

ANIMAL LIFE AND LORE by Osmond P. Breland. Published by Harper and Row, 49 East 33rd Street, New York 16. Price 6.95 dollars (R4.90 approx.) 388 pages illustrated with line drawings by Matthew Kalmenoff. Overall size $9\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

In this book the author sets out to reply to the why, what, when and how questions concerning mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, insects and other invertebrates, and in doing so draws on his widespread experience and knowledge amassed over a period of some thirty years of research and travel, during which he produced two earlier books entitled *Animal Facts and Fallacies* and *Animal Friends and Foes*.

He agrees with the generally accepted speed of mammals, making the cheetah the fastest with a speed of 70 miles an hour, a speed which he states is also attained by several birds, including the falcon, ducks and geese, the European Swift and the plover. He debunks the belief that mountain sheep land on their horns when making long downward leaps, giving as his reason that they would break their necks were they to do so.

Probably among the most surprising information for the layman is the statement that the wing-beats of midges, calculated with accurate instruments, reach from 988 to 1,047 per second, while those of mosquitoes are from 278 to 587 per second.

He describes the principal recognition difference between crocodiles and alligators as being in the shape of the snout, the crocodile's head narrowing sharply from level with the eyes to the tip of the snout, whereas the alligator's head is almost as broad at the end of the snout as at the eyes.

The ability of basilisk lizards to run on water, the fact that mongooses are not immune to snake venom and countless other interesting features are all included irrespective of whether they relate to the largest mammal or the smallest insect. In fact the reader will find answers to nearly all the questions that may be asked on wild life in the pages of this fascinating book.

G.B.T.

OTTER IN OUR PARLOUR by Morna Eyre. Published by Tafelberg-Uitgewers, Cape Town. Price R1.65. 147 pages illustrated with 12 photographs. Overall size $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

THIS IS THE TRUE STORY of the experiences of a couple who bought a small farm on an unspoilt piece of land near Gansbaai, on the Cape Coast to the east of Hermanus, and built their own home there. Then they caught an otter which later became a very interesting and affectionate pet, that eventually all but dominated the whole household. Later the household was increased by the acquisition of first a dog and later a tame steenbuck, with both of which the otter was extremely friendly from the very first meeting. The whole story really revolves round the habits of this tame Cape clawless otter, its likes and dislikes, peculiar mannerisms, food preferences and the entire absence on its part of any apparent desire to return to the river where its parents lived and where it had been caught originally. A short account of the author's experience with her otter appeared in Vol. 17, No. 1 of *African Wild Life*, in which as in the book she furnishes much valuable first-hand information on what is a very rare pet and an animal that is comparatively seldom seen.

G.B.T.

The Golden Bird

by Fay Goldie

A book every bird-lover should read. Here is the full story of the OSTRICH, from prehistory to today, and the dramatic contribution it has made to our economy and natural heritage.

Published by Garnet Publications

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7. Tsitsikamma Forest and Coastal National Park

Although the Parks Board is already responsible for this area, it has not yet been proclaimed a National Park.

A temporary caretaker and tourist officer was appointed and he was responsible for no fewer than 1,665 campers during the December/January school holidays.

8. Augrabies Falls

This beautiful waterfall will, in due course, be incorporated in a National Park. This will happen as soon as the Department of Water Affairs has reached finality on what it will need for the production of electricity in the vicinity. However, the Falls will not be touched or spoiled by these developments.

9. Scientific Research

As in the past, a large number of research workers, drawn from different scientific institutions such as Onderstepoort, C.S.I.R., universities and museums, were busy in all the different National Parks. Reports were regularly received and several papers were published in the Board's scientific journal, Koedoe.

The biological staff in the Kruger Park continued their research into new methods of catching and transporting wild animals and tried many kinds of drugs. Of these, M.99, a new drug, seems to hold the greatest promise.

The usual animal and plant surveys were continued and the veld-burning experiments, now in their tenth year, received attention.

10. Educational Work

The Stevenson-Hamilton Memorial Library played a large role in making the stay of many a visitor at Skukuza a very rewarding one, but it is especially the stopping-place of visiting scientists, and it is of the greatest value for the Board's biologists and field staff.

The publications of the Board have again met with an extraordinary demand, and two of these, viz. "Our National Parks" and "The Mammals of the Kruger and other National Parks" had to be revised for new editions.

11. Head Office

Successful negotiations with the Department of Transport resulted in the Board now receiving R100,000 for the building and maintenance of roads, instead of R60,000 as in the past. This became essential because of the increase in public traffic.

The Government has also given the Board the right to establish three "Border Patrol Posts" in the Kruger and one in the Kalahari Gemsbok Park. This means that the Board has been empowered to act for several state departments. The Government is also contributing towards the establishment of these posts.

