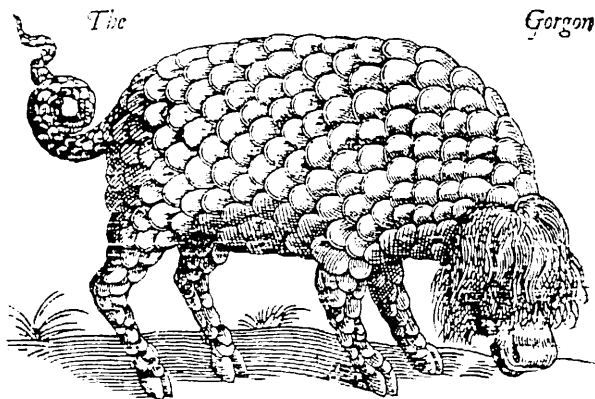


THE
HISTORIE
OF
FOVRE-FOOTED
BEASTES.

Describing the true and lively figure of every Beast, with a discourse
of their severall Names, Conditions, Kindes, Vertues (both naturall and
medicinnall) Countries of their breed, their love and hate to Mankinde, and the
wonderfull works of God in their Creation, Preferuation,
and Destruction.

*Necessary for all Divines and Students, because the story of every Beast is amplified with Narrations out of Scri-
pture, Fables, Philosophers, Physicians, and Poets: wherein are declared divers Hieroglyphicks, Emblems,
Elegancies, and other good Histories, Collected out of all the Volumes of CONRADVS GESSNER, and all
other Writers to this present day.* By EDWARD TOPSELL.



LONDON,
Printed by William Iaggard.
1607.

SAMUEL JOHNSON'S
MENAGERIE

*The beastly lives of exotic quadrupeds
in the eighteenth century*

— ★ —

JULIA ALLEN



THE ERSKINE PRESS

2002

Fig. 1 'Pray lend me 'topsel on Animals.' Letter to Edward Cave ?1738.

RATTOON *n.s.* A West Indian fox, which has this peculiar property, that if any thing be offered to it that has lain in water, it will wipe and turn it about with its fore feet, before it will put it to its mouth. *Bailey.*

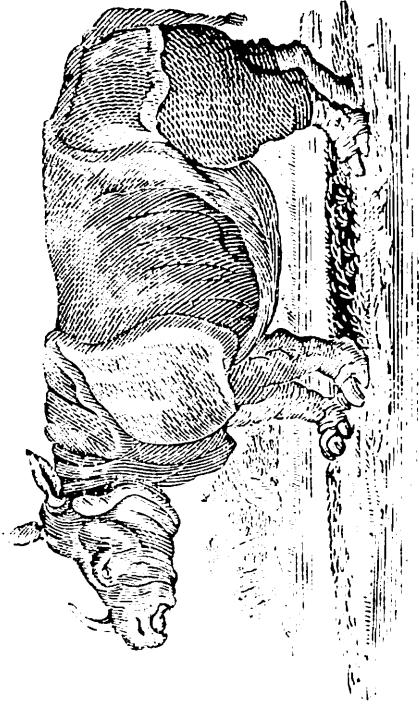


Fig. 46.

RHINOCEROS *n.s.* [*ῥῖν* and *κερῶς*, *rhinocerot*, Fr.]

A vast beast in the East Indies armed with a horn in his front.

Approach them like the rugged Russian bear.

The arm'd *rhinoceros*, or Hyrcanian tyger:

Like any shape but that, and my firm nerves

Shall never tremble.

If you draw your beast in an emblem, shew a landscape of the country

natural to the beast, as to the *rhinoceros* an East Indian landscape, the croc-

odile, an Egyptian.

ROCK-BOT *n.s.* A species of deer.

The *rock-deer* breeds chiefly upon the Alps: a creature of admirable swiftness, and may probably be that mentioned in the book of Job; her horns grow sometimes so far backward, as to reach over her buttocks.

Girard's Muséum.

under **SABLE** is a little beast ...

The peacocks plumes thy tackle must not fail,

Not the dear purchase of the *sable's* tail.

