

ANOTHER NOTE ON THE SCHOMBURGK-DEER

(*Cervus (Rucervus) schomburgki* (Blyth),

BY U. GUEHLER

After several notes about the Schomburgk-deer had been published in this Journal in former years, the first comprehensive article was written by Phya Indra Montri (Mr. F. H. Giles) in 1937 and printed in the Natural History Supplement Vol. XI No. 1. In that article the author has given a most valuable and complete collection of all known data and facts about this mysterious animal. The article is all the more remarkable because it contains, in addition to a photo of the stuffed Schomburgk-deer from Paris, a reproduction of the very likely one and only existing photograph of a living specimen from the Berlin Zoological Garden, where this deer lived from 1899 to 1911. As a matter of fact that photo does not even exist in the archives of the Zoo in Berlin, as I was informed by one of the directors.

Phya Indra Montri's article touches on the very interesting question, whether *Cervus schomburgki* should, according to the data available, be recognised as a special species, or whether it merely represents a local variety of the Indian Barasingha (*Cervus duvauceli*). Phya Indra Montri is inclined to agree to the theory brought forward by C. von Arentschildt, namely that the Schomburgk-deer is actually the same animal as the Barasingha, that the difference in the appearance of the antlers is merely due to the difference in living- and feeding-conditions prevailing in India and Thailand respectively, and that therefore the Schomburgk-deer should be classed as a sub-variety of the Barasingha and classified as *Rucervus duvauceli siamensis* or *Rucervus duvauceli schomburgki*.

Contrary to this view, I venture to express the opinion that *C. schomburgki* definitely represents a species by itself, how closely related to *C. duvauceli* it may be. This opinion, which I have already expressed in an article written in 1936 and published in the "Zeitschrift fuer Saeugetierkunde" 11. Bd. pg. 20-31, is based on the following :

Phya Indra Montri is inclined to think with Herrn v. Arentschildt, that this classification — the classification of *C. schomburgki* as a separate species — was premature. It is admitted that the classification by Blyth was entirely based on the difference in the antlers. I quote from the "Proceedings of the Zoological Society of



London" 1863, page 155 :

"Mr. E. Blyth exhibited some horns and other specimens which had been obligingly lent him for that purpose by the authorities of the South Kensington Museum.

Among them were a pair of loose horns and odd right and left horns (of different individuals) of a species of Deer that had been presented to Her Majesty by the Siamese Embassy lately in London, and made over to the South Kensington Museum by Her Majesty's command.

The last were considered by Mr. Blyth to indicate the existence of an undescribed species of Deer, probably inhabiting Siam, which he denominated *Cervus* or *Rucervus schomburgki*, in compliment to his distinguished friend, Her Majesty's representative at the court of Bangkok. He had seen a similar pair of horns upon the frontlet, in Calcutta, in the possession of a sailor, who was unable to inform him of their origin; but Mr. Blyth had considered that pair, at the time, to represent a remarkable variety of horn of the *Rucervus duvaucelii* of India. The occurrence, however, of horns of three additional individuals of the same type, and the region from which they were all but certainly brought, induced him to believe that they indicated a veritable species, separated in its geographic range from that of *R. duvauceli* by the intervention of the range of *Panolia eldi*. The latter extended from the Manipur Valley to that of the Irawadi (the species being common in Lower Pegu), and reappeared in the southern Tenasserim province of Mergui, and in that of Kedda within Siamese territory, a region where the *R. duvauceli* or Indian Bara Singha was quite unknown. The horn of *R. schomburgki* much resembled that of the Bara Singha, but was remarkable for the extreme shortness of the beam, combined with a well-developed crown-and-brow-antler, imparting a characteristic aspect. Had it not been for his extreme familiarity with the varieties of horns presented by the various Deer of India and neighbouring countries, Mr. Blyth would scarcely have ventured to consider the *Rucervus schomburgki* as distinct from *R. duvauceli* of India, but under the circumstances he did not hesitate in regarding it as a second species of the same peculiar type."

Two reasons induced, according to the above quotation, Mr. Blyth to believe that this deer indicates a veritable species :



- a) the fact that the horns all originated from Thailand, i. e. that this new species was widely separated in its geographic range from that of *C. duvauceli*,
- b) the characteristic aspect of the horns, i. e. the extreme shortness of the beam.

Furthermore it is expressly stated in the Proceedings, that Mr. Blyth was "extremely familiar" with the varieties of horns presented by the various deer of India and neighbouring countries.

