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who carried him in, a wriggling mass of scales. Had I known at the time it was a King Cobra and not a Python I had to meet I certainly would not have taken the risk of approaching him so close for the shot. The King Cobra measured between pegs 13' 7", girth 9", Ventrals 245, Scales 15, subcaudals 84. As I know of no other records in the district it would be interesting to know measurements obtained by other members.

May 1929.

J. W. B. A.

Observations on Indian Rhino and their shikar on foot.

In the following article I propose giving a description of the habits and haunts of Rhino and my experiences of "still" hunting them. In India I have heard of no one except myself who has undertaken this. In Africa, where the jungles are less dense and fairly free of immense tall reeds and grass, shooting on foot of the African species has been done. My experiences after this beast on foot were undertaken after I had used elephants without success. Every sportsman knows the dread elephants have of Rhino, and whilst I was in India, it was said the only two elephants that were staunch to them were in the possession of the late Maharaja of Cooch Behar.

It was disheartening, when on an elephant, to pick up the fresh tracks of a Rhino, where he had been feeding during the night and go on tracking and tracking through miles and miles of giant null and ekra, fording "bheels" &c., to come up to the place where the beast lay in his "seat" or wallow; then an ominous grunt or a whistling sort of noise, and the elephant would whizz round and carry one 3 or 4 miles before stopping, sometimes plunging into a quagmire. My friend D was once chased by a Rhino: his elephant bolted and got stuck in a quagmire from which he was extracted with much difficulty.

Any one who has been on the top of a runaway elephant will agree with me that it is most unpleasant, whether one is on a howdah or a pad. The beast stumbles and falls; a rolling ship in a storm is not

in it and worst of all the *hathi* tries to shake the pad off as well as the occupants. In a howdah it is still worse as one gets rattled like a pea in a drum. Lord Victor Brooke had his arm fractured in a shoot with one of the Viceroys when his elephant bolted after a charge from a Rhino. In one case, the elephant I was on bolted, went absolutely mad and the only way the mahout stopped it was to drive the pointed end of the iron goad into the elephants' tongue. It was all this that made me decide to try stalking the beast on foot.

I have been after both the Great Indian Rhino and the smaller, the Sumatran one.

Booreegaon, a wild tract, situated on the right bank of the Brahmaputra, in the Darrang district of Assam, was the scene of my operations where lay the beds of the old Brahmaputra. In this tract were "bheels," null, ekra and a certain amount of scattered forest of simul (*Bombax*) and wild plum; for about 50 square miles not a villager nor a habitation was to be seen. It was an ideal spot for Rhino and it is no exaggeration to say that, in this comparatively small area, there must have been 12 or 13 Rhino. Kaziranga, the Sanctuary of Assam, was on the opposite bank and I think Rhino were attracted to this spot after the jungle fires, when the young succulent null shoots appeared.

My friend D and I had been out many times on elephants without success, so I suggested foot shooting. D was not taking any so I had to undertake the job myself.

I managed to get hold of an Assamese tracker Loloong by name, who was a ripping chap, although an inveterate opium eater, and would not budge in the morning until he had his "dope" and kept it up, with small doses, during the day. Poor Loloong met a horrible fate as I shall relate.

Before relating my experiences it may be of interest to give some account of the habits of the larger and smaller Rhino.

The smaller Rhino is found at the base of hilly country, where the hills are undulating and the forest dense and mixed with streams and cane brakes. I have seen them in considerable numbers in the foot hills of Tipperah, Sylhet and Lushai. In the small ravines there

are swamps and streams where cane takes the place of null and it is there where the smaller Rhino lies up and has his wallows; terrible stuff to get through and in stalking one cannot do it without considerable noise and being caught up by the thorns on the cane. The small Indian Rhino, on this account, is a most difficult animal to approach as he lies up in his wallow, like the large species he has always one ear and his nose stuck up above the mud and the sense of hearing is very acute.

