

HOOFED MAMMALS OF THE WORLD



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31 THE ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROSSES

The Indian rhinoceros is the largest of the rhinoceroses found in Asia. Its strange form, ungainly head, thick skin with the numerous folds and the horn on the nose, make one think of some prehistoric creature. Indeed it is a creature from the past, for fossil remains found from the Pliocene and Pleistocene eras show that at one time the rhinoceroses were much more common than they are today and that there were many more kinds. They were found in Europe, Asia, Africa and North America. Formerly the Indian rhinoceros was found throughout most of India; but now its range is limited to northern Assam, northern Bengal and eastern Natal. In a recent (1971) survey it was estimated that there were about six



INDIAN RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros unicornis*)

hundred and thirty of these animals in existence. The great majority of these rhinoceroses are found in Assam, where, fortunately, most of them are on reserves: the Kaziranga Sanctuary in Sibsagar District, Assam, is the most important. Since it is doubtful if there are fifty living rhinoceroses left in either Nepal or Bengal, it is unlikely that the Indian rhinoceros can long survive without the strictest kind of protection.

All of the Asiatic rhinoceroses have suffered much the same fate and all are on the verge of extinction. Certain parts of this animal, including the blood, bones, skin, but chiefly the horn, have for years been believed by the natives and especially by the Chinese to contain medicinal properties. In former years, even in England, it was believed that poisoned wine poured into a cup made of rhinoceros horn could easily be detected as it would foam immediately. Another version was that the power of such a cup would make the poison harmless. Needless to say, these cups were in great demand.

On account of their beliefs, the Chinese are willing to pay huge sums for a dead rhinoceros, or for its horn; and in consequence this animal has been diligently hunted and is still poached on the reserves where it is making its last stand.

The home of the Indian rhinoceros is the tall grass and canes which grow to a height of over ten feet on the plains of its habitat. Seldom does it leave its fastnesses, for it has learned that they afford it vital protection. Nor is it ever found far from water, for it enjoys wallowing in the mud.

The two lower incisor teeth of the Asiatic rhinoceroses are sharply pointed tusks which are too small to be visible when the animal's mouth is closed; but it is with these tusks that the animal does its fighting and not with its horn as many people suppose. The African rhinoceroses do not have such tusks, and their horns are their weapons. The horn of the rhinoceros

is made of solidified hair-like fibers which grow from the skin. When the animal is skinned, the horn can be removed from the skull with the skin since it is not solidly attached.

The Javan rhinoceros looks very much like a small Indian rhinoceros, but the texture and the fold of the skin on the fore-shoulder serve to distinguish it. In the Indian rhinoceros this fold has a backward sweep as it reaches the upper shoulder, but it does not quite join the fold that continues over the back just behind the shoulder. This backward sweep of the forward fold gives the shoulder "plate" the appearance of a triangle.

In the Javan rhinoceros the front fold extends up over the foreshoulder continuously to the opposite side and is more or less parallel to the fold of the rear shoulder. The female differs from the female Indian rhinoceros in that it has no horn.

The Javan rhinoceros is at the present time one of the rarest of animals. From its former extensive range it is now restricted to a few isolated spots. The majority of these animals are to be found in reserves in western Java and Sumatra. However, a few individuals may still exist on the Thailand frontier and in the mountain regions of Laos. The present population of these rhinos could be as low as fifty or sixty.

The Javan rhinoceros prefers thick jungle and is even found in the mountainous forests. Like the Indian rhinoceros it spends much of its time wallowing in the mud and water and often these characteristic mudholes reveal its presence.



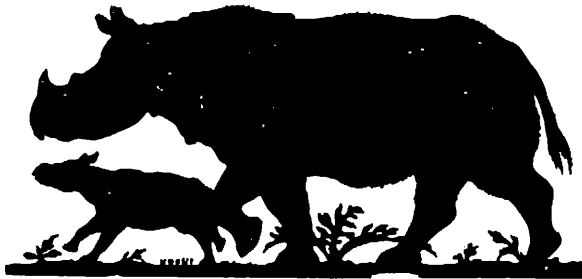
JAVAN RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*)

INDIAN RHINOCEROS. Skin dark gray with a fringe of black hair on ears and end of tail. Differs from the Javan rhinoceros in its larger size and the fold of the skin on the foreshoulders, which extends backward toward the rear of the shoulder. The thick hide is covered with numerous rounded tubercles which look like rivet heads. Both sexes carry horns, the females generally smaller. Now restricted to limited areas in Assam, Bengal, and eastern Nepal.

THE JAVAN RHINOCEROS. Similar in color to the Indian rhinoceros but smaller; and the skin lacks the rounded tubercles; the finer cracks of the skin form a mosaic pattern. Fold at the front of the shoulder extending up over the back, parallel to the fold behind the shoulder. Formerly found from eastern India south through the Malay Peninsula to Sumatra and Java. Now restricted to a few isolated regions in Burma, Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java, Thailand and Laos.

