

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

by Brenda Posada

"He's so soft!" The look of wonder in seven-year-old Grant Nicholson's eyes says it all. He'd expected the 4,300-pound rhinoceros's thick, plated skin to feel as tough as the body armor it resembles.

"It's a little bumpy," his sister Laurion, age six, points out. Indeed, Randa's upper legs are covered in wart-like bumps, typical for her species.

Visiting from St. Louis, the Nicholsons are among two dozen visitors participating in the Zoo's Indian Rhino Encounter on a recent Saturday morning. Mom Kathy, a California native, says the family makes a point of visiting the L.A. Zoo whenever they are in town. Preparing for this trip, they were excited to see the opportunity for a behind-the-scenes rhino meet-and-greet advertised on the Zoo's website.

Their enthusiasm is shared by the rest of the group. Adults and children alike are awed by Randa's calm and stately presence. Educators Jess Kohring and Anna Becker brief participants on safety precautions before turning the group over to keepers Jennifer Gruenewald and Stephanie Zielinski, who share a bit about Randa's history, likes and dislikes. They describe her diet and daily skin care regimen and affectionately refer to her as "pampered."

Offered on weekends and holidays only, the tours have proven quite popular since their debut last fall, and the revenue supports Zoo operations. According to her keepers, Randa gets as much out of the encounters as her guests. It's a change of pace and she enjoys tactile interactions with people.

Soon it is time for tour participants to line up for the opportunity to touch and perhaps even feed the star attraction. Apples are on the menu, and Randa uses her large, prehensile lip to gently pluck a piece from Grant's outstretched palm.



"I got slimed," he squeals, staring at traces of rhino saliva on his hand. Dad Brian forgoes his turn so that Grant can have another go. "Double slimed!" he announces after Randa happily accepts his second offering.

Sister Laurion seems apprehensive at first, but after tossing her treat into Randa's mouth, pronounces the entire experience "cool." When the family of four moves on, the rest of Randa's callers take their turns. Hands are sanitized, and the guests pose for photos before winding their way back into the Zoo, chattering excitedly about their impressions of Randa—"soft," "smooth," "bumpy," "huge," and indisputably "cool."

For more information or to purchase tickets for the Indian Rhino Encounter, visit www.lazoo.org.

ESCAPE TO AFRICA

by Diane Tuchmayer

If your vacation dreams include viewing rhinos and other wild animals in their native environment, consider a journey with the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association's (GLAZA) International Travel Program. GLAZA's tours focus on the animals, environment, history, and culture of the destination while also educating travelers about the Zoo's efforts to promote wildlife and habitat conservation.

The next adventure, a safari to the wildlife-rich nation of Botswana, will be led by Zoo Director John Lewis and take place from May 29 to June 8, 2014. The journey begins in the lush Okavango Delta, earth's largest inland water system, which supports an immense variety of animals and plants. A highlight of this segment of the trip is a talk by Dr. Tico McNutt on his work with Botswana's wild dogs, the second most endangered carnivore in Africa. Time permitting, he will accompany tour members on a wildlife run to find some of his study subjects. This area is also home to hippos, crocodiles, buffalo, lions, spotted hyenas, about 450 bird species, and large numbers of elephants.

After flying in to another Delta camp, tour members can view elephants who formed their own herd after being released into the wild. Bristol University researchers are studying the interaction between this herd and the area's wild elephants. Travelers can observe the researchers at work and may also glimpse giraffe, zebra, impala, wildebeest, tsessebe, and lechwe that graze in the area.

The 308,880-acre Linyanti Wildlife Reserve, famous for its lions, is

the next stop. Virtually all species of African animals except for rhinos live in large numbers in this ecologically diverse reserve. Day and night drives provide outstanding opportunities to view at close range a wide variety of diurnal and nocturnal animals.

Two optional tour extensions are available: one to Zambia's famed Victoria Falls with a sundowner cruise on the Zambezi River, the other to Cape Town, South Africa, with its Cape Dutch and Victorian architecture, towering Table Mountain, and spectacular Cape of Good Hope, where churning Atlantic waters meet the calm Indian Ocean.

This exceptional journey is organized by Classic Escapes, which contributes a portion of its profits to support conservation and wildlife research, while also providing luxurious lodgings and gourmet meals for tour guests.

Considering taking a trek? For more information, visit us online at: www.lazoo.org/calendar/travel/.



RHINOS

DID YOU KNOW? There are five rhino species: white, black, Indian, Sumatran, and Javan. Javan and Indian rhinos have only one horn while white, black, and Sumatran rhinos have two.

Rhinos use their horns to defend themselves, as well as for breaking branches and foraging for food.

Rhino horns are made out of keratin, the same material that forms our fingernails and our hair.

