

Slow growth in black rhino numbers cause for hope: conservationists

March 19 2020



The IUCN identified modest growth in numbers decimated by poaching and illegal trade—this November image released by Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority in Tanzania shows Fausta, a female black rhino who died last year aged 57

The tentative recovery of Africa's black rhino population was hailed by

conservationists on Thursday as a cause for hopes that ambitious protection efforts could overcome the "acute threat" of poaching.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature said the number of black [rhinos](#), which were once plentiful across sub-Saharan Africa, increased at a "modest" annual rate of 2.5 percent from 2012 to 2018, from an estimated 4,845 to 5,630 animals in the wild.

It said the population was expected to continue its slow increase for the next five years.

"While Africa's rhinos are by no means safe from extinction, the continued slow recovery of Black Rhino populations is a testament to the immense efforts made in the countries the species occurs in, and a powerful reminder to the [global community](#) that conservation works," said Grethel Aguilar, Acting Director General of IUCN in a statement.

No room for complacency

"At the same time, it is evident that there is no room for complacency as poaching and illegal trade remain acute threats."

Thousands of rhinos that once roamed Africa and Asia have been culled by poaching and habitat loss. Very few are found outside [national parks](#) and reserves.

Poaching is fuelled by a seemingly insatiable demand for [rhino horn](#) in Asia, where people pay huge sums for a substance—coveted as a [traditional medicine](#)—that is composed mainly of keratin, the same substance as in human nails.

Citation: Slow growth in black rhino numbers cause for hope: conservationists (2020, March 19) retrieved 25 March 2023 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-03-growth-black-rhino-conservationists.html>

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