

# Animals

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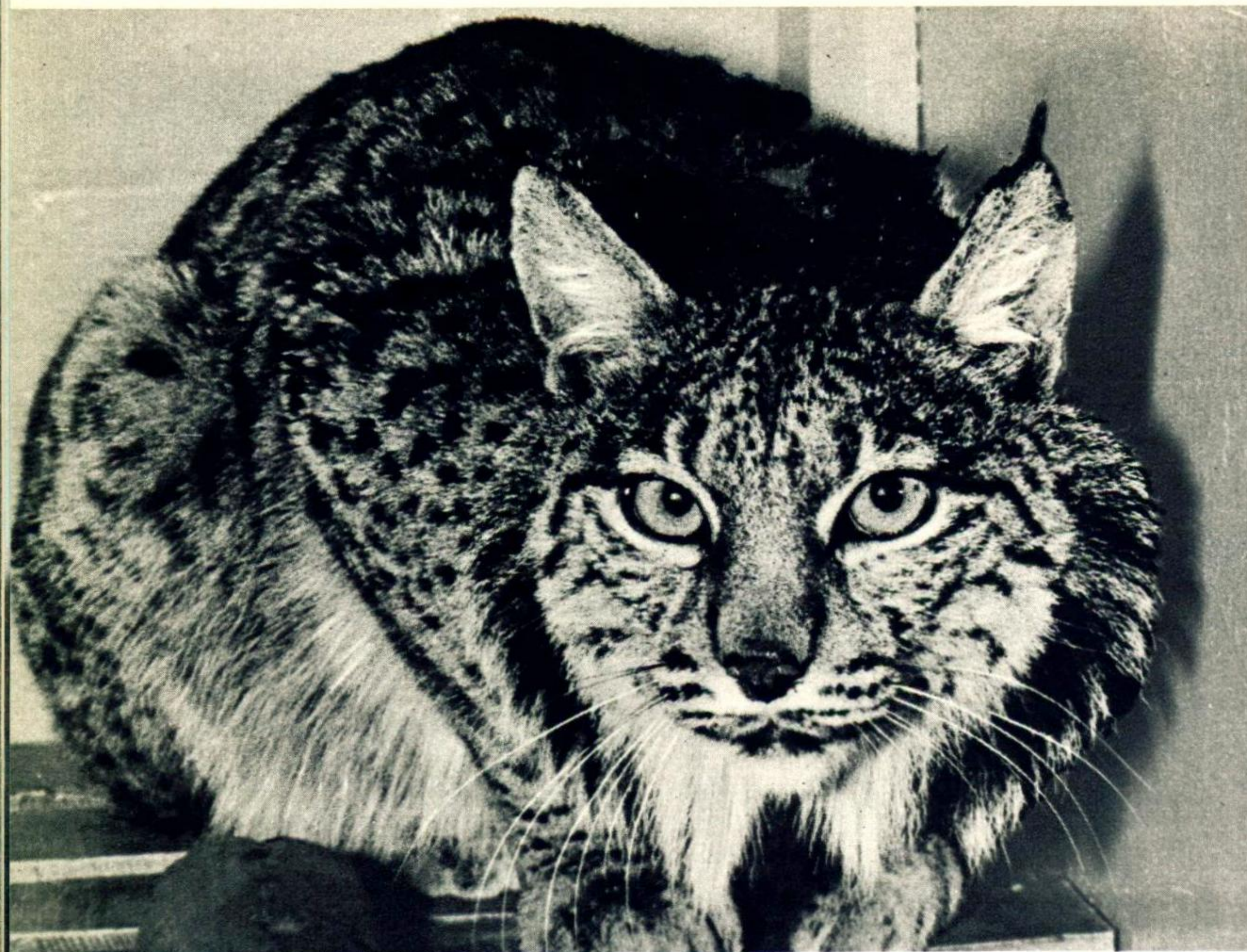
