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# Daily Express

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WEEKLY SPECIAL

Monday



## DAILY EXPRESS NEWS

### Sumatran rhino on video

**Kota Kinabalu:** A video camera trap placed inside the forest somewhere in Sabah has captured rare footage of the elusive Sumatran rhinoceros.



The two-minute video - showing the animal eating, walking to the camera and sniffing the equipment - is the first footage of behaviour in the wild of one of the world's rarest rhinos.

Scientists estimate there are only between 25 and 50 rhinos left on the island of Borneo, according to WWF-Malaysia and the State Wildlife Department here Monday.

These last survivors of the Bornean subspecies of Sumatran rhinoceros are believed to remain only in the interior forests of Sabah, an area known as the "Heart of Borneo".

The rhinos are so elusive that the first-ever still photo of one was captured only last year.

"These are very shy animals that are almost never seen by people and so this video gives us an amazing opportunity to spy on the rhino's behaviour," said Wildlife Director Mahedi Andau.

The rhinos in Sabah spend their lives in dense forest where they are rarely seen, which accounts for the lack of any previous photographs of them in the wild.

The video camera trap that captured the footage was developed by Stephen Hogg, Head of Audio Visual at WWF-Malaysia.

After successfully testing the newly developed video camera trap on the Malayan tigers in Peninsular Malaysia, it was set up in Sabah to capture the Sumatran rhinoceros.

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"We did a pilot test with two of my video cameras in an area that the field team had determined was used by rhinos. The first time we checked them, after four weeks, there were these fantastic images," Hogg said.

"This is further proof that these video cameras do work and are of value to our conservation work. This footage is awesome and could not have been better."

On Borneo, there have been no confirmed reports of rhinos apart from those in Sabah for almost 20 years, leading experts to fear that the species may now be extinct on the rest of the island.

Major threats include poaching, illegal encroachment into key rhino habitats, and the fact that the remaining rhinos are so isolated that they may rarely or never meet to breed.

"The photos and video footages will be used to determine the condition of the rhinos in the wild," said Raymond Alfred, Project Manager for WWF-Malaysia's Asian Rhino and Elephant Action Strategy (AREAS).

"But we have to realise that these rhinos could face extinction in the next 10 years if their habitat continues to be disturbed and enforcement is not in place."

"The Sabah Forestry Department is leading the acquisition of a 200-hectare forest corridor to be secured as rhino habitat, and is strengthening security within this portion of the Heart of Borneo with the support of the Wildlife Department, Sabah Foundation and WWF-Malaysia," said State Forestry director Datuk Sam Mannan.

Recently, the ministers of the three Bornean governments - Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia - signed a historic declaration to conserve and sustainably manage the Heart of Borneo. This has put the area on the global stage of conservation priorities.

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