THE BLACK RHINO OF THE LADO

SOME INTERESTING NOTES CONCERNING ITS LIFE HISTORY AND HOW IT DIFFERS FROM ITS COUNTERPART OF THE AFRICAN WILDS, THE WHITE SPECIES

By Major C. H. STIGAND

THE black rhino, unlike the white, is widely distributed over Africa. It used to be common in South Africa but is now scarce south of the Zambezi river. North of that river it is plentiful in such parts of northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Portuguese territory as are thinly populated, but it does not like the neighborhood of man. Owing to the thickness of the bush country it inhabits, and consequently the difficulty in locating it, the rhino appears to be less common than it actually is.

British East Africa and part of what was until recently German East Africa are par excellence the country for rhino. These countries have been lately so much settled over that the game has been thinned off in most of the healthy uplands but rhino still occur in numbers in the thicker and more unfertile and unhealthy parts. They are found in the Sudan and Ugauay on the east side of the Nile, from the Sudd region southwards, but do not appear on the west bank where the white rhino take their place.

In Somaliland it is only when one reaches as far south as the Webbe Shebeli that this pachyderm is met with. It does not occur in the highlands of Abyssinia but is found in the thorny bush country which lies below the upland plateaux.

Its chief food is the leaves of thorn trees of the acacia type, although it does graze on other plants. Therefore it is generally met with in the hot and rather sterile areas which favor the growth of such trees, although it usually keeps to the thick bush it is also seen in the open plain and desert. Especially is this so in East Africa where rhino can be recognized miles away, as dark patches moving across the vast, open prairies called the Athi and Kapiti plains and in the northern desert regions on the Abyssinian border.

A casual observer, seeing them in such spots and furthermore noticing them grazing and, if near enough, seeing their jaws actually moving, would be willing to stake his all that they were feeding on grass, like the other game of the plains around them, but he would lose his money. If one looks closely at the place in which a rhino has been grazing one finds a number of tiny thorn shoots and it is these it has really been eating.

On being disturbed the rhino will generally gallop off but does not always go in the opposite direction to the threatened danger. In rhino-infested country one is constantly being scared by animals

MAJOR STIGAND is one of the most noted of recent African big game hunters and explorers, and he is also a field naturalist of unusual powers. His studies of the tracks of animals have been almost unique. The only studies approaching them are those about the tracks of game of continental Europe, in the hunting books of the seventeenth century. He has the keenest appreciation of the vivid and extraordinary beauty of the teeming African wild life and has made close first-hand observations of the life histories of very many species of big game.—[Theodore Roosevelt in foreword to Major Stigand's book, "Hunting the Elephant in Africa."]

dashing past too close to be pleasant. I remember an occasion on which one came up from behind my caravan and careered up our path from rear to front. Every porter had to throw down his load and skip out of the way until finally I myself, marching in a dignified way at the head of the procession, looked round at the scene of commotion just in time to make a bolt for it. It appears to me that the rhino, before lying down, maps out its line of retreat and charges off in this predetermined direction quite regardless of whether it is towards or away from the threatened danger. It is this habit which makes him so often come to close quarters with the hunter, or blunder through a caravan of porters. Of course they will also charge with every intent to do injury, generally following up the wind or, occasionally, charging for the sound of a rifle. When the animal really means business it will, instead of thundering past, turn quickly when it finds that it has missed its objective, or when it gets a new indication of direction from sound, or scent. Being very short-sighted it has to come very close before it can charge on sight. It is astonishing how quickly this ponderous beast can wheel round on such occasions and also, when disturbed whilst lying down, how it can spring up and break straight into a gallop—apparently requiring no time to get up steam. The pace at which elephant and rhino move appears much greater than it really is; a good runner could probably outdistance them, or be able to dodge them, on a racing track but one does not keep them on such favorable ground. One meets them in thick grass and bush, through which one can only force a way with difficulty, whilst under foot are roots, stones and ant-bear holes. When one tries to run races with them under such conditions one always loses, unless one has sufficient start to get out of the wind before one is sighted.

MANY years ago, in Nyasaland, whilst following an elephant path through thick country, I cut the fresh spoor of two rhino who had crossed the track and were lying down, unknown to me, thirty yards, or so, away. On getting my wind they both came for me. Owing to the thickness of the grass I could not see them until they were but a few yards distant. I then fired in the face of one of them and jumped aside to try to dodge the second. This one whipped round, as quick as lightning, kicked me over and then tossed me high in the air, ripping a large gash in my chest with its horn. I reached the ground just in time to get a glimpse of its hind quarters as it was rushing away. Probably the one I fired at had retired on receiving a bullet in its head and the other, finding its companion gone, had hastened to follow it, instead of waiting to finish me off.

