

Study finds Sumatran rhino now extinct in Malaysia
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One of the world's rarest rhinoceroses, the Sumatran rhino, is now extinct in Malaysian jungles, a group of conservation experts have found, after no sighting of the animal in the wild since 2007.

The group's report published in the *Oryx International Journal of Conservation* noted that apart from two female rhinos captured between 2011 and 2014 for breeding purposes, there had been no sighting of the rhino despite years of searching.

"As of June 2015, no further signs of the species have been found in Sabah, and it is safe to consider the species extinct in the wild in Malaysia," the report stated.

Online news portal *The Dispatch Times* said the survival of the species now rests on less than 100 rhinos that remain in Indonesian jungles, as well as nine that are currently in captivity.

Of the nine, three are housed in Sabah with attempts to produce embryos by in vitro fertilization, and five in the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Sumatra, Indonesia. One is in the Cincinnati Zoo in the United States, but it is due to be moved soon to Indonesia.

"It is vital for the survival of the species that all remaining Sumatran rhinos are viewed as a metapopulation, meaning that all are managed in a single programme across national and global borders in order to maximize overall birth rate", said the report's lead author and PhD student Rasmus Gren Havmøller from the Centre for Macroecology, Evolution and Climate.

The report noted that captive breeding, intensive management zones and the single population strategy were important actions to ensure the survival of the species, but acknowledged that captive breeding may take years to develop.

Borneo Rhino Alliance head Datuk Dr Junaidi Payne told *The Star* that lack of breeding and hunting by poachers contributed to the Sumatran rhino's extinction.

The English daily quoted him as saying that every living rhino today has to be properly managed with cooperation from regional countries.

"We should certainly be thinking of boosting Sumatran rhino numbers through a single programme that is not based on nationalistic thinking," he was quoted as saying.

Payne is one of the report's 11 co-authors, and is working with the Sabah government to make the state's female rhinos pregnant artificially.

The *Star* reported that Payne had said before that if no rhino embryos could be made by mid-2017, it might become extinct here.

The English daily also said the Sumatran rhino is Malaysia's last rhino species. Its cousin, the Javan rhino, went extinct here after the last of its kind in Malaya was shot in 1932. – August 23, 2015.

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