

## Sumatran Rhinoceros

In 1986 it was believed there could have been as many as 800 Sumatran rhinos remaining in the wild. Now, more than 35 years later, official estimates suggest there are as few as 34-47 rhinos left in the wild.

The Sumatran rhino has not had an easy ride. Research from the Marshall University in West Virginia recently shed light on just how long the Sumatran rhino population has been having difficulties. It seems that their numbers declined dramatically due to a climate shift as long as 9,000 years ago, and have not managed to bounce back since.

More recently, widespread habitat loss and fragmentation have led to surviving animals struggling to meet and breed in the wild, while the threat of poaching still looms.

## Physical Characteristic

- **Size:** Sumatran rhino are by far the smallest species of rhino
- **Weight:** they weigh between 500-960 kg
- **Height:** 1-1.5 metres
- **Shoulder height:** they usually stand at 1.2-1.45 metres and are about 2.5 metres long
- **Skin colour:** Sumatran rhinos have a reddish-brown skin
- **Hair:** these are the hairiest species of rhino. This can vary from a short, bristly coat common in the wild, to a shaggy fur for those in captivity because there is less abrasion from vegetation. Their ears have a fringe of longer hairs, and the tail end has a tuft of thicker hairs
- **The horn:** Sumatran rhinos have two horns that are dark grey to black in colour. In the wild they are usually very smooth and form a slender cone that is curved backwards. The larger front (anterior) horn is typically 15-25 cm long, and the smaller second (posterior) horn is normally much smaller, seldom more than a few cm in length, and often just an irregular knob on the tip of the nose. Rhino horn is made of keratin, which is the same as fingernails and hair fibres. It will re-grow if broken off. It is not used for fighting, but for scraping mud from the sides of wallows, pulling down food plants, as well as aiding the protection of the head and nose when breaking through dense forest vegetation
- **Distinctive characteristics:** aside from their small size and hairy bodies that distinguish the Sumatran rhinos from other rhino species, they also have unique skin folds. There are two prominent folds in the skin that circle the body behind the front legs and before the hind legs, and lesser folds on the neck and at the base of the

legs. The skin is fairly thin, about 10-16 mm, and is soft and pliable. Sumatran rhinos also have a prehensile upper lip, which assists in grasping their food

- Sumatran rhinos can run fast and are very agile. They climb mountains easily and can negotiate very steep slopes and riverbanks. With the protection provided by the horns and rims of hard skin and cartilage on nose and head, they can easily break through the densest vegetation, leaving round tunnels