

Black Rhino: *Diceros bicornis*

Black Rhinos are slowly recovering from a 96% decline in population, and are now up to about 3,725 surviving today, thanks to conservation efforts. It is shocking to consider that as recently as 1970, there were approximately 65,000 Black Rhinos in Africa. Due to poaching, those numbers decreased sharply to 2,300 remaining in the wild.

West African Rhino Now Extinct

In July of 2006, it was reported by National Geographic News that the subspecies West African Black Rhino is extinct. According to some estimates, there were 14,000 black rhinos as recently as 1980 and more than 100,000 in 1960. According to the IUCN, it is likely that poachers gave the final push that sent the subspecies into oblivion.

Distinguishing Characteristics

The Black Rhino has two horns comprised of compressed keratin - basically hair and fingernail material. The front horn is generally from 1' 8" - 4'4" long. The rear horn is smaller, measuring from 1" - 22" long.

The Black Rhino is not actually black in color, but more likely derives its name as a distinction from the White Rhino (who is not actually white) and/or from the dark-colored local soil covering its skin from wallowing. The Black Rhinos' skin color may vary depending upon local soil, and is usually a shade of brown.

The easiest way to identify the Black Rhino at a glance is to check out the snout. The Black Rhino has a relatively narrow snout with a prehensile lip, and is also known as the Hook-Lipped Rhinoceros or the Prehensile-lipped Rhinoceros. The prehensile lip enables the Black Rhino to feed from trees and shrubs. While looking at the rhino's head, you will see eyelashes and a little bit of hair on the ears. The other area where the Black Rhino has hair is the tip of the tail.

Like all rhinos, the Black Rhino is an odd-toed ungulate, having three toes - each with a sturdy hoof-like nail. Also in common with other rhinos is a superb sense of hearing, keen sense of smell - but relatively poor eyesight.

Size of the Black Rhino

The Black Rhino's weight ranges from 1,750 - 3,000 pounds, and stands from 4.5 - 5.5 feet at the shoulder. End-to-end, the Black Rhino can be 10 - 12.5 feet in length.

Activity

Despite their large size, the Black Rhino can run up to 35 mph and turn on a dime.

Black Rhinos prefer to eat and drink at night, spending the hotter part of the day sleeping in the shade or wallowing in mud to protect their sensitive skin.



The Black Rhino's prehensile lip is used for grasping food. The Black Rhino is also known as the "Hook-lipped Rhino"



A Black Rhino calf.

2008 Population: 3,725

- West African Black Rhino subspecies: Declared extinct in 2006

Life span

- Black Rhinos can live 45 years or more in captivity, and generally 30 - 35 years in the wild.

Scientific Name and Origin

- *Diceros bicornis*
- *Diceros*: from the Greek *di*, meaning "two" and *ceros*, meaning "horn"
- *bicornis*: from the Latin *bi*, meaning "two" and *cornis*, meaning "horn"

(Sources: WWF, International Rhino Foundation, Save the Rhino International & Rhino Resource Center)

Learn more about rhinos at www.savingrhinos.org