



SOUTHERN WHITE RHINO



Phylum: Chordata, Class: Mammalia, Order: Perissodactyla, Family: Rhinocerotidae
Ceratotherium simum simum

White rhinos really aren't white. They are actually a gray color. Their name is derived from the Afrikaans word describing their mouths - *weit*, meaning wide.

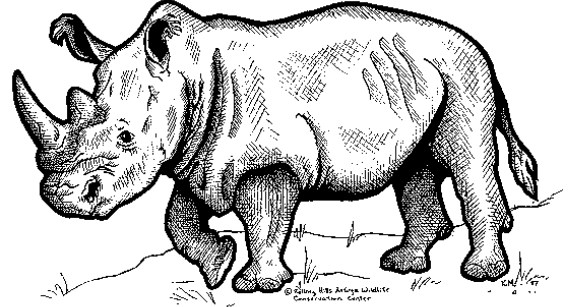
Weight: 5,000 - 7,000 lbs.

Height (at shoulder): 5 - 6 feet

Lifespan: up to 45 years

Habitat: African grasslands (savannas)

Range/distribution: 96% of the wild southern white rhino population is found in South Africa.



Status: *ENDANGERED*

- All of the world's rhino species are endangered. Fewer than 11,000 African rhinos have survived the slaughter for their horns. Fewer than 3,000 of the Asian species of rhinos are alive today.

Threats to survival: Poaching poses the greatest threat to white rhinos. Their horns are used for traditional Asian medicines and to make dagger handles in Yemen.

Diet in the wild: The white rhinoceros grazes on the short turf grasses of the African savannah.

Special features:

- The white rhinoceros has wide, square lips, specially adapted for grazing.
- All African rhinos have 2 horns. Rhino horn is made of thousands of tiny strands of keratin, the same material that makes up human fingernails. Rhino skulls have a bony 'bump' on the front that helps anchor the horn to the head.
- White rhino horn can grow 3.5 - 4 inches per year, until the animal is approximately 7 years old. After that time the horn continues to grow at a slower rate.
- Rhinos have poor eyesight, but well-developed senses of hearing and smell.
- Rhinos walk and run on their toes, making them similar to horses. In spite of their size, rhinos are able to turn quickly and run fast - up to 35 mph.
- Rhinos enjoy wallowing in the mud. The mud creates a coating on their skin to protect them from sunburn and insect bites. Mud wallowing is also an effective method of heat loss.
- White rhinos have a hump on their backs, just in front of their shoulder blades. The hump is a mass of muscles that helps support the long, heavy head of the rhino. The head of a white rhino may weigh as much as 500 - 800 pounds.
- White rhinos have high-crowned molars specially adapted for grinding up ingested grasses. They have no incisors.

Social Structure:

- Adult males are somewhat territorial and basically solitary. When a territorial bull passes through his neighbor's territory to obtain water and encounters his neighbor a great distance from their



shared border, he “cannot” behave as an inferior. Hours of fighting may ensue, and a truly savage battle may develop, with the animals charging at each other and striking each other’s flanks, shoulders, and rumps with their horns.

- Other males, known as subordinate males may occasionally graze in the same area as “satellites” to a dominant bull.
- The ranges of females often overlap. Females typically are found in pairs consisting of the cow and her calf.

Breeding & Care of young:

- Males become sexually mature at 10 - 12 years; females at 6 - 7 years
- Dominant males will often fight with each other over a breeding female.
- Gestation = 485 - 518 days (16 - 17+ months)
- Calves weigh around 150 pounds at birth.
- Calves will remain with their mothers for two years, or until another calf is born.

Efforts to save Southern white rhinos:

There are currently a little over 120 individuals in the Southern white rhino SSP. The American Zoo and Aquarium Association’s SSPs (Species Survival Plans) are special programs designed by a team of zoo and wildlife professionals. The plans outline breeding plans, work to increase public awareness and education, help conduct research, and in some cases, organize programs to reintroduce captive-bred wildlife into secure habitats. In the wild, Southern white rhinoceros populations have been increasing due to protection in reserves and parks in southern Africa.

Other African rhinos:

Northern white rhinoceros: The future looks rather bleak for the Northern white rhino. Their populations have been reduced by 80% since 1979. An estimated 31 animals survive in the wild and are found only in Garamba National Park in Zaire. Those animals are protected by armed guards. Only 9 individuals are held in captivity.

Black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*) :

Black rhinos prefer the brush and open woodlands of Africa. Like the other types of African rhinos, they have become endangered primarily due to poaching for their horns. Just 20 years ago, an estimated 65,000 black rhinos were found in the wild. Today only 2,400 individuals survive in the wild. There are 97 black rhinos in the American Zoo and Aquarium Association’s black rhino SSP.

