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No. 3.

Game Birds of Sikkim including the Darjeeling District
and of the Jalpaiguri District, Bengal.

BY

C. M. Inglis, F. Z. S., F. E. S., M. B. O. U.

(Continued from Page 28).

15. The Ashy Wood-Pigeon.

Columba pulchricollis (Hodgson).

In the cock the head is ashy-grey and the chin and throat white; a conspicuous collar round the neck broader behind, than below throat, with the bases of the feathers black, these scarcely show on the part below the throat, with broad glistening rosy-fawn edges deeper at the base and paling at the tip; remainder of upper plumage slatey-grey, the upper-back glossed with metallic green and purple: quills dark brown and tail blackish-brown: upper breast slatey-grey glossed with metallic green and purple, the dark grey shading into ashy-grey and light buff on the vent and lower tail-coverts.

The hen differs in having the collar deep glossy buff with pale edges and the lower plumage, below the upper-breast, brownish-buff instead of ashy-grey; the vent and lower tail-coverts are also a deeper buff.

Bill tinged with green and with the base of both mandibles dark livid lake; iris grey tinged with yellow; legs and feet dull purplish red.

Both sexes are said to be alike, as described by me for the hen: but in the few I have examined, all sexed specimens, have been as described above. More specimens must be examined before any certainty can be determined. The British Museum contains practically no sexed specimens.

Stevens gives the following information about its distribution.—“Recorded for the Himalayas at elevations of from 7,000'—10,000' or higher. I have seen specimens obtained on Sanchal at 8,000' during the winter (H. P. P. Barrett). It is said to have formerly frequented the station of Darjeeling in flocks of ten or thirty from November to April, and odd parties probably occur at the present day in the well-wooded portions on occasions. During the cold season, when on the ridge above Gopaldhara at 6,000' I saw large flights of this pigeon presumably, descending in a southerly direction, possibly under stress of weather”. Masson wrote.—“From 5,000 feet up to 8,000 feet, not very rare: seen near and about the station from November till April.” Osmaston found it “fairly common in the dense oak and chestnut forests between 7,000 and 8,000 ft. Stuart Baker gives the distribution as:—“Nepal, Sikkim and Tibet between 7,000 and 10,000 feet and possibly a good deal higher.....”. I found it not uncommon near Jorepokhri (6,500 ft.) but only in small parties of twos and fours. It may still be seen on Birch Hill. I secured a few specimens there in the middle of September 1927. It is also found in the Duars near Gorumara at an elevation of only 300 ft. Shebbeare got one there on the 1st May 1909 and sent me the skin of a specimen shot there by W. P. Field about March or April 1917. The latter sportsman also informed me in March 1928 that this pigeon was still to be had there.

They are forest loving birds and generally keep to the dense parts of the trees. Those I met at Jorepokhri were on high trees. I shot three but only one was good enough for a specimen, they got so damaged before reaching the ground. Stuart Baker gives the following interesting notes on birds seen by him in North Cachar:—“From the little I saw of them in North Cachar I came to the conclusion that when not nesting they were the hardest of all the Pigeons to get close to. They used to sit in the denser foliaged parts of the oak-trees, never moving or uttering a sound until they

thought I had got too near to be safe, when they quietly dropped, if I may use such an expression, out of the tree on the side opposite to me and wended their way to safety through the tree-tops. Even their flight was singularly quiet, and beyond on occasional "flip-flap" of their wings as they started, or again as they made some extra effort in twisting and turning in and out of the trees, I heard no sound. Never did I hear them make the loud clapping with their wings indulged in by most Pigeons at the start of their flight, this probably because they *descended* when first leaving the tree instead of springing into the air with an extra effort, as many of their relations do.

"Although so noiseless, their flight is just as powerful as that of any of the bigger Pigeons, and the way they dodged in and out of the trees when going at speed was really astonishing.

".....these birds had been feeding on a small berry, growing on a tiny creeping-plant which is entirely terrestrial in its habits, so they must have descended to the ground to get them. They also eat all fruit, acorns, &c. especially the blackberries and raspberries which grow in great profusion over the high hills. The Nagas also tell me that they sometimes come into their patches of Indian corn, but that they are never numerous enough to do any real damage. I have also, on one occasion only in November, seen them walking about in the rice-stubble on a hill-side, evidently picking up the rice which lay about in considerable quantities. Another bird I shot had been eating wild cardamum berries, and yet another had its crop full of tiny snails—little things, none of them as big as a green pea.

"They go about in very small flocks and sometimes singly or in pairs. I have never seen a flock of more than five."

I had no very great difficulty in getting up to the birds at Jorepokhri and have been within shot of them at Sureil without much manoeuvring, but two out of three which I shot were on such high trees that they were quite unfit for specimens by the time they reached the ground. Those got on Birch Hill were feeding on the fruit of a species of *Koula* probably *Machilus odoratissima*; the fruit is round and has a diameter of 14 mm. They were found on several days

at the same place but never more than in pairs or small parties of four.

The nidification of this bird is little known Osmaston took "two nests in small trees, about 6 and 10 feet respectively, above the ground on the 21st June. They were the ordinary platform of sticks and contained each one bird". Stuart Baker also took several nests in North Cachar, likewise in June. His nests were "mere rough platforms of small twigs coarsely, but strongly interlaced with one another; but they had one distinctive and unexpected feature, namely a sparse lining of feathers."

