

THE LAST HURRAH OF THE ‘HURRIANAH’ LION *PANTHERA LEO PERSICA* –  
PART I: A CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF HITHERTO UNKNOWN REFERENCES TO LION  
HUNTING IN PRESENT-DAY HARYANA AND RELATED REPORTS<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

The history of lions in India during the 19th century, especially beyond the Kathiawar region (particularly Gir), is poorly documented. Even more obscure is the story of the lions that once roamed in the environs of Delhi and would subsequently be christened as the ‘Hurrianah lions’ (Blyth 1863, 1865; Pocock 1930). The lions of this landscape – by and large coterminous with present day political boundaries of the state of Haryana – were where the British bureaucracy made their first acquaintance with the Asiatic lion in India.

The British seized the territories of “Hurriana” in 1809 (Dalrymple 1993) – ceded to them under the “Treaty of Lahore dated 25th April 1809” (Anon. 1883), which included the territories west of River Yamuna – six years after their takeover of Delhi in 1803<sup>1</sup>. The British controlled Hurriana and Delhi territories included the British era districts of Gurgaon, Rohtak, Karnal (including contemporary districts of Panipat, Sonipat, etc.), Ambala and Hisar (including Hansi, Bhiwani, etc.) along with a suzerainty over the adjoining Princely States of Jind, Kaithal, Thanesar (Kurukshetra), Nabha, Patiala, and so on<sup>2</sup>. It was after this conquest that the British expeditionary forces and officers scouting this landscape started coming across sizeable numbers of lions, and reported the same to the headquarters in Delhi and Calcutta. With the trickling in of these reports, the British bureaucracy and administration officially accepted the occurrence of free ranging wild lions in India<sup>3</sup>. However, this

was hardly good news for the lions themselves that roamed these territories. In less than three decades following the British conquest, the lions of “Hurriana” were exterminated and rendered extinct.

The following paper (the first of two parts, given the volume of information being presented) shall present the story of lions in the present-day north Indian state of Haryana from 1809 to their extinction in the region. This first part shall present many previously undocumented lion sightings and shooting records from Haryana and its environs, and in the process follow the trajectory of the collapse of lion populations in the region, right until their eventual extinction from this landscape.

Part II of the paper shall present a picture of the lion habitats and ecology in Haryana as described in archival sources, cultural interaction of the species with the local communities, aspects of lion behaviour, especially when cornered during hunts, and finally an analysis of the possible factors responsible for the lion’s extirpation from these territories. Part II shall also look in detail at the very interesting subject of co-occurrence of tigers and lions in the same landscape in the Haryana territories during the opening decades of the 19th century, a subject which will be only briefly touched upon in this first part.

A table (Table 1) of new lion records appended to Part I of this paper gives a complete tally of new lion records from Haryana (with relevant remarks), while a table in the forthcoming Part II of the paper shall present a comparative

<sup>1</sup>The British would later annex a significant part of Punjab adjoining Haryana territories (in the form of the *doab* region between rivers Beas and Sutlej) in 1846 under the Treaty of Lahore, and would go on to annex the entire Punjab region in 1849.

<sup>2</sup>The British era districts of Hurriana-Delhi territories (and the associated Princely States) are nearly coterminous with the present-day Haryana state with its 22 districts, namely Ambala, Bhiwani, Dadri, Faridabad, Fatehabad, Gurugram, Hisar, Jhajjar, Jind, Kaithal, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Mahendragarh, Mewat (Nuh), Palwal, Panchkula, Panipat, Rewari, Rohtak, Sirsa, Sonipat, and Yamunanagar.

<sup>3</sup>Though James Forbes had hunted a lion around the Sabarmati river in present day Gujarat with Charles Malet, the then President of Cambay, in 1781, publication/publicity of hunting records was yet to become a subject of official British communications and records, and so the account of this hunt was only published in Forbes’ *ORIENTAL MEMOIRS* in 1813, four years after the capture of Haryana.

study of records of the size of specimens of the “Hurriana” lion *vis a vis* Kathiawar’s lions (and a few of Central India’s lions).

### The Asiatic Lion in Haryana

The first record of lions from Haryana, that I have come across, dates back to *c.* 1809<sup>4</sup>, soon after the region was captured by the British. Interestingly, it is a record of two cubs captured from the wild that were kept in the Residency at Delhi, and were recorded as an exciting discovery by the British administration. A short description of the two cubs was recorded by Aleck Fraser, younger brother of William Fraser (more on William later in the paper), and reproduced by William Dalrymple. Aleck Fraser wrote: “These animals have only been known to us since our conquest of Hurriana in 1809 ... [The cubs are] as large as a common spaniel, and yet quite tame. They played about Seton’s dining room with perfect good humour, and were not surly unless much teased [sic]” (Dalrymple 1993). However, it was only a year later, in 1810, that the existence of lions in the territories around Delhi was widely publicized. A military dispatch titled “Lions Extant in India” (Anon. 1810) was published across multiple publications that used to publish interesting reports coming out of the Indian subcontinent. This particular note, not referenced before, was sent from the Military station of Hansi (Haryana) on 8th March, 1810, and gives what is arguably the first official administrative British account of wild lions from India. The note details an account of five horsemen from the Hansi cantonment rousing a lion and lioness from their grass cover, near a village about “14 coss” (Hindi *kos*, 1 *kos* = 3.08 km) while the pair was consuming a kill (pig). The grass was set on fire to drive the lions out, and while the lioness fled, the large male lion marched towards the soldiers “with his mane and tail erect” and was subsequently killed, but only after severely wounding one individual. The same note also mentioned another lioness being killed similarly by a “party of horsemen” a few days prior to this incident near Hissan (now Hisar, Haryana) after wounding “one man and two horses”. “The above consequently proves that lions are to be found in India as well as in Africa,” concluded the note, while stressing that this note needed to be publicized widely because it “will confirm what [existence of lions in India] hitherto has been doubtful, or, if ascertained, not generally known.”

I would like to point out here that this note was published after – and perhaps in response to as well – some important early works on the fauna of India that cast doubts on the existence of lions in India. Thomas Pennant in his book

THE VIEW OF HINDOOSTAN (Pennant 1798) had stated that “whether they exist at present is doubtful...”, while Captain Thomas Williamson (who was primarily only familiar with the fauna of the then British controlled Bengal Presidency and describing their status in the closing decades of the 18th century) wrote in his book ORIENTAL FIELD SPORTS (published in 1807, two years before the capture of Haryana territories by the British) “As to lions, there are none in Hindoostan...” (Williamson 1807).

It is also interesting to note a remark made in the aforesaid dispatch, comparing the male lion specimen shot by the soldiers with the African lion: “The animal was sent here, and appeared to be a full grown lion, in every respect the same as the African one, except that the colour of the mane, which was very thick, is rather lighter.” (Anon. 1810)

### OVERVIEW

In the immediate aftermath of the initial British encounter with the lions of the Haryana landscape, British military officers and soldiers unleashed a decade of wholesale massacre of these big cats across the region. As detailed in Table 1 and Fig. 1, I have listed 26 new references dealing with lions in the Haryana landscape between the years 1809 to 1823. These new references in total account for a grand total of 129 lions (could be as high as 141) sighted, out of which 109 were conclusively killed (the figure could be as high as 112) by hunters. It is worth noting that out of the 109 lions killed in the region between 1810 to 1823, as many as 80 (could be as high as 82) lions were killed in a mere five-year period (1810–1815). One of the most critical findings of this research was that often during such shoots, entire prides were wiped out by hunters, including cubs that were killed or captured.

It is worth reiterating here that all these records have been culled from pre-1857 archives, much before the so-called ‘golden period’ of shikar literature – which saw a plethora of books on the shikar exploits of the British, and later even some Indian princely states and landed gentry – came along in the 1880s that lasted right up until Indian independence. However, during the initial decades of British expansion, and establishment of the nascent colonial regime across the Indian subcontinent, books dedicated solely to the subject of hunting in India produced by British hunter-writers could be counted on one’s fingertips, despite hunting always having been a very popular ‘sport’ among British military officers and soldiers.

<sup>4</sup>This is 12 years prior to the earliest account of Indian Lion given by Pocock. “The earliest account of an Indian Lion with which I am acquainted was published by Griffith (*Vertebrated Animals. Carnivora*, p. 96, 1821)”, wrote Pocock in his paper published in *JBNHS* 34(3): 638–665.

