

VANISHING WILDLIFE

by Roy Pinney

FOREWORD BY

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ILLUSTRATED WITH FIFTY-FIVE PHOTOGRAPHS

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of losing it again if there was any way to save it. Ornithologist David Wingate, of Bermuda's Biological Station, studied the bird and its habits, searched through volumes of historical documents, and even slept on the nesting site, in an effort to learn all there was to know about the bird and its chances of survival.

In the course of this study, Wingate, joined by other ornithologists, discovered that the cahow's most dangerous enemy was not man or rats but another bird. That longtail, or yellow-billed tropic bird, a larger more aggressive species, not only usurped the cahow's nesting grounds but devoured the young. By devising artificial entrances to the nesting burrows, large enough for the cahow but too small for the longtail, the dedicated naturalists gave the cahow a desperately needed advantage in its life-and-death struggle. Now the Bermuda cahow population is slowly increasing, and hopeful Bermudians expect the bird, found nowhere else in the world, eventually to be firmly re-established on their island.

Unhappily, the fate of a native species is not always viewed with such concern. Iran, for example, has already exterminated the wild ass and, even though the gazelle and the Persian leopard and bear are so rare as to be virtually extinct, nothing has been done to alter the situation. Until the last animal succumbs, the hunting will not stop. The country has permitted the destruction of its forests to such an alarming degree that the land is now a veritable desert. Even the world famous Cedars of Lebanon have been destroyed.

This astonishing lack of concern is, fortunately, the exception rather than the rule in most parts of the world today. Most nations are deeply worried, and their anxiety is evident not only in words but in actions.

Probably one of the most outstanding examples of this concern is the magnificent work done in the former Netherlands Indies. Within an area which includes Java, Sumatra, Borneo, the Celebes, Lesser Sunda Islands, Molluccas, and New Guinea, the Dutch succeeded in establishing 97 reserves and wilderness areas prior to 1938. Ten years later, the number had grown to 120.

In view of this determined effort, it is particularly disheartening

to find poachers threatening the existence of the increasingly rare Javan one-horned rhinoceros, believed to exist now only in Sumatra. It is, without doubt, the rarest animal in the Far East, with an estimated total population of no more than fifty. Somewhat smaller than the Indian one-horned rhinoceros, the Javan, *Rhinoceros sonaicus*, stands about five and a half feet tall. It is also distinguished from the Indian species in that the skin is cracked and scaly, with a saddle-like fold coming up in front of the shoulder.

When it was discovered, in 1811, it was believed to exist only in Sumatra. Even after it was officially listed as a distinct species by the French zoologist, Anselme Desmarest, in 1820, it was thought to be extremely limited in range. In time, however, it was also found in Java, Malaya, Burma, Siam, and Assam, and there were reports of it in Borneo and French Indo-China.

Subsisting on a diet of twigs, leaves, and other vegetables, the animal remained abundant until the 1870's, and could be seen wallowing in mud pools throughout its range. But the white hunters set out to collect them, and soon they were in danger. Sportsmen boasted, some in print, that they could kill as many as forty-four in a day, losing an equal number in wounded victims that escaped.

Throughout the Far East and even as far west as Arabia, the rhinoceros horn is still believed to contain magical aphrodisiac properties. The legend, probably originating in the mythical unicorn, has nearly cost the rhinoceros its existence as a species. Thousands of the animals were killed for their horns and used in an infinite variety of concoctions brewed by Chinese pharmacists.

As the rhinoceros became scarce, the price of its horns rose and, although it has been protected for thirty years, it is still being killed by poachers. The only place where this species now survives is in Java; they have been completely wiped out of their former range. Even in Java, however, there are probably fewer than fifty of these beasts.

Singapore, the most notorious market in the world for illicit goods of all kinds, and particularly of rare animals, is dangerously



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A rare "white" or square-lipped rhinoceros roves the game reserve in Natal, South Africa.

near and, as long as officials continue to close their eyes to blatant poaching and smuggling, there is little hope that laws of any kind will save these valuable animals.

The shocking exploitation of Africa's wildlife has caused grave concern in all parts of the world. According to a 1959 estimate, that continent had already lost 75 per cent of its wildlife and, unless the trend is abruptly reversed, the remaining 25 per cent will be exterminated by 1980. Even in East Africa, often called "The Stronghold of the Wild," wildlife continues to decline, despite the fact that 28,000 square miles have been set aside as national parks and reserves. Throughout Africa it is now possible to drive all day without seeing any of the wild creatures once so closely associated in our minds with the veldt and the jungle and rain forest.

