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MALAYSIAN NATURE HANDBOOKS

*Mammals of Malaysia*

BY

M. W. F. TWEEDIE

*Formerly Director of The Raffles Museum, Singapore*

ILLUSTRATED BY MICHAEL J. WOODS



LONGMAN MALAYSIA

LONGMAN MALAYSIA SDN. BERHAD  
Wisma Damansara, Jalan Semantan, Kuala Lumpur  
25 First Lokyang Road, Singapore 22

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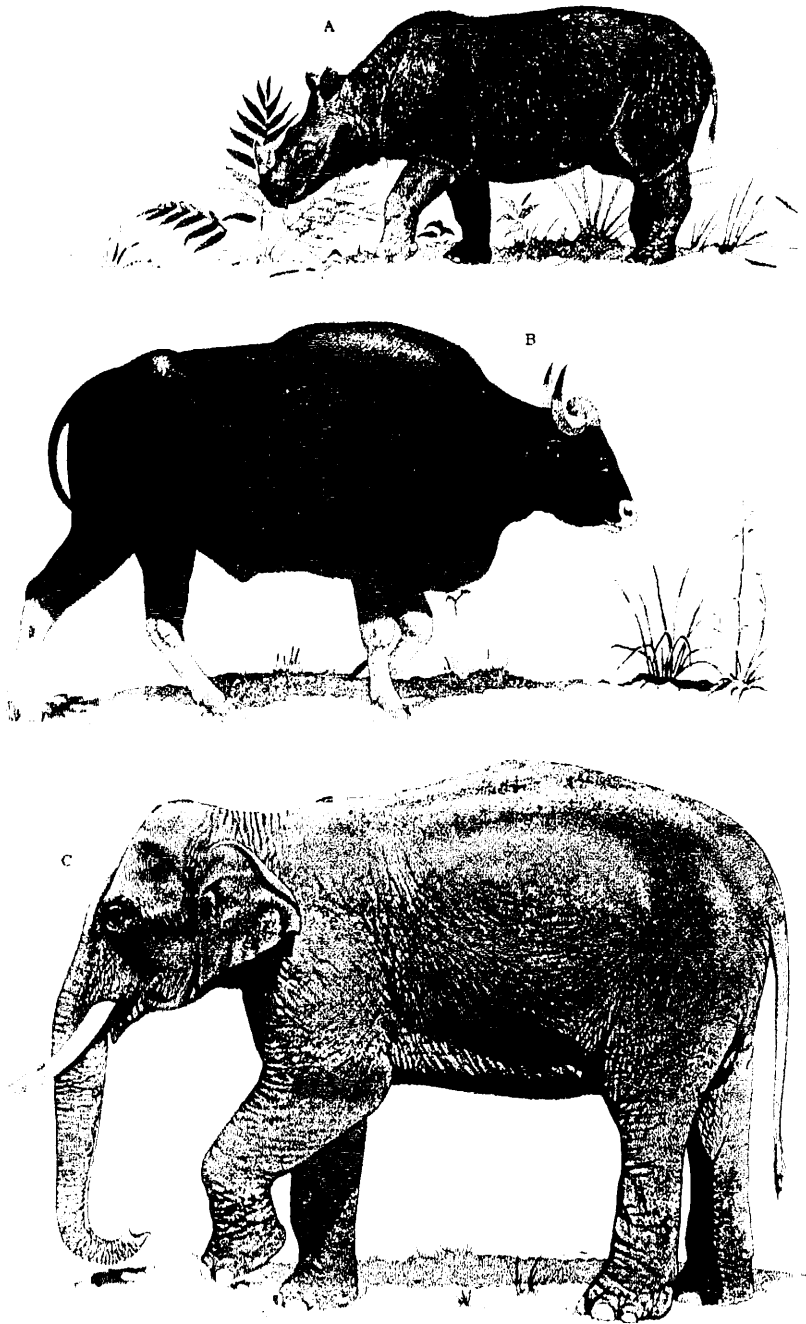


PLATE 14. A. Sumatran Rhinoceros; B. Gaur; C. Indian Elephant



Fig. 11. Malay Civet.

LARGE SPOTTED CIVET (*Viverra megaspila*), length up to 95 cm, basal half of tail with three or four dark rings joined together on top and with the dorsal stripe, terminal half dark with indistinct paler rings; large irregular dark spots on the flanks.

LITTLE CIVET (*Viverricula malaccensis*), smaller, tail marked with seven complete dark rings, its tip usually pale; flanks with numerous dark spots arranged in rows. All three, like the Malay civet, are ground-living animals.

