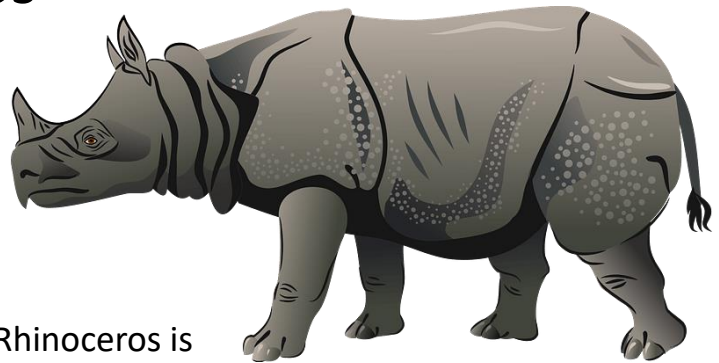


The Javan Rhinoceros

The Javan Rhinoceros is one of the rarest large mammals on the planet. The population is estimated to be between 58 to 61 animals, (2023)



The entire population of the Javan Rhinoceros is found in the Ujung Kulon National Park on the very western tip of Java, Indonesia. Once widespread throughout southeast Asia, they now only exist in Ujung Kulon National Park. The last of the rhinos in Vietnam was shot in 2010.

Description

The Javan rhino is the largest animal found in Java and the second largest in all of Indonesia, second biggest to the Asian Elephant. They range from 2 to 4 metres long and have been found to weigh up to 2 tonnes! It is believed that females are slightly bigger than males.

This species is a dusky grey color and has a single horn of up to about 25 cm. The Javan Rhino's horn is also only found on males. Its skin has a number of loose folds, giving the appearance of armor plating.

Facts about the Javan Rhinoceros:

They're heavy animals, weighing up to 2.3 tonnes.

They live to around 30-45 years in the wild.

They're herbivorous, only eating plants.

They live in live in dense, often impenetrable rain forests.

They're solitary animals, except for mating pairs and mothers with young.

They're the second largest animal in Indonesia after the Asian elephant.

Male Javan rhinos mark their territories with dung piles and by spraying urine.

They communicate with one another by scraping their feet on the ground.

They have an excellent sense of smell, but poor vision.

They are hairless.

Their skin has a natural pattern which gives them an armoured appearance.

They wallow in mud to keep cool and prevent disease and parasite infestation.

There are very few vocalizations known to the species.

The Javan rhino has no known predators apart from humans.

The Javan Rhinoceros is very shy of humans and will often become aggressive and partake in attacking and stabbing with its horn if it feels threatened.

Why the species is endangered

They are extremely vulnerable to extinction due to catastrophes, habitat loss, diseases, poaching, and potential inbreeding.

The Arenga palm has overtaken parts of the park, reducing natural forage and habitat quality. Their food source in Ujung Kulon National Park is being taken over by the invasive palm which is growing out of control.

In recent years four rhinos, including one young adult female, are thought to have died from disease, probably transmitted to wild cattle in the park and subsequently to the rhinos.

People living near the park are encroaching on and destroying crucial rhino habitat. They have been killed by farmers who regard them as agricultural pests.

The coastal Ujung Kulon National Park is highly vulnerable to tsunamis, and a major explosion of the nearby Anak Krakatau volcano could easily wipe out most life in the protected area. Rising sea levels also threaten the park.

The cause of their population decline has mainly been caused by poaching due to excessive demand for rhino horns. In the past, Javan rhinos were killed by trophy hunters. Their horns were a highly prized commodity in traditional Asian medicine. Poaching remains an ever-present threat.

Conservation strategies of the World Wildlife Fund

The first strategy is to ensure stronger protection against poaching, whether they are targeting the rhino or other species in the rhino habitat.

The second is to regularly monitor, prevent and cure diseases. Humans, livestock and other sources of disease that might be the cause, must be contained and avoided.

The third is to improve Javan rhino habitats to ensure conditions are favourable for their reproduction. One way is to monitor and control the spread of the Arenga palms.

Three species of Asian rhinos

There are three species of Asian rhinos—the greater one-horned rhino found in India and Nepal, of which there are about 4000 left; the Sumatran rhino found on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo, of which there are about 50; and the Javan rhino that is only found in one protected area on the island of Java, of which there are about 60.

A survivor story

All of the rhinos in the Ujung Kulon National Park have names. Rawing is an old rhino with the identification number 07. He's a favourite among conservation workers in the Ujung Kulon National Park because he's managed to live to a ripe old age, despite the many challenges in the area. He has a few scars to show for it, but these make him easy to recognise.

Javan rhinos like to browse widely for their favourite food plants, but until recently, wildlife rescue teams had only ever seen Rawing in the southern part of Ujung Kulon National Park. He liked it there because the invasive Arenga palms that destroy rhino plant food were not so concentrated.

But after the palms were controlled in the eastern section of the park, it was noticed that Rawing was moving into the cleared area to feed. He was even captured on remote cameras playing in this more open habitat.

Long-term survival

The World Wildlife Fund will continue working with local people to remove Arenga palms - at a rate of 66,500 a year - all by hand. Once cleared, they will plant 6,000 rhino food seedlings annually to satisfy the rhinos' big appetite.

Not only will this benefit the rhino; local people will also reap the rewards. About 50 people will be recruited to eradicate the palm, and they will continue to help with forest patrols and rhino monitoring.

