

RHINO AS WE KNOW THEM

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ABOUT 160 Black Rhino live in the Hluhluwe Game Reserve. The period of gestation is about 13 months and an interval of three years elapses between each calf. In other words, the mother rhino does not mate until the calf she has is about two years old.

A full-grown Black Rhino is roughly six feet in height at the withers and is from 11 to 12 feet in length. Their two horns, which are really composed of fibrous hair, vary in length and thickness in different animals. Mostly the anterior horn is the longer and often reaches the length of 32 inches or more. This length, although a record for Zululand, does not come near the world's record horn which is quoted by Roland Ward as 42 inches. Sometimes both horns are of equal length, and now and again an animal with a posterior horn longer than the anterior is encountered.

These horns are used as a sort of battering ram when the animals fight and it is usually only when one of the contestants has been pushed over that the horn is used as a piercing agent capable of inflicting terrible wounds. Every year five or six Black Rhino are killed in combat in the Reserve. Even cow rhino have been known to engage in mortal combat. I have also seen a cow rhino attack an amorous bull with serious results to the bull. Calves at birth are about the size of a Setter dog. They have pink noses and pink toes. A baby Black Rhino calf invariably follows its mother, whereas the White Rhino calf is always in front of its mother, which gently guides it with its horn.

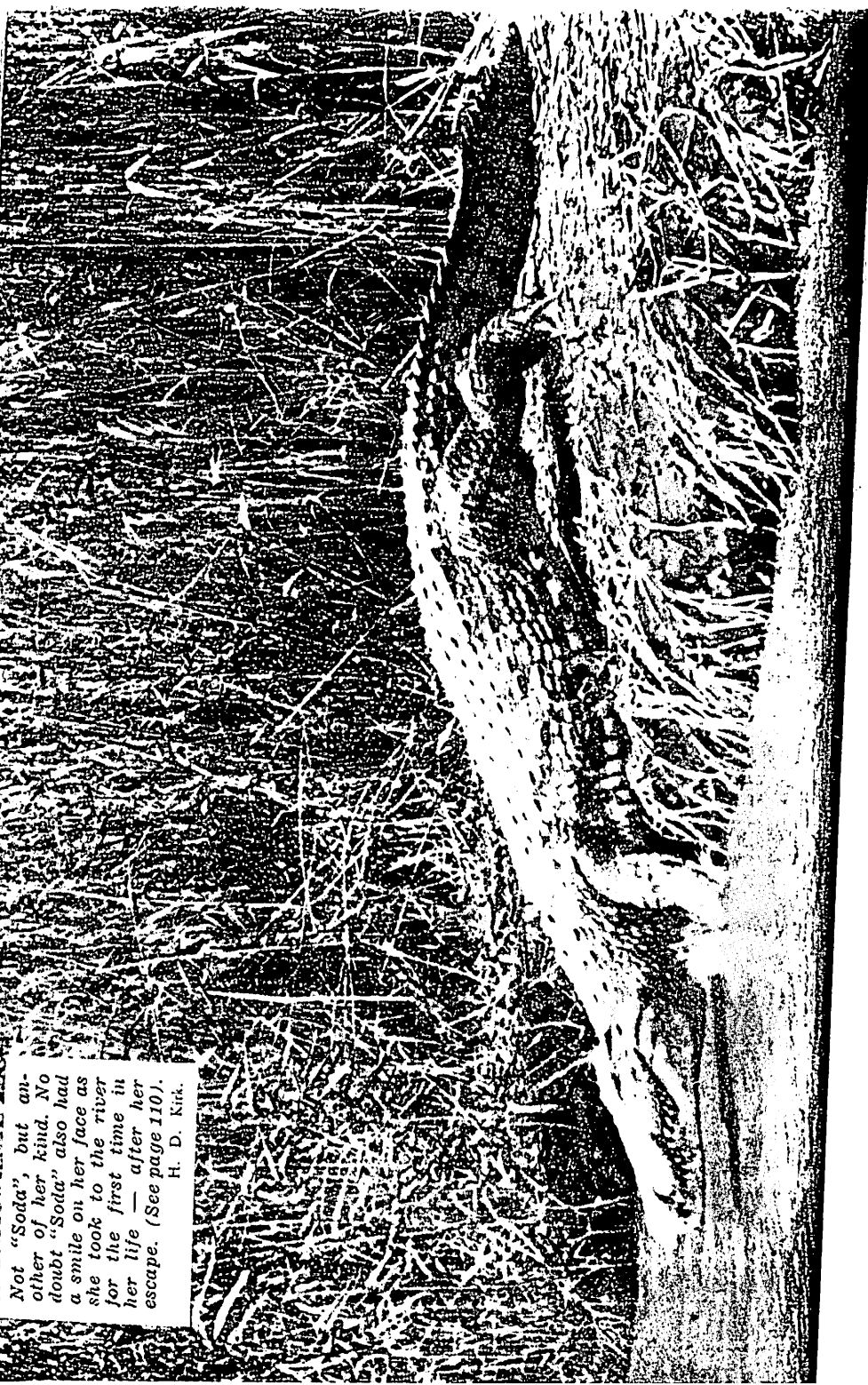
No Risks Can Be Taken The Black Rhino is certainly an animal with which no risks can be taken. I think the longer one lives among them the more one respects their uncertain temper, their morose nature and their dangerous disposition. In nine cases out of ten the animal will make a sort of charge towards a lorry or human but can be checked in its charge by a hoot of the car, a shout or a shrill whistle. Sometimes however, the charge is completed and on several occasions we have had our 3-ton truck pushed nearly over by a charging rhino.

