

Wild, Wild World of Animals



# Elephants & Other Land Giants

Based on the television series  
Wild, Wild World of Animals

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**TIME-LIFE FILMS**

# Wild, Wild World of Animals



Elephant  
& Other Land Giants

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## WILD, WILD WORLD OF ANIMALS

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# Rhinoceroses

The rhino looks like a holdover from prehistoric times. For the past 60 million years, rhinos of one form or another have roamed the earth leisurely reproducing themselves, living to a ripe old age in peace with other creatures of the wild. One of the forms, *Paraceratherium*, was the largest land mammal ever known to exist—25 feet long and 18 feet high at the shoulder.

Today the magnificently ugly rhino is on the verge of extinction. Only five species of the dozens that once abounded in Europe, Asia, Africa and even North America survive today—three in Asia and two in Africa. "Survive" may be too optimistic a word, for outside of zoos and game preserves the rhinoceros is almost as dead as the dodo bird. The great Indian rhinoceros can be counted in the hundreds. The related Javan is even nearer to extinction, with a total of only 25 to 40 animals living in the Ujung Kulon Reserve in Java. The Sumatran rhino, which has the distinction of having been described by Marco Polo, now exists in such small numbers that animal researchers can hardly find enough specimens to make studies of their behavior in the wild.

The two African species have fared only a little better. The African black rhinoceros (opposite) still numbers in the thousands, but it is found mostly within the confines of game preserves. The square-lipped, or white, rhino, a gentle creature with an undeserved reputation for ferocity, has at times been declared extinct; but a northern subspecies has been discovered that reproduces well in protected game parks, and its numbers are reportedly increasing. (The black and white rhinoceroses are misnamed; both are slate-gray. The "white" designation presumably derived from the Dutch word *wijde*, meaning "wide.")

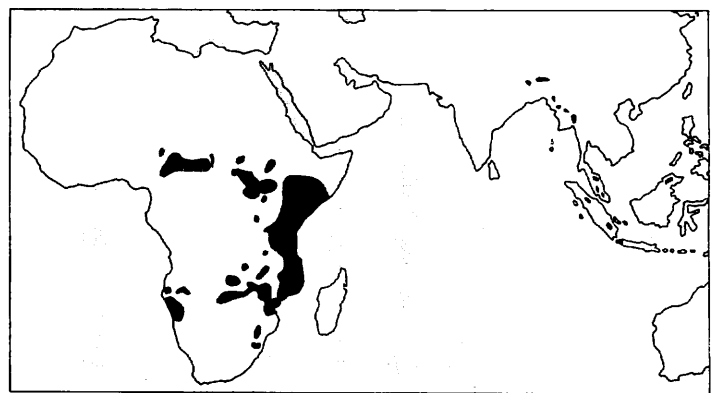
The most distinctive feature of the rhino is its horn. The Indian and Javan species have one horn, the Sumatran and the two African rhinos two—one behind the other. Composed of keratin, a chemical substance with the hardness and consistency of a cow's hoof, the horn can reach a length of 50 inches and is a superb defense weapon.

Ironically, it is because of its horn that the present-day rhino is having difficulty surviving against man. In the Middle Ages the mythical long-horned unicorn became inextricably linked in popular imagination with the non-mythical single-horned rhino, and the magical properties formerly attributed to the unicorn were transferred to the rhino. It was believed, for example, that the horn, used as a goblet, would give unmistakable evidence of the presence