The droppings are always in heaps, in the same manner as the large Rhino. He is very fond of the fruit of the O-tenga (*Dillenia indica*) or elephant apple, the result is that the urine is just like blood; he also eats the bark of certain trees and creepers and I have seen the bases of some trees almost entirely stripped of bark by them. He travels very quickly and is quite at home moving either up hill or down hill. He is not so dangerous as the large Rhino, trusting generally to flight. The spoor is a trefoil, similar to that of the large one but smaller. When he comes across a fallen tree, he always go round it being unable to raise his feet very much. Loloong told me that the Rhino lifts a fallen tree with its horn and in this way often kills the young one following behind!!! I do not know what truth there is in this.

The smaller Rhino is a great wanderer, in fact it is recordel that one was shot in a tank, that supplied the engine of a tea house with water, by the late Gordon Fraser, a tea planter in Sylhet. When disturbed he snorts like the larger Rhino but I have never heard him make the whistling noise of the latter nor have I ever come across them in pairs like the large Rhino male and female or solitary.

Both have favourite trees where the horns are sharpened and cleaned.

The large Rhino is fond of the *dhoob* grass which crops up in the drying "bheels" during the cold weather and, here too, the wild dog-rose grows and is also devoured.

The best way to get on to the fresh tracks of the large Rhino is to visit a "bheel" and if after the smaller one, the streams. The Rhino feeds at night and, at the streak of dawn, will go 8 or 10 miles to have his

siesta in the tall "null" and "ekra"; these seats can be seen in numbers when stalking. In his progress through these reeds regular tunnels are made. Many wallows both old and new may be found and into these he plunges where troubled with the heat, usually spending the hottest hours of the day in them. On leaving them he is covered with mud which cakes and is impervious to the bites of mosquitos and other biting flies. When wounded and pursued he will also often plunge into them, *en route*, to cool himself and then go on; this makes tracking an easy matter as the wet mud adheres to the reeds and grass as he brushes through.

Many people believe that the horn of a Rhino is used as an offensive weapon; this is not correct, its only use is to dig its wallows. The weapons of offence are the huge sharp tusk like teeth, sharp as razors, at the side of the lower jaw. When using these the upper lip is turned up and the lower one down, exposing them to the full; the mouth being opened at the same time. They can inflict terrible gashes, as evidenced by the scars on an old bull's hide; and, were it not for the shields, in every fight one or other of the combatants would be disembowelled.

The flesh of the Rhino is in great demand, even Brahmins can eat it and a fistful is sold for 4 annas; the horn may fetch anything from Rs. 400 to 500. To a native, therefore, to bag a Rhino is both a godsend and a gold mine and for this reason the Assam Government had to take measures in time to protect it from extermination. The Marwaris treasure the horn and cups are made of it, which are supposed to make any poisoned drink placed in them harmless; scrapings of the horn are also used as medicine to procure an abortion. In the opinion of some natives the urine is supposed to possess anti-malarial properties and, I believe, at Zoological Gardens quite a lot of money is realized by the sale of this secretion. I do not know how it is collected but it must be a ticklish and dangerous job !!

A native will build a hut in a tree, above a heap of droppings, and wait there a week to get his Rhino; an iron arrow being fixed into the bullet to make it more effective.

The smaller Rhino though not so aggressive as the large one will, when wounded and followed up, charge and takes some stopping. A female deprived of its young, like most animals, is most dangerous and will charge at anything that comes near her. The young of the large Rhino gets very tame up to a certain age. A friend of mine in Assam had one and it used to go out every day with its keeper and fetch its fodder, which was placed on its back, like an elephant. I have never heard of the young of the smaller species being kept in captivity.

I forgot to mention that the hide of the Rhino, especially the shields, is used by the Nagas to make shields and Rowland Ward, by a special process, gets a beautiful polish, resembling tortoiseshell, on it out of which tables, whips, walking-sticks etc. are made. The feet, of course, are the chief trophy for the sportsman.

