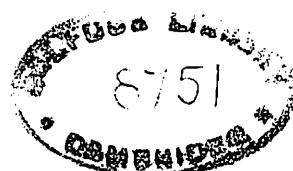




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forcing the huge animal to keep his head lifted high. Somewhere in Mafunyane's long history a poacher has tried unsuccessfully to kill this grand old man, the evidence plainly visible as a fist-sized bullet-hole in the top of his head. Park officials leave this elephant strictly alone, only checking at irregular intervals to see if he is alive and well, keeping his whereabouts a secret to prevent anyone molesting him. Mafunyane has only a few years of life left, but until he dies he will have privacy and remain king of his domain.

White Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*). The terms 'white' and 'black' rhino are unfortunate and misleading, as there is no real colour difference between the two species. How the names were actually derived remains a puzzling question, though it has been suggested that the white rhino's name derives from the 'wide' – flattened or square – mouth, a good adaptation to its grazing way of life. It enables the animal to pluck and feed more effectively on the short grass which forms its main diet. By contrast, the black rhino is a browser, its pointed mouth adapted for feeding on leafy branchlets.

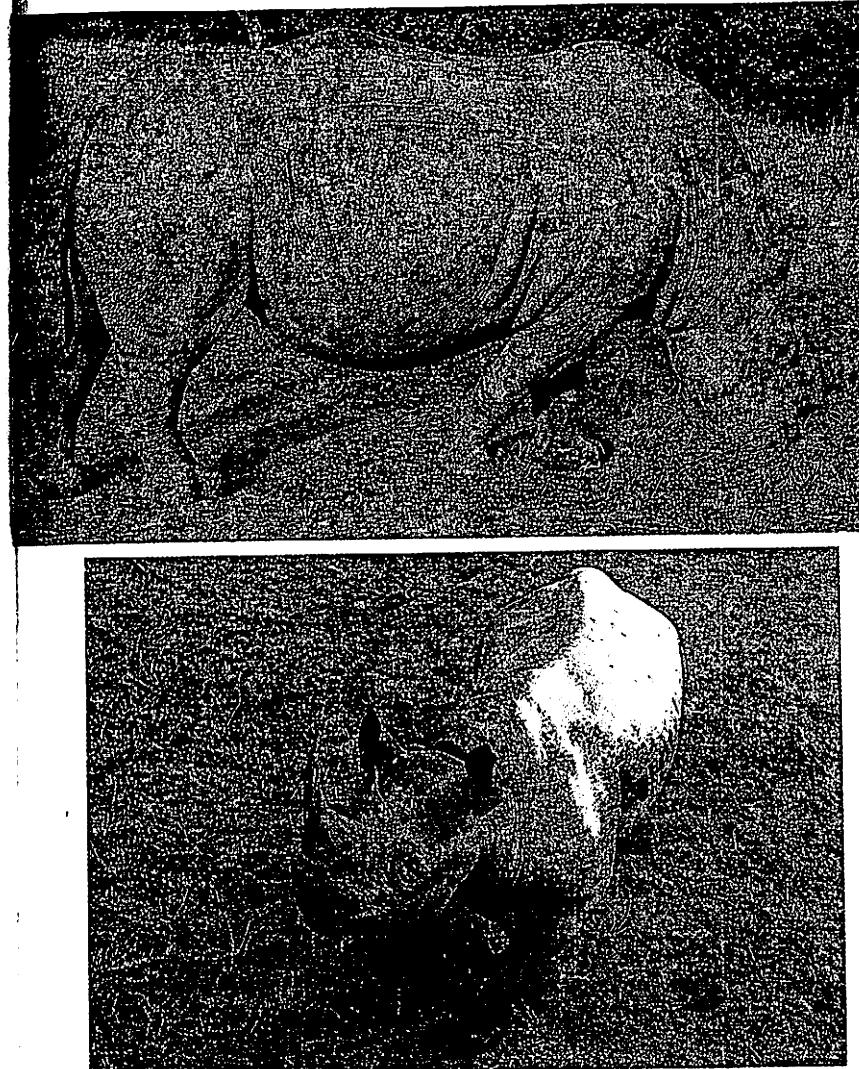
Although white rhino were once plentiful in the Transvaal Lowveld, they died out in this area late last century, as a result of excessive hunting and poaching. However, in 1961 biologists obtained a few of these animals from the Umfolozi Game Reserve in Natal, releasing them in a quarantine camp near Pretoriuskop. Since then many more have been re-introduced and released from the quarantine area. These translocated rhino established themselves so well and have bred so successfully that there are now more than 600. They are concentrated in the southern half, especially in the area between Pretoriuskop, Malelane and Skukuza.

Black Rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*). As in the case of the white rhino, black rhino numbers were also dramatically reduced by excessive hunting in the last century. Tracks of the last living black rhinoceros in the eastern Transvaal were found in the southern part of the Park in 1936.

Again, as part of their policy to re-establish all the animal species which originally occurred in this area, the decision was made by the National Parks Board to re-introduce black rhino. In 1971, 20 of these lumbering beasts were obtained from the Natal Parks Board and released between Skukuza and Pretoriuskop. Since then many more have been re-introduced, so that today nearly 100 of them roam the southern and central areas.

Black rhino are somewhat smaller, with a mass of about 1 500 kilograms, and easily distinguished from white rhino by their pointed, elongate mouths. As browsers they prefer areas in which low, clumped acacia trees are found, providing both food and shelter.

Temperamentally rather unpredictable, black rhino are very easily provoked into charging. Thus it is advisable not to approach them too closely; they have been known to attack and bash vehicles.



Top: White rhino uses its flattened lips to graze. Above: Ill-tempered, a black rhino shows its somewhat pointed lips used for browsing.

Males and females of both species have 'horns', the foremost often much larger than the hind one, both being made up of normal hair that has fused. In the East, especially China, rhino 'horn' is highly prized as a powerful aphrodisiac. Rarity and demand as a result of this belief have led to extensive poaching of these animals.