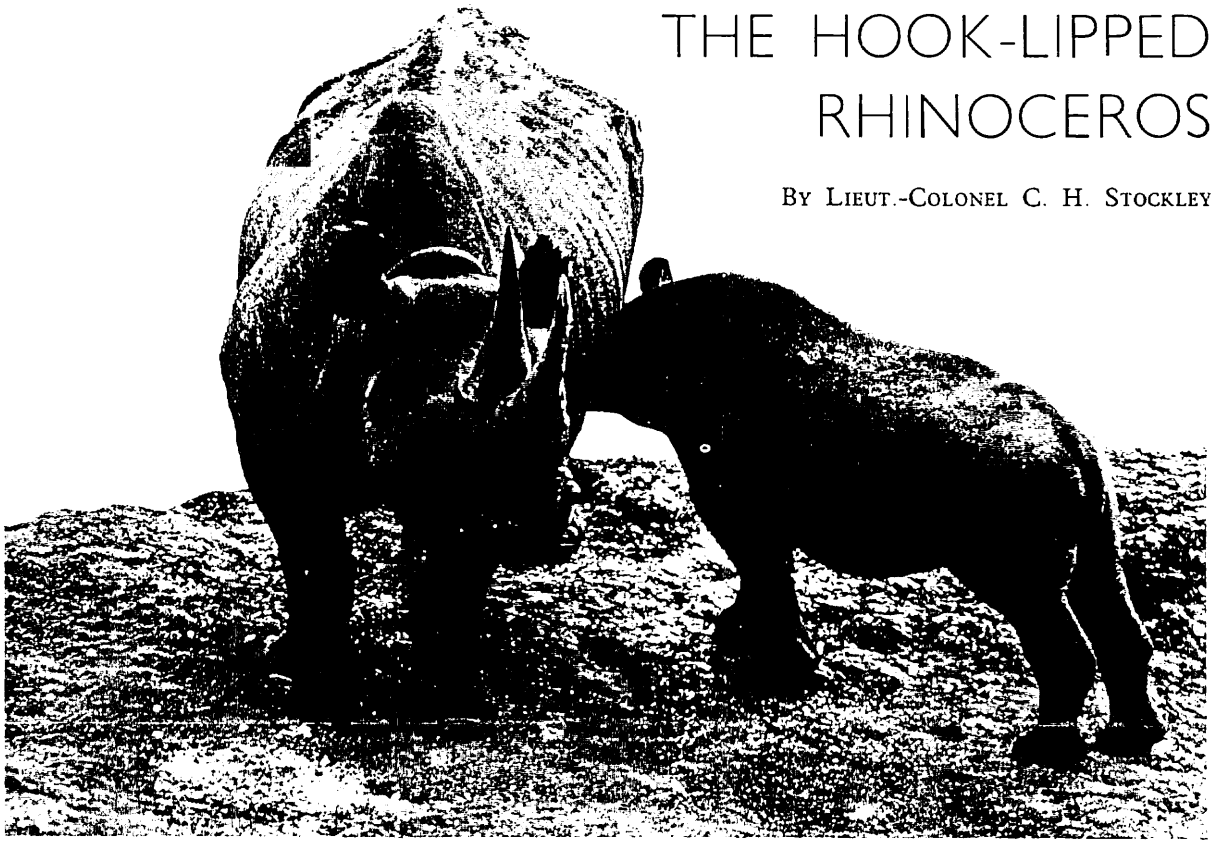
THE HOOK-LIPPED RHINOCEROS

By Lieut.-Colonel C. H. Stockley



HOOK-LIPPED OR BLACK RHINOCEROS AND CALF, KENYA
Photo : Sir Geoffrey de Havilland

The Hook-lipped Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros bicornis*) is found over most of Africa south of the Sahara, and is distinguished from the Square-mouthed Rhinoceros (*R. simus*) by the upper lip coming down over the lower, almost to a point, while that of *R. simus* is transversely straight. The hook-lipped is also known as the black rhinoceros, and the square-mouthed as the white, but both are the same colour, a dull grey. The hook-lipped may be any colour from white to black according to the soil in which it has been wallowing or enjoying its dust bath. The first two of this species I ever saw in Somaliland had been having a dust bath in a hollow stamped-out in gypsum rock, and almost shone they were so brilliantly white. On the Aberdare Range in Kenya I have seen two pairs within a furlong of each other, of which both were yellow ochre in one case and terracotta in the other. After a wallow in the mud of black cotton soil they are as dark as the darkest night.