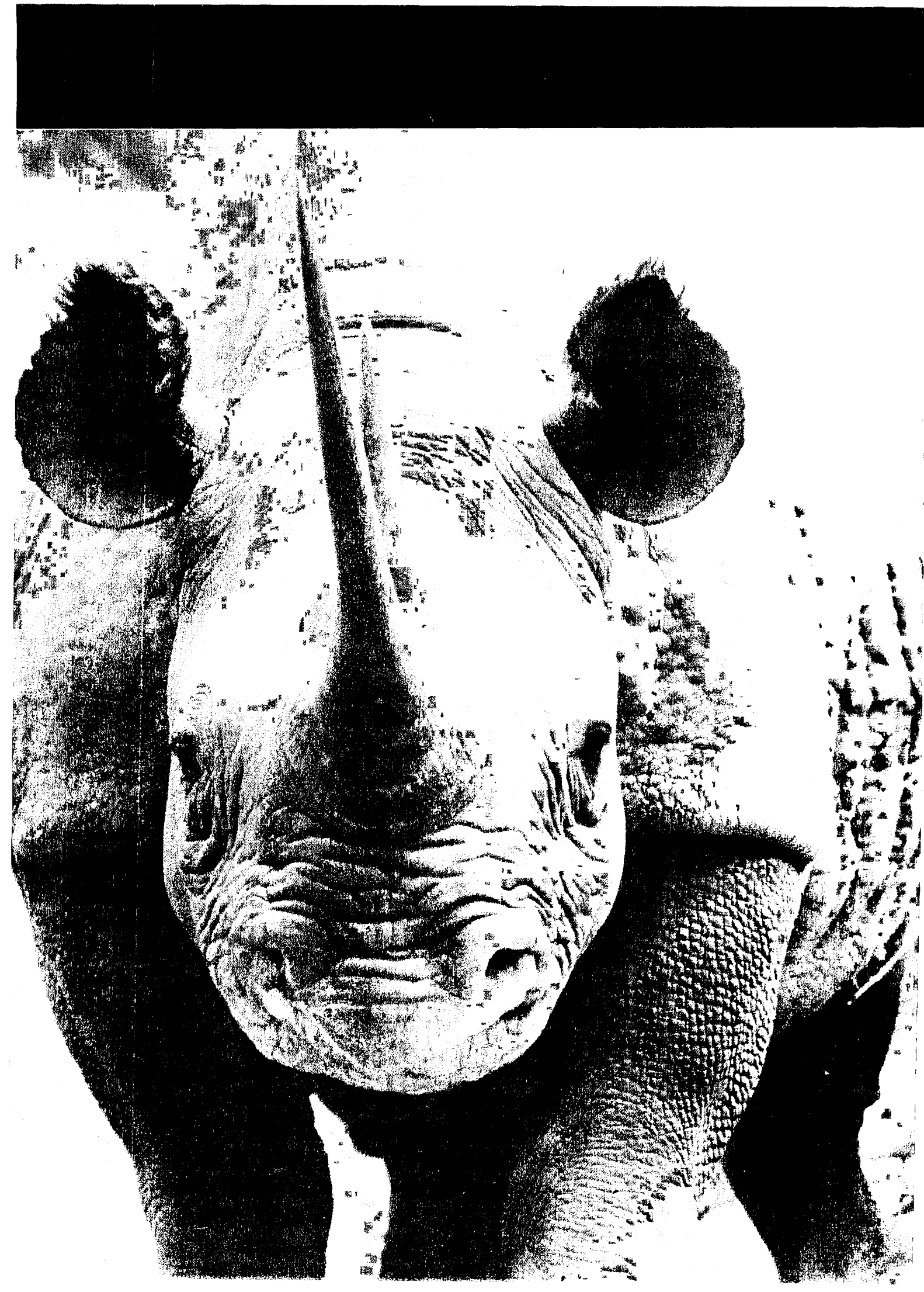
of poison and thus save its user from a painful death; ground up, it would assuage a variety of ailments, such as epilepsy and the plague, and ease the pain of childbirth. Most important were the claims made for it as an aphrodisiac. This was not a new idea, because long before the Europeans had confused the unicorn with the rhino, the ancient Chinese had developed faith in the rejuvenating properties of ingested rhino horn. Babylonians, Greeks and Romans had all used the horn as a treatment to improve sexual performance.

Although modern scientific studies have disproved the theory, the belief still prevails among millions of Asians. On Asian markets a single rhino horn can bring up to \$2,000 (far more than an ordinary Asian laborer can earn in a year), and in game parks a close watch must be maintained against poachers.

Undisturbed, rhinos have a life-span of about 40 years, most of which is spent eating and sleeping. They feed throughout the evening, night and early morning and then go to sleep. They average about nine hours of sleep a day. Their range is generally restricted to an area where daily trips to water are possible. They have excellent hearing and a keen sense of smell. They seem to rely heavily on their noses to help them follow paths that they and other rhinos have established. But an adult black rhino is extremely nearsighted, which has undoubtedly added to its reputation for aggressiveness because it has developed the habit of charging first and investigating later. A two- to four-ton, eight- to 14-foot-long rhino at full gallop is highly impressive. (For an account of one man's experiences with a nearsighted black rhino, see pages 86–89.)



