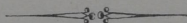


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C. M. INGLIS, F. Z. S., F. E. S., E. M. B. O. U.

snakes, *Dasypeltis*, with similar teeth and this, not being so rare is known to feed on eggs which it swallows whole, then it shuts its mouth so that none of the contents can escape and by pressure of the vertebral teeth breaks the egg without losing any of the contents. There cannot be the least doubt that our snake does the same but we are waiting for some of our Dooars friends to catch the fifth specimen alive, to be carefully observed. Fitz Simmons in his book on "The Snakes of South Africa" gives an interesting account of these species. "The snake seizes the egg at one end and proceeds to swallow it by a succession of slow and deliberate gulps, accompanied by a pushing-forward movement of the body. In fact, the snake's mouth seems just to spread slowly over the egg, so smoothly and evenly does the process act. When the egg has been worked down into the throat the snake raises its head and neck an inch or two above the ground, and by working its backbone backwards, saws the egg-shell right through longitudinally just as a person would do with a very fine fret-saw. Then the neck-muscles are put into operation, and the snake moves its neck from side to side, constricting the egg until all the contents have been squeezed out and down the gullet. Then raising its head a little higher, the Egg-eater spits out the crumpled shell.

An Egg-eating snake with a head the breadth of a man's forefinger can swallow a bantam's egg. The largest varieties can manage an ordinary domestic fowl's egg.

Egg-eating snakes are interesting reptiles to keep in captivity. Unlike most other snakes, they are not only quite non-venomous but, having no teeth, other than a few rudimentary ones in the mouth, they are unable even to scratch the skin. Knowing this, they never attempt to bite when handled, even when first captured, as do many non-venomous snake. No species of snake is more interesting to observe and study than the Egg-eater in captivity. He is different from the usual snake, as he has a gentle, innocent look about him. After being in captivity for a month or two and gently handled at intervals, he seems to become affectionate with whoever fondles him".

The Indian Snake is of the Cat Snake type with smooth laterally compressed body, brown or black above with a conspicuous light brown vertebral stripe from neck to tip of tail, and a few short varie-

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

BY

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

(Continued from page 28)

16 The Purple Wood-Pigeon.

Alsocomus puniceus (Lieckoll).

This Pigeon has been placed in a separate genus from *Columba* principally on account of the great difference in colour. It may easily be recognized by its chestnut colour. The back and scapulars are very deep chestnut, the edges of the feathers glossed with green and amethyst; the top of the head and a line under the eye are greyish-white; the rump and tail-coverts, both upper and lower, dark slatey-grey; the tail and wings blackish-brown. The lower plumage is paler chestnut slightly glossed with green on the breast.

The bill is greenish, the cere and gape lake-pink; the iris from creamy-white to orange; skin round the eye purplish-pink; the legs and feet purple-red.

Although it does not actually occur within our area, we give it so as to elicit information with regards to its occurring in the Chumbi Valley. Ludlow writing in the *Ibis* of April 1928 says:—"Occurs in the wooded

portions of the Chumbi Valley, but not beyond the Himalayan watershed." We can scarcely credit this as a fact because the bird is one of low elevations and the plains, but still Ludlow is too good an ornithologist for his statement to be ignored. The distribution according to Stuart Baker is—"Eastern Bengal, Assam, Burma, Indo-Chinese countries and North Malay Peninsula." The former species, which is not given by Ludlow, is according to Stuart Baker found in Tibet and we wonder whether Ludlow could have mistaken this bird for that one.

Stuart Baker writes that it "is a bird more of the plains than the mountains, but ascends the latter regularly to a height of some 2,000 ft." and is sometimes found up to 4,000 ft."

It seems most improbable that it should occur at such a high elevation as the Chumbi Valley.

They are forest loving birds but also prefer to be near cultivation and may often be put up in rice-fields adjoining the forest. We have personally come across them in these in Cachar. The late Mr. Primrose saw them in some numbers at salt-licks in Assam. They are found in small flocks, pairs or singly and are strong on the wing. Their food consists both of fruit and grain.

According to Stuart Baker "they breed from the foot-hills up to some 2,000 feet and also in the plains. Occasionally nests may be taken at 3,000 or 3,500 feet. They build in bamboo-clumps or small saplings, either in bamboos and scrub-jungle or in evergreen forest. They appear to only lay one egg which is glossy white. The average size is "37.6 × 29.2 mm."

17. The Speckled Wood-Pigeon.

Dendrotreron hodgsoni (Vigors).

This is a dark coloured Pigeon and may easily be recognized by the pointed feathers on the neck and there being no neck-patches and no metallic gloss on the plumage.