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THE TWO-HORNED RHINOCEROSES



SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS (*Didermocerus sumatrensis sumatrensis*)

The Sumatran rhinoceros has shared almost the same fate as the other Asiatic rhinoceroses. The incessant hunting of the animal for its horns has wiped it out from most of its original range. A few are still said to exist in Sumatra, but judging from reports, they are very scarce. It is no longer to be found in the mountain forests of Borneo where it has been hunted to extinction. Undoubtedly, more are found in the mountainous parts of the Malay Peninsula than anywhere else in the world. There are infrequent reports of it from Thailand; a few still inhabit Burma; but it is now considered doubtful if any remain in Assam.

The Sumatran rhinoceros lives in dense mountain forests and in former years wore deep trails along the mountainsides. The thick cover makes it a difficult animal to hunt, but the natives dig pits in the trails and in this way capture the animal. Like the other Asiatic rhinoceroses it makes deep wallows in the mud where the natives wait for its coming.

The young Sumatran rhinoceros is covered with curly brown hair, but this disappears as the animal grows older. Two subspecies of this animal are recognized: the hairy-eared form from Assam and northern Burma, which now may be extinct, and the MALACCAN RHINOCEROS, *D. s. niger*, of southern Burma and the Malay, which is darker with the bristle-like hairs of the body black.

The black rhinoceros of Africa is the most common rhinoceros today. Although it has been exterminated in much of South Africa, it is still found in goodly numbers in Tanzania

and Kenya. This animal seems to prefer the dry open country, but it also enters the mountainous forests to some extent. It never is found far from water, for it delights in mud baths. This animal is a browser, feeding on the leaves and twigs of certain trees: it seems to prefer the thorny acacias. The pointed upper lip is of great assistance in pulling food into the mouth. Like all the rhinoceroses its eyesight is poor but its sense of smell and hearing is acute. It is the most pugnacious of the rhinos and will sometimes charge without provocation.

Once when we were tracking elephants with two natives, our path led us past a large acacia tree under which three lions were resting. We kept on our way undaunted until we approached close to the lions. The natives shouted and waved their arms and the lions bounded away. About a mile farther on, we came across a single rhinoceros enjoying his siesta. This time the leading native deviated from the trail, giving the rhino a wide berth, and only after we were safely past did we pick up the elephant trail again. This shows how great a respect the natives have for this animal.

The white rhinoceros was first discovered and described in South Africa. Formerly it was common over much of the open country; but its numbers were so greatly reduced that at one time all of the remaining white rhinoceroses were found in the Umfolozi and Hluhwe Reserves in Natal. Under protection, the numbers have risen and other areas have been stocked from these. In 1900 Major A. St. H. Gibbons sent to Europe the skull of a white rhinoceros which had come from the west bank of the Nile in the southern Sudan. Thus, at the time when the white rhinoceros was declining, a new race was discovered two thousand miles to the north. This has been under severe pressures.

Unlike the black rhinoceros, the white rhinoceros is a grazer, preferring the open grassy country. It is more social than the

black rhinoceros, small parties associating together. It is also of a much more peaceful disposition. In walking, it holds its heavy head very low, the nose almost touching the ground.



HAIRY-EARED RHINOCEROS (*Didermoceros sumatrensis lasiotis*)

SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS, ASIATIC TWO-HORNED RHINOCEROS. Smallest of the rhinoceroses. General color brownish gray, thinly covered with short black hair. Ears edged with short black hair. As the name implies, it has two horns; and like the other Asiatic rhinoceroses, the lower incisors form two small tusks. Formerly found from Bengal and Assam, through Burma, Thailand, the Malay Peninsula to Sumatra and Borneo. The typical form is restricted to the two islands. World population estimated to be about one hundred and fifty (1967).

HAIRY-EARED RHINOCEROS. Subspecies of the Sumatran rhinoceros, characterized by the long hair which fringes the ears and the lower portion of the tail. Skin grayish, covered with inch-long dark brown bristles. Skin with two folds extending over the body but not so pronounced as in the one-horned rhinoceros. The northern form of the Sumatran rhinoceros, found in Bengal, Assam and northern Burma.



BLACK RHINOCEROS (*Diceros bicornis*)

BLACK RHINOCEROS. Dark brown in color with a relatively small head and two horns. The muzzle is rather narrow and the upper lip is triangular with a hooked tip. Formerly found throughout most of East Africa from Ethiopia to the Cape, and southwestern Angola. Now exterminated in the southeastern part of its range. In the northwest it extends to Lake Chad.

WHITE RHINOCEROS, SQUARE-MOUTH RHINOCEROS. General color slightly lighter and grayer than the black rhinoceros. Head elongated, the two horns long and the lips broad. Formerly found in South Africa north to the Zambesi. Now restricted to two reserves in Natal. The northern subspecies, *C. s. cottoni*, is found from the west bank of the upper Nile in the southern Sudan, to the border of Central African Republic and the northeastern Congo and northern Uganda.