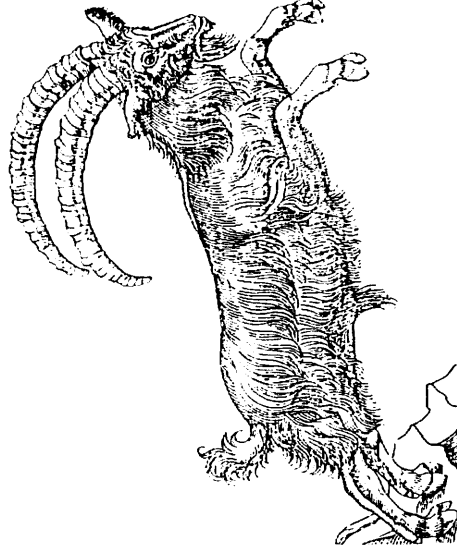
Fig. 47: The *rock-deer* breeds chiefly upon the Alps.

Fig. 48: Whatsoever he takes hold of, he doth it so strongly ... as sometimes to sleep ... while he hangs at it.

SLOTH *n.s.* [*slewð*, *slewð*, Saxon. It might therefore be not improperly written *sleuth*, but that it seems better to regard the orthography of the primitive *sloiv*.]

3. An animal.

The *sloth* is an animal of so slow a motion, that he will be three or four days at least in climbing up and coming down a tree; and to go the length of fifty paces on plain ground, requires a whole day.

Greiv.

Gay.



Fig. 61.

The position in which elephants copulate continued to be a subject of speculation amongst eighteenth-century naturalists, due to the difficulty of witnessing this act: for 'such is his pudicity', that the male 'never covers the female so long as any one appears in sight'. Calmet, who may never have set eyes on an elephant, believed that 'the female receives the male lying upon her back'; and this was one of the theories William Stukeley hoped to verify, when he had the opportunity to dissect a young female elephant in 1722, and took the uterine parts, together with the trunk, home for detailed examination.

The manner and posture of their copulation ... is something difficult to determine without some notion of the structure and situation of the *penis* in the male; but supposing that his genital parts are like those in a horse, which was advanced many hundred years ago by *Aristotle* himself ... and confirm'd lately by *Dr. Moulins*, in the anatomy of the elephant he dissected at *Dublin*, where he says the *penis* was larger than that of a stone-horse, but hardly so long. Now I say, supposing this, the posture must be as follows, and almost in the same manner as *Aristotle* has express'd ... [t]hat is in short, the female must be in a supine posture or lying on her back, and that either in a ditch, or as *Zavarnier* will have it in a bed of herbs or weeds four or five foot high from the ground, and the male in a prone posture, and so must enter *more humano*; and in order to bring the *orificium vaginae*, which is at a great distance from the *anus*, the first pair of muscles we have described as

belonging to that part, together with the influence of the *retractores præputii*, which we have likewise seen, are provided and contrived by the wise architect of all things, to draw down and approximate that part to the *pubis*, being much assisted by the efforts of the *penis* and general contraction of all the parts *vigente venere*. There seems to be still another way, could the big unyielding animal perform it; and that is for the male to get upon the female lying on her back with his head towards her hind legs. If neither of these will do, it is certain and demonstrable from the known situation of the female parts, that the *coitus* can never be performed *more brutorum*, i.e. neither by getting up behind as horses, &c. neither breech to breech, as the animals called retrocoit, such as hares, &c.¹

Unfortunately, despite making the dissection, Stukeley comes to the wrong conclusions, having been misled about the size, form, and agility of the male elephant's erect penis by Dr Moulins, who would have seen this organ only in repose. The truth had been revealed by Browne three quarters of a century earlier: 'their coition is made by supersaliency, like that of horses, as we are informed by some who have beheld them in that act.' Johnson defines supersaliency as 'The act of leaping upon any thing', and illustrates it with this very quotation.

Stukeley is also wrong, of course, in imagining that hares copulate 'breech to breech'; no animals do. Retroinquent animals were often assumed to be retrogenerative; James Parsons made this mistake after watching a male rhinoceros, exhibited in London in 1739, 'crump himself up and piss out in a full stream'. Urine spraying is generally a method of marking territory, as the owners of male dogs, or unlettered tom cats will be well aware.

This kind of 'old and grey-headed error', enshrined in folklore, was being corrected by naturalists like Sir Thomas Browne, whose *Julgæ Errors* (1646) Johnson quotes from scores of times in his zoological definitions. By the middle of the eighteenth century this work was due for revision to take account of 'those discoveries which the industry of the last age has made'; and, had not 'the favour with which it was first received filled the kingdom with copies', Johnson would have proposed himself for the task.