In the cock the head and neck are grey, the lanceolate feathers of the latter having the bases and centres to the feathers blackish; the upper back and lesser and median wing-coverts are claret-red, the latter speckled with white; the remainder of the upper

plumage is grey; the tail and quills brown, the upper breast grey with deep claret-red centres to the feathers, this colour gradually overspreading the lower breast and becoming deeper on the abdomen; the vent and under tail-coverts are deep slatey-grey.

Bill purplish-black; iris whitish; leg and feet dark green, yellow behind the former and the claws are yellow.

The hen differs from the cock in being more of a brownish-grey and having none of the claret-red colour. She is also a slightly smaller bird.

This bird is probably resident with us in the forests of Darjeeling and Sikkim above 5,000 feet which is the lowest point it reaches during the winter. In summer and autumn it has been found as high as 13,000 feet. Stevens gives the following short note—"Recorded for the Himalayas at elevations of from 10,000—13,000 in summer, and at 6,000—9,000 in winter. Obtained at Gopaldhara at 5,000. ♀ 7. 1. 12, when feeding on 'Jinghana' berries in the forest, and also at Mangpu at 5,500. ♂ 2. 4. 20. (G. E. Shaw). Elwes obtained it on the Tankra La at 13,000 in the autumn of 1870 (Blanford). Masson got it chiefly at 8,000 feet and says:—"they are cold weather birds with us, for they arrive in October and leave in May".

We got it at Yumthang (11,700) in the Lachung Valley in October 1927.

This is a bird of the oak forests in winter and pine forests in summer and autumn. There is little on record about its habits so we quote Staart Baker in full:—"In habits, as far as those are known, it is more of a Wood-Pigeon than a Rock-Pigeon, being very arboreal, though it will also descend to the ground to feed when there is anything to entice it there. It assembles in very small flocks as a rule and in North Cachar more than four or five were never seen together; very often it went about in pairs only, and occasionally a single bird might be met with.

Its note is easily distinguishable from that of any other Pigeon I have ever heard; it begins with a coughing, jerked-out note, and then continues with a deep double rolling-note which might be syllablized as "whock-whrroo-whrroo," the third note more prolonged than the second, and can be heard at a great distance.

It feeds on berries, acorns, small wild-plums, grain, and blackberries, raspberries, and strawberries. I have also shot them out of stubble in patches of rice-cultivation, but they appear only to frequent these when they are well surrounded by the oak-forest. The crops of those shot in such places were always full of rice, often mixed with tiny pebbles and a little earth.

Their flight is very powerful and swift, and even birds rising from the ground, though they did this with the clatter and noise made by all Pigeons when thus rising, seemed to get the pace up extraordinarily quickly.

For the table they seemed to me much the same as the native domestic Pigeon, perhaps a little drier and more closely grained in the meat. As, however, the birds I shot were wanted as specimens, all those eaten were skinned first, and the coating of fat being missing from the dish may have affected the flavour one way or the other.

Masson wrote:—I have always seen them in moderate flocks of from twenty to thirty ... they are very good birds for the table.

We got two at Yumthang, one in the forest and one out of three, sitting on a branched pole near a house in the open, a queer place for them to be.

The information about the breeding of this Pigeon is very scant, Stevens, according to Stuart Baker, "shot birds which were breeding in the well-forested parts of Nepal and not in the higher rocky parts above the forest." These were at an elevation of 8,000 feet. Stevens makes no mention of this in his "Birds of the Sikkim Himalayas."

Stuart Baker took two nests in the North Cachar Hills on the 28th May and 1st June 1896. The nests were "a rough platform of twigs, green and dry, interwoven with one another with but a little depression for the eggs, and no lining of any kind. Both were placed in small stunted oaks ... and were built on horizontal boughs some 15 to 20 feet from the ground.

Only one egg appears to be laid, white in colour. Stuart Baker's egg measured between 1.34 in. and 1.64 in. in length and 1.02 in. and 1.16 in. in width.

(To be continued)

THE SNAKES OF NORTHERN BENGAL AND SIKKIM

BY

G. E. SHAW AND E. O. SHEBBEARE.

(Continued from Page 58. Vol. IV No. 3.)

55. *Psammodynastes pulverulentus*. (Gunther) The Mock Viper. Not poisonous.

A small and usually dull brown viperish looking snake with short thick head on a distinct neck. The head is flat and somewhat triangular with black longitudinal streaks, usually one median, one above each eye and one from eye to beyond gape, those above the eye converging posteriorly and forming an incomplete triangle. The colour on the head may be anything from pale grey or buff to black and the pattern is sometimes quite lost in the general dark colour. Eye large with vertical pupil. The chin is characteristic for this is the only Indian snake having three pairs, instead of two, of long scales bordering the central groove there. The pattern on the body may vary tremendously and though most are dingy a very few are quite brightly variegated with small white spots with below them a line of bright yellow ones along the neck and for a few inches of the body. Some have two lighter longitudinal bands on each side the lower one having a dark brown linear band beneath it almost completely on the ventrals and subcaudals; the general colour is some kind of fawn or dull reddish brown. In this form the ventrals will probably be very yellow lightly speckled with black. Others in place of the longitudinal bands have a dark vertebral ridge and then on each side of it a series of faintly marked reddish-brown spots, often shown up and brightened by a smaller black spot at the posterior edge; the sides are darker again and the ventrals yellowish-brown covered with dark brown speckling. In others the only pattern is produced by brownish or even dull orange spots across the vertebrae, every inch and a half or so, and having black borders only just darker than the general brown colour. When angry it expands its lungs and shows up the white skin and white margins to scales, producing a beautiful reticulate pattern along the sides of the front part of the body.