THE LAST HURRAH OF THE 'HURRIANAH' LION – PART I

**Table 1:** Chronological record of hitherto unknown references to lion shooting in the region covered by modern-day Haryana

Date	Location	Remarks	Source	Lion Count (Sex)	Lions Killed (Sex)	Additional Notes
1809	Hurrianah (Haryana)	Two lion cubs at Delhi Residency	Dalrymple (1993)	2 (cubs)	–	# Possibly the first record of acquaintance of British bureaucracy with the lions of Haryana
8th March, 1810	Hansi and Hissan [Hisar], Haryana	A lion and lioness roused; the latter killed. One lioness killed prior to this incident near Hissan [Hisar]	Anon. (1810)	3 (1 male, 2 females)	2 (females)	# Possibly the first reference to lions being killed by the British in Haryana # Thick mane, colour rather lighter [compared to African Lion] # Lions found on a kill (pig)
18th June, 1811	Hansi, Haryana	43 lions killed between March 1810 and June 1811	Anon. (1813)	43	43	# Unspecified number of tigers and 2 leopards also shot in the same area as lions
December, 1812	Bhowanny (Bhiwani), Haryana	Six lions chased, 4 killed	Nugent (1839)	6	4	# Lady Nugent says that lions are being primarily hunted by Europeans, not 'native inhabitants'
31st December, 1812	Choota Bhowanny (Choti Bhiwani), Haryana	Footsteps of one lion seen near camp	Nugent (1839)	1 (male)	–	# Tigers and lions mentioned occurring in the same plain landscape "covered in different parts with low wood and jungle"
4th January, 1813	Hansi, Haryana	Captain S.'s brother killed 7 lions in one day. William Fraser and party killed 6 out of 8 lions in one day. Footsteps of one lion seen close to the author's camp	Nugent (1839)	16 (7 + 8 + 1)	13	# Tigers and lions mentioned in same conversation around hunting big game in the locality
5th January, 1813	Khalwah (Probably Kalwa village, Jind District, Haryana)	Rajah of Jheend (Jind) killed 4 lions in one day	Nugent (1839)	4	4	# Evidence of Indian princes, and possibly other landed gentry as well, hunting lions in Haryana and adjoining territories in the same time period as the British.
6th January, 1813	Suffeedun (Safidon), Haryana	A lion reported seen near camp; One lioness shot	Nugent (1839)	2 (1 male, 1 female)	1 (female)	# Dimensions: length 8 ft, height 3 ft
7th January, 1813	Suffeedun (Safidon), Haryana	Lions seen by William Fraser (as informed to author)	Nugent (1839)	–	–	# William Fraser informs that he has "seen both lions and tigers on this spot" # Tiger hunting around Karnal, 17 miles from Safidon
1813	Loodehauneh (Ludhiana), Punjab	Lion sent by Colonel Ochterlony lands at Calcutta, animal most probably captured as cub close to Karnal (17 miles from Ludhiana)	Anon. (1813)	1	–	# The lion is remarked to bear "an exact resemblance to the African lion, in his colour and proportions; and is equal in size, and rather superior in height, to any of the same species that we have ever seen."

THE LAST HURRAH OF THE 'HURRIANAH' LION – PART I

**Table 1:** Chronological record of hitherto unknown references to lion shooting in the region covered by modern-day Haryana (*contd*)

Date	Location	Remarks	Source	Lion Count (Sex)	Lions Killed (Sex)	Additional Notes
9th March, 1814	Rohtak (Rohtak), Haryana	1 lioness shot	Williams (1814)	1 (female)	1 (female)	# William Fraser present in this hunt # A lioness and a tiger shot at the same time in the same place, just a few dozen metres apart # Measurements of the lioness killed: length 9 ft, height 11 hds [hands] # Measurements of the tiger killed: length 10.3 ft, height 12.3 hds [hands]
10th March, 1814	Rohtak (Rohtak), Haryana	Lion, lioness, and 2 cubs (about 18 months old) shot	Williams (1814)	5 (1 male, 2 females, 2 cubs) + 2? (killed previously)	4 (2 females, 2 cubs) + 2? (killed previously)	# 1 Spotted Deer (Cheetal) shot, 4 Nilgai seen, Great Indian Bustard reported # The lion was known as the "burrah haramzader" [badā harāmzādā] (the big rascal) # 2? [killed previously]: "...On our arrival at the den, (which was near the place the two last were killed) ..." # 4 lions shot on 10th March; the following day the party went tiger shooting in the same area
12th March, 1814	Rohuk (Rohtak), Haryana	4 lions tracked, all killed. The hunting party suspected there might be a dozen lions there.	Williams (1814)	4 (3 females, 1 male) + 8(?)	4 (3 females, 1 male)	# First record of hunters coming across a fresh wild prey kill (nilgai) by lions. # One leopard shot in the same patch of woods during the same hunt. # 8(?) – Hunting party suspects at least a dozen lions in that patch
March, 1814	Kurnaul (Karnal), Haryana	One lion killed by Colonel Thompson	Anon. (1814)	1 (male)	1 (male)	# Dimensions of lion killed: length 10 ft 2 in; height from ground to top of shoulder: 4 ft 6 in; four legs circumference: 2 ft 4 in # This lion was allegedly a man-eater (8 human kills) and a cattle lifter.
14th April, 1814	Rohtak (Rohtak), Haryana	One lion and one tiger killed near Rohtak during Lady Hood's travel from Mathura (Uttar Pradesh) to Saharanpur (Uttar Pradesh)	Sandeman (1868)	1 (male)	1 (male)	# A tiger shot along with a lion in the same hunting excursion
1814	Haryana	William Fraser takes Lady Hood lion-hunting	Dalrymple (1993)	-	-	# Whether this statement refers to Lady Hood's Rohtak hunt of 14th April 1814 as noted above (Sandeman 1868) or were these additional lion hunts organised by Fraser for Lady Hood needs further investigation
9th January, 1815	Suffeedan (Safidon), Haryana	One lion reported	Hastings (1858)	1	-	
17th January, 1815	Chota Bhowanee (Choti Bhiwani), Haryana	Two lionesses shot	Hastings (1858)	2 (females)	2 (females)	# Measurements of lionesses: 9 ft 4 in, and 9 ft 2 in. Author asserts that "In ... a measurement the tail of the lion furnishes less than that of the tiger to the general amount." # Great Indian Bustards seen: "In our way home we saw many bustard...were extraordinarily shy"

THE LAST HURRAH OF THE 'HURRIANAH' LION – PART I

**Table 1:** Chronological record of hitherto unknown references to lion shooting in the region covered by modern-day Haryana (*contd*)

Date	Location	Remarks	Source	Lion Count (Sex)	Lions Killed (Sex)	Additional Notes
20th January, 1815	Dholera (Haryana)	Padded elephants and mahouts waylaid on the night of 19th Jan by two big cats, most probably lions, a little distance from Dholera village.	Hastings (1858)	2(?)	–	# Hastings believes the two big cats to be tigers. The present author thinks they were lions: Refer to text p. 178 for details.
1815	Bahadurgarh, Haryana	Author wants to dispossess the lions from area some miles from Bahadurgarh by bringing in canals	Hastings (1858)	–	–	
1817	Haryana	William Fraser writes a letter stating "I have killed seven lions lately, five with the spear"	Dalrymple (1993)	7	7	# Probably part of the figure of 84 lion kills in Haryana region that is popularly attributed to William Fraser
23rd March, 1818	Sanghee (probably Sanghi village, Rohtak district, Haryana)	3 lions roused, 1 lioness shot	Egan (1820)	3 (1 male, 1 female, 1 of unknown sex)	1 (female)	# Tiger and lion reported from the same jungle along the Ferozepur canal on 23rd March; lioness shot. A tiger shot in the same hunting "circuit of about sixteen miles" a day before the lioness was shot # Sightings of wild boar, nilgai, hare, hyena, and partridges mentioned
April, 1822	Hansi, Haryana	6 lions killed out of 8 sighted, 2 cubs captured	Anon. (1823)	8 (2 males, 4 females, 2 cubs)	6 (2 males, 4 females)	# Two tigers killed along with 6 lions in the same hunting excursion, a leopard also killed. # Probable first record of all three big cats cohabiting the landscape – lion, tiger, and leopard – being killed in a single hunting expedition
1822	Bhowanny, Hurrianah (Bhiwani, Haryana)	Colonel Comyn kills 13 lions in two successive hunting expeditions	Comyn, 1822	13 (5 males, 3 females, 2 cubs, 3 of unknown sex)	13 (5 males, 3 females, 2 cubs, 3 of unknown sex)	# The first hunt was probably around Jan–Feb 1822, yielding 3 lions; the other around May–June 1822, yielding 10 lions (5 males, 3 females, 2 cubs) killed in less than a week # Dimensions: 12 ft (1st male), 11 ft (1st female), c. 13 ft. (2nd female), 14 ft (3rd male). (Evidently these dimensions are inaccurate/ grossly exaggerated) # Third male lion "had a splendid mane, nearly black"

