

# GREAT AND SMALL GAME OF AFRICA

AN ACCOUNT OF THE DISTRIBUTION, HABITS, AND NATURAL  
HISTORY OF THE SPORTING MAMMALS, WITH  
PERSONAL HUNTING EXPERIENCES

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comparatively low and broad crowns, with a peculiar and characteristic pattern, easy of recognition when once seen. The head is large and massive, with a concave profile, small eyes, and the somewhat tubular erect ears situated far back ; the upper lip being often pointed and prehensile. The powerful limbs are relatively short for the size of the body, and each toe bears a hoof-like nail of great breadth. The tail is thin and of medium length ; and the skin, which may be divided into several partially distinct shields by deep folds, is of great thickness, and is either nearly naked, or more or less sparsely covered with coarse hair.

At the present day the group is restricted to Africa and the warmer parts of Asia. In Africa it is represented by the widely-spread common or black rhinoceros (*R. bicornis*), the nearly extinct Burchell's, or white rhinoceros (*R. simus*) of the Cape and south-eastern regions, and the little-known Holmwood's rhinoceros (*R. holmwoodi*) of East Africa. All three are distinguished from their Asiatic relatives by their smooth skins and the absence of front teeth ; and all have two horns. Burchell's rhinoceros, which is a grass-feeder, differs, however, very widely from the common species in the structure of its cheek-teeth. Holmwood's rhinoceros is at present known only by the horns and may prove not to be a distinct form.

#### THE BLACK RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros bicornis*)

*Zwaart Rhenoster* OF THE BOERS ; *Upejana* OF THE ZULUS AND MATABELE ; *'Sipejana* OF THE SWAZIS AND MATONGA ; *Borele* AND *Keitloa* OF THE BECHUANAS ; *Upelepe* OF THE BASUTO ; *Chipambiri* OF THE LOWER ZAMBESI NATIVES AND ALOMWE (P.E.A.)<sup>1</sup>

The prehensile-lipped rhinoceros, as this beast may be termed, is in one sense an antediluvian animal, the group to which it belongs having made

<sup>1</sup> Portuguese East Africa.



its appearance as far back as the Miocene, and being numerous during the Pliocene period. In those days some were hornless and four-toed, others horned and three-toed, as in existing types. The thick-jawed rhino (*R. pachygnathus*) is considered the immediate ancestor of *R. bicornis*. The most striking characteristics of the latter are the rounded termination of the nasal bones, the comparatively smooth and naked hide, the pointed, prehensile upper lip, small round nostrils, and the position of the eyes behind the extended axis of the posterior horn. The tail is tufted, the ears are moderately large and more or less fringed with hair. Both sexes carry well-developed horns, differing so much in size and conformation as at one time to have led to a belief in the existence of two distinct species.<sup>1</sup> The following authenticated measurements<sup>2</sup> of six pairs of horns demonstrate this variation:—

Anterior horn	10 in.	18 in.	28 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.	31 in.	38 in.	41 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
Posterior „	6 in.	12 in.	8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.	19 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.	11 in.	10 in.

Cows' horns are usually longer, but more slender than those of the bulls. These horns, composed of closely-packed horny fibre, are not fixed solidly on the skull, though there are prominences on the latter below each, on the nasal bones for the anterior, and on the frontals for the posterior. But though not actually fixed to the skull, it is an arduous task to dislodge them with a skinning-knife. The average dimensions of an adult bull are as follows:—Tip of nose to root of tail between uprights, 9 feet; tail, 1 foot 10 inches to 2 feet; over all, "sportsman's measurement," about 12 feet; shoulder height, 5 feet 4 inches. An adult cow will run 10 feet over all, with a standing height of 4 feet 10 inches. Following are the dimensions of my two best bulls:—

<sup>1</sup> It is a remarkable fact that, with the exception of a huge bull I shot in Portuguese Northern Zambesia, I have never met with another long *anterior*-horned rhino in Central or Central East Africa—*i.e.* a typical keitloa,—and the natives only recognise the one—*chipambiri*.

<sup>2</sup> From Mr. Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game*.



Length in straight line, point of lip to root of tail.	Length of tail.	Sportsman's measurements over all.	Vertical standing height.	Girth of neck.	Girth behind the shoulder.	Length anterior horn.	Basal circumference.	Length posterior horn.	Basal circumference.
10 ft. 1 in.	2 ft. 1 in.	13 ft. 1 in.	5 ft. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.	5 ft. 1 in.	8 ft. 11 in.	32 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.	21 in.	19 in.	15 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.
10 „ 3 „	2 „ 3 „	13 „ 4 „	5 ft. 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ „	5 ft. 2 „	9 „ 2 „	20 $\frac{3}{8}$ „	22 „	9 $\frac{3}{4}$ „	18 „