The birds got by me at Jorepokhri in late July, on dissection, proved to be breeding.

The eggs, one in number, are white. Stuart Baker gives his biggest egg as 1.56 by 1.18 in. and the smallest 1.46 by 1.06 in.

Masson wrote that he had found the nest below Sandakphu containing *two* eggs. This statement is undoubtedly wrong.

Osmaston reared, by hand, the two he got from the nests and presented them to the Calcutta Zoo. There was a specimen there got some years before but it only lived a few months.

(To be continued)

THE SNAKES OF NORTHERN BENGAL AND SIKKIM

BY

G. E. SHAW AND E. O. SHEEBEARE.

(Continued from page 32 Vol. IV No. 2)

So far all the snakes of the family *Colubridae*, numbers 6-46, have belonged to the Division without fangs of any kind—the so-called *Aglypha*, from a without, and *glypho*, I carve, therefore uncarved teeth. Now we come to a second group which have the posterior maxillary teeth enlarged and grooved. They are called *Opisthoglypha*, *opisthe* meaning behind. These will be numbered 47-60, and are a little suspect. None of the Indian species are able to affect man though the Water Snake No. 47 is said to have made a man's hand throb but there is no doubt that they can poison very

small animals and in South Africa one species of the group, a Boomslang, which does not occur in India very nearly killed a man. The man was bitten in the forearm and lay on the brink of death for nearly a week and took three months to recover completely.

The third group with the anterior teeth altogether modified into big hypodermic needles are the poisonous snakes called *Proteroglypha*, *protero* meaning before.

In these the parotid salivary gland has been enlarged and modified into a venom producing gland, and it is interesting to note that a salivary gland feeds the long back teeth of group 2, and that its secretion has been found to be decidedly poisonous, and moreover the ordinary saliva of the first group of apparently perfectly harmless snakes is also found to be somewhat poisonous to small animals, so is the Python's saliva. Only that of the Blind Snakes seems to be without any effect whatever.

47. *Hypsirhina enhydria*. (Schneider) Schneider's Water Snake. Not poisonous.

Although many of our Snakes are often found in water yet this is the only one we have that can be said to really live in it. It frequents rivers, estuaries, lakes and marshy ground and the young are born in the water. The snake has to breathe air however, and the nostrils are placed much higher on the head than usual so that air can be obtained while only the very tip of the snout is above water.

The snake can be identified readily by the fact that the two nasal shields are in contact behind the rostral; this with the count 21 in mid-body is sufficient.

Probably it does not ascend the hills but it has been obtained from Jalpaiguri.

The colour is a dark olivaceous-green or olivaceous-brown above with a pale lemon yellow below. The line of demarcation is sharp, along the upper lip above its row of scales and then down to the 3rd costal row and right along the body; there is also usually a pale stripe along the sides on the 8th. row above the ventrals. A black line each side defines the edges of the ventrals and there is usually a line of dark spots along their centres.

Pupil vertically elliptic.

Apparently it feeds on fish.

D'Abreu who was at Kurseong School once, reported in 1912, that a man at Parbatipur was bitten on the back of the hand which became inflamed at once; fifteen minutes later the hand began to throb and the throbbing lasted for about an hour, after which no ill effects were felt.

The genus *Dipsadomorphus* includes many species of which we know four to occur here, the next genus *Boiga* has only recently been split off and we have also three of them. They are all called Cat Snakes, principally because of their nocturnal prowling habits but partly because they can climb well and hunt mice.

All have the very slender body laterally compressed and the vertebral row of scales enlarged as shown in Fig. D. of Plate 2.

The pupil of the eye is a vertical ellipse.

18. *Dipsadomorphus trigonatus*. (Schneider) The Common Cat Snake or Gamma Snake. Not poisonous.

As with other members of the genus the head is flattened, eye large with vertical pupil, neck very narrow, body slender throughout laterally compressed. The ground colour is usually light yellowish-brown or sandy. Dorsally a series of dark, more or less Y shaped marks, occur on each side which fade posteriorly; between the arms of each Y is often whitish. It is these marks that give the name Gamma Snake for they are very like that Greek letter. Another description of the marking is:—A white black-edged zig-zag band along the back. There is a dark streak from behind the eye to gape. Vertebrae only feebly enlarged in the middle of the body. This together with the number of the subcaudals will distinguish it from the other Cat Snakes.

Eggs when laid contain embryos partly developed. Hatchlings about 9 inches.

Colonel Wall says it is a most intrepid snake and essentially arboreal.

It probably reaches the base of the Eastern Himalayas but we have never found it. Specimens have been taken at Purnea, Calcutta and the Khasi Hills. [2 from Tindharia. Editor].

Costals 21 or 23. 21 or 23. 15 or 17. Mostly 21. 21. 15
Ventrals 206 to 256. Subcaudals 75-96. Length to 3 feet.
1 inch.

49. *Dipsadomorphus gokool*. (Grey) Gray's Cat Snake. Not poisonous.

[Tolerably common in the Doars].

