

Breeding

trunk, which is necessary for it to be able to grab the mother's nipples with its mouth. During all of the first day, the mother would not permit the baby to lie down to sleep. Whenever the baby became too tired and threatened to slip to the ground, the mother would put her trunk underneath the tiny body and support the calf by pressing it against one of her forelegs. Finally, during the night following the day of the birth, the mother let the baby lie down. Only occasionally would she cover the calf with hay and then only partially.

According to our findings, altogether 52 Indian elephants have been born in European zoos and circuses. This figure includes the above-mentioned elephant calves born at Hanover Zoo in 1964/5. In these births the females outnumber the males with a ratio of 32 to 17. (Three births where the sex was not recorded are not included.) Most births occurred in the months of May, June, August, September and December. On the average, the gestation period for male calves lasted 644 days (a little over 21 months), the extremes being as low as 615 days and as high as 688 days. In female calves, the average came to 648 days, with the extremes of 628 and 668 days. Seven calves were still-born, five were killed shortly after birth by the mothers, three died after the mothers refused to accept them and attempts to rear them failed. In one case, the calf had to be killed owing to severe weakness. Therefore, out of 52 births, 16 calves were either stillborn or died immediately after birth. The remaining 36 babies were reared but only four grew up to reach an age of 30 years or more. Thirteen elephants born in captivity are still alive today. Only two Indian elephants born in Europe, one male and one female, have themselves reproduced.

A survey of all Indian elephants born in European zoos and circuses today, as well as additional reports on the elephants born at Hanover Zoo, will appear soon in the journal *Der Zoologische Garten*.

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A NOTE ON THE BREEDING OF
BAIRD'S TAPIR

Tapirus bairdi

AT TUXTLA GUTIERREZ ZOO

by Miguel Alvarez del Toro

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BAIRD'S TAPIR, *Tapirus bairdi*, is found from southern Mexico south to Ecuador and Colombia and west of the Andes from the gulf of Guayaquil in the south to the Rio Sinu in the north. It is fast becoming exterminated in many parts of its range. Its habitat is principally marshy, lowland forest. It differs from the Brazilian tapir, *Tapirus terrestris*, in that it has a more convex head and very little crest. Very little is known about its habits in the wild.

The male Baird's tapir at Tuxtla Gutierrez Zoo arrived at the zoo in February 1954, when it was about six months old. It was found in the forests of El Marcadito, Cintalapa, Chiapas and it had been badly attacked by a jaguar, *Panthera onca*. The female was caught when she was about one month old in March 1955 in the Sierra Madre, Los Custepques, Chiapas.

The tapirs are kept in an enclosure measuring 30 m x 40 m. It is well planted with trees and contains a pond deep enough for them to dive and submerge in. As they defaecate in water, a pond is very important to them. They are fed bran, ground yellow maize, fruits and a variety of plants they eat in the wild. They are specially fond of the fruits and leaves of the Moju tree, *Brosimum alicastrum*, and the Amate tree, *Ficus glaucescens*.

Baird's tapir does not seem to have any fixed breeding season as tracks of new-born young are found throughout the year in the wild. In 15 March 1960 our pair of tapirs produced their first young. The pair were left together and unfortunately one or both of them killed the baby when it was one month old. A second young was born in 20 May 1962. On 23 August 1964 the third offspring, a male named 'Filiberto' was born. He is a partial albino.

Oestrus lasts about four or five days and during this period several copulations take place. When the female is in oestrus she becomes very aggressive towards other

females. She is also very restless, running about the enclosure and making the sharp, squeaking cry typical of the species. As mating was only observed for the first time in 1965 we have been unable to calculate the gestation period exactly but we agree with Leopold (1953) that it must be between 390 and 400 days. The pair of Baird's tapirs at Tuxtla Gutierrez Zoo are kept together until just before the young is due to be born. They are then separated until the young is weaned after about one year. The pair mate almost immediately after they are reunited with each other. The female suckles the young standing, lying down and in a seated position.

REFERENCE

LEOPOLD, A. S. (1953): *Wildlife of Mexico. The game birds and mammals*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.

A NOTE ON BREEDING INDIAN RHINOCEROSSES

Rhinoceros unicornis

AT GAUHATI ZOO

by T. Chowdhury

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A FEMALE Indian rhinoceros, *Rhinoceros unicornis*, named 'Deepali' arrived at Gauhati Zoo already pregnant. On 10 April 1963 she gave birth to a female calf, 'Rajkumari'. At birth the baby weighed 73 lb, measured 22 in. at the shoulder and was 26 in. long. Both animals were sent to the National Zoological Park, Washington, on 15 November 1963.

On 10 October 1963 another female Indian rhinoceros, 'Padumi', gave birth to a female calf after a gestation period of 18 months. The calf, 'Japari', weighed 76 lb at birth, measured 23 in at the shoulder and was 26 in. long. 'Japari' was sold on 2 November 1965.

BREEDING THE INDIAN WILD ASS

Equus hemionus khur

AT AHMEDABAD ZOO

by Reuben David

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THE Indian wild ass, *Equus hemionus khur*, bears a strong resemblance to the Persian wild ass *E. h. onager*, but whereas the onager is greyish

in colour, the normal colour of the Indian wild ass is a dark sandy colour with a chestnut mane and broad dorsal stripe. The lower parts are white and the area of the rump fawn. The ears are short and upright, a characteristic peculiar to the subspecies. It is estimated that there are between 800 and 900 wild asses left in the Rann of Kutch but the number may well be less as a survey has not been carried out recently. The wild animals often migrate across the border from India into Pakistan, but they are more commonly found on the Indian side where they breed. Despite their very reduced numbers, the wild asses are still shot for sport or for meat by poachers and there is a very real danger that the Indian wild ass will soon become extinct. Because of this situation it is to be hoped that the Government will permit selected zoos to acquire breeding groups in order to build up stocks of the Indian wild ass in captivity.

At present there are very few Indian wild asses in zoos; the Ahmedabad Zoo has 2 males and 3 females, the Maharaja of Baroda has two males and one female in his zoo at Baroda and there is pair at Junagadh Zoo. For the first time for very many years births have been recorded. On 13 August 1964 the Maharaja of Baroda's pair gave birth to a male foal and a filly foal was also born at the Ahmedabad Zoo on 2 March 1965. The prospects of our establishing a captive breeding herd are good.

On 20 September 1960 we received five young Indian wild asses, aged between one-and-a-half and two months. All came from the Little Rann of Kutch. One pair died immediately after their arrival at the zoo and on 3 March 1961 a male died following an operation for abdominal hernia. On 26 October 1961 we were fortunate enough to receive another filly foal, about three months old. This meant we had a good foundation stock of one male and two females.

We have found that great care must be taken with newly-caught young wild asses if they are to adjust to captivity. If trapping operations are not carried out properly the wild ass will often die either during or immediately after capture. In the past, newly-captured foals often refused to eat and died. However, we have evolved a method that works well. We place the newly-captured young animal