When feeding or undisturbed the Rhino walks very slowly, but when chased it is astonishing with what speed the animal travels. I should say its speed, in full gallop, is about 15 miles per hour. It will go through unbroken "null" or "ekra" like a rabbit through bracken, ploughing a clear path in its progress. Even half-burnt "null" and "ekra", which sometimes baffles an elephant, is nothing to a Rhino. When chased he spins round every now and then facing the pursuer and then dashes off again. In going easily through swampy and "ponky" ground the Rhino has no rival and it is wonderful how little the feet sink in this stuff. I think the shape of the foot, acting like a snow shoe over snow, enables the animal to get over easily. The wedge-shaped head helps him to get through heavy jungle and the thick hide protects him from thorns and "ekra" stumps.

When charging the animal utters a loud nasal snort, lowers the head and comes thundering along; it is always well to jump to the side when a charge is being made. Sometimes it will not charge home but will stop a few paces off shaking its head from side to side and striking the feet on the ground like a cow; the tail is also rapidly whisked.

The sense of sight is bad but smell and especially hearing are very acute.

They visit salt licks like most animals. I have never seen Rhino swim but presume they are good swimmers.

as I know they have crossed rivers like the Brahmaputra and Benelli when in flood.

The ashes of burnt jungle are eaten by the Rhino, no doubt for the saline matter contained.

I have never seen the third variety of Rhino, the Asiatic two-horned one (*R. sumatrensis*) the greater part of whose body is clad with hair of some length, so must leave a description of him to other sportsmen.

I will now relate some of my experiences on foot after Rhino. They were thrilling times, and, although my last experience ended in a tragedy, I look back to those days with pleasure and my heart beats fast when recalling them. If anyone wishes to undertake this job let me tell him that the sportsman must be in first rate training. This sort of shikar can only be done after the jungle fires, April and May in Assam, when the heat from the sun is terrific. It also means a long tramp, wading through and swimming "bheels" and forcing one's way through unburnt jungle and wild cardamoms 10 or 11 feet high, a very weary and tough job. My longest day, according to my diary, was from 3 a. m. to 11-30 p. m., allowing one hour, out of this, for a halt for rest and lunch. I was so tired after this, that the slightest movement gave me cramp in the legs. Every sportsman who has had a long day after Markhor and Ibex, over difficult country, knows the feeling; however, a hot bath, a good dinner and sweet slumber makes one forget all this.

My wife and my tracker Loloong were with me on my first experience. We procured an elephant to take us to the "bheel" where we were going to pick up fresh tracks. We found tracks, evidently of a bull that had been feeding there during the night, and leaving my wife to return to camp, Loloong and I proceeded to follow them up. We had left camp at 3 a. m. and reached the "bheel" at daylight. We tracked and tracked, through the tunnels and burnt jungle, till 1 p. m. After crossing a large piece of burnt jungle we saw a patch of unburnt jungle, with some simul trees and wild plums and Loloong was sure the bull was lying up in this and he was right. On entering it, the tracks were very plain. Loloong led the way round with a 12 bore rifle and I followed with a 450 H. V. In one of the tunnels our way was blocked by a huge mass of dead reeds, several feet high, the accumulation of years.

I thought it impossible for the Rhino to have got through this but Loloong held on and crawled under this heap and then suddenly drew back and held up his fingers. I then knew that the Rhino was there. Crawling under the heap, not an easy job, what was my astonishment to see a huge Rhino about 8 yards away, standing broadside on and not moving a muscle. From my awkward position I fired at his shoulder; he gave a snort and a rush, fortunately not in our direction, otherwise both of us would have been trampled to death. We went after him, tracking was easy as there was plenty of blood. The animal went on and on only stopping at a few wallows *en route*; blood marks then became less distinct and we had to trust to other signs. The beast ultimately got into an old bed of the Brahmaputra, impenetrable to anything, except a Rhino and here we had unfortunately to give up. Night was now falling and there were many miles to go before reaching camp, it was not till 11-30 that we got home. There was no moon and how we managed to find our way through those swamps and jungle was, indeed, marvellous; I was wet to the skin and my clothes almost in tatters.

Next day we went out on an elephant to search for the beast, but the mahout said the elephant would sink in the quagmire where the Rhino had taken refuge and so I lost this beast much to my regret.

