



PRIVATE • GAME • LODGE

Rhino of the Greater Makalali Nature Reserve

History of the Rhino Species

There are five different species of rhino; three exist in Asia and two in Africa. Asia has the Greater One-horned rhino, the Javan rhino and the Sumatran rhino.

At the start of the 19th century the greater one-horned rhino was hunted to near extinction, with less than 200 animals remaining. There has been a huge amount of work done by the Indian and Nepalese protection agencies to improve the numbers to what it is today, over 3 500.

The Javan rhino population numbers however, are dismal with only 67 remaining. The main threat to the survival of the Javan rhino is a limited genetic pool due to the small population size that exists; which has led to inbreeding. The population is growing but the available habitat for these animals needs to be expanded to support any significant growth.

The population of the Sumatran rhino is also dwindling. There are currently thought to be less than 80 rhinos in existence. The main cause is a reduction and fragmentation of their natural habitat which makes it difficult for the animals to meet and breed. This is a recurring cause for declining wildlife numbers in Sumatra where large sections of the rainforest has been destroyed to make way for palm sugar plantations.

Closer to home, in Africa, the two species of rhinos are the white and black rhino. The white rhino is one of Africa's greatest conservation success stories. In the early 1900's there was less than 100 white rhinos. This has now increased to between 19 500 and 21 000, with the larger population found in South Africa.

Poaching has caused the black rhino population to drop from an estimated 65 000 in 1970, to less than 2 500 in 1995. Recently numbers have begun to increase and are now estimated to be over 5 000. This increase is driven by a dedicated conservation effort to prevent poaching.

Over 1,000 rhinos are poached each year in South Africa. They are killed solely for their horns which are sold on the black market around the world. The biggest markets are in China, Yemen and Vietnam. In 2016 the Kruger National Park lost 458 rhino between January and late August alone.

Why Are Rhino Poached

Commercial rhino poaching started as recently as 1970. The sole reason that rhinos are poached is for their horns. The horn is traditionally believed to have many uses, for example, in Chinese and Vietnamese culture; it is used as an aphrodisiac and as a cure for illnesses like headaches, fever, cancer and even impotence. More recent studies have shown that the horn is used as a status symbol by the uber wealthy. In Yemen, it is also used in the production of an ornamental dagger called a "Jambiya".

Rhino horn is valued at around R200 000 to R300 000 (USD14,000 - USD21,500) per kilogram.

Since 2007 there have been 7 245 African rhinos poached.



White Rhino



Black Rhino

Anti-Poaching Efforts

Field rangers are the front line of defence against poaching. A field ranger is a trained security person, deployed on foot or vehicle into a game reserve with the sole intention of looking for poaching activity. Field rangers not only face the dangers of some of the wildlife that they protect, but also the reality of potentially dangerous interactions with poachers who in some cases are armed. K9 Units have been very successful in counteracting poaching, as tracker dogs can sniff out a poacher's trail much faster than a human can track by sight. Dogs also come in handy during the apprehension of a poaching suspect.

Dehorning of rhino in an area badly affected by poaching can also be successful deterrent. A rhino can be safely dehorned without harming the animal, but the process needs to be repeated every 2 years as the horn grows out again. This solution is only viable in smaller private game reserves where the population is known. It is used as a measure to protect the animal, although the action is not ideal as rhino use their horn for fighting and defence of their young.

In areas where poaching is prolific, high-tech equipment is being implemented to try and halt the tide. These methods can be split into proactive, such as drones, infrared cameras, and GPS collars; and reactive for example DNA tracking. These methods have all had great success in deterring poachers; but the cost is high and, in many cases, unaffordable.

Why Protect Rhino?

From an ethical point of view, rhinos are a key part of the ecosystem. Wildlife reserves and conservation areas aim to protect all species within their boundaries. When a species is struggling, especially due to human activity, it is our moral duty to assist and give particular attention to that species, be it a mammal, bird, reptile, fish or plant.

From an ecological point of view, rhinos are considered a keystone species. The removal of a keystone species dramatically affects the environment and other wildlife. White rhino, for example, play an important role in maintaining grazing lawns which other animals benefit from.

