Final Natural History Essays

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covered with hair, and a well-haired example of the African elephant is preserved in the Paris Museum.[1]

Although first described in 1817 by Cuvier in his "Règne Animal," the Sumatran rhinoceros had been imperfectly known to Europeans long before that date; it was, indeed, the Sumatran unicorn of Marco Polo. Bell, a surgeon to the East India Company at Bencoolen, described and figured the "double-horned rhinoceros of Sumatra" in the "Philosophical Transactions" in 1793; while Mr. Miller, a friend of Thomas Pennant, had met with it apparently earlier than Bell. It is significant of the shy habits of this rhinoceros that Miller only saw two specimens during a long residence in the island; one of these, however, was within a distance of twenty yards. The first museum specimen seems to have been a skull of a young rhinoceros sent to England by Mr. Bell not later than 1793, and said (though this is doubtful) to be the same as that figured in the "Philosophical Transactions;" Sir Stamford Raffles afterwards presented to the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons the skeletons of three individuals.

The first living specimen at the Zoological Gardens was not received till August 2nd, 1872, when an example which had been taken in the Sunghi-njong district of Malacca was deposited in the collection by Mr. Jamrach. The beast was afterwards purchased

1. Renshaw: "On the young of the African elephant:" Proceedings of the Zoological Society, 1904.

by the Society for £600. An old female which had shed her lower incisor teeth, she proved a disastrous speculation, dying six weeks afterwards; some recoupment was however effected by selling the skin and skull to the British Museum.[1] On December 7th, 1872, another female arrived in London, and gave birth to a calf while still on ship-board at the Victoria Docks. At a few hours old the enterprising youngster was found walking about the deck in spite of the cold and rain; the exposure almost paralysed its limbs, though use was restored by rubbing it all over and placing it in warm blankets. Indeed, by the next day the little rhinoceros was so vigorous that its attendants had quite enough to do to prevent it from running all over the room in which it had been temporarily placed. The animal was exceedingly quaint in appearance, having a long almost donkey-like head, and long legs, and an ample coat of crisp black hair. The anterior horn was ¾ inch long, but the posterior one was represented only by a smooth spot; height at shoulder 2 feet, length 3 feet. This rhinoceros was very thin and bony, and soon died; the mother and the carcase of the young one were shipped to America. In July, 1875, Mr. Jamrach deposited another female at the Zoo, which he afterwards sold to the Society for £600.

Distributed thorughout Burmah, the Malay Penin-

1. Although as a rule long-lived animals, rhinoceroses are liable to die after a very short illness; thus a Javan rhinoceros at Calcutta died of pneumonia in twenty-four hours.

sula, and Siam to Sumatra and Borneo, the present species is a dweller in dense forest, hiding hermit-like in the depths of the hill jungles, and climbing the mountains as far as 4,000 feet. Deep dark virgin forest, here and there bright with scarlet fruit; tangles of rattan palm and belts of banana trees; glowing masses of flowering ixoras and fields of mountain bracken—these adorn the home of the Sumatran rhinoceros. Like the hippopotamus, the rhinoceros constantly uses the same track; it sleeps every day in the same bedroom or "rhinoceros house," a sheltered lair in the depth of the thicket.

The Sumatran rhinoceros is fond of bathing, and wallows like a pig; sometimes it immerses the whole body in the mud, so that only a part of the head is visible.[1] Most active early in the morning and in the evening, it retires in the middle of the day for a prolonged siesta. Leaves of the jack fruit are a favourite food of the Asiatic rhinoceroses, and they also feed freely on those of the yalher fig (*Ficus glomeratus*); they ravage crops which may be growing in the neighbourhood, the Javan species (*R. Sondaicus*) attacking coffee and pepper plantations. In spite of their size and strength these animals are not very brave, and a single wild dog has been known to put one to flight.

1. A two-horned rhinoceros is said to have been seen swimming in the *sea* in the Mergui Archipelago; similarly it is said that Flacourt, the discoverer of the African black rhinoceros, first saw one in the "Bay of Saldaghne" near the Cape.