Not all erroneous beliefs arose from writers, or in the distant past. Prints of Dürer's rhinoceros (1515), Parsons believed, had 'led several ... Natural Historians ... into Errors; for such have always copied him; and indeed many have exceeded him in adorning their figures with Scales, Scallops, and other fictitious Forms'.

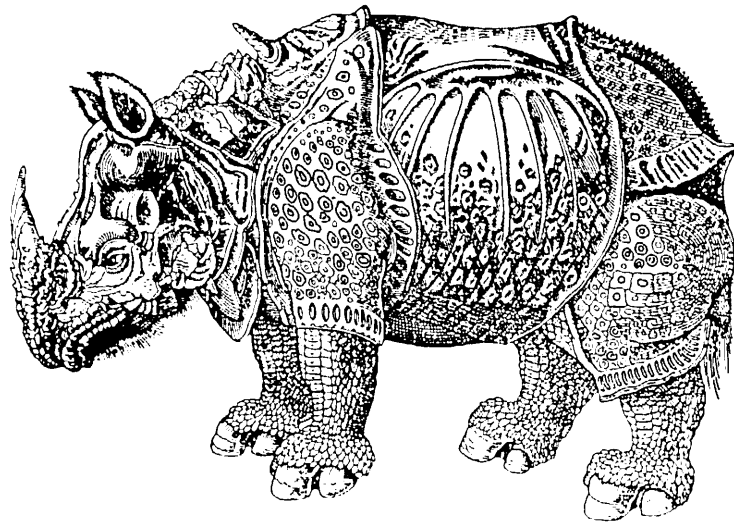


Fig. 62: Dürer's rhinoceros, as reproduced in Topsell, an image that 'led several ... Natural Historians ... into Errors'.

The striking feature of Dürer's rhinoceros – Topsell's reproduction is a close copy – is that it appears to be clad in a suit of armour, out of which its four scaly legs protrude; and we can picture it casting aside back-plate, épaulière, and cuisse, when, like Kipling's rhinoceros, it fancied a cooling swim. T. H. Clarke believes Dürer never saw a living specimen, but based his original drawing upon a sketch accompanying a newsletter about the beast that survived the journey from India to Portugal in 1515, and adds that Dürer, who lived next to the armourers' quarter in Nuremberg, was actively engaged in designing armour at the time.

It was to be 169 years – during which time the Dürer print circulated widely – before an English naturalist had the opportunity to view a living rhinoceros. Today, when we look at Dürer's armoured pachyderm, or read Evelyn's homely images, we see not a rhinoceros, as we know and understand it, but the past caught in freeze frame.

Icons and Emblems

Conspicuous for its brevity and lack of zoological information is Johnson's definition of the lion. Here, he is describing an icon, the king of the beasts, a creature weighed down with symbolism and association, not one of the tame and tatty exhibits at the Tower, that would 'stare in your Face,

and Piss upon you' with urine 'as Hot as *Aqua Fortis*' stinking 'worse than a *Pole-Cats*', nor yet the man-eating monster of travellers' tales. The lion, with the Scottish unicorn, had supported the royal arms since 1603,¹ and for more than 400 years had figured prominently as an heraldic emblem and on inn signs. Johnson, however, dispenses with most of the esoteric material that bulked out Bailey's *Dictionarium Britannicum* (1730). Here, as an example, is his entry for lion.

LI'ON [lio, Sax. *teyon*, Su. *teþ*, Du. and L.G. *teþe*, H.G.F. *liena*, It. *leon*, Sp. *leam*, Port. of *leo*, L. *λεων*, Gr.], the most courageous and generous of all wild beasts, the emblem of strength and valour.

If the LION'S Skin cannot, the FOX'S shall.

L. *Si leonina Pellis non satis est, assuenda Vulpina.*

Gr. *Ἄν ἡ λεοντῆ μὴ ἔξικηται, τὸν ἄλωπεκὸν πρόσρον.*

Erasm.

F. *Si la Peau du Lion ne suffit pas, il faut coudre celle du Renard.*

All which signify no more than, what I can't do by force I'll do by cunning. The L. likewise say; *Dolus an Virtus quis in Hoste requirit.*

A *Lion* being looked upon as the king of beasts, is esteemed the most magnanimous, the most generous, the most bold, and the most fierce of all four footed beasts; and therefore has been chosen by heralds, to represent the greatest heroes, who have been endued with these qualities.

