

Oryx

The International Journal of Conservation

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<http://www.oryxthejournal.org/>

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The Society was founded in 1903 as the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, and subsequently named the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society. Fauna & Flora International is conserving the planet's threatened species and ecosystems – with the people and communities who depend on them.

Oryx - The International Journal of Conservation, is now published quarterly by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Fauna & Flora International. It is a leading scientific journal of biodiversity conservation, conservation policy and sustainable use, with a particular interest in material that has the potential to improve conservation management and practice.

The website, <http://www.oryxthejournal.org/>, plays a vital role in the journal's capacity-building work. Amongst the site's many attributes is a compendium of sources of free software for researchers and details of how to access Oryx at reduced rates or for free in developing countries. The website also includes extracts from Oryx issues 10, 25 and 50 years ago, and a gallery of research photographs that provide a fascinating insight into the places, species and people described in the journal.

The [Rhino Resource Center](#) posted this PDF in June 2009. We are grateful for the permission.

THE TIGER

Letters have appeared in the English press expressing fears for the survival of the tiger. Comments in *The Statesman* on these letters by Mr. M. D. Chaturvedi, formerly Director-General of Forests, India, give ground for hoping that the immediate extinction of the tiger need not be feared.

The number of tigers shot yearly since the last war has not decreased very much: heads of forest departments report an increase of tigers in Bengal, stationary population in Madras and Mysore, decline in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Luckily the tiger breeds freely in the wild. Litters may be as high as six, but normally only two are found at heel. A tigress starts breeding at about four years old and has a litter at least every third or fourth year; she may be depended upon to raise three cubs during an average life span of ten years.

WEAPONS OF THE GREAT INDIAN RHINOCEROS

A COMMUNICATION FROM MR. E. O. SHEBBEARE

Mr. E. P. Gee, in a letter, describes an attack on an elephant by a great Indian rhinoceros in defence of her calf. The elephant attacked was one from which Mr. L. M. Talbot, ecologist of the International Union for the Protection of Nature, was watching the rhinos, and it received a gash $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by 2 inches deep. The wound was made by one tush only and the horn not used.

Though I have never witnessed such an attack, I have always myself thought that—apart from trampling on its victim, which may be accidental—the Indian rhino's only offensive weapons were these "tushes", perhaps better described as the outer pair of lower incisors, since rhinos have no canines. Unlike the middle pair of incisors, these are pointed and usually very sharp (see Blanford, *Fauna of British India, Mammals*, p. 471). I remember how Bena, a Bengali tracker, who had once been hoisted by a rhino on to the crupper-ropes of a retreating pad-elephant, used to demonstrate, with his own lower incisors, how the lift had been effected, and the healed scars on his loins fully bore him out. The horns of the Asiatic rhinos are often not much sharper than the pointed toe of a shoe and, being only consolidated hair, not so very much harder.

It would be interesting to be assured, by those who know the far fiercer and more efficiently horned African rhinos, that these do actually use their horns as weapons—as one would naturally suppose they do.

If not as weapons, what do Asiatic rhinos use their horns for? I have been told that they are for grubbing roots and knocking over ant-hills. One certainly often sees areas, several square yards in extent, grubbed up, especially in old, burnt savannah, and mahouts have assured me that this was the work of rhinos. Unfortunately the work of pigs looks identical to me at any rate, so that until I have seen a rhino thus using its horn I should prefer to be guarded in my statement. Similarly one often sees ant-hills levelled, but again, I have not seen a rhino using his horn for this; sloth bears certainly flatten out ant-hills in their search for their daily bread, termites.

MANAGEMENT OF FOREST LANDS FOR WILD LIFE

(From a paper presented to the Fourth World Forestry Congress in Dehra Dun, December, 1954, by K. S. Dharmakumarsinhji, Vice-Chairman, India Board for Wild Life.)

It is accepted as a general principle that the importance of good timber supersedes the interest of wild life in forest land. But this does not necessarily mean that wild life should be neglected and has no place in forest planning. Wild Life is a part of forest produce and its existence depends upon forest vegetation.

The problem is to discover which species are most advantageous to the growth of the forests, so that we can encourage the species which are least harmful or are conducive to the regeneration and growth of forest trees.

Because a small animal like a red squirrel stores its food of nuts and seeds in holes and forgets it, forest trees germinate and develop. In the deciduous forests and grasslands of India, the nilgai feeds upon the leguminous seed pods of hardwoods and defaecates the seeds for better regeneration. In the Rajasthan district of India, where afforestation with *Prosopis juliflora* is being undertaken, it might be possible to assist the expansion of the forest by introducing nilgai. According to my experience, the nilgai feeds upon the fruits of *Balanites roxburghii* and disperses the seeds, which germinate rapidly. Indian birds such as mynas, barbets and fruit pigeons feed extensively upon fruits, especially of *Ficus* and *Neem* trees. The seeds are scattered in their excreta and germinate rapidly. To what extent can we take advantage of these beneficent creatures?

The over-abundance of game in forest land becomes a problem where regeneration of trees is concerned. Browsing of sal trees