

# Nepal's rhino numbers 'recovering' after war

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A one-horned rhinoceros cub stands in Kashara Chitwan National Park, some 200kms southwest of Kathmandu. The number of rhinos living wild in Nepal has risen above 500 for the first time since a civil war that led to rampant poaching of the endangered animals, the government says.

The number of rhinos living wild in Nepal has risen above 500 for the first time since a civil war that led to rampant poaching of the endangered animals, the government said Sunday.

It said wildlife experts who have spent the past month conducting an exhaustive survey had counted 534 rhinos in Nepal's southern jungles -- 99 more than when the last such study was carried out in 2008.

The new figures show the one-horned rhino population is recovering after a dramatic plunge in numbers during the 1996-2006 civil war, when soldiers deployed to prevent poaching left to fight a guerrilla

insurgency.

Maheshwor Dhakal, ecologist with the government's national parks department, told AFP the rhino population's recovery was down to improvements in law enforcement and in local awareness of the importance of conservation.

"The government is encouraged by this positive result, although challenges remain in curbing poaching and protecting rhino habitat," he added.

Thousands of one-horned [rhinos](#) once roamed the plains of Nepal and northern India, but their numbers plunged over the past century due to [poaching](#) and human encroachment of their habitat.

The animals are poached for their horns, which are prized for their reputed medicinal qualities in China and southeast Asia.

A single horn can sell for tens of thousands of dollars on the international black market, and impoverished Nepal's porous borders, weak law enforcement and proximity to China have made the country a hub for the [illegal trade](#).

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