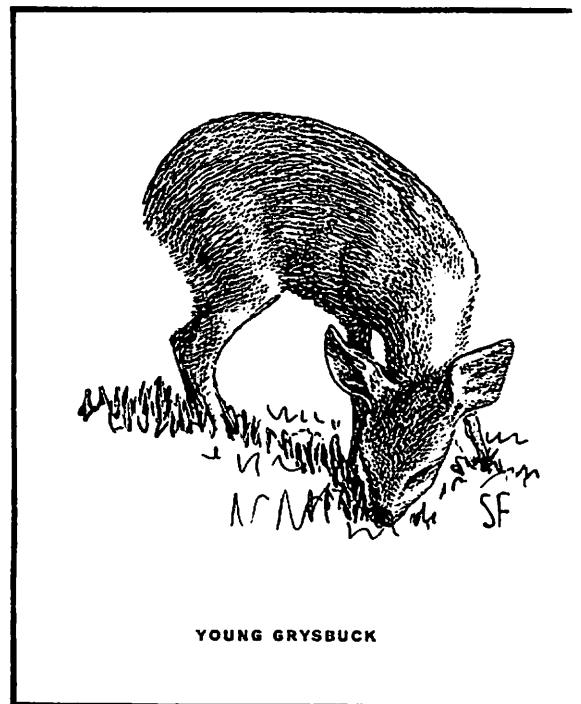


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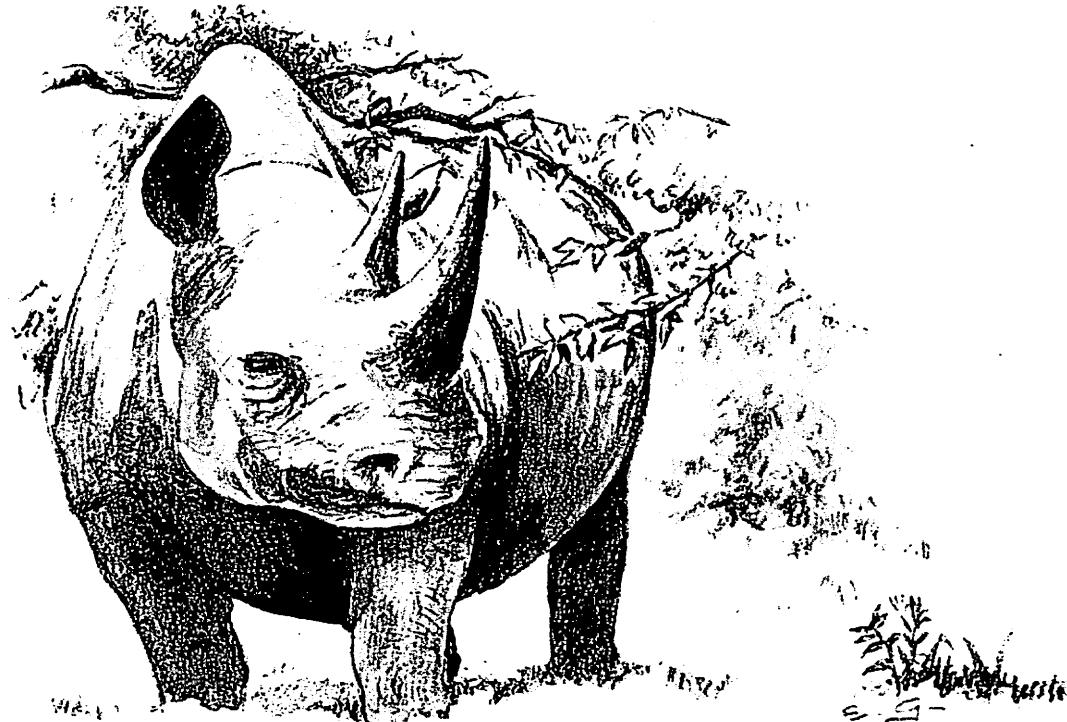
DOUGLAS HEY

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BLACK RHINOCEROS

The surviving animals from the Addo Bush, numbering 30, now have sanctuary in the Addo National Park where their future is assured.

