



No, It is Not a Dinosaur! It's a Rhino!

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For Information on Royal Chitwan National Park, see www.visitnepal.org
The Big Zoo offers more information about the worlds' interesting animals! www.thebigzoo.com

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The ancient Indian rhinoceros is now protected; once hunted for their horns.

Taxonomy:

Domain	<u>Eukarya</u>
Kingdom	Animal
Phylum	Chordate
Class	Mammal...
Species	<i>Rhinoceros unicornus</i>

Vocabulary to Know:

- * **Fossil record**—the remains of a past organism preserved in rock
- * **Fortunate**—bringing something unexpected but good; lucky
- * **Encounter**—to come upon face to face, to meet
- * **Armor**—defensive covering for the body; protection
- * **Herbivore**—a plant eating animal
- * **Prohibiting**—preventing from doing something
- * **Taxonomy**—the classification of organisms according to their characteristics
- * **Eukarya**—organisms that are eukaryotes; all organisms have a nucleus within their cell(s)

Imagine riding through the wild and chancing upon an ancient animal found in the **fossil record** back 3 million years! Scientists believe the Indian rhinoceros is very closely related to the African rhinos who have been around almost 50 million years!

When visiting Nepal in the summer of 2007 I was **fortunate** enough to **encounter** three wild rhinos and an infant rhino in the Royal Chitwan National Park; one of my pictures is included here (I was just 10 feet away).

The Indian rhinoceros is unique for its single horn (thus the species name *unicornus*; uni meaning one). It is covered in a thick **armor** like skin with very little body hair; it has eye-lashes and hair on its ears and its tail. They are large animals; adults can range from 5.7 to 6.7 feet tall and up to 13 feet in length. Males can weigh over 4,800 pounds!

The rhino is an **herbivore** who munches on grasses and plants. The rhinoceros is a solitary creature who spends most of its life alone; you often find mothers with their young grouped in pairs. The rhino also enjoys swimming!

The Indian rhino was hunted almost to extinction. Population growth also affected the life of the rhinoceros. Fewer than 2500 individuals remain in the wild; the species is endangered.



The graph to the right shows how conservation efforts have increased the Indian rhinoceroses population. Through strict regulation, monitoring, and by **prohibiting** hunting, the governments of India and Nepal have helped to save the rhinoceros.

Image Accessed 06/11/2008
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Rhinoceros-unicornis-popula.jpg>

