



# Datasheet African rhinos

For internal WWF use only, compiled by Femke Koopmans (fkoopmans@wwf.nl), June 2012

**Name:** Black Rhinoceros/ Hook-lipped Rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*),  
White Rhinoceros / Square-lipped Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*)

**IUCN status:** Black rhino: Critically endangered  
White rhino: Near threatened

**CITES status:** Black rhino: Appendix I  
White: Appendix I and II (*C. s. simum*, only the population of South Africa and Swaziland and for the exclusive purpose of allowing international trade in live animals to appropriate and acceptable destinations and hunting trophies)

**Subspecies:** Black rhino: Three surviving South-western Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis* ssp. *bicornis*), Eastern Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis* ssp. *michaeli*), Southern-central Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis* ssp. *minor*)

White rhino: Northern White Rhino (*Ceratotherium simum* ssp. *cottoni*), Southern White Rhino (*Ceratotherium simum* ssp. *simum*)



White Rhino © F. Koopmans



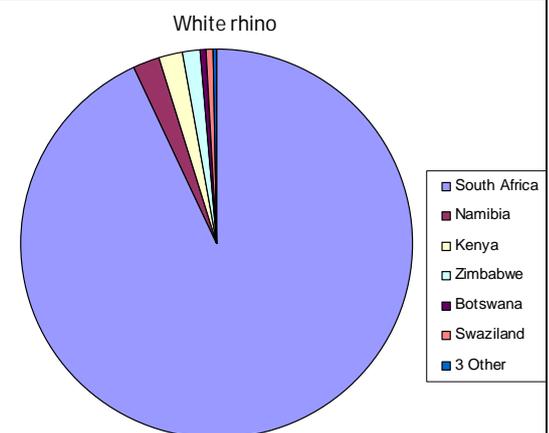
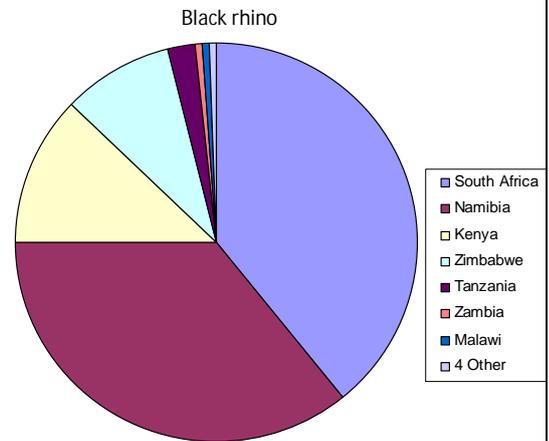
Black Rhino © F. Koopmans

## Distribution and population size

A total of about 4,880 Black Rhino, and 20,170 White Rhino survive in the wild (AfRSG data, 2011), scattered among 12 countries of the African continent. Four countries (darker shading on map) conserve 98.8% of Africa's white and 96.1% black rhino. The pie charts show the proportion of total numbers of each species by country.



Figure 1. Distribution of Black & White Rhino (subspecies and populations combined) (IUCN SSC AfRSG)



In table 1, population numbers are presented for each of the subspecies of African rhino. Countries without data are not part of the distributional range of the particular subspecies.

Table 1. African Rhino numbers per country (IUCN SSC African rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) data, 2011)\*.

Species	White Rhino				Black Rhino					Total
	Subspecies	<i>C.s. cottoni</i> (northern)	<i>C.s. simum</i> (southern)	Total WR	Trend	<i>D.b. icornis</i> (south- western)	<i>D.b. michaeli</i> (eastern)	<i>D.b. minor</i> (southern- central)	Total BR	
South Africa		18,796	18,796	Up	171	60	1,684	1,915	Up	20,711
Namibia		469	469	Up	1,750			1,750	Up	2,219
Kenya	4	361	365	Up		594		594	Up	959
Zimbabwe		290	290	Down			431	431	Down	721
Botswana		135	135	Up			7	7	Stable	142
Tanzania						88	25	113	Up/Down?	113
Swaziland		88	88	Up			17	17	Stable	105
Zambia		7	7	Enhanced			27	27	Stable + In	34
Malawi							24	24	Up	24
Uganda		9	9	Up						9
Mozambique		6	6	Down?			1	1	Min	7
Angola					1			1	Min	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20,161</b>	<b>20,165</b>		<b>1,922</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>2,216</b>	<b>4,880</b>		<b>25,045</b>
<b>Rounded</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20,160</b>	<b>20,170</b>		<b>1,920</b>	<b>740</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>4,880</b>		<b>25,050</b>

\* Table excludes speculative guesstimates

Trend: Enhanced = physical numbers added to the population by translocations, Up = underlying increase in numbers after allowing for translocations in or out, Down = reduction in underlying numbers after allowing for translocations in or out, Down? = reduction in total number is probable but to be confirmed, Min = least number of rhino present

## Population trends

**Black rhino:** A wave of poaching of black rhino started in East Africa in the 1960s spreading rapidly to the west and south. From an estimated 100,000 individuals at that time, there was a drastic decline in numbers, bottoming out in the early 1990s (reaching a low of 2,410 in 1995), but subsequently doubling to reach 4,880 by the end of 2010 as a result of conservation efforts (see Figure 2).