Apart from its size, the elephant is a truly remarkable animal. It is able to move very silently, and travels through the bush at a speed of 6 miles an hour, but can run at over 20. They swim well and are fond of bathing and taking mud baths. Their eyesight is poor, but senses of smell and hearing are acute. The long, muscular, flexible trunk is really a lengthened nose and upper lip, which is used for a great variety of purposes such as feeding, drinking, smelling, trumpeting, carrying and feeling. Being a large animal, an elephant requires a great deal of food and consumes between 400 and 600 pounds weight a day. It feeds on grass and ferns, and on the tender shoots, leaves and bark of a variety of trees. It obtains the leaves by stripping them from the branches, or it may even push the trees down. Bark is gouged off the stem with the tusks. The animal drinks by drawing water up into its trunk and squirting it into its mouth. Although the trunk is strong and muscular, it is also sensitive and can pick up small objects.

The forefoot of an elephant is oval in shape, 22 inches by 25 inches, and is cushioned underneath with a jelly-like substance. Consequently, the animal is able to accommodate itself to the nature of the ground over which it walks.

Elephants are intelligent animals. Their skill in avoiding steep gradients is well known; many of our roads and rail routes through the mountains follow paths made by elephants. They are among the few animals which possess what might be termed a community spirit. For example, if an elephant is wounded, members of the herd will endeavour to help it to escape by lifting it to its feet and supporting it on either side. While doing so, they utter sounds of sympathy and encouragement. If one of a

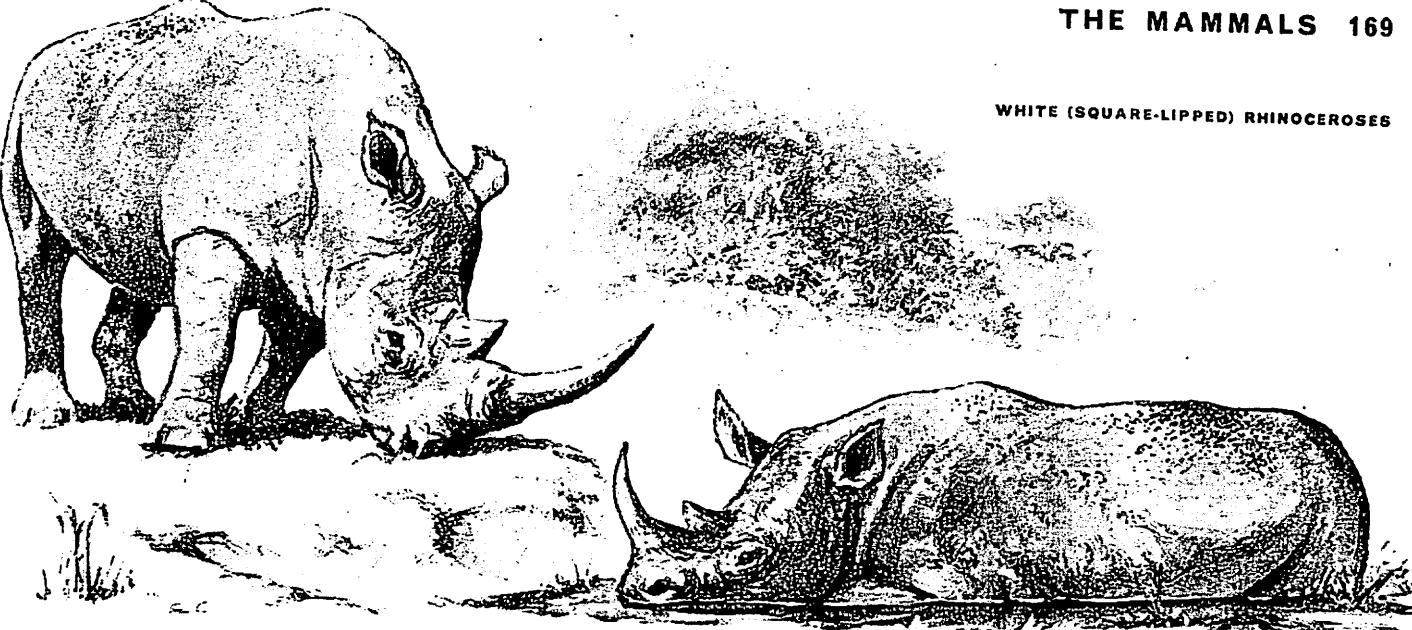
herd falls into a trap, the others will rally round, and while some break down the sides of the pit to form a ramp, others will scout around for the cause of the danger. They will then pull the trapped animal to safety. Female elephants will defend their young against any odds.

