

Sumatran rhinos: The lowdown...



Name and species

- Scientific name: *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, from "di", the for two; "cero" meaning horn; and "rhinus" meaning nose
- There are only about 300 left in the wild

Physical characteristics

- The Sumatran rhino is the smallest of the five species of rhino, measuring 6-9ft/2-2.3m, standing 3-5ft/1-1.5m high, and weighing around 2,200lb/1,000kg
- Like the two African species, the Sumatran rhino has two horns: a longer one in front (rarely more than 12in/30cm long) and a shorter one behind
- The only living rhino with a hairy hide, the Sumatran rhino is thought to be a direct descendent of the prehistoric woolly rhino
- Sumatran calves are extremely hairy when born, the hair growing a reddish brown in young adults before becoming sparser and turning black in older animals
- They have a lifespan of up to 40 years

Location and habitat

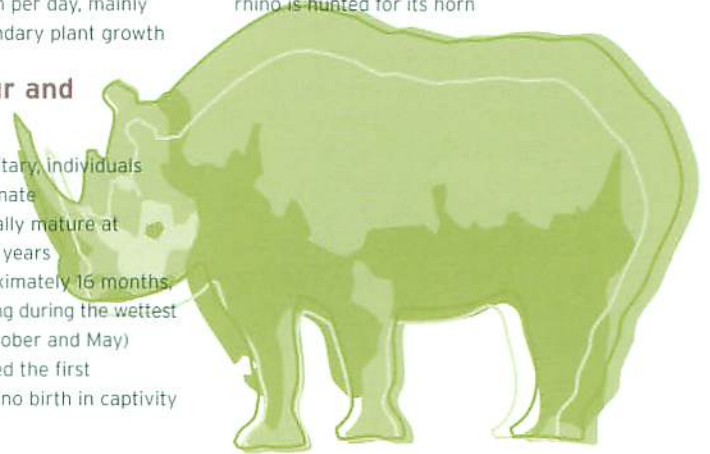
- Dense rainforest and mountain forests of peninsula Malaysia, Borneo and Sumatra
- They are good climbers and have been found as high as 10,825ft/3,300m, although this may be avoidance of human contact rather than natural preference
- Sumatran rhinos need to eat around 110lb/50kg of vegetation per day, mainly bamboo, fruit and secondary plant growth

Social behaviour and breeding

- Extremely shy and solitary, individuals only come together to mate
- Females become sexually mature at 6 years old, males at 10 years
- Gestation takes approximately 16 months, with most births occurring during the wettest months of the year (October and May)
- Cincinnati Zoo recorded the first successful Sumatran rhino birth in captivity in September 2002

Under threat

- Sumatran rhinos were so common in the 19th century that they were considered a garden pest
- Loss of habitat due to logging and the burning of forests for farmland has fragmented populations
- Like all other rhino species, the Sumatran rhino is hunted for its horn



Nepal - Political turmoil spells trouble for rare Indian rhinos...

Nepalese conservation officials are hugely concerned that the local one-horned Indian rhino population may be at increased risk, due to the rapid redeployment of soldiers from National Park guard duty to the campaign against the Maoist rebels in the country. The rate of rhino slaughter by poachers has increased alarmingly over the last year, and Save the Rhino has had unconfirmed reports of up to 40 rhino deaths in the area since the state of emergency was declared at the end of November 2001.

Most of the country's estimated 600 rhinos are concentrated in Chitwan National Park, on Nepal's southern border with India, where the number of army checkpoints around the park has been reduced by four-fifths due to lack of manpower. This has left the rhinos perilously vulnerable to opportunistic poachers who are attracted by the lucrative trade in rhino horn in markets in Asia and other parts of the world.

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