

By T. R. H. Owen

MANY people, but not all, know that the adjectives "white" and "black" which distinguish the two species of African rhinoceros have nothing to do with colour. The former is a corruption of a Boer word, possibly "wetide munde" referring to the wide square lip which is one of the species' most marked physical characteristics. The others are its bigger size: a large white rhino stands over six feet at the shoulder, which is six inches more than the black; the fringed ears; and the different silhouette—the white appears to stand high at the withers, with an immensely heavy, arched neck, and huge head, and is shorter on its legs. It is a bulkier and more pig-like animal altogether.

Distribution in the Sudan is of some interest. The white is entirely confined to certain occasional areas, mostly close to and all within a hundred miles of the West of the White Nile, and South of the Bahr-el-Arab (Lat. 9° 45'). The black rhino during last century was found in Abyssinia and the Northern Sudan tributaries of the Blue Nile. Sir Samuel Baker in the sixties found them on the river Setit (Lat. 14° 20'), and recounts a long and exciting chase on horseback after a pair, which made a two-mile point for a thorn forest and saved their brushes, getting to ground by a narrow margin before the Homman riders who accompanied him could hamstring them.

That is a thing of the past, and the animal is found now only from the latitude of Bor (Lat. 6° 15') Southwards. It was previously believed confined entirely to the East bank of the White Nile, but of that more anon.

If their names bear no relation to the colour of their hide, which in both kinds is a muddy grey that can flash whitish in the sunlight or look opaque black in the shadow, they are more appropriate to the colour of the animals' natures. The white must be almost the least offensive large animal in creation. His sight is extremely bad, worse than the elephant's, and certainly worse than his cousin's. His nose is keen, and though instances have been recorded of his taking little notice of human scent, I have always found that it is the one thing calculated to send him off the map at an uneasy shamble.

He also takes ready warning from the ox-peckers, or tick-birds. They are not found over much of his range, but where they exist they follow him and are remarkably shy, often becoming excited when a human intruder is 50 or 60 yards away and rising and flying before he can close to 40 yards. Unless warned by scent or by birds this rhino can be approached to very close range. When at last aware of the intruder he is likely to turn and lumber off, but I have known him to peer at the strange figure, lift up his head and adjust his pince-nez as it were, peer again, say "No, it can't be," and go on feeding. The Dinka of the Bahr-el-Ghazal give them a wide berth. But then the Dinka, off his own wicket, is not a particularly bold individual. I have met a female with a calf who became somewhat angry, and had to be avoided, but I have yet to hear of an authentic record of the white rhino attacking any human being.

Not so the black rhino. He is black-hearted indeed, a truculent, crusty and often offensive beast, as every East African hunter knows, and though bulky and short-sighted, he is more alert, quicker off the mark and more purposeful than the white.

In a belt of thickish forest near the river Loll (Lat. 9° 0') some 110 miles West of the Nile, a colony

of a score or two rhino live, close to a place called Aweng and another with the cheerful name of Tooray. The area is thickly inhabited by Dinka, and the beasts, presumably white, being so far West of the Nile, seemed to be changing their habits, taking to a life in forest rather than open bush and being extremely dangerous. Not a year went by without Dinka being killed and damaged by them, usually when travelling at night, but sometimes from an unprovoked attack in daylight when passing through thick bush. The rhino had been seen once or twice by British officials, whose visits to the spot are few, but never properly observed.

Some years ago, being then less well acquainted with rhino, I had occasion to go that way and essayed to get a photograph. Their habit is to drink at night and retire to dense thickets at sunrise, so that chances were poor and hunting had to begin in the semi-dark. We located a pair before dawn (they communicate with a hissing, wheezy snort, like a bad tempered steam-engine, which can be heard a long way) but they were moving rapidly and irregularly around feeding. I stuck to one of the pair, the bull, hoping to keep in touch till light became sufficient.

