

Endangered Animals of South Africa

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The country of South Africa has long been associated with its diverse population of wild animals. This country is home to several species of lions, elephants, tigers, and leopards. Unfortunately, many of the animals in South Africa are endangered species. This means that the animals could eventually become extinct if they are not taken care of. Some of the most endangered species in South Africa include the Riverine Rabbit, Mountain Zebra, Black Rhinoceros, African Wild Dog, and African Elephant. Through advocacy and research, the population of these species can be recovered.

One of the smallest animals on the endangered species list is the [Riverine Rabbit](#). This animal weighs about five pounds. It is listed as critically endangered on the [International Union for the Conservation of Nature. \(IUCN\)](#) list. These rabbits are usually brownish in color with a white ring around their eyes and a brown stripe across their face. They eat plants and travel alone. They are found mostly along rivers near the Karoo Desert in the Cape of South Africa. There are very few of them left and several years went by where the rabbits were not seen at all. They are threatened by habitat loss due to farming and agriculture. Rabbits are also killed by dogs, hunting traps, and other animals. There may be less than 250 of these rabbits left in South Africa. The [Riverine Rabbit Conservation Project](#) is an organization that works to learn more about the rabbit and educate others on how to help protect the species.

[Mountain Zebras](#) are another of South Africa's endangered species. Mountain Zebras are easily recognized for their black and white stripes and pointed ears. There is a wide range of sizes among individual animals, and zebras can weigh as little as 250 pounds or as much as 600 pounds. Zebras live in herds in the deserts of South Africa. The Mountain Zebra is currently listed as endangered. This is the result of habitat loss, hunting, and competition. Much of the zebras' land is used for agriculture. When this happens, livestock takes over their food. Because of war and economic struggles, Mountain Zebras are also hunted for their meat. There are several organizations that have made it their mission to protect the Mountain Zebras. The [Etusis Foundation](#) is one organization that is actively educating others and advocating for the species. There are also parks and reserves for these zebras. The population is increasing because of these organizations, and the future of the Mountain Zebra is improving.

The [Black Rhinoceros](#) is a species of rhinoceros that lives only in select African countries including Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. These huge animals can weigh over 3,000 pounds. They are a greyish color with very thick skin and two pointed horns on their nose for protection. They also have a pointed lip for eating trees and plants. Most subspecies of this rhinoceros are extremely endangered, with some are even thought to be extinct. They were hunted for their horns, which have been used for dagger handles and medical purposes. They are also threatened by habitat loss. Under the IUCN, they are listed as critically endangered, and there are less than 2,500 left. The [International Rhino Foundation](#), established in 1989, works towards research and efforts to recover the various species of rhinoceros. There are also several parks and zoos that help protect the rhino. In addition, the trading of horns is now illegal.

The [African Wild Dog](#) looks like a mixture of a dog and a wolf. They have fur that can be different combinations of yellow, brown, black and red. The African Wild Dog only weighs about 75 pounds, but can be a vicious animal and has very sharp, strong teeth. Like many dog breeds, this species travels in packs. Though they can be dangerous predators, this is also an African species that is in danger. There may be less than 5,000 of these animals left. They are threatened by various factors including habitat loss, disease, and competition. The African Wild Dog has been killed by humans to keep the dogs away from pets and livestock. Rabies and distemper are common diseases found in the African Wild Dog. They can also starve because they lose food to larger animals. These other animals may attack and kill the dogs. To protect the species, some dogs have been placed in zoos and there is also an organization called the [African Wild Dog Conservation](#) that develops plans to recover the population of the African Wild Dog through research and education. The species is listed as endangered on both the IUCN and [Endangered Species Act](#).

The [African Elephant](#) is a symbol of African wildlife, but this is also an animal that is in need of protection. This elephant species is the largest African animal on the endangered species list and one of the largest animals in the world. Even larger than the Asian Elephant, the African Elephant can weigh nearly 15,000 pounds. This species is endangered primarily due to poaching, which still takes place in some locations. There are approximately 500,000 African Elephants left, and they are located mostly in South Africa. They are listed as vulnerable on the IUCN list. In 1989, the [African Elephant Conservation Act](#) was passed in an effort to protect the species. This is a species that has become stable in some areas, thanks to organizations that help with recovery such as the World Wildlife Fund.

These are only a few of the many endangered species in South Africa. These animals face the danger of extinction if actions aren't taken to protect them. To contribute to the cause, people can donate to conservations and educate themselves more about efforts to save the animals. Through organizations, reserves, protection plans, and conservation laws some of the animal populations can ultimately be saved from the threat of extinction. To learn more about endangered species visit <http://www.iucn.org/> or <http://www.fws.gov>.

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