The *Lion* [Emblematically] is used to represent vigilancy; some being of opinion, that he never sleeps. And he also represents command and monarchical dominion: and also the magnanimity of majesty, at once exercising awe and clemency, subduing those that resist, and sparing those that submit.

A *LION*, with a serpent about his neck, is an emblem of valour joined with conduct.

LION [in *Blazonry*] in blazoning a lion, their teeth and talons must always be mentioned, they being their only armour, and are in coat armour for the most part made of a different colour from the body of a beast; and therefore speaking of their teeth and talons, you must say they are armed so and so.

A *LION* [Hieroglyphically] wiping out with his tail the impressions of his feet, was a representation of the great creator, covering the marks of his divinity by the works of nature, and hiding his immediate power, by the visible agency of inferior beings.

Anthropomorphism

The attribution of human characteristics to animals has a very long history; and I shall start by looking at the influence of Æsop and Aristotle upon eighteenth-century thinking about animals.

¹ (Plate V)

instrument upwards, downwards, backwards or sideways, to any part of its body ... It is very diverting to see the creature eat ... The leaves and herbs it rous up into a bundle, after it has shak'd them from dust and insects, as a man does a sallad, wherein it is very nice and delicate: then bending the trunk into a circular form, lodges them in its mouth. It's said, if you mix sand or dirt with barley, which it loves very well, it will separate the grain very notably from the impurities before it eats.'

Rhinoceros

Unlike the docile and tractable elephant, the rhinoceros is not an accommodating beast, and when angry has awesome powers of destruction. Nevertheless, no fewer than four were exhibited in England between 1684 and 1793, and a great deal has been discovered about them by T. H. Clarke and written up in *The Rhinoceros from Diner to Stubbs, 1515-1799*.

Visitors to the first, a young female, paid 'twelve pence apiece, and two shillings those that ride him' [sic]; and along with the sensation hunters flocking to her stall at the Belle Savage Inn on Ludgate Hill in London went John Evelyn, who looked at her with a naturalist's eye.

Sir William Godolphin and I went to see the Rhinoceros (or Unicorn) being the first that I suppose was ever brought into England: It more resembled a huge enormous Swine, than any other Beast amongst us; That which was most particular & extraordinary, was the placing of her small Eyes in the very center of her cheekes & head, her Eares in her neck, and very much pointed: her Leggs neere as big about as an ordinarie mans wast, the feete divided into claws, not cloven, but somewhat resembling the Elephants, & very round & flatt, her taile slender and hanging downe over her Sex, which had some long haire at the End of it like a Cowes, & was all the haire about the whole Creature, but what was the most wonderfull, was the extraordinary bulke and Circumference of her body, which though very Young, (they told us I remember not above 4 yeares old) could not be lesse than 20 foote in compasse: she had a set of most dreadfull teeth, which were extraordinarily broad, & deepe in her Throate, she was led by a ring in her nose like a Buffalo, but the horne upon it was but newly Sprouting, & hardly shaped to any considerable point, but in my opinion nothing was so extravagant as the Skin of the beast, which hung downe on her hanches, both behind and before to her knees, loose like so much Coach leather, & not adhering at all to the body, which had another skin, so as one might take up this, as one would do a Cloake or horse-Cloth to a greate depth, it adhering onely at the upper parts: & these lappets of stiff skin, began to be studied with impenetrable Scales, like a Target of coate of maile, loricated like