Boulenger's description is "Body strongly compressed. Yellowish brown above; head with an arrow shaped brown black-edged mark, longitudinally divided into two, a black streak on each side of the head, passing through the eye; a yellowish vertebral streak, a series of erect Y shaped marks on each side of the body; lower parts yellowish with a series of brown spots along each side."

The difference in colour and pattern from *trigonatus* is evidently very small but the vertebral scales in this snake are much enlarged and nearly as broad as long in the middle of the body.

A mouse has been found swallowed by this snake.

Costals 19 or 21. 21. 15 or 17. Nine out of ten are 21. 21. 17. Ventrals 224-233. Subcaudals 87-101. Length to 2 ft. 10 ½ inches

50. *Dipsadomorphus multifasciatus*. Blyth. Has also been called *Dipsas multifasciatus*. The Many-banded Cat Snake or the Himalayan-Cat Snake. Not poisonous.

It may be reddish-brown or else dark grey with no trace of brown in it, or brownish-grey, but they all have well marked irregular black transverse lines every half inch; these are slightly zig-zag and are composed of black patches on part only of separate costal scales. The lip and throat are yellow; some have yellow vertebral spots for about eight inches from the head and may have a line of yellowish or white spots along the edge of the ventrals. There may be a black line from eye to gape; bluish grey marbling on ventrals and black spots near, or quite at edge, with often white spots below or on first costal row making an irregular black and white edging to the ventrals.

Calotes versicolor, the common lizard, called usually a Blood-sucker, seems to be the favourite food.

Found at 2000 to 4000 feet. Wall gave 5000'.

Costals 21. 21. 15. Ventrals 223-251. Subcaudals 96-116. Length to 45½ inches.

51. *Dipsadomorphus stoliczkae*. Wall. The Grey Cat Snake or Stoliczka's Cat Snake. Not poisonous.

Common in the Hills. This was for many years

confused with *D. hexagonatus* which it is now realised is confined to Burma and the Shan States. We have retained the name "Grey Cat Snake" but not 5% of them are grey the rest are reddish-brown. The head is three times as wide as the slender neck. In the red form the eyes are like bright reddish-brown enamel with a vertical black slit of a pupil, but in the grey form the eye is dark grey with a yellow pupil. Ventrals yellow at the chin and throat passing backwards through yellowish-red to pinkish under the tail, or even the same colour as above; or from yellow to brownish-white. There is usually a row of light spots along the edge of the ventrals. The upper lip yellow with a sharp line of demarkation from the eye to back of gape. The grey form may vary from pure slaty-grey to greenish or ochraceous.

Food. Lizards and birds often found in stomach. It often enters houses, probably after lizards.

Costals 21 (19 or 23) 21. 15. Ventrals 225-248. Subcaudals 94-116.

Length to 48.8 inches.

52. *Boiga cyanea*. (Dumeril and Bibron) Formerly *Dipsas cyanea*. The Green Cat Snake. Not poisonous. Body laterally compressed but neck not so slender as in *Dipsadomorphus*.

Colour uniform bluish-green or grass-green above with ventrals greenish-yellow. Chin and throat also yellow and upper labials a little lighter than the rest of the upper parts, with a narrow blackening at the extreme edges. The skin where it shows between the scales, especially on the neck, is black and the inside of the mouth is also black. No other markings at all. Costals 21. 21. 15. Ventrals 237-257. Subcaudals 124-134. Length to 4 feet 9 inches. [1 from Lindharia. Editor].

53. *Boiga cynodon*. (Boie) Formerly *Dipsadomorphus cynodon*. Black-barred Cat-Snake or Boie's Cat-Snake. or the Large-Toothed Cat-Snake. Not poisonous.

Really a plains Snake found in the Jalpaiguri District though it has not come into our hands.

Except that it is a light brown snake with black cross bars we have no description of its appearance. The scaling is sufficient to identify it when found.

siesta in the tall "null" and "ekra"; these seats can be seen in numbers when stalking. In his progress through these reeds regular tunnels are made. Many wallows both old and new may be found and into these he plunges where troubled with the heat, usually spending the hottest hours of the day in them. On leaving them he is covered with mud which cakes and is impervious to the bites of mosquitos and other biting flies. When wounded and pursued he will also often plunge into them, *en route*, to cool himself and then go on; this makes tracking an easy matter as the wet mud adheres to the reeds and grass as he brushes through.

Many people believe that the horn of a Rhino is used as an offensive weapon; this is not correct, its only use is to dig its wallows. The weapons of offence are the huge sharp tusk like teeth, sharp as razors, at the side of the lower jaw. When using these the upper lip is turned up and the lower one down, exposing them to the full; the mouth being opened at the same time. They can inflict terrible gashes, as evidenced by the scars on an old bull's hide; and, were it not for the shields, in every fight one or other of the combatants would be disembowelled.

The flesh of the Rhino is in great demand, even Brahmins can eat it and a fistful is sold for 4 annas; the horn may fetch anything from Rs. 400 to 500. To a native, therefore, to bag a Rhino is both a godsend and a gold mine and for this reason the Assam Government had to take measures in time to protect it from extermination. The Marwaris treasure the horn and cups are made of it, which are supposed to make any poisoned drink placed in them harmless; scrapings of the horn are also used as medicine to procure an abortion. In the opinion of some natives the urine is supposed to possess anti-malarial properties and, I believe, at Zoological Gardens quite a lot of money is realized by the sale of this secretion. I do not know how it is collected but it must be a ticklish and dangerous job !!

