

BIG GAME SHOOTING IN THE INDIAN EMPIRE

BY

LIEUT.-COLONEL C. H. STOCKLEY
D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., F.R.G.S., F.Z.S.

LONDON

CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD.

1928

absolute equanimity, while three weeks later a herd of bison, bolting some fifty yards from the track, stampeded them so far into the forest that it took me two days to recover my discarded baggage.

Useful facts to remember when elephant shooting are that they have very poor eyesight, fair hearing, and excellent scenting powers.

Twice the circumference of the forefoot gives the height of an elephant.

A shootable elephant will have 18 inches of tusk showing and 2 feet not visible ; the tusk should weigh about 40 lb.

If a herd stampedes in your direction keep still. To run is fatal. A shot into the base of the trunk will turn a charging elephant.

If you have to run, go downhill ; an elephant cannot travel fast or control his course well on a down grade.

Elephant shooting is not allowed in any district where " kheddars " are held, but may be shot in parts of Burma under special licence, and there are always a good many declared rogues in Coimbatore and other adjacent districts.

THE GREAT INDIAN RHINOCEROS ✓

(*Rhinoceros unicornis*)

THE JAVAN RHINOCEROS ✓

(*Rhinoceros sondaicus*)

THE SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS ✓

(*Rhinoceros sumatrensis*)

VERNACULAR NAMES.—*Gaında*, Hindostani ; *Kyan*, Burmese.

DESCRIPTION.—The general appearance of a rhinoceros is well known, so it is only necessary to note the differences between the three species.

R. unicornis is the largest of the three species, running to 6½ feet at the shoulders, while *R. sondaicus* does not measure more than 6 feet, and *R. sumatrensis*, which has two horns, to the single one of each of the other species, stands only about 4½ feet.

R. unicornis has a skin folded so as to resemble armour-plating, and it is also covered with little studs.

R. sondaicus has the folds but not the studs, the skin being netted all over with fine cracks.

The skin of *R. sumatrensis* is blacker, rather hairy, and in texture more like the surface of an orange.

The horn of *R. unicornis* runs to 25 inches in length and 21 inches basal circumference, but 16 inches is a good horn, and few go bigger than this.

R. sondaicus has a more slender horn, which reaches nearly 11 inches in length.

R. sumatrensis has two horns, of which the longer front one usually attains a length of about 14 inches. There are two much longer horns in the British Museum which are ascribed to this species, but they were purchased in Malaya, and appear to me to be typical horns of the African Black Rhinoceros from the lower slopes of Kenia.

Asiatic rhinoceros horns are of considerable value for medicinal purposes in Eastern Asia, and African horns are imported and sold as Asiatic horns. The longer horns are, however, almost invariably rejected as not genuine. I have seen a good many authentic horns of *R. sumatrensis*, and met sportsmen who have shot them, and have never seen or heard of one of more than 14½ inches.

DISTRIBUTION.—*R. unicornis* is still plentiful in the Nepal Terai, and is found along the foot of the Himalayas to Assam, where it was once plentiful, but has been so reduced in numbers that the shooting has been closed. It does not appear to reach Burma.

R. sondaicus is found from the Sikkim Terai and the Sunderbunds throughout Assam and Burma to Malaya.

R. sumatrensis is found from Chittagong and Eastern Assam throughout Burma to Malaya.

HABITS AND CHARACTERISTICS.—*R. unicornis* is essentially a dweller in high grass, in which it makes tunnels like enormous rabbit-holes. They have a trick of depositing their ordure at one place, piles several feet high being found. Many have been shot by men waiting at these. They are usually driven

by elephants, and numbers have been shot by "ringing" in the Nepal Terai.

They are usually peaceful beasts, but will sometimes charge an elephant and rip it badly with their lower tusks.

R. sondaicus has a great range, and is found in swamp or on ridges 5000 feet above sea-level. Forest and somewhere to wallow are what they need.

R. sumatrensis seems to stick to the hills.

Both these species are shy and retiring, but will charge freely when wounded.

They have been terribly poached of late years, and the shooting of them is now forbidden in Burma. The only permit I know of being granted of recent years was to a monied American who shot a cow with a small calf, which, of course, also died. In lower Burma and the Malay Peninsula, they are much caught in pits, and by poachers sitting up over salt-licks. Every part is saleable for medicinal purposes, the blood and horns being particularly valuable.

Their period of gestation is reported to be fifteen months for *R. unicornis*, and seven and a half months for *R. sumatrensis*. The period seems to be very small for the last species. I do not know on what evidence these are based.

Only one calf is produced at a birth.

All species are very easily killed. A chest shot, breaking up the big blood-vessels, is quickly fatal.

THE MALAY TAPIR

(*Tapirus indicus*)

VERNACULAR NAME.—*Tara kyan*, Burmese.

DESCRIPTION.—A parti-coloured, pig-like beast about 40 inches at the shoulder, with a prolonged nose, which almost amounts to a trunk. The fore-part to the shoulders is black, behind the shoulders it is greyish white, except for the lower half of the hind limbs. The hair is very scanty, the impression being given that the body is naked.

DISTRIBUTION.—In the Indian Empire it is found in Mergui and Southern Tenasserim. It is also found in Western Siam, the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra.