

**FREQUENTLY**

**ASKED**

**QUESTIONS**

**RHINO**

# The White Rhino

The white rhino's name is derived from the Dutch "weit," meaning wide, a reference to its wide, square muzzle adapted for grazing. The white rhino, which is actually grey, has a pronounced hump on the neck and a long face.

Weight: over 2 tons.

The white rhino's habitat: Grassland and open savannah. White rhinos live in savannah with water holes, mud wallows and shade trees. White rhinos are grazers.

# The Black Rhino

The black or hooked-lipped rhino, along with all other rhino species, is an odd-toed ungulate (three toes on each foot). It has a thick, hairless, grey hide. Both the black and white rhinos have two horns, the longer of which sits at the front of the nose.

Weight: 1 to 1½ tons.

Black rhino have various habitats, but mainly areas with dense, woody vegetation.

Diet: Vegetarian. Black rhinos are browsers.

# What do rhinos eat?

Diet Description: The black rhino is a browser, with a triangular-shaped upper lip ending in a mobile grasping point. It eats a large variety of vegetation, including leaves, buds and shoots of plants, bushes and trees. The white rhino is a grazer feeding on grasses.

# What are the habits of rhinos?

Rhino live in home ranges that sometimes overlap with each other. Feeding grounds, water holes and wallows may be shared. The black rhinos is usually solitary. The white rhinos tends to be much more gregarious. Rhino are also rather ill-tempered and have become more so in areas where they have been constantly disturbed. While their eyesight is poor, which is why they will of charge without apparent reason, their sense of smell and hearing are very good. They have an extended "vocabulary" of growls, grunts, squeaks, snorts and bellows. When attacking, the rhino lowers its head, snorts, breaks into a gallop reaching speeds of 48 kilometres an hour, and gores or strikes powerful blows with its horns. Still, for all its bulk, the rhino is very agile and can quickly turn in a small space. The rhino has a symbiotic relationship with oxpeckers, also called tick birds. In Swahili the tick bird is named "askariwakifaru," meaning "the rhino's guard." The bird eats ticks it finds on the rhino and noisily warns of danger. Although the birds also eat blood from sores on the rhino's skin and thus obstruct healing, they are still tolerated

What is the lifespan of the rhino?

Lifespan: 35 to 40 years.

# How long do rhinos carry their young?

Reproduction: Young are born after a gestation period of 16 months.

# Who is the rhino's enemy?

Predators: Humans. Man is the cause of the demise of the rhino. In the wild, the adult black or white rhinos has no true natural predators and, despite its size and antagonistic reputation, it is extremely easy for man to kill. A creature of habit that lives in a well-defined home range, it usually goes to water holes daily, where it is easily ambushed. The dramatic decline in rhino is unfortunate in an era of increasing conservation but efforts are underway to save the rhino from extinction.

# How long have rhinos roamed the earth?

Rhino have existed on Earth for more than 50 million years and have a glorious history. In the past, rhino were much more diverse and widespread (occurring in North America and Europe as well as in Africa and Asia).

Rhino have a long and distinguished history. Since their origin about 50 million years ago, they have been an extremely diverse group, representing many different ecotypes: Some were like giraffes, some like horses, some like hippos, others like modern rhino. The extinct rhino were also more widespread occurring in North America and Europe in addition to Africa and Asia. Moreover, rhino were not confined to the tropics in the past but extended into temperate and even arctic regions.

# How many species of rhino are there?

Today, only five species of rhinos survive. These five species are further divided into 11 identified subspecies. All rhino are under threat of, and all but one species is on the verge of, extinction. Without drastic action, some rhino could be extinct in the wild within the next 10-20 years. Only about 25,000 of these marvellous creatures survive in the wild with another 1,250 in captivity. Of these rhino, more than two thirds are white rhino. There are only around 7,300 of the other four species combined.

Best current population estimates are:

White rhino:20 150

Black rhino:4 860

Greater one-horned rhino:2 850

Sumatran rhino:200

Javan rhino:<44

# What has caused the spike in rhino poaching?

The recent killing increase is largely due to heightened demand for rhino horn, which has long been prized as an ingredient in traditional Asian medicine. It has been claimed recently that rhino horn possesses cancer-curing properties as well as the ability to cure impotence; despite there being no medical evidence to support the assertion. Each horn weighs around 10kg.

The current wave of poaching is being committed by sophisticated criminal networks using helicopters, night-vision equipment, veterinary tranquilisers and silencers to kill rhino at night while attempting to avoid law enforcement patrols. The criminal syndicates operating in South Africa have been described as highly organised and coordinated, using advanced technologies – this is not typical poaching.

