

19.04.2005 - BBC NEWS : **Nepal rhino population declines**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south\\_asia/4459277.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/4459277.stm)

The number of endangered one-horned rhinoceros in Nepal has declined in recent years, due mainly to poaching, wildlife authorities say.

The latest count of the population has shown that rhino numbers have dropped to fewer than 400 from nearly 600 animals in three parks in 2000.

Poaching has been blamed largely on inadequate security caused by the long-running Maoist insurgency.

Nepal is home to a quarter of South Asia's rhino population.

In the last official count of the Nepal's one-horned rhinos, the authorities had claimed success in the conservation of what is called the world's most endangered species.

The 2000 count showed that there were more than 500 rhinos in the country's largest national park, Chitwan, and about 100 in two other smaller parks - a 25% rise in the population over previous years.

Five years later, the rhino population had dropped by nearly a quarter, authorities said.

Trading in the horn of the rhino is internationally banned, but experts say that poachers are encouraged by the big profit margin.

The government was forced to cut down the number of security posts established to counter the poachers in Chitwan national park due to fears of attack by the rebels.

19.04.2005 - WWF : **Catastrophe for Nepal's rhinos**

[http://www.wwf-uk.org/news/n\\_0000001528.asp](http://www.wwf-uk.org/news/n_0000001528.asp)

Nepal's Rhino population has suffered a catastrophic decline of more than 30 per cent in the last five years.

The number of greater one-horned rhinoceros in the country's Royal Chitwan National Park has fallen from 544

in 2000 to just 372 in 2005. At least 94 have been killed by poachers.

As the country's political situation has deteriorated since the last survey in 2000 the national parks have seen less protection from the military. Unarmed national park guards have had little chance to protect the animals against heavily-armed poachers.

The upsurge in poaching is almost certainly due to Nepal's military reducing the number of soldiers assigned to protect the park - which is home to the vast majority of Nepal's rhinos - from 32 to 8. Nepal's army is currently struggling to deal with the Maoist insurgency that has led to increased violence throughout the country.

Callum Rankine, International Species Officer for WWF UK said: "This is a catastrophe for Nepal's Rhinos and has set back the efforts of conservationists to preserve these magnificent beasts by a decade."

In the 1960s, there were less than 100 rhinos in Nepal but conservation action, especially anti-poaching efforts, helped increase numbers to more than 600 by 2000, with Chitwan alone having 544 rhinos.

WWF believes that there is still hope for Nepal's rhinos, with even stronger conservation action. In 2002, 40 rhinos were poached and the Government of Nepal with support from WWF, increased strict anti-poaching and community efforts, reducing the losses to 29 in 2003 and 10 in 2004. Without such measures, it is likely poaching would have gone totally unchecked.

"We brought Nepal's rhinos from the brink of extinction once and we will do it again with the joint effort of conservation partners from around the world," Rankine added.

"These creatures are biologically essential to Nepal's Terai grasslands, and serve as an economic lifeline to local communities by providing millions of dollars in tourism income."