Let us further investigate the two reasons of Mr. Blyth.

a) The habitat of *C. duvauceli* is restricted to India, that of *C. schomburgki* to Thailand, two countries separated from each other by several barriers of high mountains and an enormous distance. If *C. schomburgki* is identical with *C. duvauceli*, how did the former come to Thailand? I am unable to accept the explanation suggested by Phya Indra Montri, namely, that the deer had been brought as pet by Indian settlers. This seems very unlikely. And why then does *C. duvauceli* not exist in Burma, a country with very similar climatic conditions to those in Thailand? It seems also unlikely that *C. duvauceli* or *C. schomburgki* ever lived in Burma, but "that they have been forgotten" as Phya Indra Montri suggests. Surely some horns of them would have been found, if they ever lived there. I therefore believe that Mr. Blyth for mere geographical reasons was quite justified to make *C. schomburgki* a distinct species.

b) The other reason is that characteristic aspect of the antlers of *C. schomburgki*. The illustrations on the table attached will show this. The antlers of *C. duvauceli* are undivided for a considerable distance above the origin of the brow-tine, whereas the antlers of *C. schomburgki* branch off at a very short distance above the origin of the brow-tine. The result is that the antlers of the latter have quite a different appearance, much more compact than the antlers of Barasingha. But it is according to my opinion not so much the distance from pedicle where the antlers divide that matters, but the very different general appearance, the characteristic style of ramification, the basket-like shape and the great number of points of the antlers of *C. schomburgki* which altogether clearly and strikingly mark the difference between both types of antlers. Furthermore I am in agreement with Lydekker and Dunbar Brander, when stating, that the Barasingha has never a

forked brow-tine. We know however that the Schomburgk-deer very often has a forked browtine, as illustrated f. i. by pictures No. 5, a-c. The latter fact alone would according to my opinion again amply suffice to make *C. schomburgki* a separate species. We know that f. i. the existence or non-existence of a certain gland, or the number of vertebrae are sufficient reason for separating two otherwise quite identical mammals into two separate species. And finally: The fact remains, that not a single zoologist in any country has so far ever been in doubt about *Cervus schomburgki* being a separate species. They apparently all accepted the classification of Blyth. Lydekker and Dunbar Brander did the same. Several German zoologists, with whom I expressly have made enquiries, have confirmed that they consider the classification of Blyth as being correct. I therefore see no reason why we—amateurs in zoology, as we more or less are—should question the decision of the experts.

In addition to the above I would like to give all data about the antlers represented in illustrations 4 to 6. Whereas antlers No. 4 and 5 are in my possession since many years and similar photos have already been published before in the "Zeitschrift fuer Saeugetierkunde," antlers No. 6 were only recently acquired and are reproduced here for the first time. This pair was bought by a Chinese horn-dealer in Kampengpet in May 1941. No. 5 and 6 represent to my knowledge some of the best specimens known so far and 6 probably the best on record as far as the number of point is concerned. For comparison the measurements of the antlers in the possession of the late General E. W. Trotter are given, as published in Rowland Wards "Records of Big Game" 1928.



## Characteristics of the Antlers of the Schomburgk-Deer.

Antlers	Length on outside curve	Circumference above coronet	Tip to Tip	Widest inside	Number of points		Weight	Remarks
					right	left		
Collected by U. Guehler No. 4	30"	7 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	26 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	33"	11	11	6.1 kg.	<i>Length of brow-tines</i> right                  left 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ "                  20 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
No. 5 a-c	28"	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	25"	28 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	18	11	7.1 kg.	Both brow-tines are forked.
No. 6 a-c	29 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	8"	17"	32"	21	12	8.4 kg.	Right brow-tine much shorter than left one.
Collected by E. W. Trotter	32 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	6 $\frac{1}{8}$ "	32 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	32 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	16	13	—	—





The three representatives of the Rucervine group:

I. *Cervus (R.) duvauceli* Cuv.

Barasingha or Swamp-deer.



1  
Central Provinces Type



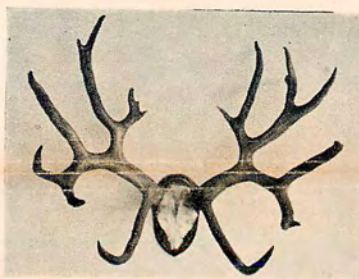
2  
Normal or Terai Type



3  
Sambar Type

II. *Cervus (R.) Schomburgki* Blyth

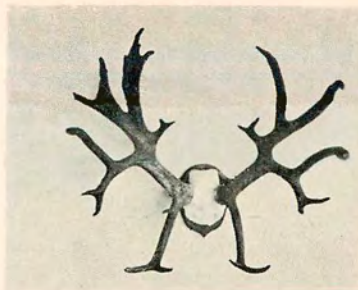
Schomburgk Deer.



4



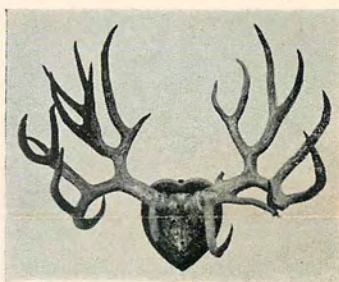
5 a



5 b



5 c



6 a



6 b



6 c

III. *Cervus (R.) eldi* Gray

Thamin or Eld's Deer.



7