

AFRICAN RHINOS: CONSERVATION CRASH!

A GROUP OF RHINOS IS CALLED A CRASH.
LET'S LEARN WHY RHINO POPULATIONS
ACROSS AFRICA ARE CRASHING IN NUMBERS.

Rhinos across Africa are disappearing. In 1900 there were a million rhinos in Africa. In 2000 there were only a few thousand.

Rhinos could become extinct like the dinosaurs. Dinosaurs were killed by a meteor hitting the earth. That was a natural extinction event.

Humans cause the disappearance of rhinos. Rhinos may become extinct because humans are choosing to hunt them, NOT because of a natural extinction event.

Both black and white rhinoceros species are being poached (illegally hunted) for their horns.

WHAT COULD MAKE RHINO HORNS SO VALUABLE?

Are they made of diamonds or gold?
No. They are made entirely of KERATIN, the same material that makes up HUMAN FINGERNAILS and HAIR. The rhino horn is made of a solid core of mineralized keratin, surrounded by lighter layers of keratin.

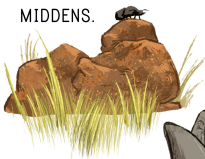
Some people think this keratin has magical or medicinal powers. Scientists have studied the keratin in rhino horns and found it has the same magical and medicinal powers that our hair and fingernails have - NONE.



RHINOS NEED THEIR HORNS, PEOPLE DON'T

Mother rhinos need their horns to chase away predators.

Rhinos leave each other chemical messages in their poop piles, which are called DUNG MIDDENS.



THE WHITE RHINOCEROS

is a grazer, meaning that it eats mostly grass. It is also called the square-lipped rhinoceros because it has straight shaped lips for chomping grass. It is the largest rhino species.



Nobody knows for sure why the rhinos were named "white" and "black". Both species are grey in color.

THE BLACK RHINOCEROS

is a browser, meaning that it eats mostly leafy plants like trees and shrubs. It is also called the hook-lipped rhinoceros because it has lips with a hook-like point that it uses for stripping leaves off of branches.



WHY SHOULD WE CARE IF RHINOS BECOME EXTINCT?

Scientists studying white rhinos in South Africa found that places with rhinos have much bigger areas of edible grass species than places without rhinos. The grazing of the white rhinos likely helps keep open areas of grass called GRAZING LAWNS that are VALUABLE FEEDING AREAS for rhinos, zebras, antelope, and other species.

The white rhinos only graze specific grasses. This allows for more diverse grazing lawns with no single type of grass dominating the area. White rhinos are a KEYSTONE (ecologically important) species. If they become extinct, then their savanna ecosystems may change in ways that make it difficult for other grazing species to find the types of grass they like to eat.



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