

WILD-ANIMAL CELEBRITIES

BY
ELLEN VELVIN, F.Z.S.

Author of "Behind the Scenes with Wild Animals," "Animals
with Histories," "Wild Creatures Afield," etc., etc.

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CHAPTER V.

SOME GREAT PACHYDERMS

MESOVIRO, RHINOSCEROS; VICTORIA, RHINOSCEROS; HIPPO, HIPPOPOTAMUS.

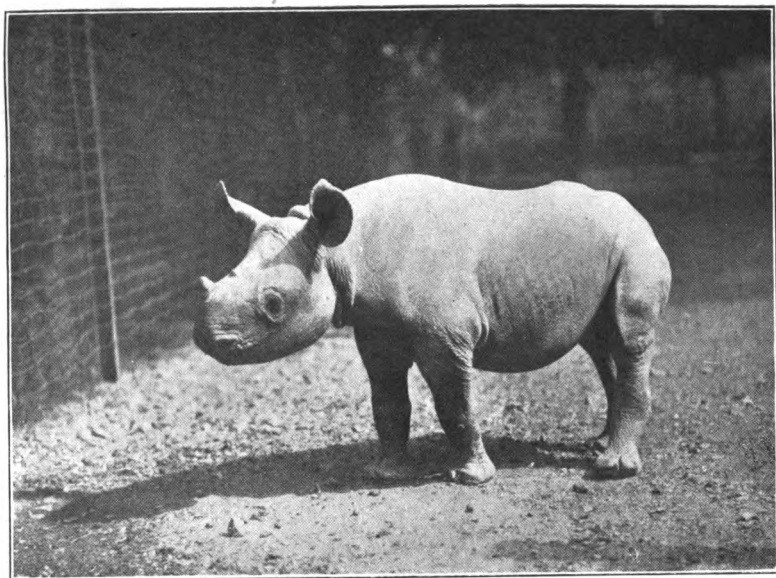
SPECIMENS of the African Rhinosceros in captivity are so extremely rare that an impression existed at one time that it was impossible either to obtain them or keep them in confinement. But, as far back as 1868, a two-horned African Rhinosceros was captured in Upper Nubia and sold to the London Zoological Society, England, by Carl Hagenbeck.

This wonderful specimen attracted an enormous amount of attention at that time because it was believed to be the very first rhinosceros which had been in Europe since the days of the Romans. Consequently, this animal was gazed at, wondered at, discussed in papers and magazines and drew immense crowds from all parts.

One of the most interesting rhinosceroses in captivity, partly on account of his extreme youth, and partly because of his manifold adventures before and after his capture, is Mesoviro, the baby rhinosceros in the New York Zoological Park. His captors gave him this African name which means "One who is found by the way." Mesoviro was certainly "found by the way," and the story of his capture is quite exciting.

An Austrian, named Fleisher, went hunting with a small party southeast of the Lake Victoria Nyanza last July and one day saw a female rhinosceros with a very young calf. Fleisher had a very small party of natives with him and was not by any means well equipped, but he determined to get the little rhino calf if he died in the attempt. He knew full well what an extremely valuable animal it would be if he could only get it to the coast.

But the African natives are terribly afraid of the rhinosceros and when they saw the Austrian actually pursuing the rhinosceros and



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MEZOVIRO, IN THE NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL PARK, IS ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING RHINOCEROSES IN CAPTIVITY

the calf every one of them fled, leaving Fleisher alone. After much difficulty and one or two narrow escapes, Fleisher succeeded in shooting the mother and, rushing forward seized the baby rhinosceros. It was only a few weeks old, but so wonderfully strong and vigorous that it was almost impossible for one man to hold it.

The Austrian, however, was not to be daunted, but grasped the calf firmly round the neck, which was doubly difficult to hold on account of the thickness and slipperiness of its skin. The young rhinosceros promptly ran off, taking his captor with him, not letting any little things such as dragging him through the thick thorny bushes, with their long "bide-a-wee" thorns, stop him. He kept this up briskly for half an hour, until the Austrian's clothes were torn to ribbons, he was terribly torn and scratched and faint from exhaustion. But, in spite of all this, Fleisher held on desperately until at last the calf was so exhausted that he had to partly submit to his captor.

After awhile the natives returned to see what had become of their master and, seeing only a young rhinosceros, willingly gave all the assistance they could. So stubborn and such determined resistance did the little animal show, however, that it was found impossible to either lead or drive him even after tying him securely with strong ropes. As no coaxing or driving could induce him to move a step of his own accord, they tied his legs firmly together, thrust a long pole between them and, with the young rhinosceros hanging upside down with his feet in the air, carried him a long, tiresome six-days' journey of ninety miles.

It was seen during the first part of the journey that the calf's head, hanging downward in the manner it did, caused him not only great discomfort but also made him struggle in such a way that there was danger of his dying from exhaustion, or killing himself by his struggles. So a piece of coarse cloth was slung under the pole, hammock fashion, and, supported in this way, the

animal stopped struggling and seemed more at his ease.

A mother rhinosceros gives only a small quantity of milk at any time, and when the young calf is only a few weeks old it begins to eat grass, so the calf was fed all this while on unsweetened condensed milk; not long afterwards it began to graze. Mesoviro was taken to Gkoma, a military station in British East Africa, where he remained very contentedly for about six weeks. A pool was made for him, and in this pool he played most of the day, plastering himself all over with mud and doing other delightful things that only a rhinosceros can appreciate.

Having been bought as a speculation, at the end of that time he was taken to Sharati, and then to Uganda, whence he was conveyed on the Uganda Railway to Mombasa on the coast. Here at Mombasa, Mr. Tjader, an amateur explorer and naturalist of New York, had just arrived and was present when the baby rhinosceros also arrived, Mr. Tjader, after seeing the animal, cabled at once to Mr.

W. T. Hornaday and was authorized to buy the animal for the New York Zoological Park. The total cost of this tiny rhinoceros, still only an infant, when finally landed in his cage at the Park was \$4,532.

Mr. Herbert O. Lang, a taxidermist for the American Museum of Natural History, was engaged to take care of the baby animal, and took him from Mombasa by steamer to Naples, and thence by the White Star Liner Cedric to New York. Every care and attention was given to the diet and exercise of this valuable little animal. The quantity of unsweetened condensed milk was increased from three cans a day to nine, and before very long the rhinoceros calf and Mr. Lang were to be seen daily taking vigorous exercise between decks, generally covering a distance of about five miles a day.

Mesoviro arrived on the last day of the year and, on January 1st, 1907, weighed 235 pounds and stood 26 inches at the shoulder. With Mr. Lang, the young rhinoceros was most docile, gentle, and affectionate, but for

the first few days in the Park he refused to allow a strange keeper to feed him. But he seemed to know by that time that the keeper was his friend and is now quite contented, consumes eleven cans of unsweetened condensed milk a day and all the boiled rice and finest clover hay he can get.

The other rhinosceros in the antelope house close to Mesoviro is also an African, and curiously enough was captured when three months old by the same man who captured Mesoviro, and in much the same way. This is a female and has been in the Park now since June, 1906; she is thriving and healthy. Her only adventure was when, some time ago, having a painful abscess in her jaw, an operation was performed, in the middle of which she sent everything near her flying. But the operation saved her, for she recovered her health and spirits and has been perfectly well ever since.

In the Zoological Gardens at Amsterdam, there is a pair of the biggest hippopotami I have ever seen. They are certainly well taken