A concerted international enforcement movement, at both ends of the supply and demand chain, has been described as the only hope to end the rhino poaching crisis.

25 things you might not know about rhinos

Is your family obsessed with trivia night? Do you keep running out of small talk at summer braais? Try out some of these interesting rhino facts!

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| A group of rhinos is called a "crash". |
| White rhinos aren’t white. (And black rhinos aren’t black.) The white rhino’s name is taken from the Dutch word describing its mouth: “weit”, meaning "wide". Early English settlers in South Africa misinterpreted the "weit" for "white". |
| Rhino are fast! They can run between 48 – 64 kilometres per hour, which may not sound like much, but if one is running straight towards you it feels like a NASCAR race car is coming your way. |
| Rhino pregnancies last 15 – 16 months. |
| A rhino’s skin is much softer than it looks, and is actually quite sensitive to sunburns and insect bites. (That’s why rhino like rolling in the mud so much it helps to protect them from the sunburns and insects.) |
| Contrary to the common myth, there is no evidence that rhino stamp out forest fires! |
| Rhino have poor eyesight, but very well-developed senses of smell and hearing. (And they will charge at you when startled the best way to escape is by climbing a tree, if one is handy!) |
| African rhino have a symbiotic relationship with oxpeckers, also called “tick birds”. In Swahili, the oxpecker is called “askariwakifaru”, which means “the rhino’s guard”. The oxpecker eats ticks and other insects it finds on the rhino, and creates a commotion when it senses danger. |
| Rhino have existed on earth for more than 50 million years, and once roamed throughout North America and Europe (as well as Asia and Africa). |
| Most rhino use piles of dung to leave “messages” for other rhino - nuances in the smell of dung can tell a rhino a lot about others in the area. Each rhino’s smell identifies its owner as unique - the smell is different for young vs. adult animals, for males vs. females, and females in oestrus vs. non-reproductive females. Combined with urine left along trails, dung piles create invisible “borders” around a rhino’s territory. |
| Throughout their history, rhino have been a very diverse group. The extinct rhino Paraceratherium was the largest land mammal that ever lived, and resembled a big, muscular giraffe. Telecoeras was a single-horned, hippo-like grazer common in North America. |
| The book, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, illustrated by Denslow, differs a lot from the movie classic, and actually has a reference to rhino. Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Lion each get to meet the Wizard individually and he appears differently to each one of them. To Dorothy he appears as a huge head, to the Scarecrow as a beautiful woman, to the Lion as a great ball of fire, and to the Tin Man as a terrible beast. |
| Three of the five surviving rhino species (black, Javan and Sumatran) are Critically Endangered, which means there is at least a 50% chance that these species will become extinct within three generations (for rhino, this means about 30-60 years). |
| The prehistoric woolly rhino, whose entire body was covered in a thick, shaggy coat, was hunted by early humans and is depicted in cave paintings dating back more than 30,000 years ago. The Sumatran rhino is the closest living relative of the extinct woolly rhino. (And they’ve got the hair to prove it!) Woolly Rhino is probably the most well known of the extinct rhino. |
| The black rhino has a prehensile lip which allows it to feed on trees and shrubs. (The other African species, the white rhino, has a long, flat lip for grazing on grasses.) |
| The Javan rhino is the rarest land mammal in the world. Less than 50 individuals survive in only two locations (Cat Tien National Park in Vietnam and Ujung Kulon National Park in Indonesia.) |
| Not all rhino are solitary both black and white rhino commonly live in extended family groups (particularly females and calves). |
| Rhino horn is not used as an aphrodisiac in traditional Asian medicine. It is actually used to reduce pain and fever, although there is no scientific evidence to support this usage, and of course, it is illegal. |
| Sumatran, black and white rhino all have two horns; Javan and greater one-horned rhino have one horn. (And some female Javan rhino don’t appear to have a horn at all.) |
| The most famous piece of rhino artwork is Albrecht Durer’s woodcut, “The Rhino”, printed in 1515. It (not entirely accurately) depicts a greater one-horned rhino sent as a gift from the King of Portugal to Pope Leo X, and has been reprinted countless times over the past 500 years. |
| The word rhino comes from the Greek '*rhino'* (nose) and '*ceros'* (horn). |
| Depending on the species, rhino can live to be 35 – 50 years old. |
| Rhino horns are made of keratin, the same material that makes up your hair and fingernails. |
| The closest living rhino “relatives” are tapirs, horses and zebras. |
| Paraceratherium, the largest land mammal that ever lived, resembles a very big, muscular giraffe and is now extinct. |
| Telecoeras, a single horned, hippo-like grazer is an extinct rhino. |