**Table 1:** Chronological record of hitherto unknown references to lion shooting in the region covered by modern-day Haryana (*contd*)

Date	Location	Remarks	Source	Lion Count (Sex)	Lions Killed (Sex)	Additional Notes
1823	Hurriannah (Haryana)	General Watson kills 2 lions and captures 2 cubs	Bennett (1829)	4 (1 male, 1 female, 2 cubs)	2 (1 male, 1 female)	# One of these cubs became the famous lion named 'King George' of the Tower Menagerie, London (closed down in 1830).  # Bennett (1829) erroneously wrote that these lions were procured by General Watson from "Bengal", this was corrected by Balfour (1858), and subsequently by Blyth (1865).
?	Pewar Village, Jheend (Jind district, Haryana)	One lion tracked	Fogarty (1867)	1 (male)	1(?)	# 1 (?) : Could not access full text
Total (26 New References)	–	–	–	129 (141?)	109 (112?)	–

Moreover, even administrative records of animals being ‘destroyed’ by the British colonial state and regional administrative regimes as part of administrative policy were, by and large, absent during this period. It was only *c.* 1870 onwards that, with the inception of district and provincial

level administrative literature in the form of Gazetteers and Statistical Account books, such records started being meticulously maintained in an organized manner. Thus, it is always particularly difficult to locate hunting accounts and figures in pre-1857 colonial literature and most of what one comes across are snippets and glimpses of the actual scale of shikar being undertaken at the time. And so, it can be concluded with some degree of certainty that the written records pertaining to the number of lions seen/killed in such a short time frame (1810–1823), despite being appreciably high, would, in reality, be just a fraction of the actual number of lions seen/killed during this period.

**The Decade of Massacre**

We now return to Hansi, one of the first military stations established by the British in the newly conquered “Hurriannah territories”. A year after the March 1810 military dispatch detailing the killing of lions around the station came a follow up note from the same station. It was short, and quite incredible, and read as follows: “Hansi, June 18, 1811. – The lions are still very plentiful here; yet we have now killed in all, *forty-three*; besides tigers, and two leopards” (Anon. 1813). Attention must be drawn here to the fact that these figures were of lions hunted over a single year in the vicinity of a single military station, out of the multiple that had been established across “Hurriannah territories”. This is also a remarkable note for reasons more than one; not only does it give a rough idea of the scale

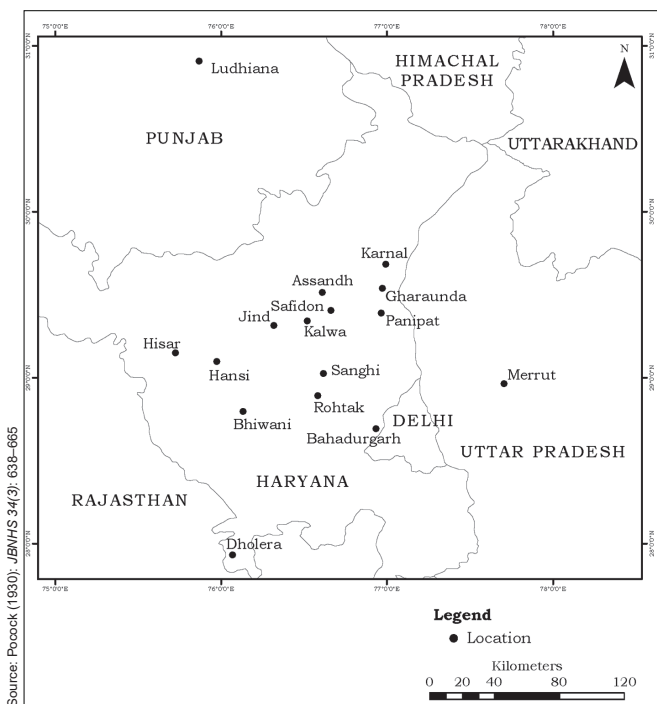


Fig. 1: Map showing localities given in Table 1 where lions were shot as well as some other localities mentioned in this paper

of killing of lions being undertaken by the British, it also provides the first evidence of tigers cohabiting the same wild landscape as the lions.

From here on, multiple records of lions being killed across Haryana start trickling in. However, there are three major sources that provide detailed records of lion occurrence, their hunting, and their ecology in Haryana. The first of these is the travel diaries of Maria Nugent (*nee* Skinner), the wife of Sir George Nugent, the Commander-in-Chief of India (1811–1813). She accompanied her husband on a tour of India and kept a private journal (originally not meant for publication) of her travels. However, these journals would eventually be posthumously published in 1839 (Lady Nugent died in 1834) as a two-volume memoir titled “A JOURNAL FROM THE YEAR 1811 TILL THE YEAR 1815, INCLUDING A VOYAGE TO AND RESIDENCE IN INDIA, WITH A TOUR TO THE NORTH-WESTERN PARTS OF THE BRITISH POSSESSIONS IN THAT COUNTRY, UNDER THE BENGAL GOVERNMENT”. In this journal are to be found some of the most detailed records of occurrence of lions and their hunting in territories north west of Delhi, almost completely coterminous with the territorial expanse of modern-day Haryana state. While passing “Bhowanny” (Bhiwani, central Haryana, 128 km west of Delhi) in December 1812, she observed “Our road lay through wild country, ... infested with wild beasts. Lions, in particular, are said to have their dens in situations so surrounded with thorny bushes that no one can get at them; but the instant they make their appearance in the plain, they are followed and destroyed by inhabitants; I should rather have said by European gentlemen, for the native inhabitants rarely interfere with the animal creation. The other day six lions were chased [sic], four of which were killed... .” (Nugent 1839).

The above reference gives very interesting clues on the ecology of lions in Haryana. The habitat (more on it in Part II of the paper) was thorny scrub bushes, degraded remnants of which can still be seen in some (albeit very rare) uncultivated parts of Haryana. Moreover, she emphasizes that it was the British who were mostly doing the killings, rather than local villagers. Finally, her recounting of killing of four lions out of a group of six gives further credence to the likelihood of destruction of entire prides in single hunts.

In a period of less than one month (December 1812 to early January 1813), Lady Nugent’s diaries reveal killing of at least 22 lions (and sighting of at least 29 lions, seven escaping being killed). Evidently, this is a large number of lions being killed in a very short period. It can be argued that the hunting of lions was much easier and swifter (compared to tigers in the jungles) because of their gregarious nature, and more importantly the kind of open habitat they dwelled in where, as Lady Nugent recorded, “the instant they make their appearance in the plain, they are followed and destroyed”. While going into the details of each hunt recorded by Lady Nugent during her month-long tour of Haryana is not feasible in this limited space, there are a few important takeaways from some of them which may be noted here. While camping between Bhiwani and Hansi, at a village outpost called “Choota Bhowanny” (Choti Bhiwani) where footsteps of a large male lion were found near the encampment, she records that lions stayed away from the villages and human habitations by day, but approached villages by night and carried out significant cattle depredations. “... they always avoid the haunts of men ... excepting at night, when they venture to approach villages, carrying off cattle, &c, of which we have heard many complaints, in this neighbourhood”, she wrote<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, she also records the presence of both tigers and lions in the area between Bhiwani and Hansi, reinforcing the proof offered in the first 1810 military dispatch of tigers and lions cohabiting this landscape.

