

# The Rhinoceros

Rhinoceros are one of the most endangered animals in the world. To some people the horn of a rhinoceros is very valuable. In Asia, it is ground into a powder and used as a drug to treat fever and convulsions and in Yemen it is carved to make traditional dagger handles. Poachers receive large amounts of money for a single horn, as it is said to be literally "worth its weight in gold". To get hold of these horns, poachers have killed huge numbers of rhinoceros. This is one of the main reasons for the fall in the world's population of rhino, which currently stands at about 12,000. All rhinoceros are endangered, with the Asian rhinos critically so. To conserve certain rhino populations, the horn is cut off some animals to protect them from poachers. As the horn is made of a hair-like material, it is a painless procedure and has little effect on the rhinoceros.

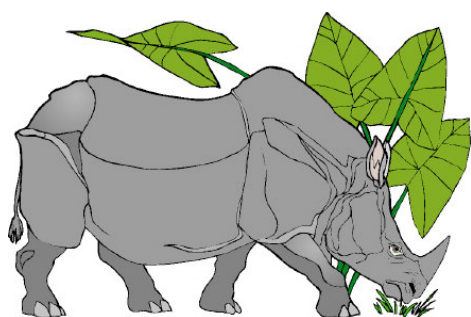
Rhinos are herbivores, only eating plants. They have a relatively small brain in comparison to their size. Both the Black and Indian Rhinos have prehensile lips. "Prehensile" means that it has adapted for grasping and holding. They use the lip like a finger to select and pick twigs and leaves.

Rhinoceros' are generally solitary animals but some species may travel in pairs or form groups. While adult female rhinos are not territorial, adult males are. When two male Indian Rhinoceros meet they will often fight using tusk-like lower incisors (teeth) as weapons, often resulting in the death of one of the rhinos.



## The Rhino's Horn

The rhino's horn is made of keratin, the same substance that makes human hair and fingernails. There is no obvious hair on a rhino except for some on its tail and tufts on its ears. A rhino has a very thick protective skin (up to 2cm) and large folds on the Asian rhino's skin gives the appearance of armour. Rhinos love to wallow in mud. The dried mud keeps their skin cool and protects the surface area from flies and other insect bites.



## Five Different Types of Rhinoceros

There are five different species of rhinoceros in the world: two from Africa (living in the savannahs) and three from southern Asia (living in tropical and subtropical forests and swampy grasslands). The two African rhinoceros are the **Black Rhinoceros** and the **White Rhinoceros**. Both rhinoceros each have two horns. The three southern Asian rhinoceros are the **Javan**, **Sumatran** and **Indian Rhinoceros**. Like the African rhinos, the Sumatran Rhinoceros also has two horns, while the Javan and Indian have only one.



## Second Largest Land Mammal

The rhinoceros is the second largest mammal on land, next to the elephant. It can weigh up to a tonne or more (the White Rhinoceros can weigh up to 2.3 tonnes) and the heights vary from 1.5 m to 2.0 m. It is a very strong and muscular animal. The frame and legs of the Asian rhinos are quite thick however the African rhinos have surprisingly thin legs, which enable them to run at great speed, sometimes reaching 45kph (28 mph). Rhinos have a good sense of smell and relatively good hearing but their eyesight is poor.