



The latest rhino numbers

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They have no idea...



Black rhinos used to be thought of as solitary animals. They didn't want to socialise or spend time together but live in the bush alone, chewing on acacia leaves and taking mud baths when it got too hot.

But, a few years ago, new footage revealed that they did spend time with others. Gathering around the waterhole at night, they would sniff and grunt and figure each other out. And then they would go back to their days, mostly alone (but not always), and head back to the waterhole at night to see their friend, or someone new.

The past 18 months have felt a little like we're that first version of black rhinos: living without much interaction, suddenly finding ourselves in a strange, mostly solitary new world. Thankfully, technology helped, and while we couldn't quite sniff and grunt in person (or perhaps never really should), we could laugh and remember what our friends and family's faces looked like – through a screen.

But, as we've all adapted to this so-called 'new normal', one thought that I have often reminded myself of is that rhinos, and all wildlife, have no idea what's going on. No hand sanitiser. No Zoom calls. No masks. The huge changes we've all made to our daily lives mean nothing to rhinos wandering through bushes in Namibia making friends at night by the watering hole.

Of course, that doesn't mean they haven't been affected. The past 12 months have been tough: the global rhino population is estimated to be at its lowest since 2010, poaching has increased in certain places, and the climate crisis is changing the availability of their food and the health of their habitats.

It isn't easy to keep going (especially with endless video calls) when things are hard. But, even if they have no idea, rhinos need all of us to do everything that we can to help.

Because, like me, I'm sure that you want to live in a world that includes Javan rhinos rolling around in mud baths in Ujung Kulon National Park. (Do search for that video online if you haven't seen it yet, it's wonderful!)

And that's why what we do (me, you, and everyone who supports rhinos) is so important. Together, we can make sure that rhinos are protected and their numbers increase.

As always, thank you so much for being a part of our rhino family. The rhinos may have no idea, but I know how much your support can and does achieve. Have a look at pages 6 and 7 to see a few highlights.

I sincerely hope that sometime soon, just like black rhinos, I can see many of you for a drink around a watering hole (no sniffs or grunts, I promise).

Cathy Dean, CEO



Black rhino
Diceros bicornis
In-situ population¹ 5,366 – 5,627

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Critically Endangered Considered to be facing an **extremely high risk** of extinction in the wild

<CR>

Northern white rhino
Ceratotherium simum cottoni
Population 2 (in Kenya, introduced)²

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Critically Endangered Considered to be facing an **extremely high risk** of extinction in the wild

<CR>

Southern white rhino
Ceratotherium simum simum
In-situ population¹ 17,212 – 18,915³

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Near Threatened Is close to qualifying for or is likely to qualify for a threatened category in the near future

<NT>

Javan rhino
Rhinoceros sondaicus
In-situ population¹ 75

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Critically Endangered Considered to be facing an **extremely high risk** of extinction in the wild

<CR>

Greater one-horned rhino
Rhinoceros unicornis
In-situ population¹ 3,588

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Vulnerable Considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild

<NT>

Sumatran rhino
Dicerorhinus sumatrensis
In-situ population¹ <80

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Critically Endangered Considered to be facing an **extremely high risk** of extinction in the wild

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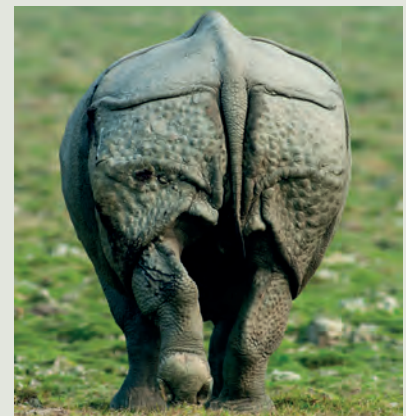
Rhino conservation: Where we're at

Rhinos are in trouble. They are not just running out of space, battling a poaching crisis and beginning to feel the effects of climate change. They're facing all three of these issues, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, at the same time. And the global population is declining.

