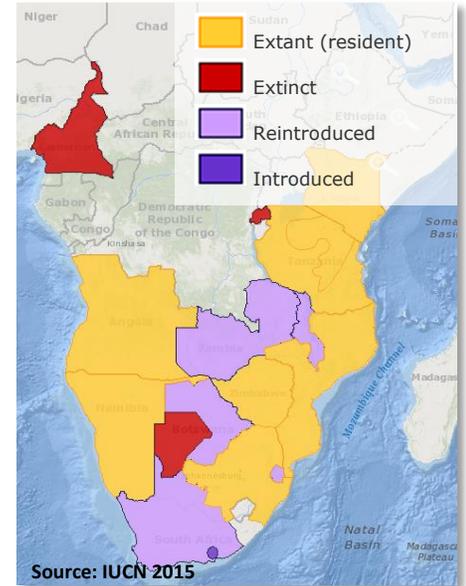


Black Rhinoceros Conservation Summary



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 loss¹. 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 2010¹, 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%).¹ 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*)¹. The West African subspecies (*D.b.longipes*) was declared extinct in 2011.

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 increasing². The rhino horn trade has increasingly included involvement by organized crime syndicates, increasing the effectiveness of poaching and smuggling operations³. The value of rhino horn has grown to surpass that of gold and other high-value commodities², 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 2012 and 2016, 31 AZA-accredited zoos & aquariums reported taking part in a variety of field conservation projects that benefited the black rhino. Over these five years, the AZA community invested over \$1.7 million in black rhino conservation. 82 institutions also reported spending over \$2.2 million towards more general rhino conservation efforts which may have partially benefitted black rhinos. In addition, for over two decades, AZA-accredited institutions have raised funds through the "Bowling for Rhinos" program of the American Association of Zoo Keepers, an AZA Conservation Partner. Funds have been directed to in-range conservation programs in both Africa and Asia, affecting not only the black rhino, but the four other extant rhino species (white, Indian / greater one-horned, Javan, and Sumatran) as well.



References:

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.