**White rhino:** The total population of the southern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) was reduced to just 20- 50 individuals in the Umfolozi Game Reserve in South Africa in 1895. Operation Rhino was launched with the first successful translocation out of Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park in 1961. Numbers of populations and rhinos have increased ever since and the result has been one of the world's great success stories with the sub-species being successfully translocated to new areas in eight other countries and throughout South Africa, increasing to about 20,170 individuals in the wild at the end of 2010 (figure 2). In contrast, the last remaining confirmed wild population of the northern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*) was recently killed off by poachers in the Garamba National Park in the DRC, and today there are only four remaining in Kenya following a translocation of the last four potentially breeding northern white rhinos from Dvur Karlove Zoo in the Czech Republic.

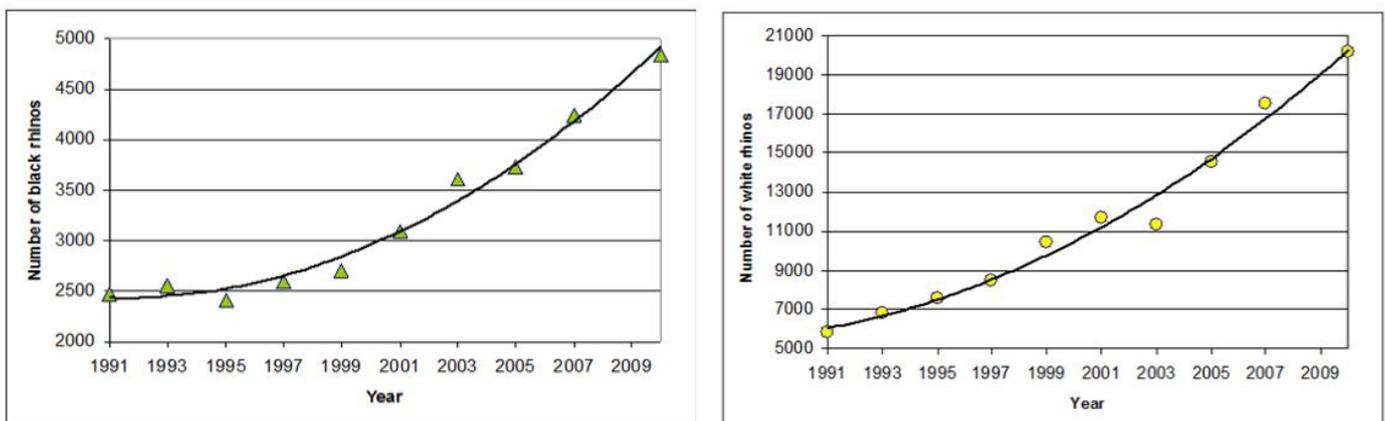


Figure 2. Population trends Black & White Rhino (subspecies and populations combined) from 1991-2010 (AfRSG)

Although the figures presented here seem very encouraging, it should be noted that the estimated number of Black Rhino was approximately 65,000 animals in 1970. Populations of both species have increased in recent years, but African rhinos still rely on conservation efforts for their long term survival.

## Main threats

### Poaching and illegal trade

The main threat for both rhino species is poaching for the international rhino horn trade. Rhino horn has two main uses: traditional (and more recently new non-traditional) use in Asian medicine, and ornamental use (for example, rhino horn is a highly prized material for making ornately carved handles for ceremonial daggers or Jambiyas worn in some Middle East countries). In recent years there has been an upsurge in black market prices for rhino horn which has coincided with an increase in poaching in some range states. This increase has coincided with new use of rhino horn to supposedly treat cancer (a non-traditional use) and one for which there is no supporting clinical evidence of its effectiveness. Vietnam is the top destination for South African rhino horn and fails on compliance and enforcement. Poaching levels have increased dramatically in recent years (Milliken et al. 2009). Figure 3 shown trends in rhino poaching in South Africa alone. In 2011 an approximate total number of 480 rhino's was poached throughout Africa and 232 people were arrested for poaching activities

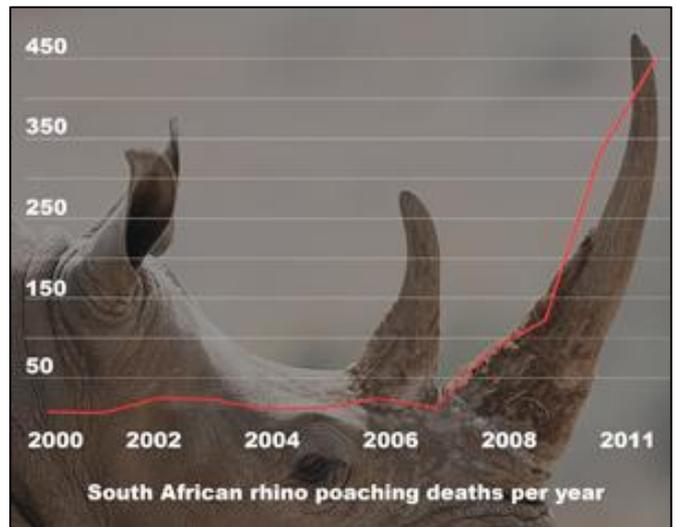


Figure 3. Nr of rhino's (Black & White combined) poached in South Africa between 2000 and 2011 (Eustace, 2012 in WWF Black Rhino range expansion programme evaluation).