Some people think it particularly low down for the rhino, and other dangerous game, to molest the innocent hunter in this way without provocation. They condemn them as 'savage' and 'ferocious' beasts not worth a moment's consideration and only fit to be exterminated. Such an attitude is unjust—worse still it is lacking in a sense of humor. Firstly one never knows if the animal was really unprovoked. It may have been shot at by some other sportsman and be unable to discriminate between the scent of the hunter who has already wounded it and the hunter who has not yet done so. Again it may consider the hunter's presence in its particular haunt is, of itself, a declaration of war. The hunter spends his life in stalking game, trying to come on them unawares and then attempts to murder them with a weapon calculated to kill them before they have a chance to retaliate. When the quarry steals a march on the hunter and catches him first it is ridiculous to consider that there is anything unfair, or unsporting, in its behavior. The Mohammedan does not consider it lawful to eat the flesh of an animal which has not been killed by a co-religionist in the authorized way—by

cutting its throat. So when, with moslem followers, one shoots anything, someone generally rushes forward with a knife to kill the animal before it is quite dead. When one shoots a rhino, however, no gallant man rushes forward to perform this rite whilst the animal is still kicking. Either the throat is cut after death, or it is not cut at all. In the latter event they eat the meat all the same saying that the rule does not apply, as the rhino has no neck to speak of.

ONCE, whilst marching some distance ahead of my caravan, I shot one of these animals. After ascertaining that it was quite dead I went up to it, caught hold of its horn and then called to my men to come and finish it. Some of them, seeing me close to the body, came up with knives prepared to go through the farce of cutting the animal's throat and pretending that it was still alive. As they came near I jerked the head up and let it fall back on the ground calling out "Hurry up, I can't hold him much longer." Whereupon they retired hastily.

The anterior horn is curved backwards and is much longer than the posterior. I have, however, seen a rhino on which the back horn stood some inches higher than the front and must have been about twenty inches—a most unusual length. The horns of the female are much more slender than those of the male and sometimes attain great length, although more often this slender horn gets broken—it then wears down into a short and stumpy one giving little indication of having been once much longer. The broken part of the horn is gradually worn into a point, sometimes by being systematically ground on a stone.

The rhino has on each foot three toes, each provided with a hoof, or broad nail, which cuts into the surface of the ground and makes the spoor very distinctive. The middle toe faces forward and the side toes outward. The whole spoor looks like the outline of the top of a man's head with large ears on each side. The track of the hind foot is, like that of nearly all animals, narrower than the fore. The spoor is much the same size as that of a hippo but cannot be confused with it as the latter has pointed toe nails.

Some African natives are wonderful at tracking and bushcraft in their own particular localities but, as their skill is the result of instinct rather than conscious thought and effort, they are quite hopeless if taken out of the country they know. In Uganda proper, that is the part of the Uganda protectorate in which the Baganda live, there are no rhino. I took

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ROOSEVELT AS A STUDENT OF BIRDS

