

514

CLIVE WALKER

SIGNS

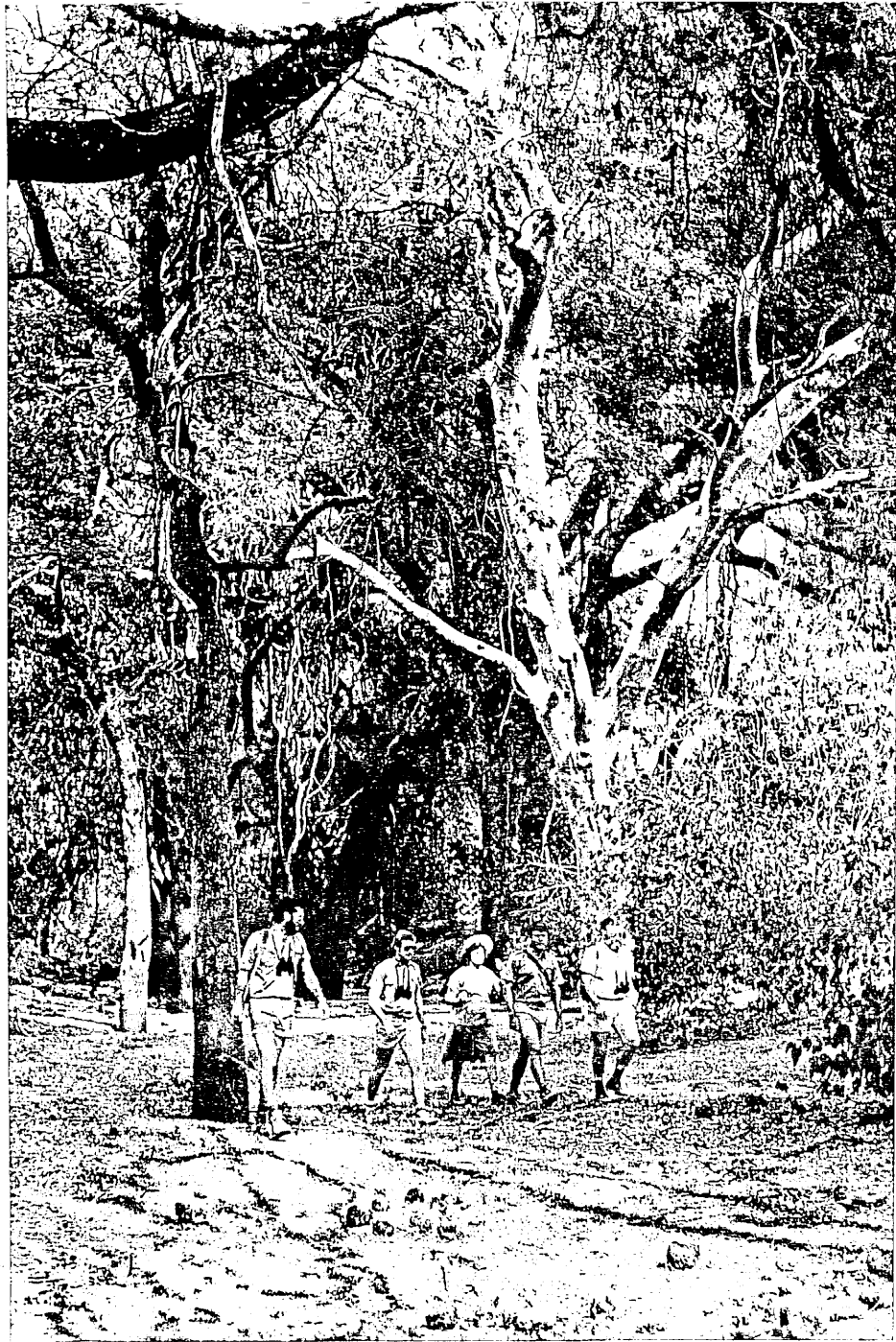
of the

WILD



A field guide to the spoor & signs
of the mammals of southern Africa

NEW EDITION



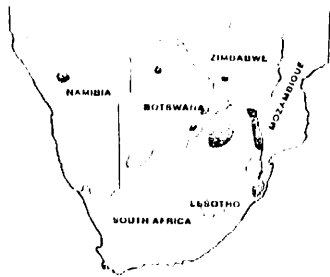
CLIVE WALKER

SIGNS *of the* WILD

(1st ed. 1981)
5th ed. 1996
pp. 1-215



STRUIK



White Rhinoceros

Ceratotherium simum

Afrikaans: Witrenoster Zulu, Siswati: uMkhombe

Tswana: Tshukudu, Mogohu, Kgetlwa

Transvaal Sotho: Tshukudu, Mogohu Venda: Tshugulu

Sindebele: Umholu Shona: Chipembere

DESCRIPTION

SHOULDER HEIGHT: 1,8 m MASS: Up to 2 000 kg

GESTATION: 18 months; single calf at intervals of 3 years.

