

THE AMAZING RHINOCEROS

The rhinoceros is the second largest land mammal after the elephant. There are five species of rhinoceros: white, black, greater one-horned, Sumatran and Javan. The name rhinoceros means nose horn and is sometimes shortened to rhino. Rhinos are characterised by their large size and each species weighs over a ton. They are known for their distinct 'prehistoric' look: an appropriate name for one of the oldest land mammal species in the world. Three of the five species are listed as being critically endangered: black, Javan and Sumatran.

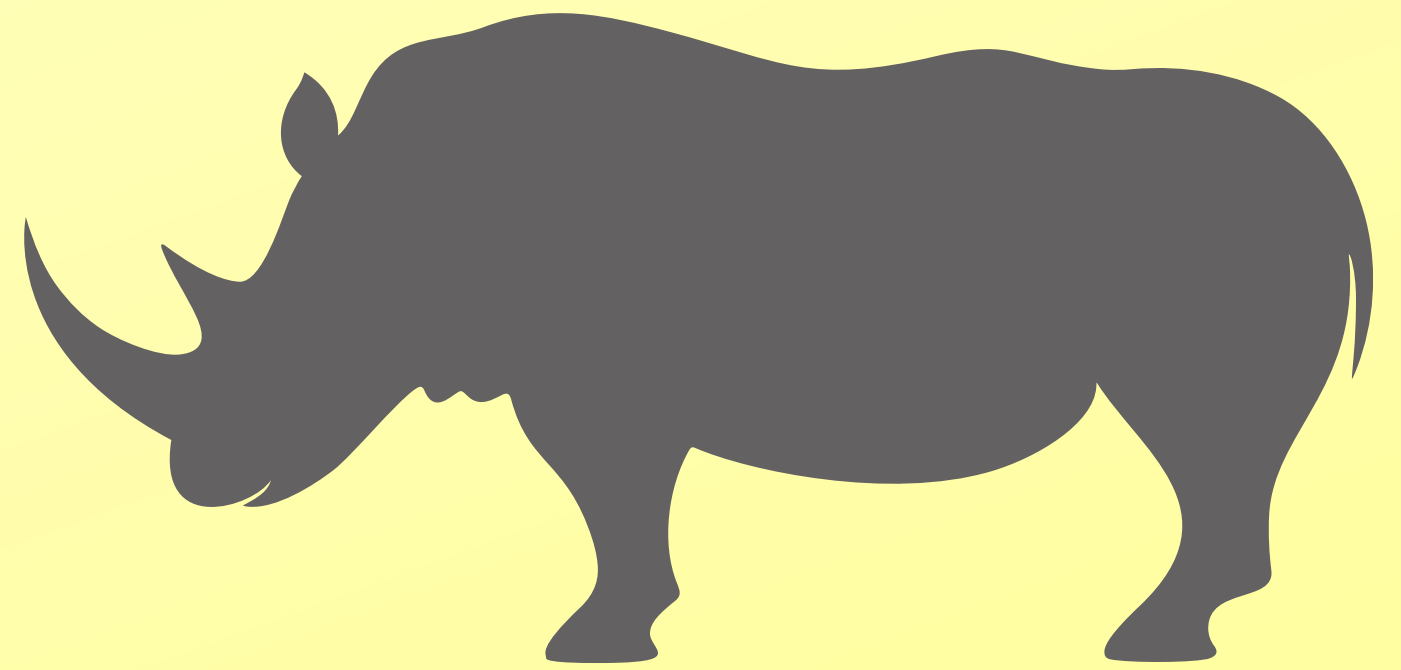


This means that they have fifty per cent chance of becoming extinct in three generations.

The white rhino has recovered from near extinction as a species thanks to intensive conservation efforts. However, other species are still threatened by extinction. The black rhino is now critically endangered with only around five thousand remaining in the wild. They live throughout Southern and Eastern Africa in a range of dense bush habitats where there are sufficient resources to support them. They will look for areas where there are shrubs and woody plant life with a water source nearby. In Africa they are found in woodlands, forests, semi-desert savannah and wetlands.

Black rhinos are entirely grey. However, their actual colour is determined by the soil in which they roll. They have large ears that can rotate to pick up sounds from many directions. Although black rhinos have an excellent sense of smell, their eyesight is very limited

which may explain why rhinos will charge before they investigate their target. The black rhino is characterised by its two very large keratin horns which can measure almost one metre in length. It is these horns that have led to the rhino being critically endangered.



Black rhinos have been hunted relentlessly by poachers for their valuable horns. Rhino horns are harvested by poachers selling them for high prices. They are then used to make dagger handles or medicine to cure a range of diseases. Because of this poaching, numbers have dramatically fallen from 1970 onwards. Today, the black rhino remains a rare sight.

With strict protection measures put in place and with conservation efforts, black rhinos are slowly recovering. It is important that we continue to support these conservation efforts to ensure that the rhino does not become extinct. It is clear that if nothing is done, this amazing creature could disappear for good.

DO YOU REALLY WANT THAT TO HAPPEN?