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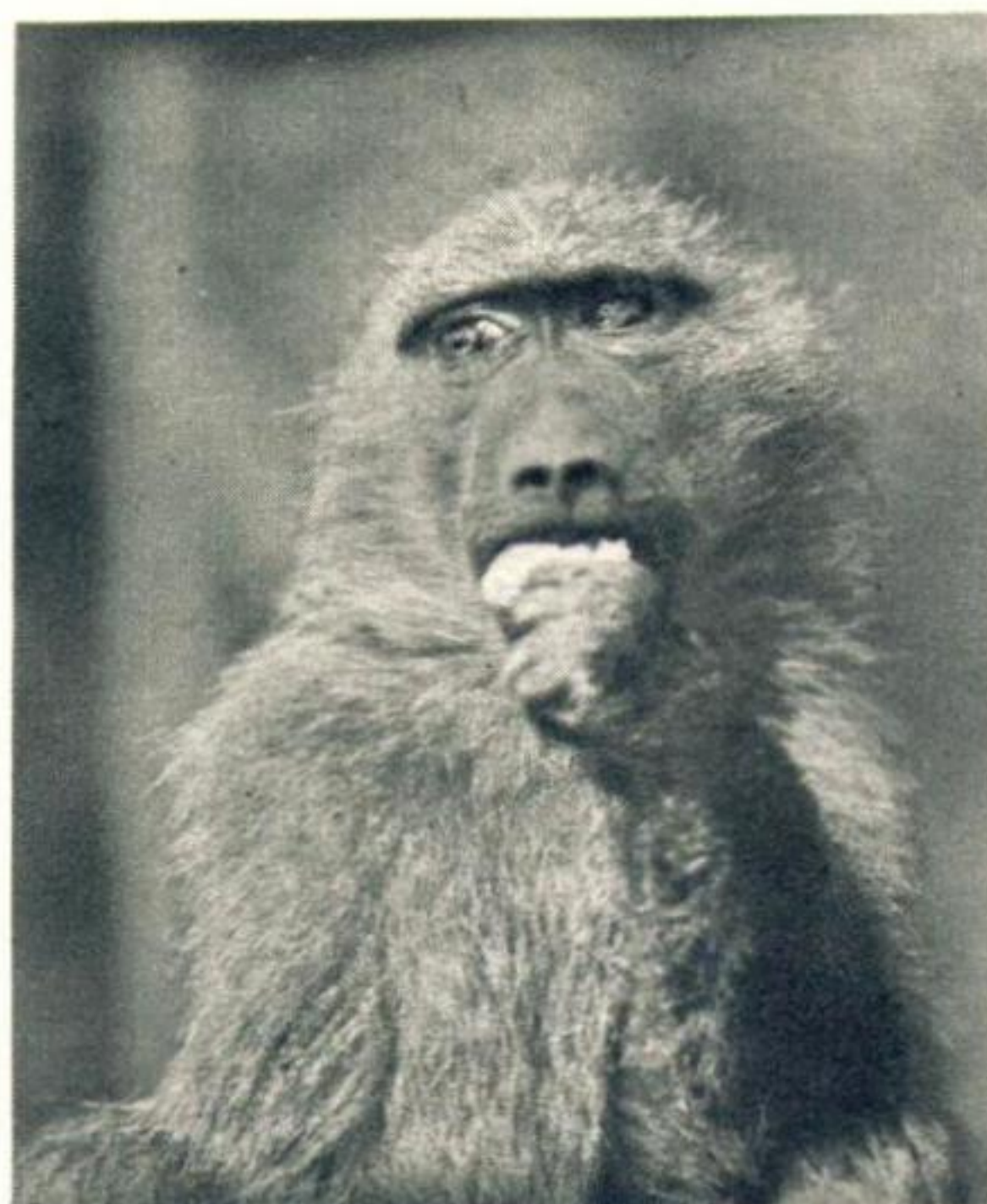
## animal in danger