The jaw is square and the head is carried low. Larger than the black rhinoceros, it is by contrast, far more placid and less prone to attack. Curious by nature, tapping sounds draw its attention. In the event of a fast approach, get behind a tree. Eyesight is poor, but both hearing and smell are acute. The tail loops over the back when the animal is on the move. It can reach speeds of up to 40 km/h over short distances. It is fond of mud wallows and rubbing posts which are often polished to a fine surface. The calf walks in front of the mother.

DIET

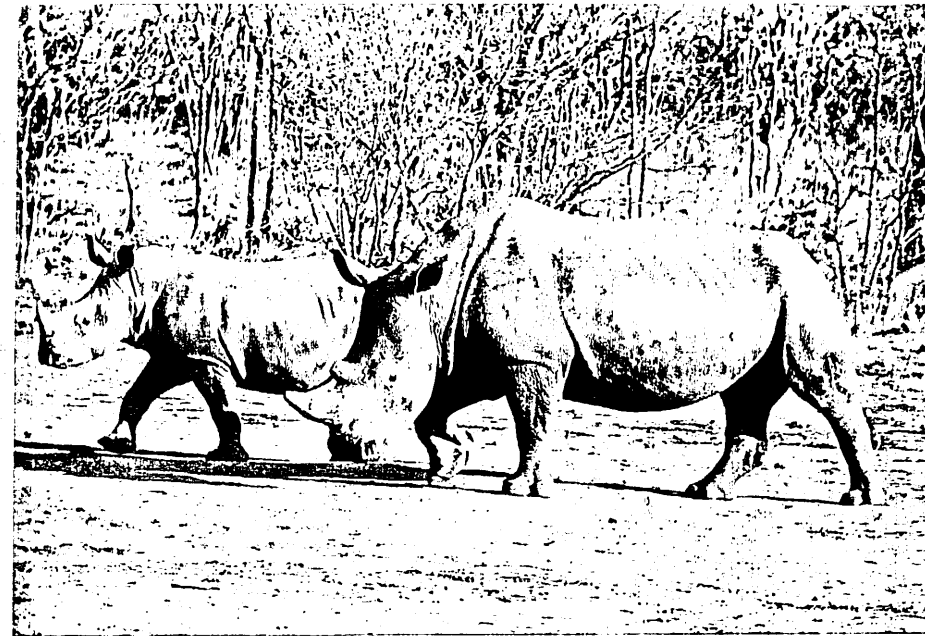
They are grass eaters.

FAECES

Deposits its dung in large middens. Droppings are large and darkish-green when fresh, turning black with age. Resembles elephant dung in composition. Territorial bulls urinate backwards in a fine controlled spray. Trees and bushes are marked using the horn.



A smoothly polished rubbing post.



The calf generally precedes the mother.

SPOOR

Three-toed; forefoot is 28 cm long and 24 cm wide. Well-used trails are often formed. They are experts at negotiating steep slopes. Spoor is longer than that of the hook-tipped rhinoceros.



The spoor is longer than that of the black rhinoceros.



20 28 cm



Black Rhinoceros

Diceros bicornis

Afrikaans: Swartrenoster Zulu, Sindebele: uBhejane
Transvaal Sotho, Tswana: Tshukudu Xhosa: Umkhombe
Venda: Thema Herero: Ngara Tsonga: Mhelemba
Kung Bushman: Klu Shona: Chipenbere, Nhemu
Lozi: Sukulu Yei: Unshunguzu Nama/Damara: !Nabas

DESCRIPTION

SHOULDER HEIGHT: 1,6 m MASS: 900-1 000 kg

GESTATION: 15-16 months; single calf SPEED: Maximum of 45 km/h.

