



NATURAL HISTORY



Thick-Skinned Animals in Bronx Park

Of all the animals which impel our admiration, there are probably none upon which we look with so much awe as we do upon the thick-skinned species, connecting us as they do with the past ages of the mammoth and the dinotherium. A very wonderful and comprehensive collection of them has recently been brought together by the New York Zoological Society and just at this time attention has been attracted to it by the society's request for funds with which to pay for several of the individuals. Some of the specimens are so rare that when they were offered upon the market there was nothing to do but to pick them up as quickly as possible, else the opportunity to secure any of their kind might have vanished forever.

The collection, which is to be installed in the elephant house, when that building is completed, consists of four elephants, two African rhinoceroses and one Indian rhinoceros. The tapirs are also to be housed in the same building, but they are not thick-skinned animals and will be kept there only for convenience.

Of the elephants, the one which the society has had the longest, and which is so far the best known is the Indian elephant, Gunda. He is a fine male and his special value is found in the fact that of all the Indian elephants which one sees in captivity, about twenty-nine out of every thirty are females. The males have to be specially ordered and this was the case with Gunda, who was captured wild in the interior of Assam, northwestern India, and came to the Zoological Park in May, 1904, as the gift of Col. Oliver H. Payne. His intelligence is marked, and in two days he learned to place pennies in a bank and ring the bell.

One of the most characteristic features of elephants is their ears, and it is largely by this means that they are classified. Gunda's ears, it will be seen, are rather small, somewhat irregular and entirely different from the ears of the other species in the collection.

For five years the New York Zoological Society has had a standing order for a specimen of the colossal Soudan African elephant. It was this species to which Jumbo belonged and also from which comes the world's record pair of elephant

tusks, eleven feet five and one-half inches in length, presented to the National Collection of Heads and Horns by Mr. Charles T. Barney. A full grown animal is worth about \$8,000, but so rare are they that the society had no immediate hopes of obtaining one. Fortune turned, however, and early this year Carl Hagenbeck, of Hamburg, offered two babies for \$2,500 each. They were immediately accepted, arrived in good condition, and are now temporarily in the antelope house. They are a male and a female and have been named Kartoom and Sultana.

The ears of the Soudan African elephant are nothing short of stupendous, the largest ones on record having a maximum vertical diameter of no less than six feet five and one-half inches, and a transverse diameter of four feet one and one-half inches. The height of the animal to which it belonged is estimated to have been over thirteen feet.

When so much is expected in the ears of Soudan elephants, it is particularly gratifying to know that those of Kartoom and Sultana are perfectly satisfactory. Those of Kartoom are particularly immense. They overlap each other on the neck, they cover almost the entire shoulder, and descend to a point three inches below the lower line of the jaw, and both are without a flaw.

By far the rarest thing in elephants, however, is the little pigmy West African elephant named Congo, which, according to Prof. Noack, of the London Zoological Society, is the type specimen of a new sub-species, *Elephas africanus pumilio*. It was at first thought that he belonged to another species, *Elephas africanus cyclotis*, but closer examination proved otherwise.

There is considerable similarity in the ears of these two species, *Elephas africanus pumilio*, and *Elephas africanus cyclotis*, those of Congo being somewhat oval in shape, with a very decided lappet on the bottom. Congo differs from the other, not only in some minor ear markings, but also by the unusual shortness of the "finger" on the lower border of the tip of the trunk and the greater length of the upper "finger." He also appears to have a darker skin than has the more frequently observed *Elephas africanus cyclotis*. He is the gift to the society of Mr. Charles T. Barney.

The society is very fortunate in being the possessor of two fine young African rhinoceroses, Speke and Victoria. The African rhinoceros was once very common in a larger portion of East and South Africa, but over fully nine-tenths of the area it has now been exterminated by hunters, and unless the Government is able to take immediate steps for its protection, it seems that its ultimate extinction is a matter of only a short time.

