

Vanishing Wild Animals of the World

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farms has not proved very successful in recent years, and its future was not assured until the Mountain Zebra National Park was set up in the Cape Province in 1937. Even then the first attempt failed, and it took two large infusions of fresh blood and a substantial extension of the park boundaries to bring about the present encouraging position, with fifty-eight of the surviving world stock breeding well in the park.

The larger Hartmann's Mountain Zebra *E. z. hartmannae* is in much better shape, with about 7,000 animals in the mountain escarpment zone that forms the eastern boundary of the Namib desert in South-West Africa. It is, however, said to be still decreasing owing to poaching and competition from domestic stock for the available grazing. Sightings by people unfamiliar with this zebra have before now given rise to hopes that the quagga had been rediscovered.

All five species of rhino remaining in the world today are considered to be in danger, but the two African species are in better shape than the three Asian ones. With its horns and pachydermatous hide, the rhino looks like a survival from an antique age, insufficiently adapted to the stresses of modern living, and some biologists have pronounced it to be a living fossil on its way to natural extinction; but this remains an opinion and no more. The much more ancient coelacanth seems to have quite a healthy population in the seas off the East African coast, and there is no reason to suppose that the African rhinos were ill adapted to the natural conditions that prevailed almost throughout the continent south of the Sahara less than a century ago. Of the two, the white or square-lipped rhino is much less common than the widespread black rhino; both species have two horns.

The White Rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* (Plate 6) is dark grey, not white (any more than the black rhino is black), so that many people prefer to call it by the more accurately descriptive name of Square-lipped Rhino. The largest surviving land mammals after the elephants, white rhinos are predominantly grazers and of a rather mild disposition, in contrast with the irritability that seems to be engendered in the browsing black rhino by its diet of thorny shrubs.

The two races of the white rhino are geographically quite distinct, but very similar to look at, though zoologists detect some differences in their skulls and teeth. The rarer of the two is the northern race, *C. s. cottoni*, which inhabits the Upper Nile and adjacent territories in the Sudan, the Congo, Uganda and the Central African Republic. The southern Sudan may still be its main stronghold, with perhaps up to 2,000 individuals but, since the rebellion in this part of the country, no estimates reliable or otherwise have been available, although those in the Nimule reserve were said to be flourishing in 1962. Until a few years ago, there were almost as many white rhino in the north-eastern corner of the Congo, but Kai Curry-Lindahl, the eminent Swedish conservationist, who visited the area in 1966, found that their numbers had been catastrophically reduced from over 1,000 to only about 100. In 1963 the Garamba National Park, the rhinos' Congo stronghold, was completely occupied by well armed rebel forces who slaughtered the bulk of the game, including some 4,000 elephants and perhaps 950-1,150 white rhinos. The national park organisation was completely destroyed, but is now being built up again, so there is some hope that the surviving rhinos may repopulate the park. In Uganda there may perhaps be eighty (in 1955 there were 350) in the West Nile province, as well as a dozen transported to the safety of the Murchison Falls National Park in two expeditions with the aid of Anglia Television and the World Wildlife Fund; to these five calves have been born making a total of seventeen animals in the park. In the Central African Republic the population in Ubangui is very small, possibly not more than a dozen,

ged although formerly rhinos were widespread in this part of the southern fringes of the Sahara, as far west as Lake Tchad.

