

# Rhinoceros

Numerous species of rhino have become extinct over millions of years. One species known as Toxotherium, the smallest known rhino, existed long ago in the central plains of North America and had a jawbone only three inches long. There are five species of rhinos on earth today. All of these have had their numbers much reduced by man. Rhinos in their natural state, hate the scent of man and if they feel the least bit upset when they catch the scent, they will charge.



**Rhinoceros**

Two of the species are on the verge of extinction. These are the Javan and Sumatran. The other species are the black rhino and the white rhino of Africa, and the Indian rhino.

They are close relatives to the horse and are plant eaters. They enjoy a variety of vegetation such as young trees and shrubs, cactus-like plants, climbing vines, tree bark and grass which they devour like a lawnmower.

They use their horns to unearth mineral salts. They need a great deal of water to survive and guard their water holes while they are using them, even chasing away other rhinoceros. They are good swimmers and can go long distances. They are excellent divers. Running speeds are from twenty to twenty five miles per hour but they have been clocked at over thirty-five miles an hour over short distances. Like their relatives, the horses, they can trot, canter and gallop.

Second in size to [elephants](#), the rhino realizes that he might not win a fight with an elephant so it is rare that they will do battle.

Rhinoceros have poor vision but an acute sense of hearing and an excellent sense of smell.

They spend a lot of time eating during the night hours. They sleep most of the day and then visit the watering hole to drink and wallow to cool and sooth their skins. Like many birds and mammals they enjoy a dust bath.

They are not very social animals. Small groups are the norm. Female rhinoceros mate at three years of age and males mate when they are seven.



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Gestation period is approximately 18 months and the newborn is usually up on its feet within hours. The African rhino baby may weigh as much as 60 lbs. The Indian rhino baby may weight a hundred lbs. more than that.

Rhinos are wonderful parents. They care about them and protect them and teach them for the years it takes them to grow up. Mothers may have babies at three year intervals. The babies nurse for about a year, even though they are able to eat vegetation soon after they are born.

Rhinos are one of the most threatened animals. Facts concerning the dwindling numbers of them and the loss of land areas for them to exist on are sad indeed.

Not even in a Wildlife Sanctuary such as the one in Assam, are they safe from poachers who were relentless and savage that it took military force to drive them out.

The poachers didn't care that they were speeding up the extinction of the Sumatran species of rhinoceros. Man's belief in superstition relating to rhinoceros horns, hair, internal organs, hide, blood and teeth go back many centuries and stretch across many countries. Because of superstition, these awesome creatures are being destroyed.

All information and photos retrieved from  
<http://www.itsnature.org/angered/moderately/rhinoceros/>