Some other notable hunting records in Lady Nugent’s memoirs are from 4th January, 1813 when pugmarks of lions were found around a tank close to her camp, which in turn got her discussing lions and tigers with the military officers accompanying her. “Talked a great deal to Captain S. about lions, tigers, &c ... his brother killed no less than seven in one day ... Mr. Fraser and a party of gentlemen killed six out of eight, not long since”. Yet again, we see tigers and lions being mentioned in the same conversation on the hunting of big game in the region. Yet again, the account seems to describe virtually complete destruction of two prides (seven lions, and later six out of eight lions) in single hunts on each occasion.

The name Fraser is worth noting here. William Fraser (1784–1835), who was part of Lady Nugent’s camp, was the British Agent to the Governor General of India,

<sup>5</sup>This anecdote is notable as parallels can be drawn between this particular behaviour of Haryana’s lions back then to that of Asiatic lions in rural Saurashtra (Gujarat) today. Over the years, lions of Gir forest have expanded their distribution range to include large adjoining rural landscapes spread across multiple districts (Ranjitsinh 2014; Singh 2017). The 2020 lion census in Gujarat recorded 674 lions spread across “nine districts of Saurashtra, namely Junagadh, Gir Somnath, Amreli, Bhavnagar, Botad, Porbandar, Jamnagar, Rajkot, and Surendranagar, constituting 53 talukas, covering a sprawling expanse of around 30,000 sq. km” (Gujarat Forest Department 2020). Many of these lions that live in rural landscapes surrounding the villages have been noted to rest in secluded farms and degraded scrub areas around villages by day and move into human inhabited areas by night to carry out cattle raids.

Commissioner of the Delhi Territory, and also British Political Agent/Resident on multiple occasions to the court of the Mughal emperor. He also happened to be Lady Nugent's nephew, the elder brother of Aleck Fraser who first described two lion cubs at the Delhi British Residency in 1809, and was famed as a "lion-queller par excellence" (Mundy 1832). He often hunted with another famous hunter – his close friend Colonel James Skinner (1778–1841) of Skinner's Horse Cavalry Regiment fame (the two Skinner's Horse Cavalries were raised by him at Hansi). The French botanist and naturalist Victor Jacquemont, travelling in India from 1828 until his untimely death in Bombay in 1832, went looking for lions in Haryana<sup>6</sup> and met William Fraser, who by then was nearly 50 years old. Jacquemont attributed 84 lion kills to William Fraser. "Mr. Fraser is a man of fifty, who, but for some eccentricities of character, would hold a higher office than the one he occupies" wrote Jacquemont (Phillips 1936), while in another couple of letters written to Captain Cordier from Chandernagore Thana on October 10 and October 27, 1832 (Jacquemont died a few weeks later on 7th December), he wrote, "He has killed eighty-four lions, mostly on foot or on horseback, and has had quite a lot of his hunters eaten. He has six or seven legitimate wives, but they all live together some fifty leagues from Delhi and do as they like... He is also called Fraser the Lion, to distinguish him from twenty or so other Frasers, five or six of whom, like him, are William Frasers." (Phillips 1936). I have found the name of William Fraser come up quite a few times in these previously undocumented lion hunting records from Haryana that I have come across. Whether the lions killed in these hunts by (or in presence of Fraser) are part of that figure of 84 lions attributed to him by Jacquemont or not, is anybody's guess. A collection of these records and other documents were published posthumously in his book *LETTERS FROM INDIA* (Jacquemont 1834).

The next day (5th January, 1813), Lady Nugent recounts discussing lions with the Raja of Jheend (Jind) while camping at the village of Khalwah (most probably present day Kalwa village in Pillu Khera *tehsil* of Jind district, Haryana) which she describes as a "wild country, covered with jungle and low wood", where "the young Rajah yesterday told us he had killed four lions himself, in this neighbourhood, in one day." This is a very notable reference because even though Lady Nugent had earlier asserted that Europeans were the ones hunting lions, this anecdote proves that while the local villagers in these territories might not have hunted lions in

any notable numbers, Indian nobles and landed gentry were definitely hunting lions. Moreover, the fact that my research only looks at British records also leaves ample scope for further research into vernacular sources, as well as the written records/archives of the Princely States of the region. A thorough search for such records is likely to yield many more interesting hunting records of lions from Haryana and adjoining regions. Did these Indian noblemen conduct lion-hunting at the same scale and frequency as the British? Did the arrival of the British and their firearms change the style of lion hunting of Indian nobles – did they start killing more lions as a result of access to better firearms, as well as in a bid to compete with the perceived hunting prowess of British officers and administrators? These are fascinating questions that need further research.

We return to Lady Nugent's journal. The following day, i.e. 6th January, 1813, she had marched to Suffeedun (Safidon, Jind district, Haryana; about 117 km north-west of Delhi), a "wild country", where yet again a lion was reported being seen very close to her camp, prompting the 'gentlemen' in the encampment to beat the 'jungle'. William Fraser, one of the 'gentlemen' hunters, soon came across a lioness which he shot. "At 12 they brought to my tent a large lioness; she [had been] shot by my nephew Fraser, just as she was making a leap to the head of his elephant. She was three feet high and eight in length – I saved some whiskers...all night the camp was in uproar ... poor bearers were so much afraid of the lion coming in quest of his wife ... Mr Fraser...told me he had been on this very ground not long ago, and could not rest for the roaring of wild animals, and that he has seen both lions and tigers on this spot...", records Lady Nugent. Next day, her camp marched 17 miles from Safidon to reach Kurnaul (Karnal, Haryana) and her camp officers went tiger hunting in the area the day after. She recounted that it was only after reaching Ludhianah (Ludhiana, Punjab), 19 miles from Kurnaul, that the bushy jungle eases out and vast cultivated lands begin to be seen, and no big cats were seen or heard of from here onwards.

In the same year, 1813, a news report was published with the following details: "A very fine lion, sent from Loodehaunch [Ludhiana] by Colonel Ochterlony, was landed at Calcutta, on the evening of November 13. The animal is supposed to be a native of Cashmere [Kashmir], and belonged for some time to the Rajah of Putteala [Patiala] ... [was originally] intended for a present to the King of Ava ... [arrived late] ... [now] to be put up to public sale. ...This article contributes to settle

<sup>6</sup>It is worth mentioning here that lions had already been more or less exterminated from Haryana territories except for a few stragglers by the time Jacquemont travelled through the area in 1829, and while he met up with Colonel Skinner and William Fraser in search of one, he could not sight one.



the doubt on the existence of lions in India. The country of Cashmere, we believe, was not before known to produce any. From the nature of that country it adds to the probability that lions were frequent anciently, where now they are never seen. The following shows that in some places they are numerous; notwithstanding the endeavours used to destroy them, and other ferocious beasts.” (Anon. 1813)

Interestingly, this lion is also remarked to bear “an exact resemblance to the African lion, in his colour and proportions; and is equal in size, and rather superior in height, to any of the same species that we have ever seen.” It is my view that this lion coming from “Cashmere” [Kashmir] is a case of misreporting (though one could argue that the extreme limit of lion distribution north-west of Delhi could have extended into the Jammu plains). I believe that this lion (captured most likely as a cub after killing of the mother/pride and presented to Raja of Patiala) was from around Karnal region which, as we have seen above, was prime lion habitat and within a 17-mile radius of Ludhiana (Lady Nugent wrote that the boundary of Ludhiana district was 19 miles march from Kurnaul). Moreover, Lady Nugent’s diary entry for 8th January, 1813 says that Colonel Ochterlony, who is supposed to have sent the above lion the same year, was posted in Kurnaul [Karnal] and he and his staff had received her on reaching Karnal.

