

The Society was founded in 1883 for the purpose of exchanging notes and observations on Zoology and exhibiting interesting specimens of animal life. Its funds are devoted to the advancement of the study of zoology and botany in the Oriental Region. The Society also promotes measures for conservation of nature.

Membership of the Society is open to persons of either sex and of any nationality, proposed and recommended by one or more members of the Society; and also to persons in their official capacity, scientific societies, institutions, clubs, etc. in corporate capacity.

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Members receive during a year three issues of the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* now in its 76th volume, and four issues of *Hornbill*, the Society's popular publication.

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J. C. Daniel, P. V. Bole and A. N. D. Nanavati.

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December will extend to the 31st December of the year following the election.

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NOTES, NEWS AND COMMENTS

The International Trade in rhinoceros products

Dr. Esmond Bradley-Martin has recently completed a fact finding mission for the I.U.C.N. African Rhino Group, to determine the extent and mechanics of the international rhino trade. He reports:

From 1970 to the present approximately 90% of the rhinoceros in Kenya, Uganda and northern Tan-

zania have been killed. Rhinos in these three East African countries and Zambia constituted, at the beginning of the decade, the world's largest concentrations. Official statistics, which exclude smuggling, show that a total of almost 24 tonnes of rhino horn was sent overseas from East Africa between 1970 to 1976. This represents approximately 8280 rhinos; the entire rhino population of Africa is now estimated between 14,000 and 24,000



An Indian Rhino in typical habitat. The horn is its doom.

Photo: E. P. Gee



Should we look the other way and let them become extinct?

Photo: E. P. Gee

animals. In Asia, there are only about 2000 Indian, Sumatran and Javan rhinos left.

The main reason for the accelerated killing of rhinos results from the increased demand for rhino products, especially the skin and horn, in the Yemens, India, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan.

For centuries the horn of the rhino has been used for precious ornaments, works of art, ceremonial cups and especially for medicinal purposes. The popular belief among westerners that the major use of rhino horn is by the Chinese as an aphrodisiac is unfounded. In the Far East most rhino products are used medicinally to cure ailments,

from typhoid to snake bites, but mostly as a fever depressing drug. Reliance on the efficiency of rhino horn as a medicine is probably more of a long term threat to the continued existence of rhinos than anything else.

Despite the fact that the quantity of rhino horn available on the market has increased in the decade of the 1970s, prices have risen to an all time high. From early years of this century up to 1975 there has been a 21-fold price rise, one of the greatest increases in the world for any product over so short a period of time. In 1976 the wholesale price of rhino horn went up more than three-fold to \$105 a kilo. The following year the price al-

most doubled to \$190 and in 1978 reached \$300. By September 1979 in Southeast Asia the minimum wholesale price was an incredible \$675 a kilo, some 2000 per cent increase in only four years.

The total number of rhinos that died annually in the wild from 1972 to 1978 produced 7970 kilos of horn, or about eight tonnes for the world trade. This is roughly the same amount as the total of imports from consumer countries. Thus from two very different and independent sources, we can conclude that a minimum of 7.75 ton-

nes of rhino horn has entered the world market annually from 1972 to 1978. If this is so, 1972 was worth \$255,750, at \$33, a kilo. By 1978 the wholesale value had increased to about \$2,400,000. If the same amount of horn came onto the world market in 1979 as in the previous year, the wholesale value was \$4,650,000. If one were to calculate the retail value of that portion of it which ended up in the pharmacies of Asia (4778 kilos), the price would be \$41,602,046, a gigantic sum of money for one single animal product.

RHINO-PRODUCT SHOPS IN THE FAR EAST

Sample of the larger traditional Chinese medicine shops—1979

| <i>Place</i> | <i>Number of shops examined</i> | <i>Number selling rhino products</i> |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Singapore | 15 | 8 (53%) |
| Hong Kong (Kowloon) | 15 | 11 (73%) |
| Macao (China) | 9 | 7 (78%) |
| Taipei (Taiwan) | 9 | 9 (100%) |
| Bangkok (Thailand) | 23 | 12 (52%) |
| Chiangmai (Thailand) | 5 | 3 (60%) |
| Total | 76 | 50 (66%) |

Average retail prices of rhino horn per kilo—1979

| <i>Place</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Price</i> |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Singapore | Almost all African | \$11,615 |
| Hong Kong | Almost all African | \$11,103 |
| Macao | Almost all African | \$ 4,127 |
| Taipei | African | \$ 1,596 |
| Bangkok | Indian | \$17,090 |
| Chiangmai | Mostly Sumatran | \$ 3,654 |
| | Sumatran | \$11,764 |
| | Average | \$ 8,707 |

Source: Esmond Bradley-Martin
—IUCN/SSC NYZS-WWF African
Rhino Group, *Newsletter*, No. 1,
April 1980