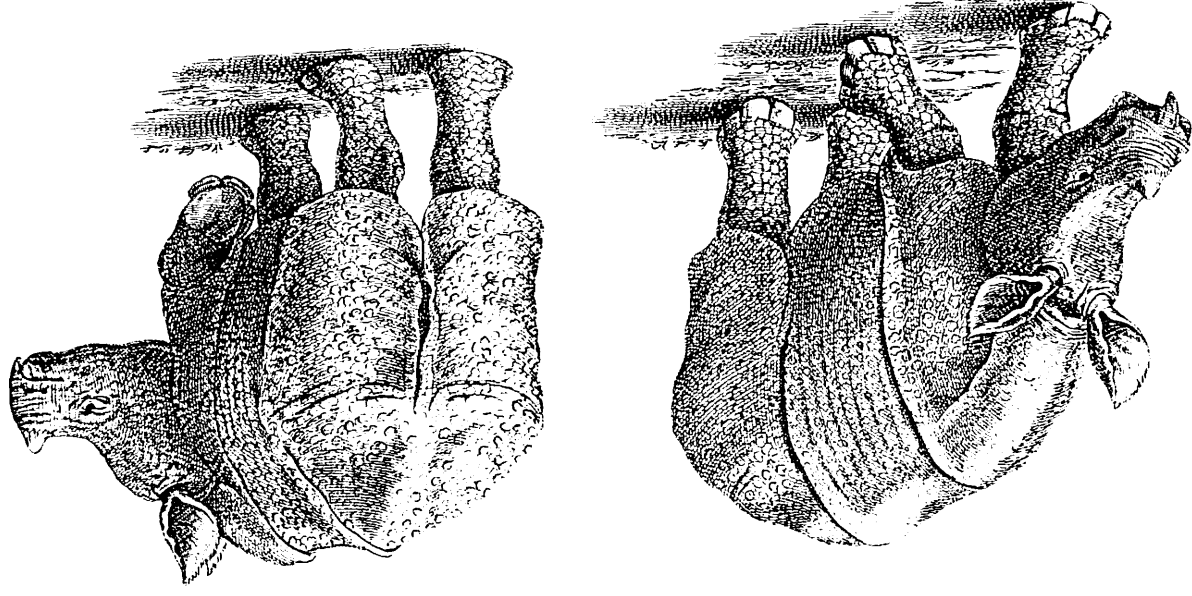


Fig. 75: The Rhinoceros. Although the rhinoceros did not exceed a young Iberian pig in height, he was 'very broad and thick'.

Armor ... [S]he was ... Tame enough, & suffering her mouth to be open'd by her keeper, who caus'd her to lie downe, when she appeared like a [greate] Coach overthrowne, for she was much of that bulke, yet would rise as nimble as ever I saw an horse ... [T]o what stature she may arive if she live long, I cannot tell; but if she grow proportionable to her present age, she will be a Mountaine: They fed her with Hay, & Oates, & gave her bread.¹

By the time the second rhinoceros arrived in London in 1739, the entry fee this beast could command had more than doubled to '2^s 6^d each person'. This very considerable sum – which could almost have bought four dinners at the Pine Apple in New-street – may well have put it out of reach of the young Johnson, who had just moved to the capital and was scratching a wretched living for himself and Tetty with his pen. We know a lot about this animal thanks to James Parsons, who visited him, drew him, and described him in a letter read to the Royal Society on 9 June 1743 and published in their *Philosophical Transactions* Vol. XLII, for the Years 1742 and 1743. It was a two-year-old male, which had arrived from India 'in the Ship *Lyel*' on 'the First of June ... and was brought to *Eagle-street, Red-Lion-Square*, on the 15th of the same Month'.

[F]rom his being first taken, to the time of his landing in *England*, his Expences amounted to One Thousand Pounds Sterling.

He was fed here with Rice, Sugar, and Hay: Of the first he eat Seven Pounds to about Three pounds of the Sugar; they were mixed together, and he eat this Quantity every Day, divided into Three Meals, and about a Truss of Hay in a Week, besides *Greens* of different Kinds, which were often brought to him, and of which he seemed fonder than of his dry Victuals; and drank large Quantities of Water at a Time.²

Although 'he did not exceed a young Heifer in Height', he was 'very broad and thick'; and Parsons hints at the threat he posed, despite his appearing 'very peaceable in his Temper', and allowing himself 'to be handled in any Part of his Body'. For he

is outrageous when struck or hungry, and is pacified in either Case only by giving him Victuals. In his Outrage he jumps about, and springs to an incredible Height, driving his Head against the Walls of the Place with great Fury and Quickness, notwithstanding his lumpish Aspect: This I have seen several times, especially in a Morning, before his Rice and Sugar was given him; which induces me to believe he is quite indomitable and intractable, and must certainly run too fast for a Man on foot to escape him.³

¹ 22 October, 1684

² *Phil. Trans.* pp. 528-9

³ *Ibid.* p. 529

And this threat would have been compounded by the animal's unease in its unnatural surroundings:

I have observed a very particular Quality in this Creature, of listening to any Noise or Rumour in the Street; for though he were eating, sleeping, or under the greatest Engagements Nature imposes on him, he stops every thing suddenly, and lifts up his Head, with great Attention, till the Noise is over.¹

For selected visitors, the Bengali keeper would rub his back and sides with straw, while he lay on the ground, to 'make him ... emit his *Penis*', an organ of 'extraordinary Shape'.

