



**THE FIELD**

**QUARTERLY MAGAZINE**

**AND REVIEW.**

---

**VOLUME III.**

---

LONDON:  
PUBLISHED BY HORACE COX, 346, STRAND, W.C.

---

1872.

## NATURAL HISTORY.

### THE HAIRY RHINOCEROS.

THE collection of the Zoological Society—the richest in the world in large pachyderms—has recently been increased by the addition of a rhinoceros that has never before been seen in a living state in the Western hemisphere. India possesses three distinct species of this genus—the great Indian rhinoceros (*R. indicus*), of enormous size, capable when wounded of overturning even an elephant in its desperate charge. This species is sufficiently familiar to the inhabitants of the metropolis, as two specimens, a male and a female, have long been denizens of the Regent's Park Gardens. The lesser Indian species (*R. sondaicus*) is much smaller, not being more than 3½ft. to 3¾ft. high. This is found at present in the Bengal Sunderbunds, more abundantly in Burmah, and through the Malayan peninsula to Java and Borneo. The third species is widely diffused. It was originally observed in Sumatra, and consequently named *Rhinoceros sumatranus*, but it is the most common rhinoceros in the Indo-Chinese countries and down the Malayan peninsula. It exists in Sumatra only among the islands. Jerdon informs us that it has been shot as high as lat. 23° north, near Sandoway.

This species was first described by Mr William Bell in the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1793, from a specimen shot near Fort Marlborough. This animal was 4ft. 4in. high at the shoulders, and 8ft. 5in. long from the nose to the end of the tail. The ears were described as edged with short black hair, and the surface of the body was rough and thinly covered with black hair, the skin being soft, and not more than the third of an inch in depth even where thickest, and easily cut through with a common dissecting knife; and the animal was correctly described as not having "that appearance of armour which is observable in the single-horned rhinoceros."

In the unrivalled osteological collection in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, Lincoln's-inn-fields, a complete skeleton of this species exists, and also several sets of loose bones; but the living animal had long been a desideratum in our European vivaria.

About five years ago a Calcutta paper announced the capture of a young female two-horned rhinoceros, which was taken near Chittagong, after having exhausted itself in its efforts to escape from a quicksand. In this condition it was secured by the united efforts of some 200 men, and, being bound with ropes, was secured to a tree. On the arrival of the news at Chittagong, Capt. Hood and Mr Wickes started with eight elephants to secure the prize, which was found to be the two-horned Sumatran species described by Sir Stamford Raffles. After being bound with ropes between the elephants, she was marched into Chittagong, having to be conveyed across two considerable rivers, through one of which she was towed by the elephants, and the second she passed in the ordinary cattle ferry boat. So great was the attention she excited, that the train of followers sometimes reached a mile in length. Arrived at Chittagong, she was placed in charge of an attendant, and by feeding with chupatees and plantain leaves she became somewhat tamer. When first captured she was about 6ft. in length from the forehead to the root of the tail, and upwards of 4ft. in height. The horns were small, not more than 3in. in length, the upper being in front of the eyes.

The existence of the specimen became known to Mr William Jamrach, a well-known natural-history collector, then located at Calcutta, who made three journeys to Chittagong to arrange for her purchase and transport. The animal was confined by ropes and chains some miles from Chittagong, and, from her size and want of docility, the transport was attended with great difficulty. Fortunately, she had become attached to her feeder, and followed him by night as he carried a lantern and proceeded singing through extemporised roads to Chittagong, the passage through the villages being forbidden by the authorities. There she was embarked with great difficulty in a small vessel, being chained down on the deck, and conveyed to Calcutta. On her arrival she was so exhausted by her efforts to escape that she lay down after being landed, and had to be dragged by main force into the bazaar.

The transport to England was a matter of the greatest difficulty. The strength of the animal is so enormous that it would have been impossible to confine her in an ordinary stall, such as would have served for a horse or ox, or even for a docile elephant. Mr Jamrach therefore had a cage built of teak, in the strongest possible manner. The dimensions of this cage were 12ft. by 9ft., by 8ft. high. As it now stands empty in the Zoological Gardens, it looks as if it would serve for a very fair-sized country cottage. In this the animal safely reached England, in company with five small elephants, a couple of tigers, and a number of smaller animals of various kinds. On arrival at the Gardens, it was found that there was no gate sufficiently wide to admit the cage, and a portion of the inclosure had to be taken down to permit the entrance of the huge and intractable beast, which, tied by large ropes, was, not without some considerable risk to all concerned, conducted to the inclosure where she will in all probability spend the remainder of her life.

The so-called Sumatran rhinoceros differs from the better-known Indian species in having two horns, in this particular resembling the two-horned African species, *Rhinoceros bicornis*. It is covered with very coarse hair, which in this specimen is reddish-brown on the head and shoulders, and greyish on the body and hinder quarters; and the skin, in place of being hard and horny as in the ordinary species, is soft and flexible—a slight fold behind the shoulders serving as an indication of the massive armour-like plates on the greater Indian animal. The hair is particularly abundant on the ears, where it forms a fringe, which is very accurately rendered by the artist; the tail is also furnished with a tuft of coarse hair. In habit the animal is evidently aquatic, and, despite of the cold season at which she has arrived, has already taken to the bath.

At the present time she is recovering the effects of the voyage, although she still bears on her hinder legs the marks of the ropes by which she was secured in India; and around the fore leg is a huge strap and ring by which she may be secured—a precaution perfectly necessary, as, like the other species, her temper is morose and disposition dangerous.

Should our description lead our readers to inspect this animal, which is so interesting, as being now seen for the first time in captivity, we would strongly caution them against standing behind her even at a very considerable distance. This caution is the more necessary, as exceedingly unpleasant results have occurred from its neglect.