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# Winning the War: Conservation Successes

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*A lot of the money that has gone into rhino conservation since 1985 is resulting in success stories," says WWF's Esmond Bradley Martin. "After many years of failure, conservation measures are finally starting to work," agrees TRAFFIC Director Jorgen Thomsen. He cites improved protection in Africa and the lobbying efforts of Martin as particularly effective measures.*

*Though inroads are being made on both fronts of the rhino problem—trade and poaching—much work remains before all rhinos can be taken off the endangered list.*

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## Closing the Marketplace

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The most effective tools to end the demand for rhino horn products are substitutes. The use of horn from non-endangered species, such as the common domestic water buffalo, respects traditional beliefs while ending the demand for rhino horn. The cases of Japan and Yemen offer two models of the effectiveness of legislation and substitution.

Japan stopped using rhino horn almost overnight. In the 1970s, it was importing about 800 kilos of horn a year for medicinal purposes. "Then it joined CITES in 1980," says Tom Milliken of TRAFFIC, "and since then we haven't had any reports of significant amounts of rhino horn being smuggled into the country. The government, which was the object of strong international criticism for its conspicuous consumption of endangered species, told the pharmacists and doctors not to prescribe it because it was an illegal commodity and urged the use of substitutes, and they listened." TRAFFIC Japan's monitoring programme helped ensure that the demands were met. The fact that Japanese are generally law-abiding also made an impact. Japanese pharmacists now use saiga antelope and water buffalo horn in medicines.

When Martin started investigating the rhino horn trade, he found that China was not the number-one consumer of rhino horn as was commonly thought. In the early 1980s, Yemen, on the southwest tip of the Arabian peninsula, was importing 1,500 kilos of African rhino horn a year—about half of the annual horn harvest—to use as dagger handles. The carved horn is a status symbol. After discussions with government officials, Martin succeeded in getting trade laws established. These laws, combined with a sagging economy, have resulted in a great reduction of rhino-horn imports into Yemen. Yemeni men now sport daggers with handles fashioned from more affordable water buffalo horn, camel nails, and plastic.

In Asia, Hong Kong has the most comprehensive rhino horn trade policy. The import, export, and domestic sale of rhino horn and medicines containing rhino horn are against the law—and the laws are enforced. Permits are required for all rhino horn possession, including antiques such as a 500-year-old rhino carving. In 1990, Martin found that only 5% of the Hong Kong pharmacies he visited carried rhino horn, down from 32%

three years earlier. Retail prices have dropped, too. Perhaps the most significant change is the increased sales of saiga antelope horn.

Elsewhere in Asia, Macao and Malaysia all had rhino products galore in their traditional Chinese pharmacies. Pressured by WWF, Macao, which was also a big trading centre for rhino horn, prohibited all internal trade in 1988. The Malaysian Department of Wildlife and National Parks cracked down on pharmacists selling rhino horn products in Kuala Lumpur and Penang. The demand for rhino-horn products in both countries has dropped dramatically because of their willingness to enforce international agreements and domestic laws. Macao and Malaysia have turned to substitutes like saiga antelope horn.

In the mid-1980s, Burundi, in Central Africa, and Dubai, the United Arab Emirates' largest city, were both trading posts for rhino horn. In 1987, press attacks prompted Burundi to crack down on the market in the capital, Bujumbura. In 1988, Martin, representing WWF, began talks with United Arab Emirates' leaders. Ensuing support from other international conservation organizations led Dubai to halt its rhino horn trade by 1989.

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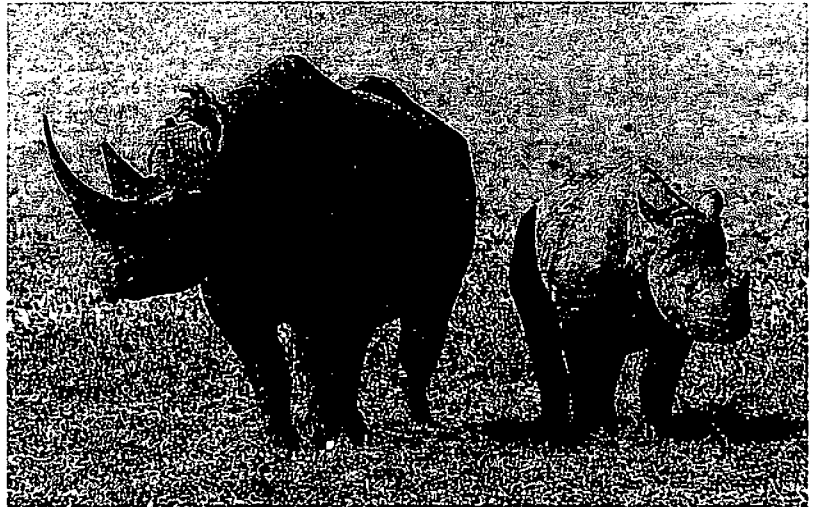
## Rhino Math

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Old rhinos and baby rhinos are the most visible signs of conservation success. Their existence means rhinos are living longer and breeding. The greater one-horned rhino, square-lipped rhino, and South African and Kenyan black rhino populations are all on the rise. Experts are cautiously optimistic: Conservation is working but the numbers are still precarious.

The Kingdom of Nepal, separating India from China, has managed to set the tone for exemplary rhino conservation. In 1968 the

country was down to about 95 greater one-horned rhinos. One of the poorest countries in the world, Nepal established a successful protection programme on a minimal budget. In 1974 hundreds of soldiers from the Royal Nepali Army were assigned to guard the Royal Chitwan Park. Today there are two



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**Black rhinoceros and calf in Tanzania's Ngorongoro Crater.**

people for every rhino. Although there have been some recent setbacks, the rhino population is now up to 400.

In Africa, the highly publicized "rhino war" between poachers and wardens continues. After Kenya's black rhino population dropped 98% between 1970 and 1985, down to 335, the government, working with conservation organizations and other concerned groups and individuals, established rhino sanctuaries. Guarded day and night, the fenced-in areas have let the rhino population grow to about 400.

In 1989, South Africa set up the Endangered Species Protection Unit, manned by police, which has stopped the smuggling of rhino horn and hide to Asian destinations such as Taiwan. Over the past five years, the country's southern square-lipped rhino population has continued to grow. About 5,000 of them now graze in protected areas.