

Rhino Rundown: Species and Population

There are five rhinoceros species. In Africa: the black, or hooked-lip (Diceros bicornis), and the square-lipped, or white (Ceratotherium simum). In Asia: the greater one-horned, or Indian (Rhinoceros unicornis), the Javan or lesser one-horned (Rhinoceros sondaicus), and the Sumatran (Dicerorhinus sumatrensis).

African Rhinoceroses

The Black Rhinoceros

The black rhinoceros, perhaps the best-known species of rhino, once roamed sub-Saharan Africa in the hundreds of thousands. Today it survives in pockets primarily in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Namibia, and Tanzania.

Vital Statistics: The Black Rhinoceros

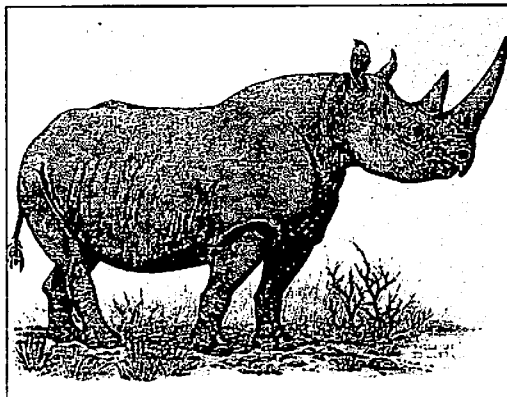
Aka: hooked-lip rhinoceros

Threat category: endangered

Total population: 3,400

Distribution: from Cameroon to Somalia, down to South Africa. Concentrations in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Namibia.

Average height and weight: 1.5 metres at shoulder, 1,400 kilograms



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The 1960s estimated population of 65,000 plummeted to 3,800 by 1987. There are now only about 3,400 black rhinos in the wild. However, while they remain the most popu-

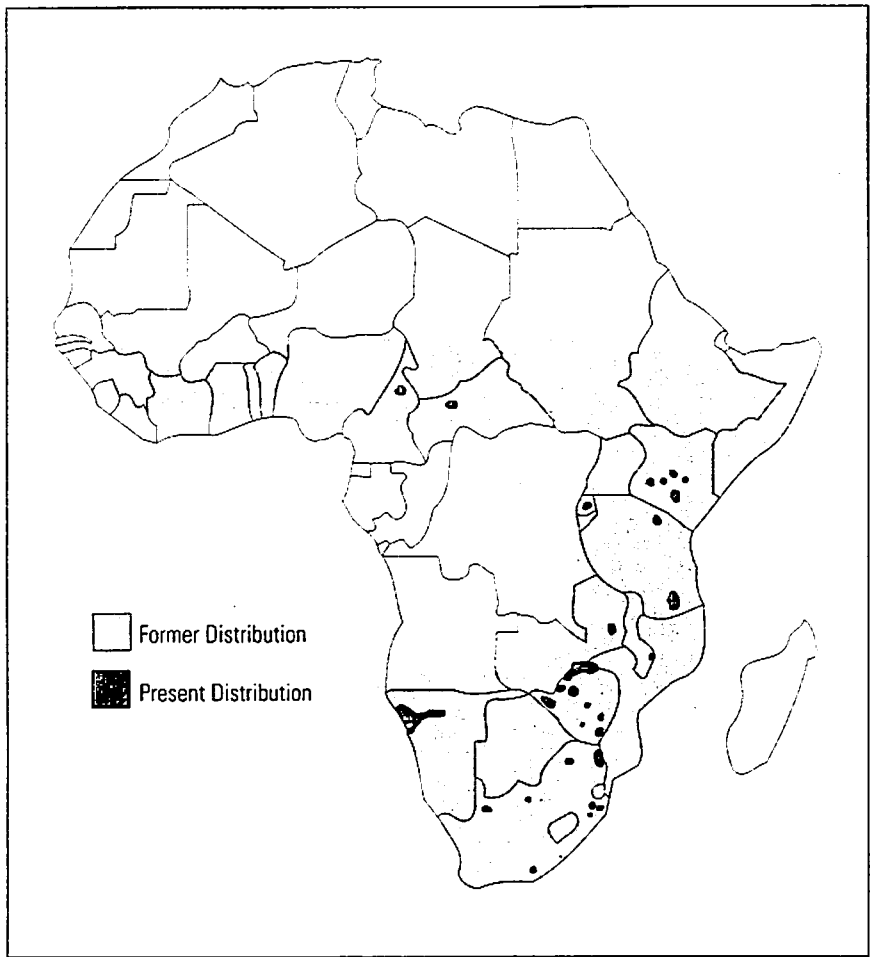
lar poacher target, recent statistics show the decline is slowing down. In fact, in Kenya their numbers have increased during the last four years, although 400 is still a far cry from the 1960s figure of 20,000.