In size they vary much, also in conformation. The little *nyika* bush rhino of the lower Tana cannot weigh much more than half as much as some of the great brutes which live in the forests around my house at the foot of Mt. Kenya, and it is from these forests that the longest and heaviest horns come. Here also the cows are sometimes bigger than the bulls, whereas that is not the case with the plains rhino in my experience.

An adult forest rhino will stand five and a half feet, the plains rhino some six inches less, and those of the Somali country little over four feet. In conformation they may be compact and heavy, straight-backed and slow moving, or long and slightly hollow-backed, with restless and active dispositions. The front horn is normally longer than the rear one, but in Somali individuals frequently have the rear horn the longer, though in these neither horn goes to much over 15 inches in length as a rule. In the forest rhino the front horn is often over 30 inches and the rear over 20, and round Mt. Kenya three have been shot in recent years with front horns over 40 inches. These were bulls carrying thick and well-shaped horns : cows sometimes have very long horns which are so thin that it is extraordinary that they are not broken in the forest. The shorter

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cow horns from forest specimens are often quite as thick as those of a bull, but in bush rhino are nearly always much thinner. In forest rhino of Kenya a curious aberration is sometimes seen, the horn starting as a thick lump in a bull, then growing up thinner and more curved than usual, appearing almost as if it had been broken off early in life and then grown again.

The mating season is usually early in the rains of any particular area, and as the rainy seasons vary in many parts of Africa this may be almost any month in the year, but in Kenya the popular months are April and November. At this time the bull is often aggressive, showing off before his mate by chasing cattle and herdboys, or even attacking cars on a main road. The actual courting is a curious performance, the bull chasing the cow round and round in the forest, both going at an even canter, punctuated by loud snorts about four to the minute.

The gestation period, as far as it can be fixed, seems to be fifteen months. This does not agree with that of the Great Indian Rhinoceros in captivity, of which there are two records of a few days over 19 months, but it worked out about right with two pairs which I saw frequently.

The calf stays with its mother for three to three and a half years, when she comes in season again, and, if a female, may stay on until the birth of the youngster, not being driven away by the new mate as usually happens with a bull calf. Cows with very young calves are rarely accompanied by other rhinoceros.

At first the mother is aggressive in fancied defence of her youngster, which is given to chasing anything smaller than itself. The eyesight of a calf is much better than that of adults, which have difficulty in defining a stationary object at anything over forty yards. After the first year the mother often ceases to take much interest in the vagaries of her offspring, remaining unmoved when the bad-tempered little beast attacks some other animal gratuitously. The calf is born with a rudimentary horn, in shape like a limpet shell, and both calf and horn grow rapidly for the first six months, the horn reaching as many inches in that time. Full stature is reached in eight years, but they continue to increase in sturdiness and weight for several years.

The greater proportion of their food is got by browsing on low bushes, but they do occasionally graze, and I watched one after a drought, when new grass was springing up, feeding alternately on grass and bush. This cow was so thin that every rib showed.

A solitary bull, or a pair of rhinoceros, will take up residence on a bit of territory and hold it against all comers, which is the main reason of the frequent fights when a cow is not even present. These fights seldom result in any serious hurt to either combatant, and I have never heard of a fatal result to one of them. The combatants are likely to attack any intruder after these fights, when suffering from excitement and minor injuries.

