

... eagles all took their fish supplies from these same pools, and the Bakaratse natives were occasionally to be seen wading in line, middle or breast deep, in the water, spearing fish, often of large size, in their steady progress. The pelicans pouched their prey, and flew off each morning to a neighbouring saltpan to swallow and digest them. The remains of the banquets of the grand African fishing eagle (*Haliaeetus vocifer*) were often to be seen on the shores of the Botletli River, but these were easily to be differentiated from those which had fallen victims to the otter. In these last a piece or two out of the shoulder had usually only been devoured, very much after the habit of our English otter where fish is plentiful.

Skins of both species—the Cape and the spotted-necked otter—were brought to us by natives in this part of Ngamiland, and occasionally the animals themselves were seen in the living state. They are shy, nocturnal creatures, however, as in most other parts of the world, and do much of their hunting by night. Our waggon dogs sometimes drove them from their hovers. Walking down to the Botletli one morning at early dawn, to shoot wildfowl, I had a fine view of a bitch otter of the Cape species swimming with three quarter-grown young ones along the banks of the river. All swam with complete grace and ease, and were manifestly as perfectly at home in the water as our British species. I have seen both this and the spotted-necked species at other times on the Botletli, as well as on the Limpopo, the Gamtoos (Cape Colony)—the Cape otter only—and other rivers in South Africa. Dr Lönnberg suggests that the Cape otter subsists mainly on mollusca, this view being apparently derived from its dentition and from the habits reported of its near ally, the Rhodesian clawless otter. In some situations and under certain conditions I believe that this otter, with its powerful jaws and teeth, can and does subsist on a diet of this kind. But my own observation and the reports of natives convince me that in suitable haunts it partakes of a much more varied dietary. It is a curious fact, by the way, bearing out the view that this otter can adapt itself largely to a diet of crabs, as well as crawfish, mussels, and other shell fish, that on many parts of the coast line of Cape Colony, sometimes where there are no rivers near at hand, this otter is to be found supporting itself apparently with perfect ease.

The spotted-necked otter (*Lutra maculicollis*) is somewhat darker in colour than the last-named species, and measures and weighs considerably less. A fair specimen will measure about 34in. to 36in., of which the tail extends to some 14in. or 15in. The upper and lower lips are white, and the throat and chest are curiously spotted with light red, whence the animal derives its name. Both fore and hind feet carry claws upon each toe, and all are strongly webbed. This otter, in fact, seems even more perfectly adapted for existence in the water than its larger and heavier cousin the Cape otter. In Cape Colony this species is not well known, though I believe it has been found in some few rivers. Lichtenstein, who procured the first specimens during his travels in South Africa (1803-06), is believed to have obtained them from the Bambusbergen, in the north-east region of the old colony. It has been found in the Transvaal on the Limpopo, Ngamiland, Natal, Mozambique, Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and on the west coast from Angola and the Cameroons northwards as far even as Liberia. As a rule hunters in South Africa are busied in pursuit of other and to them more important game, and hitherto little attention has been paid to unobtrusive creatures such as the otter. In the future I am convinced that this species (the spotted-necked) will be observed and reported from many more localities than at present. I believe that many years ago I saw one or more of these otters on the Gamtoos River in Cape Colony, and I have little doubt that this otter will be identified from various rivers in Kaffraria, and even in the old colony, as well as from many other localities farther north. The habits of this otter are very much like those of our own British species. It is an expert fisher, and devours at times other kinds of food, such as small mammals, the young and eggs of wildfowl, crabs, fresh-water mussels, and other odds and ends. Coarse fish of various kinds are extremely plentiful in most South African rivers, and this otter has small difficulty in satisfying the major portion of its wants from this source.