The Spanish lynx (*Lynx pardellus*) was once quite widespread throughout the Iberian Peninsula, but its range has been much reduced within the past 50 years; it is now found only in a few isolated areas and in the Coto Doñana, in south-west Spain. It is not known exactly how many of these smaller relatives of the European lynx still survive, but they are thought to number several hundred. Between 150 and 200 live in the Coto Doñana. The Spanish lynx is becoming rarer because of constant reduction of its habitat through deforestation; it also preys on domestic animals and has been killed by farmers for this reason. Several measures have been suggested to ensure the survival of this animal in the future. One is that it should be taken off the list of vermin, for which there is no close season; another is that a special reserve should be created in the Coto Doñana where it would be completely protected (at present as many as 15 or 20 are shot every year in this area).

## cover picture

This young *Chacma* baboon (*Papio ursinus*) was photographed at Chessington Zoo. It belongs to a family of four, and at the moment is slim enough to squeeze through the bars of its parents' cage. It enjoys sitting on the barrier rail and occasionally pays a call on the penguins. Eventually, however, it will become too big to escape from the cage for these excursions.

There are about a dozen species and subspecies of baboons, found in Africa and Arabia, the *Chacma* baboon being the largest. They live to the south of the rain forests down the eastern side of the continent and also in South Africa. *Chacma* baboons congregate in large troops and generally live on the ground.



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Mrs Campbell is an American farmer's wife who often looks after abandoned or orphaned animals before returning them to the wild



# HUNTED HORNS



**Michael Boorer**

*The horn is one of the rhinoceros's most distinctive features  
— but it is also the greatest threat to its survival*

**M**en have never lacked excuses for hunting the rhinoceros. Both the big game hunter and the African tribesman have killed for sport and in order to assert their superiority. Some rhinos have died more usefully to provide meat, but many more have been speared, shot, and trapped in pits as a result of the many superstitions associated with these animals.

The ground-up horn of the rhinoceros is still regarded as a love potion in the Far East. Other parts of the rhino's body are also believed to have beneficial properties and it is little exaggeration to say that the carcass of a dead rhino is worth a small fortune. The skin is roasted until it resembles

pork crackling and sold, while ordinary brown paper fetches a high price if it has been soaked in rhino's blood.

The horn itself is the most valuable part of the animal and it is said that one from an Indian rhinoceros once changed hands for the equivalent of £500. It is little wonder that the rhinoceroses of Asia have become increasingly rare, that fake rhino horns have been fashioned from the horns of water buffalo, and that traders buy the horns of poached African rhino for up to £10 per pound weight as part of a chain of black market dealing extending a quarter of the way round the world.

It is easy to feel superior towards

those who are ultimately responsible for these inflated prices. They are deluded; the objects they buy have no medicinal or magical properties. However, in Western civilisation in the past hundred years many millions of pounds have been spent on patent medicines, some of which are no more efficacious than rhino's blood.

Every civilisation has its own superstitions and these must always seem ridiculous to the outsider. At all events, mediaeval European princes contributed to the present day rarity of rhinoceroses when they demanded cups made of rhino horn in the belief that these would render poisons harmless. Still in existence in a museum is



a rhino skull with the tip of the horn missing; this was removed and ground up in the 16th century in an attempt to make an elixir to prolong the life of a prominent churchman as he lay dying.

Rhino's horns are very different in structure from those of cattle, which consist of a horny covering surrounding a bony outgrowth of the skull, and resemble still less the antlers of deer, which consist entirely of bone. This does not mean that rhino horn is very remarkable chemically; it consists of a fibrous mass of keratin, which is the material from which hair and finger nails are made. The horns grow from the rhino's skin and are not joined to the skull. They normally wobble slightly, and are sometimes knocked right off. When this happens they grow again. One African black rhinoceros in a zoo grew a new horn a foot long in five years, which became 20 inches long in 10 years.

These figures do not indicate accurately the actual amount of horn growth, for all rhinos tend to keep their own horns short by rubbing them on rocks, trees, and ant-hills. This rubbing helps to keep the horns short and strong, and may also play some part in marking out territory and in working off the bad temper for which rhinos are, rather unjustly, notorious.

Of the five living kinds of rhinoceros, the Javan and Indian species have a single horn, while the Sumatran rhino and the two species from Africa bear two horns, the foremost horn being the longer of the two. Occasionally members of the two-horned species have been seen with a small bump representing a third horn.

