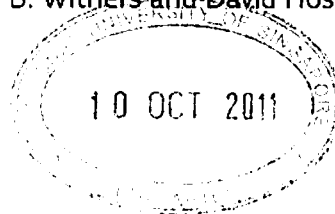


Wildlife of Southern Africa



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White Rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* Witrenoster

There are scattered populations over the whole region in protected areas. The White Rhino is the world's second largest land mammal - the African Elephant being the largest. The animal's name has nothing whatever to do with colour, but is a corruption of the Afrikaans word 'Wit' meaning 'wide' and refers to the shape of the mouth which has a broad upper lip, this being the most obvious difference between the two rhinoceros species. The larger and heavier than the Black Rhino, the head is large, square-shaped and carries two horns. The front horn is the larger of the two, averaging 80 cm in length, the rear horn is shorter and thinner. The ears are large and oval in shape with pointed tips, the eyes are small and the eyesight is rather poor. The huge body is covered with a thick hide of pale grey skin. The tail is short, terminating with stiff hairs. They feed by grazing, using the wide mouth and strong lips to crop short grasses. They will feed throughout the day and night, but usually seek shelter from the hot midday sun. They will drink several times a day if water is readily available but during the dry season they can survive by drinking every three to four days. In spite of their bulk they are surprisingly quick and manoeuvrable.

In some parks staff have been experimenting with different anti-poaching measures, one of which involves sedating and then removing the rhino's horn. This procedure in no way harms the rhino, but does decrease the possibility of them falling foul of the poacher's gun.

Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* Swartrenoster

As a result of heavy poaching over the whole region, scattered populations are now only found in protected areas. A relic of prehistoric times, the rhinoceros is almost unrecognisable. The Black Rhino is distinguished from the slightly larger White Rhinos by the narrow mouth and prominent upper lip. The head is large and carries two horns, the larger front horn measuring on average 60 cm. The ears are rounded and are fringed with tufts of dark hair. The eyes are small and the eyesight poor, but the senses of smell and hearing are very acute. The huge body is covered with a thick hide of grey skin, although due to the rhino's predilection for wallowing in mud, their coloration can appear variable. The tail is short and tipped with stiff hairs. In spite of their bulk the Black Rhino is very manoeuvrable and capable of a top running speed of 50 kph. They are far more aggressive and bad-tempered than the White Rhino. They feed mainly in the early morning and late afternoon, seeking shade or a mud wallow during the hottest midday period. Although they are capable of surviving for several days without water, they will drink and wallow daily when possible, often travelling many miles to an available source. During periods of drought they will often dig for water in dried up riverbeds. Rhinos are solitary animals, although females are usually accompanied by their most recent offspring.