Up to a certain point all sportsmen are agreed as to the character of this pachyderm. He is irritable, nervous, inquisitive, and churlish; unwary and wanting intelligence; harsh and coarse by nature as the thorny vegetation he feeds upon; unsympathetic as the dry, arid districts in which he lives. But when his acts under greater or less provocation are discussed, opinions differ. No doubt, much has been written by those whose experience of the animals has not been sufficient to qualify them to do so authoritatively; hence, from the conduct of a few, certain conclusions regarding rhinoceroses generally, have been arrived at, which wider experience would falsify. On the other hand, we have the testimony of the late Mr. W. Cotton Oswell, Mr. F. C. Selous, and Mr. F. J. Jackson,—the result of wide experience,—and even these differ. The former hunted the rhino in the days of muzzle-loading smooth-bores, before it had learned what a formidable enemy man is, and he naturally found it a morose, fierce-dispositioned creature, from which he had many narrow escapes. Mr. Selous urges that “the danger of hunting him has been much exaggerated,” and that he is rather of a cowardly disposition, although not by any means sweet-tempered. Mr. F. J. Jackson says: “There is no knowing what rhinos will do when shot at and wounded,” and though not thinking them very dangerous beasts, he has great respect for them, uses heavy rifles against them, has had very exciting encounters with them, and has several times been viciously charged by them. Colonel F. D. Lugard gives similar testimony, and relates how Captain Williams was actually hunted by one. From this, I think we may conclude that, although naturally timid, and certainly not dangerously



aggressive, the rhino is of most uncertain temper, and when wounded and encountered at close quarters can and will charge most fiercely, and occasionally is as vindictive as any buffalo; my experience, at all events, distinctly points to this conclusion.<sup>1</sup> Rhinoceroses utter three characteristic cries—a succession of deep, *blethering* grunts, made, I fancy, by the males alone, and at certain seasons; the “locomotive” snort, which accompanies a charge or an ignominious flight when suddenly alarmed; and the shrill squeal of approaching dissolution.

A few years ago rhino were far more widely distributed throughout Central South Africa than at present. There are probably not a dozen left in even the remotest corners of the North-Eastern Transvaal, where once they abounded; two or three in the Matamiri bush, and a few in the Libombo range near Oliphant's River Poort represent all. In the rough, broken country south of the Zambesi and east of the Falls, in parts of the Barue country and Chiringoma, P.E.A., they are still fairly numerous, and there are a few in Matabeleland, Mashonaland, and Amatongaland. In 1893-94 I found them plentiful in Portuguese Northern Zambesia to the south-east of Tete, and on my last expedition, 1896-97, established the fact of their frequent occurrence in the interior of the Mozambique province.

Rhino lie up during the heat of the day in dense patches of scrub or grass-jungle, or under the shade of a solitary bush or tree in the open, though quite as frequently they are found out in the quivering heat, entirely unsheltered from the sun's burning rays. In hot weather they move off towards their watering-places—which are often far distant—at sunset, drinking between 6 and 8 P.M.; at such times they make a maze of tracks in the sand as they wander from pool to pool. After drinking, they set out in a bee-line for their feeding-grounds, and browse throughout the night, during which they cover a great deal of ground; and even then, it

<sup>1</sup> I know an instance of a native being charged and killed, and of another whom I met personally who was chased and regularly hunted by a wounded one, which caught and fearfully mutilated him.



is a puzzle to know how they support their huge bulk on the poor feed afforded by the sparse, scrubby bush in many localities. In cold weather, and during the dry season, they often get up and feed at once, not visiting the water till midnight or later, this being their only drink for the day ; but in hot weather they pay a second visit, at dawn, to the water, when, if a mud hole is to be found, they wallow as well—a necessary performance for this tick-infested pachyderm. They then seek their mid-day resting-place, seldom moving about after 9 or 10 A.M., except in the wet season, when I have seen them browsing throughout the day. They feed entirely upon the astringent leaves of shrubs and bushes, roots, and the leaves and twigs of the thorny acacias. When eating, they make a loud champing noise with their jaws. The black rhino often deposits his dung—which is dark red-brown in colour—in saucer-like hollows which he scoops out under a bush or tree, and invariably scatters it about afterwards with his horn. These spots are regularly visited—not unfrequently by other animals—till a great pile has been collected. Tracks lead from one such “ dumping-ground ” to another, and deep furrows are ploughed up around them, made, I think, as often by their feet as their horns. They often make crescent-shaped furrows also, in the ground, on alternate sides as they walk along. Rhino almost invariably lie with their sterns to the wind, and, when disturbed, go off at a slinging trot up wind, with their tails screwed up over their backs ; but, if suddenly alarmed, or closely pursued, they break into a gallop which only a good horse can keep up with, but which a rhino can sustain for a long distance. Though they usually run up wind, yet, when wounded, or conscious of pursuit, they hold on down wind everlastingly. I am unable to offer reliable information as to their breeding habits. I have seen a rhino calf about fourteen days old on October 28, and another on November 2, about a month old. On the other hand, my friend Mr. J. J. Harrison shot a cow in October, which had a four or five months’ old calf with her, and I am inclined to think that they are usually born at the



end of the rainy season—the period of gestation being probably sixteen or eighteen months. The flesh of a fat rhino is well tasted, though rather coarse ; I do not like the liver. These animals are in best condition in the autumn.

