





*Cervus schomburgki*

THE  
JOURNAL  
OF THE  
Natural History Society of Siam.

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Volume III.

BANGKOK.

Number 1.

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**SOME NOTES ON CERVUS (RUCERVUS) SCHOMBURGKI.**

BY P. R. KEMP.

WITH A PLATE.

This deer is one of the rarest and least known of the Rucervine group of the family Cervidae, and should be of particular interest to members of this Society, since Siam is essentially the country in which it is to be found.

The first record of this deer occurs in 1863 when Blyth described the species in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society, page 155. In that, or the previous year, a Siamese Embassy had been in London, and had presented a pair of loose horns, and odd right and left horns, of this deer, to Her Majesty Queen Victoria,\* by whose command they were made over to the South Kensington Museum.

Blyth when exhibiting these horns before the Zoological Society, considered them to belong to an undescribed species of deer, "probably inhabiting Siam," and he gave the species the name *Cervus* or *Rucervus schomburgki*, "in compliment to his distinguished friend, Her Majesty's representative at the Court of Siam," who was then Sir Robert Schomburgk. Blyth had seen a similar pair of horns before in Calcutta, in the possession of a sailor, who was, however, unable to give him any information about their origin, and he had put them down as a remarkable variety of horn of the *Rucervus duvauceli*, the "barasingha" of India, with which he was quite familiar.

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\* This is somewhat remarkable, in view of the fact that the Siamese of today place no value whatever upon the horns of this deer. Eds.

The occurrence, however, of these additional horns presented by the Siamese Embassy, which were certainly brought from Siam, induced him to believe that they indicated a distinct species, separated widely in its geographical range from the *Rucervus duvauceli*, which was quite unknown in Siam.

In 1865 two fine pairs of horns of *Cervus schomburgki* were purchased for the British Museum from a miscellaneous collection of objects of Natural History procured in Siam, and brought home by Sir R. Schomburgk and auctioned after his decease.

Blyth exhibited photographs of these and other horns in the P. Z. S. 1867, page 835, and at the same time he makes mention of "having been assured that a living buck of the species is at this time living in the Jardin des Plantes at Paris."

He also mentions in this paper the fact that two of the heads exhibited had the brow tine forked.

Sir Victor Brooke, F. Z. S., writing nine years later (P. Z. S., 1876, p. 304), mentions having received further specimens of the horns of *Cervus schomburgki*, and states that "all specimens were procured in northern Siam, probably even in the tributary states named Laos and Shan," basing his statement upon the opinion of Dr. Campbell, the resident Medical Officer of the British Consulate at Bangkok, with whom he had corresponded on the subject.

Brooke also refers to "an adult stag mounted in the gallery of the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle at Paris" which had been sent from Siam by M. Bocourt, and which is "that mentioned by Mr. Blyth (P.Z.S. 1867, p. 835).

In the P. Z. S. 1872, p. 798, further mention is made of a living specimen of the *R. schomburgki* in Shanghai. This animal, it was stated, was presented to a European by the King of Siam.

In 1873 the Zoological Gardens in London procured by exchange from the Zoological Gardens of Hamburg, a buck deer which was identified as *Cervus duvauceli*. In 1877, however, it was suggested that this deer was really a specimen of *Cervus schomburgki* and its origin was then traced back. It was found to have been bred in captivity in the Hamburg Zoological Gardens between a male, said to have come from Bangkok in 1862, and a female received from Berlin, which was also believed to have come from Siam. (P. Z. S., 1877, p. 682).

During the next twenty years I can find no record of this deer, but in 1897 a live male specimen was procured in Siam, having been caught by Phya Rachavarinth, the Governor of Saraburi, "somewhere on the Korat plains."

This deer was given to Mr. Passmore, who was at the time stationed at Saraburi in charge of the railway construction, and was sent down by him to the late Mr. Bethge, the Director General of the railway. The latter went home to Germany in 1898 and took the deer, with other living specimens of the fauna of the country, for presentation to the Berlin Zoological Gardens.\*

Neither Mr. Passmore nor Mr. Bethge realized the value of the find, and were considerably surprised when they later heard that the animal was a very rare one, and—erroneously, it would appear—the first ever caught and brought to Europe. It is said that Mr. Bethge was seriously annoyed at having to pay ticals 21 for railway charges for the animal's transport to Bangkok.

The rarity of the find was such that Messrs. Jamrach sent out, in about the year 1905, a special collector to endeavour to capture another living specimen. This collector, Mr. Chance, spent several months in the Korat district attempting to net this deer, but was not successful in obtaining a specimen either dead or alive, although he was more fortunate with *Cervus eldi* which is comparatively common.

Mr. Chance had in his possession photographs of the deer, which I imagine, must have been taken of the animal sent to Germany.

*Cervus schomburki* undoubtedly belongs to the same group as *Cervus duvauceli*, the "barasingha" or swamp deer of India, and *Cervus eldi*, the "lamang" of Siam, or "thamin" of Burma.

