

ASSAM SECRETARIAT PROCEEDINGS.

Revenue—A.

September 1905.

Rules for the regulation of sport in reserved forests.

Proposed reservation of the Laokhowa, North Kamrup, and Kaziranga forests in Nowgong, Kamrup, and Sibsagar, respectively.

No. 75.

No. 2409G., dated Gauhati, the 4th November 1902.

From—J. C. ARBUTHNOTT, Esq., C.I.E., I.C.S., Offg. Commissioner of the Assam Valley Districts,

To—The Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

With reference to your No. 1278Misc.—7720-28G., dated the 18th October 1902, forwarding letter No. 186, dated the 16th July 1902, from the Honorary Secretary, Zoological Garden, Calcutta, to your address, I have the honour to invite your attention to paragraph 6 of the Honorary Secretary's letter, in which the offer of Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000 is made for an adolescent rhinoceros. The animal which was formerly common in Assam, has been exterminated except in remote localities at the foot of the Bhutan Hills in Kamrup and Goalpara and in a very narrow tract of country between the Brahmaputra and Mikir Hills in Nowgong and Golaghat where a few individuals still exist. In Kamrup and Goalpara the extinction of an interesting animal has been hastened within the last 5 years by the yearly incursions of large shooting parties from Bengal, which has led to the reckless and indiscriminate destruction of all game. It is inevitable that such parties should include novices who fire at anything that gets up in front of them. In the case of rhinoceros the slaughter of females and immature animals has brought the species to the verge of extinction. There is, I think, still time to preserve the very few that are left. I understand that the shooting of rhinoceros has been prohibited in Bengal. I would therefore suggest that the destruction of rhinoceros in Assam by shooting or by pitfalls be prohibited until further orders. I am convinced that, unless an order of the kind is issued, the complete extinction of a comparatively harmless and most interesting creature is only a question of a very short space of time. I trust therefore that the Chief Commissioner will see his way to take measures for the preservation of a species which is now verging on extinction before it is too late. An order prohibiting or limiting the destruction of rhinoceros without special permission would, I feel sure, be welcomed by all true lovers of sport and natural history. In my opinion, however, it would be necessary to absolutely prohibit the destruction of the animal in certain tracts where it is still known to exist anyhow for a period of years.