

## I. INTRODUCTION

Chitawan and neighbouring areas of Nepal have long been famous for their abundance of big game, including the Great Indian One-horned Rhinoceros, *Rhinoceros unicornis*, which is now one of the vanishing species of the world. For many years this part of southern central Nepal was the strictly guarded shooting preserve of the rulers of that country; but with the advent of democracy and unsettled political conditions in 1951, the exact status of the area and of the rhinoceros in it has not been clear to the outside world. Reports were in circulation of alarming slaughter by poachers in recent years, especially in the year 1958-59; but lack of authentic information prompted the Survival Service Commission of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to ask me to investigate the distribution and status of the Rhinoceros in Nepal, and to suggest measures for the preservation of this species in Nepal.

As it was not possible for me to visit the area concerned until the end of March, 1959, which is the start of the hot weather, when dust, heat, and flies render camping difficult, and as facilities for investigating the problems were somewhat restricted due to the short notice given, the duration of the survey was not extensive. Sufficient time was, however, found to spend two and a half weeks in the Rapti Valley, to traverse almost the whole area, to visit typical localities within the rhinoceros area, both inhabited and uninhabited by rhinoceros and to obtain first-hand information about the administrative and ecological aspects of the problem.

Having had considerable experience of the Great Indian rhinoceros and its preservation in Assam and Bengal, I found it most interesting to study the same animal and its habitat in Nepal—where conditions turned out to be very different from those in India.

## II. GENERAL REVIEW AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

The rhinoceros area in Nepal covers approximately 1,250 square miles, comprising the valleys of the Rivers Narayani, Rapti, and Reu. Although it is *dun* \* country, it contains most of the sub-tropical vegetation usually associated with *terai* country, and can roughly be divided into (1) riverain, (2) grassland above flood level, and (3) *sal* forest. The hills are almost entirely under *sal* (*Shorea robusta*), a valuable hardwood.

\* A glossary of local terms appears on page 85.