[I]n its utmost State of Erection, it never was extended to more than about Eight or Nine Inches. Its Termination is backward in a curved Direction, so that he is a retromingent Animal, and consequently retro-generative.²

Parsons, who had 'several times seen him pissing', observed:

he turns his Tail to the Wall, and, extending his hind Legs assunder, crumps himself up, and pisses out in a full Stream as far as a Cow.³

But it was the skin of the rhinoceros, 'impenetrable' 'inflexible' and 'musketproof', that most impressed every spectator; and Parsons saw in its folds an example of 'the great Wisdom of the Creator'. For if the skin were continued all over the Creature, as the Skins of other Animals, without any Folds; he could not bend any way, and consequently not perform any necessary Action; but that Suppleness in the Skins of other Quadrupeds, which renders them flexible in all Parts, is very well compensated in this Animal by those Folds; for, since it was necessary his Skin should be hard for his Defence, it was a noble Contrivance, that the Skin should be so soft and smooth underneath, that when he bends himself any way, one Part of this

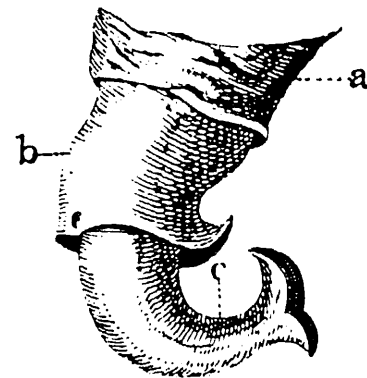


Fig. 76: The *Penis* in an erect state.
a. The first *Theca* or *Præputium*, of a darker colour.
b. The second *Theca*, being flesh-coloured.
c. The tubular *Glans Penis*.

¹ *Ibid.* p. 534

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

Board-like Skin should slip or shove over the other; and that these several Folds should be placed in such Places of his Body, as might facilitate the Performance of every voluntary Motion he might be disposed to.'

This rhinoceros probably went on tour in England, and may have got as far as Norwich in June 1744.

Between 1741 and 1758 a female Indian rhinoceros travelled extensively in Europe in the company of her enterprising Dutch owner, Douwe Mout van der Meer, a one-time employee of the Dutch East India Company. While bears and elephants had to walk, Clara, as she was named by admirers in Germany, rode in a specially built wooden wagon; and her progress has been tracked by T. H. Clarke from the posters advertising her arrival in a town. She probably came to London three times in the 1750s, and on her last visit died on 14 April 1758 at the age of 21. This 'Surprising, Great and Noble Animal', exhibited at 'the horse and Groom in Lambeth-Marsh', had been 'caught in *Asia*, in the Dominions of the *Great Mogul*' and, according to her poster, was 'as tame as a Lamb, because it was caught very young, and for two Years successively has run round the Tables of Gentlemen and Ladies like a Lap-dog'. By the time she reached London, she was '12 Feet thick, and 6000 Pounds Weight', consuming 'every Day 70 Pounds of Hay, and 25 Pounds of Bread', and drinking '14 Pails of Water'. (Plate VII.)

The enormous consumption of huge visiting herbivores must have depleted the resources available for the hard-worked native horses, and cattle, which often went hungry in the winter months, not to mention those for a largely undernourished populace. The rhinoceros painted by Stubbs in 1790 or 91 was probably the young animal sold to Thomas Clark of Exeter 'Change, who mounted exhibitions of curiosities and had a large menagerie. And the one Johnson saw in Versailles, where it lived from 1770 to 93, had been procured for Louis XV from India.

Alligators and Crocodiles

James I's plans to keep crocodiles in the undrained marshes of St James's Park came to nothing; for one thing, alligators and crocodiles cannot survive without warmth. 'An alligator stuff'd' hung in many an apothecary's shop, and the museum of the Royal Society exhibited the 'Skeleton of a Crocodile or *y^e Leviathan*', but few had seen the living creature. However, on the day he visited the rhinoceros, Evelyn also

went to see a living Crocodile, brought from some of the *W. Indian* Islands, in every respect resembling the Egyptian Crocodile, it was not yet fully 2 yards from head to taile, very curiously scaled & beset with impenetrable

