

# HISTORY

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## Eponyms associated with the nomenclature of the recent species of rhinoceros

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### Abstract

Since 1758, a total of 16 eponyms have been described to honour explorers and taxonomists for the recent species of rhinoceros. This paper presents short biographies and the circumstances of the description of these names used in zoological nomenclature. The name *blythii* was named after Edward Blyth (1810–1873), *brucii* after James Bruce (1730–1794), *burchellii* after William John Burchell (1781–1863), Campbell's rhinoceros after John Campbell (1766–1840), *camperis*, *camperii*, *camperi* after Petrus Camper (1722–1789), *cottoni* after Percy Horace Gordon Powell-Cotton (1866–1940), *crossii* after Edward Cross (1774–1854), *floweri* after William Henry Flower (1831–1899), *gordoni* after Robert Jacob Gordon (1743–1795), *harrissoni* after Tom Harrisson (1911–1976), *holmwoodi* after Frederick Holmwood (d.1896), *jamrachi* after William Jamrach (1842–1923), *michaeli* after Michael Grzimek (1934–1959), and *oswelli* after William Cotton Oswell (1818–1893).

### Résumé

Depuis 1758, un total de 16 éponymes ont été décrits pour honorer les explorateurs et les taxonomistes des espèces récentes de rhinocéros. Cet article présente de brèves biographies et les circonstances liées à la description de ces noms utilisés dans la nomenclature zoologique. Le nom *blythii* a été nommé d'après Edward Blyth (1810–1873), *brucii* d'après James Bruce (1730–1794), *burchellii* d'après William John Burchell (1781–1863), le rhinocéros de Campbell d'après John Campbell (1766–1840), *camperis*, *camperii*, *camperi* d'après Petrus Camper (1722–1789), *cottoni* d'après Percy Horace Gordon Powell-Cotton (1866–1940), *crossii* d'après Edward Cross (1774–1854), *floweri* d'après William Henry Flower (1831–1899), *gordoni* d'après Robert Jacob Gordon (1743–1795), *harrissoni* d'après Tom Harrisson (1911–1976), *holmwoodi* d'après Frederick Holmwood (décédé en 1896), *jamrachi* après William Jamrach (1842–1923), *michaeli* d'après Michael Grzimek (1934–1959) et *oswelli* d'après William Cotton Oswell (1818–1893).

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### Introduction

Taxonomists who decide that a specimen belongs to a new species are free to choose any names

as long as these adhere to a few rules of spelling and format. Zoological nomenclature starts with the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Systema Naturae* by Linnaeus of 1758, by

a convention introduced by Hugh Strickland in the first set of rules (Rookmaaker 2011). For the recent species of rhinoceros, 65 specific or subspecific names have been proposed (Rookmaaker 1983). Among these, 16 were originally proposed to honour the people who had discovered the animal or who otherwise were deemed worthy of this distinction. These names are called eponyms (Beolens et al. 2009, Gürtler 2017–2020). The names are usually just a surname with a suffix (-i or -ae) as required for the Latin format (ICZN 1999). As we work with these names in our daily practice, it is interesting to establish which people are actually acknowledged in this way. At the same time, this draws attention to the significance of zoological nomenclature, which is governed by a set of essentially simple rules which are one of the pillars of exact communication between zoologists discussing animals seen during their studies in museums and in the field.



Figure 1. The syntypes of *Rhinoceros blythii*, two skulls of young animals figured by Edward Blyth (1862, pl. 3 Figs. 2, 3).

### *Ceratorhinus blythii* Gray, 1873 Edward Blyth (1810–1873)

Blyth (1862) wrote a pivotal paper on the rhinoceros in Asia on the basis of the collection of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, which would later be incorporated in the Indian Museum, Kolkata. He discussed and figured two skulls of a double-horned rhinoceros from Tenasserim, Thailand (Fig. 1), which John Edward Gray (1800–1875) provisionally suggested to be different from other specimens (Gray 1873). The syntypes are still in the collection of the Zoological Survey of India (Fig. 2). The name is a junior subjective synonym of *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* (G. Fischer 1814).



Figure 2. One of the syntypes of *Rhinoceros blythii* in Kolkata, ZSI 17687 (Photo. Tanoy Mukherjee, 2018).