Food. I have only found lizards in their stomachs. Colonel Wall found a frog and *Venomy*, a slow worm, others have found frogs. Common in the hills between 3,000 and 6,000 feet in jungle and shade; less common lower down. This snake is plucky and even vicious. I have seen one strike at a Painted Keelback, the Keelback died in convulsions 16 minutes later but was not eaten.

It is viviparous and the new born snakes I have found were about 7 inches long. Wall found them about 5 inches long.

Costals 17. 17. 15. Ventrals 146-178. Subcaudals 44-71. Length to $24\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

56. *Dryophis fronticinctus*. Gunther. Gunther's Whip Snake. Not poisonous.

The name of the genus comes from *Drus*, a bush, and *ophis*, a snake, all the Whip Snakes spending most of their time in bushes. Wall describes it as "Uniform khaki brown above with a rather darker ill defined dorsal stripe. In the fore body there are the usual black oblique marks seen in other species of the genus. No flank line. Beneath buff with an obscure blackish lateral line on the ventrals, some ruddy streaks between these and a median stripe of punctiform blackish spots. An obscure postocular streak." 3 or 4 loreals.

Takes readily to water.

Costals 15. 15. 13. Ventrals 168-196. Subcaudals 115-151 Grows to 3 feet.

This species was found near the mouths of rivers in Burma and has not been recorded from intermediate districts till Assam and Darjeeling are reached. This fact and some differences in the teeth lead Colonel Wall to suspect that our snakes are not really *fronticinctus*.

57. *Dryophis prasinus*. Boie. Malayan Whip Snake. Also called Himalayao-Malayan Green Whip Snake or Boies's Whip Snake. Not Poisonous.

A long thin whip like Snake generally a beautiful vivid green colour but it may be greyish-green or even greenish-grey.

Head $2\frac{1}{2}$ times as wide as neck but still elongated; very flat on top and the scales project forming a distinct ledge over the eyes and loreal region.

It has one uniform colour from the neck almost to the tip of its tail, except for a white line along the sides of the ventrals very near their edges, and a general yellowing and lightening below this; under

the chin there is usually a blue tint and sometimes also on the top of the head. If the skin of the neck is stretched the colour between the scales is seen to be black and white. Eyes white with a horizontal black elliptical pupil.

It is a gentle snake often found in bushes but extraordinarily difficult to spot among the green leaves. Oviviparous.

Food. Eats small birds, lizards, frogs, insects, but we have not been able to persuade one to eat at all in captivity.

Costals 15. 15. 11 or 13. Ventrals 194-206. Subcaudals 145-186. The pattern of the scales is shown in D on Plate 2. Length to 5 ft

58. *Dryophis mycterizans* (Linné) The Common Green Whip Snake. Not poisonous. Its specific name comes from *Mycterizo*—I turn up the nose. There is a fleshy elongated appendage on the tip of its snout which is distinctive, and which earned this name for the snake.

The head is long and narrow ending in the fleshy pointed snout, with a prominent ridge from snout to eyebrows, usually pale green or yellow. The iris has a beautiful golden colour. Pupil horizontal. Body very slender, bright verdant green above, and when excited the skin shows between the scales black and white. There is a narrow white or yellow line along the entire body on the side of the ventrals. The chin and throat are white or blue sometimes mottled with yellow. The belly is green but lighter in tint than the back. Rarely, specimens are found with a khaki or olive brown collar. Usually found in bushes but sometimes in high grass. Its long slender body puts so small a weight on each twig that it can move freely on the very tips of their branches. It is an inhabitant of the plains and low uplands and is found in the Duars. In disposition it is generally quiet but when teased it loses its temper and can be very fierce and then bites freely.

Primrose recorded that one ate a Buff-striped Keelback, and others have also found it eat snakes, but its principal food seems to be lizards, birds and mice. Sometimes it is oviviparous and sometimes viviparous. In the Bombay Natural History Society's office one gave birth, in September 1927, to 14 young. They all had the longitudinal line white with another distinct white line over the upperside of the orbit to the tip of the snout

This was not present in the mother and her longitudinal line was yellow. The length of the hatchlings was $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Costals 15. 15. 13 or 11. Ventrals 176-206
Subcaudals 140-153. Length to 6 feet 4 inches.

