

Javan Rhinos



Javan rhinos are the most threatened of the five-rhino species, with 60 individuals surviving in Ujung Kulon National Park in Java, Indonesia. Vietnam's last Javan rhino was poached in 2010. The Javan rhino is a dusky grey color and has a single horn of up to about 10 inches. Their skin has a number of loose folds giving the appearance of armor plating. This species is very similar in appearance to the closely-related greater-one rhinoceros, but has a much smaller head and less apparent skin folds.



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The population in Ujung Kulon National Park represents the only hope for the survival of a species that is on the brink of extinction. Until the late 19th century and early 20th century, Javan rhinos existed from northeast India and the Sunderbans, throughout mainland Southeast Asia, and on the island of Sumatra. If we lose the population in Java, the entire species will disappear. Javan rhinos are found in only one protected area in the world. The biology of the species is poorly understood because techniques for accurately estimating their numbers are not fully developed. They are extremely vulnerable to extinction due to natural catastrophes, diseases, poaching, and potential inbreeding.

ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Javan rhinos were killed by trophy hunters during colonial times. They were also killed as agricultural pests and for their horn, a highly prized commodity in traditional Asian medicine. Poaching remains an ever-present threat and ultimately wiped out the subspecies found in Vietnam in 2010.

REDUCED GENETIC DIVERSITY

The small size of the Javan rhino population is in itself a cause for concern. Low genetic diversity could make it hard for the species to remain viable.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Ujung Kulon National Park is highly vulnerable to tsunamis and a major explosion of the Anak Krakatau volcano could easily wipe out all life in the protected area.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Nearly 50% of the park has been overrun by Arenga palm, a native but invasive species that leaves the area barren of food for rhinos.

DISEASE

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. “We have brought white, black and Indian rhinos back from the brink of extinction, so we know how to save rhino species. Now it’s time to pull together as a global conservation community to do the same for the Javan rhino.”

Dr. Barney Long Asian Species Expert



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ESTABLISHING NEW POPULATIONS

WWF and its partners are working on the development of a program to translocate rhinos from Ujung Kulon National Park to establish a new population in other suitable habitat in Indonesia. This new habitat would eliminate the threat of natural disasters and create two populations.

MONITORING AND TRACKING

WWF conducts ongoing research on the Javan rhino, which continues to reveal critical information about behavioral patterns, distribution, movement, population size, sex ratio and genetic diversity. We also work closely with the Ujung Kulon National Park Authority to keep track of rhino populations. In 2010, we received camera trap footage of two Javan rhinos and two of their calves in the dense tropical rainforests of the protected area. The videos prove that one of the world's rarest mammals are breeding. Before these camera trap images surfaced, only twelve other Javan rhino births were recorded in the past decade.

MANAGING JAVAN RHINO HABITAT

WWF supports habitat management in Ujung Kulon National Park. Our efforts focus on the removal of Arenga palm, an invasive species that leaves the area barren of food for rhinos, and support for antipoaching patrols.