### *Rhinoceros brucii* Lesson, 1842 James Bruce (1730–1794)

The Scottish explorer James Bruce travelled in Ethiopia from June 1768 to November 1772. While staying at Tcherkin (Cherkin), about 10 km NW of Gondar, on 7 January 1772 his party killed an adult rhinoceros with two horns on the nose. The animal was 396 cm long, 213 cm high, with horns of near-equal lengths of 35.5 and 33 cm (Rookmaaker and Kraft 2011). Bruce wrote about the specimen to the French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707–1788), who kept track of new discoveries for his famous *Histoire Naturelle*, saying that all rhinos known in Ethiopia had two horns (Buffon 1778:134). In the extensive natural history section of his travels, Bruce (1790) included a plate of this African rhinoceros (Fig. 3). Inexplicably, the depiction was in fact a copy of the single-horned rhinoceros previously published by Buffon (1764) with

the addition of a second horn (Fig. 4). Therefore, Bruce's rhinoceros was a rhinoceros from Africa, double-horned and supposedly heavily armoured. The name was resurrected in the trinomen *Diceros bicornis brucii* by Zukowsky (1965).



Figure 3. "Rhinoceros of Africa" as perceived by James Bruce (1790).



Figure 4. "Le Rhinocéros", the single-horned rhinoceros illustrated in Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* of 1764, pl.11.

## *Rhinoceros burchellii* Lesson, 1827 William John Burchell (1781–1863)

During his expedition to the Bechuanas in the Northern Cape, Burchell reached Chué Springs or Heuningvlei in October 1812 (Rookmaaker 2008:67, Nowak-Kemp 2018). At this northernmost point of his journey, he shot a few black rhinoceroses as well as two white rhinoceroses, which showed him that these were two separate species (Fig. 5). The species was soon described as *Rhinoceros simus* in Burchell (1817). However, the French naturalist René Primevère Lesson (1794–1849) used a different name in his list of mammals in 1827.

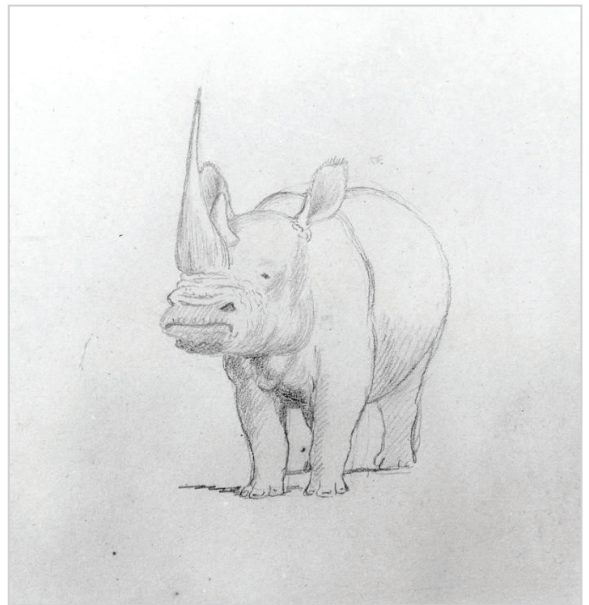


Figure 5. Sketch of a white rhinoceros made during the expedition by William John Burchell in 1812 (Museum Africa, Johannesburg 68/1844).

## *Campbell's Rhinoceros* John Campbell (1766–1840)

As Director of the London Missionary Society, Campbell travelled widely in South Africa 1819–1821. On 18 May 1820 two rhinoceroses were shot near Mashow, one of which had a very long anterior horn and a short posterior horn (Rookmaaker 2008). Campbell (1822:294) thought that this must be the unicorn, which was widely reported in the press at the time (Fig. 6). The horn was later added to the collection of the American Museum of Natural History, New York (Osborn 1905). The specimen in fact belongs to *Ceratotherium simum* (Burchell 1817).





Figure 6. The unicorn found by John Campbell in South Africa in 1820 (Travels in South Africa, 1822).

*Rhinoceros camperis* Griffith, 1827

*Rhinoceros camperii* Jardine, 1836

*Rhinoceros camperi* Schinz, 1845

Petrus Camper (1722–1789)

The Dutch physician and naturalist Camper (1782) presented a lengthy monograph on the rhinoceros, mainly reporting on his examination of a skull brought from the Cape of Good Hope. Subsequently he received information and specimens from his pupil Jacob van der Steege (1746–1811) from Java (Rookmaaker and Visser 1982). This led him to recognize the Javan rhinoceros as a separate species, as seen on a broadsheet engraved by the Amsterdam engraver Reinier Vinkeles (1741–1816) in 1787 (Fig. 7). Camper's death two years later prevented him from pursuing this further in a publication. The names commemorating him by Jardine and Griffith are synonyms of *Rhinoceros sondaicus* Desmarest, 1822, the name by Schinz is a synonym of *Diceros bicornis* (Linnaeus 1758).