The second important source describing lion hunting in Haryana and lion habitats in the region in some detail is an 1814 manuscript diary written by Edward Ellerker Williams. The particular section of the diary detailing lion hunting in Haryana region is titled “SPORTING SKETCHES DURING A SHORT STAY IN HINDUSTANE”. Quoting all the details of lion hunts recorded in this diary is not feasible given space constraints here, but the diary gives detailed notes on the habitat and ecology of lions in the area as well. However, the most important aspect of this diary is, arguably, that one of the hunts conclusively establishes tigers and lions not just occupying the same landscape but in fact the same patch of jungle, with the two big cats being shot in the same patch of forest during the same hunt barely an hour apart (more on this in Part II of the paper). This hunt happened around Rohuk (Rohtak, Haryana), which is about 66 km west of Delhi. Interestingly, William Fraser, who had told Lady Nugent at Safidon (80 km north of Rohtak) that he had “seen both lions and tigers on this spot...” is also present in at least one of the hunts recorded by Ellerker Williams. Over a period of four days (9th March to 12th March, 1814), nine lions (including two cubs) were killed (the figure could be 11 since two lion killings are also mentioned in passing without specifying when/in which hunt they were killed), with a lioness being killed on 9th March, four out of five lions being killed on 10th March and again four (three lionesses, one lion) being

killed on 12th March (Williams 1814). Thus, one can observe a regular pattern in these killings, where a large number of fatalities on single (and often multiple) prides are inflicted by hunters over successive days of a hunt. How would such regular large offtakes from the landscape’s lion population, often within a few days or few weeks, have impacted the social structure and breeding success of surviving lions, is anybody’s guess.

In the meanwhile, military dispatches and reports of lions being taken out in the Haryana territories kept coming in. Published in the Calcutta Gazette, a note dispatched from the military station of “Sahranpur” (now Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh) on 14th April, 1814 detailing the progress of Lady Hood’s travel from Muttra (Mathura, Uttar Pradesh) to Saharanpur reported that “Her Ladyship, in her way from Muttra, had a hunting excursion at Rohtuk, which did not prove very successful, as the Party only killed one lion and one tiger...” (Sandeman 1868). Dalrymple also states that Fraser took Lady Hood, “an aristocratic tomboy” lion-hunting in 1814 (Dalrymple 1993). Whether this statement refer to the same hunt described in the Calcutta Gazette or did Fraser organise additional lion hunts for Lady Hood needs further investigation.

Around the same time, another dispatch from the military station of Kurnaul (Karnal, Haryana) was published detailing the killing of “a lion of enormous size, and supposed to be the largest ever seen in India” by a party of officers led by Colonel Thompson. Notably, this lion was quoted to be a man-eater having “killed 8 villagers, a great number of bullocks, and otherwise done much damage previous to the information being sent to cantonments of his being in the neighbourhood”. The dead lion was measured at 10 ft 2 in (end of nose to tip of tail), 4 ft 6 in height (from ground to the top of the shoulder), and with four legs having a circumference of 2 ft 4 in (Anon. 1814).

The third critical source in piecing together the history and ecology of the “Hurriana” lions is the Private Journals of Francis Edward Rawdon-Hastings, 1st Marquess of Hastings and Governor General of India (October 1813 – January 1823). Excerpts from his journal were published posthumously in 1858, 32 years after his death. His detailed notes on his travels through the Haryana territories from 9th January, 1815 to 20th January, 1815, undertaking roughly the same route as Lady Nugent took almost exactly two years before him, yielded regular lion encounters. He heard of a large lion in the neighbourhood of Suffeedan (Safidon, Haryana) on 9th January, killed two lionesses at Chota Bhowannee (Bhiwani, Haryana) a week later on 17th January (measuring 9 ft 4 in. and 9 ft 2 in. respectively from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail) and had his riding elephants and mahouts waylaid on the night of 19th January by two big

cats a little distance from the village of Dholera (Hastings 1858). Due to the darkness of the night, the mahouts could not accurately identify if the two cats that had waylaid them were tigers or lions, but gave the following description to Hastings: “The elephant was stopped by two large animals, who approached it growling and roaring furiously; that these beasts walked round them several times; that the elephant fell into a violent trembling.” Hastings was of the view that the two cats were tigers. However, based on the nature of the tract he describes, the duo are more likely to be lions. Hastings’ journal notes give much detail on the kind of habitat lions dwelled in this country, the cohabitation of lions and tigers in the same landscape, and the kind of micro-habitats the two big cats preferred while cohabiting the same landscape, attitude and beliefs of locals *vis a vis* lions and tigers, and so on (these will be detailed in Part II of the paper).

And so, between June 1810 and January 1815, in less than a five-year period, the aforementioned sources yield a total of at least 91 confirmed lion records (which could possibly be as high as 103), out of which as many as 80 (possibly 82) were killed. I have not been able to trace many records of killings of lions in Haryana post 1815, but a few of them are worth elucidating here.

The first is a very interesting record related to William Fraser from 1817 to be found in William Dalrymple's book. Dalrymple quotes a snippet from a letter written by Fraser in 1817 in which Fraser writes: "I have killed seven lions lately, five with the spear" (Dalrymple 1993). Thus, Fraser was probably still regularly hunting lions in Haryana in 1817.

The second is a note on hunting lions on 23rd March, 1818 at a place called “Sanghee, 60 miles N.W. of Dihlee [Delhi]”, and about 28 miles from “Pannuput” [Panipat, Haryana]. The mentioned location is probably the present-day village of Sanghi in Rohtak district, Haryana. On 22nd March, 1818, a large party of hunters – which once again included William Fraser among others – with as many as 10 sporting elephants in total, along with horsemen and footmen, started a beat for lions which had been reported from the area. Interestingly, instead of lions, they first came across a tiger who unleashed a fierce charge on one of the elephants before it was shot dead. After shooting the striped cat dead, the writer notes that “in a circuit of about sixteen miles we beat up many jungles, in the hope of rousing a lion, but without success...”. However, the next morning, on 23rd March, they went out at “9 am in quest of three lions, which we heard were in a jungle about six miles to the north-east of our tenets [sic]” (Egan 1820). The lions were found in the scrub and bush jungle around the then abandoned Ferozpur canal (now known as Western Yamuna Canal), and while two lions were able to escape, the lioness was eventually shot

dead, but not before she severely mauled one of the beaters in her bid to break free. While other details from this hunt shall find space in the appropriate sections in Part II of the paper, it must be noted that this reference adds to the number of prior references pertaining to the co-occurrence of tigers and lions in the same patches of forests.

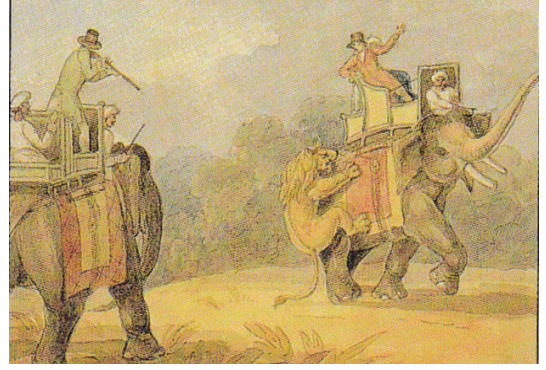
It is worth noting here that Sir Charles D'Oyly, the famous British public official and painter, presented two albums titled "Indian Sports" – containing 63 drawings in water-colour illustrating various types of hunting scenes from India – to the 1st Marquess of Hastings and his wife the Marchioness of Hastings. Painted somewhere between 1810–15, the second of these two albums has a fascinating sequence of illustrations depicting a hunt for a lion and a tiger taking place in the same beat, in what looks like an open savannah woodland or scrub forest. This in all likelihood was drawn by D'Oyly after reading (or hearing) a detailed description of a lion and tiger hunt undertaken in a single day's beat – much like the ones described in this paper – from the Haryana region. This album, now housed with the British Library, is perhaps the only existing colonial-era visual depiction of a lion and tiger cohabiting the same patch of forest. This lion hunting sequence by Sir D'Oyly was first reproduced by Divyabhanusinh in his book *THE STORY OF ASIA'S LIONS*.” (D'Oyly 1810–1815; Figs 2–8)

The next previously unrecorded reference is among the last references establishing conclusive evidence of lions in the Haryana landscape. A letter from a military officer stationed at Merrut (now Meerut in Uttar Pradesh) who went hunting big cats in Hansi in April, 1822 states, “A few days ago, I returned from a trip which I started for on the first of April. I went expressly for lions, which are found beyond Hansi, on the borders of the desert. I killed two lions, four lionesses, a tiger and tigress, and a leopard. ...One of the lioness[es] had two young ones [lion and lioness] which I brought away. They are quite tame, and are now running about my house...” (Anon. 1823). There are two important take-aways from this record. One is that lions, which barely a decade earlier were recorded as very common just around the military station of Hansi, had now retreated to areas far “beyond Hansi, on the borders of the desert”. This pride was probably among the last ones in the Haryana landscape which survived at the very fringes of their erstwhile extensive habitat in the region. This particular hunt also reinforces the earlier accounts of lion cubs being killed or captured by hunters during the destruction of the pride, in my opinion a critical factor in the extermination of lion populations in the region. Moreover, this record also is a very interesting note, and the only one I am aware of, where all the three big cats cohabiting the landscape – lion, tiger, and leopard – were killed in a single hunting expedition.

