



BLACK RHINO

Perissodactyla
Family: Rhinocerotidae
Genus: *Diceros*
Species: *bicornis*



Range: scattered populations in Kenya, Tanzania, Cameroon, Zambia, and Mozambique

Habitat: bushy & grassy plains, dense brush to open forest, and semiarid regions.

Niche: terrestrial, crepuscular, herbivorous

Wild diet: leguminous herb, and shrubs among 200+ plants found in 50 families

Zoo diet: horse chow, alfalfa, oats, hay, pipeline, fruits, vegetables, acacia and other browse

Life Span: (Wild) 40 years without poaching pressures, 16-20 years with poaching
 (Captivity) 40-45 years

Sexual dimorphism: male larger but female horn is more slender than males

Location in SF Zoo: Lion Fountain Trail, next to hippo

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

The black rhinoceros are characterized by the two large horns on their nose, the front one being the largest. These horns can measure up to 50 inches in length and are made of hardened compressed hair-like fibers on a bony base. They have small eyes and are extremely nearsighted, making the rhino dangerous and unpredictable, and likely to charge unfamiliar sounds and smells. They have prominent, erect ears swivel to pick up sounds and with their excellent sense of smell they are able to obtain information about their surroundings and help detect danger.

A thick, wrinkled, tough hide protects the rhino as it pushes its way through the thorny acacia trees and bushes it likes to eat. The rhino uses its prehensile (grasping) upper lip to strip nutritious leaves off tough branches. Rhinos run and walk on their toes and are able to reach speeds of 28 - 35 miles per hour for short distances.

Weight:	2,000 - 3,000 lbs
Length:	10 - 12.5 ft
SH:	4.5 - 6 ft
TL:	1.66 - 4.33 ft
Ft Horn:	1.66 - 4.33 ft

Dentition: I0/0, C0/0, PM 3/3, M 3/3 x 2 = 24. Black rhinos are browsers.

STATUS & CONSERVATION

Black rhinos are Critically Endangered. Before 1960, the population of black rhinos throughout the eastern and southern parts of Africa was approximately 200,000. Due to large-scale poaching, 95% of the rhinos in existence have now been killed. There are 4,880 black rhinos alive today and most of those are protected by armed guards.

Rhinoceros horns are valued by some cultures for folk medicines and for decorative dagger handles. As a result, the black rhino has been hunted nearly to extinction. Although big cats can prey on young rhinos, the adult animal has only one enemy: humans. Rhinoceros populations have also come under pressure as a consequence of bush clearing for agriculture and firewood.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

Rhinos use several forms of communication. Vocalizations include grunts, squeals, gurgling, loud puffing snorts when alarmed. Due to their bad eyesight and solitary nature, urine spraying, foot-dragging tracks and dung heaps are important forms of communication among other black rhinos.

Males are solitary, but not territorial in the strict sense of the word. By urine-spraying shrubs and rocks and using communal dung heaps rhinos mark their trails and borders. Males urine to the rear and can spray a distance of 10 to 13 ft. Trails are further marked by males trampling their fresh dung piles thus soaking the soles of their feet. When co specifics meet they challenge each other by snorting, pawing the ground and short charges. Rhinos feed morning and evening, sleep in the shade or wallow in mud during the hot part of the day. Wallowing provides cooling and protection from flies and biting insects.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Mating and births can occur any time of year. Males are chosen by the females and during peak estrus (3 days) she may mate with several males. These males approach a female to determine her status by checking her urine by the flehmen response. He may circle and feint an attack then back off, if female permits he may nuzzle her flank and shoulder. When the calf is due, the cow hides in thick cover and will remain reclusive while calf is young, since bulls have been known to attack small calves. The female may not mate again for 8-10 months after calf is born. Calves may remain with their mother for 2-3 years. Calf can walk in about an hour and when traveling they remain close behind their mother.

Estrous Polyestrous 17 - 60 days	Sexual Maturity: M 8 yrs / F 6 yrs
Gestation: 450 d / 15 months	Weaning Age: 2+ yrs
# of Mammae: 1 pr	Weight at birth: 55-88 lbs.
# of Young: 1	

MISCELLANEOUS

Subspecies include: Western (*Diceros bicornis longipes*) Eastern (*Diceros bicornis michaeli*) South-western (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*) South-central (*Diceros bicornis minor*) **Diceros**: from the Greek di, meaning "two" and ceros, meaning "horn" and **bicornis**: from the Latin bi, meaning "two" and cornis, meaning "horn"

Sources:

Updated: 11/94, 9/07, 6/13

Macdonald 1984 / Novak 1991 / Penny 1987 / Wright 1991 / Zoobooks 1991

The Behavior Guide to African Mammals © 1992 by RD Estes p 228 - 31

<http://www.rhinos-irf.org/rhinoinformation/blackrhino/index.htm>

http://www.botany.uwc.ac.za/Envfacts/Black_Rhino/