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FOREWORD

"To my mind there is no finer country for the man who has already had some experience," said Stockley, the author of "Big Game Shooting in the India Empire" regarding Myanmar as a hunting ground, "but I would not recommend it to the novice"¹ Such a statement will hardly discourage the beginner who is presented with the opportunity of going on a Myanmar shikar; more likely it will have the opposite effect of putting him on his mettle, while in the veteran hunter it will probably arouse a keen interest and a desire to try his hand at Myanmar big game.

In both cases the visiting sportsman will need to obtain as much advance information as he can get on local conditions and fauna. "Know thyself" said the philosopher. "Know thy adversary" is equally appropriate advice for the hunter who would set out to match his wits against some of the most cunning and dangerous wild beasts to be found anywhere in the world. This book is a modest attempt to help the prospective hunter of Myanmar big game acquire such knowledge.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to organize and present what is currently known regarding the behaviour and habits of each of the major species of wild animals in Myanmar. I have attempted to describe the physical and psychological characteristics of each species and discuss its distribution within and without the country, its relationship to the environment and to other species, and its qualities as a game animal.

Since classic works in Myanmar game already exist, such as Lydekker's "The Game Animals of India, Burma, Malaya and Tibet"² Pollok and Thom's "Wild Sports in Burma and Assam,"³ Evans' "Big Game Shooting in Upper Burma",⁴ Peacock's "A Game Book for Burma and Adjoining Territories",⁵ and Smith's "Wild Animals of Burma",⁶ not to mention standard works on

Indian wildlife such as Blanford's "Fauna of British India including Ceylon and Burma",⁷ Stockley's "Big Game Shooting in the Indian Empire",⁸ Prater's "The Book of Indian Animals",⁹ among others, the question arises as to why another book on these topics is necessary.

The answer lies in the fact that nearly fifty years have passed since the publication of H.C. Smith's abovementioned work, the last in a whole series of absorbing monographs on Myanmar game written by British administrators and sportsmen. Much has been learned about Myanmar wild animals since then, a lot of it from Myanmar sources, and it would appear that the time is now ripe for putting this new information on record.

The author has no pretensions to credentials other than a keen interest in natural history fostered by a hunting experience of over thirty years in various parts of the country, and an earnest desire to do whatever is possible to further the cause of game conservation in Myanmar.

A word may be in order concerning this last matter. Gone are the days when the Myanmar forests and plains teemed with animals of every conceivable description and British hunters like Stockley and Pollok could roam about and bang away at will, often shooting in a single day more than the present-day hunter will get on his license during his entire lifetime. The advent of modern high-velocity firearms, introduced into the country by the British, resulted in such wholesale destruction of the wildlife of Myanmar, both by visiting hunters and local shikaris, that the Forest Department became alarmed and enacted legislation to halt the depletion of this important national resource. Game laws were promulgated under the Burma Forest Act of 1902, the Burma Wildlife Protection Act of 1936 and Rules, 1941, and the Burma Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Act of 1956.

The State Law and Order Restoration Council has, from its very inception, vigorously pursued an enlightened and comprehensive wildlife conservation policy, enacting the Forest Law in 1992 and the Wildlife Conservation Law in 1994 to better preserve Myanmar ecosystem and biodiversity.

Under the Forest Policy of Myanmar adopted in 1995, 30 % of the land area of Myanmar is to be set aside as reserved forests and a further 5 % as wildlife parks and sanctuaries under the Protected Areas System. Altogether 15 species of reptiles, 106 species of birds and 53 species of mammals are also to be accorded protection to ensure the conservation of biodiversity and protection of the natural environment.

Nowhere is the Government's commitment to nature conservation more apparent than in its decision to establish the Myinmoletkat Nature Reserve. The Government has set aside for this project an area in Dawei District, Tanintharyi Division, covering one million hectares and including the Luwaing and Heinze-Kaleinaung reserve forests to constitute a regional biodiversity reserve worthy of World Heritage status.

Proper wildlife conservation procedures include the systematic culling of stocks of wild animals that have over-bred and threaten to upset the ecological balance. Determining the annual allowable cropping of different species to set up quotas to redress the balance and guide the issuance of game licenses to hunters is another integral part of scientific wildlife management.

In wildlife conservation work the hunter who scrupulously respects the game laws, who helps to enforce them and who subscribes to both the spirit and the letter of the law is an ally not to be under-rated. The real culprits in wildlife depletion are the commercial poacher and the amateur hunter who is either ignorant of the game rules or knowingly flouts them.

The most dedicated proponent of proper conservation practices is often the experienced hunter who has been schooled in the ways of the wild, who has learned to know wild animals and love them, and has come to the realisation that they are a valuable and easily expended national resource which should be cherished and treasured for posterity. If this book should result in an increase in the number of such true sportsmen by arousing in some small measure an interest in Myanmar fauna among beginning hunters, I shall be well content.