The Board is negotiating with the City Council of Pretoria for a piece of land on which a new head office building can be erected. These negotiations are developing favourably for the Board.

To Save a Rhino

By REG GUSH

HUNTING by means of wire snares is prevalent throughout Zululand wherever game is still to be found. In the Mkuzi Game Reserve, which borders onto native reserve along much of its boundary, constant patrols by rangers and game guards have to be maintained to combat widespread poaching by this method. In twelve months over 1500 snares were removed from various areas of this Reserve and this number represents only a small percentage of the total number set. The length of the river boundary, along which most of the snaring takes place, makes the task of keeping an adequate control on hunting operations of this nature very difficult and many snares are set and removed by hunters before patrols reach the area.

Impala, Nyala, Bushbuck and Blue Wildebeest are the usual victims of these traps, but on occasion rarer mammals such as Suni Antelope and Black Rhino are caught. One native poacher who was arrested in the Reserve had six Suni skins in his possession. During the last four years, five Black Rhino have been killed at Mkuzi by snares.

Snares are set across game trails leading to and from the river or other watering points, and any animal using this path is in danger of getting itself caught. The moment an animal feels itself held by a snare it reacts instinctively and fights against the force restraining it; the snare cuts deeper into the flesh with every effort of the animal to free itself, and death often takes a long time. If it is fortunate, it will die still secured to the tree, for this is quicker, otherwise it may tear the snare free from the tree to which it is tied and will wander around for days, unable to feed or drink, until it finally collapses and dies in agony.

On the 16th August, 1963, a native game guide, who was conducting a party of tourists around the Reserve, arrived back at camp late in the afternoon and reported seeing a Black Rhino cow in the Magwaza area which had been caught in a snare; this had happened only two or three days ago, as the animal was still in reasonable condition although it was not feeding. A number of guards were dispatched to the area immediately and they were successful in locating the animal and keeping it under observation from the leeward side. Through binoculars it was possible to see that the snare had cut deeply into the flesh around the neck and along the top of the head, in places up to four inches.

Four native rangers were detailed to remain in the vicinity of the animal during the night and keep it under observation. In the meantime a request was made to the rhino-catching team of the Umfolozi Game Reserve staff for assistance. It was arranged that a ranger would arrive the following morning with the "Operation Rhino" truck, capture guns, drugs and all other necessary equipment needed to immobilise this animal.



The snare cut four inches down into the flesh over the ear and along the throat.

After the arrival of Ranger Rochat a start was made for the area where the guards had been left the previous day. They were contacted and it was learnt, to our dismay, that the track of the rhino had been lost during the night and that all efforts on their part to re-track it had been unsuccessful. A number of other rhino in the area had left spoor and it was impossible to tell one from the other. All guards and labour in the Reserve were called to the scene and these were split up into parties of two and sent out in different directions in an effort to locate the animal. A thorough search of the area by ourselves was to no avail and we returned to the rendezvous at midday to await the other parties. During the early afternoon groups of searchers started returning and all reported negative results. The afternoon wore on and Ranger Rochat, who had urgent commitments at Umfolozi and would have to leave the following morning, expressed doubts that sufficient time would remain to dart, follow-up and load the animal before dark, even if it could be located then. By 3.00 p.m. only one party of guards remained to report back and our hopes of being able to save this animal were starting to recede. As we were preparing to return to camp the last party returned and reported that the rhino had been seen in the thick Mahlala bush and that two of its lying-up places had been discovered showing signs of fresh blood.

From then on things moved swiftly. The rhino was successfully located and had fortunately moved out of the bush into open



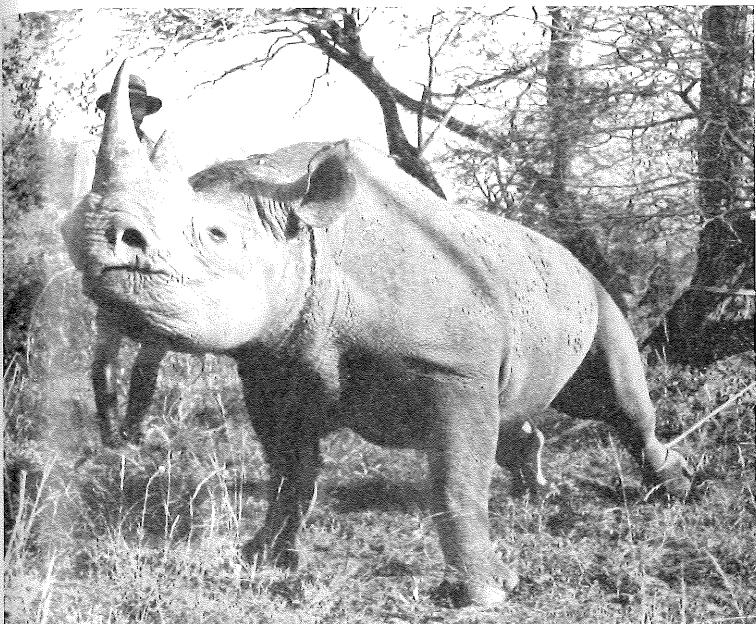
The animal had to be rolled over on to its brisket to avoid its having difficulty in breathing while under the effect of the anaesthetic.