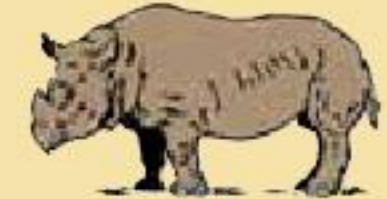
Rhinos have a great sense of hearing. Their tube-like ears can turn to help pick up sound.

The life span for a rhinoceros ranges from 30 to 50 years, depending on the species.

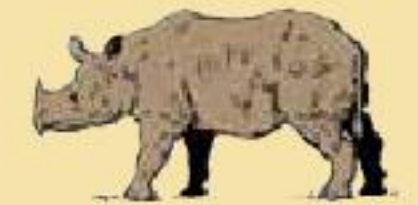
The largest rhino species, the white rhino, weighs up to 6,000 pounds and stands 5 to 6 feet tall.



white rhino



black rhino



Indian rhino

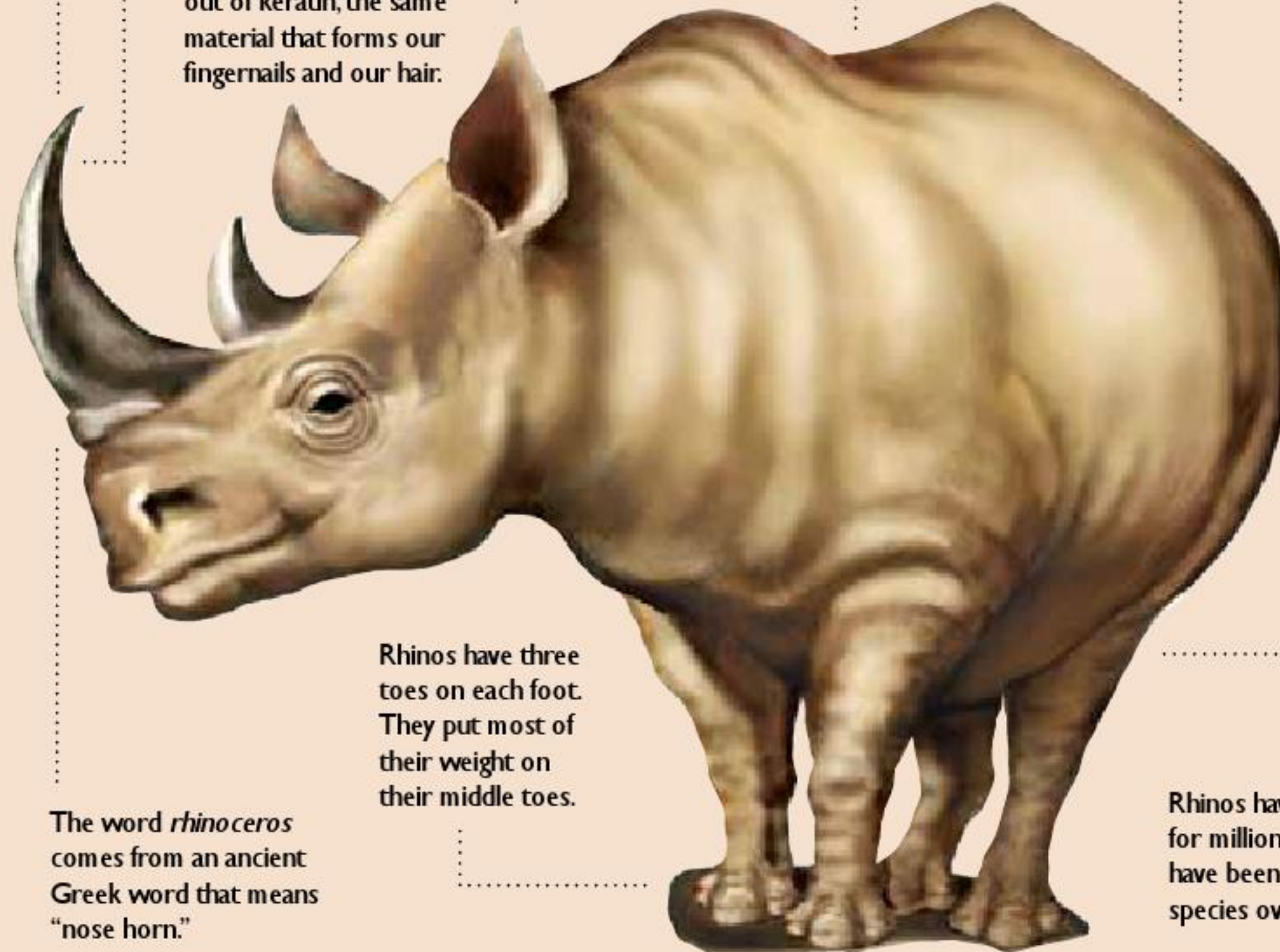


Sumatran rhino



Javan rhino

A group of rhinos is called a herd or a crash.