A native will build a hut in a tree, above a heap of droppings, and wait there a week to get his Rhino; an iron arrow being fixed into the bullet to make it more effective.

Costals 23 or 25 to behind mid-body, 15 near tail
Ventrals 249-277. Subcaudals 114-147.

54. *Boiga forsteni*. (Dumeril and Bibron) Formerly
Dipsadomorphus forsteni. Forsten's Cat Snake.

Brown with three series of black spots which are broader than long, the median alternating with the lateral series. A black band from the frontal shield to the nape and another on each side behind the eye; lower parts white, uniform or spotted with brown. (Wall B. N. H. S. 19. 75)

Costal scales 25. 27. 27-31. 15-17. Ventrals 254-273.

Subcaudals 102-131. Length 7 feet 7 inches.

[Recorded from the Darjeeling District—Editor].

(To be continued)



Snakes

Having reported the slaying of what I imagined an outsize in King Cobras, I am asked to expand my note into how and where I got the snake.

The actual shooting of the King Cobra was quite a simple matter entailing a round of No. 4 shot. A large snake was known to exist in the vicinity of a deep wet nalla with plenty of jungle cover, but was thought to be a Python. Just before sunset a chowkidar came to me at the double with information that a snake at least 50 feet long and about a foot in girth was holding up the garden cart road and preventing coolies approaching the lines; being father and mother of the whole crowd would I go and remove the obstacle. This I proceeded to do, expecting to bag a Python. When I got to the spot the snake was taking cover in a small drain at the side of the road with his head up facing the crowd of people some distance from him. On approaching him he came straight at me down the drain and I blew his head to pieces at about 10 feet range. The snake lived for hours after this, there was no other way I know of despatching him, and it was no mean feat of the four men,

who carried him in, a wriggling mass of scales. Had I known at the time it was a King Cobra and not a Python I had to meet I certainly would not have taken the risk of approaching him so close for the shot. The King Cobra measured between pegs 13' 7", girth 9", Ventrals 245, Scales 15, subcaudals 84. As I know of no other records in the district it would be interesting to know measurements obtained by other members.

May 1929.

J. W. B. A.

Observations on Indian Rhino and their shikar on foot.

In the following article I propose giving a description of the habits and haunts of Rhino and my experiences of "still" hunting them. In India I have heard of no one except myself who has undertaken this. In Africa, where the jungles are less dense and fairly free of immense tall reeds and grass, shooting on foot of the African species has been done. My experiences after this beast on foot were undertaken after I had used elephants without success. Every sportsman knows the dread elephants have of Rhino, and whilst I was in India, it was said the only two elephants that were staunch to them were in the possession of the late Maharaja of Cooch Behar.

It was disheartening, when on an elephant, to pick up the fresh tracks of a Rhino, where he had been feeding during the night and go on tracking and tracking through miles and miles of giant null and ekra, fording "bheels" &c., to come up to the place where the beast lay in his "seat" or wallow; then an ominous grunt or a whistling sort of noise, and the elephant would whizz round and carry one 3 or 4 miles before stopping, sometimes plunging into a quagmire. My friend D was once chased by a Rhino: his elephant bolted and got stuck in a quagmire from which he was extracted with much difficulty.

Any one who has been on the top of a runaway elephant will agree with me that it is most unpleasant, whether one is on a howdah or a pad. The beast stumbles and falls; a rolling ship in a storm is not

in it and worst of all the *hathi* tries to shake the pad off as well as the occupants. In a howdah it is still worse as one gets rattled like a pea in a drum. Lord Victor Brooke had his arm fractured in a shoot with one of the Viceroy's when his elephant bolted after a charge from a Rhino. In one case, the elephant I was on bolted, went absolutely mad and the only way the mahout stopped it was to drive the pointed end of the iron goad into the elephants' tongue. It was all this that made me decide to try stalking the beast on foot.

I have been after both the Great Indian Rhino and the smaller, the Sumatran one.

Booreegaon, a wild tract, situated on the right bank of the Brahmaputra, in the Darrang district of Assam, was the scene of my operations where lay the beds of the old Brahmaputra. In this tract were "bheels," null, ekra and a certain amount of scattered forest of simul (*Bombax*) and wild plum; for about 50 square miles not a villager nor a habitation was to be seen. It was an ideal spot for Rhino and it is no exaggeration to say that, in this comparatively small area, there must have been 12 or 13 Rhino. Kaziranga, the Sanctuary of Assam, was on the opposite bank and I think Rhino were attracted to this spot after the jungle fires, when the young succulent null shoots appeared.

My friend D and I had been out many times on elephants without success, so I suggested foot shooting. D was not taking any so I had to undertake the job myself.

I managed to get hold of an Assamese tracker Loloong by name, who was a ripping chap, although an inveterate opium eater, and would not budge in the morning until he had his "dope" and kept it up, with small doses, during the day. Poor Loloong met a horrible fate as I shall relate.