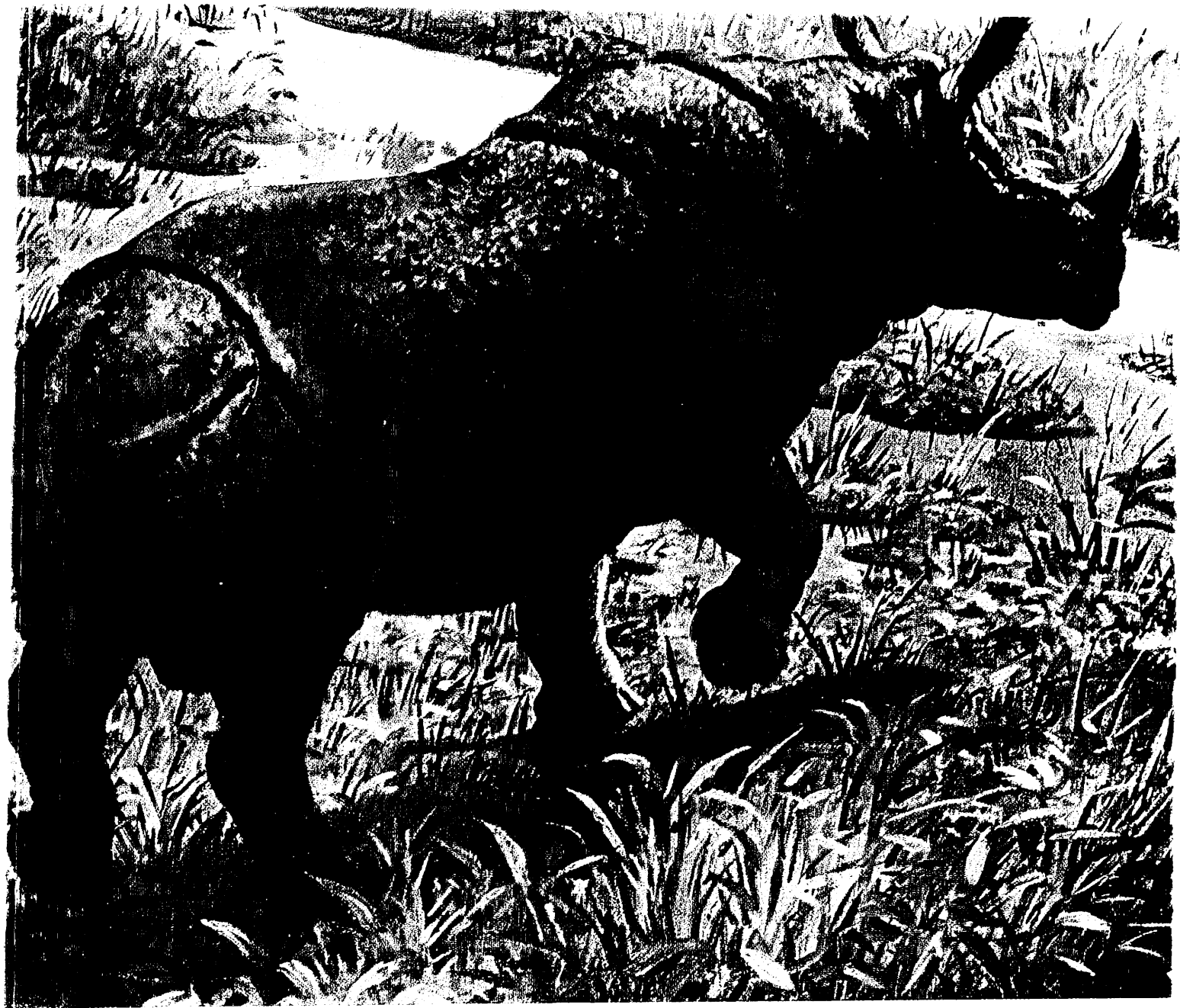
A very different picture is presented by the southern race, *C. s. simum*, which although its total numbers may be smaller is thriving so well under the excellent protection of the Natal Parks Board that it is eating itself out of house and home, and its increasing numbers have become an embarrassment. There are 800 in Zululand, mainly in the two game reserves of Umfolozi and Hluhluwe, the only surviving natural populations from a range that once extended over a large part of southern Africa. However, these small reserves do not provide enough grazing for an expanding population, and to prevent severe overgrazing of the habitat a massive operation, as described in Part 4, has been mounted to disperse the surplus white rhinos to other parts of Africa and zoos all over the world.

The Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* is one of the more numerous of the endangered species, its numbers being estimated at between 11,000 and 13,500, but it has decreased and is still decreasing at such a rapid rate that its inclusion in the Red Data Book is fully justified. The present populations include several hundreds in most countries from Cameroon, Tchad and the Sudan south to the Republic of South Africa, but numbers in Ethiopia, the Somali Republic, Botswana and Malawi are probably very small. Its headquarters lie on the great plains of Kenya and Tanzania, where there are some 5,500 to 6,500, but generally speaking the future of the black rhino outside national parks and game reserves must be considered precarious. In settled areas rhinos are inconvenient animals to have around, and the Kenya Game Department has for some years been engaged in shifting rhinos from areas where they are not wanted to others where they are more welcome. In other countries, however, the fate of a rhino in a settled district is more often to be killed, especially in view of the value of its horn. Indeed poaching for the horn, which is believed to have aphrodisiac properties and fetches very high prices, will probably continue to be the main threat to the black rhino even when all survivors are safely housed within protected areas.

John Goddard, a Canadian zoologist with the Tanzanian Game Division, and Hans and Ute Klingel, of the Serengeti Research Station, have done some fascinating field research on the rhinos of the Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania, in the course of which each rhino was identified by its individual peculiarities, recorded in photographs without the necessity of tagging. Most of the rhinos resident in the crater, especially the old bulls, were found to have well defined home ranges, but nearly half the sixty-one animals observed proved to be wanderers who stayed only a short time in the crater, while counts suggested that the residents too were often in the habit of wandering outside. Such information is vital for the formulation of an effective conservation programme for these rhinos, and indeed all other animals.

Even-toed ungulates

The even-toed ungulates comprise the largest group of threatened mammals in Africa south of the Sahara: the pigmy hippo, the walia ibex and no fewer than twelve species of antelopes.



25. Javan Rhinoceros

Rhinoceros sondaicus

The rarest large animal in the world, barely two dozen surviving in the Ujung Kulon reserve at the western tip of Java. There may also be a handful on the mainland of South-East Asia, but none have been reliably reported from there for many years.



that in pursuing their traditional migrations the elephants are almost bound to interfere with farming operations somewhere. Hence a constant persecution of the remaining stock of 1,000–1,500, by exasperated farmers who care little about tourist attractions or the need for the ecological survey to discover the Ceylon elephants' requirements which the Smithsonian Institution has recently undertaken at the instance of the Wild Life Protection Society of Ceylon. This survey has been grant-aided from the joint Revolving Fund of the Fauna Preservation Society and the World Wildlife Fund, which purchased two land-rovers for the use of the research team.

Sirenians

The Dugong (page 31) was once found throughout this region in suitable, shallow waters with marine plants for grazing, but there is little hard information about its status today. A dugong sanctuary has been proposed for Puttalam Lagoon in Ceylon.

Odd-toed Ungulates

As well as having the Indian wild ass, this region has the largest number of rhinoceros species—three, and all of them threatened as a result of the demand for their horn as an aphrodisiac. Much the rarest of the three is the one-horned Javan Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros sondaicus* (Plate 25), a smaller version of the great Indian rhino, at one time widespread throughout the region. The only certainly known population today is the two dozen or so which survive in the Ujung Kulon reserve in western Java, but there may also be a few in the Tenasserim area on the Burma-Thailand frontier. Great efforts have recently been made by the Survival Service Commission of the International Union for Conservation of Nature to secure a proper scientific management of this reserve, where, for instance, scrub clearance is needed to provide a continuance of the habitat the rhino likes best. A motor-boat for communication both with and within the reserve was the first project financed by the Revolving Fund of the Fauna Preservation Society and World Wildlife Fund, and visits from a succession of distinguished European biologists have been arranged through the SSC and WWF. Javan rhinos are so rarely seen that the field workers have to rely on tracks for estimating numbers, and it is a worrying feature of the present situation that at the last census, in November 1967, no tracks of calves less than a year old were seen.

The small hairy two-horned Sumatran Rhinoceros *Didermoceros sumatrensis* (Plate 26) is more widespread, but very rare wherever it is found. It formerly inhabited an extensive region from Assam and what is now East Pakistan over the whole of the continental South-East Asia to Sumatra and Borneo. Latest estimates of its numbers are between 100 and 170 all told, of which there may be about forty in Sumatra, thirty in Malaya, twenty to thirty in Burma, perhaps ten each in Borneo and Cambodia and half a dozen in Thailand, on the Tenasserim border. An attempt to capture some to breed in captivity a few years ago ended disastrously with two killed and a single female in Copenhagen Zoo. What the Sumatran rhino most needs to survive is effectively guarded reserves, but political and social conditions over most of its range make this most difficult to achieve at present. The FPS/WWF Revolving Fund made a small grant to enable the Malayan Game Department to buy a small motor-boat to facilitate patrolling in the Sungei Dusun Reserve where three Sumatran rhinos, two adults and a young one, are known to exist.

