

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release October 1, 1979

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ENDANGERED STATUS PROPOSED FOR BLACK RHINOCEROS

The black rhinoceros, now estimated to number fewer than 15,000 throughout Africa, has been proposed for listing as an endangered species. The proposal was published by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the October 1, 1979, Federal Register.

Black rhinoceros (Diceros bicornis) populations throughout eastern and southern Africa appear to have suffered drastic declines in the last 10 years, down as much as 70 to 85 percent in Kenya and Tanzania, for example. Wildlife biologists think a low reproductive rate may be contributing to the decline but the primary factor is the increased demand--and rising prices--for rhino horn products. The rhino horn is valued in some countries for use on traditional daggers and in other countries, along with the hide, for medicinal purposes.

Exports of rhino horns have quadrupled since 1971 to over 4 tons in 1976, according to statistics from the countries of origin. However, there are reports from one country, indicating that traders there have imported nearly 8 tons of rhino horns in 1976 and again in 1977. A rhino horn weighs about 3½ kilos, or nearly 8 pounds.

Prices have jumped from \$23 a kilo in 1969 to \$112 in 1976, with reports of substantially larger sums being paid in some countries. The increased prices have also stimulated poaching, which reportedly has become more widespread and sophisticated. The rhino is easy to stalk and many show evidence of extreme disturbance from harassment.

The black rhinoceros is also listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, a category under the 51-nation treaty that restricts trade in such species. Listing it under the Endangered Species Act would place further controls on importation and interstate commerce and would no longer allow importation of black rhino sport trophies. Listing would also allow the Service to encourage and assist other countries in conducting research and population surveys, in establishing national preserves, and in reintroducing the species in parts of its former range.

Interested persons should submit comments and additional information by November 3, 1979, to the Director (OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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INT 0046-80
OCT 1979