

Emily Sexson
Enrichment Specialist
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This Saturday is all about rhinos as we celebrate World Rhino Day from 2 to 4PM at the rhino habitat. If you've visited the zoo lately, you've probably seen our resident rhinos Johari and Jabari. These two critically endangered black rhinos came to Lee Richardson Zoo with a breeding recommendation from the Association of Zoos and Aquarium's Species Survival Plan. While the two rhinos have been at the zoo since May of 2016 they've only recently shared the same habitat when introduced together in June of this year. The introductions went well, and with time we hope there will be a rhino calf born to the pair in the future.

Black rhinos are native to south-eastern and southern Africa. Historically this species of rhino numbered over 70,000 as recently as the 1970's, however, their population plummeted to 2,410 by the 1990's due to poaching and habitat loss. Today, thanks to conservation efforts, there are over 5,000 individuals in the wild. Black rhinos are not the only species of rhino in need of our help.

There are 5 different species of rhino, and all are facing extinction due to poaching and habitat loss. Rhinos are poached for their horn as many falsely believe that the horn has medicinal values. The entire animal is lost solely for its horn which is made up of keratin, the same protein that our nails and hair are made of. Although there are no curative powers in the horn, it is one of the most valuable substances on Earth valued at over \$100,000 per kilogram, making it worth more than its weight in gold.

Two species of rhino, the black and the white rhino are native to Africa. The white rhino, which is larger in size than the black rhino gained its name from the shape of its lips. English settlers in South Africa mistook the Afrikaans word "wijd" for "white" as they sound very similar. The South Africans were describing the white rhino by its mouth as its shape is very flat and wide. The black rhino features a narrow pointed mouth with a prehensile (capable of grasping) upper lip.

In addition to the African species, there are three species of Asian rhino: the Javan, Sumatran,

and greater one-horned rhino. The greater one-horned rhino is distinguishable by its massive size and single horn; it is the largest of all rhino species with males weighing up to 4,600 pounds. The Javan rhino looks very similar to the greater one-horned rhino only smaller. Javan rhinos have a prehensile lip similar to that of the black rhino. There are as few as 60 Javan rhinos left in the wild making it one of the world's rarest large mammals. The Sumatran rhino is the smallest species of rhino and are known as the hairy rhino, as unlike the other species, their body is covered in hair. They are also the most primitive looking as they are the closest living relative to the woolly rhinoceros that lived during the ice age.

While each species has distinguishing characteristics, all are facing extinction due to habitat loss and poaching. We can help rhinos by sharing information about them and using our voices to vote against the trade of rhino horn and poaching. At home we can reduce, reuse, and recycle; simple changes in our daily lives can have a great impact on our planet's ecosystems. It is up to us to protect wildlife by making appropriate lifestyle choices that lessen are negative impact on the Earth that we share with other species. Simple things to start doing today include recycling your waste or using reusable items such as shopping bags or water bottles.

This Saturday, September 23rd we'll be spending an afternoon sharing fun facts about rhinos and ways you can help at our World Rhino Day event from 2 to 4PM. There will be a fun matching game, a rhino mask craft, a discovery cart featuring bio-facts and information, a keeper chat at 2:30 with staff who work directly with the rhinos, as well as rhino temporary tattoos for sale with all funds raised going towards wildlife conservation. For more information, you can visit our Facebook page or our website www.leerichardsonzoo.org or give us a call at 620-276-1250. We hope to see you there!