COMMON PALM CIVET OR TODDY CAT (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*)

Plate 13B

MUSANG PULUT

Length 50–60 cm, tail about the same. Ranges from India and Ceylon through Sundaland to the Philippines, Celebes and the Lesser Sunda Islands. The colour varies from dark to pale grey and there are three distinct parallel dark lines along the back and black spots on the flanks. There is a dark patch on each side of the face, enclosing the eyes, throat uniform grey, tail not ringed.

This is the common musang that lives in forest, plantations and settled areas and often finds its way into roof spaces of houses; it

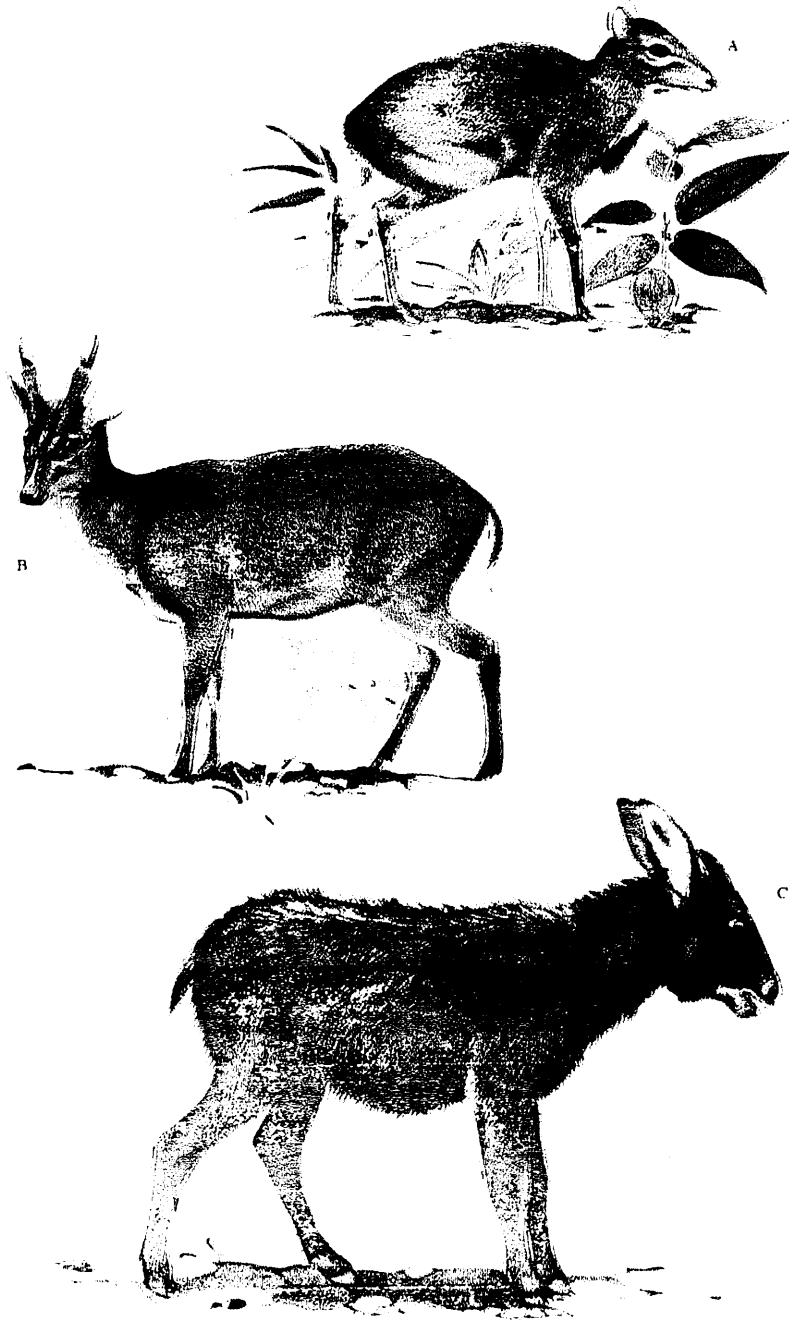


PLATE 16: A. Large Mouse-deer; B. Barking Deer; Serow.

which is generally supposed to be derived from animals that escaped from domestication by the Brunei sultans; trained elephants were seen in Brunei as early as 1521. On the other hand fossil remains from the Pleistocene Epoch or 'Ice Age' have been found in Borneo and it is possible that they have survived as wild animals there since the time when Sundaland was more or less extensively joined to the mainland of Asia.

Elephants need large quantities of vegetable food, as much as 250 kg or a quarter of a ton, a day. They have no inhibitions about invading standing crops and they do serious damage, as much by trampling as in feeding, but the construction of ditches only 6 to 8 feet wide will prevent the entry of elephants into cultivated land. Nevertheless, like tigers, wild elephants are not good country neighbours; they must be accommodated in large nature reserves if they are to live at all.