The female was captured in July, 1905, in the northern part of German East Africa, within about sixty miles of the head of Speke Gulf, which is the southeastern arm of Lake Victoria-Nyanza, by an Austrian named Fischer. Lieut. Fischer was hunting with a party of natives when they suddenly came upon a mother rhinoceros with a baby one month old. The natives immediately decamped, but the lieutenant stood his ground, shot the mother and secured the young one. She was then slung on a pole, with her head resting in a gunny sack, and was carried ten days' journey to Speke Gulf. Victoria finally came into the possession of Mr. Louis Ruhe, the animal dealer of New York, and by him she was sold to the society for \$5,000.

The second African rhinoceros, named after the famous explorer who gave his name to the gulf, was captured at about the same place a year later. At Mombasa he was seen by Mr. Richard Tjader, who was in Africa in the interest of the Museum of Natural History, and through his offices a purchase was effected by cable for \$3,000. When transportation and care were added, the total price reached \$4,000. Speke is the gift of Mr. Frederick G. Bourne.

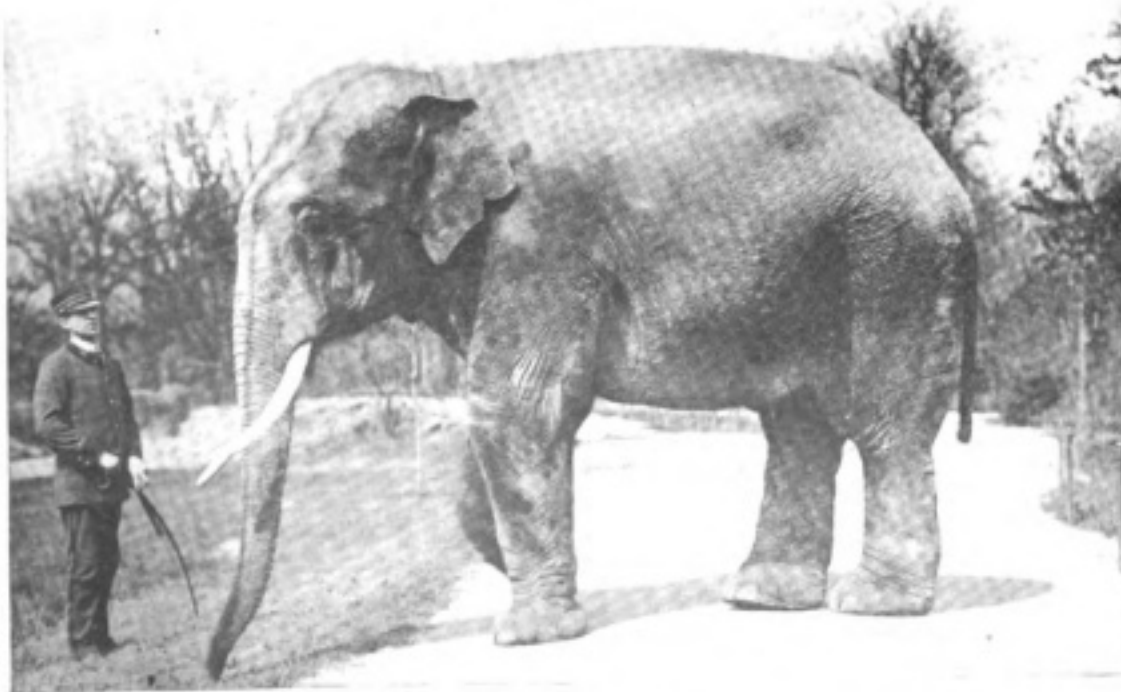
Of all the wild animals which are still to be found in their native haunts, there is none more wonderful than the Indian rhinoceros. When fully grown he is between five and one-half and six feet tall and over ten feet long, while over his entire body are immense armor plates of thick skin articulated by thinner and more flexible sections. The Indian rhinoceros is rapidly becoming extinct, like his cousin the African rhinoceros, and therefore peculiar interest attaches to the specimen in the Zoological Park. He is the first one to appear in the market for fifteen years.