After a gestation period of approximately 650 days, the young elephant, weighing 200 pounds, is born. It matures at about 8 years of age and lives for approximately 80 years. The legend of elephant graveyards, where the aged are said to go off to die, is not founded on fact. When an elephant dies, putrefaction sets in immediately, which, aided by scavengers including mammals, birds and insects, soon disposes of the entire carcase except the tusks. These being heavy, eventually sink into the earth.

Contrary to general belief, the elephant is a timid creature with a gentle disposition, and does not molest other animals if left undisturbed. So-called rogue elephants are usually animals which have been injured and suffer from painful, suppurating wounds. Such animals associate the smell of man with their suffering, and so become dangerous. The Asian elephant was domesticated centuries ago and has become a reliable and devoted ally to man. Special schools for training African elephants were established in the Congo, where the animals were used in forestry and agriculture.

The rhinoceros, meaning 'nose-horned', is another large animal. Formerly the rhinoceros abounded throughout the Cape Province and was found within sight of Table Mountain. The last one was shot near Port Elizabeth in 1853. There are two kinds of rhinoceros in South Africa, the Black and the White, or Square-lipped variety. The Black rhinoceros is not black but brown in colour, whereas the White rhinoceros is even darker in colour than the Black. It may have derived its name from the

WHITE (SQUARE-LIPPED) RHINOCEROSES



fact that albino specimens sometimes occur. They are very fond of wallowing in the mud, which, when dry, gives the animal a light-grey appearance. This also may account for the name.

The Black rhinoceros, a solidly built creature with sturdy legs, weighs about 2 tons. It is pre-historic in appearance and carries two horns on its forehead, the longer being in front. These are not true horns, but are formed of compacted hair and are very tough. Although attached only to the skin, the anterior horn is a truly fearsome weapon. The Black rhinoceros is a rather unpredictable creature and often charges at the slightest provocation. When one considers how they have been persecuted by man, however, this is not surprising. The Square-lipped rhinoceros is the larger, and the horns are also better developed. The animal stands over 6 feet at the shoulder and is about 14 feet long. The record horn is one of 60 inches in length. They are rare, and the few remaining specimens in South Africa are to be found in the Hluhluwe and Umfolosi Reserves in Zululand. They also occur in the Congo, Uganda and the Sudan, but the total number of specimens living today probably does not exceed 3000. The number in South Africa is estimated to be approximately 600. The Square-lipped rhinoceros feeds largely by grazing, while the Black rhinoceros has a prehensile lip and is a browser. The rhinoceros has been ruthlessly hunted for centuries for its skin and horns. The skin, which is thick and tough, is used for making sjamboks. The horn, believed by Asians to possess important medicinal qualities, fetches a very high price as an aphrodisiac.

The officers of the Natal Parks Board are concerned about the status of the Square-lipped rhinoceros, particularly those which occur in a corridor of land between the Hluhluwe and Umfolosi Parks. They have perfected a technique for catching these animals in order to transfer them to other parks and reserves. In a modified Land Rover, an experienced marksman is driven to within range of the rhinoceros. He fires a dart containing an immobilising drug into the flank of the rhino, after which a horseman follows the 'darded' animal until it drops. It is then given an injection to counteract the immobilising

drug, and a tranquilliser. As soon as the tranquilliser takes effect, the animal is manoeuvred into a crate, which is winched up a portable ramp onto the platform of a 5-ton truck. The animal is transported to an enclosure where it is kept before distribution. By this technique, more than 100 animals have been caught, and distributed to parks, nature reserves and specially selected zoological gardens in South Africa, Europe and America. The future of the Square-lipped rhinoceros therefore appears to be more hopeful.

The Hippopotamus, the 'horse of the water', is about the same size as a rhinoceros. A large bull may attain 14 feet in length and weigh nearly 3 tons. It occurs only in Africa and was known to the ancient Egyptians, who called it the river hog. The Hippopotamus was also known to the Romans, who displayed them in the arena and used the skins for shields and helmets. Hippopotami

HIPPOPOTAMI