Whilst poaching pressure initially increased during civil unrest and war in the late 1990s in both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring Sudan, good reproduction enabled the Northern White Rhino population to remain relatively stable. However, since 2003, poaching escalated and the population declined rapidly with 11 carcasses found in a three-month period between March and May 2004. Confirmed numbers of Northern White Rhino fell from 30 individuals in April 2003 to just four in August 2005. No live rhino have been seen since 2006 or signs of live rhino (spoor or dung) reported since 2007 despite intensive systematic foot surveys. It is believed that the Northern White Rhino has probably gone extinct in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

### Civil unrest

Civil unrest and the free flow of weapons in Africa have had a significant impact on African rhino conservation efforts. Black Rhino populations in Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda have to varying degrees all suffered from the consequences of war and civil unrest since the 1960s (Emslie and Brooks, 1999). The negative effects of this have been exacerbated when combined with lack of political will and lack of conservation expenditure by some governments. Some detrimental effects include trading of rhino horn and ivory for weapons, increased poaching due to increased poverty in times of civil unrest, and diminished levels of protection for rhino populations as funds are diverted away from wildlife departments.

## WWF Programmes

WWF has supported rhino conservation in Africa since 1961. By the mid 1990s, WWF International's Programme Committee decided that a coherent and programmatic approach to rhino conservation in Africa was required and called for the development and implementation of an action plan that defined what WWF is doing to support African rhino conservation. The 'African Rhino Action Plan' developed in 1997 effectively marked the birth of WWF's African Rhino Programme (ARP).

### Vision

In 50 years time, viable and well-distributed populations and/or meta-populations of African rhinoceroses occur throughout their natural historic range in Africa, acting as flagship species for biodiversity conservation and wildlife-based sustainable economic development.

### Meta-goal for 2020

By 2020, at least five key rhino populations and /or meta-populations are increasing by at least 5% per annum and at least two new populations have been established.

This goal is designed to take advantage of current opportunities and minimize the impact of identified threats.

The main objectives of the African Rhino Action Plan for 2015 are:

- 1.1. International and national controls on live specimens and rhino horn possession and trade strengthened to reflect CITES commitments by 2015;
- 1.2. Regional and national strategies pertaining to rhino management developed and/or updated by 2015;
- 1.3. Regional and National capacity strengthened for coordination of law enforcement efforts to implement legislation and policies that support rhino conservation by 2015;
- 2.1. Sufficient range for establishment of at least two new rhino populations secured by 2015;
- 3.1. Protection and biological management established, maintained or improved at five sites so that rhino populations at these sites increase at a minimum of 5% per annum by 2015;
- 3.2. Viable rhino re-introduction project supported in at least 1 recovering range states by 2015;
- 4.1. Opportunities that rhinos provide as a "flagship" species to promote wildlife-based land use for the amelioration of rural poverty enhanced by 2015;
- 5.1. Judiciary, local communities, decision- and policy- makers are aware of rhino conservation and actively support rhino conservation needs and opportunities by 2015;
- 6.1 Leadership capacity for rhino conservation management and coordination strengthened by 2015.

The Black Rhino Range Expansion Project (BRREP) was initiated in 2003 as a major WWF project to help conserve the species by enhancing the protection and growth rate of selected populations and to expand the range of black rhino to new areas in suitably large tracts of land with adequate habitat for the species.

Since the project began in 2003:

- Black rhino range in KwaZulu-Natal increased by 34% (approximately 90.000 hectares);
- About 18% of black rhino in KwaZulu-Natal are now on Project partner sites;
- A founder population of black rhino were released for the first time on to a community-owned site;
- The Project proved that partnerships between landowners and formal conservation organizations make otherwise unattainable goals possible.;
- Nearly 100 black rhino have been translocated and more than 30 calves have been born on project sites.



### References

- Emslie, R. and Brooks, M. 1999. African Rhino: Status Survey and Action Plan. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.
- Emslie, R. 2011. *Diceros bicornis*. In: IUCN 2011. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2011.2, available at: [www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org), accessed May 2012.
- Emslie, R.H. and Knight, M.H., 2011. information report released at CITES SC 61, published by IUCN
- Hanks, 2012. Project evaluation and scoping of WWF's African Rhino programme
- Hanks, 2012. Project evaluation and scoping of the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project, Phase 3
- IUCN SSC AfrSG, 2012
- WWF, 2012. African Rhino Action Plan 2013- 2015 (under development)
- WWF, 2012. Wildlife Crime Scorecard: Key findings and recommendations