



The WHITE RHINOCEROS

of the Umfolozi Game Reserve

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Photographs: W. F. Schack

A detailed description of the methods employed to check the number of White Rhinoceros in existence, and a reassuring statement regarding the future of these animals which, perhaps more than any others, represent a challenge to wild life preservationists in South Africa.

THE present home of the White Rhinoceros is in the Umfolozi Game Reserve, situated between the White and the Black Umfolozi Rivers. These rivers, however, do not act as barriers, and animals can cross into the adjoining Crown Lands and Native Reserves, especially during the dry winter months when the rivers are low. Reports are occasionally received of White Rhino straying into Native Reserves where they are injured or killed by Natives. During certain months of the year, deaths are also reported in the Umfolozi Game Reserve; these deaths, amounting to about five per annum, mostly result from injuries sustained when fighting.

At one time it was feared that the White Rhino in Zululand were gradually decreasing in numbers and that this species would at some future date become extinct. A count of the White Rhino was made early in 1932 when the number estimated was approximately 220, and another in 1936 when 226 animals were seen, excluding calves.

For the anti-nagana campaign in Zululand, when extensive aerial spraying was done with DDT for the eradication of the tsetse fly *Glossina pallidipes* in the Umfolozi Game Reserve, more detailed information in regard to the number and distribution of the White Rhino was required.

A cursory preliminary count, made in October, 1948, clearly indicated that the total White Rhino exceeded 300. After this, arrangements were made for two organised counts when special consideration was given to (a) available water supply which would prevent the rhino from wandering over long distances; (b) visibility, which is very limited in long grass and in bush thickets with heavy shrub growth, which conditions usually exist from January to May, depending upon the rainfall; (c) completing the count in as short

FACING: Surely one of the finest White (Square-lipped) Rhino photographs ever taken.



a period as possible, since the animals cannot be prevented from wandering backwards and forwards from one area to another.

The first count was from the 3rd to 9th November, 1948. For this purpose three European Game Rangers and seventy-five Natives were employed under the direct supervision of Senior Game Ranger Adank. Both Europeans and Natives employed had a thorough knowledge of the area, which knowledge was essential on account of the hilly nature of the country and of the heavily bushed valleys. The area was divided into eighteen sections according to the hills, watersheds, valleys, bushed thickets and available roads and tracks. Each section was counted and recorded separately.

The Methods Employed For the larger and more heavily bushed areas, additional Natives were required, while for the small open areas less Natives were used. Special measures were employed to avoid duplication as far as possible. The Natives were lined up at distances so that in open country each man could see one or two of his companions on either side. In more heavily bushed areas the men were spaced within shouting distance of each other. By means of recognised sounds and signs, each man knew which animal he had to count.

Special precautions were taken not to disturb the animals if possible. After the count for each area was completed, the Natives were lined up in the same order in which they had proceeded through the area, and were carefully questioned about the description of each rhino or group of rhino, the size, approximate age, sex, locality, whether disturbed or not and whether on the move, and, if so, in which direction. Whenever there was any doubt as to whether any rhino or group of rhino had been duplicated, these were left out of the total count. Transport was used to convey the Natives to the next area with as little delay as possible, bearing in mind the possibility of animals infiltrating into or out of the areas not yet counted.

The Figures Obtained For the first count the total White Rhino amounted to 557. These were recorded as follows: (1) full grown, including cows and bulls which could not be identified, 229; (2) bulls, 74; (3) cows, 40; (4) young unidentified, 30; (5) big calves 55; (6) small calves, 59.

The second count was from the 7th December to 14th December, 1948, and an additional European Ranger and seven Natives provided by the Natal Parks Game & Fish Preservation Board were employed. The count was again conducted on the same lines for the first count but with a view to obtaining more details about cows, bulls and calves as well as to the re-distribution after a lapse of four weeks.

The total for the second count was 554. These were recorded

FACING: An unusual photograph of White Rhinos resting in the shade of thorn bushes.



as follows (1) full grown, including cows and bulls which could not be identified, 101; (2) cows, 153; (3) bulls, 142; (4) young unidentified, 61; (5) big calves 30; (6) small calves, 67. The small calves would be up to about 18 months old, the big calves from about 18 months to 2½ years old and the young from about 2½ to about 4 years old.

Although it is known that a few Black Rhino do exist in the Mona and the Toboti-Gcoyi areas, these were not recorded as such. Only two Black Rhino were recorded from the Munyana area in the Southern Crown Lands.

The total number of White Rhino counted is higher than any previous total recorded and reflects an increase in the number over the past 16 years. This is confirmed by the number of small calves recorded with each count. There is, therefore, no imminent danger of this species becoming extinct within the near future.

FACING: Another outstanding White Rhino photograph by W. F. Schack.

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As Others See Us

THE following is a slightly abbreviated excerpt from the "Sport Gossip" columns of *The Star* of June 28. As pointed out by Mr. J. H. Orpen, our ex-President, it shows us "as others see us."

It is an old and odd belief in South Africa that most Australians are a tough-hearted, rough people.

But on the Germiston railway station the touring soccer players showed that Australians can be as gentle as Mary's lamb. Stepping off the Durban train to catch their Witbank connection the Australians were appalled to see three dead springboks, with address labels attached, lying sprawled on the platform in the cold of the morning.

Lifting the head of one buck with its throat ripped out by some unknown and accurate hunter one of the Australians said sadly: "Do you mean to say South Africans shoot these beautiful animals?" When told that they do there was a chorus: "It's a crying shame."

Bob Lawrie, captain of the team, said he could never shoot such a gracious creature, and told a story. A friend of his once shot a kangaroo at close quarters. Badly wounded, the kangaroo stood up on its back legs, fixed him with a scornful stare and literally wept. The hunter quickly finished him off but vowed that never again would he shoot another one.