Fifteen years ago, it was estimated that there were 21,191 rhinos left on the planet. Looking at the graph below, you might call those rhinos in 2005 the baby boomers. Since the significant increase up to 2010, despite the pressures they faced, rhino numbers have – for the most part – held steady. In the last few years, that trend has reversed. Thankfully, it's not because of a sudden spike in poaching. But that doesn't make the reality much better.

Today, it's estimated that there are just 23,000 rhinos left on the planet. While this decline may not have been as immediate as the numbers suggest (the sudden decline is – most likely – a more gradual change over the past decade), it does show how big a mountain we have to climb just to make it back to those 2010 numbers. And then beyond it, to the point where rhino populations are genuinely healthy.

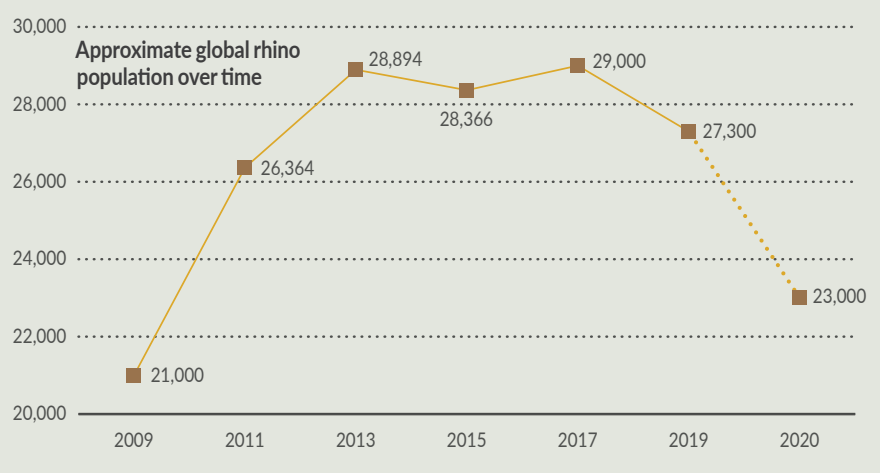
To put it simply: rhinos need to breed more. To do this, they need enough space, access to the right food, and to be safe from harm. But we can't lock rhinos up with food, water and an armed guard 24/7. We've got to find solutions that tackle the multiple threats they face, and quickly.



KELLY RUSSO/IRF

Of course, another challenge that the numbers highlight is how difficult it is to estimate the number of rhinos that live in different habitats. With time lags between official rhino counts and despite the increasing use of technology that provides more accurate estimates over time, knowing how many rhinos are left is extremely difficult.

Rhino populations must be counted regularly, and these numbers must be shared so that conservation activities can be channelled to the places that need it most.



¹ In the countries in which they naturally occur.

² Northern white rhinos are thought to have once inhabited the very western part of Kenya, where the last two survivors are housed now by Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Kenya.

³ Numbers confirmed at the last official count (up to December 2017). Since then, the number of Southern white rhinos in one place (Kruger National Park, South Africa) has been re-estimated.

African rhinos

One of the main reasons for the huge decrease in the global rhino population is a change to the estimated number of rhinos in Kruger National Park, South Africa.

For years, Kruger has held the largest rhino population in the world, with around 10,000 rhinos (black and white) living there.

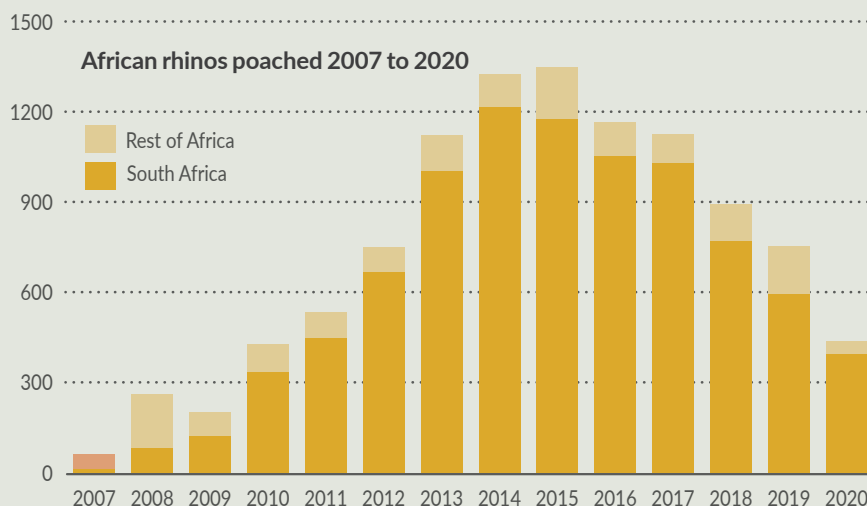
In January 2021, a new report confirmed what we feared: poaching and an extended drought had severely impacted the Park's rhino population: it has declined by a staggering 59% since 2013. There are now just 3,529 white rhinos and 268 black rhinos left in Kruger.

Thankfully, since 2014, the number of rhinos poached each year has declined in Kruger (as it has done across South Africa), but has this been because there are simply fewer rhinos left to poach?

Across Africa, fewer rhinos were poached during 2020, likely due to restrictions in movement within each country and internationally, making it harder for poaching gangs to attack and then to traffic horns to the consumer countries of China and Viet Nam.

Unfortunately, recent reports show a U-turn in poaching statistics

Compared to the same period in 2020, poaching in South Africa between January and June 2021 increased by 50%. What's more, areas that seemed to have poaching under control in recent years have had significant increases. Are poachers focusing on new target areas? So far, it's not clear if other countries are seeing the same trend. We hope that's not the case.



Asian rhinos

While the numbers are very different, poaching remains a huge threat to all three Asian rhino species. Fortunately, no Javan or Sumatran rhinos have been poached for many years, but the most recent suspected incident for a Greater one-horned rhino was in July 2021, when a rhino was found dead without its horn in Chitwan National Park, Nepal.

Despite this devastating loss, poaching isn't the main threat to this species. With a growing population (now at ~3,523 compared to ~2,454 in 2000), Greater one-horned rhinos are running out of space. Several rhinos in Chitwan National Park, in Nepal, have died due to natural causes such as intra-species fighting, a clear sign that more suitable habitat is necessary. Efforts to establish new populations in previous rhino habitats continue and are essential to allow this species' number to keep growing.

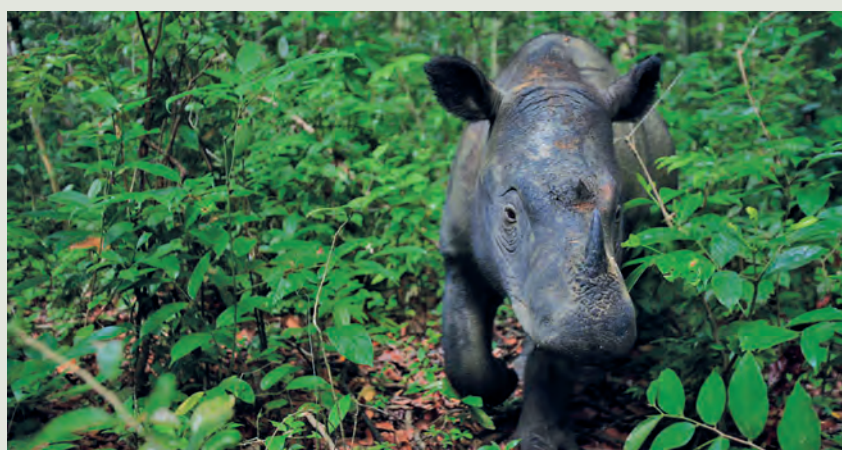
In contrast, rather than spreading rhinos out, we've got to bring Sumatran rhinos together. A handful of very small populations are thought to live in different locations across Indonesia, but finding these rhinos is like looking for very few needles in four or five haystacks: almost (but not quite) impossible. Only two populations are known to be breeding successfully (one of these