The word *rhinoceros* comes from an ancient Greek word that means "nose horn."

Rhinos have three toes on each foot. They put most of their weight on their middle toes.

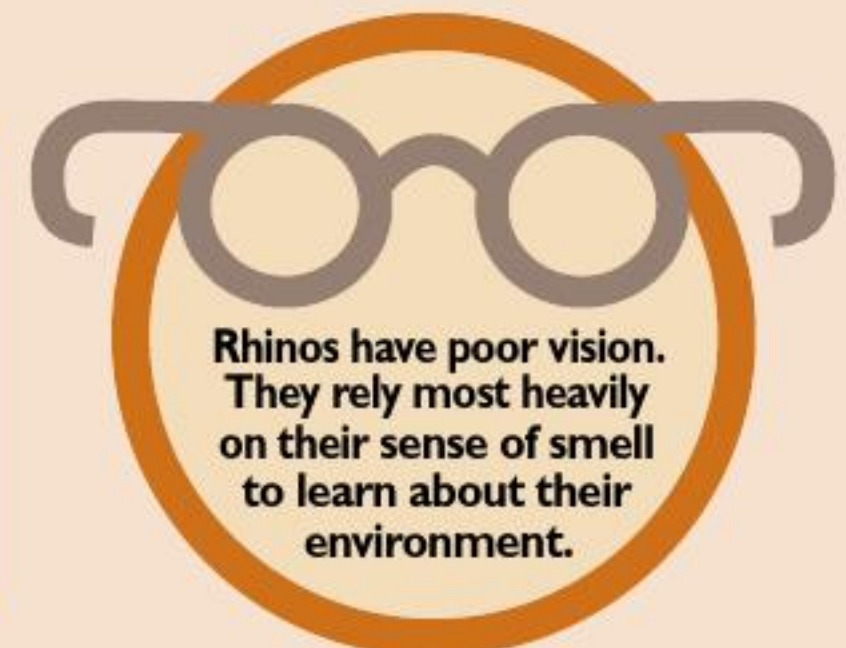
Rhinos have been on Earth for millions of years. There have been many different species over time.

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A black rhino can run up to 40 mph.



All rhinos are herbivores. They eat various grasses, branches, aquatic plants, crops, and some fruit.



Rhinos have poor vision. They rely most heavily on their sense of smell to learn about their environment.

THE KENNETH T. AND EILEEN L. NORRIS FOUNDATION

In the 50 years since its inception, the Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation has built an extraordinary philanthropic legacy. Established in 1963 by the Norris family—Kenneth Sr., his wife Eileen, and their son, Kenneth Jr.—has contributed more than \$100 million to community, cultural, youth, medical, and education/science initiatives throughout California, with particular focus in the Los Angeles area. Their generosity includes several capital gifts to the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens, to help construct Chimpanzees of the Mahale Mountains, the Children's Discovery Center, and Elephants of Asia. Most recently, the Norris Foundation has provided unrestricted funding to the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA), which supports the Zoo's general operations.

Grants for an organization's operating budget are not commonly provided by charitable foundations, but then the Norris Foundation is not a common foundation. Executive Director Walter Zanino explains, "We ask organizations where they need support the most, because that is where we get the best requests."

This flexibility has allowed the Norris Foundation to meet the priority needs of hundreds of local charities. "We're very proud of the organizations that we sup-

► The foundation's executive director, Walter Zanino, on a recent visit to Elephants of Asia.



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port," Zanino adds, "and we like to be involved with them for the long-term."

The Norris Foundation's relationship with the L.A. Zoo spans 16 years, extending back to the early projects of the Master Plan. When it first partnered with the Zoo in 1997 to help fund the chimpanzee exhibit, the project was engaging not only in a scientific and educational sense, it also had a community component by virtue of being at the Zoo. "It appealed to us across the board," Zanino says. "The Zoo is one of those places that you always remember as a child. It's a great place for whole families to come together, grandparents with their kids and grandkids..."

This penchant for family and community parallels the Foundation's roots: Kenneth and Eileen Norris established their charitable giving to sustain the communities that had supported them and their family business, Norris Industries,

Inc., a steel and military manufacturing company based in Long Beach. While the company is no more, the Norris name continues to thrive through the work of its foundation.

In addition to its support of the L.A. Zoo, the Norris Foundation has been instrumental in changing the face of Los Angeles with the Norris Center for the Performing Arts in Rolling Hills Estates and the University of Southern California Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center—two other examples of its remarkable legacy of giving. The Norris Foundation was built on the generosity and compassion of a great Southern California family, and its work continues to make a difference in countless lives. GLAZA is proud to count the Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation as one of its most treasured philanthropic partners.

—Megan Runquist Holmstedt

To learn how you can support the Zoo's mission, please visit www.lazoo.org/support or call the Development Division at 323/644-4767.