*African rhinos are scattered over the south, central and eastern regions. Asiatic rhinos are in enclaves in India, Malaysia, Sumatra and Java.*





## A Lively Beginning

The gestation period for rhinos lasts for seven to eight months in the Sumatran (the smallest of the five species) and from 17 to over 18 months in the others. Newborn calves, like the three-day-old white rhino above, are on their feet just hours after they are born and follow their mothers wherever they go. The babies suckle at any opportunity, and though they begin eating greens when they are only one week old, they will continue to nurse for at least

one year and possibly two. Young rhinos stay with their mothers until they are about three years old, but once a cow gives birth to a new calf (on the average of once every three years), she no longer tolerates the presence of an older offspring. The immature rhino reluctantly leaves its mother, sometimes attaching itself to another lonely exile or to an adult female but more often striking out on its own to begin the traditionally solitary rhino way of life.

When a rhino cow, like the African black rhino female at right, comes into heat she makes whistling noises to attract the bulls. If two males are present, rather than waiting for them to fight over her, more often she simply takes her pick. The chosen bull approaches the cow cautiously, for she often responds to his first advances by vigorously butting him with her horns. The bull may gallop away, but undaunted, will approach the cow again. This sometimes goes on for hours, during which the male tries—often unsuccessfully, as below—to mount the female. The two rhinos will sometimes face each other and gently rub horns before finally copulating, an act that can take as long as an hour. Once this lengthy encounter is over, however, the partners go off in different directions in apparent disinterest.





