

# Black Rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*) Conservation Profile Synopsis

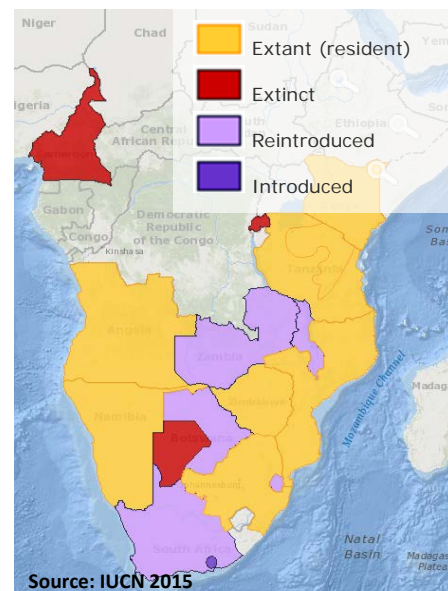


## State of the Species

Once the most numerous rhinoceros species at an estimated 850,000 individuals, black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) populations declined to less than 100,000 animals by 1960 as a result of hunting and habitat loss<sup>1</sup>. From that point, a poaching-driven decline reduced

populations by approximately 98% to 2,400 animals by the mid-1990s. Due to sustained conservation efforts, numbers of this species increased to almost 5,000 animals in 2010<sup>1</sup>, though a massive resurgence in poaching in recent years threatens this species once again.

As of 2010, around 96% of the total black rhino population was in four countries: South Africa (39% of total), Namibia (36%), Kenya (12%), and Zimbabwe (9%)<sup>1</sup>. Of the three extant subspecies of black rhino, populations of the south-western (*D.b.bicornis*) and southern-central (*D.b.minor*) are more robust at approximately 1,900 and 2,200 animals, respectively, compared to 7-800 animals of the eastern subspecies (*D.b.michaeli*)<sup>1</sup>. The West African subspecies (*D.b.longipes*) was declared extinct in 2011.



### Status

#### African Subpopulation

IUCN	Critically Endangered
ESA	Endangered
CITES	Appendix I

#### AZA Eastern Black Rhinoceros Subpopulation

##### Rhinoceros Taxon Advisory Group

Chair	Steve Shurter
SSP Coordinator	Lisa Smith
AZA	Yellow SSP
AZA population	60 individuals

## Primary Threats to the Species

The greatest threat to black rhinos is poaching to satisfy demand for traditional Chinese medicine in East Asia. Demand exists in some Middle Eastern countries as well for use as traditional dagger handles. A resurgence of poaching began in 2008 and has been increasing<sup>2</sup>. The rhino horn trade has increasingly included involvement by organized crime syndicates, increasing the effectiveness of poaching and smuggling operations<sup>3</sup>. The value of rhino horn has grown to surpass that of gold and other high-value commodities<sup>2</sup>, making the incentive for poaching extremely high. As such, efforts to conserve black rhinos must include reducing the demand for horns in addition to protection of animals and their habitat in Africa.

## AZA Conservation Support

Between 2010 and 2014, 24 AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums reported taking part in a variety of field conservation projects benefitting black rhinos amounting to over \$1.3 million in black rhino conservation. The AZA community invested an additional \$1.2 million to support organizations such as the International Rhino Foundation, a charity dedicated to the global conservation of rhinos through allocation of funds towards projects and species in need. For over two decades, AZA-accredited institutions have provided financial support to the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya, through the American Association of Zoo Keepers' Bowling for Rhinos program. Lewa is home to 12% of Kenya's black rhinoceros population, making it an integral partner to AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums that are dedicated to rhino conservation. This is not an exhaustive list of organizations, but these efforts represent the significant ties that AZA-institutions have with rhinoceros-focused conservation organizations.



1. IUCN. 2015. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. <http://www.iucnredlist.org> Downloaded on 08 May 2015
2. Biggs et al. 2013. Legal trade of Africa's rhino horns. Science 339: 1038-1039.
3. Zimmerman. 2003. The black market for wildlife: Combating transnational organized crime in the illegal wildlife trade. Vanderbilt journal of transnational law 36: 1657-1689.