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CITES 2004

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WWF FACTSHEET

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BLACK RHINOCEROS *Diceros bicornis*

I. Species Facts

Natural History and Distribution

The black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* is basically grey, but the colour varies from yellow-brown to dark-brown according to local soil conditions. It has two horns and occasionally a third small posterior horn is present. The anterior horn is larger than the posterior, averaging 50cm in length. Distinguishable from the white rhino mainly by the prehensile upper lip, (hence the alternative name of hook-lipped rhino), it is not always darker in colour. The black rhino is a browser using its upper lip to feed on twigs of woody plants and legumes.

Black rhinos are essentially solitary, but temporary aggregations of up to a dozen individuals have been observed, with longer-term associations between mothers and daughters. Breeding takes place throughout the year, although peaks in breeding activity occur at varying times in different range countries. Reproductive maturity is reached at four to six years in females and seven to nine years in males. The gestation period is between 419 and 478 days with an average interval of two and half to three and a half years between calves.

The Black rhino is the only species of the genus *Diceros*. There are four recognised subspecies or "ecotypes" and under the new IUCN criteria for level of threat, all four are listed as Critically Endangered. The Southern-central black rhino (*D.b. minor*), the most numerous subspecies, inhabited a historic range from central Tanzania down through Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique to northern and eastern South Africa. The South-western black rhino (*D.b. bicornis*) is more adapted to the arid and semi-arid savannahs of Namibia, southern Angola, western Botswana and western South Africa. The East African black rhino (*D.b. michaeli*) which had a historic distribution from south Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia down through Kenya into north-central Tanzania, maintains its current stronghold in Kenya. The West African black rhino (*D.b. longipes*) is the rarest and most endangered subspecies. Whereas it once occurred across most of the savannas of West Africa, today only a few individuals remain in northern Cameroon.



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Black rhinos were once found throughout sub-Saharan Africa with the exception of the Congo Basin. They are now limited to a patchy distribution from Cameroon in the west, to Kenya in the east and south to South Africa. Present in habitats ranging from desert in the south-west to montane forests in Kenya, the black rhino is found mainly in grassland-forest transition zones.

Range States

Range States for black rhinos: Cameroon; Kenya; Malawi; Ethiopia; Namibia; South Africa; Rwanda, Swaziland; Tanzania; Zimbabwe; Zambia (re-introduced); Botswana (re-introduced).

Range states in which black rhinos have probably become extinct: Central African Republic; Angola; Chad; Democratic Republic of Congo; Mozambique; Nigeria; Sudan; Uganda.

POPULATION

Populations of black rhinos declined very rapidly in the second half of the twentieth century. During the late 1960s it was estimated that 70,000 survived in Africa; in 1981 only 10,000 to 15,000 remained and by 1993 only 2,475 rhinos were recorded. The latest figures (2004) indicate a total of 3,600 black rhinoceros currently exist in Africa.

During the late 1970s and 1980s numbers decreased by between 40 per cent and 90 per cent in some regions; the rate of population decline was lowest in South Africa (approximately 30%). Populations in Africa stabilised by 1992 largely due to significant increases in South Africa and Namibia, which offset the mortalities elsewhere. Since 1996 most of these populations have continued to show modest increases.

Major populations: The extensive and well-protected area system of South Africa has allowed the continuing recovery of black rhino populations. South Africa holds the largest proportion of the world's wild black rhino population. In terms of population size, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Kenya are the other important black rhino range states.

Threats

Earlier in the 20th Century hunting to clear land for agriculture and human settlement was the main cause for the decline of African rhinos. However, the single most important cause for the catastrophic decline of rhinos in the last quarter of the 20th century was the demand for their horn in the Middle Eastern and Eastern Asian markets. Historically, in medieval Europe, rhino horn was fashioned into chalices believed to have the power of detecting poisons. In the Far East, and in the many East Asian communities elsewhere, the horn is still used as a fever-reducing ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine; and in the Middle East it is carved and polished to make prestigious dagger handles.



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II. Black Rhinoceros and CITES

Current status within CITES

All range States protect the black rhino under national wildlife legislation; however, levels of enforcement vary and poaching remains a very serious threat in most of the range states. The black rhinoceros was listed on Appendix I of CITES in 1977. Thus international commercial trade in this species is prohibited between Parties to the Convention.

