

*As Different as*

# BLACK AND WHITE

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**T**HERE WERE THREE of them and three of us, but the advantage was irrefutably theirs. Jack Selsor, Driver Ozzie Shutte and I had a combined weight of approximately 530 pounds; theirs came nearer ten tons. We stood six feet tall and so did they, but *they* were twelve feet long! They were in fact representatives of the third largest of all land mammals being exceeded in bulk (and power) by only the two surviving species of elephant.

Under any conditions, the White Rhinoceros is an awesome beast, but when multiplied by three and viewed from a distance of eighty feet the effect is that of an advancing enemy tank battalion. The intervening terrain did nothing to add to our peace of mind — it was table-top flat, absolutely treeless, and its veneer of dried, golden grass offered no suggestion of a suitable hiding place. However, I found some small comfort in recalling the remarks of Herbert Lang, wildlife photographer and authority on African game: "The Black Rhino can be and often is a highly dangerous animal, but the White Rhino is about as worrisome as a domestic cow."

It began to look as if Mr. Lang's assessment had been correct. The three White Rhinos, facing us and moving slowly ahead, were quite aware of our presence, yet not sufficiently concerned about it to pause in their foraging. Under similar circumstances three Black Rhinos would have succumbed to a state of utter hysteria resulting in either a snorting, stomping, headlong charge or a frantic retreat. The White Rhinos did neither; they merely chomped on tufts of grass and slowly walked towards us while we cautiously backed away. No matter how peaceable their intentions were, eighty feet was close enough.

Their remarkable disregard for a potentially dangerous proximity to mankind offered the key

to the present rarity of their species. Once abundant and widespread in various African areas, the mild-mannered and pathetically trusting White Rhinoceros was almost exterminated soon after Europeans invaded its domain. In the middle 1800's, enormous numbers of White Rhinos inhabited portions of South and Central Africa. By 1900, they verged on extinction. Now they exist in only two small and widely separated spots: one area on the Sudan frontier and another 2500 miles to the south in Zululand. That the species is now on the increase, at least in South Africa — in fact, that it survives at all — is due to stringent and effective conservation measures maintained in both remaining fragments of its former range.

