

FRENZ, Lothar. *Nashörner – ein Portrait*. Matthes & Seitz, Berlin: 2017 (Naturkunden 36). Pp 128; illustrated. Price € 18.00 (hardback). ISBN 9783957574732.

The death of Sudan (1973–2018) in March of this year heralded the end of a two-million-year-old era. The last male Northern White or Cotton's Rhinoceros, *Ceratotherium simum cottoni*, on Earth died peacefully, if ill, in a wildlife refuge in west-central Kenya. With only Sudan's zoo-born daughter and granddaughter left, neither pregnant from the old bull, the fate of the subspecies, if not full species, is sealed – unless biotechnologists find a way around nature. (Some geneticists consider Cotton's Rhinoceros a unique species on the basis of presumed isolation from the southern African population of White or Square-lipped Rhinoceroses (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) for hundreds of thousands if not a million years, but most taxonomists apparently disagree.) At least Sudan was not the victim of poachers. One of the most prolific conservationists and scientists to have written about the fate of endangered rhinoceroses, not just the Northern White, was not so fortunate. Esmond Bradley Martin (1941–2018) was murdered in Nairobi only a month before Sudan passed away. Both tragedies in Kenya made headlines worldwide. The fate of the Rhinocerotidae – and of game wardens and conservation scientists that frequently put their life on line to protect an entire family of Mammalia on the brink of extinction – moves people and the media as perhaps no other group of mammals, save the Cetacea, do.

Lothar Frenz's depiction of the family of rhinoceroses is timely. A science journalist, he has written a lively, informative, comprehensive and compassionate little book, beautifully illustrated by historical images and eleven commissioned "portraits" of six Tertiary and five Recent species of rhinoceros. Although originally a biologist, Frenz devotes most of his book to the cultural history of the rhinoceros, that is, to the relationship between rhinoceroses and mankind. Chapters are devoted to the rhinoceros as a subject for scientists, for big-game hunters, for travelling menagerie owners and zookeepers, for artists, novelists and filmmakers. The concept of the small octavo may sound familiar: Reaktion Books in London have published or recently announced 88 titles in their popular series "Animals", all published since 2003 in basically the same format and layout. Frenz's book is volume 36 in a very similar series called "Naturkunden" ("Natural histories"), issued since 2013. The most noticeable difference superficially, especially with titles on the same topic, is that volumes in the German series are published as hardbacks.

Remarkably, in his two-page bibliography Frenz does not list the corresponding volume on rhinoceroses from the "Animals" series (Kelly Enright, *Rhinoceros*, 2008). It is hard to believe that he did not consult Enright's book for comparison before writing *Nashörner*. Several of the illustrations are in both books, as could be expected. Both authors emphasize Albrecht Dürer's (1471–1528) influence on Europeans' image of the rhinoceros for over two centuries; both bemoan Theodore Roosevelt's (1858–1919) contribution to the slaughter of both White and Black (*Diceros bicornis*) rhinoceroses in Africa. Roosevelt condemned their perceived stupidity: animals that more or less deserve to go extinct. Both authors praise the Hollywood film *Hatari* (1962) for its exciting scenes of rhinoceros chases (although Enright's John Wayne movie becomes Frenz's Hardy Krüger flick). Both cite the late Bradley Martin, of course, but Enright could still be a bit more optimistic about the future of the Northern White Rhinoceros than Frenz can now. *Nashörner* is obviously more up to date on statistics, but it cannot otherwise be said to supersede Enright's *Rhinoceros*. Its strength lies in Frenz's engaging prose, its merit in bringing to a wider public's attention the fascination that the rhinoceros can radiate and the tragedy of its senseless demise. If one reads German.