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THE WILD MAMMALS OF TESO AND KARAMOJA—III

By J. M. WATSON

Suborder: PERISSODACTYLA.

Family: EQUIDAE. Horses, Zebras, Asses.

HIPPOTIGRIS BURCHELLI BÖHMI (Matschie). East African Zebra.

Teso: *Etuko, itukoi.* Karamojong: *Etuko, ngitukoi.*

DISTRIBUTION: Widely distributed throughout western Karamoja from the Kidepo valley in the north to Tisai in the south. As Zebras are very dependent on water they are confined to localities where a permanent supply is available: in 1948 they quickly discovered the new dam in the Loliyakat river and were frequent visitors there throughout the dry season.

DESCRIPTION: The Burchelline Zebras are characterized by a body pattern of broad dark, almost black, stripes on a light background. The range of the race *böhmi* extends south from the southern Sudan, east of the Bahr-el-Gebel, to northern Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and the upper Zambesi. As might be expected, there is considerable local variation, not only in the shade of the light and dark stripes, but, to a limited extent, in the pattern also. In general, the widest stripes are the oblique ones—about five in number—on the posterior part of the body, which sweep back alongside the spinal stripe and over the croup. The mane is well-developed; the muzzle and nose-patch are brown; and the greater portion of the ears white.

The stallion measures a little over four feet—13 to 14 hands—at the shoulder and will weigh up to 700 lb. The girth of a male shot by Major Powell-Cotton, standing 48½ in. at the shoulder, taped 61 in. The mare is somewhat smaller; like the horse, she has two mammae.

BIOLOGY: The Zebra, which always appears in the best of condition, is a grass feeder; it favours the fairly open short-grass country which is a feature of much of western Karamoja. I have only observed it in small parties of twelve to fifteen animals, but I am told that it occurs in very much larger herds, especially during the dry weather when the number of available watering places is limited. It undoubtedly appreciates the company of other animals and I have noticed it associating with eland; there is also a record of a lone stallion accompanying a herd of buffaloes.

The Zebra seldom strays far from water, drinking in the evening and in the early morning. In the past, before the Karamojong had spread throughout the district, hunting parties were wont to rely on the Zebra to lead them to water holes. During the heat of the day the animal rests standing or lying down. While feeding, a mare not infrequently takes the lead: Millais (1895) notes that when moving slowly, the herd maintains a crescent whereas antelope keep in a string. Invariably all the animals of a herd will walk with their heads in the up-wind direction. Many observers have recorded the peculiar habit of dust bathing on some suitable rolling ground which is frequented by a herd over a long period.

Photographed at Moroto, Karamoja, by J. M. Watson

FIG. 7A

Ant Bear.

Photographed at Moroto, Karamoja, by J. M. Watson

FIG. 7B

Ant Bear.

(face p. 182)

Photographed in Sidi, by C. R. S. Pitman

FIG. 8

Zebra—showing croup and belly markings.

The shrill, almost bark-like, 'qua-ha-ha' call of the Zebra is generally uttered when the animal is alarmed or restless. Zebras seldom call by day, when feeding, unless the herd is disturbed. They are particularly noisy at night, especially when watering, or when lions, their chief and most persistent enemy, are in the vicinity, although during the day they pay little attention to their presence. When alarmed a herd is liable to stampede but, unless very hard pressed, the animals are unlikely to exert themselves for any great distance and quickly return to their normal easy loping pace. Owing to its inability to leap, the Zebra may prove a very serious menace in fenced areas as in its headlong rush it may either take away with it wire and posts or, while endeavouring to scramble on its knees underneath, may break strand after strand in its desperate struggles.

The presence of a pack donkey train in the vicinity of a Zebra herd appears to arouse an excited curiosity among its members. During the day they may merely trot along at a short distance from and parallel to the caravan or, alternatively, stampede past it, an act which often induces the donkeys to do likewise. At night, according to Shortridge (1934), they will collect around camps where donkeys are kraaled when both become extremely noisy and excited, the donkeys endeavouring to break out of their confinement.

