

A STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF BENGAL

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DISTRICTS OF BHÁGALPUR AND THE SANTÁL PARGANÁS.

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into shallow water. The lower classes of fishermen eat their flesh, and their oil is collected as a specific for rheumatism.

The rodents include squirrels, rats, hares, and porcupines. The striped squirrel (*Sciurus palmarum*) is the most common of the tribe. Indeed, it is doubtful whether any other squirrel is found. The gerboa rat (*Gerbellus Indicus*) is said to be sometimes met with. The natives call it *harín-mús* or antelope rat. The bandicoot (*Mus bandicoota*) which derives its name from the Telinga word *pandikoku* or pig rat, is found in towns. The brown rat (*M. decumanus*) is found in most masonry buildings; and the Nepal rat (*M. plurimammis*) in the northern plains. The common mouse (*M. urbanus*) is also plentiful. The Indian porcupine (*Hystrix leucura*) or *sáhi*, is becoming scarce, as it is eaten by the lower castes. It is usually obtained by being smoked out of its burrows. When attacked, it usually runs a little, and then suddenly charges backwards with its spines erect. The smaller or Bengal porcupine is also found and hunted down. The common Indian hare (*Lepus ruficaudatus*) or *khargosh* is very abundantly found; it is eaten by all classes, being considered pure food.

There are no wild elephants now in Bhágalpur, but down to the end of last century they were found in large numbers both north and south of the Ganges. Even in Dr Buchanan-Hamilton's time (1807-13) they did much mischief along the foot of the southern hills, from Rájmahál to Monghyr. He states that they had then, according to native tradition, been only thirty or forty years in this part of the country. Whence they were said to come, he does not mention. He estimated them in 1810 at one hundred head. He also speaks of a colony of elephants frequenting the marshy parts of the north of the District. Rhinoceros (*Rh. Indicus*) were formerly numerous in *parganá* Náthpur, whither they used to wander from the neighbourhood of Jalpaiguri. One or two are still sometimes seen, but very rarely. It is much larger than the animal met with in the Sundarbans (*Rh. sondaicus*). The Indian wild boar (*Sus Indicus*) is found in all parts of the District, but chiefly in the large uncultivated tracts north of the Ganges, where it does considerable damage, and also supplies the numerous low castes with food.

There are no true stags in the District, but smaller deer are numerous. The *bárasingha* or swamp deer (*Rucervus Duvancellii*) is sometimes met with as high as eleven hands. It is common near the Tarái, but scarce in the southern hills. The *sámbar* stag (*Rusa Aristotelis*) is similarly distributed, but is a taller and heavier animal