

## Man-eating Tiger Problem

Just how knotty a problem that of the man-eating tigers in the Sunderbans is comes out in Dr. Hubert Hendrich's interesting and valuable report following his survey for WWF early last year. With an annual average of over 75 men killed in the last four years by an animal that is now seriously endangered and in the Red Data Book it was urgent to find out some facts.

Dr. Hendrichs divides the tigers into four categories: A-tigers, he says, never attack man; B-tigers may attack men if molested, often only mauling the victim; C-tigers will readily attack and kill at the slightest molestation; they may start to eat the body but do not return to a kill; D-tigers will search for a man for days, even give up all other hunting; they always return to the victim if driven away, and even circle a place to which the body has been taken, sometimes for days. The development of some D-tigers could be traced in the records, and two could be traced in the field. Of the whole area, 23 per cent is occupied by A-tigers, 47 per cent by B-tigers, who caused 5 per cent of the kills, and 29 per cent by C-tigers responsible for 30 per cent of the kills. In some areas there were no man-kills.

Dr. Hendrichs suggests that if the D-tigers could be identified easily and shot on the kill to which they always return, casualties from them could be reduced by 70 or 80 per cent. This would also save a lot of tigers, for in one area recently three innocent A-tigers were shot before the man-eater was killed.

The C-tigers are the problem, for the circumstances that make them kill are not understood, and he suggests that either all the tigers in the C areas must be killed or all the C areas must be left to the tigers. 'Both ways are difficult, costly, and offer no final solution.' The first might result in all the A and B tigers moving into the empty areas and becoming C-tigers; the second would mean keeping all men out which would only be acceptable if the lost revenue from forest produce were made good by tourist revenue. As these C areas are fortunately of least economic importance this might be feasible and could reduce C-tiger casualties by up to 80 per cent.

As an interim measure he suggests that tigers should only be shot in areas with most trouble, which could be shifted according to necessity, and that an area of at least 1000 sq.km. should be set aside permanently where there would be no shooting under any circumstances and work camps should be moved.

His suggestions for further studies are headed by one on water salinity, for he found that the number of tiger attacks on men was not correlated with either the forest utilisation by men or with the density of prey species — spotted deer and wild boar — but that it was positively correlated with the salinity of the water and high water level. Further studies on these lines could reveal what makes a tiger population ferocious and make possible a management plan that would conserve man, forest utilisation and the tiger.