

# **PROJECT RHINO**

## **RHINOCEROS UNICORNIS**

SCIENTIFIC NAME

## **VULNERABLE**

IUCN STATUS

**2005**

INTRODUCTION OF PROJECT  
RHINO IN INDIA

**5,500 SQ.KM**

PROTECTED AREA UNDER  
PROJECT RHINO - INDIA

**APPROX. 2,900**

POPULATION IN INDIA

**APPROX. 3,600**

POPULATION IN THE WORLD



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# Conservation of Greater One-Horned Rhinos

- ❑ Of all rhino species, Indian rhinos, also popular as **Greater one-horned rhinos**, are possibly the most prehistoric ones. Their skin is like a thick armour plate which reminds of dinosaurs. But, it's the one horn that makes them distinctive and special from other rhino species. Unlike the critically endangered black rhinos, greater one-horned rhinos are counted in the **vulnerable category** mainly because of the lower threat of poaching. At present, these beautiful species can only be found in two places; **Kaziranga National Park in Assam, India** and **Chitwan National Park in Nepal**.
- ❑ These creatures were once at the stage of extinction. From a mere population of **75 in 1905 to 2700 by 2012**, the rhino conservation effort of Government of India has seen tremendous success over the years. **In 1986 Indian rhinos were given the status of endangered species**. The stern policies of the rhino conservation project in India, initiated by the Indian wildlife and the government, that we have seen Indian rhinos repopulated from around 200 in the late 19th century to over 3000 at present.

# Reasons Behind the Declining Population of Rhinos

- 1. Sport Hunting:** In the late 1800s and early 1900s, there was a trend amongst royals for sport hunting. It was during this period when Greater one-horned rhinos were hunted continuously and relentlessly. There were several reports that claimed that the Britishers in Assam, especially military officers, killed more than 200 Indian rhinos out of sport hunting. And as a result of that, the population of these wild species declined to around 12 in Kaziranga National Park by the year 1908.
- 2. Poaching:** Poaching has always been a threat to wildlife. It is the most important reason for the decline in the population of Indian rhinos.
- 3. Habitat Loss or Human-Rhino Conflict:** With the increasing human population, the needs of every human being is also increasing. Since a long time, humans are entering in the wildlife habitat. In order to have fresh lands. This results in the disappearance of alluvial plain grasslands that are the necessity of rhinos.
- 4. Population Density and Genetic Diversity:** Some times, high population density can also be a reason to start a conservation programme. High population leads to lower breeding rates.

# Steps Taken Towards Rhino Conservation in India

Since 1986, these wild creatures has been listed as **endangered** in the list of **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)**. However, in 2008, Indian Rhinos were listed as **vulnerable** on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. From the journey of endangered to vulnerable includes various strict measures and policies that have imparted by the government in association with **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)** and other non-government organization that work towards wildlife conservation. Some of the steps taken towards Rhinos conservation are:

- 1. Indian Rhino Mission 2020:** Despite the strict measures and policies, there always remains a major threat of poaching to Indian rhinos. Back in the year 2005, the Assam government along with the International Rhino Foundation, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Bodoland Territorial Council, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service launched the '**Indian Rhino Mission 2020**'. This entire mission was basically an effort to attain the rhino population of at least 3000 in seven protected areas of Assam by the year 2020. Under this initiative, Indian rhinos are moved by the concerned authorities from the crowded places like Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary and Kaziranga National Park to protected areas. The reason for doing so is to provide ample space to these creatures to breed so they can live long.
- 2. Restoring Landscapes:** With the rise in rhino population, there would there was a need for additional space to breed and live. All the concerned organization started restoring rhino habitat not just in India but Nepal as well. For that, habitat corridors were secured so that these creatures can move to higher areas during flood times.

**3. Working with Locals:** In India and Nepal, protected areas of greater one-horned rhinos are engirdled by human settlements. Therefore, it was important for the rhino conservation in India that the locals residing around the rhino reserved must sympathetic towards the species. Several projects have been carrying out towards the conservation of Indian rhinos that also ensure livelihood to locals by asking them to plant several specific floral species that support anti-poaching operations. This also helps in reducing the conflicts between humans and rhinos.

**4. Reducing Illegal Trade:** Several measures are being taken to stop the illegal trade of rhino horn by its concerned organization along with TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade monitoring network. Intelligence network and anti-poaching patrols are operating from strategic locations to prevent illegal trade of rhino horns in the black markets of Asia.

**5. Monitoring and Census:** In every three years, the census of Indian rhinos is done in Kaziranga National Park. This census is carried out in a visual count form. Along with that, a recording of mortality is also carried out during this time.

**6. Reinforcing the Law Enforcement:** All the concerned rhino conservation experts along with the state government aim to strengthen the wildlife laws and their enforcement. They also fund anti-poaching resources and operations in the protected areas. A debatable measure, Kaziranga National Park in Assam has implemented a law in which guards or forest rangers can shoot a poacher in order to save rhinos.

- Being a part of society, it's very important to be aware of the importance of rhino conservation in India from our part. There are a number of ways that we can follow in order to ensure how to save Indian rhinos as follows:

**Engage with the Wildlife Conservation Community**

**Visit National Park**

**Say No to Animal Products or Illegal Wildlife Parts**

**Learn More about the Risks to Wildlife**

**Spread Your Awareness to Inspire Others to Act**

- We can help rhino conservation project by being a helping hand of various organisations and foundations and staying connected with them. From our part, we can impart our knowledge to others and educate them about the importance of wildlife conservation in India. It is the easiest and effective way to make more and more people work towards the conservation programme.
- In today's world where a number of wildlife species are on their brink of extinction, we have given ourselves a chance to make sure to not make the Indian rhino species going into the category of endangered again. So, let's take a pledge to even contribute a small amount of our effort towards this great cause. Just make sure do not let the beautiful greater one-horned rhino species to say bye to this world so soon.