



BLACK RHINOCEROS



Diceros bicornis minor

STATUS

- Critically Endangered
- The Black Rhinoceros has been pushed to the brink of extinction by illegal poaching for their horn and by loss of habitat
- There are currently approximately 3,500 (2,500 in the wild)
- The West African sub-species of Black Rhinoceros was presumed extinct by the IUCN in 2007.

ORIGIN

- Black rhinoceros are native to the eastern and central parts of Africa including Kenya, Tanzania, Cameroon, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe
- The sub-species at Monarto Zoo is found in South Central Africa.

HABITAT

- Black rhinoceros live in long and short grass savannahs. They prefer habitat which includes trees and water.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- Black rhinoceros are solitary animals with the exception of coming together to mate
- Mothers and calves will sometimes gather in small groups for short periods of time.

DESCRIPTION

- The Black rhinoceros is a herbivorous browser that eats leafy plants, branches, shoots, thorny bushes and fruit
- It has a relatively narrow snout with a prehensile upper lip (one that can grab things)
- The two horns are made of 'keratin' which is like compressed hair, not bone
- The Black rhinoceros is hairless except for fringed ears and tail bristles

- Adult weigh from 800 to 1100 kg
- Females are sexually mature at five years and males at seven years.

POINTS OF INTEREST

- Black rhinoceros can go without water for two to four days, but often drink twice daily if water is nearby
- Black Rhinoceros do not have a distinguishing shoulder hump like the White rhinoceros and the Black rhino is smaller than the White rhino
- The gestation period is fifteen months and females can have one calf every two to three years
- The expected life span is thirty five to sixty years
- Thick skin protects the Black rhinoceros from thorns and sharp grasses. Parasites, like crabs often live in their skin and these are eaten by ox-peckers and egrets that live with the rhino
- Black rhinoceros have poor eyesight and rely more on hearing and smell to sense their surroundings.
- The name “Black” was given to this species to distinguish it from the larger “White” rhinoceros. However it was all a big mistake. The White rhinoceros has a **wide** mouth, adapted for eating grass. The Afrikaans word for “wide” sound like “white” and this name has stuck. Both Black and White rhinoceros have similar grey colouration.