The name "Banda Api" (or fire rhinoceros) applied to the Sumatran animal has been held to indicate its red appearance after rolling in the mud; but another and much more interesting explanation may be the true one. It is said that fire has a peculiar attraction for these animals, which will approach one lighted in the jungle and even endeavour to extinguish the blaze—curious enough if true, and quite inexplicable. Similar tales have been recounted of the African species; thus one of the older writers relates how a black rhinoceros once rushed into a party of soldiers bivouacked on the banks of a river, injuring them and putting out the fire; and the Hon. W. H. Drummond has recorded how in Zululand a black rhinoceros once made an unprovoked attack on his camp fire, scattering it in all directions and stamping it out with its feet as it squealed with rage. The white species has been known to approach within twenty yards of a camp fire, only retreating when a brand hurled at it struck its snout.

The Sumatran rhinoceros is extensively taken in pitfalls, the horns being bartered to the Chinese, who use them as medicine; in Canton the druggists exhibit them for sale amongst other strange *materia medica*. For some diseases the horns are ground into powder, for others fragments are worn amulet-fashion about the person. Rhinoceros horns are divided into four classes: *Sumbu lilin* (wax-coloured), *Sumbu api* (fire-coloured), *Sumbu nila*

(blue), and *Sumbu itam* (black). These animals defend themselves not with their horns, but with their enormous *razor-edged teeth*; an elephant's foot bitten by one of these furies has been cut to the bone before now.

The hairy-eared variety of the Sumatran rhinoceros was first described on August 16, 1872, at the Brighton meeting of the British Association, from an individual then living in London.[1] It differed from the typical race in the drooping plume of hair ornamenting the ear conch, in the greater development of the hairy covering, and in its larger size and shorter tail. Moreover, the texture of the hair was finer than the bristly coat of the typical Sumatran race; the hide was smoother and also paler. The anterior surface of the fore and hind feet, and also the outer aspect of the limbs, were clothed with a considerable quantity of black hair.

This individual was secured in the following circumstances:—

In December, 1867, some natives found a female rhinoceros embedded in a quicksand at Chittagong, in Eastern Bengal; quite exhausted with struggling, she fell an easy prey. Two stout ropes having been attached to her neck, the unfortunate beast was hauled out by the combined efforts of about two hundred men; kept taut between the

1. Dr. Anderson had, however, described the specimen—supposing it to be a typical *sumatrensis*—early in 1872.

ropes, she was then tethered to a tree. The natives next applied for assistance to the magistrate at Chittagong; Captain Hood and Mr. H. W. Wickes came to the rescue with eight elephants, after a tough march of sixteen hours. Terrified at the sight of the rhinoceros, all the elephants bolted forthwith; but, having been rounded up again, a leg of the captive was made fast to an elephant. At this critical moment, the rhinoceros unluckily gave a roar, upon which the chicken-hearted elephant again made off; had not the rope slipped the limb would probably have been torn out of its socket. Finally, the rhinoceros, roped securely amongst the elephants, was marched off towards Chittagong. She had sometimes half a mile of people trailing after her, the journey being almost a royal progress; thousands of natives thronged the route, even breaking down the bamboo bridges with their numbers. The rhinoceros had to cross two rivers; but nevertheless safely arrived at Chittagong, where she was freed from the ropes and turned into a stockade. A bath and a covered shed were provided, and the animal soon became very tame, feeding from the hand. In November, 1871, "Begum" was purchased by Mr. W. Jamrach, and was sold by him to the Zoological Society for £1,250, arriving in England on Febuary 15, 1871. Safely lodged in the elephant house in Regent's Park, the new animal was presently seen to be quite

different from and much larger than the typical Sumatran specimen obtained later in the year; and, although anatomical points could not be settled till after death, the animal was prized as a great rarity, being the only hairy-eared rhinoceros known.[1]

