

## 9 PERISSODACTYLA

The Perissodactyla are the odd-toed ungulates, large in size with toes separate and sheathed in horny nails. This whole order has very few surviving species though there are many fossil families and genera which no longer exist. It comprises six genera and only 17 species amongst which are all the large herbivorous hooved animals having an uneven number of toes on the hind feet. In Pakistan today only one species survives to represent the whole order, and this itself is sadly on the verge of extinction in this particular region.

### FAMILY RHINOCEROTIDAE – RHINOCEROSSES

#### Key to the Family RHINOCEROTIDAE

Body semi-naked or only sparsely covered with hair. Three toes on all feet. Central toe larger than others. One or two horns of dermal origin (not connected with the skull) and growing from the upper part of the snout.

Genus *RHINOCEROS* Linnaeus, 1758

#### RHINOCEROS UNICORNIS

*Rhinoceros unicornis* Linnaeus, 1758; Great One-horned Rhinoceros, or Indian One-horned Rhinoceros.

This huge and almost prehistoric-looking animal now has chances of survival in several widely separated reserves (e.g. Manas, Kaziranga, Jaldapara and Chitawan) which have been created in northern Assam and southern Nepal in the Himalayan foothill zone, regions of extensive swamp and tall grass. It is difficult to believe that it once ranged right across the Himalayan foothills to Pakistan. The great Moghul Emperor Baber gives accounts of hunting this beast in the Vale of Peshawar in what is now the North West Frontier Province. They were armed only with a cross-bow and arrow for such hunts. This was around 1526 and presumably at that time suitable riverine grass thickets and swamps extended right across the foothill zone of the Himalayas. That the animal was well known to the Indus Valley peoples in ancient times is further corroborated by seals which have been excavated at Harappa (Sahiwal District on the Ravi River) clearly depicting *R. unicornis*.

### FAMILY EQUIDAE – HORSES AND ASSES

#### Key to the Family EQUIDAE

Horse-like mammals with reduction of toes to one broad hoof. Body well covered with hair and having crest of longer hairs on top of neck.

Genus *EQUUS* Linnaeus, 1758

#### Key to the Pakistan Species of EQUUS

Body uniformly coloured reddish-buff with dark brown spinal stripe.

... *Equus hemionus*

#### EQUUS HEMIONUS

*Equus hemionus* Pallas, 1775; Asiatic Wild Ass (see Illustration 47).

Subspecies *Equus hemionus khur* Lesson, 1827; Indian Wild Ass or Ghor-Khar

**Taxonomy:** The Asiatic Wild Ass ranges from the high uplands of Central Asia and formerly through the desert areas of Afghanistan, Iran and Baluchistan to Sind and the Rann of Kutch. Five distinct subspecies have been recognized. The Kulan, being the nominate subspecies *E. hemionus hemionus*, extends from Mongolia at the extreme north east of its range to Kazakhstan in the west. The Kiang, *E. hemionus kiang*, is well known to travellers in Tibet and Ladakh (Stockley, 1936). The Syrian Wild Ass, *E. hemionus hemippus* is presumed to be extinct (Bannikov, 1971). The Persian subspecies, is *E. hemionus khur* and this animal extends from Afghanistan down into Iran and the Rann of Kutch.

**Description:** Larger than the Wild Asses of Ethiopia and the Sudan (*Equus asinus*), the Onager is a handsome reddish-tan animal with creamy-white legs, belly and a dark brown hog mane. It differs also from domestic strains and the North African Wild Ass, in having comparatively shorter ears, no trace of horizontal dark stripes on the upper part of the legs, besides being markedly bigger, and lacking blue grey fur tones.

The upright stiff mane of hairs ends abruptly on the poll and consists of dark chestnut hairs up to 6.5 cm in length in the middle of the neck where they are longest. The head is comparatively large with a broad rounded muzzle which is creamy-white and the upper lip in skins examined from the Rann of Kutch, is well covered with stiff bristle-like fawn hairs. The ears have conspicuous dark brown tips on their inner margin and measure 19–20 cm in length. There is a broad dark chestnut brown stripe extending from the withers to the proximal third of the tail. This stripe is narrow over the shoulders, being 1 cm wide broadening noticeably over

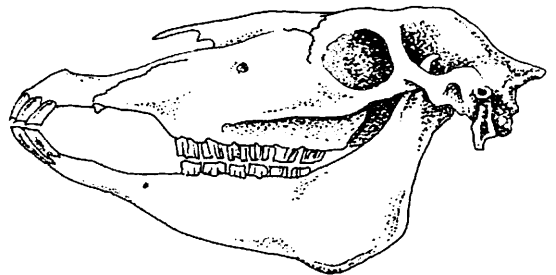


Fig. 45 Showing lateral view of skull of adult male *Equus hemionus*. Note very small tush or canine tooth in upper jaw only.