In Zimbabwe, home to half of Africa's remaining black rhinos, the poaching pressure of the 1980s has successfully been reduced by anti-poaching efforts and translocation of rhinos to safer areas. Though poaching is still intense, "fewer dead rhinos are being found," says Glen Tatham, Chief Warden of Zimbabwe's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management. However, the increasingly isolated pockets of black rhinos remain vulnerable, calling for continued stringent protection.

The Square-Lipped Rhinoceros

There are two subspecies of square-lipped rhino: the northern and southern. Though also known as the white rhino, like the black it is actually grey. The name comes from a bad translation of the Boer word "widje," referring to the animal's broad lips.

Both subspecies have made dramatic comebacks. In the 1970s, 400 northern square-lipped rhinos lived in Zaïre's Garamba



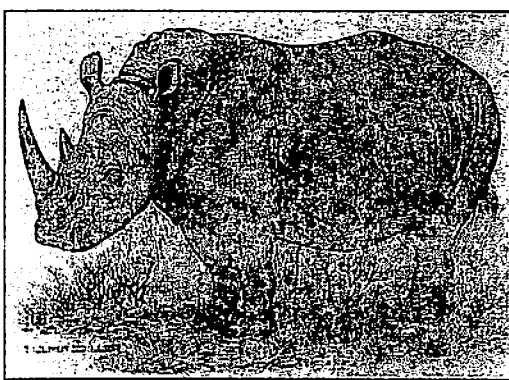
Past and Present Range of the Black Rhino

Source: International Wildlife Trade: Whose Business Is It?, Sarah Fitzgerald, World Wildlife Fund

National Park and by 1984 they had been hunted down to a despairing 15. Conservationists are relieved that the rhinos have rallied back up to 28 today. This last viable population is protected by the Zaire wildlife department and non-governmental organizations such as WWF.

The southern square-lipped rhino was heavily hunted by hungry European settlers for its meat and fat. The animal was believed extinct in 1892. Under protection since the turn of the century, the southern square-lipped rhino population is now up to 4,800.

Vital Statistics: The Square-Lipped Rhinoceros



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Aka: white rhino

Threat category: endangered (northern subspecies only)

Total population: 4,800 (southern)
23 (northern)

Distribution: South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zaire

Average height and weight: 1.75 metres at shoulder, 2,500 kilos

Asian Rhinoceroses

The Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros

The greater one-horned rhinoceros, also called the Indian rhino, exists only in protected wildlife reserves in India and Nepal.