The sun was just on the horizon, but still inadequately bright, when the quarry chanced to perform a semi-circle round a thicket and came back facing us and only 25 yards off. He instantly saw the intruder, strode several paces forward with head raised (in which position his sight serves him best) to get a good view, then without a second's hesitation broke into a lumbering gallop and charged. The head was still held up high, and as I ran sideways to leave the path clear I saw him out of the corner of my eye swerve like an international three-quarter and follow accurately, dropping his head for the strike. It was no blind charge; he meant to have his man. Picador acrobatics when he was within a yard or two avoided the onslaught by a matter of feet and he thundered on into thick cover, but it is not a practice to be recommended or repeated. The attack is purposeful and conducted with head held up for a good view until the last moment.

I had been much too occupied with self-preservation to indulge in scientific observation. A year or two later in 1947, a Danish expedition under Mr. Boje Benson, collecting for Copenhagen museum, shot one of these rhino, which also charged, and to cut the story short, it was found to be a rather small race of the black species, a little pocket of them living unsuspected far West of the river. From further inquiries and one or two horns seen, there is reason to believe that a few specimens range much farther West, along the Bahr-el-Arab and possibly up the Bahr-el-Ghazal tributaries and into French territory, but this still remains to be proved.

The white rhino does not mind rocky, up-and-down country where it exists in such neighbourhoods as Nimule at the boundary of Uganda and the Sudan. But most of the few areas where it is found are flat and are fairly open bush. It is entirely a grass-eater, whereas the black is mainly a browser of bushes. I have watched the latter, however, picking up the pods of acacia, and it is said to be fond of the great bomb-like seed-pods of *Kigelia*, the Sausage Tree, when they fall to earth. The white feeds mainly at night. By day it is drowsy and dopy. Even at seven in the morning I have approached for a photograph and at the critical moment the quarry has sunk incontinently to the ground and gone to sleep. When it rises it does so like the horse, forelegs first, not back-end first like the cow and most ungulates.

The black rhino has a notable habit of keeping several selected spots as latrines and visiting them regularly, often scooping about in the piles of old droppings with his horn or feet. The white also keeps his latrines but they are distinguishable from those of the black. The latter's look more like a lumpy pile of mown grass left by the gardener, while the white leaves well-formed and more scattered droppings with some resemblance to the elephant's. Between the tracks of the two species I doubt if anybody could discern, except that the white's is apt to be larger. Both are neat and rather like the ace of clubs.



A WHITE RHINO ADVANCES QUIETLY LOOKING HUMAN. HE IS "ALMOST THE

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The white, though scarcely to be called gregarious, seems to cling constantly to a few unextensive and defined areas and to colonise them fairly thoroughly. Why it should confine itself to these circumscribed colonies, which in character, vegetation and degree of seclusion are indistinguishable from vast surrounding tracts, is not obvious. It is possible that certain species of the *Hyparrenia* grass, which is the prevailing genus in the area, are more suited to it than others, and that it stays where these are concentrated, but I am not convinced of this.

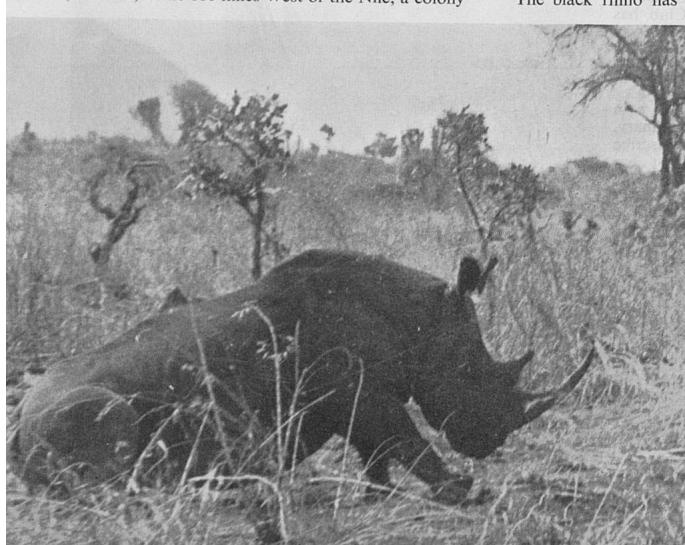
There are about six such localities in the Bahr-el-Ghazal, and perhaps Upper Nile, provinces, and the species is then strung out, close to the Nile, as far as the Uganda border, being commonest in the narrow but lovely corridor of Sudan territory which runs between the river and the Uganda hills for 30 miles North of the Albert Nile.