I rested in camp the whole of the next day as there was some official work to be done but on the following one Loloong and I started out again.

We left camp at 3 a.m. for another "bheel" where we came on fresh tracks of a bull, but it was not till 2 p.m. that we came up to him. I got within 10 yards of him but unfortunately he was in heavy stuff and I could not choose the vital spot. I fired, there was a snort and suddenly I found myself caught by my coat and dragged into the null at the side of the tunnel. Loloong was the perpetrator and had he not done so the Rhino would have got us. We followed him up and he, like the first one, took to impenetrable jungle and again we had to turn towards camp as it was getting late and reached there at 11 p.m.

After my bath and dinner Loloong came for orders for the next day. I told him I was going to take a rest in camp so he begged me to lend him my 12 bore and six cartridges to shoot pig. He returned

next evening with five cartridges, and said he had missed a pig. We then had a dispute as to which "bheel" we should visit next day. Whilst I was after another Rhino, I had noticed the track of a big bull in another "bheel" and said "Loloong we will go there." He tried to dissuade me and said he knew another "bheel" where there were three Rhino and that we should go there. I stuck to my proposal, much against his wish.

We started from Camp at 4 a. m. and on reaching the "bheel" were not long in picking up fresh tracks of the bull. Then began the long tracking and pushing one's way through unburnt "ekra" and "null" with bended back. It was weary and hot work making one's way through the maze of tunnels. We were hot on his tracks by 1 p. m. as evidenced by warm droppings and freshly trodden grass. We cautiously advanced, side by side, with rifles at the ready. I could see that Loloong was not his usual self and appeared nervous. We then came to a tunnel which branched into two and after proceeding a few yards along the one to our right Loloong held up two fingers, denoting there were two, and drew back a few yards. I now decided to take the left branch so as to get a side shot. No sooner had we done this than there was a loud snort and I saw a Rhino thundering down on us. The next instant the Rhino was within a few feet of Loloong who was on my right, almost touching him and tossing its head from side to side and stamping its feet. Loloong threw up his arms with a look of terror and when the Rhino was almost between his legs I let drive. The beast went back 8 or 10 paces, bleeding profusely and undecided as to whether to charge again or not. I was just going to let him have my left barrel when down the left branch of the tunnel came another Rhino, full tilt at me and uttering most unearthly snorts. I jumped to the side and as the brute nearly touched me, I fired and the beast went on. On looking to my right I could see nothing of Loloong; he had apparently vanished. I called out his name several times and got no reply; at last I heard a choking sound and knew something serious had happened. I made my way through unbroken "ekra," in the direction of the sound and after going about 20 yards found my poor

tracker covered with blood, his clothes soaked in blood and torn to shreds. His body was practically a pulp, there were teeth marks on his side and his skull was apparently fractured. The poor fellow was still alive and, getting his head on my knee, I pulled out the clotted blood and bits of broken ekra from his mouth, five minutes later he was dead.

The jungle was trodden down all round showing that the Rhino had made sure of killing him. My rifle was not there and after the tragedy I searched for it and found it about 10 yards away smashed to bits and what was very curious was that the stock showed the imprint and depression of one of the nails of the Rhino's foot.

What happened was this. When I was engaged with the second beast, the wounded bull must have charged down on my tracker, got him in his mouth and carried him through the unbroken "ekra", stamping on him and literally worrying him like a dog does a rat.

I was now in a dilemma. I could not leave the corpse, so stood near, with rifle cocked, in case the wounded Rhino came for me. I mounted guard for 4½ hours and then heard a swishing in the jungle. What was my joy to see an elephant, which my wife, who was in camp, had procured from the *mauzedar* and sent to search for us.

I wrapped the body of poor Loloong in grass, placed it behind me on the pad and told the mahout to take us to his village which was 7½ miles away. On the way I noticed a lot of vultures and going to the spot, to my astonishment found the remains of a young Rhino, apparently quite fresh. Then the whole thing dawned on me. Loloong on the day on which I had lent him my rifle, had shot the calf of the pair that behaved so viciously; and on that account, he had showed his reluctance to go to my "bheel."