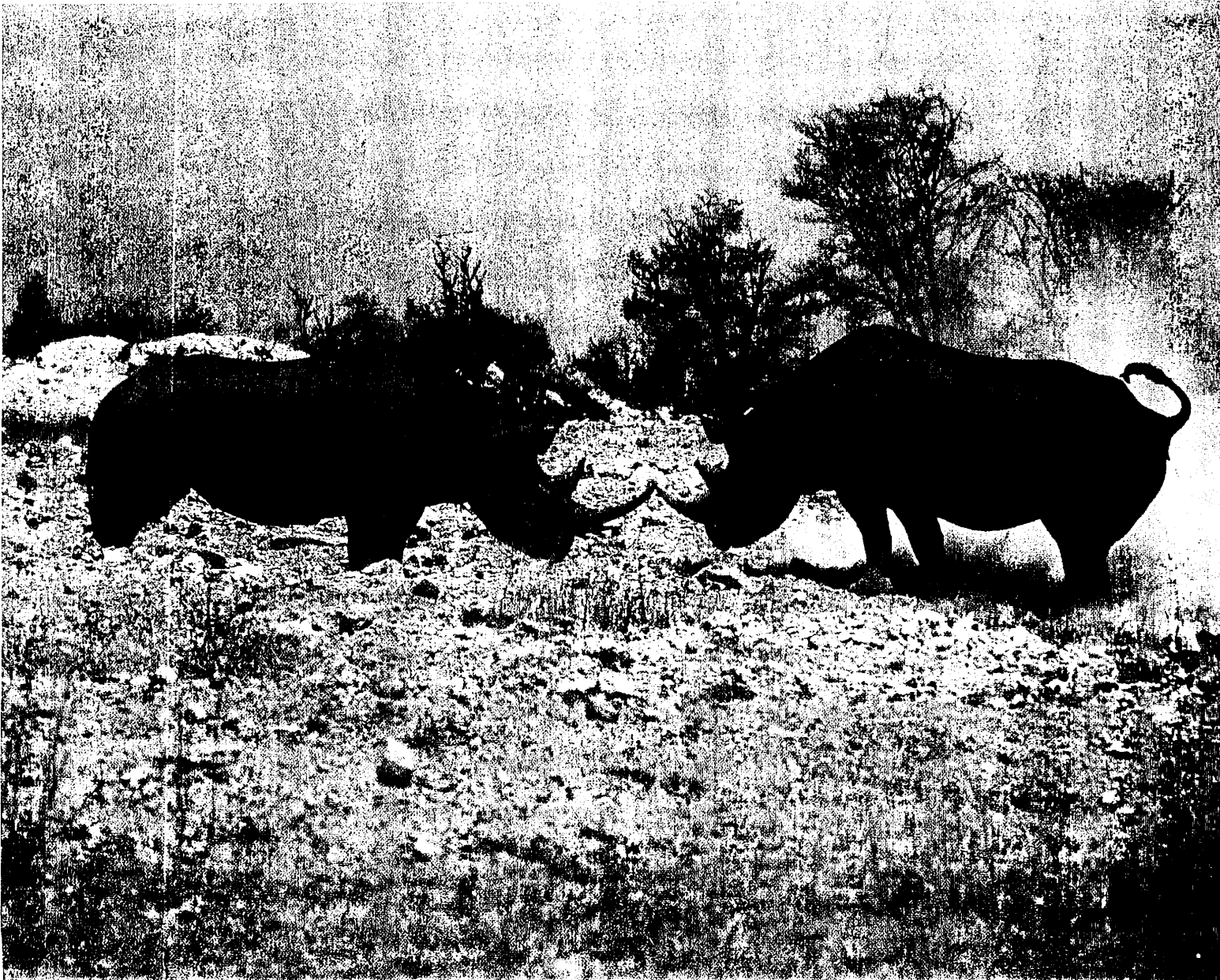


## Deceptive Ferocity

Despite their awesome appearance, the rhinoceroses' horns are really the weak spot in the animals' otherwise formidable construction. The horns are made of dense layers of keratin, which makes them stiff. These great protuberances may unravel in places and resemble small tufts of hair. If force is applied, the horns can be ripped off entirely. When this happens only the slightest bleeding

occurs and in time a new horn begins to grow. The rhinos' reputation for ferocity is rarely put to the test, since all other animals, including the usually fearless elephant, tend to avoid them. Rhinoceroses are basically solitary animals (except for the white rhino, which lives in social groups) and steer clear of others of their own kind. Fights between individuals are, therefore, rare events.