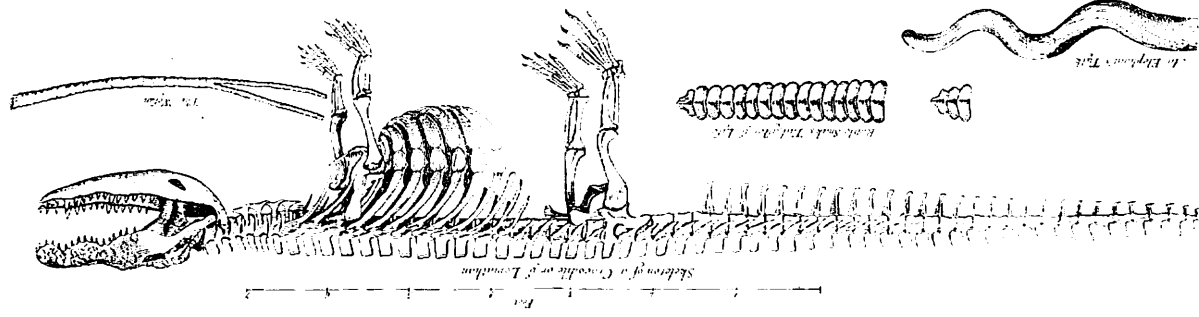


Fig. 77: 'That most ample & perfect skeleton in our Repository at the R. Society.'

An edict of 1697, designed to preserve the monopoly of the Royal Menagerie at the Tower, forbidding the display of 'lions, lionesses, leopards, or any other beasts which are *fera natura*', had proved ineffective. Ned Ward records that tigers were 'grown so common they are scarce worth mentioning', and in 1773 a catalogue of London sights stated that there were 'Lions, Tygers, Elephants, &c. in every street in Town'.¹ It should be noted that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the word tiger was used very loosely, and could be applied to leopards, jaguars, panthers, cheetahs, or panthers. And since these animals were commoner than the true tiger, when this word is used, it is likely to refer to one of them rather than to *panthera tigris*.

The Versailles Menagerie

Louis XIV set up the Versailles menagerie in 1662, thinking to establish a research centre as well as the most splendid collection of caged beasts in the world. As each new specimen arrived, it was painted or drawn by one of his designated artists; and dissections, often attended by the king himself, were regularly performed. By 1775, however, when Johnson, Mr and Mrs Thrale, and Queeney, made their autumn visit to the 'mean' town of Versailles, with its 'palace of great extent', the menagerie had lost its lustre, and was shortly to come to an inglorious end during the Revolution.

Il faut détruire les ménageries quand les peuples manquent de pain, car il est honteux de nourrir des bêtes à grands frais quand on a autour de soi des hommes qui meurent de faim.²

[Menageries must be destroyed when the people lack bread, for it is shameful to feed animals at great expense when all around us men are starving to death.]

Ever the curious observer, Johnson recorded in his journal:

Cygnets, dark; their black feet; on the ground; tame.—Halcyons, or gulls. Stag and hind, young.—Aviary, very large: the net, wire.—Black stag of China, small.—Rhinoceros, the horn broken and pared away, which, I suppose, will grow; the basis, I think, four inches cross; the skin folds like loose cloth doubled over his body, and cross his hips: a vast animal, though young; as big, perhaps, as four oxen.—The young elephant, with his tusks just appearing.—The brown bear put out his paws;—all very tame. The lion.—The tigers I did not well view.—The camel, or dromedary with two bunches called the Huguin, taller than any horse.—Two camels with one bunch.—Among the birds was a pelican, who being let out, went to a fountain, and swam about to catch fish. His feet well webbed: he dipped his

¹ Quoted by Alcock.

² Quoted in Crankshaw, p. 83.

head, and turned his long bill sideways. He caught two or three fish, but did not eat them.¹

Private Collections

Private menageries flourished in the eighteenth century as never before in England, and business for commercial dealers in exotic fauna — of whom there were large numbers in London — was brisk and profitable. Some collections, undoubtedly, were status symbols. In the 1730s, the second Duke of Richmond housed five wolves, two tigers, two lions, three bears, two leopards, a chimpanzee, three raccoons, an armadillo and a host of lesser beasts in heated catacombs beneath his park at Goodwood. On the other hand, Marmaduke Tunstall kept an extensive collection of living animals in Welbeck Street, London, which attracted the natural historians of the day, who, like the owner, wished to 'study their habits, manners and economy'.²

Queen Charlotte's zebra

The first zebra to set hoof on British soil came from the Cape of Good Hope, brought by Sir Thomas Adams in HMS *Terpsichore*, and was presented to Queen Charlotte in 1762. Its picture appeared in the *London Magazine* for July of the same year with an accompanying article. (Fig. 81.) This animal, from her majesty's good natured indulgence has been seen by numbers of people, and is now generally feeding in a paddock near her majesty's house. The representation fronting the title is a very exact one and the following lines are descriptive of its properties.

