

**Pandemic baby boom encourages rhino recovery**  
***Remarkable milestone recognized on World Rhino Day***

SEATTLE—While the rest of the world was slowing down during the pandemic, newest census data reveal greater one-horned rhinos were having a baby boom in Assam, India. Today, on World Rhino Day, Woodland Park Zoo is celebrating a massive milestone for the vulnerable species—the population has climbed to 4,014 in the Assam province.



Assam is home to 70% of the world's greater one-horned rhino population, with Nepal being the only other country with this rhino species. Earlier this year, the government of Assam completed its biannual rhino census and found that the greater one-horned rhino population increased by 274 since they last counted!

Woodland Park Zoo's conservation partner, International Rhino Foundation, says the pandemic played a significant role in this latest rhino population growth, sparking that baby boom while many protected areas were closed to visitors. "For a species that was once perilously close to extinction, numbering fewer than 100 individuals, this recovery is truly remarkable," said International Rhino Foundation's Communications Director, Christopher Witlatch. "The greater one-horned rhino population is growing in part due to the governments of India and Nepal creating space for rhinos to breed while also preventing poaching deaths."

International Rhino Foundation was founded in 1993 in response to the escalating crisis facing all five rhino species. The organization's efforts have led to a 17-fold increase in the global population of the greater one-horned rhino in just 30 years.

Rhinos face many threats, including habitat loss, poaching and climate change. For example, in India's Manas National Park, where rhinos were reintroduced in 2005, about one-third of rhinos' grassland habitat has been overtaken by invasive plant species choking out their food supplies.

International Rhino Foundation is now collaborating with Aaranyak, a wildlife and natural resource management organization, to remove invasive plants from the park and restore the grasslands. Over this past year, 50 acres of prime rhino habitat were restored, and rhinos have already returned to the area.

"We plan to restore another 250 acres over the next two years," said Witlatch. "Engagement of local people in removal of invasive plant species also offers them livelihood and in that way it helps park officials to garner better support from local communities along with improvement of grassland habitats."

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has proposed that this "Manas Model" of rhino restoration be a best practice and inspire conservationists worldwide to take similar action.

The work to maintain the rhino's habitat reminds all of us of the delicate balance we depend on to keep our forests, woodlands and green spaces thriving. Together, through Woodland Park Zoo's [Forests for All](#) initiative, we can ensure wildlife such as rhinos, as well as people, are protected; and that we work together to restore and sustain the global ecosystems that connect all of us.

Woodland Park Zoo is home to two greater one-horned rhinos, Taj, and Glenn, who were born a day apart in November of 2016. The young rhinos came to Seattle in 2018 and have been the zoo's largest residents ever since, living in Assam Rhino Reserve. Visit <https://www.zoo.org/today> to find out how you can see Taj and Glenn up close and learn how rhino keepers care for them every day.

To learn more about how you can help protect these massive creatures, visit [#RhinoLookout](#). You can also adopt your own rhino by becoming a [ZooParent](#); the program supports the zoo's animal care, education and wildlife conservation in the Pacific Northwest and around the world.

Woodland Park Zoo offers a safe, outdoor experience for all. Visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) for information. Zoo hours: 9:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m. daily.

Accessibility: Information about accessibility and resources, one-to-one aides, sighted guides, mobility equipment rentals, and a sensory map and tools can be found at [www.zoo.org/access](http://www.zoo.org/access). For questions or to request disability accommodations for zoo programs or events, contact [zooinfo@zoo.org](mailto:zooinfo@zoo.org).

For more information or to become a zoo member, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) or call 206.548.2500. Follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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