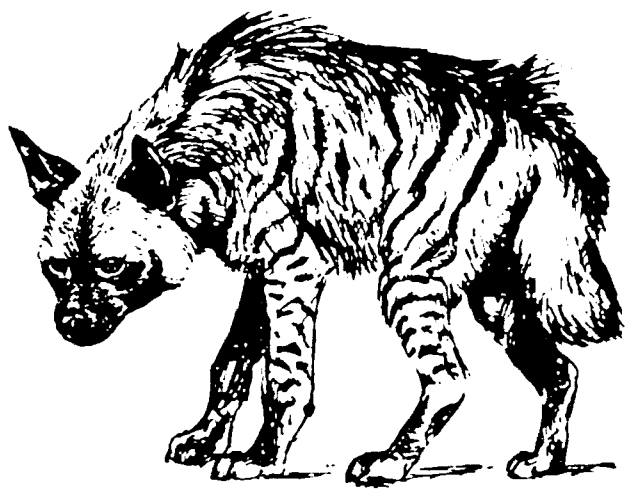


ANIMALS OF EAST AFRICA

Written & Illustrated by

C. T. ASTLEY MABERLY



STRIPED HYENA

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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by C. T. Astley Maberley

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THE BLACK RHINOCEROS

Diceros bicornis bicornis (Linnaeus)

(Kiswahili : *Faru*)

Descriptive Notes.—*Shoulder height* from 5 feet 6 inches to 5 feet 9 inches in bulls. Females up to 4 feet 10 inches. *Weight* about two tons. *Length*, about 11 feet from tip of snout to base of tail. *Circumference round belly* about 10 feet.

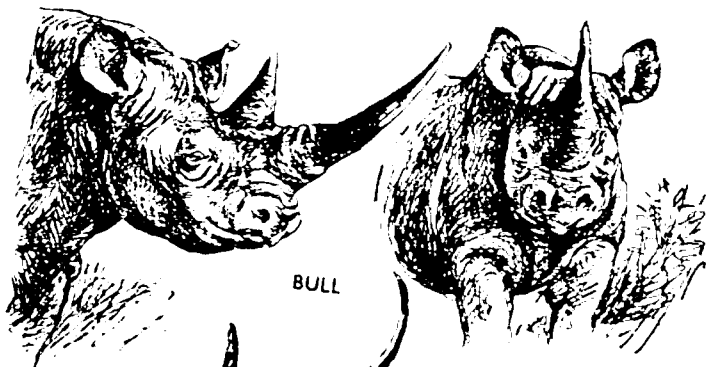
The two horns (not really horn at all, but composed of *closely-packed hair-like fibre growing from the skin*, resting in a slightly hollowed base on the skull, from which they can be detached) are normally present in both sexes. The front horn rises above the nostrils, the rear one almost over the eyes. Occasionally the rear horn is as long as, or even longer than, the front horn.

Front horns have measured up to 43 inches, rear horns up to 21 inches. The majority of front horns in East Africa are probably under twenty inches, but the horns are said to grow longer in the forest-haunting rhino than in those of the dry, thorny plains. The celebrated "Gladys" and "Gertie" (believed to be mother and daughter) of Amboseli have exceptionally long and projecting front horns, and that of Gertie is estimated as possibly reaching four feet.

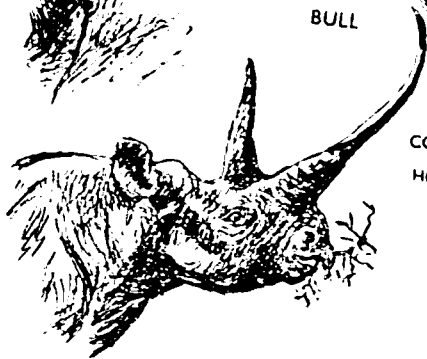
Upper lip rather pointed and prehensile, as the beast is a browser. Feet relatively small and compact, having three toes on each foot: the central one broad and the lateral ones smaller—producing a characteristic track like the Ace of Clubs! Tail moderately long and scantily tufted at tip.