Reports are sometimes heard of "herds" of white rhino. A merchant near Yei, travelling at night, found his lorry jostled and stuck in a road-block consisting of what he reported to be twenty rhino. Even allowing for the exaggeration that is born of fright and darkness there may have been a gathering of a dozen of the animals. I have not personally seen more than five together, but know of thirteen being seen within a half-mile radius from the top of a tree near Shamba on the Nile.

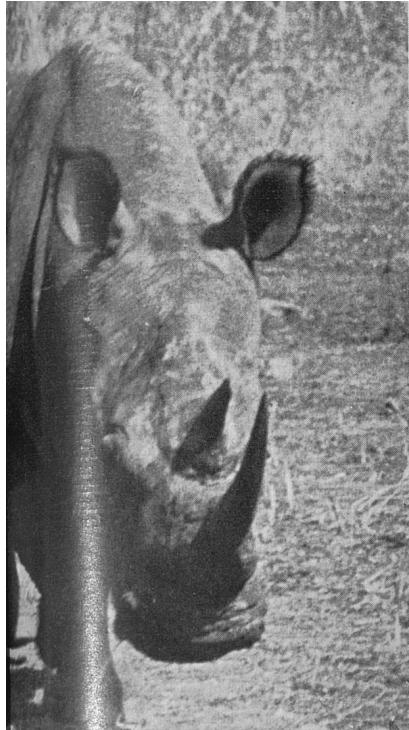
Without protection the inoffensive white rhino, at least, would be liable to extermination. In fact it is rather surprising that he has succeeded in surviving. I doubt whether in the Sudan he is actively persecuted for his horn very much; but rhino horn certainly carries no small value wherever it can be obtained.

The Chinese employment of it as an aphrodisiac is a thing I have not heard of in Africa. But its anti-toxic qualities are widely credited. Kings and viziers of old had rhino-horn cups which would betray any poison placed in the draught by effervescent; and many Arab families (not in my experience negroids) possess an heirloom of a chunk of horn for use against scorpion and snake bite. I have actually seen it given, powdered and in milk, to a man bitten by *Echis Carinatus*, the Saw-scaled Viper.

So far as I am aware the only successful attempts to rear young white rhino have been at Johannesburg, and in recent years. A number of attempts in the Sudan have failed, including the recent effort with a



A WHITE RHINO RISES LIKE A HORSE AND NOT HIND-QUARTERS FIRST, LIKE A COW



INVESTIGATE THE (TO HIS EYES) STRANGE
FENSIVE LARGE ANIMAL IN CREATION"

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young male, caught near Tonj and named Algernon, who flourished for some time and reached Khartoum, where change of climate and lack of playmates seemed to conquer his desire to live. Several cousins, however, have lately been caught by a Kenya expert, Mr. Carr Hartley, operating near Shambe. These better-grown young have been taken by lassoing from a power-wagon, with which they are quickly run down. The mother, who may show fight at first, is eventually driven off unhurt (capture of the young by natives is apt to mean the death of the mother). They have taken readily enough to milk and solid food such as gruel and millet-flour, and may yet make zoological history.

By Logan Hook

RESIDENTS of Nanyuki—thriving townlet on the North-Western foothills of Mt. Kenya—have lately been privileged to view at close quarters a couple of white rhino from Shambe in the Southern Sudan. On May 22nd a party visited the pair in their compound, some 48 miles to the westward, kept by Mr. and Mrs. Carr Hartley. When we arrived at the rhino's paddock, the gate was flung open and we strolled in, the girls in brightly coloured summer frocks, and wearing a large assortment of Parisian perfumes. But both rhinos were so deeply engrossed in a pile of freshly cut veld grass that they hardly troubled to look up. They were tamer than pigs—Mitzi, the young female of 25 months, and Bobby, the male of 19 months—so much so that children can and do ride them.