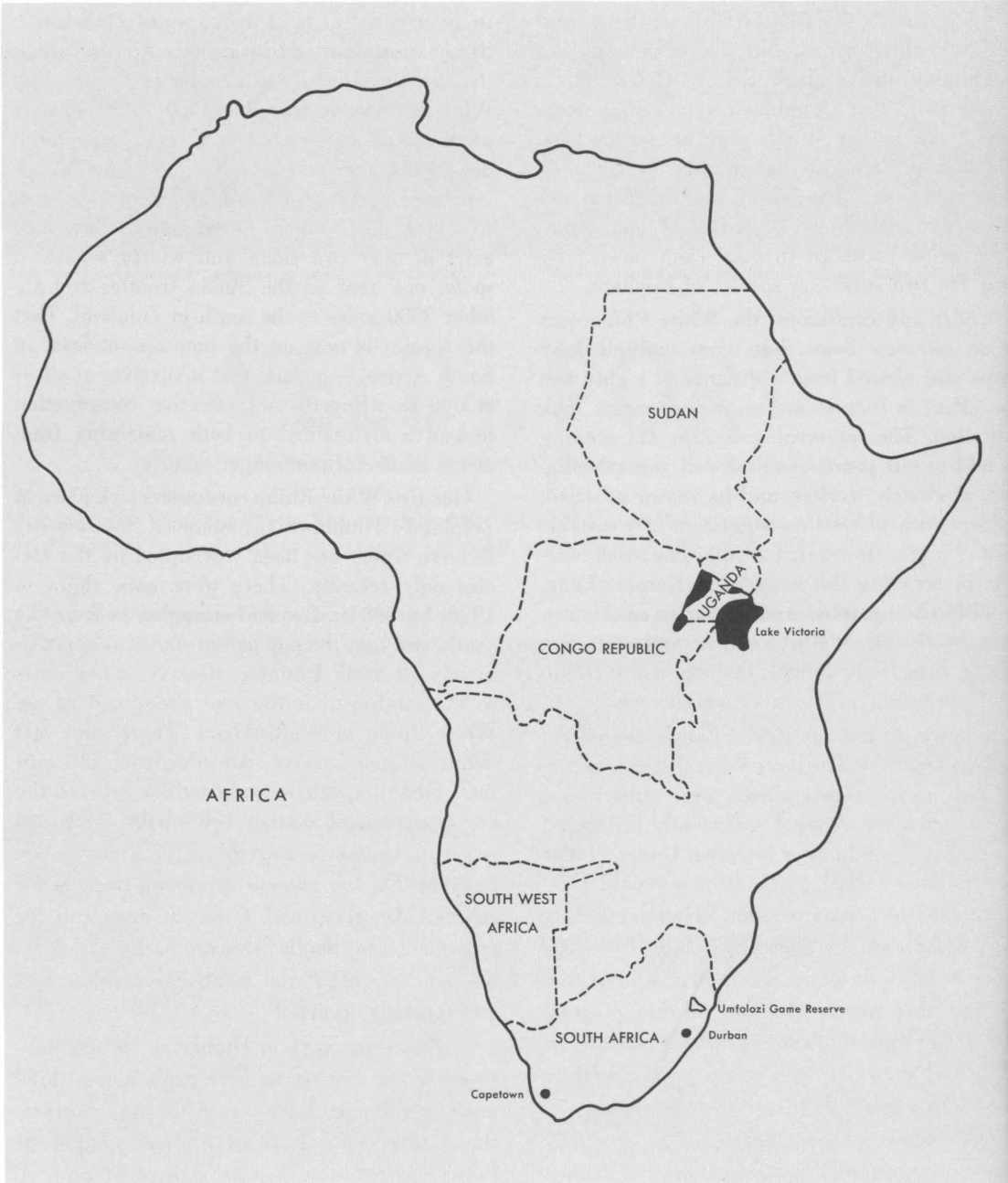
Our first White Rhino encounters took place in Zululand's Hluhluwe (pronounced Sha-slew-ee) Reserve which has been reoccupied by the species only recently. There were none there in 1920, by 1933 a few had straggled in from the south, and now the population stands at approximately 40 head. Umfolozi Reserve, a few miles to the southwest, is the real stronghold of the White Rhino in South Africa. There some 300 White Rhinos survive. An additional 110 animals inhabit a state-owned corridor between the two reserves and another 150 inhabit lands just south of Umfolozi. It is from the area outside reserves that the animals are being trapped for selected American and European zoos and for transplants to South African parks (such as Kruger National Park) in areas where the species formerly occurred.

During three days in Hluhluwe, we saw only seven White Rhinos, and we came across three more in the corridor between the two reserves. But a three-hour drive in Umfolozi netted 40 examples, including a grazing herd of nine. A

serene disposition may account in part for the fact that White Rhinos are more gregarious than their ill-tempered Black cousins.

Umfolozi is far better suited for White Rhinos than is Hluhluwe, since the former area consists of low rolling hills and valleys covered with sparse thorn forests and rich grasslands. White Rhinos are entirely grazing animals; thus, most of Umfolozi's grassy terrain is well equipped to

supply their dietary demands. Hluhluwe, on the other hand is mainly mountainous and heavily forested, with only limited areas of the savanna and open bush that White Rhinos prefer. Unlike Umfolozi, Hluhluwe contains a fair number of Black Rhinos whose browsing habits are catered to by an infinite variety of leaf-bearing plants. Since the two species of rhino prefer different habitats and there is no conflict of feeding re-





Left: The White Rhino survives only in Uganda, Sudan and the Congo in the north, and in South Africa. Our animals, representing the southern race, came from the Umfolozi Game Reserve area in Zululand.

Above: Not only is the White Rhino the largest member of its family, it also is the third largest land mammal. Only the two surviving species of elephants exceed it in size.

Photo courtesy South African Tourist Corp.