59. *Chrysocelca ornata*. (Shaw) The Gold and Black Tree Snake. Has also been called the Golden Tree Snake. Not poisonous. It well deserves the name *ornata* for it is strikingly beautiful. Head rather flattened, snout rounded and broad, neck well marked, iris round, golden.

The body is not so slender as in other tree snakes, and the ventrals have a very distinct keel on each side, much sharper than in the others.

Colour greenish-yellow or pale green above, each scale edged and mesially streaked with black, with more or less distinct black cross bars and a series of large coral-red or orange blotches along the back. Ventrals yellow with a small black spot on each side.

Though it has a wide range, from West India to China and the Phillipines, in the Indian Peninsula itself it is only found on the south part of the Malabar Coast and in Eastern Bengal. It is vigorous and plucky and will fight to avoid capture. It has been known to take flying leaps from branch to branch. One mentioned by Colonel Wall leapt from a tree 20 to 25 feet. It was fully extended till it reached the ground.

Food. Chiefly lizards. Bats, birds, mice are also recorded. In captivity it refuses frogs.

Costals 17. 17. 13. Ventrals 200-238. Subcaudals 100-144. Length to 4 ft. 7 inches.

60. *Elachistodon westermanni*. Reinhardt. Indian Egg-eating Snake or Westermann's Snake. Not poisonous.

This is an extremely rare but intensely interesting snake. In 1913 the third specimen known was obtained by Mr. Travers in Jalpaiguri and we have only heard of two more since also obtained by Travers at Baradighi. The first was caught in Rungpore and went to the Copenhagen Museum, the second was from Purneah, and is in the Indian Museum in Calcutta and Traver's first specimen is in the Bombay Museum. The interest lies in the fact that the bases of the anterior vertebrae project right into the pharynx and are capped with enamel forming teeth, while the ordinary teeth in the jaws are few and extremely minute. In Africa there is a genus of

gations of the same colour costally. Head light brown with a large black sagittate mark. One of Traver's specimens had a "sealing wax red spot on the head". A black stripe passes through the loreal region to well behind the eye. Chin, throat and belly uniform yellowish with some black basally on each side of the ventrals. Pupil vertically elliptic. Costals 19. 15. 15. Ventrals 208-217. Subcaudals 59-65. Anal undivided

(*To be continued*)

Notes on Wild Dogs in India and Burma.

In about 20 years of jungle life, I have come across wild dogs on only a few occasions, which is due no doubt to their shyness and not to paucity of numbers. My first acquaintance with them took place some 30 years ago.

I was at that time working in Lalitpur, a subdivision of the Jhansi District in the United Provinces. Having received "khabbar" that a Panther used to visit a small pool about a mile from my camp, I arranged to have a "maichan" fixed up on a tree some 40 feet from the pool and had a kid tied to a peg driven into the ground, a few feet from the edge of the water. By 6 p. m. I was in the "maichan" and settled down as comfortably as was possible. Time passed but nothing came and the kid lay down and slept peacefully. The moon was but a few days old and by 7.30 had dipped behind the tall forest trees, and gave little light. I was thinking of returning to camp when the kid suddenly sprang to her feet and looked alarmed as though danger was near, but I could neither see nor hear anything. While watching her I saw her swing round and butt at some object and at the same time I heard some animal rush by her. Then there was another rush this time from before and behind her and she appeared to have been seized by two animals, one had her by the throat and the other behind.

Aiming a little in front of her I fired, though I could not make out any object and all was quiet. Having waited for about fifteen minutes I descended and lighting the lantern I had left at the base of the tree found a Wild Dog lying dead along side her. The poor kid was

in an awful state, as she had been disembowelled by the dog that had attacked her from behind. The attack had been so swift that I had no time to save her and the darkness prevented me from seeing the dogs before the damage had been done. The one shot turned out to be a full grown bitch. She was a light tawny colour above, paling on the sides and the belly was white. The tip of the snout, the tips of the ears, paws and about two inches of the tail were black. She looked very like a yellow Pidog but was stouter in build and her paws were very large.

About a month after this event while walking through some rather open Sal forest, I noticed a young sambar stag break out from the forest to my left, run past me, within a few paces, and enter the dense forest to my right. As he passed me I saw that blood was issuing from his side and he appeared to be pretty well done. While I stood watching the stag and, wondering what had happened, a pack of Wild Dogs, 5 in number, tongues lolling out, but absolutely silent ran past within a few feet of me and disappeared into the dense forest. They must all have seen me standing almost in their track, but they took not the least notice of me. Taking my rifle I followed for some distance in the hope of getting a shot or two, but without success.

