

Southern
White Rhinoceros
Ceratotherium
simum simum



Physical Characteristics

- Physical description - The white rhino is a sturdily built animal. Each stocky leg has three hoofed toes. It has a thick neck with a muscular hump needed to hold up a large, heavy head with two “horns” located on its snout.
- A rhino’s horn is not a true horn (one with a boney core and that is attached to the skull). It grows from the skin and is made up of keratin fibers, the same material found in hair and fingernails. The front “horn” is quite large (37-79in.) and the rear “horn” is much smaller in size (up to 22in.).
- This pachyderm (thick-skinned) is relatively hairless except for eyelashes, tail bristles, and ear fringes.
- It has large rotating ears with a good sense of hearing, large nostrils with a good sense of smell, and relatively small eyes with a poor sense of vision.
- Its wide, squared lips are specialized for grazing grasses.
- Coloration: The “white” rhino is not white; it is actually gray to brown in color.

Size: White Rhinos are the second largest land mammal on Earth. Only elephants are larger.

- Height: 5.5 - 6.5ft. tall at the shoulder
- Length: 10.5 - 15ft. long
- Weight: 4000- 6000 lbs.

Lifespan

- Wild: up to 35 years
- Zoos: 40-50 years

Behaviors

- Activity Cycle – rhinos are considered cathemeral with sporadic activity during both day and night.
- Vocalizations - White rhinos have the largest range of vocalizations of any species of rhino which is most likely related to the most developed social structure of all rhinos. They can tell individuals apart by hearing their unique calls and may be able to determine the sex, age, and social status from vocalizations.
- Social Structure - White Rhinos live on the open plains and savannas. This unprotected openness may have led to females (especially those with calves) forming social groups up to 15 individuals. This small herd, also known as a crash of rhinos, when threatened, will form a circle with their horns facing outward and the calves in the middle for protection. Adult males are generally solitary and territorial.

Diet

- Wild: This megaherbivore is the largest pure grazer in Africa eating mostly grasses
- Zoo: Hay, rhino cubes, greens, vegetables

Reproduction

- Maturity: Females typically reach sexual maturity in 6-7 years while males take 10-12 years.
- Courtship/Breeding: There is no defined breeding season. With overlapping territories, male rhinos (bulls) may spar and fight over access to females. Courtship is not very easy as the potential pair may chase, vocalize, spar and clash horns with one another. If the female acts too defensively, the male may stay away. If they become a breeding pair, they will only stay

together between 5-20 days before separating again. Rhinos are promiscuous, rarely forming an even semi-permanent pair.

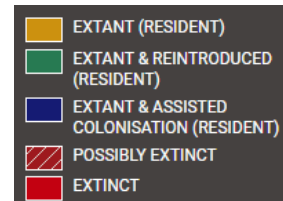
- Gestation Period: 16 months with a birth interval of one calf every 2-3 years
- Offspring: A single calf will generally weigh 140-150 lbs. Twins are rare.
- Parenting: Females are the sole care givers for offspring and are very protective. A calf will stay with its mother for 2-4 years.

Habitat and Range

- Habitat: Savanna, Shrubland, Grassland
- Range: South Africa (86%), Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Kenya

Conservation

- IUCN Status: Near Threatened
- Contributing factors: In the early 1900s, the Southern White Rhino was on the brink of extinction with only one small population with less than 50 animals remaining in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
- The largest reason for population declines in rhinos is due to poaching. The use of rhino horns brings a high level of status in certain cultures. In some cultures, the horns are carved into ornate handles for daggers (jambiyas) while other cultures believe that rhino horn contains medicinal properties or can be symbols of status. These cultural beliefs are the main drivers for black market trafficking of rhino horns.
- Habitat destruction and urbanization have also affected white rhino populations.
- Numerous conservation measures have been attempted by range countries which includes increased patrols by rangers, a shoot on sight policy for poaching, establishing managed parks and preserves, working with governments to enforce wildlife crime laws, the relocation of rhinos to safer areas, and active engagement with local communities with economic incentives.
- Conservation efforts have paid off for the southern subspecies but populations are still at risk. As of 2012, after years of protection and many translocations, the subspecies had grown to an estimated 21,316 wild animals. Since that peak, increases in poaching reduced the population by 15% and numbers were down to 18,064 individuals by the end of 2017. By the beginning of 2020, populations numbers decreased to 10,080 mature individuals.
- The Northern White Rhino effectively went extinct when the last male died in 2018 and the 2 remaining females are non-breeding.



Classification

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata
- Class: Mammalia
- Order: Perissodactyla
- Family: Rhinocerotidae
- Genus: *Ceratotherium*
- Species: *C. simum*
- Subspecies: *C. s. simum*