Before relating my experiences it may be of interest to give some account of the habits of the larger and smaller Rhino.

The smaller Rhino is found at the base of hilly country, where the hills are undulating and the forest dense and mixed with streams and cane brakes. I have seen them in considerable numbers in the foot hills of Tipperah, Sylhet and Lushai. In the small ravines there

are swamps and streams where cane takes the place of null and it is there where the smaller Rhino lies up and has his wallows; terrible stuff to get through and in stalking one cannot do it without considerable noise and being caught up by the thorns on the cane. The small Indian Rhino, on this account, is a most difficult animal to approach as he lies up in his wallow, like the large species he has always one ear and his nose stuck up above the mud and the sense of hearing is very acute.

The droppings are always in heaps, in the same manner as the large Rhino. He is very fond of the fruit of the O-tenga (*Dellenia indica*) or elephant apple, the result is that the urine is just like blood; he also eats the bark of certain trees and creepers and I have seen the bases of some trees almost entirely stripped of bark by them. He travels very quickly and is quite at home moving either up hill or down hill. He is not so dangerous as the large Rhino, trusting generally to flight. The spoor is a trefoil, similar to that of the large one but smaller. When he comes across a fallen tree, he always go round it being unable to raise his feet very much. Loloong told me that the Rhino lifts a fallen tree with its horn and in this way often kills the young one following behind!!! I do not know what truth there is in this.

The smaller Rhino is a great wanderer, in fact it is recorded that one was shot in a tank, that supplied the engine of a tea house with water, by the late Gordon Fraser, a tea planter in Sylhet. When disturbed he snorts like the larger Rhino but I have never heard him make the whistling noise of the latter nor have I ever come across them in pairs like the large Rhino male and female or solitary.

Both have favourite trees where the horns are sharpened and cleaned.

The large Rhino is fond of the *dhoob* grass which crops up in the drying "bheels" during the cold weather and, here too, the wild dog-rose grows and is also devoured.

The best way to get on to the fresh tracks of the large Rhino is to visit a "bheel" and if after the smaller one, the streams. The Rhino feeds at night and, at the streak of dawn, will go 8 or 10 miles to have his

The smaller Rhino though not so aggressive as the large one will, when wounded and followed up, charge and takes some stopping. A female deprived of its young, like most animals, is most dangerous and will charge at anything that comes near her. The young of the large Rhino gets very tame up to a certain age. A friend of mine in Assam had one and it used to go out every day with its keeper and fetch its fodder, which was placed on its back, like an elephant. I have never heard of the young of the smaller species being kept in captivity.

I forgot to mention that the hide of the Rhino, especially the shields, is used by the Nagas to make shields and Rowland Ward, by a special process, gets a beautiful polish, resembling tortoiseshell, on it out of which tables, whips, walking-sticks etc. are made. The feet, of course, are the chief trophy for the sportsman.

When feeding or undisturbed the Rhino walks very slowly, but when chased it is astonishing with what speed the animal travels. I should say its speed, in full gallop, is about 15 miles per hour. It will go through unbroken "null" or "ekra" like a rabbit through bracken, ploughing a clear path in its progress. Even half-burnt "null" and "ekra", which sometimes baffles an elephant, is nothing to a Rhino. When chased he spins round every now and then facing the pursuer and then dashes off again. In going easily through swampy and "ponky" ground the Rhino has no rival and it is wonderful how little the feet sink in this stuff. I think the shape of the foot, acting like a snow shoe over snow, enables the animal to get over easily. The wedge-shaped head helps him to get through heavy jungle and the thick hide protects him from thorns and "ekra" stumps.

When charging the animal utters a loud nasal snort, lowers the head and comes thundering along; it is always well to jump to the side when a charge is being made. Sometimes it will not charge home but will stop a few paces off shaking its head from side to side and striking the feet on the ground like a cow; the tail is also rapidly whisked.

The sense of sight is bad but smell and especially hearing are very acute.

They visit salt licks like most animals. I have never seen Rhino swim but presume they are good swimmers

as I know they have crossed rivers like the Brahmaputra and Benelli when in flood.

The ashes of burnt jungle are eaten by the Rhino, no doubt for the saline matter contained.

I have never seen the third variety of Rhino, the Asiatic two-horned one (*R. sumatrensis*) the greater part of whose body is clad with hair of some length, so must leave a description of him to other sportsmen.

I will now relate some of my experiences on foot after Rhino. They were thrilling times, and, although my last experience ended in a tragedy, I look back to those days with pleasure and my heart beats fast when recalling them. If anyone wishes to undertake this job let me tell him that the sportsman must be in first rate training. This sort of shikar can only be done after the jungle fires, April and May in Assam, when the heat from the sun is terrific. It also means a long tramp, wading through and swimming "bheels" and forcing one's way through unburnt jungle and wild cardamoms 10 or 11 feet high, a very weary and tough job. My longest day, according to my diary, was from 3 a. m. to 11-30 p. m., allowing one hour, out of this, for a halt for rest and lunch. I was so tired after this, that the slightest movement gave me a cramp in the legs. Every sportsman who has had a long day after Markhor and Ibex, over difficult country, knows the feeling; however, a hot bath, a good dinner and sweet slumber makes one forget all this.