In Burma, in the Wuntho district I came across two Wild Dogs chasing a Barking deer (doe). I was seated on a fallen tree on the bank of a stream, which was some 30 feet wide and fairly deep when suddenly the doe, mentioned above, came running out of the forest and, without hesitating, jumped into the stream and swam across. She had scarcely disappeared into the grass on my side of the stream, when a Wild Dog appeared a little lower down, sniffed about then trotted up stream and on reaching the spot where the doe had entered the stream, it turned sharply and sprang into the water and swam across. This dog was followed by another, which carried out the same tactics and jumped into the stream at the same spot and swam across. As I was without my gun I called out to my servant to bring it, my camp being close by, but the dogs must have heard me, for they returned and swam back and entered the heavy jungle. I noticed they swam very low in the water, their snouts and a small

portion of the upper surface of their heads only being visible.

In the Katha and Kanbalu Districts of Burma these dogs used to do considerable damage amongst the Brow Antler (Thamin) deer, which were plentiful in those days, the early nineties, and I used to find many heads which the villagers told me were the remains of stags killed by Wild Dogs. I was also told by the shikaris that, when a kill was discovered, the villagers used to drive the Wild Dogs off the kill with the help of the village packs and that the Wild Dogs would not leave the kill unless they had the village dogs with them, as they did not fear the humans.

That Wild Dogs do attack Panther on occasions the following incident will show.

The tragedy I describe took place in January 1898 in the Jhansi District and though I was not an eye-witness, I happened to be encamped within a short distance from the scene and so was able to make enquiries from those who had witnessed it. Near my camp was a small Police Outpost and one day some villagers, who happened to be passing the outposts casually mentioned that they had seen some Wild Dogs, attacking a panther, but on their approach the dogs had ceased attacking and had returned to the forest, while the panther had dragged itself into some scrub. One of the constables, thinking it was a good chance of bagging the panther went out to try and find the beast and, as he did not return, a search party was sent out who found the missing man in the grip of the panther, unconscious, and in a frightfully mutilated condition. The panther was still alive and was promptly killed and the constable attended to, but he died before he reached the out-post. The panther, when examined, was found to have no tail and the flesh from the hind legs and buttocks mostly torn away, but he had not been disembowelled. It was surmised that the constable, in searching for the panther, happened to pass within his reach and was dragged down.

That the Wild Dog is a scourge in the forests cannot be denied, but no amount of shooting or rewards for his destruction will ever exterminate him, as he can more than hold his own in the struggle for existence. In the forests in Dehra Dun the reward is Rs. 25 and

30 respectively for male and female, yet they appear to have increased within the past decade.

Crag Lodge,
Mussooree 18-8-29

O. C. Ollenbach, F. E. S.

LEOPARD IN A TEA FACTORY

On May 10th of this year at about 2-30 p. m. I was told by a breathless factory hand that there was a *Bagh* in the tea house. I had been for two days looking for a mysterious leopard which scores of coolies said they had seen near the coolie lines and in the tea near the factory. I had, however, failed to get a glimpse of it and scarcely believed the tale I was told.

I seized my rifle and cartridges and on reaching the factory was told the leopard was in the fermenting room which proved to be the case. There he was in a corner against the wall and lying broadside on to me. Its head was facing me and its tail was gently moving. The first shot was good enough but I put in two more to be absolutely sure and prevent any accident.

It was a male 7 foot 1 inch between pegs and was terribly mangy and extremely thin. The Leopard apparently entered the fermenting room through a large open drain in the wall and the men who were there said it made a bound at a *chokra* who fortunately escaped untouched. As all the machinery was running at the time, with the consequent noise, I think it points to the beast being desperately hungry even to the point of man-eating.

18th July 1929.

S. C. H.

HOW A ROYAL BENGAL TIGER WAS BAGGED.

"The following untouched account of a local shoot is published as received and we make no apology for including it in the last issue of 1929.

"On Sunday the 15th December 1929 Mr. A. Banerjee of the Happy Valley Tea Estate, Darjeeling accompanied by two friends Mr. Suresh Chandra Moitra and Mr. S. K. Kar went for hunting deers, birds etc to the Sukhna Forests in the Terai. They stayed at a Bungalow at Sukhna for 3 days but besides a few birds they couldn't find any other game, Mr. Banerjee who is a

