

Mutant black rhinoceros has THREE horns: Extremely rare animal spotted in Namibia with bizarre defect

- **Jim Gibson, 73, took the pictures in Etosha National Park, Namibia**
- **Rhino expert says it's a once in a lifetime sighting**
- **Cells mutated in the womb to form an extra horn**
- **Black African rhinos usually have two horns, while Indian rhinos have one**

By [Isabel Hunter For Mailonline](#)

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These are the once in a lifetime pictures of a three-horned rhino taken in a wildlife park in Namibia, southern Africa.

Captured by 73-year-old retiree Jim Gibson, the mutated black rhinoceros was just 40 metres away from his safari jeep when he took the snaps.

And Jim might not have seen the incredible sight had not extended his trip in Etosha National Park, Namibia.



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Rare: The sighting is once in a lifetime, according to South African Wildlife vet Dr. Johan Marais

'It is the only triple-horned rhino I have seen or heard of,' Jim said.

Black African rhinos usually have two-horns, whereas Indian and Javan rhinos have just one, and experts are just as excited as Jim.

'I have only ever seen two pictures of three-horned rhinos - the last one was in Kenya, but usually you won't see them for 40 to 50 years,' wildlife surgeon Dr. Johan Marais told MailOnline from South Africa.



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Mutated: The rhino's cells mutated in the womb to create a third horn, much like when mammals produce offspring with an extra leg

The vet, who works with Saving the Survivors, a South African NGO committed to rescuing and medically treating rhinos injured by poachers, said the horn was caused by a splitting of cells in utero.

'This is a mutation that would happen in the womb,' he explained, adding that the extra horn was unlikely to cause the endangered animal any discomfort or be passed down to any offspring.

'Some horns grow to the left, and others to the right, but a third one is very special,' he said.

And Jim, who is originally from Northumberland, and has lived in South Africa for over forty years, says he has never heard of the mutation before.

Jim said: 'No two days are the same in the African Bush. Anything that happens is a surprise.'

About 28 per cent of Africa's black rhinos are in Namibia, and are critically endangered as poachers kill an estimated five or six day worldwide for their precious ivory horns, for food, or for sport.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3380358/Mutant-black-rhinoceros-THREE-horns-Extremely-rare-animal-spotted-Namibia-bizarre-defect.html#ixzz43uYQAHgg>

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