A White Rhino, after being tranquilized with a dart from a gun, is docile enough to be lead into a crate.

quirements, there is little occasion for friction. But when disagreements do arise, the smaller, more piglike Black Rhinoceros comes out the winner. One authority maintains that it takes two White Rhinos to whip a Black, despite the size difference. Apparently, an ugly disposition has its compensations. By all odds, the Black Rhino should be easily routed by the larger species; not only does the White measure a foot higher and two feet longer, but the length of its horns is considerably greater. The front horn (usually the longer of the two) of a Black Rhino seldom exceeds two feet, whereas a front horn of 35 to 40 inches is not at all uncommon in Whites, and there is a record of 62¼ inches.

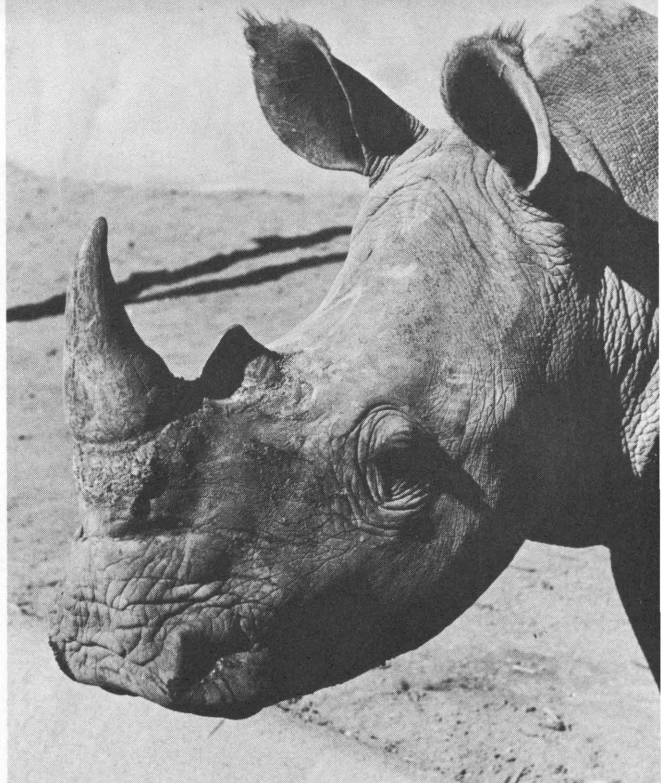
Easily distinguishable in the field, the White Rhino is less compactly built than the smaller

species and boasts a distinctive and prominent fleshy hump on the nape. Its head, proportionately long, ends in a square, broad mouth ideally equipped to shear away large mouthfuls of grass, in contrast to the hook, or prehensile, lips of the Black, employed like sensitive fingers to pluck the leaves upon which the latter species feeds. The difference in color between the two rhinos, is not as great as their names would indicate — neither is black nor white, but both are shades of gray, that of the White being slightly paler. The origin of their common names remains in question, and some zoologists have suggested that the two be referred to as Square-lipped and Hook-lipped; but to the average rhinocrophile they remain White and Black, and perhaps it is just as well to let it go at that.



Photo courtesy South African Tourist Corp.

They are as different as two members of the same mammalian family could possibly be. This statement might be applied just as appropriately to either species of surviving African rhinoceros and any of the three rapidly vanishing species of Asiatic rhino. As tag ends of evolutionary lines in a family that reached its zenith in pre-historic days, modern-day rhinos differ strikingly from one another in overall dimensions, body conformation, skin texture, number and size of horns, hair development (or lack of it), feeding habits, habitat preferences, and most assuredly in disposition and behavior. Certainly, the two African species, no matter what their color, are as different as black and white.



Tombasan is a young and immature White Rhino. This species is distinguished by an elongated head, square muzzle and a fleshy hump on the neck. All these features are apparent in our young animals.

Barney displays the prehensile hooked lip characteristic of the African Black Rhino, the most common species in captivity. He is approximately thirteen years old and has been a Zoo resident since July, 1953, when he joined his mate Sally, who came the year before.

