

ASSAM DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

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Darrang.

REFLECTED BY
Not to be

B. C. ALLEN, C. S.

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bears, wild pig and different kinds of deer, of which the principal varieties are the sambar (*cervus unicolor*), the *bara-ngha* or swamp deer (*cervus darawelli*), the hog deer (*cervus porcinus*), the barking deer (*cervulus muntjac*) and the spotted deer (*cervus aris*).

Elephants are fairly common, especially near the hills, **Elephants.** and when the crops are ripening do much damage unless the numbers of the herds are regularly kept down. For this purpose the district is divided into seven mahals or tracts. The right to hunt in each mahal is sold by auction and the lessee is required to pay a royalty of Rs. 100 on every animal captured. The method usually employed is that known as *mela shikar*. Mahouts mounted on staunch and well-trained elephants pursue the herd which generally takes to flight. The chase is of a most arduous and exciting character. The great animals go crashing through the thickest jungle and over rough and treacherous ground at a surprising pace, and the hunter is liable to be torn by the beautiful but thorny cane brake, or, were he not very agile, to be swept from his seat by the boughs of an overhanging tree. After a time the younger animals begin to flag and lag behind, and it is then that the opportunity of the pursuer comes. Two hunters single out a likely beast, drive their elephants on either side, and deftly throw a noose over its neck. The two ends of the noose are firmly fastened to the *kuntia*, as the hunting elephants are called, and as they close in on either side, the captured animal is unable to escape, or to do much injury to his captors.

who are generally considerably larger than their victim. The wild elephant is then brought back to camp where it is tied up for a time and gradually tamed.

Forty-six animals were caught in 1902-03, the last year in which the mahals were sold by the Deputy Commissioner. Rhinoceros live in the swamps that fringe the Brahmaputra, or near the hills, and are now extremely scarce. They breed slowly, and, as the horn is worth more than its weight in silver, and the flesh is prized as food, they present a tempting mark to the native hunter. Wild buffaloes are occasionally found in the same locality, and wild bulls sometimes serve the tame cows that are kept by the Nepalese on the Brahmaputra *churs*. Bison are generally found near the hills and in the neighbourhood of tree forest; tigers, leopards and bears are met with in almost every part of the district. Wild animals cause little loss of human life, but, in 1903, are said to have accounted for over four thousand head of cattle. The number of human beings killed in that year by different animals was as follows:—Elephants 2, tigers 12, bears 9, wild buffaloes 6, wild pigs 5, snakes 14, total 48. Rewards were at the same time paid for the destruction of 30 tigers, 66 leopards, and 17 bears.

Small game include wild geese and duck, snipe, florican (*ypheotis bengalensis*), black and marsh part-ridge, pheasants, jungle fowl, and hares.