Rhinos are such unwary beasts, and sleep so heavily, that it would be most absurdly easy to stalk them, but for the fact that in South Africa they are almost invariably attended by “rhinoceros birds” (*Textor erythrorhynchus*), when great judgment and the utmost care is necessary to avoid discovery.<sup>1</sup> In Central Africa I found they were far less seldom attended by birds ; still, rhino often seem singularly restive and suspicious when one is approaching them, even when there are no birds near them, as though they knew instinctively that danger was threatening. Probably their acute sense of hearing, which almost rivals that of scent, is the cause of this. They are the easiest killed of all the larger game, yet, if not hit properly, will give a deal of trouble to secure. Shot through heart or lungs they succumb very quickly, though they seldom drop on the spot ; but if shot through only one lung they will travel till doomsday, although throwing gallons of blood from mouth and nostrils. I consider the neck-shot the very best for a rhino, aiming about a foot behind, and a little below the base of the ear ; the head-shot, 4 or 5 inches before the base of the ear, towards the eye, is a certainty if the beast is quiescent. A mortally wounded rhino will perform the most wonderful antics, spinning round and round in a circle, his head in the centre, and his hind-quarters dancing up and down in an extraordinary style. Usually this signifies impending death, but not always. Frequently they pull themselves together again after it and make a blind forward charge, generally in the direction in which they are facing when they finish their performance. I was one evening watching a track along which a bull and cow rhino with a calf used to

<sup>1</sup> A pair of good field-glasses will enable the stalker to ascertain if any birds are present, before stalking in.



travel to water ; the ground was open, and I had made a little shelter of branches about 30 yards from the track. The rhinos came just after sundown. The bull, however, loitered behind on the forest edge, while the cow and calf advanced, and, when opposite me, the cow deliberately left the track and walked straight towards me. She stood sniffing loudly about 12 yards distant, but I did not want to shoot her, not alone because of her calf, but for fear of scaring the bull, which was in sight. But as she again advanced, I threw a lump of dead wood at her, hitting her on the nose, when she became furious, snorting loudly, charging again and again at the piece of wood, tossing it with her horn and trampling on it. Meanwhile the bull came up, and, stopping just where the cow had turned out, watched the latter, which, with her calf, was now making off towards the water. I fired for his heart, and he at once started waltzing around and squealing loudly. I might have given him another shot, but believed he was done for, when suddenly he made a furious dash in my direction. I had barely time to scramble out of the way when he passed over the very spot I had been sitting on, kicking my water-bottle violently as he passed. He stood again 100 yards beyond, swaying from side to side, then dropped dead. Of course this was a blind charge, made without any intention of injuring me, but I have been most viciously charged by them. In 1894 a rhino cow charged, turned after me when I dodged, and deliberately chased me for over 60 yards, and I only escaped by "going to earth" in a deep "sand crack." Again, in 1896, I twice bowled over a big bull within a few paces, but he recovered himself, and as my gun-bearer had gone off with my spare rifle I had to run for it, closely pursued for a long distance by the bull, which eventually came to grief against a big boulder. I believe that if a rhino, after being wounded, makes you out (their eyesight is very bad) at close quarters, he may be expected to charge, and often does so. It is seldom any use following a wounded rhino, for they keep going on and on for miles until they drop. Some difference of



opinion exists as to what a rhino can do on three legs. I have seen a cow, with her fore-leg broken above the knee, travel for over a mile at a pace that I and my gun-bearer could not keep up with ; and another, also with a fore-leg broken, went over 6 miles, sometimes at a great pace, before I killed her. They are difficult beasts to stop when charging. One must use heavy metal, and either kneel or squat down in order to put a bullet in the chest or throat. The most sportsmanlike method of shooting rhino is by spooring them from their drinking-holes. Water should always be carried on such occasions. Even if disturbed once or twice they do not go far before halting. If they are lying up in thick cover, one's native attendants can be sent in at the far end to drive them out. They will invariably break cover at or near the spot where they entered it, which can be guarded by the sportsman. Following them in thick cover is exciting work, but somewhat unsatisfactory, as the sportsman must get to very close quarters in order to obtain a shot, and is almost certain to be heard by the quick-eared brutes before he can do this. I always find a double .461 Metford, 90/570, a perfect weapon for rhino shooting, but from choice I prefer a double 12-bore, with 6 or 7 drams of powder and a solid hardened projectile of 2 oz. or  $2\frac{1}{4}$  oz. Solid bullets alone must be used ; hollow express bullets are useless. The Lee-Metford is said to be very efficient, but I have not tried it ; it is too small for my fancy. In case of a charge, I prefer something heavier and more certain.

F. VAUGHAN KIRBY.

#### IN BRITISH EAST AFRICA

NDOROBO NAME, *Munyi* ; SWAHILI NAME, *Faru*

The rhinoceros of East Africa is of the kind commonly called the "black," which is, I believe, the only species in all Africa north of the Zambesi. It varies in size in different parts, but in every other essential characteristic it is uniform everywhere. Judging by the dimensions given





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