

[There appears to be no reference to a 'thorn' at the end of a panther's tail in the literature available to us. Col. R. W. Burton to whom Capt. Boswell's original specimen was sent commented as follows: 'I have personally shot and skinned about 48 panthers in many parts of India and have often noticed kinks at end of tails which were evidently dislocations, probably occasioned in early life when the bones were soft. The specimen now before me shows similar dislocation—the right angle bend, and the second bend where the 'thorn' commences: two dislocations. I think the 'thorn' consists of 2 vertebrae, the pointed one having for some reason assumed the point we see. If the specimen were to be X-rayed perhaps the 'thorn' would be shown to be in two parts as I conjecture it is'.

Following up Col. Burton's suggestion we had the specimens X-rayed in London through the good offices of Mr. N. B. Kinnear, the Director of the British Museum (Natural History). Dr. Fraser in charge of the Museum's osteological collections who took the X-ray photograph remarks: 'The photograph shows that the similarity to a hook is caused by the dislocation of the terminal vertebral elements. In the larger specimen there is a double dislocation and in the smaller a single one. It is easy to see how with joints suitably dislocated the simulacrum of a hook could be produced'.

It therefore seems established that the curious 'thorn' is the result of dislocations of the terminal vertebrae. There now remains to account for the why and how, since the mutilation seems to be by no means uncommon. It may be the outcome of the playfulness of panther cubs biting each other's tails. But are panther cubs more addicted to this sort of horseplay than tiger cubs? This condition has apparently not been observed in the tiger.—Eds.]

#### 4.—INTERESTING SHIKAR TROPHIES: HUNTING CHEETAH *ACINONYX JUBATUS* (SCHREBER).

(With a photo)

The Private Secretary to H.H. the Ruler, Korea State, E.S.A., writes us:—

' . . . All these three cheetahs were shot by the Durbar in our State (Korea—E.S.A.). He was driving at night and they were all seen sitting close to each other. They were all males and the measurements were as follows:—

1. 6 ft. 5 ins. between pegs
2. 6 ft. 4½ ins. „ „
3. 6 ft. 4 ins. „ „

The first bullet killed one and the second the remaining two. The second bullet after having gone through one struck the other, which was behind it, and killed it also. It is not known whether they were born in the State or had migrated from somewhere else.

They were all of the same size, as you would see from the measurements and it is believed that they were all from the same litter. There is no trace of their parents. They were in perfect condition. A photograph of these cheetahs will be sent to you shortly and you can use the photographs as well with the account.



It would be very kind of you to have a record of this shoot published in the *Bombay Natural History Journal* and the *Field*.'

MYSORE, S. INDIA.

VAN INGEN & VAN INGEN

January 9, 1948.

*Artists in Taxidermy*

[The Cheetah is a timid creature and never known to attack man unprovoked. It is harmless to domestic animals; at any rate its numbers within recent years have been far too small for any charge of destructiveness to be justified.

According to Dunbar Brander (*Wild Animals in Central India*, p. 273—1927) the Cheetah had almost completely disappeared from the Central Provinces. He knew of only three animals having been procured in the 20 years previous to 1927. But rumours of their existence in parts of Berar, the Seoni Plateau and Saugar were still current in his day and he thought it was possible that one or two animals may have persisted. Writing 12 years later, Pocock (*F.B.I., Mammals*, 2nd. ed., vol. i, p. 328—1939) says, 'It formerly had a wide distribution in Western and Central India south of the

Ganges and extended through the Deccan at least as far south as Coimbatore (R. C. Morris) its range agreeing tolerably closely with that of the Blackbuck. But it is now to all intents and purposes a thing of the past so far as the fauna of India is concerned. . . .

The editors were so nauseated by the account of this slaughter that their first impulse was to consign it to the waste-paper basket. Its publication here is intended in the nature of an impeachment rather than any desire on their part to condone or extol the deed. That anybody with the slightest claim to sportsmanship—and the general run of Indian princes justly prided themselves on that—should be so grossly ignorant of the present status of the Cheetah in India, or knowingly so wanton as to destroy such a rare and harmless animal when he has the phenomenal good fortune to run into not one but three together—probably the very last remnants of a dying race—is too depressing to contemplate. Further comment is needless.

What adds to the heinousness of the episode is that the slaughter was done while motoring through the forest at night, presumably with the aid of powerful headlights or a spotlight. This, it will be recognised, is not only against all ethics of sport but it is a statutory offence deserving of drastic action by those whose business it should be to enforce the law.—Eds.]

#### 5.—REACTIONS OF DOGS TO NOISES

Mr. Roonwal's note on the behaviour of a dog to the sounding of a siren gives a quite common reaction by dogs to certain sounds. I have known dogs howl in the same manner as described on the gramophone being played.

There are here in this hotel a couple of dachshunds, who, every day without fail, when the nearby R. C. Church rings the Angelus at mid-day, sit up and howl together until the bell stops. The bell rings early each morning and in the evenings but the dogs do not take any notice at these times. A number of sirens sound early mornings and also at mid-day but to these the dogs do not react.

I think that it is a well established fact that some dogs will react to music, singing and other sounds in this manner, why a few do so and others do not is perhaps a matter of temperament. It is, however, lucky that all dogs do not, as the noise in any Indian town would be unbearable! They are bad enough as it is at nights when the jackals start up.

HILL GROVE HOTEL,

COONNOOR, NILGIRIS (S.I.).

R. N. CHAMPION-JONES

April 30, 1938.