Following the African and Indian elephants, this species of rhino ranks next in order of size among the largest of living land mammals. The story goes that when the Boers first saw these monsters in South Africa they were grazing out on the open veld in vivid sunshine and were so named "white" rhino. But with their square-lipped mouth, very different from the pendulous upper lip of the black rhino, they are more aptly named wide-mouthed or "wide" rhino.

Recently the Sudan Government issued licences to Mr. Hartley for the capture of four rhino—two of each sex—which one pair was to be handed to the Government.

When Mr. Hartley reached the haunts of the white rhino, in the Southern Sudan, some delay was caused

by lorry breakdowns, but later, when the time came for him and his highly-trained squad of Kenya natives to go into action, no difficulty whatever was experienced. Having selected four suitable beasts they were lassoed and crated in a matter of minutes. One mother rhino expressed mild disapproval at the removal of her offspring and ranged up alongside the lorry wearing a 40in. horn, but frightened by vigorous shouting and by clods of earth she soon sheered off, and the danger of her horns hitting the truck radiator was averted. Mr. Hartley counted in all twenty rhino, and estimated that there must have been at least a hundred within the horizon radius.

In this zoo a five-year-old black rhino cow, "Molly," was in the next enclosure to Bobby and Mitzi and could easily be compared with these two. Their slate grey colour, to the layman's eye seemed identical, though their dispositions were poles apart, for while "Molly" would usually feed out of Mrs. Hartley's hand, she became restive when strangers were present and they were always warned to give her a wide berth. At noon Mitzi and Bobby each received a bowl of gruel mixed with sweetened condensed milk, after which they completely ignored the party of sightseers.

We were told that, in their own country, the female rhino will lie on her back when suckling her young, and this must be an amazing spectacle.

Soon after the capture of the four specimens Mr. Hartley had a strange experience. Whereas the black rhino dungs every eight hours, retiring to his latratory to do so, the larger species does so every twenty-four hours. Of this strange and unexpected difference Mr. Hartley was unaware but after a day or so's anxiety all was well.

White rhinos are believed to be full grown at five years, when they come into season every four months.

By P. Z. Mackenzie

EVERYONE interested in big game in my corner of Africa was talking about white rhinos. An expedition from Scandinavia had been to collect a specimen for a museum, an American expedition had photographed them, a visiting collector of wild animals had captured some young ones and we had been attempting to rear some very young calves brought in for sale by natives. I had always considered the white rhino to be a very rare animal and very difficult to locate in a normal day's travel, but more and more evidence came in that, where they did occur, they were fairly numerous and not too difficult to find and not at all alarming in their behaviour if one did find them.

I became determined to see a white rhino and one day I found myself near one of their most likely haunts with an unexpected half-day to spare. I had been given a fairly accurate description of where to go and had been advised that about noon was the best time, for then by climbing high trees one could see them resting in family parties during the heat of the day.

Having dropped my kit and passengers at a nearby rest-camp and taken on a guide, I set off across country on a very rough woodcutters' track in my car. It was cool and cloudy in spite of it being midday, for it had rained the previous night. The track was sandy and showed up the footprints of every animal that had been across it that morning. Before long we found the tracks of buffalo, and round a corner we came into a small herd of giraffe, one being so close and so unconcerned that he looked down on the car as we passed.

Old elephant tracks made our progress very difficult and over one particularly bad stretch I got out and walked; then, just as I was about to get into my car again, I saw the unmistakable "ace of clubs" footprints of a rhino, going down the track in front of me. We carried on for a bit and came upon a rhino midden, an area of several square yards covered with droppings; a reed-buck dashed across the track, then some oribi, more giraffe and then—"Ah-hoo" (the

local equivalent of "there they are") from my driver, and I saw two white rhino trotting off parallel to us in the scrub some fifty yards away.

