

Queen's researcher finds situation dire for threatened rhino species

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Peter de Groot hopes his recent finding confirming the extinction of the Javan rhinoceros in Vietnam pushes the public to protect the last remaining group of these prehistoric creatures living in Indonesia.

"We still have a chance to save the species but before we do anything, we have to determine the profile of the remaining group," he says.

Dr. de Groot, Peter Boag and colleagues confirmed the demise of the Javan rhinoceros population living in Vietnam by analyzing animal dung collected with the assistance of special dung detection dogs. Using genetic tools developed at Queens and Cornell, they determined only one Javan rhinoceros was living in Vietnam in 2009. That rhinoceros was found dead the following year.

Drs. de Groot, Boag and other researchers are now working to save a group of 29 Javan rhinoceroses currently living in a tiny area called Ujon Kolong in Indonesia. They will use the rhinoceros feces collected by fellow researchers to determine the age, sex and pedigree of this group. This research will provide a direction to try to save the remaining population of one of the most threatened large [mammal species](#) in the world.

This work is part of Drs. de Groot and Boag's ongoing initiative to develop [genetic tools](#) that can assist in the conservation and management of all rhino species in Africa and Asia. Through the integration of non-invasive field data collected with the help of local [indigenous knowledge](#)

and with collaborators in the US , France, Africa and Asia they are developing inclusive methods to accurately monitor and conserve our shared [natural heritage](#).

Dr. de Groot's research was published in [Biological Conservation](#).

Provided by Queen's University

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