



## Compatible Rhinos—A Rare Prize for Any Zoo

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ON SEPTEMBER 14, 1956, the Basel Zoo in Switzerland proudly announced the birth of a 144-pound male baby Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*). It was the first time that such a birth had ever taken place outside of India, and only the second time that it had ever happened in captivity. A baby was born at the Calcutta Zoo years ago, but it did not live long. The gestation period for the Basel baby was found to be sixteen months, and its mother "Joymothi" is taking excellent care of it. So docile is she that members of the zoo staff entered the cage the first day and handled the baby.

In America, only the Chicago Brookfield Zoo has been successful in rearing baby rhinos and these were all of the African black variety. Apparently female rhinos are good mothers, and, once the babies arrive, there is little difficulty in rearing them. Why, then, are so few born in captivity? The most obvious reason is that, until recent years, few zoos have been able to afford themselves the luxury of a pair of rhinoceroses. After this the most important factor is compatibility. Rhinos are definitely anti-social creatures and they like to go their solitary, prehistoric way—which today unfortunately is fast becoming the road to oblivion.

The secret of Basel's success was, to a large extent, the compatibility of their pair of Indian rhinos. This is not too surprising, for this species often becomes quite tame in captivity, so tame that the London Zoo's big male "Mohan" has been trained to carry people on his back. "Peggy," a fine female long at the Philadelphia Zoo, allowed her keeper to perch high on her head, and she was a great favorite. However, the pair captured in the Kaziranga Sanctuary in Assam by Ralph Graham for the Brookfield Zoo had a terrible battle and, as a result, have been separated.

In 1953 the Philadelphia Zoo was fortunate in acquiring from the Kaziranga Sanctuary a young female of about three years of age named "Kana-

klota." In the fall of 1955 she was joined by a young male named "Kanakbala," and he was just about the same size as she had been when she arrived. Therefore, he was considerably smaller than his prospective mate, being about three years old while she was five. "Kanakbala" arrived on September 14, 1955, and was given almost a month in which to settle down. On October 10th a solid steel plate covering the barred door between the two rhinos was removed so they could see each other. At first they were a little afraid and snorted loudly, but soon they sniffed noses and in no time at all they were very affectionately caressing each other through the bars. I was a bit concerned lest the smaller male get his head caught between the bars, but he very obligingly allowed me to hold a ruler across the widest part of his head to ascertain that it was a good two inches wider than the space between the bars.

On October 24, 1955, the big event took place. On that day the two Indian rhinos were allowed together. Surprisingly enough the little male was the aggressor—if you could call it that. Actually it was mostly play, but rather on the rough side. They sparred a bit with their horns, but more often they nipped at each other's flanks with their tusks—the normal mode of attack by this species. When they tired, they took turns resting their ponderous heads upon each other's backs. For the first few days they were separated at night, until we were sure they were going to get along well together. For about a year now they have been living together—day and night—and they are inseparable. They lie together in their outdoor mud wallow and bathe together in their pool, which they love, for they are very aquatic. They play rough and frequently turn up with scratches and cuts which we cover with a mixture of lanolin and balsam of Peru, mainly to keep the flies away. The big question is: Will the male remain as friendly and compatible when he outgrows the female and reaches sexual maturity? We certainly hope so, and we are looking forward to matching Basel's feat by producing a baby Indian rhinoceros in an American Zoo.

America's First Zoo

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