

FOREWORD

The Great Indian Rhinoceros, *Rhinoceros unicornis*, is one of the mammals whose names appear on the list of animals in danger of extermination, kept by the Survival Service Commission of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. In 1958, about 800 of these rhinoceros were believed to exist, of which some 400 were known to be in India. About the same number were thought to live in Nepal, in the valley of the River Rapti.

The number of this rhinoceros in India was fairly accurately known, due to the interest of the Indian Government, the attention given to the species by the Indian Board for Wild Life and especially to the enthusiasm and devoted work for its preservation by Mr. E. P. Gee. There were about 350 rhinoceros in sanctuaries in Assam—notably 250 in Kaziranga Wild Life Sanctuary—and 50 in Bengal. About the number of rhinoceros in Nepal, there was no such degree of accuracy; “about 400” was the estimate given in 1957 by Mr. P. D. Stracey, Director of Forest Education, India, after he had visited the rhinoceros area in Nepal.

In September, 1958, an apparently reliable message from Katmandu came to the International Union for Conservation Nature, then assembled in Athens. This said that only about 35 rhinoceros remained in Nepal; the rest had been killed by poachers. On receipt of this message the Survival Service Commission of the Union arranged for Mr. E. P. Gee to visit Nepal to investigate the distribution and status of the Great Indian Rhinoceros in Nepal and to suggest measures for its preservation.

The survey which Mr. Gee made and the Report which he now submits show that the rhinoceros has not reached the desperate straits which the message from Nepal had described. Nevertheless, the general picture is of declining numbers in a shrinking habitat. The Report has been accepted by the Survival Service Commission and given to the Union for consideration and for appropriate action to preserve the Great Indian Rhinoceros.

The thanks of the Survival Service Commission are offered, through the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, to His Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva and to the Government of Nepal. Without their gracious co-operation Mr. Gee's survey could not even have been attempted. The Service is also extremely grateful to the following individuals and societies who defrayed the expenses of the survey:—

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