

THE
SPORTSMAN'S BOOK
FOR INDIA

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in the least dangerous and never charges a man, as does its congener the black one. It is usually got when out stalking, and it should be classed rather with the Himalayan than with Indian animals of the chase.

INDIAN RHINOCEROS SHOOTING

IT is difficult, in fact nearly impossible, to give reliable information such as will enable the ordinary sportsman to be successful in the pursuit of these huge animals. The great Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) is now only found in the Nepaul Terai, in the Bhútán Dúárs and in Assam. To hunt it, most elaborate arrangements have to be made; and no one but a millionaire could afford to organise an expedition without assistance. I doubt whether a Cræsus would be willing to incur the vast expenditure that would be required for the chance of a shot or two at an animal which, although interesting and comparatively rare, does not, in my opinion, afford a very high form of sport.

The Great
Indian Rhin-
oceros.
Present
Distribution.

Inhabiting, as it does, immense expanses of giant grasses and reeds, often from 20 to 30 feet high, it is generally impossible to obtain a view of it, much less to shoot it, except from the back of an elephant. Progression on foot is

Elephants
Indispens-
able.

slow and difficult in its usual haunts; and, in short, without elephants, it is useless to attempt to shoot this rhinoceros. Even if the sportsman *could* walk, he would require two or three elephants to carry his baggage and supplies. Really good elephants are not procurable for lower prices than at least 2000 or 3000 rupees. Staunch Shikári ones are much more expensive. To their cost must be added that of howdahs, pads, tents and other gear, besides the pay of mahouts and other servants, and the provision of food both for men and beasts—no small item.

The most certain way, and that most generally practised, of obtaining a shot, is to have a large number of elephants to act as beaters, and a sufficient additional number of highly trained ones to carry the howdahs of the shooting party.

Another less certain, but more economical, and perhaps more interesting method is, to take only one or two elephants and move as quietly as possible through the jungles, looking out for fresh tracks, and when found, silently following them up. Under such conditions, a rhinoceros may occasionally be found feeding in an open space, or wallowing in a mud-hole; and it may be feasible to dismount and shoot him on foot. This I have done. Premising that no one would be willing to incur the heavy expense above indicated, the only way to have a chance of shooting a rhinoceros is to obtain introductions to native nobles, commissioners, forest officers, and other officials who have the

command of elephants and are willing to lend them, or will give invitations to join their own shooting-parties. I should ill requite the kindness and hospitality that I have received by mentioning names and sending strangers to invade my former hosts; so I must leave my readers to obtain their own introductions.

Commissariat officers, however, are sometimes able to lend Government elephants, on condition that their food is paid for, and any casualties made good; but of late years, Government has greatly reduced the establishment, and there are few military stations within reach of the jungles where rhinoceros are found.

I may add that shooting in the Nepaul Terai The Nepaul Terai. can only be obtained by special invitation, which is confined to a privileged few.

Forty years ago rhinoceros were extremely numerous, and several might easily be killed Indiscriminate Shooting. in one day. Owing to indiscriminate slaughter of both sexes and all sizes, their numbers have been terribly reduced; but there are enough left to enable a well equipped sportsman to be pretty sure of obtaining one or two specimens. With these, I think that he ought to be content, although I must plead guilty to having shot six. Even if I had the chance, I would never shoot another, unless it had an extraordinarily good horn.

Of course, in heavy jungle, it is quite impossible to recognise the sexes, and a novice will be unable to distinguish between a full-

grown and an immature animal; but anyone with any idea of size will be able to refrain from killing mere calves, which, I am sorry to say, has frequently been done.

Season. February and March are about the best months for this sport. Large areas of heavy grass jungle have then been burnt, and much withered; so that the ground to be hunted over is considerably restricted. The weather is still comparatively cool; and there is not much risk of malarial fever.

Outfit. With regard to outfit, it is again impossible to give more than general suggestions. Anyone who is fortunate enough to be the guest of a Rajah or high British official, will find himself treated with the most lavish hospitality, and will only have to take his usual personal luggage, bedding, of course rifles and ammunition, and two or three native servants.

I may as well put the idea of buying a large stud of elephants, and the corresponding scale of camp equipage, etc., quite out of the question; but the man who cares to buy, or succeeds in borrowing or hiring two or three elephants, need not incur very much additional outlay.

Tents will be required for himself and his followers, but for a short trip there is no necessity for having large ones, which are troublesome to pitch, and heavy to carry.

The Elgin Mills Company at Cawnpore make excellent light tents of various patterns: I prefer my own, which they have manufactured for me,

Tents are best made of strong cotton drill, which does not absorb much water. The colour should be *fast-dyed* "khákí," which is less conspicuous than white. Messrs E. Spinner & Co. of Manchester and Bombay, supply the best.