keen Shikar was very much disappointed so also his friends and they decided to make Camp in the interior. On the 18th they made camp at Gulm and began hunting very vigorously but seldom met with success. They came across only female deers etc, which they could not shoot as the rules do not permit to shoot a female one. On the 19th they met with similar success and 20th day of December passed without any event. They were very disappointed and decided that it would be their last Camp at Gulm. So they got up early on the 21st and had their tea and mounted the Elephant which they hired and went to the interior of the forest. At last they found a big Sambar and Mr. Banerjee fired two shots and the animal fell down and they came near it; but to their great astonishment the animal, though severely wounded, made a big jump and disappeared in the forest. It was then 12 noon, and they had no meal since morning. Still they decided to follow the animal by tracing the blood mark. Gradually they came into the thick forest. It was then 3 o'clock when suddenly the Mohut exclaimed "Bagh Sahab", Mr. Banerjee was then walking (obviously tired of elephant riding) saw the big animal which was at a distance of about 50 yards, aimed and fired a shot, which hit the animal right through the heart. It growled furiously and charged them and seeing this the elephant bolted and Mr. Moitra who was on the elephant was a bit unmindful and fell down; but Mr. Banerjee was standing close by covered his friend and fired a second shot at which the great tiger gave his last jump and resounded the forest with its last roar and instantly dropped dead. All this happened in a second and showed great pluck, courage and presence of mind of Mr. Banerjee. When they were certain the animal was dead they tied it with great difficulty on the back of the elephant and came back to the camp. Next day i. e. 22nd they brought it to Darjeeling via Siliguri where crowds of people came to see it and expressed the opinion that they never saw such a big Royal Bengal Tiger before. At 9 p. m. they arrived at Darjeeling and even at this cold weather many people went to see it. The Tiger measured 12 feet."

(From the Darjeeling Times of 28th December 1929)

TIGER EMASCULATING A BUFFALO.

I read with great interest Mr. Charles Inglis's article on a "Tiger emasculating a Buffalo" in the Journal. I have never heard or seen a case of this kind. How it takes place is this:—A Tiger when attacking a large beast like a Buffalo, Bison or Horse does not kill it in the ordinary way, that is biting through the neck or back into the spinal cord; but he makes up his mind to hamstring the beast; after that the killing is an easy matter. The animal bolts tail straight out with the tiger bounding after it. I actually saw this myself in broad daylight when a Tiger was chasing a Buff across a bheel. In the chase the genital organs of the animal are exposed and liable to get pulled off. The Tiger is pretty certain to make bad shots going at that pace and the occurrence in this case was a pure accident. Often, when trying to find a kill, I have picked up the bushy end of the tail of a Buff, torn off in the attempt of the Tiger to hamstring the animal. In one case, that of a Bison, the tail had been pulled out by the root and there were scars on the rump; the wounds had healed. The Bison was an old solitary bull and this narrow escape must have happened when he was younger.

Another interesting point in Mr. Inglis's article is the distance the Tiger went before it died with its heart all smashed. I have known a Tigress to go 80 yards with her heart and great vessels blown to pieces: so that in the case of a heart shot a Tiger has plenty of time and strength to do damage, (shikaris please note). If you do happen to come on a Tiger at close range fire at his neck or break his back, when he cannot do much harm.

I may mention here that a Tiger does not kill by dislocating the neck as many sportsmen believe. In every case that I have seen there has been crushing of the 'spinal column either in the neck or back.'

The Panther kills by bleeding its victim, but in one case, that of a calf, I found the neck dislocated.

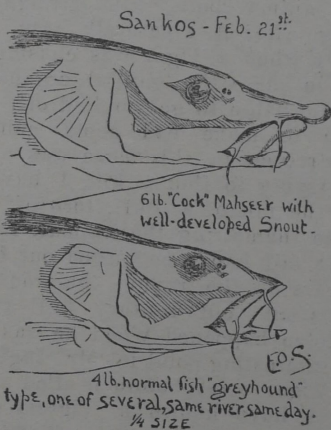
Viareggio
26th February 1930.

H. S. Wood
Colonel. I. M. S.

Varieties of the Mahseer.

In our last article under this heading we mentioned the so-called "cock" fish, but had no sketch of this variety (or phase) to offer.

While fishing in the Sankos on 21st February Mr. Jeston Homfray caught one of the best examples that I have seen for some time. I sketched it together with one of the other fish for comparison—all the rest of the catch appeared to be the "greyhound" type.



What are these "cock" fish? They form a very small percentage of the fish caught but cannot be called uncommon. They are of all sizes. With the exception of the bloated lips and snout they are identical in shape with other mahseer but, I think invariably, they have a lot of red on the fins. These two circumstances suggest a breeding phase rather than a variety.

Can anyone tell us anything about them?

Darjeeling.

E. O. S.

Head Shots at Tiger with High Velocity Rifles.