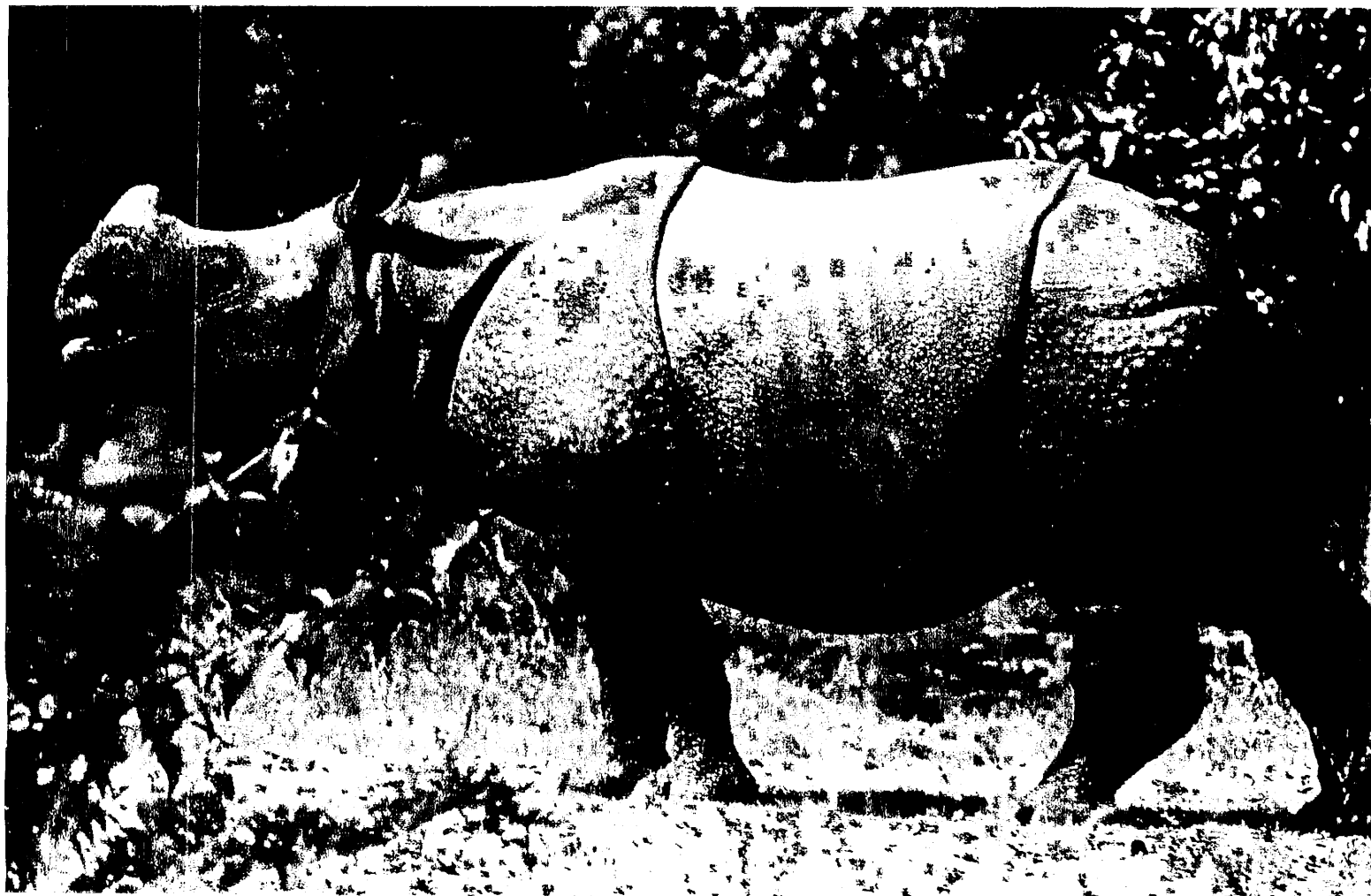
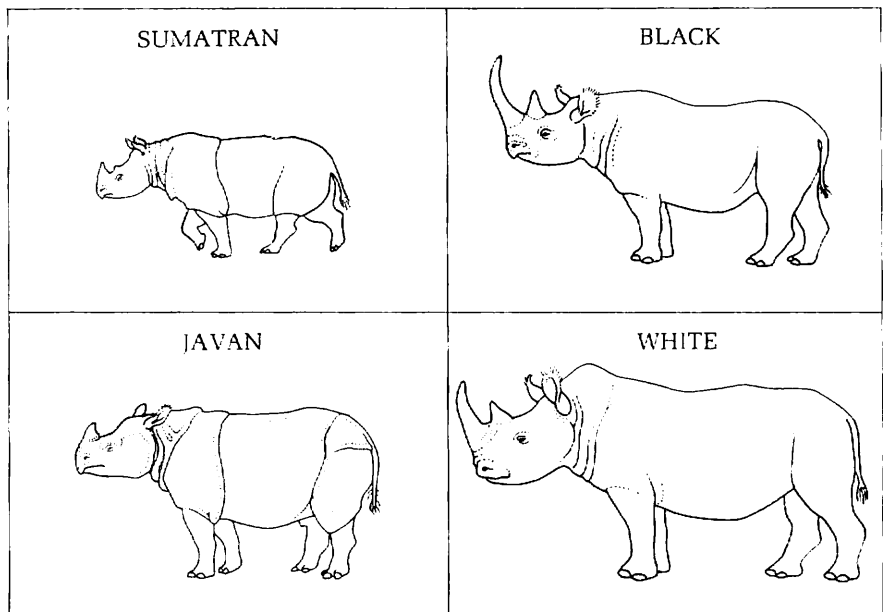
*Of the five species of rhinoceroses, the African black rhino has a special reputation for its unpredictable and often nasty temperament. An encounter between two black rhinos (below and opposite) usually begins with a great deal of snorting and pawing of the ground. Finally the combatants lower their heads and with great speed and surprising agility rush toward each other. But when they get within striking distance rhinos will often stop dead in their tracks and retreat. Although serious fights entailing a locking of horns do occur, once the dominance of one of the competitors is established, the weaker one will usually retreat before either incurs severe wounds.*