SOURCE: COURTESY THE BRITISH LIBRARY, VISUAL ARTS, LONDON



Fig. 2: The huntsman on his elephant approaches a lion at bay



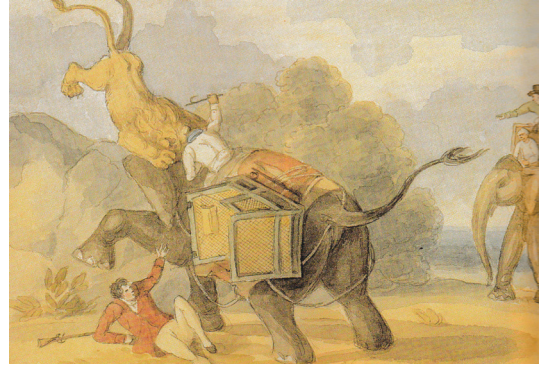
SOURCE: COURTESY THE BRITISH LIBRARY, VISUAL ARTS, LONDON

Fig. 3: The lion leaps up at a hunter in his howdah, while his companion takes aim from nearby

SOURCE: COURTESY THE BRITISH LIBRARY, VISUAL ARTS, LONDON



Fig. 4: An Indian horseman waving a scimitar gallops off with the lion in pursuit



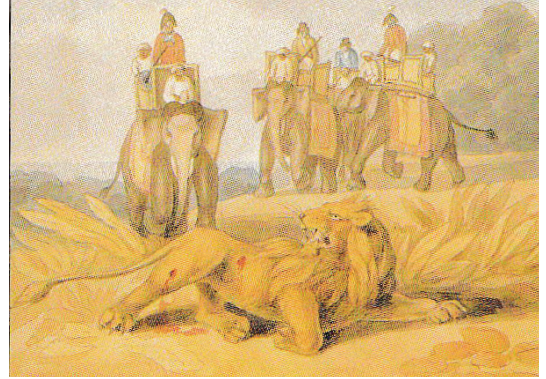
SOURCE: COURTESY THE BRITISH LIBRARY, VISUAL ARTS, LONDON

Fig. 5: The lion leaps from a rock onto the elephant, dislodging the howdah and knocking its occupant to the ground

SOURCE: COURTESY THE BRITISH LIBRARY, VISUAL ARTS, LONDON



Fig. 6: Two Indians armed with scimitars keep the lion at bay while the hunter takes aim. The mahout tries to calm the elephant beyond



SOURCE: COURTESY THE BRITISH LIBRARY, VISUAL ARTS, LONDON

Fig. 7: "The wounded lion glares at the approaching hunters on their elephants

SOURCE: COURTESY THE BRITISH LIBRARY, VISUAL ARTS, LONDON



Fig. 8: The shikari unties various dead animals from the backs of elephants and the huntsman prepares to climb down. A group of tents beyond

Finally, while there will be much more on this in Part II of the paper, it would be worthwhile to mention here that the writer also emphasizes the notable aggression of lions towards the hunters, even comparing it to the tigers that he had shot in the same hunt, and noting that "I do not think the lion is so powerful an animal as tiger, but he fights much better. A tiger will make his attack, and then retire; but a lion never retreats; he fights until he is killed."

However, one of the most vicious final assaults that probably would have been critical in wiping out what surely were among the last prides of lions in Haryana, happened around that old favourite haunt of the lions – Bhiwani – in

1822 and is recorded in an excerpt from a diary of Colonel Comyn that was finally published in a local newspaper in Australia many decades later (in 1865), courtesy the officer's son. The diary jottings of Colonel Comyn recorded him killing a staggering 13 lions (five males, three females, two cubs, and three lions of unknown sex) in two successive hunting expeditions (one probably around Jan–Feb 1822 and the other around May–June 1822), the first hunt yielding three lions while the hunting expedition during the hot months ended with 10 lions (five males, three females, two cubs) killed in less than a week (Comyn 1822).

The last conclusive record of lions from Haryana comes from 1823, and perhaps it is fitting to reproduce this final account in toto (Bennett 1829):

“...It was in the commencement of the year 1823, when the General [Watson] was on service in [Hurriannah], that being out one morning on horseback, armed with a double barreled rifle, he was suddenly surprised by a large male Lion, which bounded out upon him from the thick jungle at the distance of only a few yards. He instantly fired, and, the shot taking complete effect, the animal fell dead almost at his feet. No sooner was this formidable foe thus disposed of than a second, equally terrible, made her appearance in the person of the Lioness, whom the General also shot at and wounded so dangerously that she retreated into the thicket. As her following so immediately in the footsteps of her mate afforded strong grounds for suspecting that their den could not be far distant, he determined upon pursuing the adventure to the end, and traced her to her retreat, where he completed the work of her destruction, by again discharging the contents of one of the barrels of his rifle, which he had reloaded for the purpose. In the den were found a beautiful pair of cubs, male and female, supposed to be then not more than three days old. These the General brought away with him, and succeeded by the assistance of a goat, who was prevailed upon to act in the capacity of foster-mother to the royal pair, in rearing them until they attained sufficient age and strength to enable them to bear the voyage to England. On their arrival in this country, in September, 1823, he presented them to his Majesty [George IV], who commanded them to be placed in the Tower.”

The above is a particularly notable record for another reason. The male cub captured here would go on to become the famous lion named King George of the Tower Menagerie (the menagerie was closed down in 1830), whose fame is well-recounted in the book *THE TOWER MENAGERIE: COMPRISING THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE ANIMALS CONTAINED IN THAT ESTABLISHMENT*, authored by Edward Turner Bennett, published in 1829 (Bennett 1829). The female cub also went on to sire a cub in captivity in the menagerie. However, there

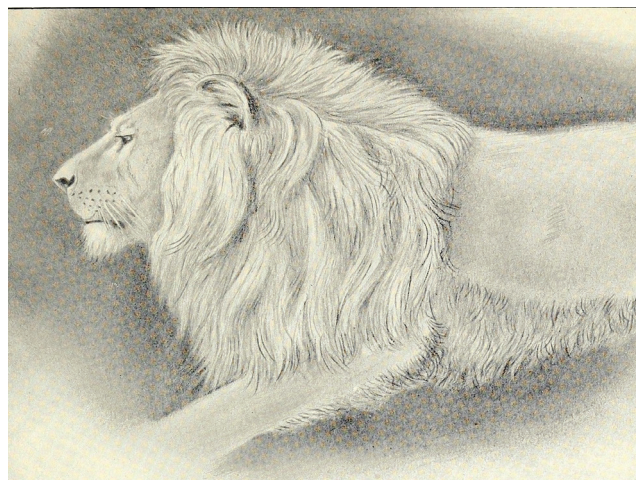


Fig. 9: Hurriana Lion in the Tower Menagerie described by Bennett as *Felis leo bengalensis*. Adapted from the original woodcut

is one significant error that Bennett made which caused much confusion. He erroneously wrote in his book that these lions were procured by General Watson from “Bengal”, and hence categorized this anecdote under a chapter that he titled “The Bengal Lion”, an error that was subsequently repeated by Buffon’s *Natural History* (Buffon 1830) and other contemporary publications (Anon. 1839; Wilson *et al.* 1832), and quite a few other authors of the time. This error even saw Bennett, and consequently some other subsequent authors as well, giving a new taxonomic name to this so called “Bengal Lion”, calling it *Felis leo Bengalensis*! (Figure 9). This error was corrected by Edward Balfour (Balfour 1858), and subsequently by E. Blyth who also wrote “the supposed ‘Bengal Lion’ of Bennett’s *Tower Menagerie* was from Hurriana” (Blyth 1865). Subsequently, authors such as Pocock (1930) and weeklies such as *Illustrated London News* also corrected the location of capture of Tower Menagerie lions from Bengal to Haryana based on Balfour’s (and later Pocock’s) account. One may wonder why I have included this reference of General Watson’s hunt in the list of unrecorded references when the captured cub was clearly known to authors such as Blyth and Pocock. The answer is that while these scholars (and a few modern scholars) have referred to the ‘King George’ Lion and the Tower Menagerie, none of them seem to have formally recorded how the said lion (and its sibling) were captured and the fact that General Watson had killed two adult lions in order to secure the two cubs. Hence, I felt it necessary to give that account in full and add the tally of four lions to Table 1.