The eye-sight and hearing of the Zebra are both good, but its stamina is poor; when wounded it bleeds profusely and soon succumbs to a serious wound. It is an expert in the use of its heels and it can defend itself against all carnivores except the lion. When fighting among themselves, stallions use their teeth. Roosevelt (1910) observed a Zebra run from the herd toward some wild dogs, with its mouth open and ears back; the wild dogs, although apparently not much frightened, got out of the Zebra's way. A wounded Zebra stallion should be approached with caution, as it is liable to use its teeth savagely.

The gestation period is about twelve months.

MISCELLANEOUS: The flesh of the Zebra is rank tasting but is eaten by the Karamojong. The tail is worn as an ornament—*elwado*—on the right arm above the elbow, by a man engaged to be married.

The track, about 4 in. long and 3½ in. wide, resembles that of a horse. It is somewhat narrower and rounder than that of a donkey.

Zebras are easily caught and tamed; training them for serious work, has, with a few exceptions, proved fruitless as they lack the necessary stamina and docility. They cross freely with the horse but the resultant offspring has not been found of any value.

In Kenya, Zebras used formerly to cause much damage to grain crops.

Family: RHINOCEROTIDAE. Rhinoceroses.

DICEROS BICORNIS BICORNIS (Linnaeus). Black Rhinoceros, Hook-lipped Rhinoceros, Rhino.

Teso: *Amosing, amosingo.* Karamojong: *Amosing, ngamosingo.*

DISTRIBUTION: The Rhino is not uncommon in the Kidepo valley especially in the neighbourhood of permanent water, e.g., Korimor, Nawi Adokoch, Lokorimong and Kanagorok (a mineral spring). It also frequents the neighbourhood

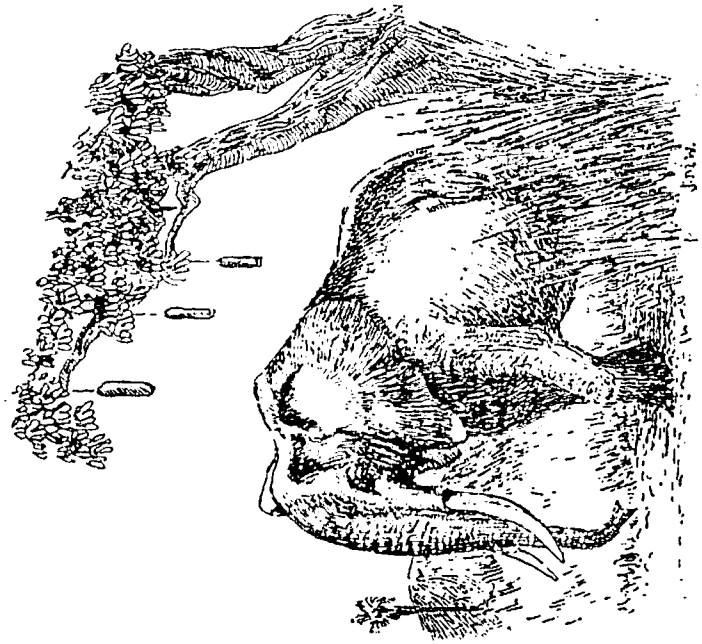

FIG. 10
African Elephant.

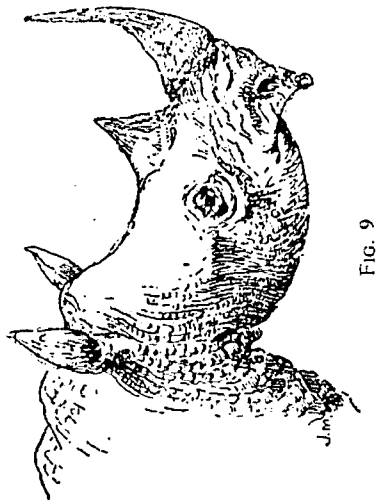

FIG. 9
Black Rhinoceros.

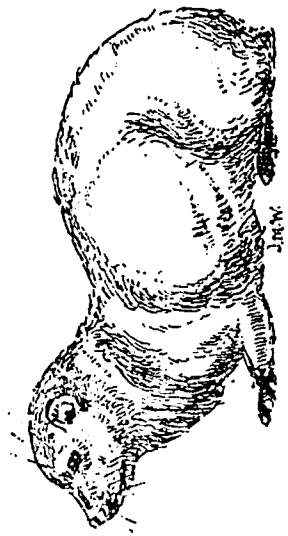

FIG. 11
Rock Hyrax.

of water in eastern Dodoth. Further south it occurs sporadically in such places as Lolelia, Kapeta, Nakodokodoi and Otukei. Occasionally it penetrates into north-east Teso; in 1939 a Karamojong travelling from Usuku to Achwa was pursued and injured by such a wanderer.