The one-horned Great Indian Rhino *R. unicornis* (Plate 27), is much the most happily placed of the three Asiatic rhinos at present, though with no room for complacency. More

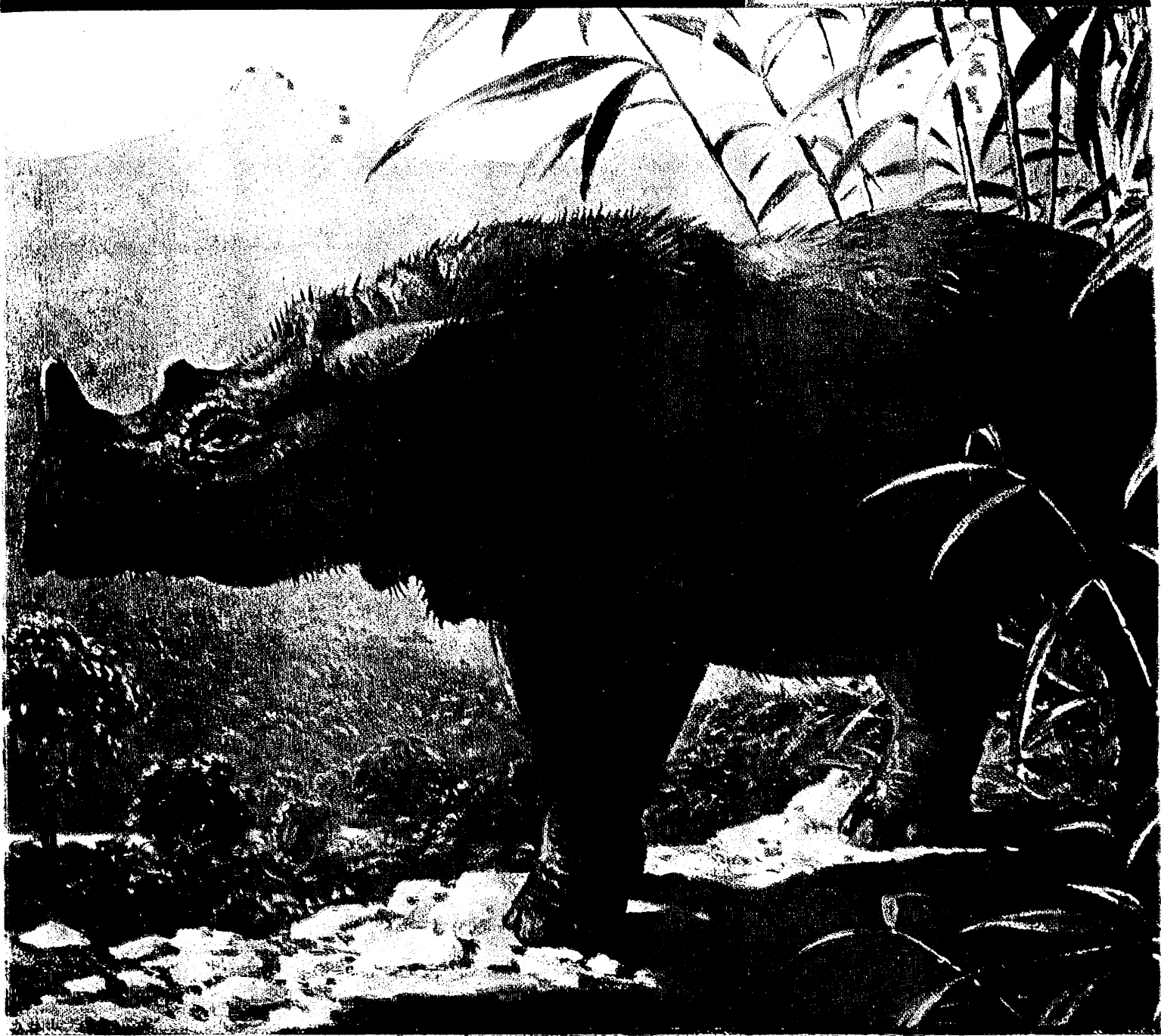
restricted in range than the other two, it has apparently always been confined to northern India and Nepal. Today there are estimated to be about 740 in the wild, of which 165 are in the Chitawan sanctuary in Nepal and the rest in India, with about 400 in the fine Kaziranga sanctuary in Assam, 120 in other parts of Assam and fifty-five in West Bengal. Kaziranga holds more than half the great Indian rhinos in the world, even if the forty odd in zoos are taken into account. The ecological survey of Kaziranga, recently undertaken by Juan Spillett for the World Wildlife Fund, with grants provided by the Swiss Volkart Foundation, shows that although the present situation is satisfactory, and poaching reasonably under control, great care is needed if the habitat is not to be spoiled by the grazing of domestic stock, and he recommends that some of the grazing now permitted on the fringes of the sanctuary should be stopped. In Nepal the authorities acted strongly a few years ago, removed 22,000 villagers who had squatted within the rhino sanctuary and resettled them elsewhere. In both countries the value of the rhinos as a tourist attraction is fully recognised, and in February 1968 the first Fauna Preservation Society tour to India visited Kaziranga. Another point in favour of the great Indian rhino's eventual survival is the fact that it breeds well in captivity; at Basle Zoo no fewer than eight calves have been born, at least one of them in the second generation.

