

Hip-Hop Designer Marc Ecko Honored

Written by Robert ID1193

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Marc Ecko, who made a rhino logo into a hip-hop fashion statement, now has a zoo rhino named in his honor.

A 3-month-old Indian rhino born at the San Diego Wild Animal Park has been named Ecko in honor of the designer, who donated \$150,000 to launch the International Rhino Foundation's project to save the species, park officials said Thursday.

The project will work with the Wild Animal Park to move Indian rhinos to reserves in India, protecting them from poachers who hunt the species for its horn. It also will support breeding exchanges among the park and zoos in India.

Marc Ecko founded his rhino-branded apparel line in 1992, and it has wide appeal among rap artists and the hip-hop culture.

The designer said that as he learned about the animal over the years, "a true affinity was born."

"More than just a logo, the rhino took on a whole new meaning as we began to co-exist with it. We always said that the rhino is a survivor, so when we overcame our early financial struggles it was only natural that we dedicate ourselves to giving back to the animal that provided the inspiration," Ecko said in a statement.

The rhino project aims to double the populations of the Indian, Black and Sumatran rhinos, three of the planet's most endangered species.

Only about 2,500 Indian rhinos are thought to live in the wild, nearly all of them concentrated in the Kaziranga National Park in India and in the Chitwan area of Nepal.

"Rhino species are really at risk when small populations are restricted to one or two reserves,"

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foundation program director Tom Foose said. "With all the eggs in just one or two baskets, a single catastrophe like a natural disaster, disease epidemic or human conflict can rapidly cause extinction."

On the Net:

<http://www.marceckoenterprises.com>

<http://www.rhinos-irf.org/>

<http://www.sandiegozoo.org/>