In 1882 Begum Latifa Khatum presented to the Calcutta Zoological Gardens the second known specimen of the hairy-eared rhinoceros. Some peasants working in paddy fields near Chittagong had noticed an unknown animal come out of the jungle into the fields, and mentioned it to a shikaree, who applied to the Begum for assistance to capture the animal. A crowd armed with sticks then surrounded the hill to which the beast had retired, and the shikaree having climbed a tree, made out that the animal was a rhinoceros. Noosed ropes were then tied to the branches of the trees, so that in a short time the animal became entangled. The rhinoceros having torn the ropes from their fastenings, rushed off with them trailing after it; but fell into a muddy hollow, and was promptly secured and dragged into a neighbouring village. The animal soon became tame, and the children of the Zenana used to ride on its back. This individual was a female; her consort was seen

1. About this time the Hamburg Zoological Society acquired a small rhinoceros about two years old, which may have belonged to the hairy-eared variety. This individual was as big as a small horse, and very tame; it is said that it would allow one to place one's hand in its mouth and take it out again.

about three days after the capture, but unfortunately an attempt to take him was unsuccessful.

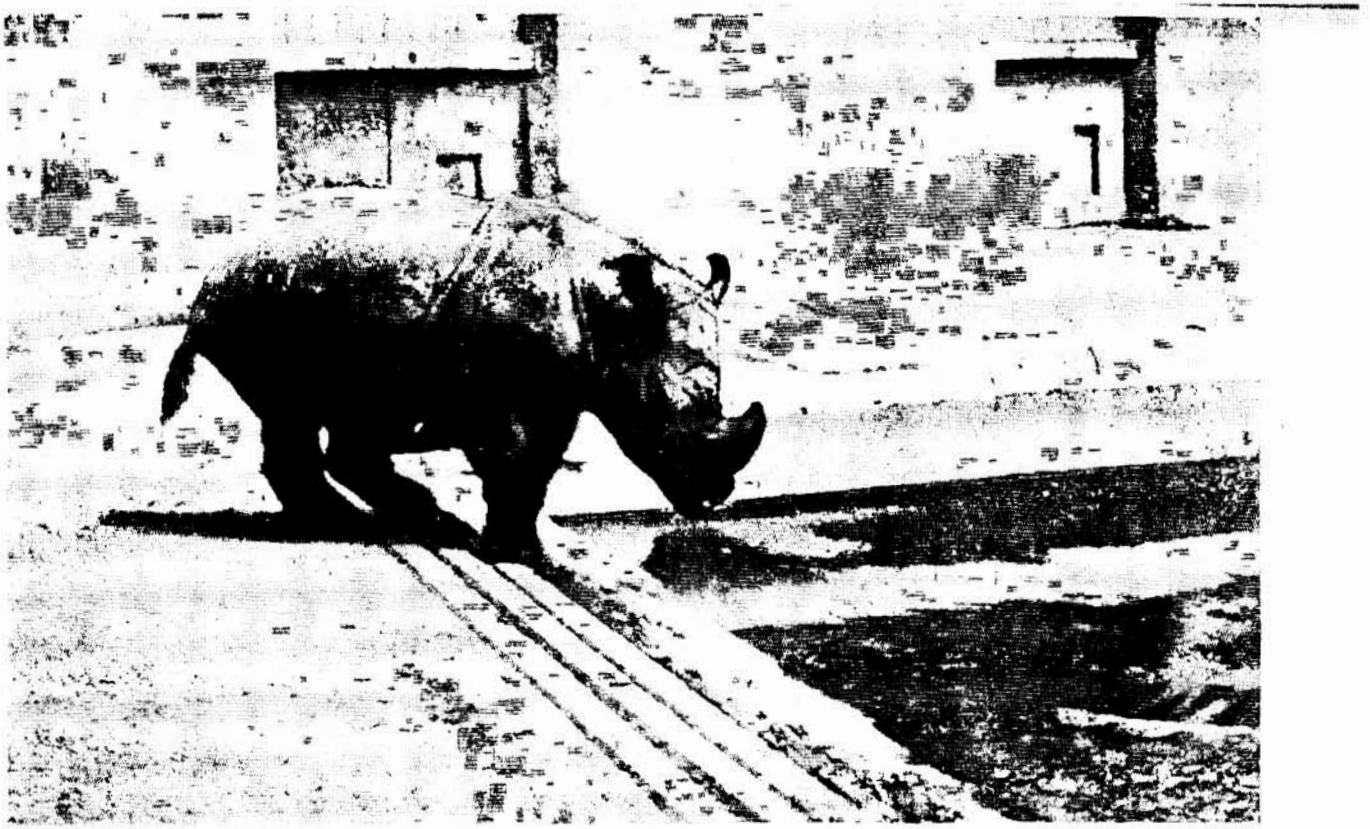
A hybrid between the hairy-eared form and the typical Sumatran race was afterwards bred in the Calcutta collection. The little animal was born early in the morning of January 30, 1889, and at first resembled a lump of animated clay. It got up after an hour and a half, and made a plucky attempt to walk, though it could not go three yards without stumbling. At one o'clock the mother was given some oatmeal gruel, and the infant a quart of cow's milk; at six o'clock in the evening, and again at ten o'clock the calf received some more cow's milk. During the night the mother began to suckle it, so that it became active and playful. The skin of this interesting little animal was soft pinky brown (contrasting with the dusky grey of the young pure-bred *sumatrensis*) and became darker with age; its body was covered all over with soft woolly hair.