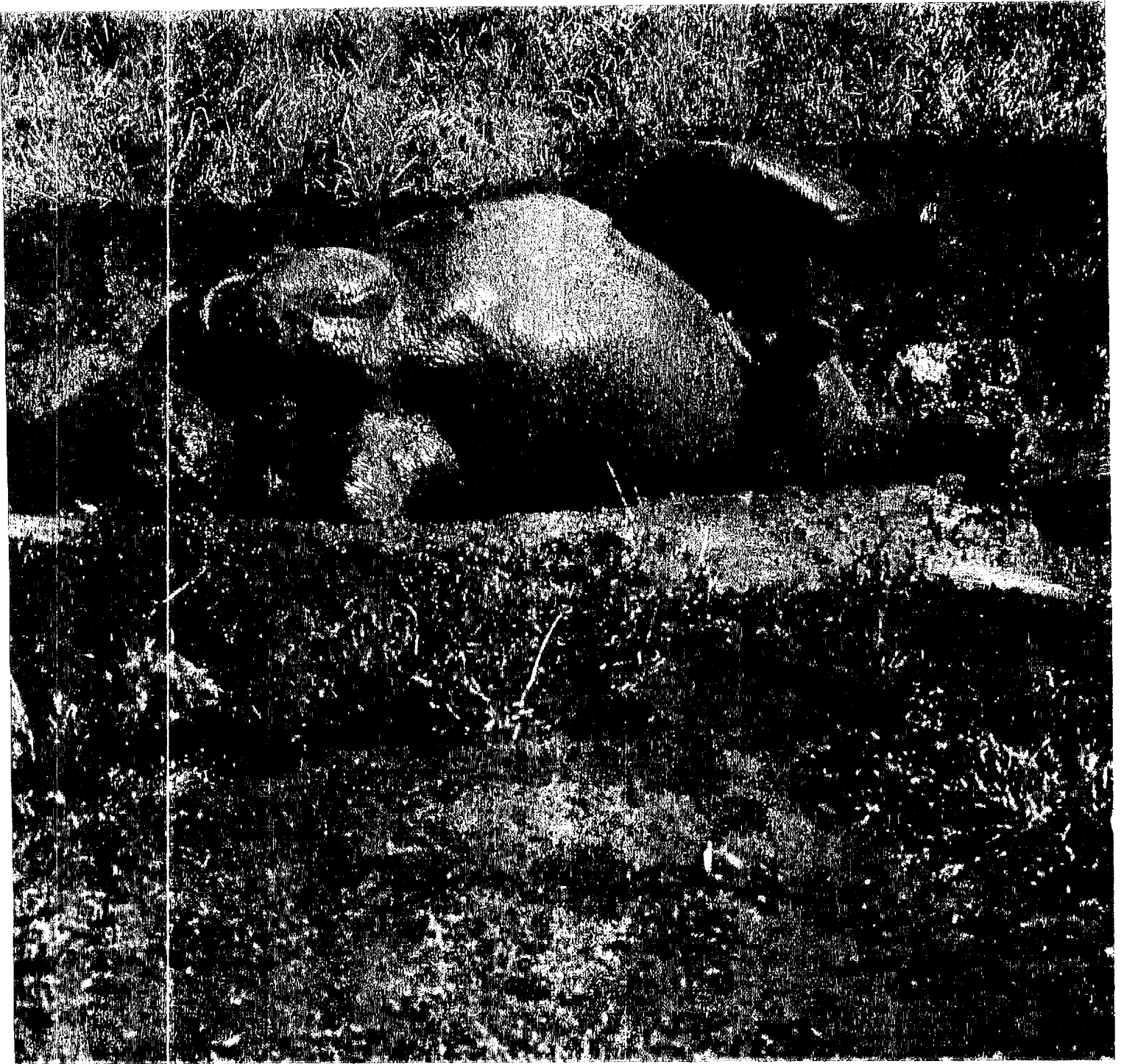




# A Varied Family

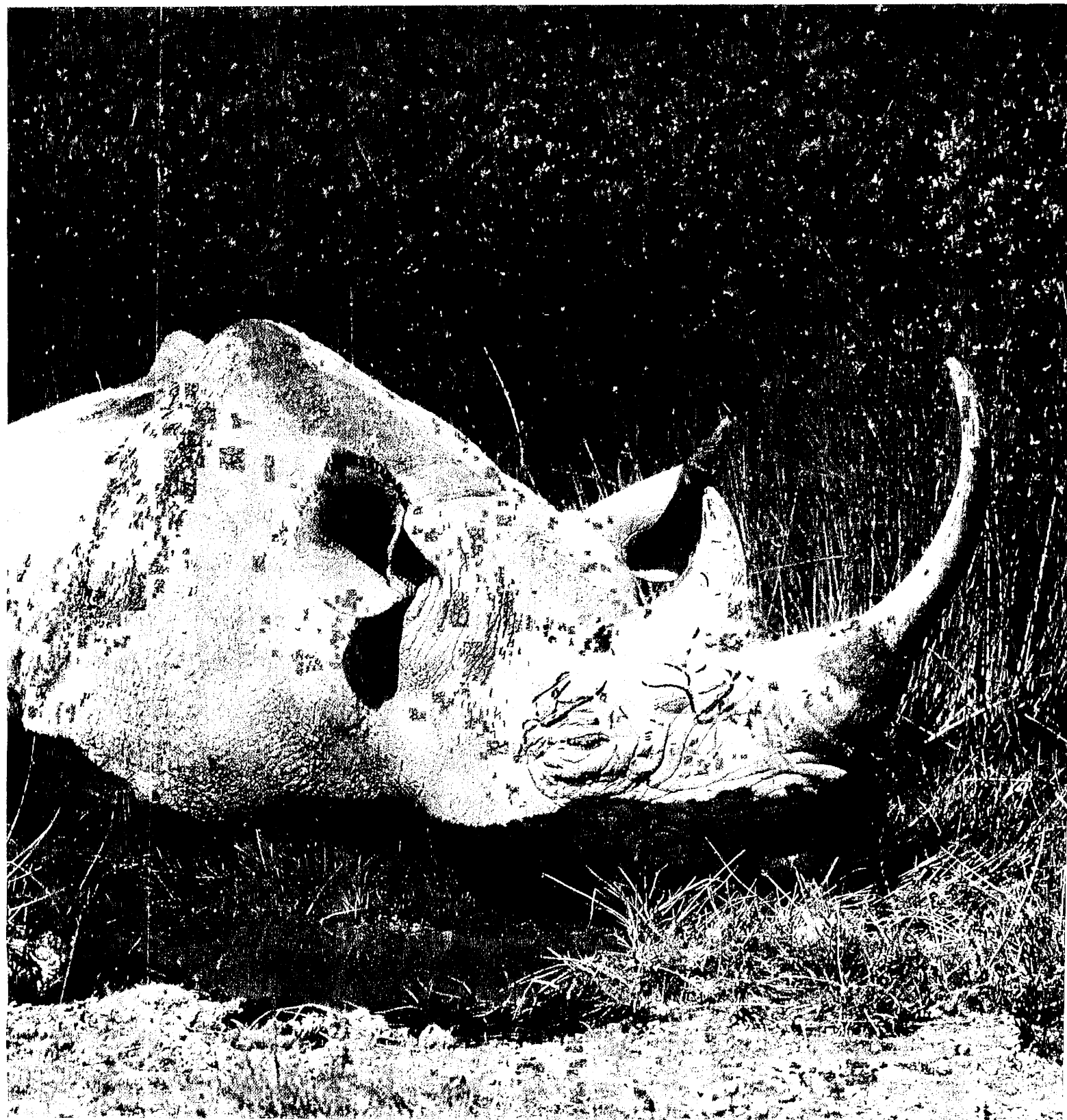
ke at first glance, the five species of  
oceroses actually have marked differ-  
es. The Indian (opposite and below) has a  
n covered by rivetlike bumps and divided  
o sections by deep folds across the rump  
l around the back, chest and neck. The  
tiguishing marks and relative sizes of the  
er species are shown at right. The rare  
an, like the Indian, has one horn and simi-  
convolutions of the skin. The Javan's neck  
ls meet above the shoulder, while the In-  
n's end at the shoulder blade. The Suma-  
n has only the chest fold and, unlike the  
er Asian species, has two horns, one being  
ere bump. The two African rhinos have  
ls on the sides of their necks plus two  
ns. The white has a distinct shoulder  
np; the black does not.





All species of rhinoceroses, like the African black rhino seen belly-up (above) pass many hours of the day—and sometimes the night—wallowing in the mud. The mud baths are essential for regulating the rhinos' temperature and for keeping their skin in good condition.

*In Africa, the wallows belong to all rhinos and are not defended, even during the dry season when the puddles are reduced to only a few inches of mud. The rhinos still manage to coat their entire bodies with the thick, protective slime by immersing one part at a time. The black rhino below gives its legs and belly a treatment while the mud on its head and back dries to a white dust.*





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