In 1906 the Maharajah of Nepal decided to have a stupendous rhinoceros hunt, and to be sure of success he turned out his entire army of 20,000 men and surrounded a tract of country which was known to contain the animals. Several large ones were killed and four young ones were captured, but of these latter two subsequently died. One of the survivors went to the Hamburg Zoological Society, and the other was sold by Carl Hagenbeck to the New York Zoological Society for \$6,000.

The hippopotami are by no means so rare in captivity as are the preceding animals. They are still found in Africa in considerable numbers, and moreover they breed readily in captivity. The one now belonging to the society was born in the Central Park menagerie, and is the gift to the society of Mr. Samuel Thorne.

The elephant house, in which the thick-skinned animals will be kept, is one of the last of the buildings to be erected in the Zoological Park, and in many respects it is the culminating feature, filling as it does a wide gap and linking the northern and southern portions. In all it will have accommodations for six elephants, three rhinoceroses, two hippopotami and four tapirs. The inclosures for each of these animals are unusually roomy and the outside corrals are designed to provide both sunshine and shade, as well as plenty of room for exercise. This is in accordance with one of the fundamental policies of the New York Zoological Society, which is that unless animals can be kept in comfortable captivity they should not be kept at all.

In this immense building, with its massive



GUNDA, THE NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S MALE INDIAN ELEPHANT.

structure, it is expected that the people of New York and the thousands who annually visit the city on their various missions, will be able to see for generations to come specimens of the few surviving members of the animal kingdom which are capable of conveying some idea of the size and appearance of prehistoric animals.

Carried a Live Skunk by the Tail.

WEST PARK, N. Y., Oct. 28.—*Editor Forest and Stream:* Both of our hired men have often insisted that a live skunk could be safely carried by the tail, insisting that they had often seen it done. Since the veracity of both men happens to be absolutely unquestionable, my father did not hesitate to mention this fact in his writing. He was at once "called down" by several naturalists, one of them being Prof. Bailey. So it happened that the other morning, when I caught a skunk in a trap set for rats in front of my hen house, I at once informed father that I had a skunk for him and it was a good time to put his theory in practice by taking his own medicine, etc. We all had our misgivings, but were also secretly delighted when he proved, in spite of his seventy years, to be game.

By means of a long pole the poor skunk was dragged about and roughly treated to get him good and mad. Then my father liberated him, bare-handed from the trap, seized him by his waving plume-like tail, and jerked him quickly into the air. There was nothing doing, Prof. Bailey to the contrary notwithstanding. Whether or not the skunk could have discharged his phosphorus-sulphurous essence cannot be said; certainly he did not. After exhibiting and being cheered by the spectators (who all stood out of range) my father dropped the skunk in a barrel.

Having often watched skunks discharge their perfumery I am firmly convinced that no skunk, held in mid air by the tail, could shoot. This is affirmed by a good skunk story that the hired man tells, he being an eye witness:

"One night when we were out coon huntin' the dogs ran a skunk in the wall. So and so pulled him out by the tail, holding him up with one hand, while he threw rocks at him with the other. Unluckily while feeling for a stone he lowered Mr. Skunk so that he got his front feet on the wall. Quicker'n lightning, before the thought, he got soaked for fair right in his eye. He just rolled on the ground; it near blinded him."

(Then someone always asks, "What became of the skunk?")

The nature fakirs often misuse the skunk, speaking of him as though his terrible odor were always present, it being one of his external fixtures. In truth there is no neater or cleaner animal than a skunk or one with less odor. Those who have very often dug out skunks in the winter time say that their den, even when occupied all winter by five or six skunks, is odorless, dry and clean.

JULIAN BURROUGHS.