Vital Statistics: The Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros

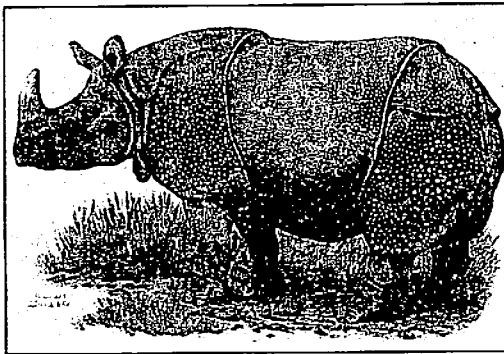
Aka: Indian rhino

Threat category:
endangered

Total population: 1,950

Distribution: northern
India, Nepal

**Average height and
weight:** 1.75 metres at
shoulder, 1,800 kilos



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Noted for its armour-plated appearance and single horn (African rhinos have two), the Indian rhino is the least threatened of the three Asian species. Its estimated population is 1,950, up from a mid-seventies figure of 750. The success is due to funds and com-

mitment from the government. However, the Indian rhino is still a poacher target—58 animals were killed in the northeastern Indian state of Assam in 1989. The rash of killings revealed an alarming new poaching technique: electrocution.

The Javan Rhinoceros

The Javan rhino has the dubious distinction of being one of the rarest large mammals on earth.

There are only 55 to 60 Javan rhinos left on Java and they all live in a small national park on the Ujung Kulon peninsula, making them very vulnerable to disease. One virus could wipe out the entire population in weeks. However, the greatest immediate threat is still poaching. Habitat loss and competition with other animals for food also keep the population in check.

Some believe the park has reached its carrying capacity for rhinos and there is a current debate on whether up to 30 animals from the Ujung Kulon group should be removed to start a captive breeding programme. In addition to the Javan population, up to 15 animals live along the Dong Nai River in Vietnam.

The Sumatran Rhinoceros

The smallest and only hairy rhino, the Sumatran rhino has been reduced to a population of 500 to 900 animals. There are no reliable early figures to trace the growth or decline of the rhino, however the current annual loss is about 10%, mainly due to poaching.

Spread over a large area, primarily on Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, the ani-

