

NOTE ON THE RHINOCEROS CAPTURED DURING LAST OCTOBER FOR THE AMERICAN ZOO

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It is believed that there are about a hundred rhinoceroses living at present in the Kaziranga Game Sanctuary, an area of about 165 square miles, stretching between the longitudes 93 degrees, 7' 30" and 93 degrees, 35' to the west and east respectively and the Brahmaputra river and the Mikir Hills to the north and south respectively. The captured rhino was one of those living in the Sanctuary though actually caught just outside it.

The last flood of the Brahmaputra during July was a record one within memory and good many rhinoceroses, not to speak of other animals, swam across to the Mikir Hills in search of land and safety. Most of the rhinoceroses went back to the Sanctuary after the flood had receded but the one captured never returned and made the Mikir Hills its home since it found itself in them after a long and hard swim in the afternoon of the 25th of July 1938.

Officiating Forester Basanta Kumar Baruah found it on that day near Sildubi (26 degrees, 35' latitude by 93 degrees, 20' longitude), a village on the Trunk road which, at that point, skirts the Mikir Hills. The Forester and the villagers watched it for about an hour as it stood almost motionless due to exhaustion. As there were no ropes near at hand, the Forester could not do anything to capture it then and there. The writer of this note accidentally arrived there the same day at sunset but by then the animal had gone a long distance into hills and nothing more could be done. An attempt was made the next day to track it down but without success. Another attempt was made on 8th August 1938 with the same result. On 13th October 1938 while the writer was making personal enquiries regarding damage done by rhinoceroses to the villagers' crops, he was informed that the young rhino was coming out every night to the villagers' paddy fields near Sildubi. Deputy Ranger Govinda Chandra Thakuria was sent ahead to find out the track, or tracks, by which it used to come out and return. He found out the tracks, of which one was found to be suitable. He was instructed to dig a pit on this track and two or three more pits on other tracks,

if found suitable, as early as possible. Three pits were dug on the 16th. Each was 9 feet long along the track by 3 feet by $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep and the walls were protected by bamboo pallisade work as the soil was sandy. The pits, normally, ought to have been 6 feet deep but as the animal aimed at appeared to be young and no other animals were near-by they were made only $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep. The country being low, the water level also limited the depth. The mouth of the pit was covered up with grass and made to appear as nearly as possible like the rest of the track. As there is a belief among the local people that a rhino can scent newly dug out earth from a considerable distance, it was deposited at a distance of about a hundred feet from the pit.

As nothing further was heard, the writer became anxious and came to the place on 20th October 1938 to see if anything was wrong. He did not have to reach the place before hearing where the mistake lay, for he was informed on the way that the young rhino had fallen into the first pit the previous night and had scrambled out before dawn. On enquiry in the village it was found that the rhino had come out just at dawn to a paddy field the same morning. It also became apparent that it had not gone back to the Sanctuary which is across a small stream. So the Deputy Ranger was instructed to increase the depth of the remaining two pits to 6 feet and to dig two more pits in suitable places.

Nothing was heard up to the 25th and the writer made up his mind to go and make the attempt personally, camping near the place for some days. On 26th morning it was found out that the rhino never lived in the grass jungle round about the paddy fields during the day contrary to what was believed to be the case and actually was in the habit of coming down to the field for grazing and returning to the hills every night. The previous night's spoor up the hill were followed to a height of about a thousand feet where it was lost among the maze of older tracks made since it came there during the flood. Two suitable tracks were found and a pit was dug on each, by the side of the road where the tracks crossed the road. Forester Abdus Sattar was ordered to camp in the village only a furlong off. Next morning, to the disappointment of all, it was found that the rhino had come very close to one of the newly dug pits, while coming downhill, but had turned back. The worst

suspicion was that it had scented danger and would never come that way again and even worse than that was that it might leave the place for the Sanctuary by some other way. If this had happened the hope of catching a particular rhino out of so many would be nil and the only thing that could have been done was to trap as many rhinos as possible and select the best. The spoors were traced uphill again to the same place where it was lost. After a thorough inspection of the place it appeared that the rhino had not gone away from the locality and it was decided to wait till next morning in order to see if it would come down at all and if so by which way. The Forester was given two Game Watchers, Joygoram Koch and Maniram Ahom and was instructed to watch by night also. The writer himself camped eight miles off at Kaziranga. The hope of catching the rhino appeared to be very lean now. Next morning, *i.e.*, on 28th October 1938, the writer packed up everything for going back to headquarters and came to see what had happened before actually going back. Perhaps the most exciting experience during the whole operation was when, on the way to the place, a man on a bicycle making certain that it was the writer, raised his hand trying to stop him. He rightly guessed what it meant and of course stopping the car was out of the question. Instead the rest of the road, about five miles, was done most probably in as many minutes. The Forester was found near the pit and the two Game Watchers carrying fodder to the pit. What more assurance was necessary? It was about 7 a.m. and the rhino was found lying down at the bottom of the very pit from which it had turned back the night before the last.

Arrangements were immediately made to bring the cage to the spot and to put the animal into it. Thanks to Mr. H. L. Shaw of Methoni, a motor lorry was at once found and the cage arrived at the place in the evening. In the meantime, the rhino was eating fodder supplied and drinking water out of a fire bucket that was lowered into the pit by means of a rope. The cage was brought into line with the pit and a slope was dug from the door of the cage to the bottom of the pit hoping that the animal would run into the cage as soon as the slope was ready for it. It was, of course, made secure by a rope round its neck and by another one round its body and the ropes were tied to trees near-by. When everything was made

ready for the rhino to run into the cage it was found that it would not do anything of the sort. On the contrary it lay down and refused even to get up in spite of pokings from behind. At last it had to be dragged out from the pit into the cage by men. It was very nearly 1 o'clock in the morning by the time the rhino was secured inside the cage. It did not struggle very much inside the cage and fell to eating and drinking as if it were in its normal habitat.

Next morning it was found that there was a wound in its chest which must have been caused by the bamboo pallisades while falling into the pit in the night of 19th October 1938. When the writer wanted to inspect the wound, to the utter surprise of all, it opened out its forelegs to facilitate inspection and treatment. On another occasion it lay on one side and opened out its hind legs, exposing a number of big ticks sticking to the skin in the pits. When these were being removed, satisfaction was apparent in its eyes and it remained in that position until all the ticks were removed.

The cage with the rhino was loaded on a motor lorry next day. It struggled to get out of the cage during the first ten minutes of its motor ride and then settled down. Though it did not feed while the lorry was actually in motion, it did so as soon as the lorry stopped.

Some delay was caused by the Railway people and the animal was actually despatched from Furkating Junction only in the morning of 2nd November 1938. Forester Abdus Sattar and Game Watcher Joygoram Koch accompanied the animal to Calcutta. Fresh fodder was arranged for on the way and the rhino was washed with cool water twice a day.

KILN-DRYING OF LIGHT HARDWOODS FOR PACKING CASES

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Summary.—Results of an investigation into the kiln-drying of light hardwoods for packing cases carried out at a seasoning installation recently built in Assam are briefly described. The drying time for $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick *tula* (*Tetrameles nudiflora*) shooks was found to be as low as 30 to 36 hours. The cost of kiln-drying for an output of 120 tons of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch shooks per month comes to less than one anna per cubic foot. For heating and power purposes, the waste obtained in the factory is usually sufficient both for the mill and the kiln.