

White Rhino: *Ceratotherium simum*

White Rhinos are divided into two distinct subspecies: The Northern White Rhino and the Southern White Rhino. The Southern White Rhino is the least endangered of the living kinds of rhino. Unfortunately, the Northern White Rhino is feared to be extinct in the wild. The WWF posted in March 2007 that only 4 individuals remain in Garamba National Park (DRC) and on June 17, 2008, it was reported that poachers have killed these last 4 Northern White Rhinos.

Northern White Rhino

There were more than 2,000 Northern White Rhinos remaining as recently as 1960. By 1984, the population was decimated to just 15. Despite increasing numbers from 15 in 1984 to 30 in 1993, the poaching intensified in mid-2003. As of June 17, 2008, the NWR is reportedly extinct in the wild.

Southern White Rhino

The Southern White Rhino was considered extinct (due to poaching) until 1895, when a small population of less than 100 individuals was discovered in South Africa. Thanks to a century of conservation efforts, researchers and concerned individuals (especially in South Africa) Southern White Rhinos have recovered to just over 14,000.

White Rhinos are confined to private ranches and heavily protected areas; however, poaching remains a threat. Nearly all of them are located in South Africa. The WWF also reports that small populations have been re-introduced to Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia, and Cote d'Ivoire.

Distinguishing Characteristics

The White Rhino has two horns comprised of compressed keratin - basically hair and fingernail material. The Northern White Rhino's front horn is generally 37" - 40" long, while the Southern White Rhino's can reach 79". The rear horn of both subspecies is smaller, reaching 22" in length.

The White Rhino is actually not white in color; the name is thought to be a result of mistaking the Afrikaans word "weit" (meaning "wide") for "white." The White Rhino is grey, although he or she often looks brown due to being covered in mud after wallowing.

The White Rhino is most readily identified by its square lip, and is also known as the Square-Lipped Rhinoceros. The square lip is used for grazing on grasses. 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 White Rhino has hair is the tip of the tail.

Like all rhinos, the White 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.



A White Rhino and her calf.

2008 Population

- Northern White Rhino: Most likely extinct in the wild (June 17, 2008)
- Southern White Rhino: Just over 14,000

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's weight ranges 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.

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)

Learn more about rhinos at www.savingrhinos.org