

The Possibility of the Former Occurrence of the White Rhinoceros in the Barotse Protectorate

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PITMAN (1934) correctly stated that there was no evidence of White Rhinoceros in Rhodesia north of the Zambesi within historical times. However, a suggestion has come to my notice that it may formerly have occurred inside Northern Rhodesian limits west of the Zambesi, between there and the Mashi, which forms the boundary with Angola. This suggestion came from the District Commissioner, Senanga, who has pointed out that there are still stories told about white rhinoceros being found in that area many years ago, though they are more legend than fact. No rhinoceros of either species exist today in Senanga as far as is known, but, according to the Chief de Poste at Luiana, both are reputedly present in Angola across the Mashi river. (D.C. Senanga, unpublished notes on game in the Senanga district).

I do not consider that *D. simus* can still exist in south-eastern Angola, where Hill & Carter (1941) regarded it as "undoubtedly extinct". But from the mass of historical detail collected (Shortridge—1934) there would appear to be no doubt that it once extended across northern Bechuanaland to the Okovango, extreme south-eastern Angola, and the Caprivi. Regarding the supposition of the past occurrence of the species in Senanga district the Resident Commissioner, Mongu (Mr. G. C. R. Clay) writes:

"I also have not heard of the occurrence of either black or white rhino in this area before. You are adamant that the rhino there would be black, but I wondered if you appreciate that white rhino existed in very large numbers indeed in the Victoria Falls—Pandamatenka area 70 years ago? A gentleman called Westbeach at the latter place employed 400 hunters and is said to have exterminated the white rhino. However, it is interesting to note that African carvers in wood still produce two types of rhino, one of which is obviously intended to be the white rhino. I do not for a moment suggest that there are white rhino in the Senanga district, but if there are rhino at all the possibility that there are white rhino should not be completely dismissed." Pandamatenka is on the boundary of Southern Rhodesia and Bechuanaland, about 18° 34'S.

While there is no definite evidence of *D. simus* in Northern Rhodesia it seems, in view of the foregoing, and on zoogeographical grounds, not impossible that it may have existed within historical times between the Mashi and Zambesi rivers in extreme south-western Barotse.

References:

1. Hill J. E. & Carter T. D. 1941. The mammals of Angola Africa. Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist. LXXVIII; Art. 1.
2. Pitman C. R. S. 1934. Report on a faunal survey of Northern Rhodesia. Government Printer, Livingstone.
3. Shortridge G. C. 1934. The mammals of South West Africa. Heinemann, London.

Antelope Poster

Available for Schools and Exhibitions

THE poster reproduced on the opposite page has recently been issued by the Society, with the object of encouraging a wider interest in South African wild life among scholars. The poster, which was originally produced by the Southern Rhodesia African Literature Bureau in conjunction with the Game Department of Southern Rhodesia, has been adapted to South African conditions. It is 30 inches by 20 inches in size and depicts twelve different species of antelopes comprising oribi, duiker, steenbuck, reedbuck, impala, tsessebe, kudu, waterbuck, roan, eland, wildebeest and sable with a picture of buffalo for comparison.

Booklet on Nature Reserves

THE Society has endeavoured for several years, through the medium of the S.A. National Publicity Conference, to persuade the S.A. Tourist Corporation or the S.A.R. Publicity and Travel Department to produce a brochure on the nature reserves in the Union.

It was learned, therefore, with considerable satisfaction, at the Conference held in August last, that the Publicity and Travel Department is in the process of producing a guide dealing with the nature reserves and parks open to the public.

In stressing the need for a publication of this nature, the Society has felt that it would serve a very useful purpose, in that it would publicise the existing reserves, many of which are generally unknown, and in addition it might well act as an incentive to public bodies and farmers to establish further reserves and thus assist in the work of preserving our wild life heritage.



Square-lipped (white) rhino in the Umfolozi Game Reserve.

(Photo: Martin Ferreira)