

## Assessing Numbers – Rhinos



*Dr Kes Hillman, Chairman, African Rhino Specialist Group*

*Photo: WWF/Kes Hillman*

AFRICAN RHINO SURVEY AND CONSERVATION  
(Project 1707)

AFRICAN RHINO SURVEY AND CONSERVATION  
(Project 1730)

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The primary objective of the survey was to assess the numbers, distribution and status of rhinos in Africa, and to identify projects to improve their conservation. This has largely been achieved and the information was updated through the joint Rhino/Elephant meeting at Wankie, Zimbabwe, in August (see report on Project 3000). The numbers and distribution of rhinos throughout Africa, updated in August 1981, are given in the table and maps.

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The most endangered of the African sub-species was found to be the little known northern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*). There are only a



*The largest populations of black rhino are in Tanzania and Zambia, but poaching is heavy in both countries*

*Photo: WWF/C.A.W. Guggisberg*

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few hundred left in the wild. Remnant populations are distributed throughout southern Sudan west of the Nile, where they occur in Southern National Park, Shambe and Mashra Game Reserves and the area proposed as Shambe National Park, and where there are unconfirmed reports of them in Chelkou and Numatina Game Reserves and along the border. Less than 300, possibly considerably less, remain in Garamba National Park in Zaire. They are being heavily poached and there is a very real danger of losing the whole sub-species.

The southern white rhinos (Ceratotherium simum simum) on the other hand, whose range is separated from them by over 2,000 km, are no longer endangered. The numbers have built up at a rate of nearly 10% per annum from a relict population of tens of individuals at the end of the last century that have been protected in what is now Umfolozi and Hluhluwe Game Reserves. Over 2,000 have been translocated to redistribute them throughout their former range in Africa, while a further 616 have been sent to zoos overseas. Their management demonstrates the possibility of directly reaping economic benefit from wildlife and feeding it back into conservation. The rhinos earn money by sale for translocation and by some hunting. They could earn more if the horn could be sold, but to do so now would perpetuate the market which threatens less protected populations of rhinos.

We estimated in August 1981 that there are now 10,000 to 15,000 black rhinos (Diceros bicornis) in 19 countries in Africa. The largest populations are in Tanzania and Zambia, but poaching is very heavy in both countries, and they have almost been eliminated from Uganda. Black rhinos suffered most from the wave of poaching that built up in the early 1970s, partly because they were widespread in the East African countries where trading was established, communications were relatively good and elephant poaching was heavy.

SUMMARY OF THE RHINO POPULATIONS OF AFRICA  
(IUCN/NYZS/WWF African Rhino Survey, August 1981)

Black Rhino (Diceros bicornis, L.)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Estim. Nos.</u>	<u>Trends</u>	<u>Data base</u>
Angola	low hundreds	decreasing	C
Botswana	low tens	"	C
Cameroun	100	"	C
CAR	1000 - 3000	"	B/C
Chad	possibly 0	"	C
Ethiopia	20	probably decreasing	C
Kenya	1500	decreasing	A/B/C
Malawi	+ 40	stable/increasing	B/C
Mozambique	200 - 300	decreasing	B/C
Namibia	+ 345	"	B
Rwanda	20 - 40	increasing	B
Somalia	low hundreds	unknown	C

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South Africa &			
Bophuthatswana	± 625	increasing	A
Sudan	300	decreasing	B/C
Tanzania	3000 - 4000	"	A/C
Uganda	low tens	"	C
Zambia	2500 - 3000	increasing	B/C
Zimbabwe	± 1400	stable/decreasing	A/B/C
 Total (rounded)	 10,000-15,000	 DECREASING	

Northern White Rhino (Ceratotherium simum cottoni)

CAR	possibly a few	unknown	C
Sudan	400	decreasing	B/C
Uganda	possibly 0	"	C
Zaire	400	"	B
 Total	 1,000	 DECREASING	

Southern White Rhino (Ceratotherium simum simum)

Botswana	60-90 (reintroduced)	increasing	B
Kenya	27 (introduced)		A
Mozambique	22-36 (reintroduced)	decreasing	B
Namibia	± 150 (reintroduced)		B
South Africa &			
Bophuthatswana	±2500	increasing	A
Swaziland	60 (reintroduced)	"	A/B
Zambia	6 (reintroduced)		A
Zimbabwe	± 180 (reintroduced)	increasing	A/B
 Total	 2,995 - 3,033	 INCREASING	

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Key: Data Base:   A: Estimates based on census figures or other detailed information reliable for rhinos.  
                           B: Census information less reliable for rhinos, or extrapolations from good knowledge of an area.  
                           C: Educated guesses.