These minor injuries include cuts and abrasions in various parts of the front half of the body, but they do not account for the superficial wound low down behind the shoulder which is to be seen on so many rhinoceros. This cannot be always due to fighting, for in the country south of Embu, where several small rivers join to make the Tana, I never saw a rhinoceros with this wound, and I have photographs of six rhino from that bit of country none of which have a trace of it. Yet Sir Geoffrey de Havilland, on a recent trip to Amboseli, near the Tanganyika border, writes that of "the many rhino" seen there, only one or two were without this type of wound, and that it was on both sexes and on fairly young ones still with their mothers.

While I was with the K.A.R. (Mounted Infantry) in Somaliland forty years ago, we had great trouble with tickbirds making similar wounds in the same places or farther back on the "saddle" of our riding camels, so much so that grazing guards had to be given shotguns to protect them. This place, low down behind the shoulder, is a favourite place for ticks to attack, the skin being tender and the host unable to get at it to rub them off. Tickbirds pull out ticks and then often go on pulling away little bits of flesh, enlarging the wounds steadily. I have actually seen them doing this in both rhinoceros and camels, though I have not seen them start the wound on the rhinoceros.

Then why had the rhinoceros in the Embu country no such wounds? There were then very large numbers of buffalo there, and while clouds of tick-

COW RHINOCEROS, ABERDARE RANGE, KENYA
Photo : Lieut.-Colonel C. H. Stockley

AN ADULT BULL IN THE EMBU COUNTRY AT 4,000 FEET. THE LUMPS ON THE HIDE ARE MUD FROM A WALLOW
Photo : Lieut.-Colonel C. H. Stockley

birds rose from a herd of the bovines, I rarely saw them on rhinoceros. At Amboseli there were few if any buffalo during Sir Geoffrey de Havilland's visit. It seems possible that the buffalo, which are the favourite hosts of the tickbirds, attracted them and saved the rhinoceros from their attentions.

Again, the forest rhinoceros living near my house have this wound in only about one in three of them. They have plenty of scars and abrasions in other places from fighting, but these are always farther back than the low shoulder wound. Again, I have seen a rhinoceros which had the shoulder wound flee into thick bush to scrape off tickbirds which attacked it in the open and began to operate on the wound.

Also three rhinoceros shot by me as nuisances, which were living in bush close to domestic herds of cattle, had no trace of this wound.

My observations are not intended to be conclusive, of course, for observers in other countries must give us their views before the matter can be settled ; but after camping in the Embu country a dozen times, and seeing clouds of tickbirds (Red-billed Oxpeckers) rise from herds of buffalo, while there were seldom any in attendance on rhinoceros, and the bearing of my experiences with riding camels seems to confirm my view. Before the late war I used to see from two to half a dozen rhinoceros every day at Embu, and probably several hundred buffalo. Not a tenth of them are left : I was there last June.

Yet in thick bush, and above all in forest, hook-lipped rhinoceros are still plentiful, and when new country was being cleared to settle Wakamba over 1,200 were shot. Forest rhino round me are plentiful and bad-tempered, and in spite of many being shot by control officers for destroying fences and crops, raiding plantations of young trees, or even attacking cars on the road, their numbers do not diminish. It is rare not to have one established in the bush within a mile of my house.

It is interesting to note, in comparing the temperaments of the two species of African rhinoceros, that the white rhinoceros, which is carefully protected and said to be harmless, was suddenly accused of being responsible for the deaths of some fifteen Africans in the S.W. Sudan two years ago. An investigating party found, in white rhino country, an isolated colony of the hook-lipped species and was viciously attacked by them.

Somali rhino are very bad-tempered, from hereditary causes, having been hunted for shield-hides for centuries; the usual method being to surround them and throw clouds of spears until the rhino dies from multiple wounds or bursts through the hunters and escapes.

Though normally they drink regularly, rhinoceros are adaptable in this matter, as Somali rhinoceros may be found many miles from water for weeks together. In 1909 I found a colony of the hook-lipped in the Bur Dab range of British Somaliland,

where no surface water is found for six to eight months at a time. In such places these great beasts chew thick-leaved succulents, mainly Sansevieria, for the necessary moisture. Such adaptation takes a long time, for during a drought a dozen years ago in Kenya, at the Laisamis wells, both elephant and rhino used to wait their turns to water until after the native cattle, then come to drink. The elephants could reach the water with their trunks, but no fewer than fifteen rhino perished miserably, stuck in the entrances of these rock wells, and a row of their skulls was lined up on a big rock for years afterwards.

