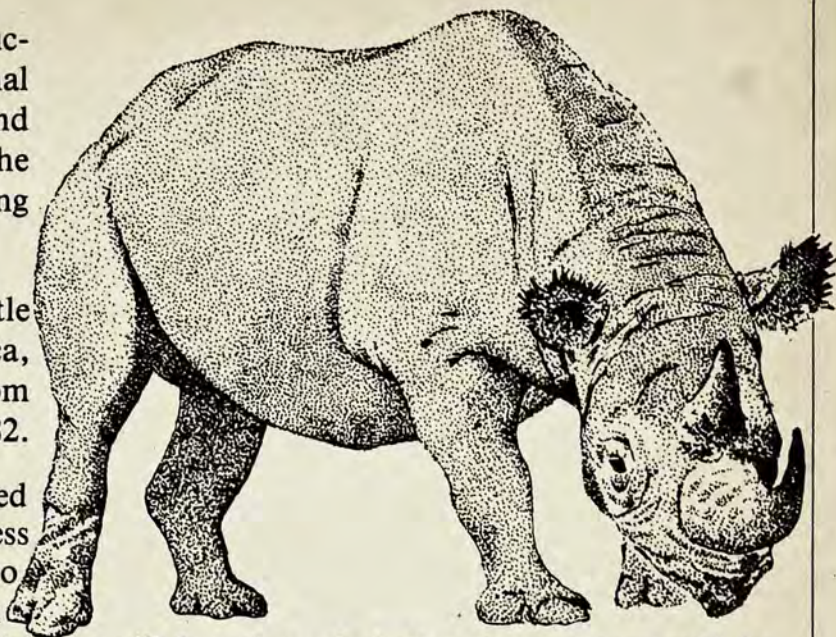


RUN RHINO RUN

Dr. Esmond Bradely Martin has been conducting investigative research on the international trade in rhino products for several years and he reports in the latest IUCN bulletin that the demand in Asian countries is finally tapering off.

This welcome piece of news, however, is little consolation for the black rhinos of Africa, whose populations have plummeted from 2,00,000 in 1970 to fewer than 20,000 in 1982.

Tom Mantzel, a Texas rancher, concerned that the African rhinos faced extinction (less than 8,000 remain in Kenya, a former rhino stronghold), has offered to rehabilitate six animals on a 1,300 acre section of his ranch in Glen Rose. He feels that, as the climate is somewhat similar to that of Kenya and the animals will be able to roam free, the rhinos



will breed much better than they would in zoos. If the programme is successful, Mantzel has agreed to send some of the rhinos' offspring back to Kenya for release in the wild.

Ants boast of a social order that enables colonies to act as super organisms. (See Nature Watch, page 258 to 261). At the heart of Componotus ant societies is the queen whose only purpose in life is to lay eggs. She is fed liquids from the mouths of workers and quietly reigns supreme over colonies that average 2,500 individuals, including workers who have no stingers, but emit a strong odour of formic acid when disturbed. Carpenter ants, as they are also sometimes called, chew out intricate galleries in the wood work of houses or in suitable trees. As it takes anywhere between three to six years before a colony produces sexual individuals, the presence of the ants can sometimes go unnoticed for years, until they begin to swarm.



wingless female

STICKY END

In the process of unearthing the secret of one insect-killer, plant biologists from Lebanon Valley College and Cornell University have bred a completely different killer. It seems the Venus' flytrap slams shut on prey as a result of cell growth in the outer walls of its leaves. The slightest movement on the leaf surface causes trigger hairs to send electric signals throughout the leaf's cells which respond by expanding rapidly at the phenomenal rate of

27 per cent in one second—which is why the trap closes. The researchers have now produced a potato hybrid with leaf hairs that excrete a blackish gum which effectively traps destructive insects such as green peach aphids. Legs stuck to the surface of the potatoes, the insects literally starve to death! Attempts are being made to spread the know-how to include the leaves of tomatoes, tobacco and alfalfa. The eventual saving as a result of this new defence tactic by growers? A whopping \$ 100 million worth of just potatoes in one year.