

There are four known sub-species of Black rhino, namely, *Diceros bicornis*, *D.b. minor*, *D.b. michaeli*, and *D.b. chobiensis*. With a total population of less than 3 500 animals, Black rhino are still found in Kenya, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa as well as a few other East and Central African states.

## RHINO ORPHAN MAKES HISTORY

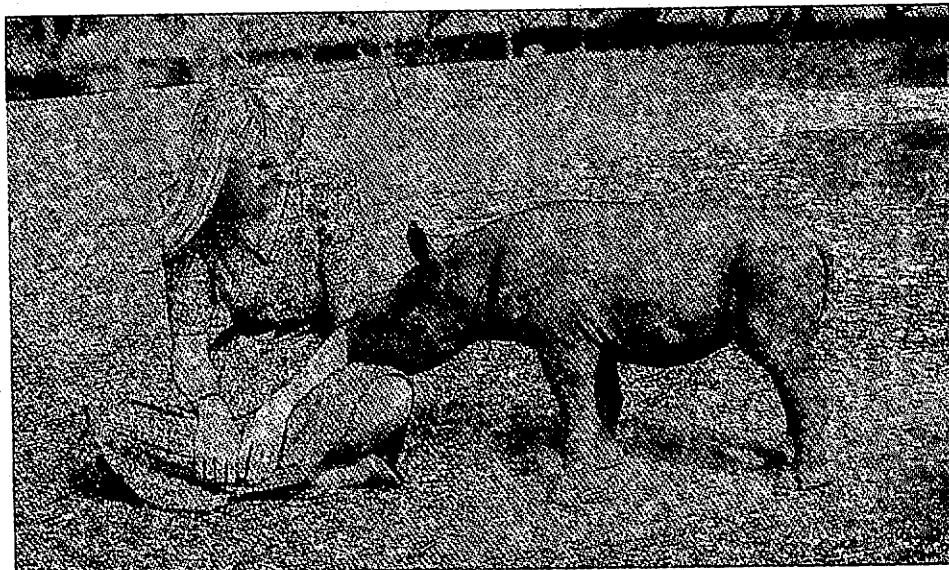
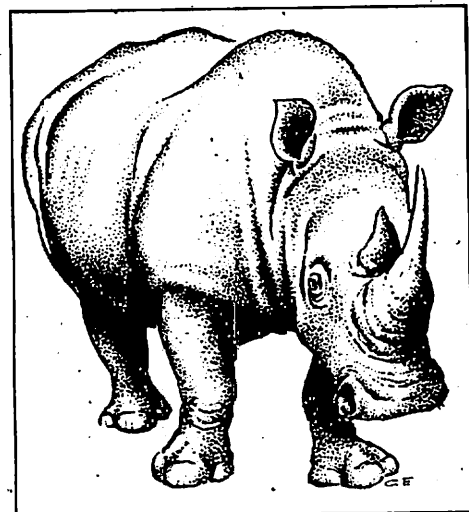


Photo: Clive Walker



### 5. White rhino

(*Ceratotherium simum*)

The African White rhino is thought to have separated from the Black rhino four to five million years ago to evolve into a more advanced grazing species. No more white than the Black rhino is black, its name is derived from the corruption of "weit", the Afrikaans word for wide, which refers to the broadly shaped mouth. It is also commonly called the square-lipped rhino.

At the turn of the 20th century, when there were thought to be less than 100 White rhino left in South Africa, the Natal parks authorities intervened. The population increased so successfully under protection that, in the 1960s, "Operation Rhino" successfully relocated White rhinos to other parts of Africa as well as zoos in order to establish alternative breeding herds.

The northern and southern subspecies of White rhino (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni* and *C.s.simum* respectively) appear to differ only in their geographical areas, rather than appearance and way of life. Of the current total White rhino population numbering 4 500–5 000, approximately 4 700 are found in South Africa, with isolated populations in Zimbabwe and Garamba National Park, Zaire.

Makoko is one of the group of five Black rhino recently purchased by Dale Parker at the Natal Parks Board game auction. Realising she was in an advanced stage of pregnancy, Makoko was therefore the first rhino to be released from the holding pen into Lapalala Wilderness to give her ample time to adapt to her new surroundings. But on 11 July 1992, just over a week later, she gave birth to a 21 kilogram bull calf.

Returning from a morning game drive, a manager and his group of guests came across the tiny rhino on a steep dirt road, apparently alone and abandoned. When no trace was found of his mother, the starving and dehydrated baby rhino was immediately taken back to camp for safekeeping.

Everyone sprang into action to save the little rhino, aptly christened Bwana Tshiwana—"Mr Orphan". Karen and Roy Trendler from the Animal Rehabilitation Centre (ARC), together with a vet and an emergency supply of colostrum, met little Bwana and his entourage from Lapalala at Nylstroom. *Colostrum, a substance found only in mother's milk, is vital in the first few hours of life to enable new born babies to build some internal resistance to disease and infection.*

By 6.00 pm that evening the small rhino had safely arrived at the Onderstepoort Veterinary facility.

Little Bwana was believed to be at least a month premature and, as with many premature births, there was no lack of complications—the umbilical cord

had not been properly severed and an infection developed, nearly leading to his death in the few weeks which followed. The rhino calf also contracted a bacterial infection which severely affects joints and had to be treated with strong drugs to ease pain and stiffness.

Based on information supplied from Kenya by both Anna Merz of the Ngare Sergoi rhino sanctuary and Daphne Sheldrick of the Nairobi Animal Orphanage, as well as scientific papers on the composition of rhino mothers milk, the correct formula was finally mixed. After five weeks little Bwana weighed in at a healthy 37 kg—almost double his birthweight!—and was showing signs of improving by the day under the care of Karen Trendler.

ARC will be looking after the new arrival for many months to come, at least until he is about 18 months old. As for the little rhino he knows no other parents except for the humans who care for him. But the day will come when Bwana is strong enough to return to Lapalala Wilderness.

Bwana has made history as the first Black rhino to be raised in captivity in South Africa. All the records and notes kept by Karen since her involvement, and daily monitoring of the calf's progress will prove to be invaluable in the future rearing of rhino calves orphaned in the wild.

On behalf of little Bwana we wish to thank ARC and the veterinarians concerned for all their time and effort dedicated to saving this little Black rhino and for giving him a fighting chance against the odds.