

# Christmas with a difference

Uganda may not be everyone's choice of where to spend Christmas, but this year two of Save the Rhino's supporters, Pam and Phil Hobson, did just that, volunteering with the Rhino Fund Uganda (RFU) team situated in the privately owned 7,000-hectare Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary.

**Phil and Pam Hobson | SRI supporters**

**T**he trip came about as a result of Phil's fundraising Arc to Arch Triathlon last summer when he raised almost £1,400 for Save the Rhino (SRI). Quite coincidentally when the money came in, RFU asked for funds towards new uniforms, closely followed by a phone call from Pam asking if SRI knew of any volunteering opportunities over Christmas. A perfectly timed match.

As recently as 1983, the rhino population in Uganda was violently wiped out. Thankfully, during the early 2000s, a desire to reintroduce the species gained momentum, leading to six animals being donated to the Sanctuary in 2005–06; two of which came from Disney's Animal Kingdom. Disney is just one of the supporters of the RFU's work.

The Sanctuary is, at the time of writing, home to 14 Southern white rhino: three adult males, three adult females and eight young aged between one (baby born 15 January, just 10 days after we left) and four plus years. Another female is also heavily pregnant, due in March/April. As the population within the Sanctuary grows, some of the animals will be relocated to protected national parks within Uganda.

As volunteers, we were assigned 'monitoring of mum-to-be' duty, watching for any kind of behaviour change in the mother and in particular her interaction with her two existing young. Normally just before a mother gives birth she would force any existing young to leave her, joining another group, so she can focus all her attention on the new baby. Unfortunately during our two-week stay this didn't happen. But this didn't prevent us witnessing fascinating behaviour at close hand including:

- The charging of the dominant bull when he thought one of the other males was getting close to one of 'his' females
- The herding of two young cows by a juvenile male
- Interaction between siblings who had not seen each other for some time

- Some unusual sudden movements by the mum-to-be, put down to possible kicks from the baby

This kind of detailed behavioural study forms part of the 24-hour monitoring of all the female rhinos, undertaken by the 80+ rangers and guides who work within the Sanctuary. Throughout the year, these data are collected and shared with *Pachyderm*, a scientific journal, to further enhance the knowledge of rhino behaviour.

Sharing information externally is just one way the RFU team supports rhino conservation. Having rangers with the female groups 24-hours-a-day means they can offer rhino trekking on foot and guarantee visitors a wild rhino sighting. The knowledge the rangers and guides impart to the visitors about rhinos and the 300+ species of birds found there is vast. Tourist trips to see the primates (which are all some people think Uganda is renowned for) now have a stop-off at the Sanctuary; further spreading the good work being done.

The simple but effective 24-hour monitoring, coupled with the community engagement work undertaken by the team, ensures the rhinos are at minimal risk from outside harm. There are also discussions about the possibility of introducing black rhino in the future; the scrubby areas of the Sanctuary would be perfect for them.

The Sanctuary may be comparatively small but they are doing great work as the successful breeding programme is testament to. Could this methodology be a cost-effective template which could be adopted elsewhere? We think almost certainly 'yes'.

## Thanks

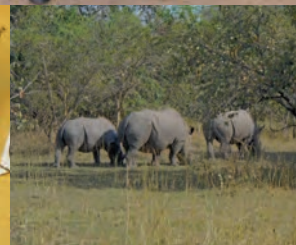
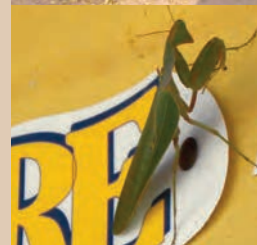
Our thanks to Phil Hobson, who raised a wonderful £1,400 that helped pay for new uniforms for the Rhino Fund Uganda's rangers.

Centre: Phil and Pam with the RFU rangers and their new uniforms.

