

Indonesia and Biodiversity: Only a dozen Sumatran rhinos left in East Kalimantan, experts believe

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Sumatran rhinoceros (Shutterstock/Handoko Ramawidjaya Bumi)

The population of the Sumatran rhinoceros in the regencies of West Kutai and Mahakam Ulu, East Kalimantan, is believed to have fallen to just 12 to 15 animals.

The head of the East Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA), Sunandar Trigunajasa, said poaching and habitat fragmentation had contributed to the decreasing number of rhinos in the wild.

“Releasing rhinos in the wild is an important step to start saving the decreasing rhino population,” Sunandar said as quoted by tempo.co in West Kutai on March 20, after releasing Pahu, a female rhino, in the Kelian Rhinoceros Conservation area. Pahu was rescued after she got caught in a poacher’s trap and went through rehabilitation for three months.

The rescue team is now trying to find a male mate for Pahu, who is estimated to be more than 25 years old, so that they can reproduce and increase the number of rhinos.

“As Pahu is now not young anymore, probably more than 25 years old, the next challenge is to find a male rhino in Kalimantan, which we believe is still roaming in the wild. The availability of male rhinos in the conservation area could propel the success of the breeding program. Now the team is trying to find a [male] rhino in Kalimantan,” said the director general of natural resource and ecosystem conservation of the Environment and Forestry Ministry, Wiratno, at the same event. (gis/mut)

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