

Sumatran rhino Q&A

with Eka – The Little Sumatran Rhino (aka EKA)

Teacher's Notes (2)

Why are they called Sumatran Rhinos?

Sumatran rhinos are named after the island of Sumatra in Indonesia where they were first discovered. Sumatra is one of the larger islands of the Indonesian archipelago in South East Asia.

What do Sumatran rhinos look like?

Sumatran rhinos have two dark-grey horns and three toes, a short stocky body, stumpy legs and tufted ears. Their leathery skin is grey-brown, covered with coarse reddish-brown hair. A large fold of skin extends across the back to behind their shoulders and thick wrinkles of skin circle their eyes. Their upper lip curves down, resembling a beak, called a prehensile lip.

What makes Sumatran rhinos different from other rhinos?

Sumatran rhinos are born with lots of hair; calves have dense long hair, and adults are the hairiest and smallest of all five species of rhinos. That's why Sumatran rhinos are commonly called the "hairy rhino".

What is so fun about the mud pit?

Sumatran rhinos enjoy spending hours relaxing and wallowing in pools of muddy rainwater, especially during the heat of the day. The cool mud is refreshing and nourishing for their skin and it's the best way to keep insects at bay.

What is surprising about Sumatran rhinos?

Sumatran rhinos look big and heavy but in reality they are fast and agile. Not only can they climb steep slopes, they are also confident swimmers capable of crossing a river with strong currents.

How do Sumatran rhinos communicate?

Sumatran rhinos are very "talkative", seemingly the most vocal of all rhinos. Scientists don't know for sure what all their sounds mean but they believe they communicate location, danger and even love. One of their sounds, the most melodic, has been named a "whale" call, since it sounds almost identical to the humpback whale's song. The most common is called "eep" and the loudest and most powerful is the "whistle-blow". Sumatran rhinos also leave messages in the form of twisted saplings, markings in the soil and droppings.

Do Sumatran rhinos have a particular strength and/or weakness?

Sumatran rhinos have a very good sense of smell and exceptional hearing. They can rotate their ears independently to detect sounds coming from all directions. Sumatran rhinos have fairly weak eyesight; instead they rely on their acute sense of smell and hearing.

What do Sumatran rhinos eat?

Sumatran rhinos can eat a lot and love variety: young saplings, leaves, fruits, bark, twigs and shoots. And to refill with healthy minerals and nutrients, Sumatran rhinos regularly visit salt licks where they snack on clay, which contains salts and minerals. Sumatran rhinos have a pointy (prehensile) upper lip meant to grab and pull leaves, twigs and branches into their mouths.

What about love between male and female Sumatran rhino?

Sumatran rhinos are very expressive in their courtship; they make lots of noises, raise their tails, urinate and bump each other with their snouts.

What about babies?

Female Sumatran rhinos give birth to only one baby rhino at a time every three to four years and it takes about 15-16 months of pregnancy for the calf to be born. Babies will stay with their moms for two to three year.

Do Sumatran rhinos have friends?

Sumatran rhinos live a solitary life but they share territory and trails with elephants and many smaller animals. Only mothers and their calves stay together for the first two to three years..

Do Sumatran rhinos have enemies?

Sumatran rhinos have no real predators in the wild, other than humans or poachers to be precise. Poachers hunt them and brutally mutilate and kill them for their horns. All five rhino species are illegally and brutally hunted for their horns.

Why are rhinos killed for their horns?

Rhino horns are worth a lot of money on the black market. Ground into powder, it is added as an ingredient in certain traditional Chinese medicines. People wrongly believe rhino horns to have exceptional medicinal properties. In fact, rhino horns are made of keratine, the same base material as our hair and nails or the hooves of a horse.

Why do Sumatran rhinos need to be protected?

Sumatran rhinos are critically endangered, which means that based on the number of individuals left, scientist believe the species is at high risk of extinction in the wild. Every birth is critical for the survival of the species.

What is a critically endangered species?

It's a species that The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ has categorized as facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild. It's the highest risk category.

How many Sumatran rhinos are left on this planet?

Less than 100 Sumatran rhinos are estimated to survive in the wild in three Indonesian National Parks on the island of Sumatra; and only nine live in captivity (three in Sabah, Malaysia and six in Sumatra, Indonesia).

Who is helping the Sumatran rhinos?

National and International organizations, as well as the Government of Indonesia and Malaysia are working hand in hand to protect the Sumatran Rhinos and save them from extinction.

How are Sumatran rhinos being helped?

Sumatran rhinos in the wild only live in protected areas where Rhino Protection Units are patrolling 24/7 to deter poachers and any other threats to their survival. And to increase their chances of survival an international group of scientists has been trying to breed them in captivity since 1984.

It was only on September 13, 2001 that little hairy rhino Andalas was born at the Cincinnati Zoo. He was the first Sumatran rhino bred and born in captivity in 112 years, a scientific breakthrough

lead by the Cincinnati Zoo and was followed by the births of Suci (2003, USA), Harapan (2007, USA), Andatu (2012, Sumatra) and Delilah (2016, Sumatra).

Where can I see Sumatran rhinos?

You will only be able to see Sumatran Rhinos that live in captivity and for that you will have to travel all the way to Sumatra and visit the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas, Sumatra, Indonesia.

How can I help the Sumatran rhinos?

With the help of a parent, children can either adopt a Sumatran rhino, make a donation or download Eka - The Little Sumatran Rhino (10% donated to the International Rhino Foundation). With the help of a teacher, students can organize a fundraiser and donate the proceeds to one of the many rhino organizations. Finally, children can also help by spreading the word among their friends, watch Eka together with friends or create their own fundraiser activity.

Web links:

www.rhinos.org (International Rhino Foundation)

www.savetherhino.org

www.wwf.org

www.unitedforwildlife.org

www.iucnredlist.org

www.rhinoreourcecenter.com



Sumatran rhinoceros

Dicerorhinus sumatrensis



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Less than 100 Sumatran rhinos remain in the wild

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What have I learned?