In these days it is unnecessary to give advice about sporting-dress, the style of which is so thoroughly understood; so I need only mention that clothes should be made of some strong cotton material, either "khákí," or some greenish mixture. For shooting from the howdah, canvas shoes, with india-rubber soles, will be found coolest and most comfortable.

As regards food, the supplies taken should be procured in Calcutta, where everything that can possibly be required may be purchased. Nothing is obtainable in the scattered villages in the jungles, except coarse flour and rice, milk, ghee, and occasionally fowls and eggs. For fresh meat, the sportsman must depend upon his gun and rifle. A small supply of simple medicines should always be taken, such as quinine, chlorodyne, Cockle's pills, etc., also some carbolic oil, bandages, and lint in case of accidents. For the preservation of trophies, carbolic acid, alum, and arsenical soap will be required.

Last, but not least, we come to the important question of a choice of weapons. There are now so many powerful rifles of nearly equal efficiency, that the selection must depend upon individual tastes. For many years I used nothing, in jungle shooting, except a 12-bore rifle on the "Forsyth"

principle, with a charge of 7 drams of black powder, and a hardened spherical bullet. The rifle weighed 11 lbs. and there was no inconvenient recoil. It was extremely accurate up to 120 yards, which is a far longer range than one often fires at in the jungle. With it, I killed most species of Indian "Large Game" from rhinoceros downwards, and seldom lost a wounded beast. In justice to the maker I must mention that it bore the well-known name of John Rigby. I have no experience, at game, of the modern small bore high velocity rifles, with nitro powders. From all accounts they are very deadly ; but had I again to stand up to the charge of a dangerous beast, I should prefer to stick to my old love.

A shot gun is an absolute necessity on any expedition, to supply the larder ; and a miniature rifle is a most useful accessory for the same purpose. A hatchet, a meat saw, and several good butchers' knives, with a steel to sharpen them on, are also indispensable.

I advise anyone who shoots a rhinoceros to preserve the head, feet, and the whole of the hide. Most interesting trophies, and a variety of useful articles, such as tables, cigar boxes, lamp pedestals, trays, etc., may be made from them. Rhinoceros have often been described as having almost impenetrable hides, and being only vulnerable in certain parts. This is entirely a mistake ; no animal that I know is more easily killed ; and with modern rifles the vital parts may be reached from any point, provided that the direction is

right. The brain and heart are, of course, the organs, the shattering of which, insures instant death ; but a shot through the lungs, though not so quick in its effect, is nearly equally fatal. The lungs are very large, and when they are penetrated the animal generally soon chokes—usually uttering loud grunts and squeals. I have killed three rhinoceros with single bullets.

The Java (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) or, as it is commonly called, the “Lesser Indian Rhinoceros” (although little inferior in size to the other), may be easily distinguished by the different folds and conformation of the hide, and by the absence of the horn in the female. This species exists in small numbers in the Bhútán Dúárs, where I once saw one shot by a friend. Although it frequents grass jungles, like its congener, it appears to be more of a forest-loving animal ; and its favourite haunts are the thickets at the base of the low hills where the thorny cane forms a refuge which hardly any foe can invade. I have followed the tracks in such localities, on foot—but never with success.

The Lesser
Indian
Rhinoceros.

This rhinoceros is, I believe, much more plentiful in the “Soonderbuns” (properly *Súndrában*) or Delta of the Ganges, and is to be found within a few miles of Calcutta. Few Englishmen ever go after them ; and I have only met one who had shot any.

When quartered at Calcutta I often intended to try for them ; but somehow or other my duties as a Staff Officer always prevented me. As my readers are probably aware, the Soonderbuns

consist of low lying land, covered with stunted forest, and intersected by innumerable tidal creeks. The only possible way of visiting them is by water, and for a sporting expedition it would be necessary to engage a sort of house-boat, known familiarly in Calcutta as a "Green boat," which serves as a dwelling-place, and also a "dinghy" of shallow draught in which to explore the smaller creeks. Local pilots and guides would of course be required, and I understand that shikaris are to be obtained. It would be useless to go for only a few days; as progress would be slow, and the game is undoubtedly difficult to find.

All stores, including a supply of fresh water, would have to be taken from Calcutta, and replenished from time to time by special arrangement. Possibly a steam launch might now be hired; if so, it would be a great convenience.

"Mutatis mutandis" my recommendations as regards shooting in the Dúárs and Assam would hold good here; but some extra precautions will have to be taken. Tigers are numerous in the Soonderbuns, and bear a bad reputation as man-eaters. A sharp look-out must therefore be kept, and no straggling allowed. The mosquitoes are an awful pest, and good curtains an absolute necessity. I regret that I cannot give any estimate of the cost of an expedition, but it certainly would be very moderate. A steam launch, if engaged, would probably be the heaviest item.