### When Did Lions Go Extinct in Haryana?

All the references to lions having become rare in Haryana seem to start right after General Watson’s 1823 account. However, Blyth asserts that “the lion was extirpated in



Fig. 10: A scene from Colonel Mundy's famous lion hunting expedition around the village of Pewur (near Jind) in Hurriana [Haryana]

Hurriannah about 1824” (Blyth 1863), though he also states in the 1856 issue of *India Sporting Review* (Blyth 1857) that one lion was shot in Sekhawat in 1834 (the Sekhawat region encompasses southern Haryana and north-east Rajasthan). Balfour (1858) also gave the extinction year for Haryana's lions around the year 1824 by quoting Major Brown: “So far back as in 1837, the late well-known sportsman Major Brown ('Gunga' of the *Bengal Sporting Magazine*) remarked, “Only twenty-three years elapsed from the occupation of the country, when the lions, which were at one time in the dry and sandy deserts of the Hurriannah, became extinct south of the Cuggar, through the ardour of British sportsmen, and, it is supposed, none are now to be found nearer than the Sutlej.” Other sources give a rough date of anywhere between 1828<sup>7</sup> (Archer 1833) to 1830<sup>8</sup> (Eastwick 1883).

A number of references pertaining to decline/extinction of lions in Haryana region also attribute it to rewards being paid by government for their killings. For example, Major Fogarty who was trying to find a lion around Jind (he eventually managed to track one lone male) sometime in the 1820s, writes in his diary of the lions in the region: “Formerly lion-hunting was much more frequent in India than at present; but from the rewards offered by government for their destruction, and the assiduity with which the track was followed until the king of the forest was laid

low, a lion is seldom met with now...” (Fogarty 1867). Similarly, Colonel Mundy while recounting his famous lion hunting expedition around the village of Pewur in Hurriana [Haryana] also wrote: “Of these animals there were formerly great numbers in the surrounding wilderness: but from the zeal of English sportsmen, and the price put upon their heads by Government, the royal race of the forest—like other Indian dynasties—is either totally extinct, or has been driven farther back into the desert...” (Mundy 1832) (Fig. 10). Could data on such rewards paid species-wise for this region in this time period possibly exist somewhere, as was discovered by Mahesh Rangarajan for Cheetahs (Rangarajan 1998). If it does, then it is my hope that this possibility will be explored in future for it might open up further records of large scale lion killings in this region.

### Known records of lion-hunting in Haryana territories previously cited by scholars

It would be pertinent to add here a list of some of the accounts of/references to lion-hunting in Haryana that have been excerpted by modern day scholars. I shall go through them in chronological order.

1. An account of a lion hunt in Haryana published in the *Bengal Sporting Magazine* (1833): This account, first published in the *Bengal Sporting Magazine* in 1833, by a military officer hunter writing under the nom de guerre ‘Quondam’, described the hunting of one male lion *c.* 20 years prior (i.e. *c.* 1813), close to Hansi. It is interesting to note that Quondam writes, “The first lion hunt I ever was present at was the most beautiful sight I have witnessed. The party assembled at Hissar, where some of the sporting elephants of the Marquis of Hastings’ retinue were stationed .... Our party started from Hissar ... we soon came to a jungle ... soon after entering the jungle the lion was put up and fired at; ... turned round ... taking fearful springs ... retired back to the jungle, where we followed and killed him ... young but nearly full grown male, stood exactly three feet high and was nine feet long; his mane was nine inches in length”. (Quondam 1833). Now, the year of this hunt (1813) as stated by the author,

<sup>7</sup>Archer writes “Lions abound on the confines of the Desert, and at times close up to Hansi.... The distance which lions travel in search of water is enormous; the foot-marks of one of these animals have been traced, the next day, upwards of forty miles”.... [describes Gharaunda, now a Tehsil in Karnal district and writes of the place] ...“a thick jungle surrounds it on all sides: some patches of poorly cultivated lands lay on the right and left as we came. But a very few years have elapsed since this part of the country was inhabited wholly by wild beasts, and even at this time (1828) lions are sometimes seen within twenty miles of Kurnaul; tigers are exceedingly numerous in its immediate vicinity.” Archer also makes an interesting mention about game at some distance from Merrut (note that 1822 shooting of six lions and capture of two cubs was an extract from a letter written from Merrut): “Abundance of game, (including the majestic elephant, the tiger, and some few lions, to the North-west in the desert, down to the diminutive quail) is within a short distance of Meerut [Merrut]...”

<sup>8</sup>Eastwick writes the following for Hisar: “As late as 1830 lions were to be found, but now wolves, wild hog, black partridges, hares, and quail abound.”

and the fact that Quondam writes that he was part of a retinue of Marquis of Hastings, makes it possible that this particular hunt might also have been accounted for by Marquis of Hastings' Private Journal that I have referred to in the preceding sections (Hastings 1858).

2. Captain Mundy's account of hunting of a single lion around the village of Pewur in Haryana territory (Mundy 1832; Rangarajan 1999).
3. Vigne's account of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's soldiers hunting lions (1840): This incident has been mentioned in scholarly works on the history of Asiatic lions by Mahesh Rangarajan (Rangarajan 2001, 2015), and subsequently cited by Divyabhanusinh (2008). However, I think it is important to draw attention to a particular detail vis-à-vis this account by Vigne. He quite categorically specifies the location of lions being hunted by Maharaja Ranjit Singh's (reign 1801–1839) forces to be "within two days' march of Lahore". Vigne (1840) wrote: "I did not hear of any lions, but I have known small ones to be bayoneted by Runjit Sing's hunting Sepahis [soldiers], within two days' march of Lahore, and have seen their skins." I believe the words "within two days' march of Lahore" are quite significant, because it is possible (even if not very likely) that the swift moving hunting soldiers of the Maharaja could have reached the environs of north-western Haryana territories marching a couple of days. So were the lions, whose skins Vigne saw, actually killed somewhere at the Haryana-Punjab border areas? This, perhaps, is a question the answer to which can only be guessed upon.
4. Richard Lydekker and J.G. Dollman's claim of Colonel Acland Smith's lions: There is a rather famous figure (widely cited and highly contested by modern scholars Burton 1933; Divyabhanusinh 2008; Joslin 1973; Kinnear 1920; Rangarajan 2001, 2015) of Colonel George Acland Smith hunting 300 Indian lions during his stay in India (out of which about 50 lions were killed in the Delhi district) in the years leading up to and just after 1857. This figure was first given by J.G. Dollman who produced a revised second edition of Richard Lydekker's (1849–1915) book *GAME ANIMALS OF INDIA, BURMA, MALAYA AND TIBET* in 1924 (Lydekker and Dollman 1924), and since this reference is not usually quoted in toto, I shall reproduce it here: "[The authors'] informant also states that during the Mutiny-time (that is to say, early in the "fifties") Colonel George Acland Smith killed upwards of three hundred Indian Lions, fifty of which were bagged in the Delhi district." I, like all other scholars, had always taken this figure with a 'fistful of salt' and considered it to be a widely exaggerated claim. However, while writing this paper, the figure of 50 lions being hunted around

Delhi no longer felt that far-fetched. Obviously, the years that the authors cite for this figure (early in the 'fifties', i.e. 1850s) do not seem to add up at all, as by all other contemporary accounts, lions had been extinct in the Haryana region around Delhi for more than two decades by then. However, in light of the large numbers of lions being shot by Britishers as detailed earlier, the idea of a single officer hunting 50 lions around Delhi himself (such as William Fraser hunting 84 as quoted by Jacquemont), or 300 throughout his career, does not seem as beyond belief as it earlier used to.