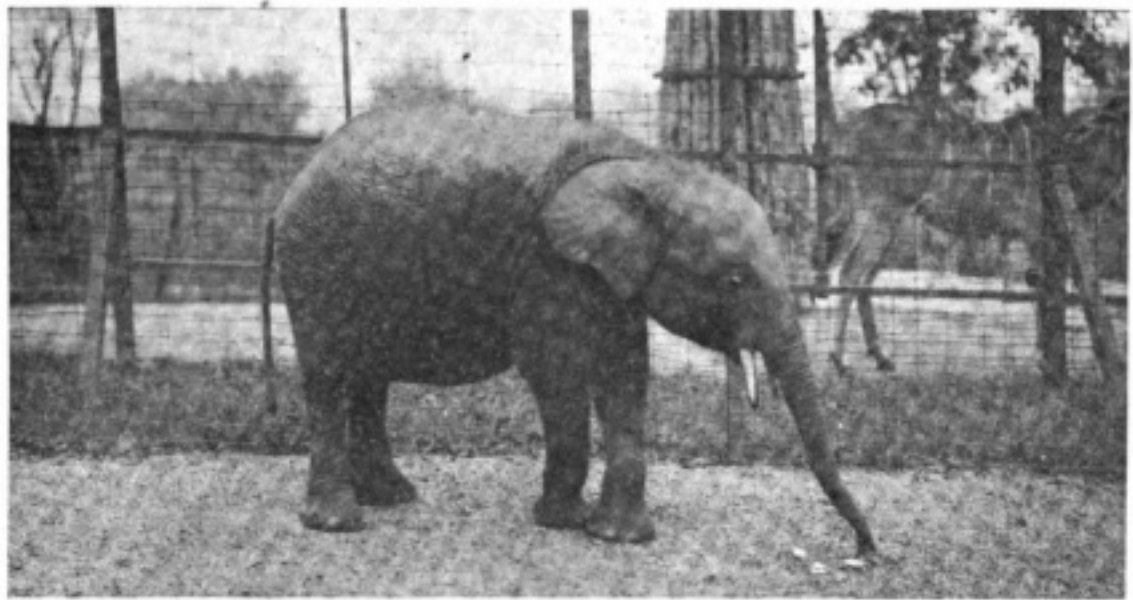
Wild Animal Dangers in India.

A RECENT report of the East Indian Government gives statistics as to the number of deaths caused by wild animals, as follows:

"The total number of persons killed by wild animals in 1906 was 2,084, as against 2,051 in 1905. Wolves are reported to have killed 178 persons in the United Provinces, and in the Madras Presidency tigers were responsible for the greatest mortality reported, while a mad wolf in the Sholapur district, Bombay, caused sixteen deaths. In Bengal the number of persons killed by elephants rose from nine in 1905, to eighteen in 1906, and a proposal has, it is stated, been made by the magistrate of Cuttack for the organization of khedda operations in that district.

"Tigers killed a larger number of persons than in 1905 in Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces and Burma, and steps have been taken for the destruction of man-eating tigers in these provinces. Three man-eating tigers were destroyed in Sambalpur, Angul and Mandia in 1906.

"The persons reported to have died from snake bite numbered 22,854 as against 21,797 in 1905, the increased mortality being ascribed to high floods, which drove snakes into houses and homesteads."



CONGO, THE PYGMY ELEPHANT OF A NEW SUB-SPECIES.

Alligators in China.

A RECENT issue of the London Times announces the receipt at the Zoological Park of three young Chinese alligators (*Alligator sinensis*). This is a matter of very great interest, for up to the year 1879 it was generally believed that alligators belonged to the new world exclusively. It is true that nearly ten years before Swinhoe had demonstrated the existence of a great saurian in the Yang-tze-kiang described as a crocodile. In 1879 a French official of the Chinese customs, Mr. Fauvel, published a detailed account of the animal, which showed it to be an alligator not distantly related to the well known alligator of the Southern States, though much smaller. It is greenish-black above, and yellowish and grayish below. This is believed to be the origin of the famous dragon of the Chinese.

The Kuskwagamutes.

A PRESS dispatch says that Dr. George B. Gordon, curator of the department of American archaeology of the University of Pennsylvania, who has just returned to Philadelphia after penetrating the Alaskan wilderness for 2,000 miles on the Mrs. C. C. Harrison expedition, reports the discovery of a small tribe of aborigines, hitherto unknown to ethnologists.