Greater Makalali Nature Reserve

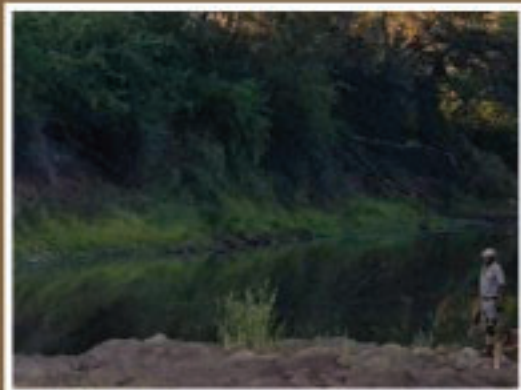
The Greater Makalali Nature Reserve (GMNR) is located in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The entire reserve is fenced in an area of 21 200 hectares. In 1994 a game reintroduction program of endangered species and species previously extinct to the area began. This was part of the first ever relocation of intact family groups of adult elephants from the Kruger National Park. A year later; lions, spotted hyenas, hippos, and white rhinos were also relocated onto the property, along with cheetahs the following year. With the reintroduction of black rhinos in 2015, GMNR finally hosted all the game species previously indigenous, except for roan and sable antelope. The GMNR is involved in a project called the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project (BRREP). BRREP is an initiative driven by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in collaboration with local conservation agencies and game reserves to increase numbers of the critically endangered Black Rhino. The GMNR has one of 11 new Rhino populations which were relocated to create new breeding populations. These 11 sites total 200 000 hectares of Black Rhino conducive habitat. The GMNR like the other new habitats don't own the Rhino but are the custodians ensuring their safety and wellbeing for generations to come. The GMNR is currently looking to introduce further White Rhino's in order to enhance the population and maintain genetic diversity.



Our Anti-Poaching Efforts

Like most game reserves that have rhinos, GMNR has fallen victim to poaching. In response to this we have intensified our anti-poaching efforts.

We have an anti-poaching unit on the GMNR called the K9 Conservation; with field rangers patrolling day and night. As the name suggests, they make use of dogs to assist them as they patrol the reserve. We also use GPS collars allowing the K9 Conservation and rhino monitors to actively locate and check up on our rhinos.



Field rangers on patrol

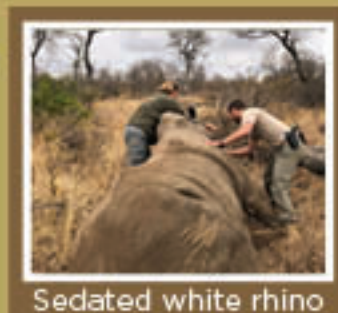


Working dogs at rest

DNA samples have been taken from all our rhinos for DNA tracking purposes. This means that if a poacher kills one of our rhinos and is subsequently caught, the horn can be traced back to GMNR, linking the poacher to multiple other crimes.

How You Can Get Involved and Help

Our rhinos are in desperate need of your help. You have the unique opportunity to be part of this essential conservation effort, helping to ensure the future safety and prosperity of the wonderful rhino population we have fought hard to build here at GMNR. Any contribution will be gratefully appreciated. Funds will go towards assisting with costs of the anti-poaching unit and Rhino monitoring on the reserve. In addition you can contribute towards or sponsor one of the collars we fit to track and protect the rhinos from poachers. The GPS collars not only allow us to track and monitor our rhinos but the data is also used for scientific research to enable conservationists to better understand and protect rhinos in the future.



Sedated white rhino



Fitting a GPS Collar to a rhino

It may even be possible to experience the rhino collaring process. This will involve accompanying the GMNR management and veterinarian as they sedate and fit a collar to one of our beautiful rhino. This is a once in a lifetime chance to get up close and personal with this endangered giant of the African bush. Take part and actively contribute to ensure these magnificent creatures are around for many generations to enjoy.

Donations to be made to: Rhino Revolution Hoedspruit Trust
FNB
Bank code - 261251
Account number - 62408963454
Swift code - FIRNZA AJXXX

All donors to please state that funds donated are to go towards the Greater Makalali Nature Reserve for Rhino protection. Donors are to request a 18A Tax Certificate if required.

Contact: Richard at shenzele@gmail.com or 072 497 7436
Rob at wardengmpgr@rawifi.co.za or 083 945 1775