Laws controlling trade in rhino horn have been tightened since 1992 in many countries, and South Korea, one of the major importers of rhino horn, joined CITES in October 1993. In 1994, Oman (a non-Party to CITES) issued a Ministerial decision, banning the importation of rhino horn. In 1997, Yemen, then probably the single most significant national market for rhino horn in the world, acceded to CITES. This represented a major step forward in attempts to enforce the international trade ban. The challenge now is to follow up to ensure effective implementation of controls to stop illegal imports of rhino horn.

Risks

Stockpile management is necessary to ensure horns collected from the field are secured in stockpiles, and therefore reduce the risk of leakage to the illegal market. However, stockpile management has traditionally received relatively little attention. Yet, in many places stockpiles continue to grow. In Africa, TRAFFIC has worked on this issue for over three years and has now documented almost 17 tonnes of horn with some stockpiles growing at 20% every four years. TRAFFIC also continues to assist a number of Parties strengthen horn stockpile management. Whilst TRAFFIC has witnessed marked improvements in levels of management recently, there remains room for improvement in many African range States. Further, quantities of horns and levels of stockpile management in Asian range States (especially India and Nepal) and consumer nations (e.g. China and Yemen) are not fully understood. Weaknesses in stockpile management may provide a loophole for leakage to illegal markets, thus undermining other field conservation efforts.

III. WWF Black Rhinoceros projects

Financing rhino conservation projects

Between 1962 and 2001, WWF spent a total of CHF 46,963,923 on the conservation and management of African rhinos. WWF launched its African Rhino Programme in 1997 in order to provide technical and financial support in a strategic manner as well as have a programmatic focus on rhino conservation. This programme, which operates in partnership with key African rhino range states, has been spending an average of CHF 1,500,000 per year on the conservation and management of both black and white rhinos in Africa. The programme is directly active in the following countries: Republic of South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Kenya. Additionally, through its consortium membership of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Regional Rhino Programme, WWF also works in Tanzania, Botswana, Zambia and Malawi.



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Examples of projects

The WWF African Rhino Programme is currently supporting 12 field projects that are designed to improve the conservation and management of African rhinos in a holistic manner (improved biological monitoring & population performance, improved security monitoring, capacity building and development of rhino expertise, halting illegal trade in rhino horn and its derivatives, improved legislation and better enforcement of laws.)

WWF recognizes that the long-term future of African rhinos can only be ensured if local communities and the private sector are involved in the conservation effort in a meaningful way, and that they benefit from these resources without detriment to the growth of the rhino populations.

Since 1991, WWF's Rhino Conservancy Project has contributed to the objectives of Zimbabwe's Rhino Policy and Management Plan, and works to consolidate the rhino conservation effort on large conservancies in the south-eastern Lowveld in particular Save Valley (3,420km²), Bubiana (1,250km²) and Chiredzi River (800km²). Rhinos have been translocated into these areas, de-horned and radio collared. Research on population growth, habitat carrying capacity and genetic diversity is ongoing. The Lowveld conservancies now hold over 50% Zimbabwe's black rhino population. This project promotes rhino conservation on private land in the context of "wildlife utilisation as an appropriate form of land use" and works to achieve this in an economically and socially sustainable manner. This project is also piloting an innovative approach of directly involving local communities in rhino conservation through a stockholding scheme. Under this plan local communities 'grow' white rhinos (for which WWF is also providing 'seed rhino stock' on behalf of the local communities) on the conservancies and benefit from the sale of the progeny to the conservancy. In return the community engages in security measures to protect the rhino population for the conservancy, hence helping reduce the security monitoring cost for the conservancy management. This not only creates a win-win situation for all parties concerned, but it also ensures that the local communities have an economic interest in helping rhino conservation on the conservancy succeed.

Since the mid 1990s WWF has also been providing major support to black rhino conservation in Kwazulu-Natal in the Republic of South Africa. Our support focused on enabling Ezemvelo KZN-Wildlife, the relevant management authority, to improve the conservation and management of their rhino populations in the reserves through improved biological and security monitoring and focused meta-population management. This approach was such a success that the project has now grown and moved into a second phase in which WWF not only supports in situ conservation, but is also involved in an innovative scheme of 'rhino range expansion' in which rhino populations will be established on new sanctuaries in a state-private partnership. For this KZN-Wildlife will provide the founder rhino stock from their reserves under a special arrangement of 'loaning and profit sharing' and the private sector in return would share the burden of rhino conservation and 'growing' these populations. Through this scheme prime black rhino habitats will be reclaimed for conservation before it is too late and the areas are converted to other inappropriate forms of land use.

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