Prior to European colonization, the balance between man and nature on the African continent was such that no species was endangered. The animals were remarkably abundant, hunting methods were primitive and the human population comparatively sparse and static. Guns and medicine abruptly changed all that. Within thirty years, the human population doubled and animals became alarmingly scarce. The delicate balance was irrevocably destroyed.

The first region to suffer was South Africa, and the first victim was the quagga, the most beautiful wild game species of the continent and, perhaps, of the entire world. It was similar in appearance to the zebra, with which it once was mistakenly confused, but the distinctive narrow black stripes were limited to the neck and head of this handsome chestnut-brown animal. The legs and tail were white. Somewhat more stocky in build than the zebra, it closely resembled a pony in form, but its splendid markings set it apart from any other animal on earth.

Once abundant throughout Cape Province and the Orange Free State in South Africa, the quagga, as a wild animal, was extinct by 1870. The last captive specimen, in the Amsterdam Zoological Gardens, died in 1882. Nothing remains of it but a few stuffed relics and a single photograph of a living specimen.

lation census has been made and no certain facts regarding the status of the markhor could be given. According to a letter from A. R. Ranjha, information from sportsmen, naturalists and others indicated the markhor had considerably decreased in numbers, due to indiscriminate shooting, and all the races are consequently threatened with extinction.

The **Angolan giraffe** (*Giraffa camelopardalis angolensis*) is native to Angola and southwest Africa from lat. 20° S. northwards. According to letters in 1959 from R. Bigalke to the Survival Service Commission, the Angolan giraffe then numbered 3000, and possibly more, in southwest Africa. It is no longer in danger of extermination and should be removed from the list of endangered species.

The **Bawean deer** (*Cervus kubli*) is found only on the Island of Bawean (north of Java); its population not known. According to Mr. A. Hoogerwerf, who visited Bawean, the deer is not especially rare; it lives by preference on steep, wooded hills, where men and even dogs cannot penetrate without much difficulty. Bawean people as a rule are not hunters. This deer is not protected, but Mr. Hoogerwerf did not recommend approaching the Indonesian government to seek protection, since it is unlikely that any regulation could be enforced in so remote a place.

The **Florida Key deer** (*Odocoileus virginianus clavium*) is found in the Florida Keys. According to a letter from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the Survival Service Commission, this deer is being protected from the dangers of development. Its population, numbering 200 in 1959, is slowly building up.

The **Great Indian rhinoceros** (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), located in northeast India and Nepal, has a world population of 700.

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some left on the mainland of southeast Asia. Its total world population numbers perhaps 50.

According to L. Talbot, in 1957, between two and four dozen animals were found at Udjung Kulon, Java; only one or two young were reported. They are carefully protected by the Nature and Wildlife Management authorities of the Indonesian government, upon which the future of this species depends.

The population of the Sumatran rhinoceros (*Didermocerus sumatrensis*) is not known; its habitat includes Sumatra, Borneo, and the mainland of southeast Asia.

In Sumatra, according to L. Talbot, in at least five widely separated areas on the island this rhinoceros is very rare. Indonesian game laws are only effective in Java. In Borneo very few specimens remain. In Burma, there are between 35 and 46; widely dispersed from Putao in the extreme north to Victoria Point in the south. They are completely protected under Section 6 of the Wild Life Act, but are constantly hunted by poachers.

According to L. Boonsong, in 1958, 36 animals were found in isolated areas of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam; they are probably decreasing.

In a letter to the Survival Service Commission in 1960, Nguyen-van-Hiep reported that the Sumatran rhinoceros was very rare in Vietnam; it was protected, but hunted by Burman and Laotian poachers. It lives singly in deep forests on the frontiers of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

In 1960, according to a letter from J. A. Hislop, a few were sighted in southeastern Malaya, in Johore and southeast Pahang.

The Nubian wild ass (*Asinus asinus africanus*) is located in two areas of Sudan: northeast Sudan and within the great bend of the Nile north of Khartoum. Its world population is not known.

According to P. Z. Mackenzie, this animal was very rare in the Red Sea hills south of Suakin and the Eritrean border as far south