Within the last half century the Rhinoceros has retreated rapidly before the advance of man. If place names incorporating the vernacular word for Rhino, e.g., Akaikamosing—the Home of the Rhino—near Nariam, are any guide to its presence in the past, then it was probably at one time abundant throughout the south of Karamoja and in much of eastern Teso as well, a supposition which local opinion upholds. The County Chief of Bokora informs me that, on the introduction of taxation, his father took him, then a mere lad, to the fastnesses of Napak to escape this unpleasant innovation and he well remembers the large number of Rhino then roaming about on the mountain, many of which fell easy victims to the Karamojong spearmen. Two Rhino were shot at the Lia springs above Moroto township during the dry weather of 1928. I have no reason to believe that any Rhino now exist south of the Soroti-Moroto road.

DESCRIPTION: The Black Rhino—only a shade blacker than the white rhino—stands on the average an inch or two over 5 ft. at the shoulder and weighs about 2,500 lb. The total length from nose to tip of the tail is about 11 ft. 3 in. The female is generally somewhat smaller; a specimen at the New York Zoo scaled 1,080 lb. Noticeable characteristics are: the extremely heavy and formidable build, with a girth measurement of about 10 ft; the thick heavy hide devoid of hair except for a few bristles on the margins of the ears and at the tip of the tail; the two horns, anterior and posterior, consisting of an agglomeration of hair-like structures, which are quite unlike the horns of other ungulates; the prehensile upper lip projecting beyond the lower; the absence of canine and incisor teeth in both the upper and lower jaw; and the three almost equal toes on both front and hind feet.

The horns of the female are generally longer but more slender than those of the male. Ward (1935) gives 53½ in. as the record length of an anterior horn; this trophy adorned a female shot in Kenya. A specimen (sex not recorded) from South Africa carried a record posterior horn of 29½ in.; the front horn of this animal was 29 in. long. Such measurements are, of course, very exceptional and the average length in Uganda is not much more than a foot; a pair weighing ten pounds would be a satisfactory prize. There is considerable variation in the size of the rounded base of the horn, and abnormalities, e.g., the horn protruding forward like the bowsprit of a ship, or the development of a small third horn behind the posterior horn, are not unknown. A five-horned Rhino is on record. Specimens have been shot in which only the pedicles of the horns remain, suggesting that the horns may in some instances be broken off accidentally. The race *holmwoodi*, to which the Rhino of Uganda was at one time assigned but which is now considered a synonym of *bicornis*, was based upon two frontal horns of 41 in. and 42 in. in length, characterized by their thinness, the small size of the pedicles and a generally compressed appearance.

BIOLOGY: The Rhino undoubtedly prefers its own company to that of its fellows and demands only to be left alone. It is usually met singly, or sometimes in a small family party, usually a cow with a very young calf or a cow with a calf several years old. The ubiquitous tick-bird or ox-pecker—*Buphagus*, a member of the starling family—is invariably in attendance, ready to break into hissing screams on the first approach of danger. The Rhino is a browser, feeding on shoots, leaves (including those of the cotton plant if available) and roots. Percival (1928) mentions its particular fondness for the wilted branches of one of the euphorbias. Observers who have watched it feeding have commented on the use to which it puts its prehensile lip to pluck its food, the fastidious manner in which it selects the choicest tit-bits, and the noisy champing of its jaws as it masticates its meal.