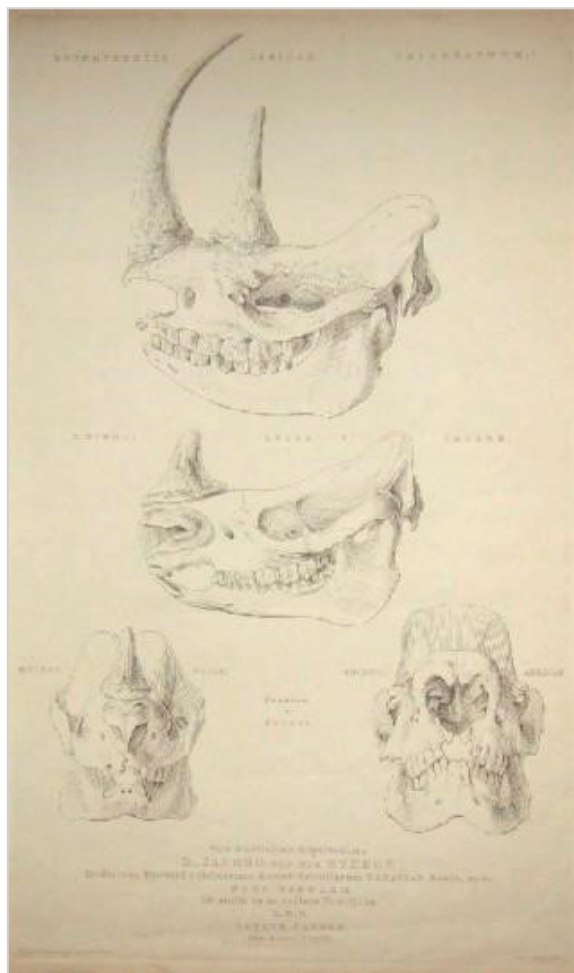


Figure 7. Broadsheet engraved by Reinier Vinkeles following the design of Petrus Camper, showing the distinction between rhinoceros skulls from Africa and from Java (British Library, London).

*Rhinoceros simum cottoni* Lydekker, 1908

Percy Horace Gordon Powell-Cotton (1866–1940)

Powell-Cotton's fourth African expedition of 1904–1907 started out in the Lado Enclave on the west bank of the Nile, now in South Sudan and north-western Uganda (Joynes 2016). He shot several white rhinoceroses here, probably early in 1905 as newspaper reports started to appear in the British press in April of that year. On his return home he donated a skull with horns to the British Museum (Natural History), where they were rather tentatively described by Richard Lydekker (1849–1915) as a new subspecies (Lydekker 1908). When Lydekker was writing, the use of subspecies had

evidently become more fashionable in mammalian taxonomy, whereas this was almost unheard of just a few years earlier. The *Illustrated London News* was able to print a photograph taken in Africa as well as an artist's impression of the hunt (Powell-Cotton 1907a, b) (Figs. 8, 9). Most of the specimens were added to his private museum, now the Powell-Cotton Museum in Quex Park, Birchington-on-Sea. Besides a short paragraph (Powell Cotton 1932), the details of the expedition have not been included in any of his own books.



Figure 8. “The chance of a life time”. Impression by the London artist Frank Dadd (1851–1929) of Major Powell-Cotton shooting a white rhinoceros in the Lado Enclave (*Graphic*, Supplement of 9 March 1907).

### *Rhinoceros crossii* Gray, 1855 Edward Cross (1774–1854)

Cross was the proprietor of the Surrey Zoological Gardens in Newington near London from 1831. A long rhinoceros's horn (Fig. 10) measuring 3 feet 5 inch (104 cm) along the curve length from his collection was described as a new species by John Edward Gray (1854). Its origin is not known but it is generally regarded to be a horn of a Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus*



Figure 9. “The famous white rhinoceros shot by Major Powell-Cotton”. The only published photograph of the white rhino killed in the Lado Enclave (*Illustrated London News*, 13 April 1907, p. 561).

