

Growing Wild: the rescued rhino calves



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Subhamoy Bhattacharjee 31 July 2017 Updated 31 Jul 11746 views

It's been a year since [Kaziranga National](#) Park was inundated by the worst floods to have hit Assam in [over](#) a decade. Among the 100-plus wild [animal](#) emergencies that CWRC (the Centre for [Wildlife](#) Rehabilitation and [Conservation](#): the [wildlife](#) rescue, treatment and rehabilitation centre run by [Wildlife](#) Trust of [India](#) (WTI), the International Fund for [Animal](#) Welfare (IFAW) and the Assam Forest Department near [Kaziranga](#)) and its [Mobile](#) Veterinary Service units attended during the floods last year, were eight orphaned rhino calves that were [rescued](#) and brought to the centre to be hand-raised.

The simultaneous long-term care of eight rhinos has been a massive challenge for the team at CWRC. In addition to the efforts of the centre's [animal](#) keepers and veterinarians, the tremendous support received from individual and corporate supporters, the Government of Assam, the [Kaziranga National](#) Park Authority and people from all walks of life across Assam has been critical.

“I remember that a [group](#) of children from a remote school had given up a mid-day meal to buy milk formula for the rhino calves”, says Dr Rathin Barman, WTI Joint Director and centre-in-charge, CWRC. “There have been several such touching expressions of support. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the people of Assam and all well-wishers for their support and encouragement [over](#) the past year.”

When the rhino calves were first brought to CWRC they were stabilised at the centre's Large Animal Nursery. Once they had recovered from their flood-related trauma and injuries they were shifted to a small outdoor paddock attached to the nursery. Gradually, having acclimatised to the outdoors, they were introduced to three larger paddocks with a natural stream running through them. This allowed the calves to wallow and play – an important part of their natural developmental behaviour.

“The calves have grown fast”, says Dr Panjit Basumatary, the [lead](#) veterinarian at CWRC. “Importantly, they’ve experienced all four seasons now, in an approximation of their natural habitat. It was touching to see how the younger calves huddled close to the older ones at night to keep warm during the winter, [as](#) they would have with their mothers. Now, [as](#) they play in the [mud](#), enjoy the rain or nap together [as](#) they would in their natural environment, we feel a sense of satisfaction that they are making good progress towards a life in the wild.”

CWRC currently has [ten](#) rhino calves under care. The eight calves [rescued](#) last year had already bonded with an older calf that was [rescued](#) in 2015. Another under care four- to six-month-old calf displaced by the monsoon floods was [rescued](#) from Burhapahar and brought to the centre earlier this month during [Kaziranga](#) flood 2017.



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