

The Hairy Rhinoceros

History, ecology and some lessons for management of the last Asian megafauna

Author: John Payne (2022)

This book charts the recent extinction of the Hairy (Sumatran) Rhinoceros in Malaysia. John Payne is a 'Big Beast' of conservation in Borneo and knows his subject more than most people. He has been in Malaysia since the 1970s and has spent well over 40 years heavily involved in conservation in Borneo; he is best known for his work on mammals, an early book, with Charles Francis, being *A Field Guide to Mammals of Borneo* (1985). *The Hairy Rhinoceros* shows that he still cares and still writing, and, as its subtitle suggests, he uses this book to demand that the next generation of conservationists learn vital lessons in wildlife management before it is too late.

His profile of Hairy rhino biology gives extensive coverage of its behaviour, ecology and reproduction. The following chapter entitled 'Prehistory to 2021' charts the reduction in its population from being widespread through mainland SE Asia to the death of Malaysia's last two individuals in 2019 and the continuing survival of perhaps 100 animals in Sumatra.

With a chapter entitled 'How Humans Failed The Hairy Rhino', the book isn't meant to be an easy read. John is someone who has experienced the frustrations of countless meetings on rhino conservation listed extensively in the 'Chronology' chapter. There have been successes, too, for example in the collaborations for pioneering rhino egg collection and storage and the chapter on 'Husbandry, Trapping and Moving' describe the huge challenges of working with megafauna in captivity.

In this book, you will learn much about the elusive Hairy rhino from a recognised expert, as well as understanding his input into conservation initiatives. However, it is not meant to be a memoir, instead it is a call to action: with the right approach, the Hairy Rhino might still be saved from extinction! With lessons learned from some of the challenges and failed initiatives described in the book, the future of other endangered megafauna listed in the final chapter can also be secured!

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