*sumatrensis*). Gray's description was read in the meeting of the Zoological Society of London on 28 November 1854, and published in the *Proceedings* which, according to the receipt of printed sheets, was 11 April 1855 (Sclater 1893a, Duncan 1937).

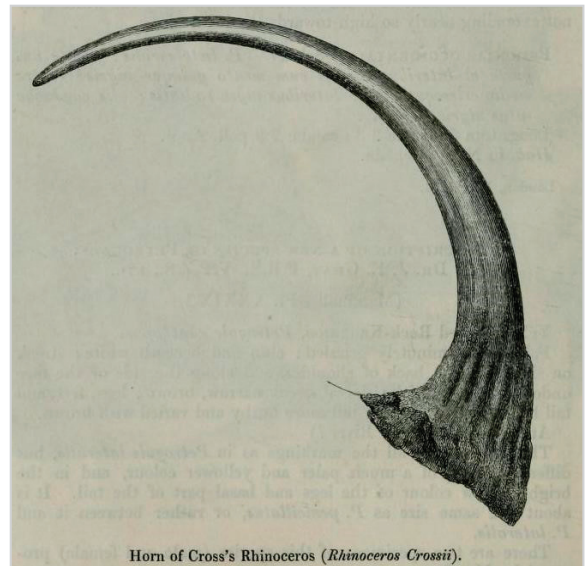


Figure 10. Horn of Cross's Rhinoceros (*Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* 28 November 1854, p. 251).

### *Rhinoceros floweri* Gray, 1868 William Henry Flower (1831–1899)

John Edward Gray (1868) here honoured Flower, who was Conservator of the Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England 1862–1884. The skull had been obtained from Sumatra



(Flower 1876) (Fig. 11). Gray introduced a multitude of new species, many of which, like this one, did not stand the test of time through changes in taxonomic theories (Rookmaaker 2015). Gray read his paper in the meeting of the Zoological Society of London on 12 December 1867, which then became part of the third part of the *Proceedings* actually published in April 1868 (Duncan 1937). *Rhinoceros floweri* is a subjective junior synonym of *Rhinoceros sondaicus*.

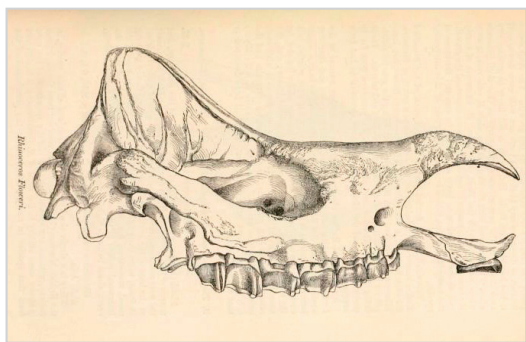


Figure 11. Type-specimen of *Rhinoceros floweri* in the Royal College of Surgeons of England, London, no. 2934 (Gray 1868).

### *Rhinoceros gordonii* Lesson, 1842

Robert Jacob Gordon (1743–1795)

On 2 November 1778 Gordon shot a black rhinoceros near the source of the Gamka (Leeuwen) River in the Eastern Cape of South Africa (Fig. 12). He proceeded to dissect the animal, of which the results were preserved in a set of five detailed drawings of the anatomical details (Cave and Rookmaaker 1977, Rookmaaker 1989). He also sent details to Holland where they were summarized by Jean Nicolas Sebastien Allamand (1713–1787) in Leiden to be inserted in a supplement to the popular *Histoire Naturelle* by the Count de Buffon in 1782 (Rookmaaker 1982). While Gordon never claimed a new species, the one named after him is an example of the black rhinoceros of the Cape region which belongs to the nominal subspecies *Diceros bicornis bicornis*, which was the first subspecies we know of to go extinct (Rookmaaker and Groves 1978).

