



Both northern and southern white rhinos have the two horns and straight, "square" upper lip characteristic of white rhinos. They are grazers, and this lip shape allows them to get close to the ground as they clip off grass.

of accredited zoos discovered that very few northern white rhinos were represented in captive populations.

At the Wild Animal Park, we currently have three northern white rhinos, two females and a male. The two females, named Nola and Nadi, are well known characters at the Park. An inseparable pair, they are often seen together. In the afternoons, the animal care staff will often find them sunning, lying down with legs



The northern (seen here) and southern white rhinos are two subspecies of *Ceratotherium simum*, separated by geography and some physical and genetic differences.

spread out from their sides. Keepers, along with animal care supervisors like Lance Aubery, who have worked with them for many years are able to approach them, scratching their backs and feeding them apples. The pair are so used to human interaction that they even allow their feet to be trimmed during these afternoon sessions. Observing these two, it saddens me to think that there are less than 10 northern white rhinos left in the world.

Our work with northern white rhinos began too late and with too few individuals. In April 1972, the Wild Animal Park received a pair

The northern white rhino is a subspecies that has reached a critical juncture and may go extinct in our lifetime.



of female northern white rhinos from the National Zoo in Washington D.C.. These two females had never bred. The Wild Animal Park introduced them to a male from the Khartoum Zoo in Sudan. We hoped that these two females would be enough of a herd to stimulate breeding behavior. We also hoped they would find the male attractive. We all watched anxiously, hoping that breeding would occur. Unfortunately, the females showed no interest in the male.

Reproductive physiologists from the Society's CRES department began

working with the northern white rhinos to help stimulate breeding. Because of the female rhinos' advanced age and lack of prior breeding, the scientists felt that their lack of interest was due to a state similar to menopause. These physiologists attempted to reawaken the rhinos' dormant reproductive systems with hormone treatments. After several months, one of the females, Nola?, began to show signs of cycling. One instance of breeding behavior occurred, but no calves were produced. The advanced age of the females and the few numbers in the herd worked against the hope for success.


In the meantime, war, famine, and genocide were occurring in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The last herd of northern white rhinos in the wild was seriously affected by the human events around them. Poaching for rhino horn and bushmeat took its toll, and in 2006, there are only about four of this subspecies

Nola and Nadi, the Wild Animal Park's two northern white rhino females, are almost always together, sunning, grazing, or taking a mud bath.



left in the wild. Including the three elderly northern white rhinos at the Wild Animal Park and the five individuals that remain at Dvur Kralove in the Czech Republic, the population of northern white rhinos has been reduced to fewer than 10.

Here at the Wild Animal Park, we are continuing our commitment to the conservation of rhinos. We will continue to work with other accredited zoos to maintain sustainable captive populations of southern white rhinos, Indian rhinos, and black rhinos. We worry about those species we are not working with, the ones that are not well

represented in the zoological ark: the Javan rhino and the Sumatran rhino. We know that like the northern white rhino, these species are increasingly endangered in the wild and may only survive if people can find the means to support them in zoos and continue funding conservation projects in the wild. 



A HOPEFUL FUTURE FOR INDIAN RHINOS

In addition to the southern white and northern white rhinos, the Wild Animal Park also has a herd of Indian rhinos *Rhinoceros unicornis*. As the meaning of the scientific name indicates, this species is a "one-horned rhinoceros," as opposed to the two-horned white rhinos. Indian rhinos are also distinctive for their armored appearance, looking as if they are covered in heavy plates. These are really thick, overlapping folds of skin, which do afford some protection but are still sensitive to bug bites and sunburn. That's why you'll often find rhinos lolling comfortably in a pool or mud wallow.

The Wild Animal Park currently cares for a herd of 6 male and 11 female Indian rhinos, several of which are growing calves. We reached a significant milestone in December 2005, when our 50th Indian rhino was born (pictured at right), which was also the first fifth-generation rhino birth in the world. Lali, which means "precious girl," is growing by leaps and bounds and is venturing away from



her mother to spend time with the other calves. Most recently, we've had another birth, a male named Khali, born on February 24. Because his mother was not able to produce enough milk for him, he is being raised at the Park's Animal Care Center and is doing very well.

Our herd of Indian rhinos is located in the Park's Asian Plains exhibit, and the females tend to spend their time with their young adults and youngest calves. These groups then join up to share meals at the feeders and to lounge in the mud wallows. Our adult male prefers to be off by himself, unless he is courting one of the females. You might also notice keepers working in the exhibit area, filling the feeders with hay and herbivore pellets, collecting fecal samples

for hormone analysis, or helping veterinarians with health care procedures when necessary.

The Zoological Society of San Diego's first Indian rhinos arrived at the Zoo in 1963, and this species was there at the opening of the Wild Animal Park in May, 1972. They began a breeding program that has now spanned several decades, with the goal of increasing the number of Indian rhinos in both United States and international zoos to create a stable and sustainable population.

This year we will send two of our females to the Patna and Dehli zoos in India to contribute to the breeding programs there, and they will send us three males that will provide new genetic bloodlines for the North American population. The Society will also provide funding and support for two conservation programs: the North American Save the Rhino

Campaign and Indian Rhino Vision 2020, a program in India working to increase the wild rhino population there to 3,000 by the year 2020.

Indian rhinos are an endangered species, with current estimates of only about 2,000 left in the wild. However, the conservation work taking place worldwide in facilities like the Wild Animal Park provides hope for this remarkable species. We hope to see their handsome, lumbering figures trotting along well into the future.

