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Press Release

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Rare Javan rhino found dead in Vietnam puts population on a knife's edge

Vietnam – A Javan rhino has been found dead late last week in Cat Tien National Park, Lam Dong Province, Vietnam, signalling a dire situation for the rarest large mammal on Earth. It is now uncertain how many, if any, Javan rhinos are left in Vietnam.

The rhino is suspected to have been killed by poachers after a scientific examination by WWF and National Park authorities found the animal had been shot and the horn had been removed. Rhino horn is a highly valued commodity in the illegal wildlife trade, with the skin and faeces used for alleged medicinal purposes.

“This is devastating news for rhino conservation and Vietnam,” said Dung Huynh Tien, National Policy Coordinator of WWF Vietnam. “The loss of this rhino is symbolic of the grim situation facing endangered species like the rhino and tiger across Vietnam.”

Local people first reported finding the body of a large mammal to National Park authorities on April 29th. A forest patrol team was immediately deployed to the site where they confirmed the dead animal was a Javan rhino.

“WWF urges the Vietnamese Government to launch an urgent and extensive criminal investigation into this animal’s death,” said Dung Huynh Tien.

It is a criminal offence under Vietnamese law to trade, use or consume any part of an endangered animal such as the Javan rhino. Those convicted of this crime can face imprisonment and large fines.

Vietnam’s Javan rhinos (*Rhinoceros sondaicus annamiticus*) are one of only two populations of the species left on Earth. There are no Javan rhino in captivity worldwide. WWF recently finished a field survey using highly trained sniffer dogs from the US to locate rhino dung. These dung samples will undergo DNA analysis to determine the exact population status of the species. Results from this study won’t be available until later this year.

WWF will send samples taken from the dead rhino to Queen’s University in Canada for analysis to see if the DNA of the dead rhino matches any of the dung samples taken during the population status survey.



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Notes to the editor

- For high-quality photos of the Javan rhino including photos of the taken of the rhino found in Cat Tien National Park visit: <http://www.divshare.com/gallery/715805-485>
Please note caption information is saved as the file name. All credits to WWF.
- Rhinomania blog: <http://www.rhinomania.blogspot.com>
- The Javan rhino (*Rhinoceros sondaicus annamiticus*) was listed as Critically Endangered on the 2009 IUCN Red List.
- Three different subspecies of Javan rhino are recognized. The most abundant subspecies (*R. sondaicus sondaicus*) lives only in Ujung Kulon National Park, Java, Indonesia, with approximately 40 to 60 individuals remaining. The subspecies once found in Bengal, Assam, and Myanmar (*R. sondaicus inermis*) is now extinct. The third subspecies (*R. sondaicus annamiticus*) survives only in Vietnam, and is the subject of this population survey.
- WWF is working to conserve 600,000 km² of the world's most biologically diverse, economically viable, and seriously threatened forests and rivers within the Greater Mekong region, home and life source to over 300 million people in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and southern China.