The three Asiatic species tend to have rather short horns. Those of the male Sumatran rhino, for example, do not often exceed 10 inches and the horns of the female are even shorter. The African rhinos have longer horns, and in these two species those of the females are usually longer, although more slender, than those of the males. From time to time female black rhinos with specially long horns occur in Africa. During the 19th century the

*Long horns are usually owned by animals which lead more placid lives such as those which live in game reserves*

appearance in the hands of a dealer in Zanzibar of some exceptional horns gave rise to the erroneous belief that these came from a new species, 'Holmwood's Rhinoceros'. More recently two apparently related animals at Amboseli, Kenya, have been the owners of remarkable horns.

### **Gladys and Gertie**

One of these, Gladys by name, had the longer horn, but in 1955 she broke it, and Gertie, her rival, became the probable holder of the world record. In 1952 Gertie's horn was about 40 inches long, and over the years it grew steadily. Even with relatively docile rhinos in a game reserve it is not possible to measure the length of the horns accurately, but by 1959 Gertie's horn was probably over 4 feet 6 inches long.

A horn as long as this was too fragile for the demands made on it and it therefore came as no surprise when first the tip and then the whole horn was broken off—probably during one of the robust scuffles which seem to be a normal part of rhino courtship.

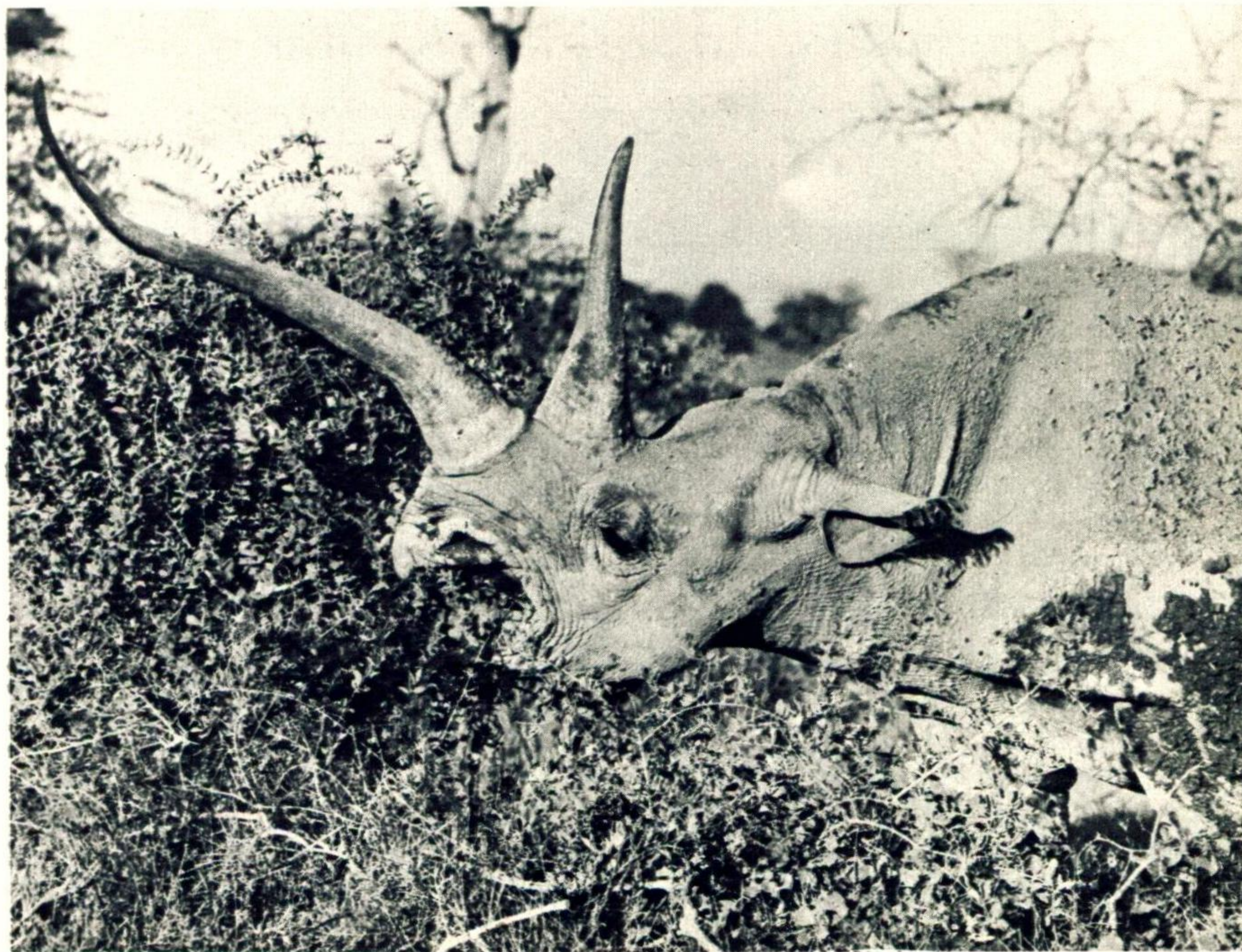
It is interesting to speculate as to why these exceptional horns occur. The fact that they tend to come spasmodically from certain populations of rhinos suggests that they may be hereditary, like height in humans. However, bearing in mind that the