Only one accident to a European has happened in the last 20 years; this occurred some months ago when a visitor on his way to the Rest Huts got out of his car to photograph a rhino bull. He was severely gashed between the knee and hip, which necessitated a week's stay in hospital.

The speed of a charging Black Rhino has been tested dozens of



White Rhino in
the Hluhluwe
Reserve.
W. F. Schack.



Not "Soda", but another of her kind. No doubt "Soda" also had a smile on her face as she took to the river for the first time in her life — after her escape. (See page 110).

H. D. Kirk.

times in the Reserve by means of a light motor truck. Twenty miles an hour is its limit, and that only for a short distance. The bulkier White Rhino cannot travel more than 16 miles an hour, and that only in short spurts.

A rhino's sight is bad and it is doubtful if it can see any object more than 20 or 30 yards away. His sense of hearing and smell are, however, highly developed. If the rhinosceros possessed the keen eyesight of other wild animals it would probably have become extinct years ago. The very fact that it is shortsighted has allowed its existence in places where the human element is found. A keen-sighted rhinosceros with its other natural characteristics could never have been allowed to exist.

Little Colour Difference There is no appreciable difference in colour between the two species, although it is a notable fact that the White Rhino prefers to wallow in sandy pans, which often has the effect of making this species look lighter in colour than the Black, which likes to wallow in black mud. After a heavy shower of rain, however, both species look about the same colour.

In Zululand there are more than 400 White or square-lipped rhino (*Rhinoceros simus Burchelli*). They deposit their dung in huge heaps and return to the same place daily to increase the size of such heaps. One could fill a fair-sized lorry from each heap. No attempt is made to disguise their whereabouts by scattering the dung and so exposing it to evaporation, as is the case with the Black Rhino. When the large heaps of dry droppings are found disturbed, it is usually due to the activities of anthecars, which are seeking the termites which consume the lower layers of the mass.

The White Rhino is easily distinguishable from the Black. The White is a bigger animal, higher at the withers, holds its head low and weighs about a ton more than the Black. Its gait is slower and more measured. It has a huge square lip and its head generally resembles a sack of putty cut off squarely at the end. The folds in the skin of the White Rhino are much more pronounced than in the black.

Only Two In Captivity A female White Rhino calf born in July, 1946, was abandoned by its mother during a game drive, and was presented to the National Zoological Gardens at Pretoria. Since then a young White Rhino bull has been presented to the same institution and, as far as is known, these are the only two White Rhinos ever to be kept in captivity.

Note: Readers are also referred to "Last Strongholds of Rhinosceros," by R. I. G. Attwell, "African Wild Life", Vol. 2, No. 3.

Copies of *Eggs of Birds Breeding in Southern Africa*, reviewed in our last number, price 42s., are obtainable from the author at P.O. Marandellas, Southern Rhodesia.