Dr. Gordon calls these unknown American inhabitants "Kuskwagamutes." He brought here a collection of their clothing, arms and utensils. The tribe was found about 800 miles from the

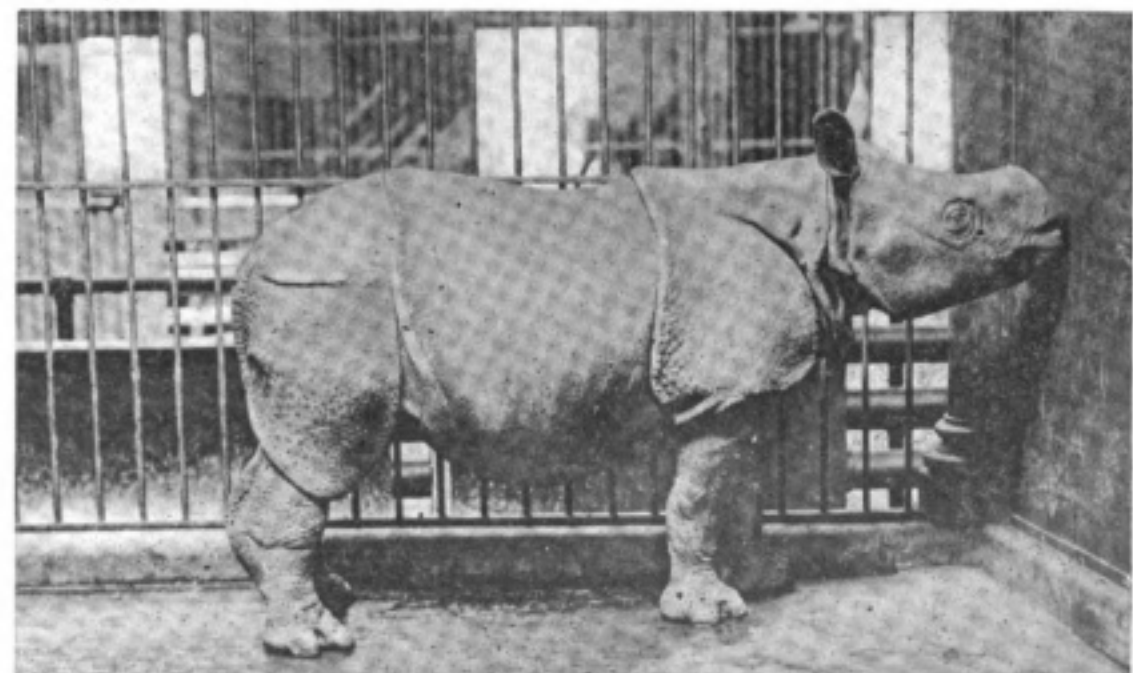
mouth of the Kuskokwim River, and they were few in number. This people, Dr. Gordon says, came of Athabaskan stock, but have been conquered by the Eskimos and have almost been absorbed by them. Instead, however, of wearing furs like the Eskimos, they made the skins of loons and other great birds into robes for clothing.

Deer and Bicycle Lamp.

It is reported from Sayville, L. I., that on the night of Oct. 31—which it is to be noticed was Hallowe'en, a time when spirits are said to walk and all sorts of unexpected and uncanny things to happen—Wm. E. Gorton, riding along the highway on a bicycle, was charged by a deer, upset and thrown far. It is said that Mr. Gorton was riding near the Cutting estate, and that the deer, a buck, attracted by the light on his bicycle, charged the light and a considerable mixup followed.

After the bicycle had been overturned, the light still burned, and the buck charged it a second time. It passed on over the light and struck the wire fence about the Cutting place, and after charging the fence several times, as if it were an enemy to be defeated, it started off down the road.

THE FOREST AND STREAM may be obtained from any newsdealer on order. Ask your dealer to supply you regularly.



THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S YOUNG INDIAN RHINOCEROS.