ultimate length attained by a horn depends not only upon growth, but also upon the wear it receives, it may be that long horns are owned by animals which lead more placid lives.

Possibly, female African rhinos tend to have longer horns than males because their owners are more good natured; Gladys and Gertie led exceptionally peaceful lives in their nature reserve. This peace was not to last, however, for early last year Gladys fell to a poacher and a few weeks later Gertie lost an eye, presumably in a fight with one of her fellows.

Both the black rhinoceros and the rarer white rhinoceros of Africa use their horns as weapons in self-defence against enemies and against rivals of their own kind. In combat the animals bring their immense weight to bear, shoving at each other with their shoulders and lunging with the horns at each other's flanks. In this respect they differ considerably from the Asiatic species, which make no use of their shorter horns during a fight, but rely on their tusk-like front teeth.

Other and more peaceful uses for the horns exist. Javan rhinoceroses, and probably members of other species, use their horns to grub up edible roots. A black rhino has been seen to wedge the trunk of a small tree between the two horns, pulling it over to browse







Left: The Great Indian rhinoceros is distinguished by the fringe of stiff hairs around the ears and adorning the tail. Like the Javan it has one horn

Below: The African white rhinoceros (*Diceros simus*) has a square upper lip which it uses to crop herbage. It has two horns







*To breed in captivity, mammals must be contented and well looked after. Left: The first rhinoceros to be bred in captivity in Europe was born at Frankfurt Zoo towards the end of 1956. Right: One of the two Indian rhinoceroses born at Whipsnade Zoo*

upon the leaves. Animals of this species also use their horns to excavate salt and in the Aberdare Mountains of Kenya they have dug out quite large caves in this way. Female white rhinos are said to use their horns to steer their young. This may well be true, for in this species juveniles tend

to run in front of their mothers whereas young black rhinos run behind.

Rhinoceros horns, which among mammals are unique in their position on the middle line of the body, are obviously useful to their owners in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, the possession of these horns is also a

cause of the rhino's downfall. It is because they are hunted for their horns that rhinos are today in danger of extinction. Apart from man, rhinos have no serious enemies.

Rhinos tend to breed slowly, but because, in the past, they lived for a long time, they could maintain their numbers. In the last hundred years or so they have been hunted on an ever-increasing scale. The rhino birth rate remains as low as ever, but the death rate has increased alarmingly.

Few Javan rhinoceroses survive. There are slightly more of the Sumatran species, but these are so widely scattered in the forests of south-east Asia that it seems unlikely that they will avoid extinction.

The two largest species in size, the Indian rhino and the white rhino, each number a few hundred individuals. Members of both species have found refuge in well-run game reserves. Here they are for the moment safe, although neighbouring human populations tend to eye the agricultural potential of these reserves in a manner which permits no complacency.

The black rhinoceros is today the most numerous species but here, too, the numbers are declining, and the time is rapidly approaching when rhinos will never be seen outside game reserves and zoos—if at all.

*The great Indian rhinoceros feeds on reeds as well as grass and spends a considerable part of its time in or near water*