The following full description of the species, taken from Lydeker's Catalogue of Ungulates, 1915, must, I think, have been taken from a study of one of the living animals in captivity in Europe, or from the mounted specimen in Paris.

"Typical locality:—Siam.

"Height at shoulder about 3' 5"; coat in winter rather long and coarse; general colour uniform brown, darkest on nose and the upper surface of tail, and lightest on cheeks and flanks; under parts, under surface of tail and lower lip whitish;

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\* Mention of this animal is made in P. Z. S. 1900, p. 303.

a tinge of rufous on upper lip, back of head and limbs; hair on front of lower part of forelegs elongated into a fringe; metatarsal gland not described; antlers, large, complex, smooth and polished; the brow tine very long, frequently forked, and arising nearly at a right angle to beam, the latter very short and more or less laterally compressed, then forking dichotomously with each of the main branches about equally developed, and again forking in a similar manner to terminate in long cylindrical tines; in immature antlers hind branch of main fork less developed than front one. Good antlers measure from 27 to 33 inches in length along the front curve with a basal girth of from  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to 6 inches and a tip to tip interval of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  to  $28\frac{3}{8}$  inches."

The range over which the animal is found is, according to Rowland Ward (Records of Big Game, 1914 p. 57) :—

"Siamese territory east and west of the Menam River; also Cambodia west of the Menam River south of Paknam Po and in swamps occasionally on east; in fact, the inland districts of the Menam River in northern Siam."

This statement shews a good deal of geographical confusion as to the position of Cambodia. His Menam River is of course the river Chao Phraya, the term Menam, or Mother of Waters, being used in Siam to designate any large river.

Lydekker states that the range includes Yunnan, and Blanford gives the Shan States as a locality in which this animal is found.

In my opinion, this deer is not found anywhere in the valley of the Menam Chao Phraya proper at the present day, though, doubtless it was found in the vicinity of Paknam Po twenty years ago, before the railway opened the country up.

Some two or three years ago when I was in the Paknam Po district, some old residents told me that they remembered this deer, which they described as resembling the "lamang" (*Cervus eldi*) but with more complex and multi-tined antlers.

They stated that the animal was known to them as "saman" (ส้ม) and was frequently found some twenty years ago running with 'lamang' in the open and rather swampy country east of Paknam Po in latitude  $15^{\circ} 30' N$ , and longitude  $100^{\circ} 30' E$ . They also asserted,

and this statement I have heard elsewhere in other districts, that the "saman" are always males, but that they breed with the "lamang," and their young, when males, may carry antlers of either description, "lamang" or "saman."

This statement rather points to the deduction that the female *Cervus schomburgki* closely resembles the female *Cervus eldi*.

H. B. M. Consul-General in Bangkok, Mr. Lyle, also informs me that he remembers seeing antlers of this species many years ago in native houses along the Menam Chao Phraya between Paknam Po and Utaradit.

I spent three years in the province of Pitsanulok some sixteen years ago but I never came across or heard of this deer, though I shot "lamang" in the southern part of the district.

During the last three or four years I have been several times in the districts both east and west of Paknam Po, and it would seem that the settlement of this country in the last twenty years has driven all game away from the more open country. It was not until I got on to the Menam Sak to the east, in the Bua Chum district, that I could pick up any news of the recent appearance of *Cervus schomburgki*. At Bua Chum, a village on the east bank of the Menam Sak, in latitude 15° 15' N longitude 101° 10' E, I ascertained that antlers were occasionally brought in for sale to the Chinese who trade up and down the river. I could, however, get hold of no one who had actually shot or seen this animal, but its existence in the district was generally recognized. The animal was known to the Laos as "la-ong" (ລ້ອງ), and "saman" (ສົມພັນ) would appear to be the Siamese name for this animal. It was said to be rather lighter in colour and somewhat smaller in size than the sambar.

In 1917 I was in the Korat district and made further enquiries there, with much the same result. At Sung Nern I gathered from an old inhabitant that he remembered a deer called "la-ong" which had formerly been occasionally seen and shot but, since the advent of the railway, he had not seen or heard of this animal anywhere in the district, although he believed it was found "up north." This locality would correspond to latitude 16° longitude 102°, the Chaiyapum district of Korat.

In Bangkok "skin and horn" shops, the antlers of *Cervus schom-*

*burgki* are frequently seen, but whether from recently killed animals or not I cannot say. Enquiry generally elicits the information that they came from Korat, and this is most probably the case, though some certainly come from the Menam Sak district as mentioned above.

In my opinion *Cervus schomburgki* is an even rarer animal than is generally believed, and its habitat, at any rate as far as Siam is concerned, limited to a small area formed by the quadrilateral contained between latitudes 15° and 17° N, and longitudes 101° and 103° E. It is certainly not now found in Siam west of longitude 100° 30' and I cannot learn of its existence in the province of Ubon, the most easterly part of Siam.