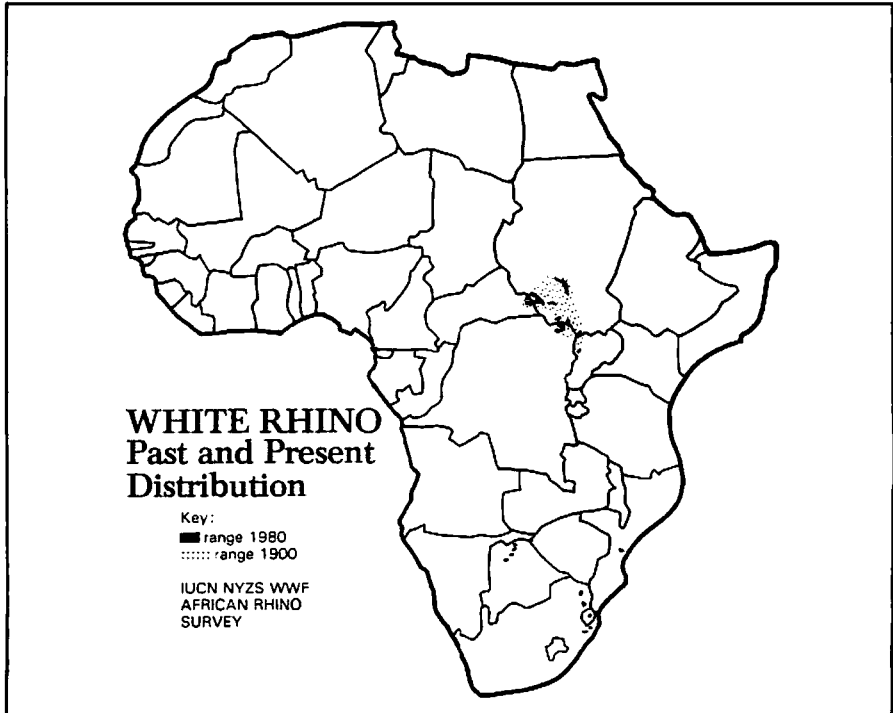
Reductions in numbers of between 60% and 90% were estimated within national parks. Poaching has largely been brought under control in Kenya, but the wave of emphasis has spread south to Tanzania and Zambia and north to Sudan and Zaire. In the latter it has hit particularly at the northern white rhinos.

The threat of commercial poaching has also moved further south, where previously there was little poaching except for meat. A high proportion of

trained and motivated staff per unit area of land controlled it, and there was little need for stringent trade control. This leaves a huge temptation for the start of commercial poaching with easy sale, now that the value of rhino horn is known.

Improving the conservation of rhinos involves all aspects of the problem:

- ensuring adequate conservation status, e.g. through national parks, to sufficient viable populations of each sub-species to give a reasonable chance of survival, with higher priority for the rarer sub-species and valuable ecosystems;
- improving protection through anti-poaching measures, with priority given to the most urgent or severe needs and the more valuable populations;
- measures at all levels towards stopping the trade in rhino horn and products;
- research to provide the information to direct the conservation; and
- education about the rhino situation to promote widespread, long-term conservation.



With limited funds and time, the highest priorities were given initially to the most urgent needs to protect the more valuable populations from poaching, and to investigating and stopping the trade in rhino products. Fifty-one projects have been identified so far, of which 36 were of highest priority. A variety of sources and organizations may be involved in funding these projects although WWF/IUCN has had a major role in most. Funds to date have been spent on initial investigations and preliminary follow-up to the trade and on strengthening CITES, on anti-poaching improvements in Tanzania and to a lesser extent Uganda and Sudan, and on establishing effective anti-poaching units in Zambia. Some funds have also been spent on conservation education and on translocations in Kenya and Botswana. Funds have been allocated to conservation of the northern white rhino in Sudan and Zaire, and major projects await funding in the Central African Republic and Cameroun, while investigations of the deeper rooted basic problems of the economics of rhino conservation and the effectiveness of anti-poaching are planned.

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