My wife and my tracker Loloong were with me on my first experience. We procured an elephant to take us to the "bheel" where we were going to pick up fresh tracks. We found tracks, evidently of a bull that had been feeding there during the night, and leaving my wife to return to camp, Loloong and I proceeded to follow them up. We had left camp at 3 a. m. and reached the "bheel" at daylight. We tracked and tracked, through the tunnels and burnt jungle, till 1 p. m. After crossing a large piece of burnt jungle we saw a patch of unburnt jungle, with some simul trees and wild plums and Loloong was sure the bull was lying up in this and he was right. On entering it, the tracks were very plain. Loloong led the way round with a 12 bore rifle and I followed with a 450 H. V. In one of the tunnels our way was blocked by a huge mass of dead reeds, several feet high, the accumulation of years.

I thought it impossible for the Rhino to have got through this but Loloong held on and crawled under this heap and then suddenly drew back and held up his fingers. I then knew that the Rhino was there. Crawling under the heap, not an easy job, what was my astonishment to see a huge Rhino about 8 yards away, standing broadside on and not moving a muscle. From my awkward position I fired at his shoulder; he gave a snort and a rush, fortunately not in our direction, otherwise both of us would have been trampled to death. We went after him, tracking was easy as there was plenty of blood. The animal went on and on only stopping at a few wallows *en route*; blood marks then became less distinct and we had to trust to other signs. The beast ultimately got into an old bed of the Brahmaputra, impenetrable to anything, except a Rhino and here we had unfortunately to give up. Night was now falling and there were many miles to go before reaching camp, it was not till 11-30 that we got home. There was no moon and how we managed to find our way through those swamps and jungle was, indeed, marvellous; I was wet to the skin and my clothes almost in tatters.

Next day we went out on an elephant to search for the beast, but the mahout said the elephant would sink in the quagmire where the Rhino had taken refuge and so I lost this beast much to my regret.

I rested in camp the whole of the next day as there was some official work to be done but on the following one Loloong and I started out again.

We left camp at 3 a. m. for another "bheel" where we came on fresh tracks of a bull, but it was not till 2 p. m. that we came up to him. I got within 10 yards of him but unfortunately he was in heavy stuff and I could not choose the vital spot. I fired, there was a snort and suddenly I found myself caught by my coat and dragged into the null at the side of the tunnel. Loloong was the perpetrator and had he not done so the Rhino would have got us. We followed him up and he, like the first one, took to impenetrable jungle and again we had to turn towards camp as it was getting late and reached there at 11 p. m.

After my bath and dinner Loloong came for orders for the next day. I told him I was going to take a rest in camp so he begged me to lend him my 12 bore and six cartridges to shoot pig. He returned

next evening with five cartridges, and said he had missed a pig. We then had a dispute as to which "bheel" we should visit next day. Whilst I was after another Rhino, I had noticed the track of a big bull in another "bheel" and said "Loloong we will go there." He tried to dissuade me and said he knew another "bheel" where there were three Rhino and that we should go there. I stuck to my proposal, much against his wish.

We started from Camp at 4 a. m. and on reaching the "bheel" were not long in picking up fresh tracks of the bull. Then began the long tracking and pushing one's way through unburnt "ekra" and "null" with bended back. It was weary and hot work making one's way through the maze of tunnels. We were hot on his tracks by 1 p. m. as evidenced by warm droppings and freshly trodden grass. We cautiously advanced, side by side, with rifles at the ready. I could see that Loloong was not his usual self and appeared nervous. We then came to a tunnel which branched into two and after proceeding a few yards along the one to our right Loloong held up two fingers, denoting there were two, and drew back a few yards. I now decided to take the left branch so as to get a side shot. No sooner had we done this than there was a loud snort and I saw a Rhino thundering down on us. The next instant the Rhino was within a few feet of Loloong who was on my right, almost touching him and tossing its head from side to side and stamping its feet. Loloong threw up his arms with a look of terror and when the Rhino was almost between his legs I let drive. The beast went back 8 or 10 paces, bleeding profusely and undecided as to whether to charge again or not. I was just going to let him have my left barrel when down the left branch of the tunnel came another Rhino, full tilt at me and uttering most unearthly snorts. I jumped to the side and as the brute nearly touched me, I fired and the beast went on. On looking to my right I could see nothing of Loloong; he had apparently vanished. I called out his name several times and got no reply; at last I heard a choking sound and knew something serious had happened. I made my way through unbroken "ekra," in the direction of the sound and after going about 20 yards found my poor

tracker covered with blood, his clothes soaked in blood and torn to shreds. His body was practically a pulp, there were teeth marks on his side and his skull was apparently fractured. The poor fellow was still alive and, getting his head on my knee, I pulled out the clotted blood and bits of broken ekra from his mouth, five minutes later he was dead.

The jungle was trodden down all round showing that the Rhino had made sure of killing him. My rifle was not there and after the tragedy I searched for it and found it about 10 yards away smashed to bits and what was very curious was that the stock showed the imprint and depression of one of the nails of the Rhino's foot.

What happened was this. When I was engaged with the second beast, the wounded bull must have charged down on my tracker, got him in his mouth and carried him through the unbrokea "ekra", stamping on him and literally worrying him like a dog does a rat.

