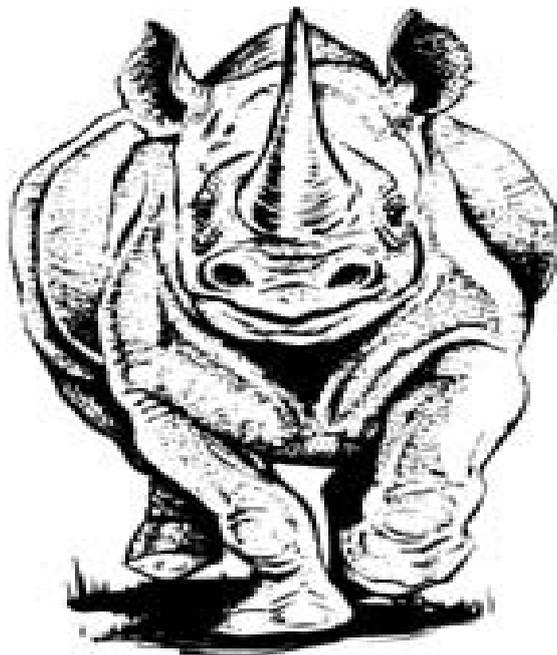


# The Rhinoceros



**The scientific name** for the black rhinoceros is *Diceros bicornis*.

Black rhinoceroses have a sort of “attack-first-and-ask-questions-later” attitude. When a rhino catches the scent of a human or anything else unfamiliar, it is likely to charge. Rhinos can't see well, so they sometimes charge objects like trees and rocks, mistaking them as threats. But rhinos have keen senses of smell and hearing.

Biologists think that the black rhinos' quick-to-charge attitude is due to their poor vision—they quickly attack any perceived threat, and their perception is mainly through smell. Most of the rhinos' charges are bluffs, but these unpredictable animals can be dangerous.

Rhinos don't clash just with other animals or objects; sometimes they fight with each other. Males often battle over territory and females. Even courting males and females sometimes fight one another.

Black rhinos use the bigger of the two horns on their noses as weapons in a fight. Their horns, made of a substance similar to that of human fingernails, sometimes break off, but they regenerate, or grow back.

Female rhinos also use their horns to protect their babies from predators such as lions, crocodiles, and hyenas. In spite of their fierce reputation, black rhinos do have a “softer” side. The females are very attentive mothers. They look after their young for years, protecting them from enemies and teaching them how to survive independently.

Young rhinos usually stay with their mothers until a sibling is born. By then they're generally over two years old, almost adult size, and ready to live on their own.

Humans are the only real threat to adult black rhinos. No other animal is a match for a full-grown rhino and its heavily

armored body of very thick skin and lethal horns. But human poachers threaten the species' survival.

People often illegally kill the protected, endangered rhinos for the animals' horns. In several Asian cultures, people believe that a rhino horn provides powerful medicine for a variety of ailments. Other people, who live mainly in northern Africa, use rhino horns to make the handles for special daggers. Since rhino horns fetch high prices, many poachers are willing to break the law and kill these endangered animals.

Text by Catherine D. Hughes





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## Fun Facts

White rhinos communicate using a variety of noises, including squeals (when they're distressed); growls (as threats); and snorts (during courtship).

Female Javan rhinos are pregnant for 16 months and only have offspring every four or five years.

While rhinos generally try to avoid humans, they can be ferocious if they are cornered or feel threatened.

The white rhinoceros is also called the square-lipped rhinoceros. Its broad lips are shaped for grazing on short grasses.

Great Indian rhinos live in farmland and woodlands in parts of northern India, Nepal, and a few neighboring countries.

The word "rhinoceros" comes from two ancient Greek words. "Rhino" means nose, and "ceros" means horn

There are five species of rhinoceros: black, white, Javan, great Indian, and Sumatran

Rhinos may live up to 45 years old in captivity

The white rhino is one of the largest living land animals.

Rhinos don't see very well, but scientists think they can smell and hear well.

Rhinoceros (or "rhinos" for short) are tough contestants for the title of "World's Second Heaviest

Land Animal". While there is no doubt that elephants are the world's heaviest land animals, there is no consensus among scientists about the first place runner-up. Well, this truly is a tough call, because the two finalists - rhinos and hippos - both weigh more than 7,000 pounds!

Rhinos live in a wide range of environments. Some rhino species take their residence in savannahs, some inhabit open woodlands, and others prefer dense tropical forests. Although rhinos have an intimidating appearance, they are actually vegetarians feeding on grasses, twigs, leaves, and shrubs.

There are five different species of rhinos; two live in Africa (white rhinos and black rhinos) and three in Asia (Indian rhinos, Javan rhinos, and Sumatran rhinos). White rhinos, black rhinos, and Sumatran rhinos all have two horns, while Indian rhinos and Javan rhinos possess just a single horn. With the exception of Sumatran rhinos, the other four rhino species have almost no hair on their thick skin. All rhinos have short and stocky legs to support their barrel-shaped bodies.

## Acknowledgements

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