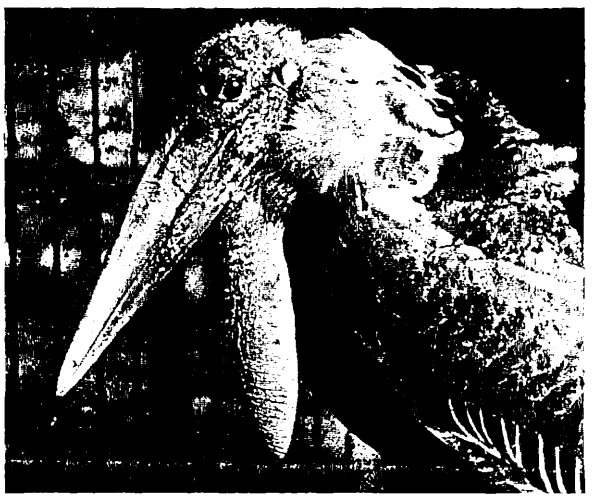
THE QUAINT MARABOU STORK

BY MAJOR HUGH MACKAY

THE Marabou Stork (*Leptoptilos crumeniferus*) is indigenous to Africa, and in many parts, like the Northern Frontier District of Kenya Colony, may be seen in thousands, either perched on the table-top branches of acacia trees or wandering about the sandy clearings of the bush. An allied species, the Indian Adjutant (*L. dubius*), occurs throughout Central and Northern India extending into Burma and Cochin China. (See photo, p. 87.) If caught young Marabous are easily tamed, but unfortunately they are apt to be short-tempered. They used to be trapped in great numbers in the past for the beautiful fluffy white feathers which are found under their tails, and which were used for military head-dress decorations. The Marabou is a large, heavy bird, with a grey back and streaky grey and white wings. The breast is white, and its beak is yellowish, extremely long and very strong. Its yellowish eyes have a wicked gleam in them. It is, in a way, a grotesque bird, and requires a long loping run before it can become airborne, while when landing it glides in and then is forced to run for some yards before it can come to a standstill.

In the "nyika" (wilderness) of Kenya, the Somali children trap the birds for their feathers, and in this illegal procedure, the youngsters have to be most careful. During the time I was on the frontier, I heard of several youngsters who had been killed by Marabou, while I have attended to spear-like wounds on the bodies of others, the result of stabs inflicted by the struggling birds with their cruel beaks. When the birds have been snared, a noose is placed over their beaks, then the bunch of under-tail feathers are pulled out and the bird allowed free. When angry the Marabou makes a loud clapping noise with his bill, rather like the sound of large wooden clappers.

In the small zoo which the District Commissioner and I kept at Wajir, we were fortunate enough to receive a newly hatched Marabou, and a strange looking creature it was indeed, with its comic expression and long hanging dewlap. (See photo).



MARABOU STORK (*Leptoptilos crumeniferus*) SHOWING LONG PENDULOUS AND DILATABLE POUCH
Photo : F. W. Bond

Within a few days it became quite friendly and ate practically anything from our fingers, while making a grumbling, gobbling noise. The bird "George" grew rapidly, and soon was quite at home in the boma. He wandered at will, and even out to the fringe of bush, but his brethren would have nothing to do with him, and chased him back to the boma.

He often caused great amusement by turning up on my King's African Rifles' Parade, and when the askaris were in a long line for kit inspection, he would stalk solemnly behind me, gazing at the men with speculative eyes. At that time I was fond of wearing my red and white striped Sandhurst blazer, and one day I was in the stone-built office which had but two small high-up windows, and one door. It was the afternoon and no askaris were about. Suddenly I heard the well-known clapping voice of "George". I wondered what was annoying him. I looked up to see the angry-looking fellow