I was now in a dilemma. I could not leave the corpse, so stood near, with rifle cocked, in case the wounded Rhino came for me. I mounted guard for 4½ hours and then heard a swishing in the jungle. What was my joy to see an elephant, which my wife, who was in camp, had procured from the *mauzedar* and sent to search for us.

I wrapped the body of poor Loloong in grass, placed it behind me on the pad and told the mahout to take us to his village which was 7½ miles away. On the way I noticed a lot of vultures and going to the spot, to my astonishment found the remains of a young Rhino, apparently quite fresh. Then the whole thing dawned on me. Loloong on the day on which I had lent him my rifle, had shot the calf of the pair that behaved so viciously; and on that account, he had showed his reluctance to go to my "bheel."

I got to the village and had a bad time as the villagers, including his family, became truculent and menacing. They said that I had shot him but after seeing the body they were satisfied that he had been killed by a Rhino and I told them I knew all about his shooting the calf. I sent a wire to my D. C. when I reached camp and he asked for a report and the verdict was that I was blameless and that the death was accidental.

After the occurrence the vernacular press tried to make out that I was responsible but I think I did all that could be done under the circumstances and had I known the calf had been killed, I would never have gone after these animals on foot. That night on thinking things over I came to the conclusion that I had had a very narrow squeak, only a few inches decided it and had I not jumped to the side the second Rhino would, certainly, have got me. Needless to say I made ample compensation to the relatives of the deceased. He was a good chap but his nervousness at telling a lie had contributed to his death.

After this tragic and thrilling adventure I promised my wife never to go after Rhino on foot, but if I were single and had the chance I would do so.

One of the wounded animals was seen, by some Gurkhalı herdsman, crossing the Brahmaputra. He was sickly and probably died in the Kaziranga Reserve. My regret is that I did not bag the murderer.

Before I close this article I would like to say something regarding their distribution and protection.

About 40 years ago the large Indian Rhino was plentiful in the Goalpara, Darrang and Nowgong districts, also in the Duars, Terai and Nepal. Pollock saw numbers in the Jaintrapuri jungle in Sylhet, but there is not one there now. They were all exterminated 36 years ago. About 14 years ago the Assam Government saw wisely the ultimate extinction of this interesting animal and formed the sanctuary of Kaziranga, in the Nowgong district; at the same time absolutely prohibiting the shooting of it. Some years ago the Duars authorities followed suit. I should say, at the present moment, the largest number are found in Nepal. In the Tezpur district of Assam, which I know best, the best places for Rhino in 1911, were the right bank of the Brahmaputra between Behali and Boregaon; Gohpur, on the confines of the Lakhimpur district; the jungles bordering on the bank of the Gohpur and Sonarupa and Orang at the foot of the Bhutan hills, also in the Borsola jungles at Singrighat.

Before I left India I saw a picture of a bag made in one year by an Indian Prince. I think there were 35 animals or more and most of the heads looked immature and not worth shooting. Every sportsman will agree with

me that this is indiscriminate slaughter and should cease. Cooch Bihar State was also famous for its Rhino ground, but I believe none exist there now.

My plea for the Rhino is that more sanctuaries should be made wherever it is found. This total protection for a number of years and I especially ask the Rulers of Indian States to afford the same protection or, at least, to use some discretion in their shikar.

I should say the smaller Rhino is found, in greatest numbers, in Hill Tipperah, the foot-hills of Lushai and of Sylhet, but as many of the tracts of the latter are being opened up as tea gardens by settlers (tea garden coolies), this animal is disappearing.

The Rhino is not an aggressive animal except under special circumstances and owing to its extreme shyness it does not raid crops like the elephant.

Let us hope that the race will multiply and flourish and, after the lapse of years, will afford excitement and sport to the coming sportsmen. As a result of the formation of the Kaziranga Reserve, a forest officer who visited it before I left India, computed the number of Rhino there as 32 or 33 head. As regards Sanctuaries I suggest that regular, judicious firing of portions should be carried out, this would prevent Rhino wandering into unreserved jungles for the sake of the young "null and ekra" shoots and grass which sprout up. Firing also benefits by destroying ticks, mosquitoes, snakes etc.

I know one sportsman who always fired the jungle in proximity to a reserve and then went round it getting his Rhino without difficulty.

In conclusion I offer this advice to my fellow sportsmen who wish to hunt the Rhino on foot. Use a .461 H. V. rifle as the .450 is not allowed in India and use soft nose bullets, not solid, as the range is very close. I lost a number by using the latter.

Cortina, Italy.

H. S. Wood,

1st February,

Col. I. M. S. (retired)

TIGER EMASCULATING A BUFFALO.

