

ROOKMAAKER, L. C. *The rhinoceros in captivity: A list of 2439 rhinoceroses kept from Roman times to 1994*. SPB Academic Publishing, The Hague: 1998. Pp 410; illustrated (166 monochrome pictures, 41 tables). Price Fl 225, US\$ 128 (laminated boards). ISBN 90-5103-134-3.

No-one, perhaps, knows more about rhinoceroses than Dr Kees Rookmaaker, the former curator of the sadly defunct Rhino Museum near Melkrivier, South Africa. Currently at work on an encyclopaedia of the Rhinocerotidae, he is the compiler of the *Bibliography of the rhinoceros* (1983), a “bibliographic masterpiece” according to the anonymous reviewer in *Archives of natural history* 11: 525 (1984). His new book is a masterpiece too, not least because it is much more than the subtitle suggests. It is not merely a “list”. It is a biographical dictionary of every one of 2,439 rhinoceroses known to have lived in one or other of 500 zoos, travelling menageries, circuses or game farms in 80 countries on all six inhabited continents. For each specimen, as far as could be determined, the name, dates of birth or acquisition and death, the circumstances of the acquisition, and “home” zoo(s) are given. Some entries are more than half a page, others merely three or four lines long.

Thus we learn, for example, that the first black rhinoceros kept in captivity since Roman times was “Theodore”, who lived in the London Zoo from 11 September 1868 until his death of stomach cancer on 12 April 1891. Lorenzo Cassanova (or perhaps his Sudanese helpers) captured him on 12 February 1868 near Cassala in Upper Nubia. Imported (actually purchased in Trieste) by the animal dealer Carl Hagenbeck, he was sold for £1,000 to the Zoological Society of London. Rookmaaker also provides an illustration, and lets us know where others can be found. Not all of the 2,439 rhinoceroses that Rookmaaker has traced are as well documented, of course, but the superabundance of information should gratify anyone with an interest in these intriguing great beasts.

The original database was built up by sending questionnaires to hundreds of zoos, many of which replied with photocopies of all their records, and photographs to boot. Access to the literature is presumably the least one could expect of a Rookmaaker.

*The rhinoceros in captivity* is arranged by species and then by town or city or in the case of travelling menageries by country or continent. For each of the five species of Rhinocerotidae Rookmaaker offers a comprehensive introduction to the animal in captivity. Specimens are not merely listed; the individual “biographies” have been scanned for information on longevity and births. Chronological lists and a roster of collections give one good overviews. The profusion of well-reproduced photographs and other illustrations should please any rhinocerotophil. The 19-page index makes it easy to use the book for quick-reference.

Any book as chock-full of facts and statistics as Rookmaaker’s is bound to have an error or two; anything else would be supernatural. However, I found very few and really only very minor mistakes. The London dealer Charles Jamrach did not “start an animal trading business in 1840” (p. 87); he took over the business, established in the mid-1830s, on the death in 1841 of his elder brother William. Carl Hagenbeck’s Tierpark in Stellingen, Hamburg, was inaugurated in 1907, not 1908 (pp 76, 198). The site at Stellingen had no animals until 1901, and thus no Sumatran rhinoceroses in 1885 (p. 141). They were kept in Hagenbeck’s zoo in Neuer Pferdemarkt, Hamburg. The first zoo in modern times to exhibit a black rhinoceros was actually not the London Zoo (p. 164); it was Hagenbeck’s menagerie in Spielbudenplatz, Hamburg (which Hagenbeck had acquired from the Jamrachs’ father, himself an animal dealer until 1860). Only subsequently did the Zoological Society of London acquire “Theodore”. The Paris Ménagerie du Jardin des Plantes bought its first black rhinoceros from (Carl) Reiche not Reiches (p. 220). I do not make these corrections as an exercise in nit-picking, although it may well give that impression. Rather, they show that the substance of Rookmaaker’s labour of love remains sound. Other readers – and the book deserves many – may stumble over other small errors or misprints, but that should not detract from the fact that *The rhinoceros in captivity* is a model of zoo (and zoology) historiography – full of useful as well as pleasantly trivial information, crisply written and meticulously documented. The family Rhinocerotidae is fortunate to have such an enthusiastic and competent chronicler as Kees Rookmaaker.