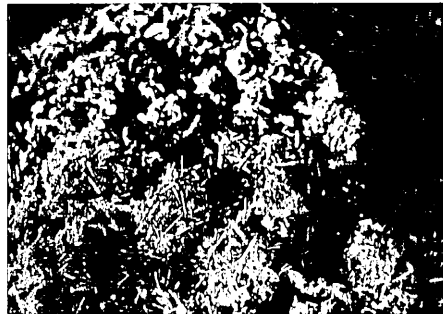
The hook-lipped, or black, rhinoceros has a distinctive prehensile lip. It holds its head high and is smaller than the square-lipped, or white, rhinoceros. The alternate name, black rhinoceros, alludes to it being darker in colour than the white rhinoceros. An agile animal, the hook-lipped rhinoceros can display considerable aggression when alarmed. It is normally shy and usually solitary. Its eyesight is poor but it possesses exceptional hearing and a good sense of smell. The head is held horizontal in a charge - the whole front portion of the body lifts off the ground when it tosses its target. The tail is held erect on the run. The black rhinoceros has a wide vocal range and, I believe, can communicate at a level inaudible to human hearing. Breathing is also an important part of communication. A sharp, strong snort followed by a fluttering sound is an alarm or warning sound; a hoarse sound is used to make contact with another rhinoceros. It also makes loud puffing and snorting sounds. The calf runs behind the mother.

DIET

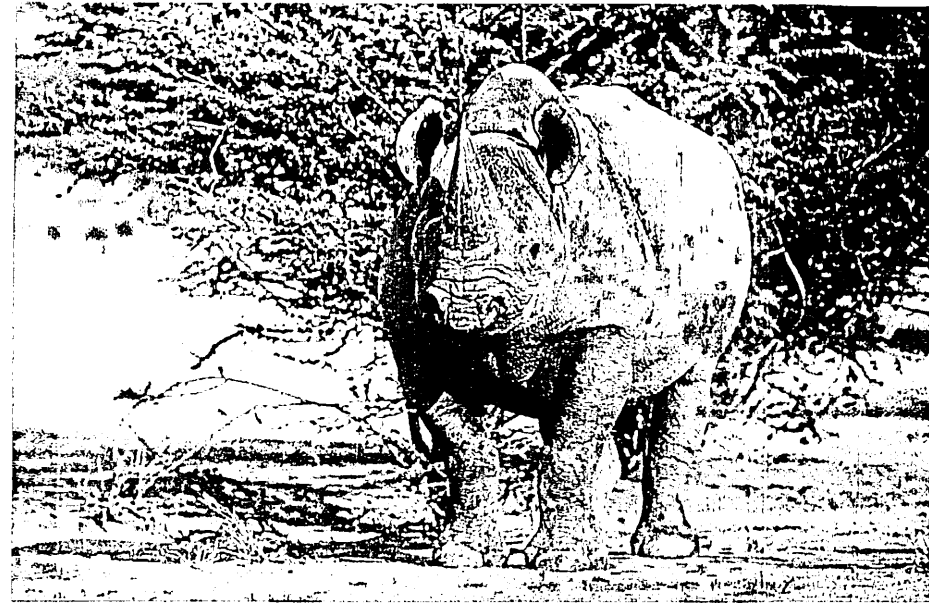
Browser, also known to graze seasonally. Usually found in thickets where it eats shrubs, twigs and leaves. Thorns present no problem.

FAECES

Usually defecates in middens or along various routes; dung is scattered with the hind legs. Easily identified by its fibrous and woody nature. Different colour to the dung of the white rhinoceros.



Faeces contain wood chips



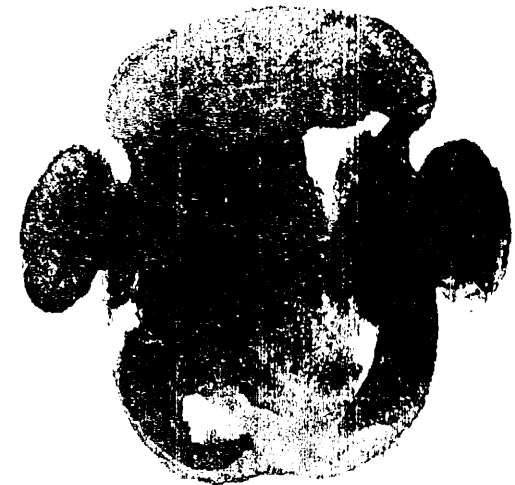
A black rhinoceros on the alert

SPOOR

Much more compact and smaller than that of the square-lipped rhinoceros (page 130). Urinates backwards against vegetation and then kicks back, often breaking up the vegetation. This action is a form of marking territory and communication.



Spoor is circular and compact



20-25 cm

Endangered species