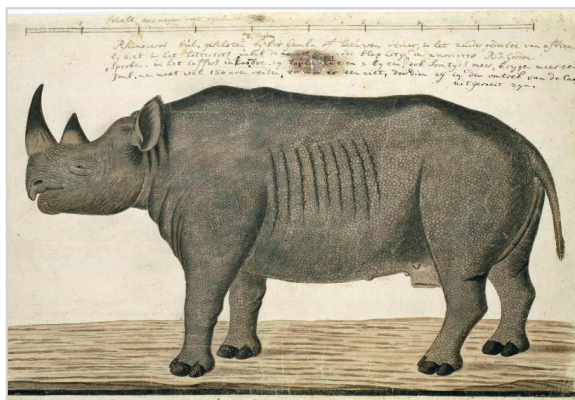


Figure 12. Black rhinoceros sketched by Robert Jacob Gordon in South Africa in 1778. (Gordon Atlas no. 205, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

### *Didermocerus sumatrensis harrissoni* Groves, 1965

Tom Harnett Harrison (1911–1976)

Harrison was well-known for his explorations and anthropological enquiries on the island of Borneo (Heimann 2000). The rhinoceros was just one of his passions, which he discussed with the present author in Brussels not long before he died in Bangkok in a car crash (Harrison 1956; Harrison 1975). The Bornean subspecies of the Sumatran rhinoceros, smaller than others, was one of the first taxonomic advances proposed by Colin Peter Groves (1942–2017), who became well-known as an anthropologist and taxonomist with enduring interest in the rhinoceros (Rookmaaker and Robovsky 2019).

### *Rhinoceros bicornis holmwoodi* Sclater, 1893

Frederick Holmwood (d.1896)

Holmwood was the British Consul at Zanzibar from 1873–1887, and later at Smyrna. He received two long horns of a black rhinoceros obtained by a friend in the north-east of Tanzania, just south of Mwanza (Jackson 1969:73) (Fig. 13). They were provisionally described by Philip Lutley Sclater (1829–1913) and this name was revived as a valid subspecies *Diceros bicornis holmwoodi* by Zukowsky (1965:95). This is now a subjective junior synonym of the East African black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis minor* (Drummond 1876), or rather *D. b. keitloa* (A.Smith 1836) as discussed by Rookmaaker (2016).

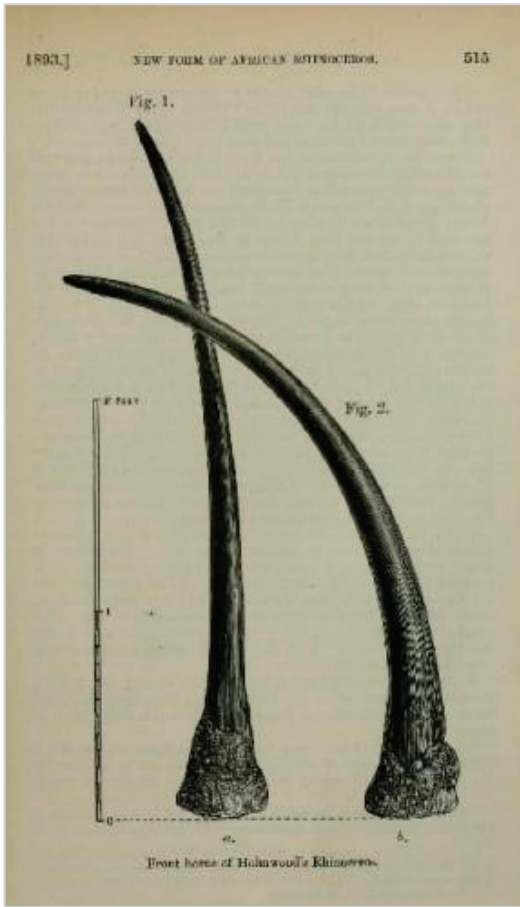


Figure 13. The long horns of *Rhinoceros holmwoodi* from Tanzania (Sclater, *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, 6 June 1893, p.514).

*Rhinoceros jamrachi* Jamrach, 1875  
William Jamrach (1842–1923)

The London based animal dealer William Jamrach described a female rhinoceros imported from India in 1874 as a new species in a green leaflet of three pages dated 8 October 1875, reprinted in January 1876 in the *Oriental Sporting Magazine* (Jamrach 1875; Jamrach 1876). Jamrach was part of a family concern started by his father Charles Jamrach (1815–1891), which often collaborated with similar firms run by Charles Rice (1841–1879) in London and Carl Hagenbeck (1844–1913) in Hamburg, Germany (Rookmaaker 2014:231). The rhinoceros which reached the Berlin Zoo on 30 June 1874 has been subject of much discussion because her actual specific identity is obscure in the absence of any good

drawings or photographs, or even a clear description (Rookmaaker 1977; Rookmaaker 1998). Jamrach was convinced that it was a separate species and described it himself as he could not find a working taxonomist to do this for him, unconventionally naming it after himself. Only one depiction of the animal is known, next to a black rhinoceros ‘Molly’, as part of scenes in the Elephant House by the Berlin artist Gustav Mützel (1839–1893) illustrating the description by Woldt (1882) in the *Gartenlaube* (Fig. 14). The specific identity, *R. unicornis* or *R. sondaicus*, remains under review.

