

by the large Kantalai Tank (over 8 square miles of water) near Trincomalee. We were out for 'movies' of Ceylon elephants to add to my Indian elephant films, and filled in the time in stalking some of the large crocodiles (*C. palustris*) in the tank. Incidentally, we found a service rifle quite ineffective in stopping these big mugger (unless hit in the spine) in fact very different in effect from the .318 I used for big garial (*G. gangeticus*) on the Indus in years gone by.

One afternoon we, separated by some hundreds of yards, were lying watching for mugger to emerge on a scrub covered island, when I noticed an apparently not very large mugger lying in the shallows with only its back, and tail flanges showing. I put it down as about 10 feet. Shortly afterwards my companion fired a shot in the distance, and at the sound, the mugger in front of me reared a truly colossal head from the water at an angle of 45 degrees, and let out a roaring bellow before dropping back with a splash. I hesitate to intimate the length and bulk of that really prehistoric and awe-inspiring head, but considering how much bulkier the mugger is for his length than a garial, I should imagine the beast certainly not less than 15 feet and probably more. It certainly appeared so in comparison with a 10 footer shot shortly before. There are reported to be many large mugger in this tank. Why the bellow was given on the *sound* of a distant shot is obscure.

A curious habit of the Ceylon mugger—which I have not seen in the U. P., where my previous experience of mugger has been—is to emerge in the evening, and lie out all night—certainly where they have been much disturbed.

I have never seen a garial walking with its body clear of the ground like a mugger—I do not know what others' experience has been.

S.E.A.C.

13th January, 1945.

H. G. ROSSEL,

Lt.-Col.

19.—SYNCOPE IN A CROCODILE.

Quite close to Datia in Central India are several large tanks; some right in the city where people bathe and fish (on the sly, not being permitted in the State) all around are pretty little old stone houses. There are other tanks, some five or six miles out of the city, one of the largest of which is flanked by a large stone wall, and a long flight of descending stairs takes you to the water level. These are the only remnants of what one day must have been a flourishing township.

During the monsoon the tank fills up rapidly and would then be about 2 miles across both ways, but in winter the level recedes considerably, and in May or thereabouts it generally dries up completely. Fish abound in this tank and quite naturally a lot of crocodiles (*C. palustris*) too.

Often on a winter day if one looks through 'binocs' one can quite easily discern their snouts slightly above the water as they half bask in the sun. But when summer comes round the tank

becomes a scene of utter desolation with its parched and cracked surface and its filthy odour of decay. The crocodiles have to take a long track on dry land to the next water. This they undertake after dark and the journey is accomplished usually in one night but occasionally an individual miscalculates the distance to its next abode and is compelled to lie up for the day concealed in dense undergrowth, or it is, as may happen, surprised in its wanderings by the villagers and killed with their 'kulharis' (hatchets).

There were five or six of us on the stone parapet beside the tank and it was about 6 in the evening. Down in the tank about fifty yards away a long black line (a partly submerged crocodile) was clearly visible in the water. One of the party, a State Jagirdar and a good steady shot, took careful aim and fired. The 'croc' slightly lifted to one side, and for a moment one just caught a glimpse of its creamy belly and then it just floated on the water, utterly still. Immediately one of the local 'Bunrakhas' (trackers) was sent down into the water to drag the 'croc' out. We could see it was a small creature, about 4 feet in length, and the man had armed himself with a 'kulhari' as a safeguard. His task was easily accomplished for the crocodile was in shallow water and was now being dragged up the steps by the tail, the man putting in all his strength to do so. Man and 'mugger' were half way up the steps, when suddenly the animal showed signs of life. It jerked its head right and left in an attempt to get at the man, and swished its tail about angrily, while the poor chap (now at his wits' end !) held tightly on to it.

We shouted to him to hit it with his 'kulhari' (firing would not have been safe) while a couple of fellows dashed down to his rescue. He promptly released the mugger giving it in parting a sound blow or two on the head, which stunned the creature, and with the aid of others the 'croc' was finally dragged upto us. Close inspection revealed that it was completely unhurt. The bullet had not so much as touched its body anywhere. It was finished off with a hatchet.

The rifle used was a Savage 250/3000. Did the shock of its report or the terrific impact of the bullet near at hand, temporarily stun the animal?

PALACE ROAD,

NAGPUR, C.P.

QUAZI Q. AHMED.

2nd February, 1945.

20.—A NEW RECORD OF A RARE SNAKE (*NATRIX XENURA*) FROM ASSAM.

I would like to record the taking of a further specimen of a very rare snake, first described under the name *Tropidonotus xenura* by Wall (1907) in this *Journal*, Vol. xvii, No. 3.

Whilst stationed near Kohima in the Naga Hills, Assam in May, 1944, a small and sombrely coloured snake was brought to



Ahmed, Quazi Q. 1945. "Syncope in a Crocodile." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 45, 429–430.

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