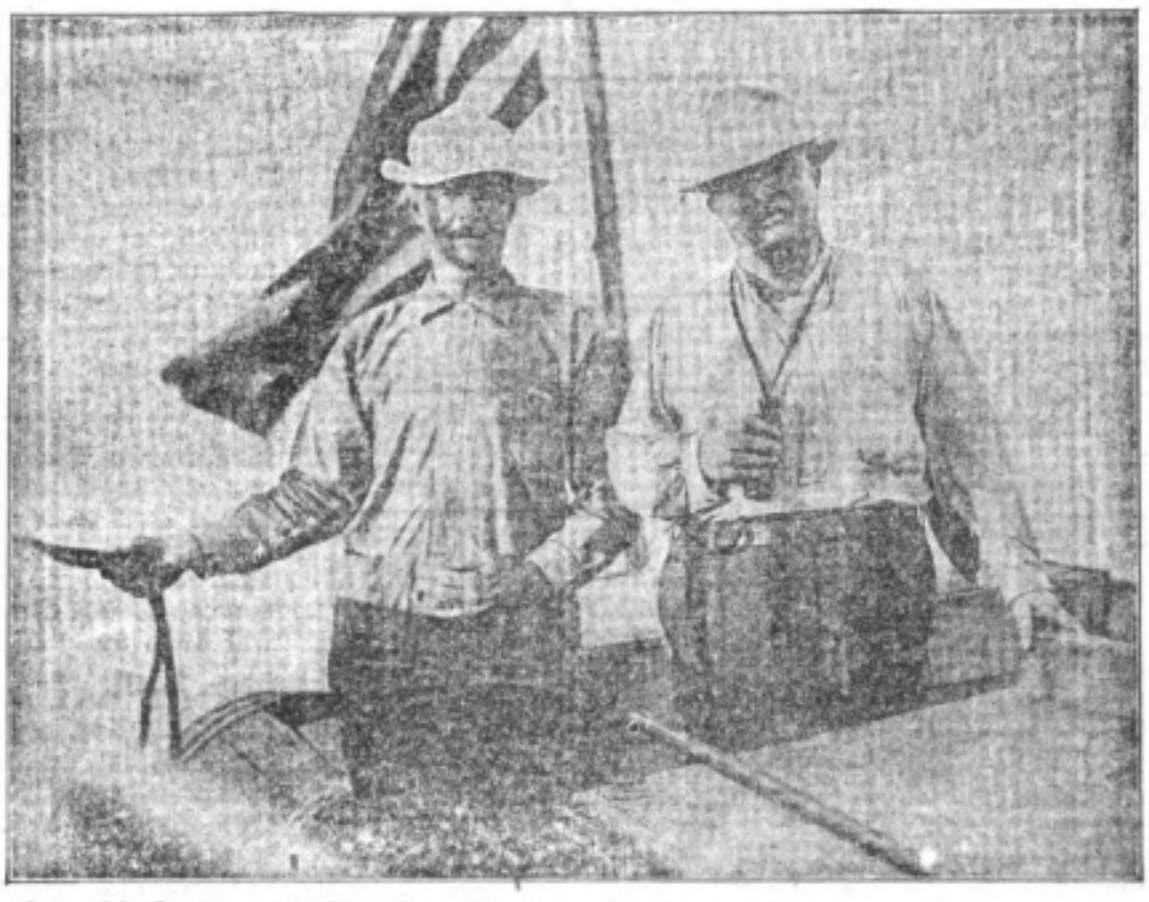
FEW MEN HAVE POSSESSED HIS BREADTH OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE HABITS CHARACTERISTICS AND LIFE HISTORIES OF OUR MANY FEATHERED FRIENDS

By JOHN M. PARKER

THEODORE ROOSEVELT was, and had been from early boyhood, a close student of bird life. He was an indefatigable reader of books about birds, and what he thus learned he verified and supplemented by personal observation. He was amazingly well-posted as to their life habits, the manner of their nesting, the forms of the nests and the way the feathered creatures reared their young. Few men I have ever met have had his breadth of knowledge of the habits and characteristics of birds, and he never lost an opportunity of adding to that knowledge, carefully jotting down in a memorandum book for future reference any details which interested him.

On one of the numerous occasions when it was my privilege to have him for a guest we were making a camping trip along the Gulf Coast of Mississippi andLouisiana. Here there was a wealth of bird-life which offered to the Colonel free scope for his hobby and kept him as delighted as a boy with a new toy. I remember well his tremendous enthusiasm over what was, in truth, a remarkable sight—a colony of Royal Terns we encountered one day which must have embraced, I should say, as many as 100,000 nests. Some of the small islands or shell-keys were so thickly covered with bird nests that it was a difficult matter to walk without stepping on them. Yet in spite of the vast number of these birds, each old one seemed able to instantly identify not only its nest, but its young birds.

All of this section is now under Government protection, and about the middle of June, either late in the evening or early in the morning, one may see the air filled with the white-winged gulls feeding their young on minnows, and even more wonderful, during the heat of the day see some of these small islands, looking at a distance like a white sheet, since, when the birds are young, the old ones stand over them with outspread wings to protect them both from the sun and the rain.



John M. Parker and Theodore Roosevelt on their way to the bird sanctuaries

VERY early one morning we were walking over the divided end of the Chandaleur Islands, and the Colonel stopped suddenly and said, "By Jove! What is this?"

Captain Spreckle, the warden of the bird islands, told us they were two coon traps. A very large coon had been caught by its foreleg in the trap and had chewed the leg off in order to escape. In the other trap a second large coon had been caught and had chewed its hind leg off in order to escape from the trap. The Captain told us that these two coons were the only ones left on the island, and while their tracks were very plainly visible, the keepers had never been able to retrap them or get a chance to shoot them before they slipped into the marsh grass and brush which surrounded the place. He was very proud of the fact that they had succeeded almost completely in freeing the island of one of the worst pests for

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"No, tank yo Cap'n," said Sam, "haint got time; got to mek c'nection wid de State Road. Yah! Yah!"