The Sumatran and hairy-eared rhinoceroses at Calcutta were found to be much fonder of water than the Indian and Javan specimens in the same collection. The former liked to lie in muddy water, and were constantly digging new holes or undermining the banks of their tank; the anterior horn was used as a pickaxe to detach the earth, which was then scraped backwards with the forefeet and beaten down into soft ooze. Two Sumatran rhinoceroses in the Gardens fought so continually

that they had to be separated. In captivity this species is liable to tuberculosis of the lungs and liver.

On April 27, 1886, a hairy-eared rhinoceros was received in exchange at the London Zoological Gardens; the new animal had a much better front horn than the type specimen. The two lived together for many years, and the writer repeatedly examined and photographed them. On August 31, 1900, the type specimen died; the following account of the survivor is based on notes made by the writer on May 11, 1906:

Day dull; animal moving slowly about paddock, heavy head carried at an angle of 45°, and tail swinging loosely about, as if it had been tacked on to the body. The animal kept wagging each ear alternately, the extrinsic auricular muscles acting very freely in bringing the ear to and from the middle line of the head; sometimes both ears were simultaneously approximated to the middle line. The pencilled tufts of hair were directed backwards, and gave quite a graceful finish to the ear. The upper part of the body was roughly tessellated; three well-defined folds of skin were seen on the buttock as the animal walked, and the tail was deeply incised with several transverse furrows recalling the segmentation of a worm. The footsteps of this heavy animal were almost noiseless; when standing still the hind legs were so



SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS. *May or August 1900.*

Hairy-eared variety. The second example seen in England. Note the tufted ears and the skin-folds about the shoulder.

much bent that a vertical line dropped from the hock to the ground would not touch the foot, or any part of the limb below the hock.

The skull and head skin of the original type specimen of the hairy-eared rhinoceros are now in the National Collection; the animal lived over thirty years in captivity, and was so much diseased that the parts above mentioned were all that was worth keeping. It was found that this race was by no means so distinct from the normal Sumatran rhinoceros as had been supposed; the once conspicuous ear tufts had apparently become worn with age, and were not noticeably longer than in old *sumatrensis*; the colour differences had also vanished, and its larger size alone gave the hairy-eared phase a doubtful distinction from the typical race. The anterior horn was much abraded, and the posterior one chipped; the former differed strikingly from the well-developed weapon carried by the survivor still in the Zoological Gardens. For the present, the hairy-eared rhinoceros ranks as a large northern sub-species of the Sumatran animal; and with this remark is now dismissed.