

# First increase in rhino numbers in Africa since 2012, monitor says

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There was a 5% increase in the number of rhinos observed in Africa last year, the International Union for Conservation of Nature said in an announcement Friday made to coincide with World Rhino Day.

The number increased to 23,300, though the animals are still endangered by poachers. At least 551 were killed illegally on the African continent last year, according to the IUCN.

The animals are hunted for their horns, which are thought in some regions to have healing powers or increase potency, despite scientific research to the contrary.

The number of white rhinos increased to around 16,800 for the first time since 2012, data shows.

The [number](#) of black rhinos also increased, to around 6,500, with the IUCN attributing this to better conservation measures.

"With this good news, we can take a sigh of relief for the first time in a decade. However, it is imperative to further consolidate and build upon this positive development and not drop our guard," Michael Knight, head of the rhino division at IUCN, said.

Rhinos are important for biodiversity because they ensure safe habitats for other [animals](#), the group said.

The IUCN is an umbrella organization with members active in the field of nature conservation. These include states and governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

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