Second from bottom: The Sanctuary's newest rhino calf, which was born in January 2014



ALL IMAGES PHIL & PAM HOBSON UNLESS NOTED





# Did you know that there are five different species of rhino?



STEVE & ANN TOON

## Africa is home to two species of rhino

The **white rhino** (left) and the **black rhino** (right). Despite their names, there is actually no colour difference between them. It is thought that the word 'white' may have come from a mistranslation of the Afrikaans word 'weit' meaning 'wide', used to describe their wide lip.

### White rhino *Ceratotherium simum*

**Population** 20,405 individuals

**Weight** 1,800–3,000 kg  
Largest rhino species

**Found in** S Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda

Pointed, tufted ears

Flattish back, with hump near middle

Elongated head, usually held down

Flat, square lip for grazing grass

Calf usually runs ahead of mother

Less aggressive than black rhino

### Black rhino *Diceros bicornis*

**Population** 5,055 individuals

**Weight** 1900–1,350 kg  
Third largest rhino species

**Found in :** Kenya, Namibia, S Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Malawi

Rounded ears

Concave back

Rounded head, usually held up

Pointed upper lip for browsing on trees/shrubs

Calf usually runs behind mother

Solitary, more temperamental than white rhino



PHIL PERRY

## In Asia, you find three very different looking rhino species

### Greater one-horned rhino *Rhinoceros unicornis*

**Population** 3,333 individuals

**Found in** India and Nepal

**Weight** 1,800–2,500 kg

**Appearance** Greater one-horned rhinos have just one horn. They have very thick skin which forms heavy folds, making the rhino look as if it is wearing a suit of armour! They have long lower incisor teeth used in fighting

**Fun Fact** Greater one-horned rhino are good swimmers and can dive and feed underwater



NAREIH SUBEDI

### Javan rhino *Rhinoceros sondaicus*

**Population** 37–44 individuals

**Found in** Java (Indonesia)

**Weight** 900–2,300 kg

**Appearance** Similar to the Greater one-horned rhino with heavy skin folds and just one often small horn. Females often have just a bump on their nose. They have a long pointed lip to grasp branches in the forest

**Fun Fact** The Javan rhino is possibly the rarest mammal on earth, very few people ever see one in the wild and there are none in captivity



ALAN COMPOST

### Sumatran rhino *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*

**Population** Fewer than 100 individuals

**Found in** Sumatra (Indonesia), Sabah (Malaysia)

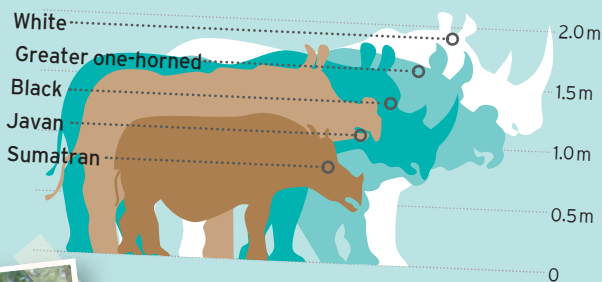
**Weight** 600–960 kg

**Appearance** Sumatran rhinos are particularly hairy. They have two horns, often looking like two raised bumps on the rhino's nose, and are much smaller than the African rhino species

**Fun Fact** The Sumatran rhino is believed to have been on Earth longer than any other living land mammal. It is the closest relative to the prehistoric woolly rhino that roamed during the ice-age



### How big is a rhino?



The name **rhinoceros** means 'nose horn' in Greek

A group of rhinoceros is called a **herd** or a **crash**



# THANK YOU!

## Our heartfelt thanks go to...

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### Save the Rhino International

*Connecting conservation and communities*

16 Winchester Walk, London SE1 9AQ  
T: +44 (0)20 7357 7474 F: +44 (0)20 7357 9666  
E: [info@savetherhino.org](mailto:info@savetherhino.org) W: [www.savetherhino.org](http://www.savetherhino.org)

### Save the Rhino International, Inc

c/o Chapel & York Limited, 1000 N. West Street,  
Suite 1200, Wilmington, DE 19801  
[www.savetherhinoinc.com](http://www.savetherhinoinc.com)  
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