I had tied up and had a kill in the jungle to the east of the old Dhowla Jhora Po'o Ground, a spot well known to many shikaris. I was new to the game and trusted the erection of my machan to a Southal who had some experience. The kill was in an old grass grown channel of the Rydak where it had encroached on the forest and my machan was made about 12 feet from the ground in a tree very near the edge of the high bank on the forest side. The machan was approximately 6 feet long and about 2 feet wide with a guard rail of one bamboo about 18 inches from the seat on the two longer sides. I got into it about 2 p. m. taking up my position facing more or less south with a clear view of the kill on my left, heavy jungle on my right, my Southal friend sitting behind me. About 4 p. m. whilst I could hear the sound of polo being played about 400 yards away to my right and recognise the voices of the players a couple of tigers arrived from the same direction as the sound. I heard them quite distinctly and Burka could also see them though a tree prevented my witnessing their playfulness. Rather suddenly their game appeared to stop and the next thing I knew was a large tiger making to pass under my machan. Sitting as I was I dared not raise the muzzle of my rifle above aforementioned guard rail and had to wait until the tiger came nearly vertically below me. I eventually aimed and fired at the top of the shoulders but as luck would have it the hammer of my rifle hit the bamboo rail and instead of exploding the cartridge and bringing off a sure kill it merely had the effect of frightening the tiger which gave a "woof" turned in its tracks and made off. I am afraid I cursed bamboo rails and several other things but pulled up short of my full vocabulary, when I saw tiger number two take up a position very nearly straight in front of me and lie down with nothing showing but his huge head about 60 to 80 yards away. This time the rifle was above the rail and I aimed at 6 o'clock in the bull and had the satisfaction of knowing I had scored a hit though I lost sight of the tiger himself. My elephant was waiting at the polo ground for my call and on its arrival I got into it fully expecting to pick up one large tiger. It was not to be so easy as all that and though there were blood marks galore darkness fell and we had

not found the 'corpse'. Next day and the day after we combed the jungle as far as we could but without success and I can assure you I felt very sore about what was admittedly a bad show. I continued to tie up cows and about this time our Club Chowkidar was killed and eaten by a tiger when returning from Rydak garden about dusk. Two of my cows tied out subsequently had obviously been attacked by a tiger but instead of being killed in tiger fashion they had merely been severely clawed. This was rather puzzling but the explanation came later when the D. C. and party came along on an errand of mercy to slay the fortunately rare beast, a man-eating tiger in the Dooars. Numerous cows had been tied out and the first night two were killed east of the Club. The beat is a comparatively easy one taken from south to north, a forest line and likewise the road from Rydak to the Club on the left, with the Rydak River on the right, the jungle narrowing as the beat proceeds and the polo ground then becomes the right flank as the howdahs face the beating elephants. In Strong's shoot I was number 1 howdah and one tiger (there were actually 3 put out at same beat) walked between me and the north east corner of the polo ground through some fairly high tufts of grass. This time I was using my 280 Ross and got him as he passed from behind a clump of jungle, a neck shot, and he lay quiet, a nice tiger 9' 3" between pegs and very fat. We now, however, came to the interesting part in what may appear a rither long winded and rambling story. An examination of the mouth showed the tiger to be minus the left upper canine and that the right lower jaw was fractured. This was undoubtedly the tiger I had hit 3 weeks before to a day, and appears to bear out the contention that a head shot with a high velocity rifle is not a good one. I was using a 470 H. V. rifle with soft nosed bullets. One remarkable fact was that the tiger was in the the pink of condition and there was a wonderful callous over the stump of the tooth and also the jaw showed signs of healing with no trace of suppuration. Apart from the two clawed cows, the blood of which he must have drunk, one wonders how this tiger could have remained in such good condition for so long, unable, as he must have been, to use his jaw.

X. Y. Z.

REFORM CLUB

PALL MALL, LONDON, S. W. 1.
1st March 1930.

The Editor

Journal of the Darjeeling Natural History Society.

Sir,

I have read with much interest the article at page 42 of the October number entitled "Head Shots at Tiger, especially with H. V. Rifles." You speak of a bullet breaking up on a tiger's jaw. It would be of great interest to know whether the bullet was of the type known as "soft nosed and split" or plain "soft nosed"; also whether the cartridge had been kept for long over one or more hot weathers and therefore perhaps generated higher pressure and velocity than when fresh.

I have only once tried a head shot on tiger, and found a .470 bullet, plain soft nosed, carried straight through and blew out most of the back of the skull. I never use "split" bullets in a large bore H. V. rifle having an idea that if the cartridge develops more velocity than intended, owing to exposure to the sun or other heat, split bullets are liable to break up sooner than is wanted in the animal fired at.

This is purely my own theory, which may of course be unfounded, but it would be interesting to hear of other experience on the same subject.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

W. AMEER ALI

I. C. S. (Retd.)

[The bullet was the ordinary "soft nosed" and was possibly a year old cartridge. Editor]

The Editor, D. N. H. S. Journal.

Dear Sir,

Would it be possible to spare a little space in the Journal to appeal to sportsmen to discourage the use of traps? Surely there can be little satisfaction in the

possession of even leopard skins when they have been procured in this way. It does not take a very brave and skilful man to issue orders for a leopard trap to be built and then to poke a gun through the bars and finish "Spots" off. Rather, if a man knows a leopard is in the vicinity let him put up a machan, tie up a goat and sit up for him, thus giving him a sporting chance, and making some exertion to obtain a skin.

