

White Rhino: *Ceratotherium simum*. Population: 17,500

The Southern white rhino is the most numerous of the living rhino species. The white rhino was thought to be extinct until 1895, when a small population of less than 100 individuals was discovered in South Africa. Thanks to a century of conservation efforts, Southern white rhinos are now classified as Near Threatened.

Two Subspecies of White Rhino

- Southern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*)
- Northern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*)

Sadly, efforts to protect the Northern white rhino have been unsuccessful. Now considered extinct in the wild, there are only eight known individuals left. The population was decimated by illegal killing to supply Asia's black market for rhino horn. The poaching crisis continues to escalate due to China's affluency boom and growing economic footprint in Africa.

In December 2009, four captive Northern white rhinos were relocated from the Czech Republic to Kenya. This plan is considered the last hope to stimulate breeding - even if it produces hybrid calves.

White Rhino Distribution

Most white rhinos are found in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. Swaziland has fewer than 100. Uganda now has 11 white rhinos, thanks to a recent reintroduction program.

Distinguishing Characteristics

The white rhino has two horns comprised of keratin - just hair and fingernail material. The white rhino's front horn is generally 37" - 40" long, and can reach 79". The rear horn can be 22" in length.

The white rhino is actually not white; the name is likely due to mistaking the Afrikaans word "weit" (meaning "wide") for "white." The white rhino is grey, although often appears brown after wallowing.

As a grazer, the white rhino is identified by its square lip, and is also known as the square-lipped rhino. The white rhino is hairless, except for eyelashes, tufts of hair on the ears, and the tail tip.

Like all rhinos, the white rhino is an odd-toed ungulate, having three toes. Also in common with other rhinos is a superb sense of hearing and keen sense of smell - but relatively poor eyesight.

Size of the White Rhino

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

The White rhino weighs from 4,000 - 6,000 pounds, and stands from 5 - 6 feet high at the shoulder. End-to-end, the white rhino can be 12.5 - 15 feet in length.



Activity

Despite their large size, the white rhino can run 30 mph for short distances. Females and calves of varying ages often reside together in small groups, known as a "crash", while males are frequently solitary.

White rhinos eat and drink both during the day and at night, spending the hotter part of the day sleeping in the shade or enjoying a good wallow.

Life Span

- White rhinos can live up to 50 years.

Scientific Name and Origin

Ceratotherium simum

- *Ceratotherium*: from the Greek *cerato*, meaning "horn" and *therium*, meaning "wild beast"
- *simum*: from the Greek *simus*, meaning "flat nosed"

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