

Securing a safe future for rhinoceros in Nepal



The one-horned Asian rhino once roamed freely across the flood plains of Chitwan and Bardia of Nepal's southern Terai. Today, rampant poaching coupled with habitat loss have drastically reduced their numbers to scattered populations that are struggling for survival against huge odds. While they are still the flagship species of one of the world's most biologically diverse ecosystems, the number of rhinos in Nepal may soon plummet ... unless we act now.

Securing a safe future for rhinoceros in Nepal

Protecting rhinos for tomorrow's generation

Rhinos are fighting for survival in Nepal. The population of one-horned Asian rhinoceros has suffered a catastrophic decline of more than 30 per cent in the last five years. A census at Chitwan National Park alone in the central Nepali plains, home to the second largest number of single-horned rhinos in the world after India, showed their numbers had fallen to the lowest level - from 544 in 2000 to just 354 by October 2006. At least 104 have been killed by poachers. As the country's security situation deteriorated since the last survey in 2000, it has only made poachers active enough to exploit the fragile situation.

Teetering on the edge

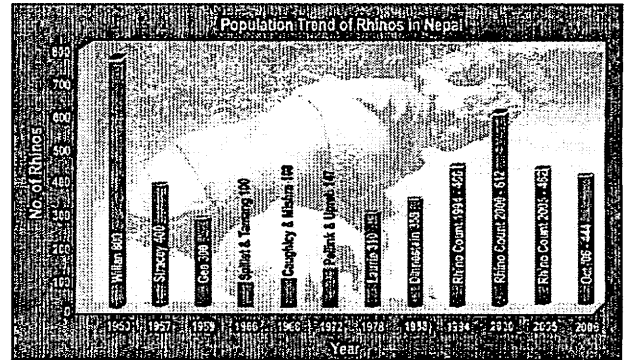
Throughout Nepal, future of these spectacular creatures is clearly at risk, for they live in a rapidly changing environment that they must share with humans struggling for sustainable livelihoods. In addition to poaching, habitat loss through change in land use practices has further compounded the human-wildlife conflict. However, with the improvement of security situation owing to the historic political developments in recent times, hopes are high to strike a right balance in reviving the population if urgent and sustainable protection measures are undertaken to let future generations enjoy this endangered pachyderm listed under the IUCN Red Data Book.

The IUCN programme on rhino conservation

Although the rhino conservation programme starts with a one-year phase, the stakes, however, are high. It envisages to address the following four basic components:

1. Launching community outreach and awareness programme;
2. Preparing a comprehensive strategy framework supporting the 20-point Chitwan Declaration;
3. Introducing rhino monitoring equipment in Chitwan and Bardia National Parks and Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve; and
4. Devising a community-based compensation mechanism.

In addition to conserving rhinos, the programme will also conserve one of the most biologically important landscapes that harbour precious habitats.



Why IUCN is involved in this mission?

As an organisation that builds bridges to secure the peaceful co-existence of people and wildlife, IUCN in Nepal is making efforts to support clear and measurable species conservation results and addressing human-wildlife conflict at the landscape level.

IUCN is uniquely placed to address the cross-cutting issues such as illegal wildlife trade and human-wildlife conflict. As an authority with the biggest global network of scientists and experts dedicated to fighting the species extinction crisis, IUCN can easily link and mobilise members of Asian Rhino Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission to the conservation of rhinoceros in Nepal. By conserving rhinos and its key habitat, we can do more than secure a safer future for Nepal's wildlife in general and rhinos in particular.

How you can help?

This one-year programme will start with a one-year phase of \$175,000. Interested partners are requested to support at least one or all components. Specific on-the-ground needs include:

\$25,000 for enhancing community outreach and awareness programmes in Chitwan and Bardia National Parks.

\$28,000 for supporting the government's recently launched Chitwan Declaration.

\$72,500 for strengthening anti-poaching efforts.

\$49,500 for implementing and institutionalizing community-based crop compensation programme.

The survival of rhinos in Nepal cannot be taken for granted. Their future depends on our continued commitment to conservation - together we can make a difference!

Nepal Country Office

For more information, please contact:

Deependra Joshi
Programme Officer
IUCN Nepal Country Office
+977-1-5528761/5528781
djoshi@iucn.org.np

www.iucnnepal.org