Vital Statistics: The Javan Rhinoceros

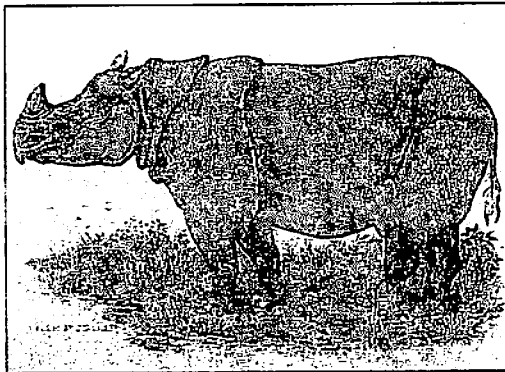
Aka: lesser one-horned
rhinoceros

Threat category:
endangered

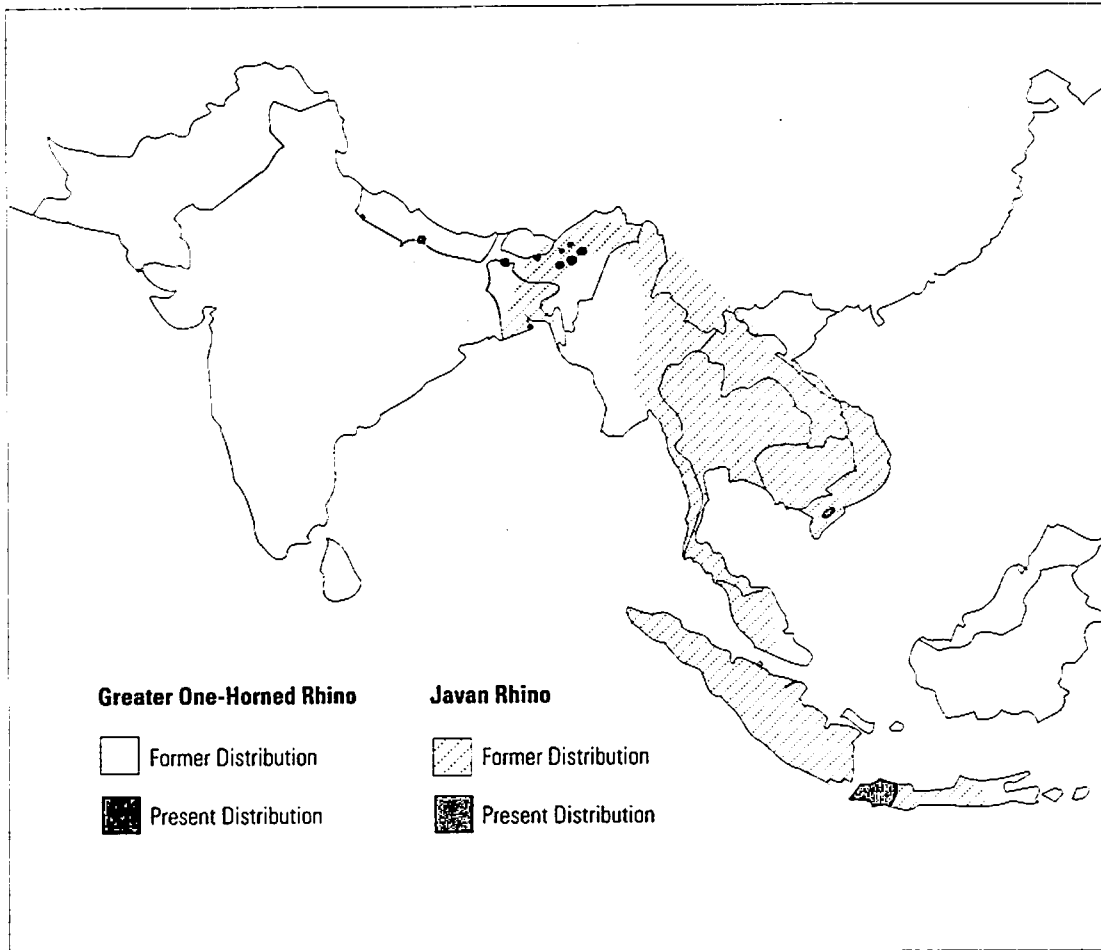
Total population:
about 70

Distribution: West Java,
Vietnam

**Average height and
weight:** 1.5 metres at
shoulder, 1,600 kilos



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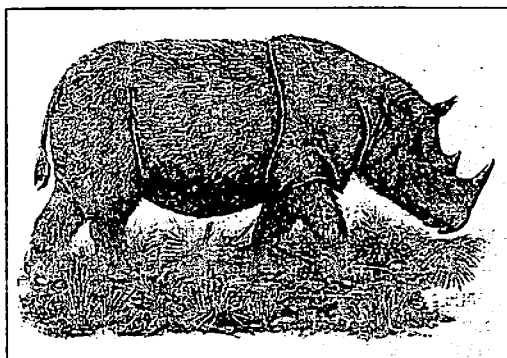
Past and Present Ranges of the Greater One-Horned and Javan Rhinos

Source: International Wildlife Trade: Whose Business Is It?, Sarah Fitzgerald, World Wildlife Fund

mal is difficult to protect. Rhinos recently captured on Sumatra for a captive breeding programme had fresh snare wounds on their legs, evidence of continued poaching. But the rhino's long-term nemesis is severe habitat loss from Indonesia's transmigration programme.

"The Javan and Sumatran rhinos are probably the most endangered species in terms of long-term survival," says Jorgen Thomsen, Director of the international office of the Trade Records Analysis of Fauna and Flora in Commerce (TRAFFIC). "Though all the rhinos are endangered, with all the attention paid to the black rhino, the two little rhinos have almost been forgotten."

Vital Statistics: The Sumatran Rhinoceros



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Aka: Asian two-horned rhinoceros, woolly rhinoceros

Threat category: endangered

Total population: 500-900

Distribution: primarily Sumatra, Indonesia and Malay Peninsula. Small pockets in Borneo, Burma, and Thailand

Average height and weight: 1.36 metres at shoulder, 900 kilos

