

RHINOCEROS

THERE ARE FIVE SPECIES of rhinoceros in the world, of which two are African and three Asian. The latter are so endangered that the numbers of all three of them put together do not match the population of any one species found in Africa. Rhinoceroses are mega-herbivores with one or two sharp conical horns at the tip of the nose. The Indian and the Javan Rhinoceros have only one horn, while both the African species and the Sumatran have two horns. The rhinoceros family evolved nearly 50 million years ago and are truly pre-historic creatures that have survived in an increasingly hostile world. India had all three Asian rhinoceroses till the 19th century but today it is a refuge for only the Greater One-horned Rhinoceros, the largest of the Asian rhinoceroses. The other two Asian rhinoceroses are today restricted to Java and Vietnam (Javan Rhinoceros), Malaysia, Sumatra, and Myanmar (Sumatran Rhinoceros). The Javan Rhinoceros is a miniature version of the Indian rhinoceros and is also called the Lesser One-horned Rhinoceros. The Sumatran Rhinoceros is sometimes called the Woolly or Two-horned Rhinoceros due to the fuzzy hair on its body.



RHINO HORN
The rhinoceros' horn grows throughout its life and can be replaced if broken. It is the sole reason for poaching of this animal, since it is believed to have medicinal properties.

RHINOCEROS CHARACTERISTICS

- Heavy thickset body weighing over 1,000kg
- Thick, almost hairless skin with folds
- One or two horns on tip of nose
- Short stumpy legs with three toes
 - Tiny eyes and tubular ears

FAMILY NAME	Rhinocerotidae
LATIN NAME	Rhinoceros unicornis
IUCN STATUS/WPA	Endangered/1
LOCAL STATUS	Locally common
POPULATION	app. 1,750
DIET	h
SOCIAL UNIT	Solitary/pairs/groups
ACTIVITY	D N
STRATUM	Terrestrial



SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS
There are unconfirmed reports of the Sumatran Rhinoceros straying into India from Myanmar.

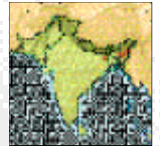
GREATER ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS

LOCAL NAME: Gainda (Hindi), Gaur (Assamese), Gondar (Bengali).

This animal is a relic of 5 million years of evolution. The large folds of skin across its flanks and tubercles, that look like rivets on the skin, give it an armour-plated look. The actual colour of its skin is a deep slate grey, but it looks ashy when encrusted with alluvial mud, or ink-black when wet. Males are larger and have thicker neck folds as compared to females. The male genitalia are also easily visible.

• **BEHAVIOUR** A creature of habit, the rhinoceros regularly follows the same walking paths or "dandis" when foraging. It also uses the same spot to defecate, forming large "toilets". This behaviour makes it vulnerable to poachers who wait for it at pre-determined locations. The rhinoceros is best seen from a safe distance. If an intruder unwittingly separates mother and calf in the tall grass, the female charges without fail. Although many charges are bluffs, some may be actually carried out, harming the intruder seriously. Indian rhinoceroses do not use their horn to gore victims, but use their sharp teeth to bite off chunks of flesh instead. The teeth are also used while fighting among themselves.

- **SIZE** Height at shoulder: 170 – 185 cm. Weight: 1,500 – 2,100 kg.
- **HABITAT** Alluvial grassland.
- **BEST SEEN AT** Kaziranga NP (Assam).
- **CONSERVATION THREATS** Poaching and habitat loss.



N West Bengal (Jaldapara and Gorumara), and Assam (Kaziranga, Manas, Orang, Laokhawa and Pabitora).