The Rhodesian clawless otter (*Lutra capensis hindei*) has, as

there has been a regrettable demand for the wing and tail feathers of the South and Central American jabiru stork for the decoration of ladies' hats. The result has been to cause a serious diminution in the numbers of these handsome and useful birds, and the desertion of former haunts by the survivors, which frequent the open Savanna country bordering the marshes and shallow-water lagoons in Venezuela, Guiana, and Brazil. Among the European population of Venezuela the jabiru is known by the name of "garson soldado," from the military appearance presented by a flock of these birds when marching in line. It is to be hoped that some legislation may be brought about, as in the case of the white egrets, to put a stop to the wanton destruction that is reported of the useful and inoffensive jabiru.

A Rare Mollusc.—It is sometimes asserted that our knowledge of the living animals of the world is approaching completion, and that few more species remain to be discovered. An American writer has, however, recently cited the remarkable case of the mollusc *Spirula* as a proof to the contrary. *Spirula* is a delicate pearly-white, spirally twisted chambered shell, somewhat like a tiny nautilus, but with the whorls open instead of in contact, its diameter being little more than an inch. It is extremely fragile, and hence cannot survive long on a surf-beaten shore, and yet on many tropical coasts is found in such multitudes as to form veritable ridges or windrows. Nevertheless, apart from fragments, the specimens of the complete animal hitherto obtained number but half a dozen. The first, which was dissected and described by Sir R. Owen many years ago, was brought from New Zealand; the second, of which the origin is unknown, was purchased from a dealer for the British Museum, and was likewise dissected by Owen; the third, now in the museum at Sydney, was collected near Port Jackson; the fourth was dredged near New Guinea by the Challenger; the fifth was taken in the same manner by the U.S. steamer Blake in the West Indies; while the sixth and last was captured off Sumatra in a deep-sea net by the recent German scientific expedition on the *Valdivia*. If an animal so common as *Spirula* must be known from only six specimens, a *fortiori*, how vast must be the number of rare animals living in the ocean of which we have no knowledge whatever!

The Northern Square-mouthed Rhinoceros.—A massive head of the square-mouthed rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sinuatus*) has just been mounted by Mr Rowland Ward, by whose courtesy we have had an opportunity of inspecting it. The animal was shot in the Lado enclave by Major Powell-Cotton, for whose private museum the trophy is destined. The horns are much worn down, the front one, although measuring 24in. round the base, being only 16in. along the curve, and the hinder one 6½in. The animal belongs to the race described by Mr Lydekker as *R. sinuatus cotius* in the *Field* of Feb. 28, the type being a skull presented by Major Powell-Cotton to the British Museum (Natural History). About the middle of the last century the late Sir Samuel Baker described a horn which he had seen at Khartoum as being 5ft. long and immensely thick, which not improbably belonged to this race. As shown by Mr Oldfield Thomas (*Nature*, Oct. 18, 1900), Professor J. W. Gregory believed he saw three examples of the square-mouthed rhinoceros in Leikpia, though he failed to shoot one and Mr Thomas then recorded the first authentic evidence of the existence of this rhinoceros north of the Zambesi, he having identified the skull of one shot by Major Gibbons on the Upper Nile near Lado. This skull and the horns were exhibited by Dr Schlater at the scientific meeting of the Zoological Society on Dec. 18, 1900, and about three years later he exhibited a front horn obtained by Capt. Hawker from Belgian officers at Lado, and taken from a specimen shot in the district. The finest horn yet secured north of the equator is one belonging to Brigadier-General Mahon (for whom it was mounted by Mr Rowland Ward). This horn, measuring 36½in. along the outside curve, was exhibited at a meeting of the Zoological Society on Nov. 17, 1903, when it was stated that Mr Ward had known of these horns being seen from the Soudan for some years before Major Gibbons secured his specimen.

[Advertisement].—"The Sportsman's Handbook to Practical Collecting, Preserving, and Artistic Setting Up of Trophies and Specimens, with Synoptical Guide to the Hunting Grounds of the World." By Rowland Ward, F.Z.S. Price 2s. 6d. net. London: Rowland Ward Limited, The "Jungle," 15, Piccadilly.