

A SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON THE STATUS OF RHINOCEROS
AND THAMIN (*PANOLIA ELDI THAMIN*) IN THE
UNION OF BURMA, 1953

BY

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This note is compiled from copies of reports very kindly furnished by the Personal Assistant to the Conservator of Forests, Burma (U Thein Yin), Principal Forest Officer, Shan States, Taunggyi (U Ne Win), and the Conservator of Forests, Northern Circle, Maymyo (U Thein). The writer takes this opportunity to thank the above mentioned forest officers for their readiness in tracing official reports on rhino and supplying him with copies on request.

SHWE-U-DAUNG SANCTUARY

The range officer, Thabeikyin, continues to receive reports from time to time that the three rhinos reported previously are still surviving in the dense jungles in the upper reaches of the Shwe-Hayar-U Chaung. (Annual Report on Forest Administration, East Katha Division, 1952-53.)

During the Japanese occupation, a villager from Pegu village shot one cow rhino and a school teacher from Thit-Sein-Goe village shot two rhino (sex unknown).

There is a local belief that the best time to come across rhino is during the full moon of Waso (July) when they usually congregate together. (Report on the Shwe-U-Daung Game Sanctuary by Range Officer, Moenik, dated 22nd May 1948.)

UYU RIVER DRAINAGE AREA

'It's pretty hard to estimate the number of rhinoceros in Homalin Sub-Division. I would personally hazard a guess of some seven or eight animals. Rhino tracks (possibly a solitary animal) have been reported from the right bank of the Chindwin north of Naatalaik. There may be one or two animals in the wild interior of Hkamti State.

'I remember a Chin telling me in 1943 how he and a few others shot two rhinos within a week in the Uyu area, west of Chaungson. The Chin village east of Mawngkan is probably doing colossal damage to game and forests.' (W. J. Carrot,¹ Commissioner, Sagaing Division—March 1951.)

The Divisional Forest Officer, Upper Chindwin, Myittha Division, suggests the triangle between Uyu and Chindwin rivers and Taw Sein unclassed forests for reservation as a sanctuary for rhino. Received report that there are rhinos surviving in the Nataleik Yele Forests in the Somra Tract. Not verified. (Annual Report on Forest Administration, Chindwin Circle, 1951-52.) The Divisional Forest Officer, West Katha Division, estimated the number of rhino in

¹ Mr. W. J. Carrot was Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills District, till June 1950.

Namka-Za, Nam-Yoke Chaung unclassed forests and the Taungthonlon¹ area as five. The same estimate was given in 1950-51. (Annual Report on Forest Administration, Northern Circle, 1952-53.)

MYITKYINA AREA

'In July 1948, a track of a rhinoceros was seen on the hills of Pao Tan Bum in Pindung Reserve by gamekeeper La Kyon Nawng and the thugyi (headman) of Mayan village. It is believed that the animal crossed over from the Uyu side and went north along the east bank of Namti and Pidsung Chaung (stream) towards the Eimkhang Bum.

'At a place called Kyaukkaik camp near the source of the Tagwin Chaung, Mogoung Range, tracks of another animal are reported to have been discovered as recently as November 1947. From the tracks seen, it is believed that the animal came from the west, crossed the Tagwin and went eastwards.

'In Indawgyi Range tracks of two rhinoceros were seen near the border of the West Katha and this Division near a place called Maingseingyi as recently as September 1948. The animals are believed to have come over from the Uyu drainage and the tracks of an animal indicated that it turned back into that drainage after about a fortnight.' (Memo dated 16th December 1948 from the Divisional Forest Officer, Myitkyina, to the Conservator of Forests, Northern Circle, Maymyo).

TENASSERIM PENINSULA

'Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus* and *Rhinoceros sumatrensis*) were at one time plentiful but owing to the depredations of Thai poachers have greatly decreased in numbers. They are now rarely heard about in any of the well-known forests. One animal may possibly visit the Yebu salt lick, another is on Nwalabo mountain, while occasional animals are reported in other areas. A queer report comes in from time to time that rhinoceros visit Rodger's Island. This report is hardly credible but as it recurs there may be some truth in it.

'In 1889, Anderson stated that rhinoceros found their way to Kisseraing Islands, that at that time they existed on Sir Robert Campbell and Sir Charles Forbes Islands. In those days the dried hide of *Rhinoceros sondaicus* was sold in the Mergui bazaar as food. He stated also that a police officer saw a two-horned rhinoceros swimming near High Island which is a good 20 miles from the mainland although there are islands in sight all round.' [Tavoy Divisional Working Plan (1939-40 to 1958-59) by H. C. Pudden, I.F.S., Deputy Conservator of Forests.]

PANOLIA ELDI THAMIN

THAYETMYO FOREST DIVISION

'Thamin occur mainly in the scrub jungle between the eastern watershed of the Pani stream and the Irrawaddy River. There are

¹ Taungthonlon is an extinct volcano, 5,600 ft., near the borders of Upper Chindwin and Myitkyina Divisions.

possibly 200 animals in this area. Round Sitsayan and Damathaw, south and north of Kama respectively, there are a total of 20-30 animals.' (Divisional Forest Officer, Thsiyetmyo—October 1947.)

MEIKTILA FOREST DIVISION

'The existing stock has diminished to a very narrow margin and is now confined to the following limits:—

Area	Estimated stock	
	Stags	Hinds
Meiktila Range:		
Menyotsaung reserve and unclassed forest	... 9	22
Inbinwa reserve and unclassed forest	... 10	8
Pyaukseikpin unclassed forest	... 8	20
Tagundina Range:		
Yugstaung and Sintsaung unclassed forest	... 10	25
Sathwa range	... small number	
Myothit range	...	do

(Divisional Forest Officer, Meiktila—14th March 1951.)

U Aung Din, M.A. (Oxon), M.Sc., Silviculturist, informed the writer that he saw thamin on several occasions during his inspection of Meiktila Forest Division in March 1954. He is definite that thamin is on the increase.

'Abundant in the Lower Chindwin, Yaw and Minbu Forest Divisions.' (Annual Report on Forest Administration, Chindwin Circle, Maymyo, 1951-52.)

'West Katha Forest Division, Nam Khan range, Ne-phi-lay unclassed forest: estimated stock 5. East Katha Forest Division—not seen now.' (Annual Report on Forest Administration, Northern Circle, Maymyo, 1952-53.)

Note.—Thamin exist in fair numbers near Kyauk-O, Thebeitkyin Range, East Forest Division (1948-49).

CONCLUSION

'Are there any thamin alive in Burma today?' (Lt.-Col. E. G. Phythian-Adams, *IBNHS*, Vol. 50 (1) p. 10—August 1951.)

Thamin exists and is on the increase in the Union of Burma. The Japs were strict. Ammunition for shot gun was not procurable and there were no shooting parties. Thamin as well as all wild game increased during the war period. It was only on re-occupation that much game was destroyed. During the present Civil War, game is destroyed by peace guerillas who misuse the ammunition supplied by the Government. Whether the insurgents can afford to waste their limited stock on wild game is not known. Ammunition is still scarce. Permit holders are permitted to draw only fifteen rounds at a time (once in two or three years). People dare not venture out to shoot game. In 1948, a party of five guns from Rangoon (Europeans) who went out to shoot junglefowl in the Insein District, were surprised by the insurgents and all their guns and ammunition looted. The Rangoon resident who organised the shoot later received a note from the insurgents that the guns would be returned in exchange for rifles!