Distribution.—Uncommon and rarely seen in Nairobi National Park; though 5 are at present recorded in the thicker forested area, whence they only emerge at night, and so are occasionally seen only by lucky visitors in the very

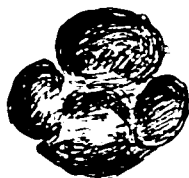
BLACK RHINOCEROS



BULL



COW WITH EXCEPTIONAL
HORNS



early mornings. Rhino appear up to 11,000 feet in the Mount Kenya N.P. and can be seen at "Treetops." They are plentiful in both east and west sections of the Tsavo N.P.; in Marsabit, N.R.; and in Mara, N.R. The real "Show-place" for Rhino in Kenya, however, is the Ol Tukai area of Amboseli National Reserve. Here, as many as seventeen of these beasts have been seen by fortunate visitors "before breakfast," and remarkably fine views of them can be obtained in the vast stretches of open, dusty country, varied with groves of beautiful yellow-stemmed Acacia forest, with a background dominated by glorious snow-capped Kilimanjaro.

Habits.—The black rhinoceros is essentially a browser off thorny twigs and shoots, though it may occasionally eat certain grasses. For this reason its upper lip projects, and is somewhat prehensile, to enable it to grasp foliage. It is found in a greater variety of country, and has always had a wider distribution in Africa, than its larger square-mouthed cousin—the White rhinoceros. In colour both species actually are similar—a dull grey, though as they both like to roll and wallow in muddy pools or swamps, their hides take on the colour of the local soil.

The black rhino feeds mainly by night and in the early mornings and late afternoons, spending the heat of the day resting in the shade, often lying down on haunches or flanks like an enormous pig. It is always accompanied by its faithful guardians—the "Tick" birds (*Buphagus*) which incessantly cling to, or clamber about, its huge frame, eagerly extracting the ticks with which the rhino are burdened. At the first cause of alarm, these birds fly up with chirring cries, and the slumbering, dozing, or feeding rhino is instantly on the alert. Its eyesight is exceedingly poor (it probably cannot distinguish a motionless object beyond fifteen yards), but hearing, and especially scent, are good. When suspicious, it will stand perfectly still, ears cocked and grotesque head raised, nostrils widely dilated as it searches the wind. If its fears are confirmed, it will either utter a few penetratingly loud, blast-like snorts, loop its tail over its rump, and trot away at a slinging, rather zigzag, pace through the scrub until it finally wheels round to stare and snort once more; or it may elect to lower its massive head and come at a lumbering

gallop straight for the cause of its alarm : such "charges" in the majority of cases being merely impulsive and confused rather than deliberately aggressive. Provided there is time, they can usually be dodged! Nevertheless, although they are becoming used to traffic at Amboseli and the more popular areas of Tsavo, the Director of National Parks cautions that rhino should never be trusted, and should be given a reasonably wide berth.

The black rhino is an odd mixture of inquisitiveness, stupidity and nervous irritability; and there is little doubt that its poor eyesight contributes to the latter (although the equally "blind" white rhino is lethargic and placid). It has been known to charge an oncoming train, twice in succession—in each case coming off second best at the encounter : and a cow rhino, accompanied by her calf, twice charged the carcass of a dead elephant which lay in her path, before finally ambling disgruntledly away!

The rhinos at Amboseli were remarkably good-tempered and tolerant when we visited them, even though the warden permitted us some very close views from his jeep. It is generally agreed that black rhino often differ temperamentally in different areas—this no doubt being due to the degree of relative peace or persecution they suffer in their neighbourhood. Thus, in the northern area of the Tsavo Park the rhino are very aggressive owing to constant persecution from native poachers until recently. For this reason, that area of the Park is at present closed to the public. An example of a really "bad" rhino comes from Ngong National Reserve, where, in 1955, a bad-tempered bull rhino had to be shot after he had caught four Masai in succession. His custom was to wait near a cattle track leading through broken country to the Ole Debesse wells, and to charge any cattle or herdsmen that passed that way.