It is an animal of regular habits and if food and water are sufficient it is quite content to remain in a restricted area where it will develop a network of well beaten but poorly graded tracks, about 20 in. wide, from watering place to feeding grounds. Needless to say it is inadvisable to camp on or near one of these paths even if it appears old and seldom used. During the heat of the day the Rhino selects some thicket, or the shade of a solitary tree, and rests, head down-wind and ears constantly twitching, either standing, lying down, or stretched full out on its side: when actually asleep, it snores loudly. In the late afternoon it moves towards its water hole, possibly feeding *en route*; if delayed, it will make up for lost time by travelling at a good trot. It drinks after sunset and, if necessary, will dig for water to a depth of a foot or more, throwing out the sand between its hind legs like a dog. After drinking it becomes sufficiently sociable to indulge in mild play with its neighbours. Percival (1928) records that they gambol "in sheer lightness of heart, romping like a lot of overgrown pigs". These gambols are accompanied by much grunting and squealing. Rhinos also enjoy a thorough scratching of the hide against a tree or suitable rock, particularly after a good wallow in the mud. Salt licks are visited if accessible, the horn being used to plough up the saline earth of which large quantities are chewed and not a little swallowed. As dawn approaches, the animal moves off once more to its daytime resort which may lie some miles from the watering place.

The Rhino possesses an excitable and inquisitive nature and at times, especially if rudely awakened from its midday nap, may indulge in stupid and blundering acts of aggression. Its eyesight is extremely poor (Pitman suggests that the horns may interfere with its vision) and a so-called 'charge' may be nothing more than a well-intentioned attempt to escape up-wind. When charging, it utters a steam-engine-like snort and travels at a clumsy gallop of about 15 to 20 m.p.h., a pace which it can sustain for a considerable distance. The tail is held aloft, and the head, too, is held high and is only lowered at the critical moment of impact. As an example of the power behind such a charge it is recorded that a Rhino, attacking a caravan of slaves, chained neck to neck, struck the centre man and broke the necks of the other twenty-one unfortunates by the shock of the impact alone. It is, apparently, a matter of considerable ease to avoid a charge by the simple expedient of stepping aside at the last minute. The Rhino seldom makes an attempt to hunt the object of its anger but

endeavours to blunder its way to safety as quickly as possible. The cries of a number of persons shouting together are sometimes sufficient to induce an attacking Rhino to turn aside. There are numerous recorded instances of Rhino charging camp fires at night.

The Rhino usually resorts to well used dunging places although this habit is not so well marked as it is with the white rhino. The voidings, which are not unlike those of the elephant, are scattered by the hind legs, although not necessarily immediately after evacuation. The area around the dunging place is not infrequently scored with the horn. The animal also has the habit of micturating against a selected rock, which acquires as a result a shiny whitish appearance.

According to Captain H. B. Potter, Game Conservator, Zululand, the gestation period is between eleven and thirteen months, with three years elapsing between each calf. Another authority, Vaughan-Kirby, places the gestation period between sixteen and eighteen months. No records are available from zoological gardens as the Rhino has not as yet bred in captivity. Percival observed a cow suckling her calf lying down, in the manner of a sow.

Captain Potter, writing in the *Field*, comments on the fact that all adult Rhinos, both male and female, develop a sore on each side of the body near the shoulder blade which increases in size during the mating season and discharges quantities of blood and fluid. In due course the sores dry up but open again during the following year. In young animals there is external evidence of these sores but they do not commence to discharge until puberty is reached. Captain Potter suggests that this phenomenon is associated with the sexual cycle, as the odour of the discharge appears to be particularly attractive to the opposite sex and may therefore assist in bringing the male and female together.

The calf reaches maturity at about seven or eight years. It will show spirited determination to defend the corpse of its mother when shot. Observers have noted that the Black Rhino calf invariably follows its mother, in contradistinction to that of the white rhino, which, preceding its dam, is guided in the direction in which she wishes it to go by the judicious use of her horn.

MISCELLANEOUS: The track of the Rhino is quite unmistakable: the three-toed hoof leaves a trefoil design about 8 in. in diameter.

The horn is valued in the East as a reputed powerful aphrodisiac. In the past it was held that a cup made from Rhino horn would split in two if poison were poured into it, while John Evelyn mentions a well in Italy which was purified by the addition of a horn. The hide is valued by the Karamojong for the manufacture of sandals.

It is probable that young Rhinos occasionally fall prey to lions; a case is on record, supported by photographs, in which a full-grown female Rhino, leaving a river after drinking, was seized by the left leg by a crocodile and, after a determined struggle, finally pulled into deep water and drowned.

The Black Rhino has a rooted aversion to crossing rivers.