The Zebra, one of the most beautiful creatures in the world, is about as tall as one of our asses. Its head is small, and its neck finely turned; its body also is small, and as elegant as that of a race horse; and its legs are scarce thicker than those of a stag. It has long ears, and has the sense of hearing in great perfection. It has also a tail that almost sweeps the ground*; and this is covered with a short fur all the way to the end, where it has a bush of fine hair, in the manner of a lion's.

The whole animal is striped with three colours, black, brown, and white; these are all very bright, and the hair is glossy; they turn cross wise of the body, but are not parted like the streaks of the tiger but surround the whole body from the top of the back to the middle of the belly.

It is one of the most inoffensive creatures in the world, feeds on grass and other vegetables, and is gregarious. It brays loudly and harshly, like the common ass. When two or three hundred are seen feeding together, which is frequently the case, they must afford a most agreeable sight.

*This being different from the *Representation*, we may suppose not to be a *genus* characteristic, or, that the *Females*, of which *Gender* this is, have shorter Tails.³

¹ Boswell II, p. 395.

² July, 1762.



Fig. VII. Clow in show, in the background her travelling wagon.

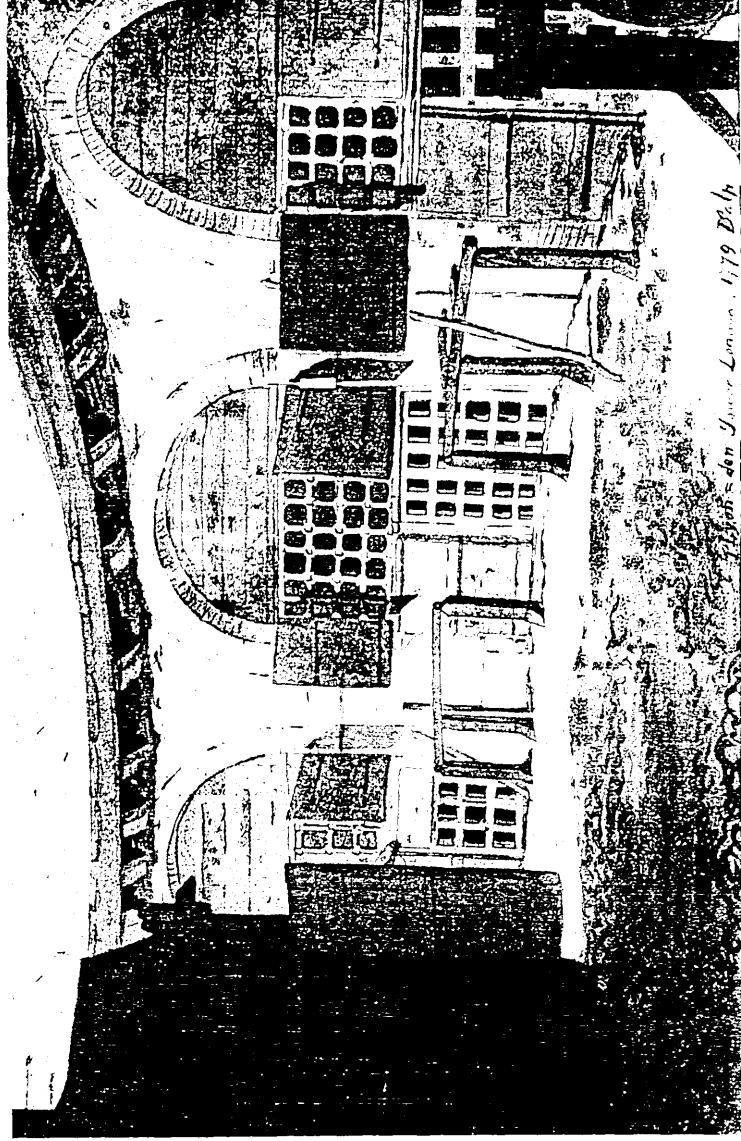


Fig. VIII. The Yard and the Travelling Wagon, 1779. D. G. Kneller