

and a red palmered hackle—and a gentler take, and a relatively sluggish fight, suddenly made me a 7lb trout man.

The next evening, fishing the same fly, but dried to float by false-casting, I saw a great back like that of a respectable salmon come out of the water, but there was no fish when I tightened. He could have been 10, or 12,

or 14lb, but I would rather not know. Formerly managed, less than perfectly, by a director who thought it more profitable to sell the hatchery fish to hotels, the Gacka fishing has now been reorganized. In early spring, 1970, 190,000 browns and 30,000 rainbows were introduced to the water, at the incredible rate of one fish to 1½ square yards. All fishing was banned until mid-June 1971.

Gacka fish grow at about 2lb per year: the stock fish of 1970 are now between 3 and 4lb, and few will have been caught in 1971 because there was no fishing during the May-fly massacre. By next May they should be 5 to 6lb, and I may be returning four-pounders as unworthy of attention.

J A MAXTONE GRAHAM

Ill met, the Indian rhino

Just so, from the back of an elephant in Assam

Had my good friend, Mr Milroy, Chief Conservator of Forests in Assam for the period just before the last war, been living today he would have found immense pleasure—as I did—in reading the article by B and A Cash [8 July] on the Kaziranga Wild Life Sanctuary.

He not only halted the wholesale killing of the Indian rhino, but his far-sighted policy and drive were mainly responsible for building up the present considerable rhino population in Kaziranga.

The contributors in their concluding paragraph say that when they met an aggressive rhino, had she rammed their elephant they might have faced a situation fraught with unpleasant possibilities. This all but happened to my wife and me.

In early 1938 my relief had arrived at the Gurkha Training Centre in Shillong and we had a few days in hand before going on long leave. Mr Milroy suggested that we go and see Indian rhino in the Kaziranga Game

taking and walking parallel to a fine bull buffalo who was returning from courting the cows of a herd of water buffaloes in a nearby Chettisi settlement. My wife sat behind the mahout on the neck of the elephant, the Gurkha game warden in the middle of the pad, and myself over the tail. I carried a large camera and, at the request of the forestry babu, my double-barrelled rifle. It was very nearly my undoing.

Morning ghoom

From the back of the elephant we could look over the top of the tall grass on to patches of jungle and numerous tops of small trees. Dollonies, with a lush green growth like young growing corn, ran like glades through the ekra grass, and it was here we looked for our rhino. We drew blank on the morning 'ghoom' but did find a couple of privies in current use, which was encouraging. In the evening we had a stroke of luck.

Moving slowly down a dollony amongst hag deer and pig, a tiger, looking as big as a donkey, suddenly crossed quietly in front of us at about 40 yards. All the deer followed him as he moved. An old sow rustling in the boggy grass looked up to see the tiger within 10 yards. She scattered. He may have been the king of the jungle, but to her was the devil himself.

We were off at cock-crow next day following up the indications of our previous ghoom. Emerging from high grass on to a long green dollony about 30 yards wide we saw, 200 yards away, our first Indian rhino. "Go straight for him," I told the mahout. As we moved there was a sudden heavy rustling to our left. "Rhino," whispered the warden, and the mahout halted the elephant.

Tucking the rifle between the rope and the pad I took up my camera and got a snapshot as his head appeared. Simultaneously our elephant looked round for the source of the noise, saw the rhino, threw up his trunk, squealed, and was off like a whippet, completely out of control. The rhino followed, first at a trot, then at a gallop and, in a matter of seconds, had closed to within three yards of the elephant's hindquarters.

Meanwhile, on his back the mahout had the only safe seat and he was extremely rattled. My wife was all but flung off at the first lunge, and was pulled back by the warden. Poised over the tail I flung my camera to the warden and seized the greasy rope connecting the pad with the tail. My rifle came adrift and hit me in the face and I had a very unhappy few seconds.

All the time the elephant was going flat out on an erratic course, the rhino at his tail and snorting in apparent fury. We had just sorted ourselves out on the pad when we met our first batch of trees. Miraculously we escaped being brushed off and emerged with only a few scratches and bruises.

We had several further frights and were wondering how long this could go on when the elephant suddenly shied at something in the grass and swerved left-handed. The rhino shot straight on like a light tank. The menace gone, our poor old elephant was soon brought under control with a mixture of flat-tery and abuse penetrated with bangs on the head with the mahout's prod.

Amid snorts

We stood upright on the pad, listened to the snorts and watched the tall grass swaying as the rhino moved about. But the still day carried no scent and the rhino eventually departed. The whole episode had occupied 20 minutes and had taken us half a mile.

F T GASS

Shikar lore

Kheddar—the rounding up of a selected group of wild elephants by forestry employees using tame elephants. **Mahout**—an elephant driver. **Babu**—a clerk; in Hindustani an educated man, anyone from junior clerk to commissioner. **Dollony**—a glade or re-entrant in high grass. **Ghoom**—going in a circle; applied to jungle, sitting on an elephant and being taken to see animals and birds in natural surroundings.

Reserve where there had been a recent count of between 70 and 80. He added that we could have his personal elephant and that he would warn the local forestry staff of our visit. We were delighted.

It so happened that our dates coincided with an important kheddar in another district and, as there was sickness amongst the trained elephants mobilized to take part, Milroy's experienced veteran had to be sent there. But he said he was sending another, known to be staunch to tiger, amenable to Europeans but not yet introduced to rhino. He hoped all would go well.

We went by car to the forestry bungalow. Beyond that we could travel only by pad elephant, mostly by game and rhino tracks. The Indian rhino has praiseworthy views on inner cleanliness and sanitation. Whenever he moves location he selects a privy fairly adjacent to where he lies up in the heat of the day, to which he repairs at the appropriate time. Over a period, these become hills and the approach routes provide fair going for elephant and also, unfortunately, accurate information for poachers.

We were out at first light next morning, over-

A trio of Indian rhinos in a wallow.

