

The Javan Rhino in Junagadh!

On an official tour through Indian provinces, the Viceroy George Nathaniel Curzon visited the State of Kathiawar in 1900. When he reached Junagadh in the afternoon of November 3, 1900, he was received with a royal display of splendour by Nawab Sir Muhammed Rasul Khanji, riding in a solid silver car, preceded by painted elephants, prancing horses, and two harnessed and mounted rhinoceroses. Lady Mary Victoria Curzon could not resist the opportunity and briefly sat on one of the rhinos, posing for an unusual and elegant snapshot.

We don't know when those rhinos came to Junagadh and how long they lived. The photograph reveals that they were actually specimens of the Javan Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros sondaicus*. It is quite possible that they were captured in the Sundarbans region south of Kolkata, where they had already become very rare. Records of Javan Rhinoceros in captivity can be counted on one hand. This photograph



gives us a rare insight into animal keeping as a leisure activity by the maharajas of the princely states. ■

Kees Rookmaaker
Netherlands

If a man walks in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer. But if he spends his days as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making the earth bald before her time, he is deemed an industrious and enterprising citizen.

Henry David Thoreau



ABOUT THE POSTER

Commonly called the Dwarf Geckos, this shy group of geckos can be easily missed in the forest. The species in the photograph was observed in Ooty near a farm adjoining a forest. Distinguished by the slender, undilated digits and round pupils, Dwarf Geckos occur in various colours, often spotted or marbled with darker colour blotches. In some species of this genus, a light coloured vertebral band is present.

Most geckos belonging to the genus *Cnemaspis* are diurnal, i.e. they are active during the day, unlike most of the other common geckos. With over 20 species in the Western Ghats alone, this is one of the most diverse but poorly known groups of lizards, due to their restricted distribution and secretive nature. ■



Dwarf Gecko *Cnemaspis* sp.

H.B. VARUN