*Diceros bicornis michaëli* Zukowsky, 1965  
Michael Grzimek (1934–1959)

Grzimek was at the start of a promising career in animal ecology, conservation and film production when he died in a plane crash in Tanzania. Together with his father Bernhard Grzimek (1909–1987) he was famous for research in the Serengeti National Park. The subspecies of black rhino named after him by Ludwig Zukowsky (1888–1965) was found in the border area of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania (Zukowsky 1965:115). The monograph on the genus *Diceros* was a major achievement by Zukowsky which includes many valuable data, often forgotten, despite the excessively elaborate taxonomy. Although dated 1964 on the title-page, it actually appeared in 1965, which date should be used in nomenclatorial citations (Mertens 1966).

*Rhinoceros oswelli* Elliot in *Oswell and Vardon*, 1847

*Rhinoceros oswellii* Gray, 1853  
William Cotton Oswell (1818–1893)

Oswell journeyed to the Limpopo River in 1844–1846 together with Mungo Murray (1802–1890) and Frank Vardon (1815–1860) on leave from his position in the Indian Civil Service (Rookmaaker 2008:70). He shot a white rhinoceros with a long forward-sloping horn in June or July 1846 on the Makolwe (Mokolo) River (Oswell and Vardon 1847). The account is illustrated with a sketch of the animal labelled “*Rhinoceros Oswelli*” and this new name also appears in the text (p. 183) (Fig. 15). The name is generally attributed to the Editor of the *Madras Journal of Literature and Science* in which this notice appeared, then Walter Elliot (1803–1887). The name was again used by John Edward Gray (1854) describing a pair of horns





Figure 14. Some scenes in the Berlin Zoo drawn by Gustav Mützel (*Gartenlaube*, December 1882).



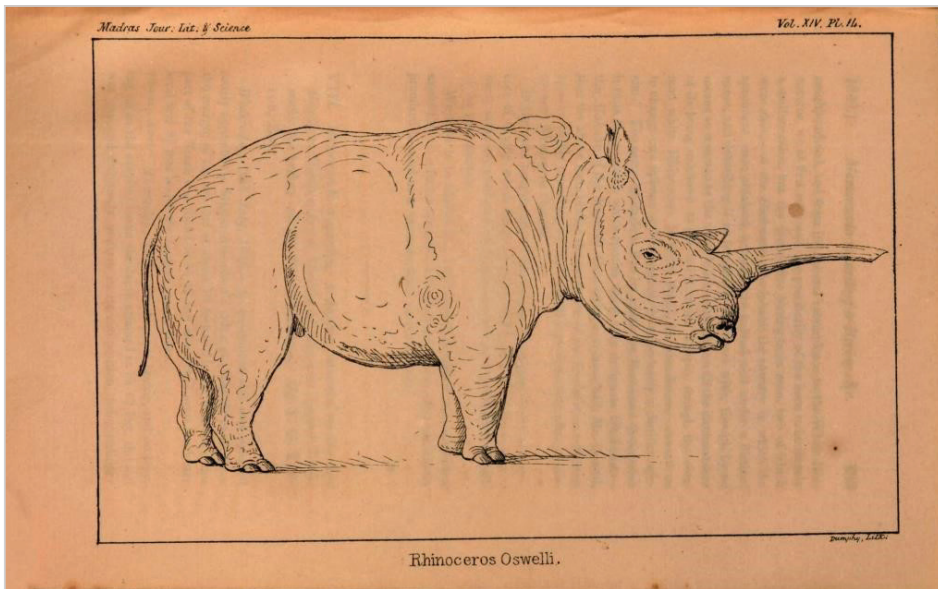


Figure 15. Sketch of *Rhinoceros oswelli* described in the *Madras Journal of Literature and Science* (July–December 1847, p. 169).

measuring 84 cm and 28 cm, obtained by Oswell and then donated by Thomas Montague Steele (1820–1890) to the Natural History Museum in London (Rookmaaker 2008:74). Gray's name is a junior primary homonym of Elliot's one, and both names are subjective junior synonyms of *Ceratotherium simum*.

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