

Salvadori 1990

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RARE ANIMALS OF THE WORLD

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CLASS
Mammals

SUBCLASS
Eutheria

ORDER
Perissodactyla

SUBORDER
Ceratomorpha

FAMILY
Rhinocerotidae

GENUS
Diceros

BLACK RHINOCEROS

Diceros bicornis

Description. The Black Rhinoceros can grow to a length of 12ft (3.75m), excluding tail, with a shoulder height of 5ft (1.60m). It weighs about 3 tons. It feeds mainly on shoots and leaves which it tears away using its developed upper lip.

Geographic distribution. Once distributed in large numbers in Africa from Cape Province to southern Angola in the west and to Ethiopia in the east.

Habitat. Savannah with trees or bushes; open areas in forests, and grassland up to 10,000ft (3,000m).

Population. During the 1970s and 1980s there was a catastrophic decline due to poaching, probably as a result of widespread publicity concerning the high value of their horns. By the late 1970s less than 30,000 remained, and by 1984 these had fallen to 9,000 and continued to decline, with several populations becoming extinct. They are, however, bred regularly in zoos.



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Ceratotherium

WHITE OR SQUARE-LIPPED RHINOCEROS

Ceratotherium simum cottoni

Description. The White or Square-lipped Rhinoceros can be divided into two subspecies: the northern *Ceratotherium simum cottoni*, and the southern, and more common, *Ceratotherium simum simum*. There are few physical differences. The White Rhinoceros is the largest of all rhinoceroses, measuring up to 13ft (4m) in length, excluding tail, with a shoulder height of 6½ft (2m). It weighs at least 3 tons. It is distinguished by its square lip (unlike the Black Rhinoceros) which is suited for browsing.

Geographic distribution. The northern subspecies was once widespread in Africa between latitudes 13° and 9° North.

Habitat. Savannah and arid forests.

Population. Since the late 1980s less than 20 survive, all in the Garamba National Park, Zaire.





INDIAN RHINOCEROS

Rhinoceros unicornis

CLASS

Mammals

SUBCLASS

Eutheria

ORDER

Perissodactyla

SUBORDER

Ceratomorpha

FAMILY

Rhinocerotidae

GENUS

Rhinoceros

Description. Like the Javan Rhinoceros, the Indian Rhinoceros is distinguished from the African Rhinoceros by the loose folds of skin, or armour, as they have been described since antiquity. This loose skin is covered with horny tubercles and drapes over the shoulders. The skin is completely hairless apart from the ears and tip of the tail. The tough hide is as thick as an elephant's. An adult male can reach up to 13ft (4m) in length, including a 24-in (60-cm) tail. It can weigh over two tons. It has a single horn. Despite its massive bulk the Indian Rhinoceros trots and gallops at speeds of up to 28 miles (40km) per hour. It has only three toes on each foot with huge nails separated by fleshy cushions. Its two sharp incisors are a particularly effective weapon if attacked. Like all rhinoceroses, the Indian Rhinoceros is vegetarian and eats grasses, shoots, reeds and leaves. It tears off the leaves from the higher branches with its flexible specially adapted upper lip which is rather like a small proboscis. In captivity they are fed on fruit, carrots, grain pellets and vitamins. According to information gathered from a number of zoos, the Indian Rhinoceros will consume 44 – 55lb (20 – 25kg) of dry foodstuffs each day, and drink up to 26gal (100l) of water. Studies of the Indian Rhinoceros in the wild have shown it not to be a particularly solitary animal: single animals have been sighted, but also groups of several individuals. Nor is it confined to a rigid territory. It wanders over vast distances within its habitat in search of food and safe areas. Occasionally there will be fighting over territory and scars are left on the tough hides. The Indian Rhinoceros does not appear to have natural enemies: no animal dares attack. However, it will retreat from the elephant, though a female is prepared to take one on if the safety of her young is threatened. The mating season is between February and April. The gestation period is 16 months. Newborn young weigh

about 143lb (65kg) and have no horn.

Geographic distribution. The species once inhabited a large area of northern India and Nepal: from the foothills of the Hindu Kush Mountains to the west of Peshawar, and to the southern bush area of the River Indus to the south of Kashmir, and all along the Himalayan foothills as far as Burma. Today it is limited to the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam, Jaldapara, and Gorumara in West Bengal, and the Rapti Valley region of Nepal.

Habitat. The Indian Rhinoceros prefers plains covered with tall grasses and shrubs, and swampy areas with lakes and streams where it can wallow in the mud. Today, particularly in Nepal, many of these rhinoceroses live in the forest and graze in cultivated areas.

Population. By the late 1950s it was estimated that around 400 survived in India, the majority in Kaziranga Sanctuary, Assam. There were also about 300 in Nepal. Under protection the numbers have increased slowly and were over 1,000 by the early 1980s. Small numbers are maintained in zoos, with an increasing proportion captive-bred.





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JAVAN OR LESSER ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS

Rhinoceros sondaicus

Description. The Javan Rhinoceros differs from the Indian Rhinoceros in that it is slightly smaller with one of the characteristic folds of loose skin meeting over the shoulders. The horn is also very small in the male and virtually nonexistent in the female. The head is slimmer and longer with a slightly extended upper lip. An adult can measure 10ft (3m) in length, including tail, with a shoulder height of 4½ft (1.40m). Not much is known about its habits, but its diet is similar to that of the Indian Rhinoceros – shoots and leaves of shrubs which it tears off with its flexible upper lip. The Javan Rhinoceros reaches maturity very quickly and adults are not gregarious.

Geographic distribution. Once distributed over a large part of India, Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, the Malaysian Peninsula, and the islands of Sumatra and Java. It is certainly

present in the Udjong-Kulon Reserve at the extreme western tip of Java.

Habitat. It prefers areas of dense vegetation: forests and high mountain forests, marshy areas, and coastal zones.

Population. In 1950 the Javan Rhinoceros was still present in the Sunderbans, the Brahmaputra Valley, and the Chittagong Hills, but probably extinct by the 1960s. By the 1980s the only viable population was in the Udjong-Kulon Reserve in Java. It is one of the rarest mammals in the world, and by the late 1980s its total population had fallen to less than 50 individuals, and last-ditch attempts were being made to maintain a captive stock.





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SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS

Dicerorhinus sumatrensis

Description. The Sumatran Rhinoceros, the only species of its genus, is the smallest living rhinoceros. It is the least developed and the only one whose body is partly covered in coarse hair. Its total length hardly measures 10ft (3m), its height is 4½ft (1.40m), and its weight just one ton. While all the other Asian rhinoceroses have a single horn, the Sumatran Rhinoceros has two. In the male, the first horn measures up to 23in (60cm) and the second 8in (20cm); the females' horns are much smaller, and the second is a mere bump. The hair is long and rough. Even the ears are fringed with hair, although it is less thick in the adult. The skin is covered with small lumps and the folds of skin are not as loose as in the Javan Rhinoceros. The

Sumatran Rhinoceros is basically nocturnal and lives alone or in small groups, wandering in search of bamboo shoots and leaves.

Geographic distribution. It was once found equally distributed throughout South-east Asia.

Habitat. This species prefers huge tropical forest, bush, swamps and reed beds with rich vegetation, from the low plains to a height of 6,500ft (2,000m).

Population. This species is in grave danger of extinction due to its very small population. However, the populations, probably all of one or two animals, are all widely scattered and isolated from each other. It is rather unlikely that the species will survive into the twenty-first century. It is protected throughout its range.