Of course, in the case of a "*budmash bagh*" any means to encompass its destruction are, in my opinion, justifiable but only in cases of that nature.

Leopards have their place in the scheme of wild life and undoubtedly keep deer down to reasonable numbers. Were this not to happen nature would find other means (disease of some kind) to decrease their numbers.

I am afraid I am not much of a hand at arguing a case but I feel that if for no other reason than that it is unsporting and the use of traps should be discouraged,

Yours faithfully,

FRANK C. RICHES.

[We fully endorse Mr. Riches' appeal. In another Journal (Vol. 1. No. 2) we attempted to champion this much maligned beast. Editor].

The Editor of the Journal of the Darjeeling
Natural History Society.

SIR,

I have read with much interest the article on the Python, which appeared in your June issue, and I wish to make some remarks. As regards the Python *intentionally* removing the head of a victim, in order to swallow it more easily, I have my doubts. As the Python has no cutting teeth how could it possibly remove a strip of skin from the back? I think the cases cited were due to accident. It is easy to suppose that the horns got entangled in some thick jungle or branches of a tree and that the struggles of the animal, combined with the enormous muscular power of the python served to sever the head with a piece of skin attached.

I am of opinion that the crushing force exerted by the coils of a Python in killing its prey must smash the ribs, although I have not verified this by a post-

mortem. As regards Pythons swallowing porcupines without suffering harm, it must be remembered that the vulnerability of a porcupines quills depends upon whether the animal is attacked from the front or rear; if in the rear they are dangerous; as a Python swallows an animal head first, the quills would lie back and be safe to the snake.

The following incident regarding Pythons may be of interest to your readers. H and I were in a cholera camp with most of our regiment. Word was brought to our hut that a huge snake was asleep in an Indian Officer's bed. H and I proceeded to the hut and there lay the Python coiled up in the bed, its head was resting on the coils and I could see, from the shape, that it had recently devoured some animal, probably a barking deer. I got hold of the brute by the neck and H got hold of it lower down, our men looking on in amazement. The snake got coiled round my arm and the pressure was extremely painful. H and I could not overcome the Python as it was exactly 11 ft. long, so 10 or 11 of our men came to the rescue and we bore it in triumph to our hut. I never relaxed my hold on the neck until it was safely deposited in a large deal case, which had a stone placed over the lid. For six months the Python shared our hut. At the end of two months it had eaten nothing so we put a fowl or pigeon inside; it never touched it and when we removed the lid the bird was sitting quite complacently on the coils. At the end of four months the snake was distinctly fading, the skin had lost its gloss and got drawn into folds and ridges. My orderly suggested feeding it on milk so a bottle of milk was produced, the snake's jaws were opened and the contents poured down its throat; so we fed our pet Python for a month. After a time we could handle it with impunity and it never showed any aggressiveness.

At the end of six months we were sent on an expedition and we let our pet have its freedom in the jungles. I hope he lived to attain a large size and still roams the forests.

I have never heard of a Python attacking man except the following narrative told me by M, a planter in the Sylhet district, who shot the snake.

M and his assistant went out for jungle fowl one morning when they heard screams and shouting.

Proceeding in the direction of the screams they came to a *bheel*. A boy was standing on the edge screaming and, in the water, they saw another boy struggling and crying. They then noticed that a Python had got hold of the boy's foot in the water. They shot the snake and rescued the boy whose foot was very much lacerated; amputation was necessary to save the boys' life.

It would be interesting to learn whether any other instance of a Python attacking man has occurred. Python feed principally on monkeys and those that sleep on trees fall easy victims. On the banks of the large rivers in Sylhet, the Hari etc, where Pythons are numerous, I have noticed that monkeys do not sleep on the trees but huddle together on some rocky ledge amongst cliffs on the banks of the river. I believe too that the Python feeds on large fish. Some Indians believe that the Python, at least some of them, have a jewel in their head of immense value. The slime of the snake, which is phosphorescent in the dark, like that of some fishes and the earth worm may account for this theory.

Brigue,
Switzerland
6th April 1928.

H. S. WOOD,
Colonel, I. M. S.

Appeal from Editor.

Our ambition is to be able to give one coloured plate with every Journal besides any black and white ones we can manage but the cost of reproduction of the former is very high and our membership is not large enough yet to allow this to be done. The Editor has painted eight plates of birds with this object. If each member would rope in two new members we might perhaps be able to do it. We realize that an illustrated Journal would be more popular and hope our members will assist us to bring one out. May we once again appeal to members to send in articles; without their help we can't increase the size of the Journal.

The Editor has now returned from leave but since his return has been on tour most of the time so has been unable to write up the usual Editorial. This will, however, be continued as usual, from our next issue.