5. Lioness of Assund (Assandh, Haryana): This very important reference has up until now, to my knowledge, only been quoted by R.I. Pocock and failed to draw the attention of subsequent scholars. Pocock (1930) in his paper on "The Lions of Asia", writes: "In a note on the skulls of lions and tigers contributed to Capt. Smee's paper on the Gujerat lion, Prof. Owen described ... the skulls of two Indian lions, preserved in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons ... one of the skulls from 'Assund in N.W. Hindustan' presented by Col. Finch in 1830 ... other specimen from North Gujerat, received in 1822 ... On inspecting the two skulls, referred to as lions by Owen, in the Museum of the College of Surgeons where they were kindly submitted to me by Mr. R.H. Burne, F.R.S., I was disappointed to find they are skulls of lionesses [and not lions], although one of them is entered in Flower's Catalogue of the collection as a lion's. Both, however, are adult, although the one from Assund is considerably the older of the two." Today, "Assund in N.W. Hindustan" is better known as Assandh, a town 45 km south-west of Karnal, that once famous haunt of lions in Haryana. Since the skull was presented by Col. Finch in 1830, it can be assumed that the lioness was killed somewhere between 1810 to 1825.
6. Jacquemont's record of William Fraser killing 84 lions in the Haryana territories (Phillips 1936), which has been cited by contemporary scholars (Divyabhanusinh 2008; Rangarajan 2001).

Thus, apart from the records of Colonel Acland Smith and William Fraser, we get a total of merely three confirmed lion killing records – as detailed by 'Quondam', Captain Mundy, and R.I. Pocock – from the Haryana region post-1764, and it was only these three records that had since been cited by the scholars working on the history of Asiatic lions in India when it came to providing references pertaining to the existence of lions in Haryana. This paper, thus, adds to the existing data another 129 lion sightings which could be as high as 141 – out of which 109 were definitely killed, a figure that could be as high as 112.

It is worth mentioning here that the appendix to the seminal work on lion ecology by Paul Joslin sought to trace all published lion references (both of lion hunting as well as general records of their occurrence in specific regions) across the Indian subcontinent from 1781 to 1891 (Joslin 1973). He tabulated his findings in an Appendix to his PhD thesis, and this table was later reproduced without change by M.A. Rashid and Reuben David in their book *THE ASIATIC LION* (Rashid and David 1992). Joslin's table gave 77 published references pertaining to lions from India and four published references to lions from Pakistan. However, these 81 references put together for the entire Indian subcontinent yielded a total confirmed tally<sup>9</sup> of a mere 60 lions (could be 59), excluding Colonel Acland Smith's tally of 50 lions shot in Delhi district. Out of this tally of 60 lions recorded by Joslin, he recorded 53 were shot/wounded<sup>10</sup>, two were captured, two skins were seen, and three lions were sighted (but not shot). Out of Joslin's tally of 60, there was not a single specific reference to lion hunting / capture / sighting from the Haryana territories.

Unlike Joslin, Divyabhanusinh (2008) in his book *THE STORY OF ASIA'S LIONS* has not prepared an exhaustive list of all lion hunting references, but rather puts across a remarkable appendix of all lion hunts where measurements of the killed animal(s) were available. This appendix presents 77 entries from the Indian subcontinent, an overwhelming majority of which are from the Kathiawar/Gir region, while there is only one entry from Haryana (which is Quondam's lion that measured 9 ft 4 in.).

More details comparing physical attributes (i.e. manes and size) of Haryana's lions with those of the rest of India's lions, as well as Africa's lions, shall be presented in Part II of this paper.

### Chronology of New Records of Lions in Haryana

Table 1 – which is a slightly modified form of Joslin's lion table (Joslin 1973) and the table presented by Divyabhanusinh and the present author (Divyabhanusinh and Kazmi 2019) for the chronology of extinction of Cheetahs in India – gives all the new records of lion sightings (and killings) in Haryana in chronological order and takes Joslin's table forward. The column titled 'Additional Notes' given in Table 1 provides some important remarks related to each of the new lion references presented in the table.

### Significance and Conclusion

The present paper (Part I of this two-part work) establishes the existence, and large scale killing – which involved wiping

out of entire prides, including killing or capture of cubs – of lions in Haryana leading up to their eventual extinction. It also adds a large number of lion sightings/killings to the overall tally of lions in the Indian subcontinent which up until now had been a miniscule number as discussed earlier. The references to killing of lions by the Raja of Jind (Fogarty 1867; Nugent 1839), Maharaja Ranjit Singh's 'hunting sepahis' (Vigne 1840), and other smaller zamindars who were approached by villagers (Williams 1814) regarding problematic lions, also establishes that along with British officers and hunters, Indian princes and landed gentry were also hunting lions, though the scale and frequency of such hunts remains unknown this paper is focused only on the British records and archives of such hunts. This part of the paper also conclusively establishes cohabitation by three big cats – lions, tigers and leopards – in the same landscape (more discussion will follow on this in Part II of this paper) which hopefully will provide some conclusive historical context to the present day debates around translocation of some Asiatic lions into Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh in order to establish a second home for the species outside Gujarat. One of the arguments often presented against this proposed reintroduction project has been the assertion that since Kuno also happens to be tiger habitat (mainly used by dispersing individuals from Ranthambore Tiger Reserve), lion translocation into a tiger use landscape is not advisable. This paper hopes to disprove this argument through a historical lens. Finally, it also lays bare the importance of moving beyond shikar books and concentrating on other sources of information – newspapers, military gazettes, published and unpublished journals and diaries, old sporting journals and magazines, compendiums, and so on – to trace the wildlife history of India and species-specific histories in the early decades of British rule in India. At the same time, it is evident that despite the large number of lions shot in a very short time frame (1810–1823), the actual number of lions seen/killed during this period would be much higher. This is so because the sources I have consulted are only British hunting records, and even those pre-1857 British records are mere snippets and glimpses of the actual scale of shikar being undertaken at the time, as the tradition of producing detailed faunal studies, gazetteer writing, and shikar literature would only appear post 1857.

Finally, on a personal note, it was incredible to think that the very land where my current workplace – Ashoka University, located a few miles from Sonapat town – and my University-provided residence (where I researched and wrote

<sup>9</sup>Total tally includes all specific lion records that encompass lion sightings, skins seen, mauling, shooting/spearing records, and cubs captured.

<sup>10</sup>51 were shot in India (figure could be 50), two in modern day Pakistan.

the first draft of this paper) stand today, were almost certainly prowled upon by prides of lions less than 200 years ago!

### Summary of Contents of the forthcoming Part II of this paper

Part II of this paper shall concentrate on the habitat, distribution, and ecology of Haryana's lions as sourced from multiple archives, and provide a detailed look into their prey – both wild and domestic – especially prey animals such as nilgai, wild boar, and cattle which seem to have composed the primary diet of Haryana's lions, perhaps supplemented with huge herds of blackbuck that could sometimes range into tens of thousands. It shall also explore in detail the factors that led to the extinction of 'Hurrianah lions' and show how the flat and open scrub, and semi-arid grassland habitat that once helped lions thrive in this region might have also made them easy pickings for hunters on horseback, on elephant back, and even on foot, in a region that was a very active military theatre during the opening decades of the 19th century. Through research into these aspects, Part II of the paper will seek to establish that while the loss of habitat and prey depletion did possibly play a role in the decline of the lions of Haryana, all evidence points towards the fact that the lions of Haryana were primarily shot to extinction by the British administration and individual hunters, even though their habitat and wild prey species outlasted them till much later. Part II will also look into the records of tiger and lion cohabitation in the Haryana landscape, and the accounts of hunters who had hunted both of them in this region, drawing comparisons on the habitat preferences and behaviour of the two big cats of Haryana. It will further detail very interesting accounts of furious aggression of "Hurrianah" lions when pursued by hunters and the casualties they inflicted in the process. The local attitudes towards lions and cultural aspects of these big cats in the lives of local communities of Haryana region shall also be detailed. Part II will also look into the possible role of canals, water tanks, and cultivation in the march and later collapse of lion populations in Haryana. An appendix shall provide the chronological record of other previously unknown references to lion hunting (and lion occurrence) and related reports from the Indian subcontinent outside of Haryana.

Another appendix will take forward Divyabhanusinh's table on the size of Asiatic lions (Divyabhanusinh 2008) by adding the measured dimensions of lions from the new records that this paper presents, collating it with Divyabhanusinh's table to present a new comprehensive table on the size of Asiatic lions. The final appendix of Part II of this paper will present brief notes on other important wildlife species and interesting natural history records that were detailed in the written archives of authors hunting lions in Haryana.

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