

IUCN–TRAFFIC REPORT 2025 – ENVIRONMENT

The 2025 IUCN–TRAFFIC report commends India and Nepal for strengthening monitoring and surveillance, significantly reducing rhino poaching and supporting population growth.

Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC)

Overview

TRAFFIC is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) dedicated to ensuring that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of biodiversity. It works across both legal and illegal wildlife trade to assess impacts, recommend policies, and guide enforcement measures.

Establishment and Headquarters

Established in 1976 as a joint programme of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Headquartered in Cambridge, United Kingdom, it operates in multiple regions worldwide with a network of offices.

Core Roles and Functions

1. Monitoring and Research

Collects and analyses data on both legal and illegal trade in wildlife to identify patterns, trends, and potential threats to species.

2. Impact Assessment

Evaluates how wildlife trade affects ecosystems, biodiversity, and species survival.

3. Policy Recommendations

Provides scientifically backed advice to governments, conservation agencies, and international organisations for sustainable wildlife management.

4. Law Enforcement Support

Works closely with enforcement bodies to strengthen anti-poaching efforts, enhance border checks, and detect trafficking networks.

5. Public Awareness Campaigns

Engages in initiatives to educate the public and reduce demand for illegally traded wildlife products.

TRAFFIC in India

In India, TRAFFIC operates as a programme division of WWF–India and has been active since 1991. Its focus includes combating illegal wildlife trade, promoting sustainable wildlife trade, and assisting in the development of effective wildlife policies. Awareness Campaign Example: The “Don’t Buy Trouble” campaign, aimed at discouraging the purchase of illegal wildlife products, became a widely recognised conservation outreach effort.

Key Findings on the State of Rhinos in 2024

1. Global Rhino Population

The wild global rhino population stands at approximately 26,700 individuals, excluding those in captivity (zoos and breeding centres).

2. African Rhino Trends

Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*): Population increased from 6,195 to 6,788, reflecting successful conservation measures. White Rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*): Population in South Africa declined to 15,752, primarily due to poaching pressures and habitat challenges.

South Asian Conservation Success

India and Nepal: Achieved notable growth in the Greater One-Horned Rhino population through strict trans-boundary cooperation and stringent government protection measures. The combined population of these two countries rose to 4,075, with 3,323 in India and 752 in Nepal, marking an increase of 61 rhinos since 2022.

Anti-Poaching Measures

From 2021 to 2024, only 9 rhinos were poached in India and 4 in Nepal, a sharp decline due to enhanced patrolling, rapid response units, and intelligence-led operations.

Concerning Trends in Asia

1. Javan Rhino (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*): Population has dropped to around 50 individuals, restricted to Indonesia's Ujung Kulon National Park.
2. Sumatran Rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*): Critically low population estimated at 34–47 individuals, with no significant increase, leaving the species "seriously imperiled."

IUCN-TRAFFIC Report

1. Report Title *African and Asian Rhinoceroses – Status, Conservation and Trade*.
2. Commissioned by Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
3. Prepared by IUCN Species Survival Commission's African Rhino Specialist Group, IUCN Species Survival Commission's Asian Rhino Specialist Groups, and TRAFFIC.

Coverage

Period up to April 2025. Focuses on status, conservation actions, and illegal trade trends for African and Asian rhino species.

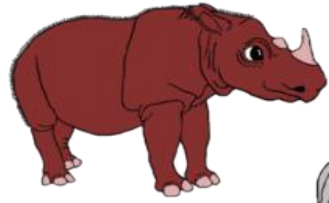
About Rhinos

Rhinos are large, thick-skinned herbivorous mammals of the family Rhinocerotidae, found in Africa and Asia.

Species and Distribution

Species	Geographic Distribution / Habitat	IUCN Status
Greater One-Horned Rhino (<i>Rhinoceros unicornis</i>)	India, Nepal – grasslands and riverine forests	Vulnerable
Javan Rhino (<i>R. sondaicus</i>)	Indonesia – Ujung Kulon National Park	Critically Endangered
Sumatran Rhino (<i>Dicerorhinus sumatrensis</i>)	Indonesia – Sumatra & Borneo rainforests	Critically Endangered
White Rhino (<i>Ceratotherium simum</i>)	Southern Africa – savannahs & grasslands	Near Threatened
Black Rhino (<i>Diceros bicornis</i>)	Eastern & Southern Africa – savannahs & deserts	Critically Endangered

the FIVE species of rhinoceros



Sumatran rhino



Greater one-horned rhino



Black rhino



Javan rhino



White rhino

Major Threats to Rhinos

1. Poaching for Horns: Driven by high demand, particularly in traditional Chinese medicine and illegal ornamental use.
2. Habitat Loss: Agricultural expansion, infrastructure projects, and human settlements reduce and fragment rhino habitats, increasing competition for resources.
3. Weak Enforcement: Some regions lack adequate resources or capacity for effective anti-poaching action.
4. Low Reproductive Rate: Long gestation (15–18 months) and slow reproduction make recovery from population declines difficult.
5. Climate Change: Alters habitat quality through flooding, drought, and vegetation changes, impacting rhino survival.

India's Rhino Conservation Efforts

Indian Rhino Vision-2020 (IRV-2020)

Objective

Increase the rhino population in Assam to 3,000 individuals spread across multiple protected areas by 2020. Outcome, Target nearly achieved, with Assam's rhino numbers approaching 3,000.

Strict Protection in National Parks. Key strongholds, Kaziranga, Pobitora, Orang, and Manas (Assam); Dudhwa (Uttar Pradesh); Jaldapara (West Bengal).

Strengthened Monitoring and Surveillance

Deployment of drones, advanced GPS tracking, and increased patrolling to monitor rhino movements and detect poaching threats.

Legal Enforcement

Stringent prosecution of offenders under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Community Engagement

Conducting awareness programmes, promoting eco-tourism, and involving local communities in conservation to reduce human–wildlife conflict.

Translocation Projects. Relocating rhinos to expand their range and reduce concentration in a single habitat, thereby lowering poaching risk and supporting genetic diversity.

Source: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/wildlife-biodiversity/iucn-traffic-report-praises-strengthened-monitoring-and-surveillance-for-protecting-india-and-nepals-rhinos-from-poaching#:~:text='Focused%20protection',India%20and%2075%20in%20Nepal.>

