

## **BLACK RHINOCEROS (SWARTRENOSTER)**

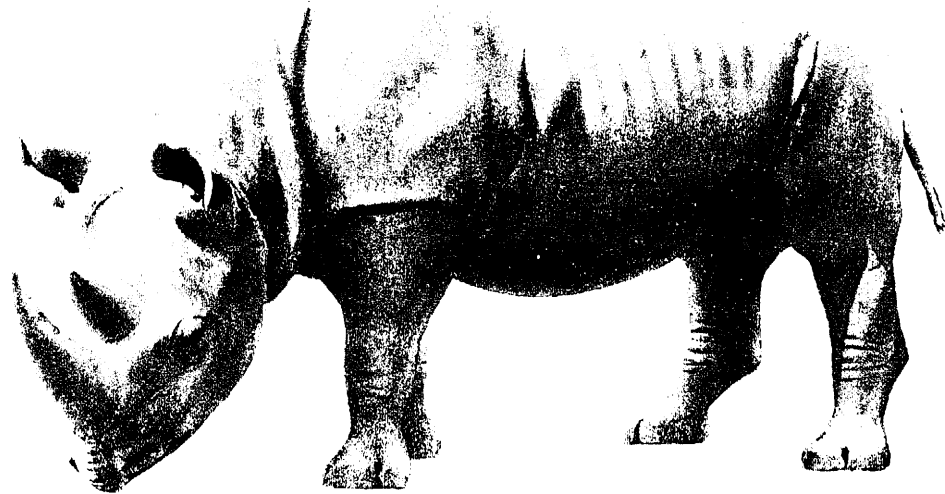
*Diceros bicornis*

Evidence has been found of the prehistoric ancestors from which the present rhinoceros family, consisting of 5 species, has evolved. Rhino are still found, as distinct species, in Java, Sumatra and India. The black rhinoceros is one of the 2 African members of this interesting relationship.

It is smaller than the white rhinoceros. The male black rhino weighs about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tons and averages 5 feet at the shoulder. His strong horns are shorter than those of the white rhino: 22 inches for the front horn, which is rounded at its base, and 10 inches for the second one being considered good. His head is shorter and smaller than the white rhino's but it is wider at the top of the skull. His eyes are very small, his nostrils flaring and always wet, and his ears are rounded. A prehensile upper lip is suited to his browsing feeding habits. There is no hump on his neck but of the two humps at the lower end of his vertebrae, the anterior one is placed further towards the back than it is on the white rhino. His body is shallower than that of the other African species and thus gives the appearance of being longer and more bullet-shaped. The black rhino's brown hide also takes on the tone of his mud or sand wallow. Behind his shoulders, as in all adults of this species, are festering sores which appear to cause him much discomfort. These lesions seem to be most active during summer. There is fighting between the males



WHITE RHINOCEROS



BLACK RHINOCEROS

## *FAMILY RHINOCERATIDAE*

and between the sexes.

The female gives birth to one calf after a gestation of 15 to 16 months. The calf follows its mother when walking.

Black rhino inhabit dense bush, or hilly wooded country through which they move with agility. They are solitary creatures who wander alone, in pairs, or in a family group of 3.

Their diet consists of twigs and shoots of trees, particularly thorn trees, vines, small shrubs and even some grass. In walking to their regular watering-places they wear smooth trails through the bush. They usually drink at night and eat during the day, except for a rest when the sun is at its highest.

Unlike white rhino, black rhino are irritable and aggressive animals. They are easily upset but will also charge without provocation, exploding through the bush like a ton of incarnate fury. Their very keen sense of smell and good hearing assist them in locating their target. Secretive about their own habits they display curiosity about the ways of others.