is at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas National Park), and rangers are on patrol to look for all other individuals and rescue them into more rhino-populated areas. With fewer than 80 Sumatran rhinos left, every animal is precious, and efforts to find and protect them are increasingly urgent.

Finding Javan rhinos is no easy feat either, but, as they all live in one forest, it's that bit easier for rangers to spot footprints, feeding signs, dung, and sometimes even see a rhino directly. Thanks to camera traps positioned in Ujung Kulon National Park, Javan rhinos

are often caught on camera, and that's when incredible news, including new calves, can be confirmed.

Four calves have been seen to date during 2021, bringing this Critically Endangered species' population up to 75. Of course, 75 remains a worryingly small population but, with at least one new calf born each year since 2012, it's clear that conservation efforts in the Park are paying off. Now we must maintain this momentum and secure more safe habitats for Javan rhinos to thrive.



CYRIL RUOJO

What you've achieved

During some of the most difficult months that many of us have faced, your support has ensured that rhino conservation has continued to move forward.

Here are some of the biggest achievements in the past year. Thank you so much for ensuring that they could happen!

Zimbabwe

A baby boom in the Lowveld

Despite the challenges that Covid-19 brought, rhino monitors at the Lowveld Rhino Trust continued their intensive efforts throughout 2020, following footprints and browsing signs to spot an average of 85 rhino sightings each month. While on patrol, the team spotted tiny footprints that signalled some new members of the herd. In total, 17 black rhinos and two white rhino calves were born in the Bulye Valley Conservancy during 2020!

The new rhinos are not only adorable to see, but also highlight the importance of good monitoring and protection for maintaining a healthy rhino population in the long-term. The area used to be home to just 4% of Zimbabwe's black rhino population; today, that's increased to more than 90%.



LOWVELD RHINO TRUST



Kenya

Zero-poaching recorded for the first time in 21 years

Despite an incredibly challenging year due to Covid-19, Kenya's rhinos were kept safe. No poaching incidents were recorded during 2020; the first time the country has had a zero-poaching year since 1999. This brilliant milestone wouldn't have been reached without the dedication shown by Kenya's rangers. While incursions continued to take place, rangers' commitment ensured that rhinos were protected.

The news is particularly important for the Critically Endangered Eastern black rhino, which has its third-largest population in Kenya.

India

More Greater one-horned rhinos in Assam

Since 2005, the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 (IRV2020) project has worked to boost the number of rhinos in Assam by establishing new populations. Thanks to these efforts, around 3,000 Greater one-horned rhinos are thought to live in Assam today, some within areas in which rhinos were previously exterminated.

IRV2020 ended when the last two rhinos were moved from Kaziranga National Park to Manas National Park, in April 2021. The next stage, up until 2030, is to continue building up new populations by moving rhinos into more, secure habitats across Assam, giving the species space to breed successfully and grow the State's population. Further activities are planned in West Bengal, which also has Greater one-horned rhinos.



IRV2020

Indonesia

New Javan rhino calves bring the population to 75

The elusive Javan rhinos are on the rise, thanks to persistent conservation efforts. 2021 brought the incredible news, as four new calves have been spotted on camera traps so far this year.

Despite the new calves, Javan rhinos remain at extraordinary risk. Their only habitat, Ujung Kulon National Park, lies on the edge of a peninsula on the western end of Java; extreme events, such as a tsunami, could wipe out the entire population. Finding suitable new habitats in which Javan rhinos can establish new populations is critical to their survival.



ALAIN COMPOST