



Rhino Horns are Shrinking

For Prelims: Biodiversity & Environment, Conservation, IUCN Red List, Indian Rhino Vision 2020.

For Mains: Rhinoceroses, its species, threats and conservation.

Why in News?

According to a recent study, the horns of [Rhinoceroses](#) may have become smaller over time due to **selective pressure of hunting**.

- The study used an interesting research approach—analyzing **artwork and photographs of the animal spanning** more than five centuries.
- The study relied on a repository of images maintained by the **Netherlands-based Rhino Research Center (RRC)**.

What are the Findings?

- The **five surviving rhino species** (White and Black Rhinos in Africa, and the Greater one-horned, Javan and Sumatran rhino species in Asia) are **still threatened by habitat loss and hunting**.
- The rate of decline in horn length **was highest in the critically-endangered Sumatran rhino** and lowest in the white rhino of Africa, which is the **most commonly found species** both in the wild and in captivity.
 - This observation follows patterns seen in other animals, such as **tusk size in elephants and horn length in wild sheep**, which have been driven down by directional selection due to trophy hunting
- During the age of European imperialism (between the 16th and 20th centuries), rhinos were commonly **portrayed as hunting trophies, but since the mid-20th century**, they have been increasingly portrayed in a conservation context, reflecting a change in emphasis from a more to less consumptive relationship between humans and rhinos.

What are the Key Facts about Rhino?

- **About:**
 - There are five species of rhino – white and black rhinos in Africa, and the greater one-horned, Javan, and Sumatran rhino species in Asia.
 - **IUCN Red List Status:**
 - **Black Rhino:** Critically endangered. Smaller of the two African species.
 - **White Rhino:** Near Threatened. Researchers have created an embryo of the northern white rhino by using In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) process.
 - **One-Horned Rhino:** Vulnerable
 - **Javan:** Critically Endangered
 - **Sumatran Rhino:** Critically Endangered. It has gone extinct in Malaysia.
- **Indian Rhino:**
 - **About**

- Only the **Great One-Horned Rhino** is found in India.
- Also known as Indian rhino, it is the **largest of the rhino species**.
- It is identified by a single black horn and a grey-brown hide with skin folds.
- They primarily graze, with a diet consisting almost entirely of grasses as well as leaves, branches of shrubs and trees, fruit, and aquatic plants.

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- **Habitat:**
 - The species is restricted to small habitats in Indo-Nepal terai and northern West Bengal and Assam.
 - In India, rhinos are mainly found in Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.
 - Assam has an estimated 2,640 rhinos in four protected areas, i.e. [Pabitora Wildlife Reserve](#), Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park, Kaziranga National Park, and [Manas National Park](#).
 - About 2,400 of them are in the [Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve \(KNPTR\)](#).
- **Protection Status:**
 - [IUCN Red List](#): Vulnerable.
 - [CITES](#): Appendix I.
 - [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#): Schedule I.
- **Threats:**
 - Poaching for the horns
 - Habitat loss
 - Population density
 - Decreasing Genetic diversity.

What are the Conservation Efforts in India?

- The [five rhino range nations](#) (India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia) have signed a

declaration 'The New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019' for the conservation and protection of the species.

- In 2019, the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has begun a project to create **DNA profiles of all rhinos** in the country.
- **National Rhino Conservation Strategy:** It was launched in 2019 to conserve the greater one-horned rhinoceros.
- **Indian Rhino Vision 2020:** Launched in 2005, it was an ambitious effort to attain a wild population of at least 3,000 greater one-horned rhinos spread over seven protected areas in the Indian state of Assam by the year 2020.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question:

Q. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. Asiatic lion is naturally found in India only.
2. Double-humped camel is naturally found in India only.
3. One-horned rhinoceros is naturally found in India only.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

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