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Photo by—N.D. Bachkheti

Tiger roaming free in Ranthambhor

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**PREMATING CALL OF GREAT INDIAN ONE HORNED RHINOCEROS  
(*R. UNICORNIS*) L. AND ITS COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH OTHER CALLS**

By

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While going through my old field notes I came across an entry which may be of interest to the readers of the Journal.

In a cool afternoon at about 16-32 hrs. on 21st February 1981 I saw a known adult female rhino (GF03) crossing an observation line slowly in front of me at Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary (26°40'N, 89°E). Gorumara is a tiny rhino reserve comprising 8.33 km<sup>2</sup> only but it still keeping its mark as a natural rhino habitat of a few square kilometres to this day. However, the female rhino crossed the 17 metres wide observation line very slowly and took about six minutes time (16-33 hrs. to 16-39 hrs.) to cross it completely. She was walking leisurely sometimes stood still on the midst of the line. As soon as she entered into the tall reedy bushes I heard a shrill sound from the other side of the line emitted by another rhino. But I failed to locate that rhino owing to presence of tall and dense reeds on my right hand side. The sound could be divisible into seven syllables. The initial two to three syllables were heard comparatively at louder voice. The intensity of the vocalization of the latter four to five syllables gradually diminished and last one or two became almost inaudible. The vocalization lasted for about two seconds only. The sound appeared to be half aspiratory half vocal associated with frequent flickerings of vocal cord. The nature of the vocalization was as below :

**“FAA—FAA—FAA—FAA—FAA—FAA—FAA”**

Just after one minute of that vocalization surprisingly I observed another rhino entering into the observation line from my right hand side grassy meadows. It was also a known bull (GBO2) and I became confirmed that it was he who emitted that sound a short while ago. He was appearing to be getting dominant gradually over his close rival GBO1 in that locality. I could even identify him by his sole impression which carried some individualities<sup>1</sup>. He had a long pointed horn which was in fact longest of all. Moreover, he had a few fresh scars got recently on his upper lip, base of the left ear and on the shoulder region derived from a battle against GBO1 for retention of territorial supremacy<sup>2</sup>. So, it was easy to recognise him. Last year I found him forming pair with another female which became pregnant later on and parturition occurred in the



were low-pitched, often associated with deep sigh and appeared to be of groaning sound, devoid of any nasal exhalations. The calls during mating were shortlived but occurred in quick intervals; at least 10 to 12 calls were counted in each bout. The frequent flickering of vocal cord also occurred there. On the other hand, the alarm call was supposed to be of shorter duration but in much louder voice like roaring. Forced exhalation of air is always there uptil the last syllable uttered in case of alarm call following which either they bolt or tend to charge moving a few steps forward.

My predecessor in this field of work distinguished ten different types of sounds<sup>5</sup> which seemed to function in communication. However, he could not differentiate the calls happened during pre mating stage, from that of the other sounds excepting two shrieks before courtship. In this context, I feel that my recordings are quite effective analysing their functional state without viewing them although I am not quite sure about the sex that is the efficient actor making pre mating vocalization.

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