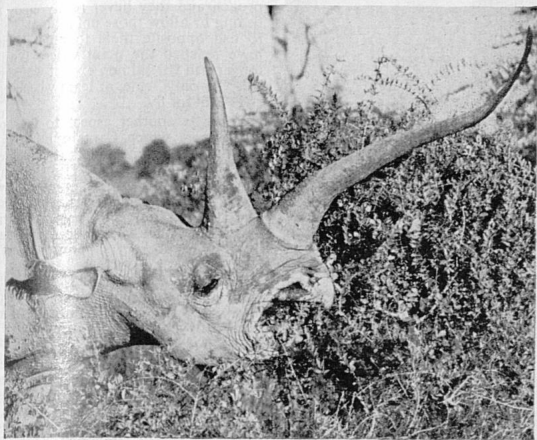


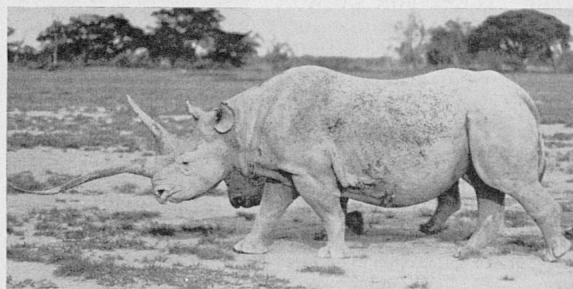
KENYA'S BLACK RHINOS

Pictures and commentary by C. A. SPINAGE

The prehistoric-looking rhinoceros has long excited zoological interest, but even now little is known of either its habits or physiology: These pictures and the commentary with them present both fact and theory



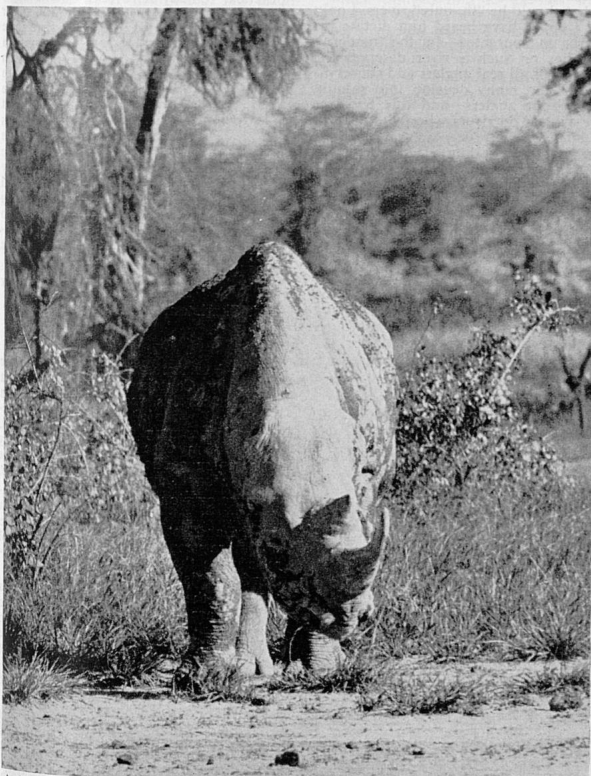
GERTIE, one of the two well-known female black rhinos of the Amboseli National Reserve, feeding on a bush of *Acacia mellifera*. Unlike the white rhino, which grazes, the so-called black variety browses on shrubs and low-hanging trees, though it does not, as popular belief maintains, feed on the acacia's 2in. long thorns, but selects the young and tender shoots. Both black and white varieties are, in fact, darker and paler shades of dirty brown, but the black is smaller. They have other physical differences, especially about the muzzle. In the picture the flattening of the underside of the horn, due to its resting on the ground, can clearly be seen.



GERTIE AGAIN, with her exceptionally long anterior horn and, mostly hidden, an earless calf to which she gave birth. The black dots on her back are probably warble flies. The rhino's horn is peculiar in that it consists of tough keratin fibres cemented together, forming, in fact, a solid clump of hair. It is thought that the beasts keep their horns ground to a sharp point by rubbing them on the ground. A horn the length of Gertie's would be of little use in defence or in an excavation after salt.



ONE OF THE FEW ludicrous sights which East Africa's game present is that of rhinos lying down. They accomplish this simply by leaning and falling, and their centre of gravity is so low that the rush of a lion has been reported to bowl one over—an otherwise formidable task. Rhinos take a dust or mud bath every day, depending on the season, presumably to get rid of the myriad warble flies which seem considerably to annoy them, despite their thick hides.



A CLOSER VIEW of Gertie's earless calf. One auditory orifice (left of head) is visible as a round, black mark. Animals with deformities such as this do not normally survive, but this particular beast seems to be managing quite well. Groups of rhinos, up to perhaps five, are frequently encountered at Amboseli, but they are generally thought of as solitary animals.

WOUNDS, often suppurating, are so frequently noticed behind rhinos' shoulders that they have led to the assumption that they are due to glands, although they have been attributed to tick birds' pecking the skin.

