

Oryx

The International Journal of Conservation

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The Society was founded in 1903 as the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, and subsequently named the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society. Fauna & Flora International is conserving the planet's threatened species and ecosystems – with the people and communities who depend on them.

Oryx - The International Journal of Conservation, is now published quarterly by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Fauna & Flora International. It is a leading scientific journal of biodiversity conservation, conservation policy and sustainable use, with a particular interest in material that has the potential to improve conservation management and practice.

The website, <http://www.oryxthejournal.org/>, plays a vital role in the journal's capacity-building work. Amongst the site's many attributes is a compendium of sources of free software for researchers and details of how to access Oryx at reduced rates or for free in developing countries. The website also includes extracts from Oryx issues 10, 25 and 50 years ago, and a gallery of research photographs that provide a fascinating insight into the places, species and people described in the journal.

The [Rhino Resource Center](#) posted this PDF in June 2009. We are grateful for the permission.

A VISIT TO THE GREAT INDIAN RHINO

By C. R. STONOR

We happened to be crossing Assam by one of the main trunk roads, and finding ourselves in the neighbourhood of the Kazaranga Game Reserve, called in at the forest office on chance. Luckily the Ranger was in, and sent a man straight away down the road to arrange an elephant.

The reserve is bounded by the main road, so we picked up the elephant—a fine tusker named “Akbar”—at once; he had already been out that day, and there was the makings of a scene, but a firm hand on the part of the mahout soon had him under control and his little fit of sulks was quickly over. For nearly a mile we crossed a great belt of dry rice fields, until we came to the start of the Reserve proper—hundreds of acres of elephant grass—and Akbar pushed into it. From the first, the giant grass was riddled with endless Rhino tracks, for all the world like a rabbit meadow on a Brobdingnagian scale; we twice came on heaps of dung—proof of the Rhino’s strange habit of relieving himself in the same spot every day. Here and there the grass—taller than our tusker—was freshly bent over, and a fresh footmark could be made out on the soft ground. It only remained to put up a Rhino, and our excitement and tension grew; the more so as the mahout kept peering warily about, and at any moment we might disturb one from his afternoon siesta in the cool of the thicket. The grass began to thin out and visibility was more than a few yards: suddenly there was a scurry and a rustle just beyond; a bull Rhino at least? Were we too near for safety? With a great clucking and whirring, a Bamboo Partridge fluttered up through the grass and away to safety.

Anti-climax set in, and Akbar swayed on through thinner country for nearly half an hour without a sign of life in any direction. Then we crossed a narrow strip of high grass again, and came out beyond a big stretch of recently burnt ground. The mahout pointed; several hundred yards’ distant was a splotch of grey among the blackened stems—a Rhino without any doubt. He warned us not on any account to talk if we got near, as Rhino have the strongest objection to the human voice, and began warily to work his way round; from a hundred yards away we could just make out another vague shape near the beast, proclaiming them mother and calf. As we came nearer, another shape loomed up beyond, and further off yet another; our luck was well and truly in, and we were in the

midst of a party of Rhino browsing on the soft grass just coming through after burning.

The cow and her calf were given a wide berth, and we made for the solitary individual beyond ; we crept nearer and nearer, and very soon could make him out to be a solitary bull—a truly monstrous beast. He was quite unconscious of us and browsed away, head to ground, while, greatly daring we advanced to within seventy yards of him. Suddenly he raised his mighty head and snuffed ; he turned at once, facing squarely on and stood taking stock of us. There was no question of his running, and it rested entirely with us how close we liked to go ; one yard too near and he would have charged at once. Occasionally an elephant will be egged on too near, and the Rhino sets up an angry chattering as a preliminary to a charge. In fact only last year Akbar was himself charged by a cow, who bit him on the forehead before he could drive her off. It did not seem to have affected his nerve, and he was quite ready to meet the bull. However, we could see all we wanted from sixty yards, and moved off leaving the Rhino in complete control and staring after us as well as his tiny eyes would allow.

The next was another cow with a well-grown calf ; she was quite unaware of us and presented her enormous armour-plated stern with tail perpetually swishing while she unconcernedly cropped the grass ; her calf was a little suspicious, and ran up to her when we came near. Far beyond were no less than three more Rhino ; but as time was short, we had to give them a miss and turned for home. As we reached the high grass once more, a charming picture met us ; in a little swampy bay of short, lush grass stood a third cow browsing contentedly with her calf by her side ; while almost under their feet was an attendant party of white Cattle Egrets, and a little further off a great Adjutant Stork was standing in gloomy aloofness ; the whole scene, set in the little area of vivid green swamp grass, with the grey bulk of the placid Rhino and the white Egrets dancing attendance was one never to be forgotten. Its peace was somewhat shattered, as a young bull we had failed to spot lumbered off ahead with a snort of alarmed rage and crashed to safety into the high grass.

We had to leave this Wonderland and be on our way ; a total of no less than eleven Rhino seen in two hours, and under the best of conditions—a memorable visit indeed.

Local opinion is unanimous that the Rhino are well on the increase ; and some of the Rangers say there are the best part of a thousand in the Reserve ; our three cows with calves out of

the eleven seen strongly supports this, and it really seems as if these superb animals are safe—provided, of course, that they are left unmolested.

With such a satisfactory state of affairs (and to maintain the patronage of a hard-headed administration) there would be no harm at all in allowing a very few old bulls to be shot annually for an exorbitant licence fee, and to sell a few calves to zoos—by careful organization the Reserve could undoubtedly be made self-supporting, or even profit-making.

ON MICE AND PONDS

By J. F. M. FLOYD

To save a pond is to present society with a blank cheque in faunal currency, at least, it would take an imposing array of experts to fill it in. That is the danger, filling in or draining out. Then you may fairly hope to entail the benefits upon nature-lovers to be, by entrusting your pond or lake to an enlightened Angling Society (that is, one that admits the prior claim of beast and bird), who *may* do something to regulate the flora. Or is there another way?

Now the very popularity of the garden pool, or sunk tub, to adorn which, if you know the right people, you may pay as much as ninepence (pre-war) for a bit of brooklime, is proof how large a public feels the appeal of natural water; that “mirror up to nature”, that picture never the same. Here in Sussex we are fortunate in our ponds, of all kinds and sizes and near together, but you cannot count the wild life in and about a pond as static from year to year, nor can you keep a fauna and ignore a flora. It is something like an undertaking to preserve the weak and confine the aggressor in the face of Nature, of Change itself! Recall to mind an œcological sequence from a previous issue of this *Journal*; bush-fires, prohibition of—spread of forest—annihilation of open pasture—antelopes depart—Kruger National Park. Or take a look at a field in a good acorn year. - Your acorn doesn't ask to be planted, just broadcast, he carries an entrenching tool of his own; only the browsers and nibblers prevent a quick return to oak wood.

Or, may you be beguiled into making a pond; that is nearly an act of special creation, that will lead to fascinating adventures,