

Indian Rhino: *Rhinoceros unicornis*

The Indian, a.k.a. the Greater One-Horned Rhino, or Nepalese Rhino numbers approximately 2,400 today, due to conservation efforts. Earlier in the 20th century, less than 200 Indian Rhinos were remaining. Strict protection efforts by Indian and Nepalese wildlife authorities have been instrumental in the recovery of the Indian Rhino.

Unfortunately, poaching has increased in recent years due to political instability in Nepal, causing the rhino population to decrease by 31% since 2000.

Distinguishing Characteristics

The Indian or Greater One-Horned Rhino has one horn comprised of compressed keratin - basically hair and fingernail material. The Indian Rhino's horn is typically 8" - 24" in length.

The Indian Rhino is grayish, and the skin forms distinctive folds around the body, making the rhino appear to be wearing plates of armor.

Indian Rhinos are the most aquatic of the five rhino species. They are strong swimmers and may spend 60% of their day in the water. Indian Rhinos can dive and feed under water, and it is not uncommon to see just their snouts, eyes, and ears above the water. They are identified by the single horn, folds of armor, and semi-prehensile upper lip. The semi-prehensile lip enables the Indian Rhino to feed on a very wide variety of grasses, leaves, branches, aquatic plants, and fruit. 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 Indian Rhino has hair is the tip of the tail.

Like all rhinos, the Indian 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 Indian Rhino

The Indian Rhino, along with the roughly equal-sized White Rhino, is the largest species of land mammal after the elephant.

The Indian Rhino's weight ranges from 4,000 - 6,000 pounds, and stands from 5.75 - 6.5 feet high at the shoulder. End-to-end, the White Rhino can be 10 - 12.5 feet in length.

Activity

The Indian Rhino is both fast and agile, running up to 25 mph for short distances and able to make sharp turns when necessary.

Indian Rhinos are designed for life near water, such as subtropical areas near floodplains and rivers, as they may spend 60% of their day in the water.



Indian Rhinos are the most aquatic of the five rhino species. They can dive and feed under water.



An Indian Rhino calf.

The "Soul of the Rhino" by Hemanta Mishra could be the most important book ever written about the critically endangered Indian Rhino.

2008 Population: 2,400

- Poaching is on the rise; population has decreased 31% since 2000

Life span

- Indian Rhinos can live 30 - 45 years in the wild, and the captive life span record is 47 years.

Scientific Name and Origin

- *Rhinoceros unicornis*
- Rhinoceros: from the Greek rhino, meaning "nose" and ceros, meaning "horn"
- unicornis: from the Latin uni, meaning "one" and cornis, meaning "horn"

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

Learn more about rhinos at www.savingrhinos.org