Sam passed on and was soon out of sight around one of the many bends of the river and railroad. When at last we arrived at Kingston Sam was standing on the edge of the platform and shouted:

"I dun tol' yo, Cap'n; if de State Road wuz on time yo'd bin leff, shuah. Yah! Yah! Yah!"

I arrived in Atlanta that night, and the next morning I started north for Baltimore through the valleys of East Tennessee and Virginia. Late in the afternoon our engine broke down beyond the possibility of immediate repair. There was no prospect of pursuing our journey until the arrival of the train next morning, so we were compelled to make the best of it, and best it proved. The accident happened near a small station known as Max Meadows, where there was a freight depot.

In the meantime the people of the neighborhood became aware of our plight, and with characteristic southern hospitality resolved to make our forced stay as pleasant as possible. The word having gone out, the farmers and their wives and daughters came riding or walking to the station from several miles around. They brought with them cooked provisions, bread, rolls, cakes, butter and milk. The ladies soon had pots of steaming coffee and tea on the station stove. A long table was improvised which was soon filled with a really tempting supper, of which we all partook liberally.

After supper and when everything was cleared away and packed up, some negro fiddlers were requisitioned and the floor was cleared for dancing. Everyone entered into the spirit of the occasion, and we danced until broad daylight, and only gave up the merry rout when the whistle of the approaching train was heard. Then the aged preacher of the neighborhood, who had been very active in promoting good humor during the evening, offered up a prayer of good will for all, and closed by saying: "Inasmich as ye did it unto one of these, ye have done it unto me."

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a party of Baganda porters over the Nile and into the Congo where we met many rhino and saw their tracks everywhere. We were there a couple of months but none of the porters ever learnt to distinguish either the animal itself, or its spoor, but always reported them as elephant.

SOME of the rhino found in East Africa have on their flanks deep grooves alternating with ridges. There is a good specimen of this kind now in the London Zoological Gardens. At first sight it appears as if the animal is emaciated and that his ribs are sticking through his hide. In point of fact these hard ridges are not immediately over the

ribs but run at an angle to them; yet each one is as hard and stiff as if it were actually encasing a bit of bone. As far as is known at present this is peculiar to animals found in one particular part of British East Africa.

In spite of their thick skins rhino often suffer from terrible gashes and wounds. The former are probably rips from the horns of their kind, made whilst fighting. The wounds and sores which are nearly always found, especially on the softer underside, are probably due to numerous tick bites and the birds pecking and tearing them out. I once met a rhino that had a gash extending almost from the spine to the belly—nearly half the circumference of the animal. It is difficult to imagine how it could have got such a gash as this, even from the most vicious rip of a horn.

Numbers of scarab beetles are found in rhino country and when one is killed and the intestines cut out one generally hears the booming of large scarabs, doubtless attracted by smell, approaching in quantities. They alight near the body and immediately busy themselves making up and rolling away balls of dung. There are an immense variety of these with different numbers and shapes of horns, or with crowns, or crests, of spikes. There is one particular beetle which has a horn which is a miniature facsimile of the anterior horn of the rhino itself.

ROOSEVELT AS A STUDENT OF BIRDS

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interferring with bird-life of various kinds.

On this same morning, as we walked up to one of the sections of the island, that was more or less covered with sand and grasses, I turned to the Colonel and told him to follow us. We went some 30 or 40 yards away, where we told him to get busy digging. He looked up with a quizzical expression and said that of course he was soldier enough to obey orders immediately, although he didn't know what we were after. Still he would do his best. It was a rather comical sight to see him digging away in the sand with both hands, and after he had gone down some distance, to see his arm slip into a cavity and see him open up a turtle's nest with eighty-four fresh turtle eggs which came as a real delicacy for our table.

The large green sea-turtle nests on these islands and is very careful to smooth over the sand and to eliminate, as far as possible, all of its tracks in order to prevent discovery of its nest, but in place after place, we found where the same old coons to which I referred before, had discovered and robbed the turtle nests, as well as the bird nests.

ON three different occasions, we saw some birds which some of us were unable to identify promptly, and in one instance, a pair of birds which one of us had never seen before. The Colonel immediately reached into his pocket, got out his memorandum book, noted the circumstances and the varieties of the birds, but