

november 2019

HONOR // RHINOCEROS // GOLD

The rhinoceros, second only to the elephant as earth's largest land mammal, has a special relationship with a much smaller animal, the red-billed oxpecker. These feathered friends eat parasites on the huge animals and alert them to danger.

At least, that's what scientists have always thought. Recently, some observers have questioned whether the birds actually benefit their hosts. But to the casual observer, the two animals appear to be valuable to each other!

The word "rhinoceros" means "nose horn." Sadly, these animals are often poached (killed illegally) for their horns. Their horns are made up of keratin, just like your fingernails.

Rhinos live in Africa as well as in India and Nepal. In Africa, the black rhino and the white rhino both have gray skin. That skin is frequently coated in mud, from wallowing. Rolling around in the mud helps protect their sensitive skin from sunburn and insect bites.

A rhino will defend its territory, and, usually, fellow rhinos will keep away. But sometimes fights break out, and these can be deadly. Rhinos can charge at 40 miles per hour! Sometimes, especially among white rhinos, a female (cow) and her calves or several adult cows will form a group called a "crash." Males, called bulls, prefer to be left alone.

In a safe habitat with vegetation and a watering hole, these intriguing giants can live 30 years or more.

HONOR: Letting someone know you see how valuable they really are.



A rhinoceros avoids clashing with rivals but welcomes oxpecker grooming sessions.