Usually one young is born at a time after a gestation period of about 21 months. Maturity is reached after 8 to 12 years and the expectation of life is rather less than that of modern man; an age of 70 is exceptional for an elephant.

The tusks, which are much larger in males, are really enormous forward-growing incisor teeth. An elephant's life span is limited by the duration of its molar teeth, of which it has the use, in succession, of six in each jaw. They do not grow and erupt together, but one after the other throughout its life, only one enormous molar (or parts of two) being present in the jaw at any one time. As it wears down each one is substituted from behind by the next one in succession, and when the sixth and last molars have erupted and worn away the elephant can no longer chew its food.

## PERISSODACTYLA

SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS (*Didermocerus sumatrensis*) Plate 14A

BADAK BERENDAM

This is the smallest of the five existing species of rhinoceros, 2.5 to 2.8 metres long and a little over a metre in height at the shoulder. It is more hairy than any of the others and has two horns on its snout,

the hinder one often very small. There are two folds in the skin, one over the shoulders and one on each side in front of the hind quarters. In colour it appears dark brown or blackish. The footprints are much more likely to be seen than the animal; they are three-toed and around 20 cm in diameter.

Rhinoceroses all over their range in Asia and Africa are threatened with extinction largely due to a superstitious belief that the substance of their horns, and other parts of them, are of medicinal value, especially in promoting virility. There is no foundation for this belief; the horns of rhinos have the same constitution as hair, and scrapings from one have the same therapeutic value, or lack of it, as chopped up horsehair.

There are now a few, very few, Sumatran rhinos left in the hill forests of Malaya, Borneo and Sumatra, and it seems that their numbers are still diminishing. They are, of course, protected by law, but a rational and realistic attitude towards them would be of more value to their survival.

Another species, the JAVAN RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*), existed in Malaya up to the first quarter of this century, the last ones having been shot near Teluk Anson in 1932. It is now known to exist only in a small population in the Hudjong Kulong Reserve in western Java, where it is carefully guarded by the Indonesian Government. The Javan rhino is much larger than the Sumatran, 1.4 to 1.7 metres high at the shoulder, and it has only one horn and three folds of skin running over the back and flanks.

#### MALAYAN TAPIR (*Tapirus indicus*)

Plate 15B

TENUK, CIPAN, BADAQ MURAI

Length between 2 and 2.5 metres, a little smaller than the Sumatran rhino. The tracks are also smaller, not more than 17 cm in diameter, and those of the fore foot are four-toed. The distribution is south-eastern Asia extending to Malaya and Sumatra, not Borneo. The young tapir is brown with a pattern of irregular yellowish longitudinal stripes; as the animal grows up this is gradually replaced by the remarkable black-and-white coloration of the adult. Both patterns can be regarded as camouflage. A curled up sleeping young tapir looks very much like a heap of sun-dappled dead leaves. The adult pattern may

well be a bold essay in what is called disruptive coloration; its effect is to convey an impression of either half a black animal or half a white one. The eye of the tiger is not automatically alerted by an image of half an animal and so fails to spot the tapir so long as it remains motionless. Tapirs are active mainly at night and they do hide effectively by day because they are very seldom seen.

This animal suffers no particular persecution but is growing scarcer as the forest dwindles away. It is a curious and interesting beast, remarkable in appearance and a 'living fossil', a relic of a once widespread and varied fauna of primitive perissodactyls. Their only other modern habitat is tropical Central and South America, where three species are found, all plain coloured as adults but similarly striped when young.

### ARTIODACTYLA

#### WILD PIG (*Sus scrofa*)

BABI HUTAN

About 80 cm high at the shoulder and may weigh well over 100 kg. Brown with black bristles forming a crest over the shoulders and along the back; the young are marked with light and dark longitudinal stripes. The canine teeth of both jaws grow continuously and are developed as tusks which are formidable weapons, especially in the male or boar. This is the wild pig or 'wild boar' that extends from Europe to eastern Asia and to the Sunda Islands except Borneo.

Wild pigs are active by day and night and in spite of being constantly hunted they seem to maintain their numbers fairly well. They feed by rooting in the soil and do serious damage to such crops as sweet potato and tapioca. They may be solitary or go in small parties, and several young are born at a time, exceptionally as many as 11, but no litters of this size have been recorded from Malaya.

#### BEARDED PIG (*Sus barbatus*)

Plate 15A

BABI BODOH, BABI JOKUT

This animal is larger than the common wild pig and paler coloured with a longer head and a conspicuous growth of bristles around the