

RARE MALAYAN RHINOCEROS.

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RARE MALAYAN
RHINOCEROS.

Nearly Extinct.

HUNT IN SELANGOR AND
PERAK SWAMPS.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

Kuala Lumpur, Jan. 23.

One of the rarest animals in the world is to be sought on behalf of the British Museum by an expedition which is now assembling in Malaya.

This animal is the one-horned rhinoceros, *rhinoceros sondaicus*, of which only two or three specimens are known in this country. There are no records of its having been found on the eastern side of the Malay Peninsula, although this region has not been explored thoroughly enough to say positively that it does not exist there.

It is almost, if not quite, extinct in southern Burma; it is unknown in the Siamese part of the Malay Peninsula; it is represented by a few dozen individuals in Java, all strictly protected; and there are believed to be a small number in Sumatra.

The one-horned rhinoceros lives in swampy jungle, unlike its cousin, the two-horned rhinoceros, which prefers mountainous country. The latter is a much smaller animal and is still fairly common in the wilder parts of the Malay Peninsula. The one-horned species was common in years gone by, but the advance of civilisation into its haunts, and the persistent hunting of it which has resulted from the high prices paid for its blood and horns by Chinese medicine men, have almost extinguished it in Malaya.

In the Interests of Science.

Indeed, it is only after very careful inquiry has shown that the two, or perhaps, three specimens of the one-horned rhinoceros which are believed to exist in the Kuala Selangor and Lower Perak jungles are old and completely isolated males, and therefore unable to propagate their kind, that the Malayan authorities have sanctioned this expedition.

These survivors, if not killed for museum purposes, will be either poached by native hunters or will die a natural death, whereas the British Museum expedition, if successful, will benefit posterity by obtaining in the interests of science specimens of a species which may soon have vanished from Malaya.

There is believed to be no representative specimen of the one-horned rhinoceros in any museum at the present time. The British Museum has a small imma-

ture specimen, and so has the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge, U.S. A., while there is said to be another specimen in a Stockholm museum.

There are two fine heads in the Kuala Lumpur museum, one being that of the famous old beast which terrorised the Pinji Valley, near Ipoh, for many years before the British regime in Perak. The history of this **rhinoceros** is told by Sir George Maxwell in his book, "In Malay Forests."

Four Malayan Specimens.

The available information relating to the incidence of this species in Malaya has recently been set out by Mr. Boden Kloss in the Journal of the F.M.S. Museums and the Bulletin of Raffles Museum.

Four of these animals are known to have been shot in this country. One was the Pinji rhino, which fell a victim to the rifle of Sir (then Mr.) George Maxwell in 1899. Another was shot by the late Mr. H. C. Barnard near Chikus, in Perak, in 1898. In 1924 a cow of this species, which had charged a Chinese jelutong tapper in the jungle near Telok Anson, was shot by an unlicensed hunter, and as recently as 1927 a fourth specimen was shot at Ujong Permatang, Selangor, and its head is now in the F.M.S. Police Mess at Kuala Lumpur.

The expedition which will shortly set out in search of a specimen will comprise Major A. S. Vernay, Major G. S. Rowley and Captain Holloway. In 1928 Major Vernay, with the co-operation of the Government of Burma, made an expedition into southern Burma in search of the one-horned **rhinoceros** but failed to get a specimen. The species is now thought to be practically extinct in that region. Major Vernay also led a scientific expedition across the Kalahari desert some time ago.

Major Rowley is an experienced big-game hunter and Captain Holloway is a collector employed by the British Museum. Captain Holloway will take back with him a considerable amount of Malayan material for the British Museum.

Not Without Danger.

The expedition will not be without danger, for the one-horned **rhinoceros** has a bad reputation. The Pinji veteran was known to have killed three men and to have chased many more. Indeed Sir George Maxwell says that only large and well-armed parties would venture into its neighbourhood. The Telok Anson animal is also believed to have killed a man before she attacked a tapper, as mentioned

above.

The killing of a **rhinoceros**, whether of the swamp or hill species, is a very profitable business for native poachers, the blood and horns being sold to Chinese medicine men at a high price. The blood is coagulated and sold in tablets, while the horns, either ground up or hollowed out, are believed to confer protection against poisoning.



This head of a one-horned **rhinoceros** is in the possession of Mrs. Barnard. The animal was shot by the late Mr. H. C. Barnard in April, 1898, at Sungei Pelawan, near Chikus, Perak.