Rhino usually drink at night, sometimes travelling long distances to water. They are noisy, and very quarrelsome, when they sometimes gather at a solitary waterhole : chasing one another about and scrapping over "water rights." On such occasions they produce some extraordinary noises—ranging from deep, hippo-like grunts or short roars to high-pitched squeals of indignation, and of course the usual snorts.

The usual gait is a fairly fast walk, head lower than

shoulders but held almost horizontally. This is varied with a shambling, rather bouncing trot : and in extreme alarm, or when charging, it is increased to a gallop : in the latter case the head is lowered with the front horn projecting horizontally. In attack, an attempt is made to "toss" the victim with the front horn. When alarmed, a rhino runs away with its tail cocked or looped over its rump.

The female always walks or trots ahead of her calf.

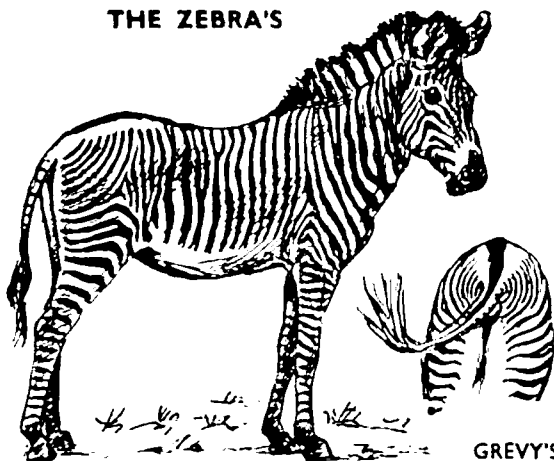
Breeding.—Rhino are slow breeders. Three years are said to elapse between the birth of each calf, and the period of gestation is from 11 to 13 months. Gertie, of Amboseli, produced a calf (known as "Pixie") born with the abnormality of having no external ears.

When standing or feeding in the thick, scrubby stuff often growing round anthills, or in other thickets, rhino are exceedingly hard to spot, and they may easily be passed at quite close quarters by visitors who do not maintain an observant watch.

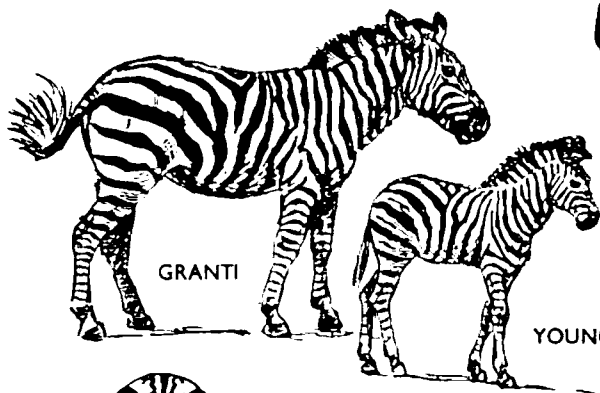
The Rhinoceros is very greatly persecuted by native poachers for the sake of its horns, which, in powdered form, are in great demand in certain oriental countries for believed "Aphrodisiac" properties. Unscrupulous traders at the coast will obtain as much as 80/- per lb. for this commodity, consequently the poaching "racket" is a severe one in Africa : and the use of the poisoned arrow a deadly threat to the continued survival of the Rhinoceros except in the most carefully guarded National Parks and National Reserves.

A curious habit of the Black Rhinoceros is that of repairing regularly to selected places in which to deposit its dung : heaps of which accumulate at such points. After voiding, the dung is often kicked and scattered about with the hind feet, and sometimes rootled about with the front horn.

THE ZEBRA'S



GREVY'S ZEBRA



GRANTI

YOUNG BOHMI



EAST AFRICAN
BURCHELL'S ZEBRA

Plam
/ 58.