

<https://ntnc.org.np/news/752-one-horned-rhinos-nepal-determined-national-rhino-count-2021>

NTNC - National Trust for Nature Conservation. 2021. Nepal rhino count 2021. NTNC website, 11 April 2021

752 one-horned rhinos in Nepal determined by the National Rhino Count 2021

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The National Rhino Count 2021 has updated Nepal's latest one-horned rhinoceros population to 752 individuals. Out of these 694 are in Chitwan, 38 in Bardia, 17 in Shuklaphanta, and 3 in Parsa National Parks and their surrounding areas. Compared to the previous census in 2015, that had counted 645 rhinos, this is an increase by 107 rhinos.

These were the results announced at a [press release](#) briefing held yesterday evening at the NTNC-Biodiversity Conservation Centre in Sauraha, Chitwan. The numbers were officially disclosed by the Secretary of the Ministry of Forests and Environment, Dr. Bishwa Nath Oli in the presence of partner organizations, stakeholders, the public and the media.

Over the past three weeks (March 22 to April 10), Nepal undertook its national rhino count to determine the existing population of its one-horned rhinos, [starting from the Chitwan-Parsa complex](#), and continuing into Bardia and Shuklaphanta National Parks and its adjoining forests and buffer zones. The census was led by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) in partnership with the Department of Forests and Soil Conservation, Nepal Army, buffer zone user committees, community forest user groups, division forest offices, local-level institutions and user groups, and tourism stakeholders, with additional financial and technical support from conservation stakeholder organizations NTNC, WWF Nepal, and ZSL Nepal. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) also partially supported the count in collaboration with NTNC.

New rhino population in Nepal according to the National Rhino Count 2021:

SN	Location	Male	Female	Unknown	(Adult)	(Semi-adult)	(Calf)	Total # Rhinos (2021)	Population increase compared to 2015
1	Parsa NP	1	1	1	2	0	1	3	0
2	Chitwan NP, its buffer zone area and adjoining forests	128	174	392	474	95	125	694	89
3	Bardia NP, its buffer zone area and adjoining forests	14	19	5	31	1	6	38	9

4	Shuklaphanta NP	3	4	10	13	0	4	17	9
	Total	146	198	408	520	96	136	752	107

On the ground 57 elephants were used throughout the counting operation, with a total of 350 personnel being deployed daily—250 persons every day for 23 days in Chitwan-Parsa, 60 persons for 12 days in Bardia, and 40 persons for seven days in Shuklaphanta. Human resources were mostly national park staff from Chitwan, Parsa, Bardia and Shuklaphanta, Nepal Army park security personnel, and NTNC technicians and support staff.

Direct capture method was used for the counting, with survey teams and enumerators on elephant backs moving parallelly from one block to another sweeping potential rhino habitats. During this, rhino sightings are made from a distance of 50-100 meters, after which they are carefully observed and identified by sex, age, physical features, health condition, and the surrounding habitat conditions. The particular rhino being identified is then allowed to pass through and kept behind the line of enumerators before recording all the observed data in standard format. This avoids the possibility of double counts that can result in over-estimation of the population.

The field survey of rhino count is a physically demanding operation where enumerators spend up to 8-12 hours out in the forest each day. Like any other fieldwork related to wildlife there are risks involved. One can fall sick due to exhaustion, there are risks from wildlife encounters, and most commonly of all is the risk of falling off elephant backs and getting injured. In spite of preparations and precautions, such risks are not totally avoidable. During this count too, as in the past surveys, several enumerators fell off elephant backs and were injured.

However this time's census was particularly challenging. Besides Covid-related obstacles, the operation had to encounter two unfortunate incidents, [one of a fatal tiger attack](#) on Bardia National Park's elephant mahout on April 04, and another case of ongoing hospitalization of NTNC-BCC's programme officer from a wild elephant attack in Chitwan.

Rise in rhino population from 645 in 2015 to 752 in 2021 marks a 16.6 percent increase overall—with population in Chitwan rising from 605 to 694 rhinos during the same period, in Bardia from 29 to 38 rhinos, in Shuklaphanta from eight to 17 rhinos, and population in Parsa unchanged at three rhinos.