

MALAYAN ANIMAL LIFE

BY

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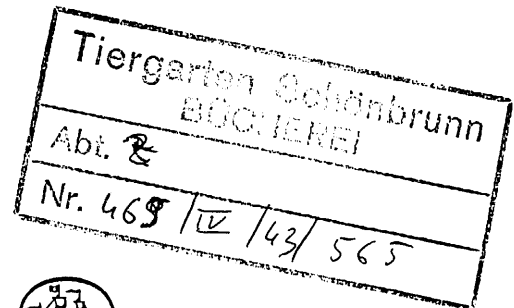
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(M. W. F. Tweedie)

Portrait of an Agamid lizard,
Gonocephalus belli



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the male, less often in the female. They are used by the males mainly for fighting, but also for digging up roots and tubers.

The term **Ungulates** or **Hoofed Animals** is often used to comprise a large number of fairly big mammals whose finger and toe nails have become greatly enlarged and thickened for walking on, and whose actual fingers and toes, or digits, are always reduced in number below the primitive total of five seen on the feet of a lizard or on our own feet and hands. They are all herbivores or feeders on leaves and grass. There are two very distinct groups of hoofed mammals, the odd-toed ones and the even-toed. The study of fossils has shown that the two groups, though similar in appearance, are by no means closely allied, and for this reason zoologists have largely abandoned the term ungulate. It is a convenient one, however, and we will retain it, remembering that it does not designate a natural group of mammals in the scientific sense.

The odd-toed ungulates have the weight-bearing axis of the feet along the middle digit, so that reduction of their number produces the well-known single toe or hoof found in the horse. Three kinds of odd-toed ungulates, primitive relatives of the horse, are (or were) found in Malaya.

The **Asiatic Tapir** (Fig. 1) is a most curious animal. Its nose is produced into a short trunk which just overhangs the mouth and the adult is quite startlingly coloured, black on the front part and limbs, white on the hinder part of the body, the pattern being sharply defined. In a zoo or a museum the beast looks very conspicuous, but in the irregular light and shade of the jungle scene the bold pattern effectively breaks up its outline and so conceals it. One sees a black patch or a white one, neither having the characteristic shape of a quadruped animal or any particular form that will attract attention. This principle in camouflage, known as the "disruptive pattern", is often applied in wartime to conceal large objects like buildings and ships. It seems to stand the tapir in good stead, for it is wholly defenceless against the attack of such an animal as a tiger, and yet remains common. Curiously enough the baby tapir is quite differently coloured, dark brown all over with numerous tawny spots and streaks. This affords camouflage on a different principle, as it directly simulates the effect of the sun-dappled leaves of the jungle floor.

Tapirs are seldom seen, but their three-toed footprints are often encountered by rivers and on muddy jungle paths.

The other two odd-toed ungulates are rhinoceroses. The **Two-horned** or **Sumatran Rhinoceros** is an animal of hilly jungle. It is rare nowadays but still fairly well established in the wilder parts of the country. The **One-horned** or **Javan Rhinoceros** is not certainly known to exist in Malaya now and is an animal on the verge of total extinction throughout its range.

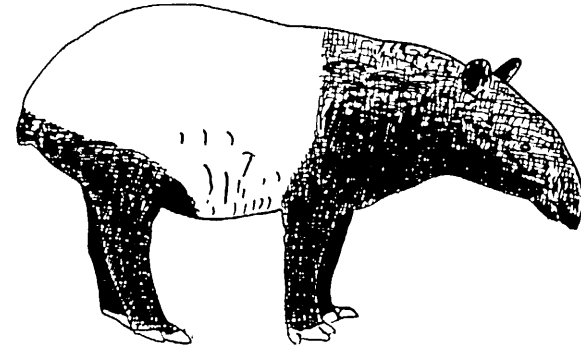


Fig. 1. Asiatic Tapir.

The existence of rhinoceroses everywhere is threatened by the enormous value as medicine placed by Chinese people on the horn, blood and other parts of these animals. It is a purely superstitious belief without any basis in fact, but if it persists there will soon be no rhinoceroses left alive. The horn or horns on the nose of the rhinoceros are wholly different in structure from those of other mammals, for they are formed of matted or consolidated hair.

In the even-toed ungulates the weight-bearing axis of the foot is between the third and fourth digits, so that reduction of their number finally produces two toes, forming a double or "cloven" hoof. Pigs, cattle, goats and deer are included in this group of mammals.

The **Common Wild Pig** is the only one of our larger mammals that can really take care of itself without any protection from the game laws. It is common in jungle and thrives also in scrub and on the fringes of cultivation, where it may be a serious pest,