Mr. Lyle, who has travelled very extensively over Siam, and who has always been an observant naturalist as well as a keen shikari, assures me that it is not found in the north of Siam, say above latitude 18°, and he also much doubts the existence of the species in the Chantabun district. The area, therefore, within which the deer is found is practically limited to the above mentioned quadrilateral which, unfortunately, is a district never visited by Europeans.

The country contained in this area is open, very sparsely settled, and in the rains swampy. The approximate elevation above mean sea level would be about 1,000 feet.

Whether this deer is found in any of the countries bordering on Siam is a point upon which I can find very little reliable information.

All the specimens (antlers) in the British Museum, and in the Bombay Natural History Society's Museum, as well as all recorded in Rowland Ward's "Records of Big Game," have come from Siam, and I cannot find any mention of specimens having been procured elsewhere, with the single exception of a pair of antlers figured in Bentham, Asiatic Horns and Antlers, Ind. Mus., 1908, p. 88, as collected by John Anderson in 1878 in the Sunda Valley, Western Yunnan.\*

Rowland Ward states that the deer is found in Cambodia, but I do not know his authority for this statement unless it was Gray, who in his Catalogue of Ruminants, Brit. Museum, 1872, describing a frontlet and antlers from Cambodia (*Cervus cambojensis*), identified it

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\* The town of Sunda is about 50 miles E. N. E. of Bhamo, on a river running into the Irrawadi at that town.

with *Cervus schomburghi*, though afterwards this specimen was recognized as belonging to *Cervus unicolor equinus* and entered under same.

I append measurements of some horns I have collected:—

Head belonging to	Length on outside curve	Circumference.	Tip to tip	Width inside	Points
1. British Museum (Record Head) ...	33"	5 $\frac{3}{4}$ "	17 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	—	9+11
2. E. G. Loder ...	32 $\frac{1}{8}$	5 $\frac{1}{8}$	—	—	12+11
3. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc. ...	30 $\frac{1}{2}$ 31 $\frac{1}{2}$	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	24	27 $\frac{1}{2}$	10+13
4. E. W. Trotter (Siam) ...	30 $\frac{7}{8}$	5 $\frac{3}{8}$	13 $\frac{1}{4}$	25 $\frac{1}{2}$	7+7
5. E. W. Trotter (Siam) ...	30 $\frac{3}{4}$	5	15 $\frac{1}{4}$	21 $\frac{7}{8}$	8+9
6. British Museum ...	30 $\frac{1}{8}$	5	15 $\frac{5}{8}$	33	10+10
7. British Museum ...	29 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	28 $\frac{3}{8}$	31 $\frac{5}{8}$	10+11
8. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc ...	29 $\frac{1}{2}$ 30	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ 5 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	28 $\frac{1}{4}$	7+8
9. E. W. Trotter (Siam) ...	28 $\frac{1}{4}$	5 $\frac{3}{8}$	15 $\frac{3}{4}$	20 $\frac{1}{8}$	8+7
10. Malcolm Smith (Siam) ...	27 $\frac{3}{8}$	5 $\frac{5}{8}$	—	—	15+

All from Siam and, I believe, all procured by purchase, since, to the best of my knowledge, no European has ever shot one of these animals.

Nos. 3 and 8 were presented in 1897 to the Bombay Natural History Society by, respectively, Messrs. A. J. A. Jardine and H. Slade. No. 8 used at one time to hang in the Borneo Company's bungalow at Raheng and would have been most probably procured at Paknam Po, or in that district.

No. 10 is a single right-hand horn and is remarkable for the large number of points it carries. This horn is shewn in the illustration accompanying this article, the lower head being also the property of Dr. Smith, having been selected, in spite of its somewhat smaller size, owing to its having the skull as well.

In all the numerous heads examined by me I have never come across a single case of the forked brow tine of which Blyth and Lydekker make mention, nor can I learn of other observers in this country having ever met with this peculiarity.

Another noticeable point is that antlers which can be procured in Bangkok at the present day very seldom carry more than 7 or 8 points, whereas the antlers recorded twenty years ago or more, frequently carried as many as 10 or 12 points.

In conclusion I would state that the authorities of the British Museum of Natural History are most anxious to procure a specimen of this deer; at present they have only skulls and horns. In 1909 and again in 1914 they approached the British Legation in Bangkok to endeavour to obtain for them a complete skin and skeleton, and offered £50 to meet expenses in connection therewith. On the outbreak of war, however, this grant was withdrawn.

If any member of this Society should at any time be in a position to obtain this animal, either alive or dead, or even a portion of its skin or skeleton, he should make every endeavour to do so. For it would seem that this deer is on the verge of extinction and it would be a thousand pities if it were to be lost to science, before a complete record could be made of it.

In the preparation of this paper I have to acknowledge with thanks assistance from Dr. R. Hanitsch, the Director of the Raffles Museum, Singapore, in particular; also from Mr. C. Boden Kloss of the Selangor Museum, Kuala Lumpur, and the authorities of the British Museum, and the Bombay Natural History Society's Museum.

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