

Hornbill



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about nature and us



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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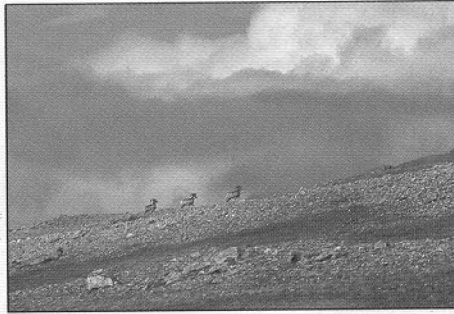
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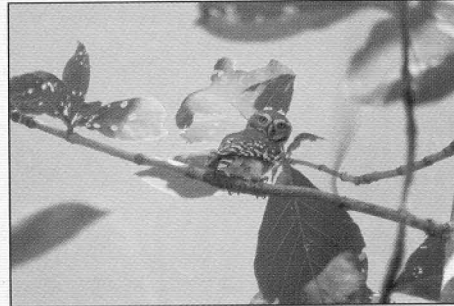
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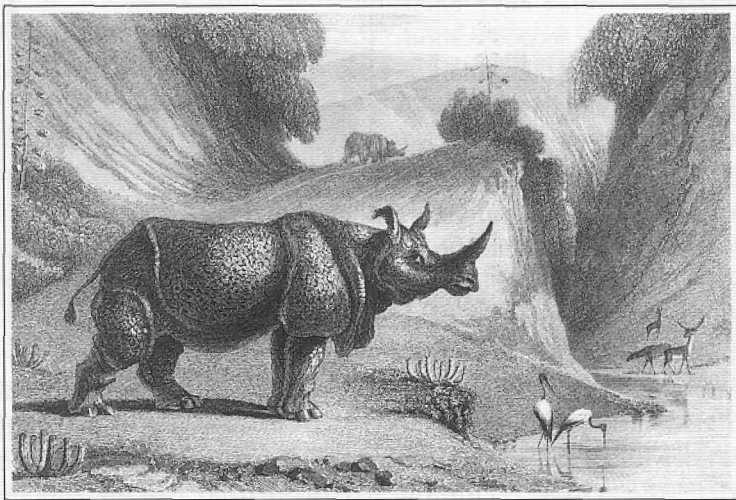
The Rhinoceros of Kotdwara

Kees Rookmaaker

STARTING out from the town of Hardwar, you cross the bridge over the River Ganges and drive over a jungle road for about 50 km to reach Kotdwara. It is at the edge of Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh, where the foothills of the Himalayas start to rise slowly. William Daniell (born in 1769) had made a rather grand tour on the Ganges together with his uncle Thomas Daniell from Calcutta to here. Both were to become famous artists, especially of aquatints of Indian scenery, after their return to England. They had to linger for a few days in Kotdwara waiting for permission to proceed to Srinagar. Wandering about in the surroundings with their sketchbooks, on April 20, 1789, they suddenly saw a rhinoceros. William tells about the event in the *Oriental Annual* published in 1835:

"The elephant is found in the lower regions of the mountains, and so is the rhinoceros, though less frequently. Of the latter animal we were fortunate enough to obtain a view, which is by no means a usual thing, as it is not gregarious like the elephant, and therefore much more rarely met with. We had turned the angle of a hill that abutted upon a narrow stream, when, on the opposite side of the rivulet, we saw a fine male rhinoceros; it was standing near the edge of the water with its head slightly bent, as if it had been just slaking its thirst in the cooling stream. It stood, apparently with great composure,

about two hundred yards above us, in an open vista of the wood. Mr. Daniell, under the protection of a lofty intervening bank, was able to approach sufficiently near it to make a perfect sketch of it; after which, upon a gun being fired, it deliberately walked off into the jungle. It did not appear in the least intimidated at the sight of our party, which remained at some distance, nor at all excited by the discharge of the gun."



William Daniell's sketch, as well as the etching made from it for the book of 1835, is shown here. It bears a remarkable witness of this unexpected encounter. Within the last four hundred years, this is the most western record of the rhinoceros, the only one west of the Nepal border, and unique to be corroborated by a drawing. The animal in the picture is clearly an example of the great Indian rhinoceros, *Rhinoceros unicornis*. 🐘