country which was approachable by vehicle. Ken Rochat prepared the drug-filled dart which had to be fired from the gas powered capture gun at a range of not more than 25 yards and he, Ranger Adriaan Erasmus and I set off in pursuit.

We approached the rhino cautiously at first so as not to alarm it, manoeuvring the Landrover behind it. It started to move off and we accelerated and careered across the veld after it. The terrain was rough with a lot of small thorn and small scrub, but no thought could be given to the scratched mudguards. It was after 4.00 p.m. and getting late; if the dart missed there would be no second chance and the animal would be sure to die within the next few days.

The rhino cantered along in front of the truck as we bucketed up behind it to get within range, Ken fired and the dart smacked squarely into the rump and stayed there—a perfect shot, but there was still the possibility that the drug would not be injected if the dart misfunctioned. That was in the hands of the Gods. The rhino entered a patch of bush and, leaving the Landrover there, we followed up on foot. It had gone into heavy scrub and we were able to approach and watch it. After twenty minutes it started showing signs of becoming unsteady on its feet, staggering and crashing into trees, and we knew that the drug had entered its system and was working effectively.

As the animal started getting groggy it was possible to approach and tie a rope around the back legs. This was secured to a tree thereby preventing it from moving back into thicker bush where it would be impossible to load. After a further ten minutes it lay down, completely anaesthetized and breathing heavily. The snare was cut with a hack-saw blade and removed, the wound disinfected and

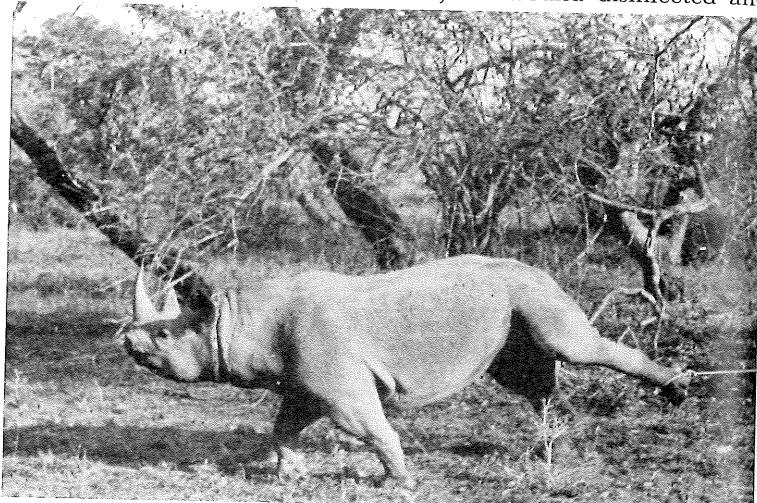


Two-inch thick nylon ropes prevented the animal from running away before the drug had taken its anaesthetising effect. The end of the cable snare is visible under the head.

packed with sulpha drugs and an antibiotic injection was administered.

To enable it to receive specialised attention, the rhino had to be moved to the bomas at Umfolozi and for this purpose the rhino-catching truck and crate from "Operation Rhino" were used. The method had been perfected by the Umfolozi staff. A crate, with the door open, was placed in front of the animal's head and an injection of the antidote to the knockout drug was given. The effect was almost instantaneous as the animal got up and staggered forward towards the crate. A rope, tied to the muzzle and threaded through a hole in the front of the box, helped to guide the rhino inside when pulled vigorously from behind the box, and with much shouting and heaving it entered and the door was closed. A power winch driven off the driving shaft pulled the crate on to the elevated back of the tip-truck. The back of the truck was lowered into position and the rollers loaded. Loading time had taken 25 minutes.

The race against time was over. The lorry left for Umfolozi where a qualified veterinarian stitched up the wound and ministered to all the other needs. Later on, having completely recovered, our patient was moved to the Ndumu Game Reserve as a mate for the solitary bull already there. As darkness fell we loaded up ropes, catching equipment and the labour gang onto the Landrovers, lit up cigarettes and headed wearily back towards camp.



Although doped, the animal was still full of fight and almost succeeded in freeing itself from the first rope used.