The Indian race of the Wild Ass *Equus hemionus khur* (Plate 12), whose other endangered races have been discussed on pages 32, 40 and 50, is entirely confined to the desert area of the Little Rann of Kutch on the borders of India and West Pakistan, where E. P. Gee, the eminent Indian conservationist, counted 870 at his last visit, in 1962. Sixteen years previously there had been between 3,000 and 5,000. It was feared that the recent warlike operations between India and Pakistan in this area might have affected the asses, but so far as can be ascertained they were unharmed. One of the main dangers to the survivors is their susceptibility to diseases contracted from domestic horses and donkeys, so it is good news that these animals are now being immunised in the Rann area against horse sickness. Another wise precaution would be to establish a breeding herd in captivity; a foal was born in 1964 at the Maharaja Fatesingh Zoo at Baroda.

Even-toed Ungulates

The endangered even-toed ungulates of the region consist of seven forms (five species) of oxen and their allies, five forms (four species) of deer, four forms of goats and goat-like animals and one pig. The bovids are the wild buffalo, seladang, kouprey, tamarau and anoa.

Fewer than 2,000 genuinely wild Asiatic Buffalo *Bubalus bubalis* appear to survive in India and Nepal. Reports from Ceylon and other parts of the region evidently refer mainly to feral specimens, although Dr Boonsong claims that it is wild but rare in Burma, Thailand (almost lost), Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam. A race has been described from Borneo, but those now in Sabah at least are feral. This species is the origin of the domestic buffalo, of which it is a larger and more alert edition. The known stocks of wild buffalo are now confined to three areas: the Brahmaputra valley in Assam, the lower reaches of the Godavari River, which runs into the Bay of Bengal just north of the Coromandel Coast, and the valley of the Saptkosi River in eastern Nepal, close to the Indian border. Juan Spillett estimated some 550 wild buffalo in the Kaziranga sanctuary in Assam in his 1966 census, and noted that the female domestic buffalo, of which some 2,000 are unfortunately grazed in the sanctuary, were usually served by wild bulls. As a result a good many feral hybrids are also loose in Kaziranga, the half-bred bull calves often being allowed to go free. R. G. M. Willan, lately Chief Conservator of Nepal,