While staying with my friend Mr. O'Donel, in the Duars, *khubber* was brought to us that a three-quarter grown buffalo had been attacked, but not killed, by a

tiger. Cart buffaloes are usually turned loose in the evening by their owners, to graze in the tea, waste land or on the edge of the forest. This one was attacked early in the morning in a piece of open land near some tea. The tiger was disturbed, before it had time to kill, by the owner who had gone to bring the animal in. We were told that the buffalo had been emasculated and so didn't think it was the work of a tiger but probably of wild dogs who are known to sometimes, though not usually, attack in this manner. The following morning, the 2nd February, word was brought that the tiger had returned during the night and killed the buffalo. On examining the kill we found that it had been emasculated and also saw the pug marks of a tiger. My host had a *machan* made on a small tree and sat up that evening. The tiger appeared after sunset and was scarcely visible in the poor light but a well placed shot bowled it over. Next morning it was found dead about 50 yards from the kill. The shot had carried away the lower portion of the heart and it seems incredible that any animal could have travelled so far in that condition.

It was a fine young male in perfect condition and with a lovely winter coat. What especially struck us were the huge fore-paws and the long fangs, longer than is usual in a much larger tiger. The clavicles were a peculiar shape just like hockey sticks. It measured 9' 1" between pegs and 9' 5" round the curves.

We should be pleased to learn if any of our readers have ever known of a tiger emasculating its victim.

Darjeeling

Chas. M. Inglis F. Z. S., F. E. S., M. B. O. U.

3rd March 1928.

THE NORTHERN INDIAN BLACK PARTRIDGE (*Francolinus francolinus asiae*) IN THE KUMAON HILLS.

I have been touring recently in the Kumaon hills (Naini Tal, Almora and Garwhal districts).

Wherever there is cultivation, the Black Partridge appears to be common. It is of course the nesting season and one hears them calling; they seldom call at other times. They seem to frequent the terraced fields

of wheat and barley or the scrub jungle on the adjacent hill sides. There is no grass land as in the Dooars.

The point that has struck me, is the height to which they go. I heard one on the top of a hill which was almost 8000 feet above sea level.

Conditions in Darjeeling are not very dissimilar. If they go up so high here why are they not found in the Darjeeling Hills? I have never heard of them out of the Dooars or Terai.

The Editor will probably say it is my ignorance but will some members back him up and report the approximate heights at which they have seen or heard the bird.

Naini Tal.

J. H.

[The bird found in Kumaon is a different subspecies to the one got this side. It is the Northern Indian Black Partridge (*Francolinus f. asiae*); the one we get in the Dooars is the Assam Black Partridge (*Francolinus f. melanotus*) and the habits appear to slightly differ. The only difference in the two birds is that ours is considerably darker in both sexes. The Northern Indian bird is found in any sort of cover, but prefers, according to Stuart Baker "grass a few feet high or scrub jungle which is fairly thick. They haunt thin forest, date and scrub groves, dense *ekra* and *nal* of river beds and swamps, plains of short grass not two feet high and practically any kind of cultivated crop which affords concealment". They have been recorded as ascending up to 8,000 feet in the Simla Hills. Our bird says Stuart Baker: "is principally a bird of grass lands seldom frequenting the scrub and tree jungle so often haunted by the birds of the South and West. This is probably due to the fact that in the humid regions of the North East, all forests are of such dense and lofty growth that they are not suited to the habits of the birds as are the sparse "Sal" and other forests of the North West of India".

It certainly does not ascend the hills here and Stevens does not even mention it in his list of the "Birds of the Sikkim Himalayas". Editor].

THE KALI KHOLA MYSTERY.

I asked my shikari why Kali Kola was a bad place for people to get lost. He told me this yarn.

That somewhere between Kali Kola, Sivoke and the Golma there is a hidden place in the jungle which is a *Sim Dap*, and this is a very very sacred place, a place where only Lepchas used to do Poojah and is only known to them, and takes them the best part of a day to get there and back. A Rajah is supposed to have given Rs. 200 to a Lepcha each year to take him there to do Poojah and he always stopped at the Kali Khola bungalow. No thoughts of shikar, slaughter or evil must be indulged in should one wish to visit this place for the way is well protected. The last part of the journey, before coming to the *Sim Dap* is through a lane of snakes through which one picks one's way and in the middle of the *Sim* there is a bubbling spring which is kept clear of leaves and sticks by two white ducks and a white barking deer. Every year at a certain time the bubbling spring recedes revealing a stone box which opens by itself and inside which is a scroll inscribed with prayers, which when read and the usual poojah of chicken, eggs and rice is put beside it, closes again and the spring bubbles up and swallows all; the poojah was then been accepted. The people again return through the lane of snakes. The stranger who goes there becomes a *Latta* and forgets the road and all that he has seen.

Eight or more years ago a Forest Officer is supposed to have bribed a Lepcha to take him there. He stopped at Kali Kola bungalow and started off in the morning. The Lepcha alone returned. The Forest Officer's bearer promised the Lepcha double 'kharcha' if he would bring the sahib back, which he did after four days. The latter was dazed and neither knew where he had been nor what had happened, nor would he believe his bearer when told he had been away four days, till it was proved to him.

In passing through the Kali Khola, I asked the bungalow chowkidar, who has been there seven years

and he told me that in his time nobody had been there but that he had heard the same story from the oldest inhabitants. The Lepchas no longer go there, but these that did formerly lived in the *busti* opposite Burra Gielle. Natives say they sometimes see coloured cloths hung up to dry on a *dara*, which on looking again have vanished.

I have heard two or three versions of this story and it would be interesting to know whether other people have done so and have followed it up.

24th April 1928.

E. S. WAY.