I gave chase on foot, with binoculars, but never got very close to them, for they were down-wind of the car and all its accompanying smells. They were big and fat and very dark grey in colour, almost like giant black pigs, with their tails curled up in a ring at their sterns. Their front horns were of moderate length, but the hind horns were only a few inches long, in fact nothing to compare with the horns of a black rhino I had seen.

On returning to the car I asked the guide where the famous trees were from which the experts always saw the rhino. "Still a long way," was the answer and we bumped along for another mile or two, seeing many fresh rhino tracks on the ground and passing several more middens. Then, coming up a slope from a dry stream-bed, we suddenly ran into three more rhino, a family party of mother, father and an almost full-grown young female. We had a very good view of them, but again they were down-wind of us and lumbered off into some tall grass.

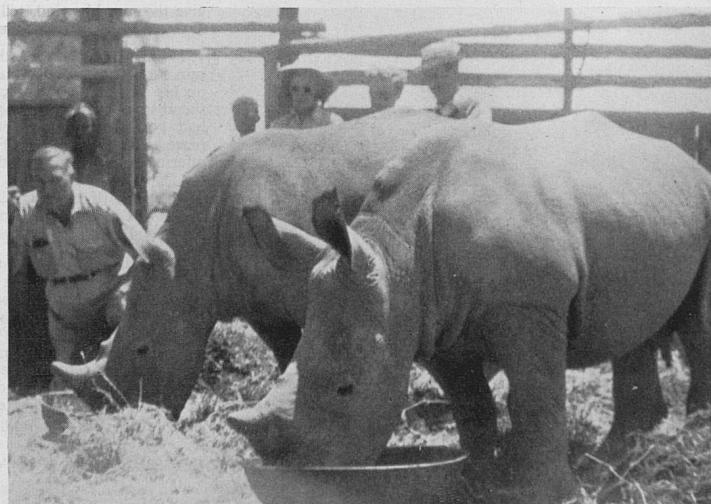
Eventually we arrived at the tall trees, which were landmarks in an otherwise scrubby plain of recently burned grass and bush. Up we scrambled but not a thing could we see except a very distant herd of buffalo. We tried another tree, with the same result. The ground was literally covered with fresh rhino tracks and at the base of the tree was the morning's evidence of where a rhino had stood, stamped, rolled and slept. Local opinion thought that as it was such a cool day, the rhino had gone off grazing instead of having their usual midday siesta, for, said my guide, it was unusual to see the rhino where we had seen them, and still more unusual not to find them in their habitual resting country.

We retraced our steps to near where we had seen the three rhinos earlier and this time the wind was in our favour. Fortunately close to the patch of unburned grass there was a big tree, which we climbed, and after a very few minutes were rewarded by the appearance of the young rhino, followed by its parents. They were all grazing, with the calf always leading, father following and mother bringing up the rear. The guide volunteered the information that it was high time the youngster untied the apron strings, for the parents really wanted to sleep and were only grazing because the young lady was so hungry. We watched them for almost twenty minutes while they grazed and moved slowly across our front, at one time coming within about sixty yards of our tree.

Our journey home was uneventful except for fresh rhino tracks on top of our old tyre marks and the extraordinary sight of a giraffe without a tail, probably the result of an encounter with a lion.

I was disappointed not to see any very small rhino calves with their mothers, for the babies are most enchanting creatures. Where they have been reared in collecting zoos they are friendly, attractive and confiding, complete miniatures of their parents. They are hornless and also hairless, except for a fringe of black, eyelash-like hairs around the edge of each ear and two fringes of longer hair down each side of the dangling tail, which is screwed in its length so that the fringes lie fore and aft between the calf's hind legs.

Five white rhino seen in a three-hour excursion off the main road seemed fair enough, although it was pronounced by the guide "a bad day." I was, however, very glad to see the rhinos in their proper surroundings and to learn that they were plentiful and undisturbed. Long may they remain so.



TWO YOUNG WHITE RHINOS
IN MR. HARTLEY'S COMPOUND