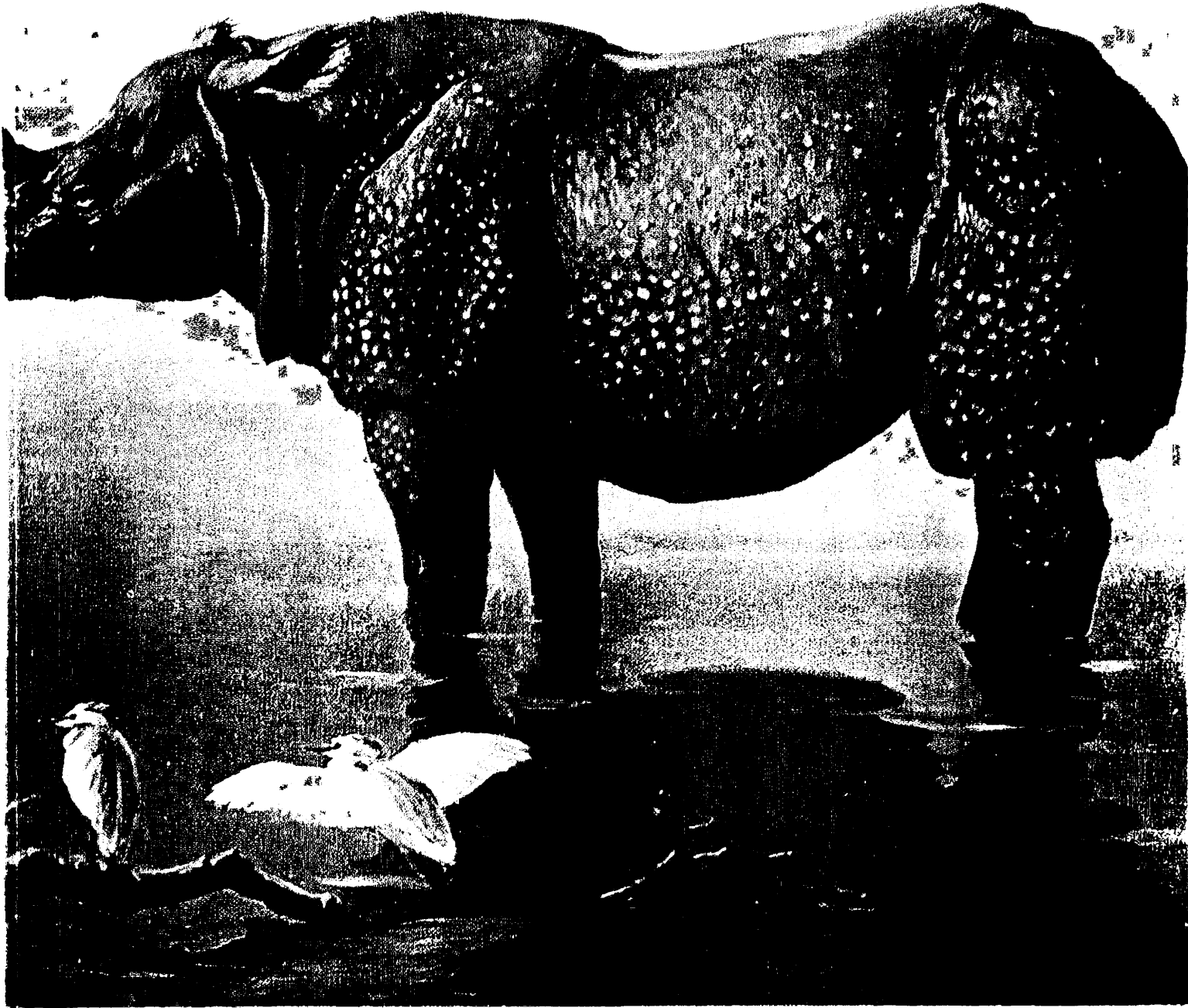


26. Sumatran Rhinoceros

Didermoceros sumatrensis

The second rarest rhino in the world, widely scattered in the remoter forests of South-East Asia, and the only two-horned rhino on the continent of Asia. There are a very few in the Sungei Dusun game reserve in Malaya.





27. Great Indian Rhinoceros

Rhinoceros unicornis

The largest of the three Asiatic rhinos, and the original rhinoceros of antiquity. Though well protected in sanctuaries in India and Nepal, it is constantly threatened, like all the rhinos, by poachers seeking its horn, widely reputed as an aphrodisiac in the Far East.