I got to the village and had a bad time as the villagers, including his family, became truculent and menacing. They said that I had shot him but after seeing the body they were satisfied that he had been killed by a Rhino and I told them I knew all about his shooting the calf. I sent a wire to my D. C. when I reached camp and he asked for a report and the verdict was that I was blameless and that the death was accidental.

After the occurrence the vernacular press tried to make out that I was responsible but I think I did all that could be done under the circumstances and had I known the calf had been killed, I would never have gone after these animals on foot. That night on thinking things over I came to the conclusion that I had had a very narrow squeak, only a few inches decided it and had I not jumped to the side the second Rhino would, certainly, have got me. Needless to say I made ample compensation to the relatives of the deceased. He was a good chap but his nervousness at telling a lie had contributed to his death.

After this tragic and thrilling adventure I promised my wife never to go after Rhino on foot, but if I were single and had the chance I would do so.

One of the wounded animals was seen, by some Gurkali herdsman, crossing the Brahmaputra. He was sickly and probably died in the Kaziranga Reserve. My regret is that I did not bag the murderer.

Before I close this article I would like to say something regarding their distribution and protection.

About 40 years ago the large Indian Rhino was plentiful in the Goalpara, Darrang and Nowgong districts, also in the Duars, Terai and Nepal. Pollock saw numbers in the Jaintrapuri jungle in Sylhet, but there is not one there now. They were all exterminated 36 years ago. About 14 years ago the Assam Government saw wisely the ultimate extinction of this interesting animal and formed the sanctuary of Kaziranga, in the Nowgong district; at the same time absolutely prohibiting the shooting of it. Some years ago the Duars authorities followed suit. I should say, at the present moment, the largest number are found in Nepal. In the Tezpur district of Assam, which I know best, the best places for Rhino in 1911, were the right bank of the Brahmaputra between Behali and Boregaon; Gohpur, on the confines of the Lakhimpur district; the jungles bordering on the bank of the Gohpur and Sonarupa and Orang at the foot of the Bhutan hills, also in the Borsola jungles at Singrighat.

Before I left India I saw a picture of a bag made in one year by an Indian Prince. I think there were 35 animals or more and most of the heads looked immature and not worth shooting. Every sportsman will agree with

me that this is indiscriminate slaughter and should cease. Cooch Bihar State was also famous for its Rhino ground, but I believe none exist there now.

My plea for the Rhino is that more sanctuaries should be made wherever it is found. This total protection for a number of years and I especially ask the Rulers of Indian States to afford the same protection or, at least, to use some discretion in their shikar.

I should say the smaller Rhino is found, in greatest numbers, in Hill Tipperah, the foot-hills of Lushai and of Sylhet, but as many of the tracts of the latter are being opened up as tea gardens by settlers (tea garden coolies), this animal is disappearing.

The Rhino is not an aggressive animal except under special circumstances and owing to its extreme shyness it does not raid crops like the elephant.

Let us hope that the race will multiply and flourish and, after the lapse of years, will afford excitement and sport to the coming sportsmen. As a result of the formation of the Kaziranga Reserve, a forest officer who visited it before I left India, computed the number of Rhino there as 32 or 33 head. As regards Sanctuaries I suggest that regular, judicious firing of portions should be carried out, this would prevent Rhino wandering into unreserved jungles for the sake of the young "null and ekra" shoots and grass which sprout up. Firing also benefits by destroying ticks, mosquitoes, snakes etc.

I know one sportsman who always fired the jungle in proximity to a reserve and then went round it getting his Rhino without difficulty.

In conclusion I offer this advice to my fellow sportsmen who wish to hunt the Rhino on foot. Use a .461 H. V. rifle as the .450 is not allowed in India and use soft nose bullets, not solid, as the range is very close. I lost a number by using the latter.

Cortina, Italy.

1st February,

H. S. Wood,
Col. I. M. S. (retired)

TIGER EMASCULATING A BUFFALO.

While staying with my friend Mr. O'Donel, in the Duars, khubber was brought to us that a three-quarter grown buffalo had been attacked, but not killed, by a