

POSSIBLE PREDATION OF A BLACK RHINOCEROS CALF BY A LION

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While on a wilderness trail in Umfolozi Game Reserve, I was awakened at 02h00 (14 June 1987) by the roaring of a lion *Panthera leo*, this being followed by the persistent high-pitched screaming of an animal in distress. While following the lion's spoor later that morning I disturbed an adult male lion from a carcass, which proved to be a freshly killed black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* (Figure 1). There were signs of a struggle, the rhino had been



Figure 1. The fresh carcass of a young black rhino.

disembowelled and there were well-defined claw and tooth marks on the neck. The horn length of 18–20 cm indicated that it was probably almost two years old, although the sex could not be determined with certainty. This circumstantial evidence strongly suggested that the lion had killed the rhino, a view supported by the experienced game guard Gqugasa Ntombela who accompanied me.

There was no sign of the presence of an adult rhino, and indeed a young black rhino is often independent of its mother at this age.

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