

BLACK RHINOS

"HOOK-LIPPED RHINOS"

The smaller of the two species of African rhino, black rhinos are agile, shy and aggressive. Their small, protruding heads and pointed lips give them the nickname 'hook-lipped rhinos'.

The black rhino population suffered a devastating decline between the 1970s and mid 1990s caused by rampant poaching. From 65,000 individuals to under 2500, the species suffered a staggering 96% loss.

Their numbers remain incredibly low, approximately 6195 individuals. Encouragingly however according to the '2022 State of the Rhino Report' by the International Rhino Foundation (IRF), the population increased around 12% between 2017 to today largely thanks to increased protection and translocation efforts.



SCIENTIFIC NAME

Diceros bicornis

Diceros bicornis: "Di" meaning "two", "cerato" meaning "horn" in Greek and "bi" meaning "two", and "cornis" meaning "horn" in Latin

SUB-SPECIES

Southern black rhino (*Diceros bicornis minor*)
Eastern black rhino (*Diceros bicornis michaeli*)
Southwestern black rhino (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*)
Western black rhino (*Diceros bicornis longipes*)

CONSERVATION STATUS

Southern Central: Critically endangered
Eastern black: Critically endangered
South Western: Near threatened
Western black: Declared extinct in 2011

POPULATION INCREASE/DECREASE

Overall, there has been an encouraging growth increase of approximately 12.5% in the last five years. Kenya exceeded its population projection according to its most recent Black Rhino Action Plan. Uganda, Zambia, Malawi and Eswatini have all retained populations despite ongoing threats from poaching. Sadly, numbers in Botswana have plummeted by just over half (27 recorded losses) in just 5 years.



HABITAT

The black rhino occupies a variety of habitats, including grasslands, savannahs, tropical bush lands, thickets, and dry forests, as well as mountain forests and moorlands at high altitudes.



HISTORICAL RANGE

Once prolific across southern, eastern and central Africa (except the Congo Basin) in strongholds such as South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Angola, Nigeria, Cameroon, Uganda, Central African Republic.

POPULATION

- South Africa: 2056
- Zambia: 58
- Zimbabwe: 616
- Uganda: 35
- Tanzania: 212
- Rwanda: 28
- Mozambique: 7
- Namibia: 2156
- Botswana: 23
- Eswatini: 48
- Kenya: 938





AVERAGE LIFESPAN

35 - 50 years in the wild. A female eastern black rhino named Fausta died in 2019 at the age of 57

HORNS

Front length: 50-130cm
Rear length: Up to 55 cm

HEIGHT

Females: 1.4-1.6 m
Males: 1.4-1.8 m
(Height to shoulder)

HEARING

They have well developed hearing and are very sensitive to low-frequency sounds

WEIGHT

Calf birth weight: 27-45 kg
Females: 700-1,300 kg
Males: 1,000-1,800 kg

VISION

Their vision is poor. They're unable to see a motionless person at a distance of 30m

AVERAGE SPEED

Black rhinos can charge up to speeds of 35mph

COMMUNICATION

They have a complex range of visual, audible and olfactory communication, including snorts, wheezes, squeals and pants, foot pounding, horn prodding and ritualised defecation in the form of middens which are communal dung heaps used like a social network

SOCIAL

Males are mainly solitary and territorial. Females with young don't tend to socialise with other adults

DIET

They consume approximately 2.5% of their body weight daily. Their diet consists of twigs, branches, leaves, shrubs and bark



REPRODUCTION

First birth: 4-7 years
Gestation: 15-16 months
Birth numbers: Single calf
Calf birth weight: 27-45 kg
Eating solids: Within 7-10 days
Weaned: Around 2 years
Birth interval: 2.5-4 years
Female sexual maturity: 4-7 years
Male sexual maturity: 7-10 years



CURRENT RANGE

The two countries with the largest black rhino populations are South Africa and Namibia, which account for almost 70% of the entire wild black rhino population.

In previous range states where black rhinos were declared extinct, such as Mozambique, which had no population for over four decades, reintroduction programs have been implemented.



HORNS

Unlike tusks, which are teeth, and antlers, which are bone, rhino horn is made of keratin. Keratin is the same fibrous protein found in human hair and nails. As essential tools, they are used for digging for water, foraging, guiding their young, and displaying dominance & defence.

The horns grow continuously throughout the rhino's life at a rate of around 7cm per year. Horns are worn through general wear and tear or by an intervention known as de-horning (the partial removal of horns as a deterrent against poaching) although the practice is not as widespread as with white rhinos.

The longest black rhino horn was recorded in Kenya & reportedly measured 51 inches.

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