

The size of the Indian tiger / J. Fayrer.

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NATURE

June 27, 1878

The Size of the Indian Tiger

IN a book recently published entitled "Thirteen Years Among the Wild Beasts of India," by Mr. G. P. Sanderson, of Mysore, at pages 272, 273, the following remarks occur regarding the size of the tiger, and in reference to certain measurements of that animal given in a small volume entitled "The Royal Tiger of Bengal: his Life and Death," published in 1875.

The author (Mr. Sanderson) says,—“Regarding the size of the tiger, once a much disputed point, all careful observers are, I believe, agreed in accepting Dr. Jerdon's view ('Mammals of India') as thoroughly correct. He says, 'The average size of a full-grown male tiger is from 9 to 9½ feet,' but I fancy that there is little doubt that occasionally tigers are killed 10 feet in length, and perhaps a few inches over that; but the stories of tigers 11 feet and 12 feet in length, so often heard and repeated, certainly require confirmation, and I have not myself seen an authentic account of a tiger that measured more than 10 feet and two or three inches. I know,” continues Mr. Sanderson, “two noted Bengal sportsmen who can each count the tigers slain by them by hundreds whose opinions entirely corroborate Jerdon. My own experience can only produce a tiger of 9 feet 6 inches and a tigress of 8 feet 4 inches as my largest. Of course writers start up now and again, as the author of the 'Royal Tiger of Bengal' did two years ago, and give us something like the following:—'The full grown male Indian tiger may be said to be from 9 to 12 feet or 12 feet 2 inches, the tigress from 8 to 10 feet, or perhaps in very rare instances 11 feet in length.' It is only fair to the author to state, however, that in the next paragraph he looks with doubt upon Buffon's tiger of 15 feet, and would only with greater hesitation accept the recorded statement that Hyder Ally presented a tiger to the Nawab of Arcot that measured 18 feet.

A portion only of the paragraph in my book is quoted; the most important, the first part, being omitted; it is as follows:—“The statements as to the length they (tigers) attain are conflicting, and errors are apt to arise from measurements taken from the skin after it is stretched, when it may be 10 or 12 inches longer than before removal from the body. The tiger should be measured from the nose to the tip of the tail as he lies dead, before the skin is removed. *One that is 10 feet by this measurement is large, and the full-grown male does not often exceed this, though no doubt larger individuals (males) are occasionally seen; and I have been informed by Indian sportsmen of reliability that they have seen or killed tigers over 12 feet in length.*”

This account of the size of the tiger really, therefore, substantially agrees with Dr. Jerdon's, except that he says, “The stories of tigers of 11 feet and 12 feet in length, so often heard and repeated, certainly require confirmation.” This confirmation is supplied. The following examples may be adduced:—

Lieut.-Col. G. Boileau killed a tiger at Muteara, in Oude, in 1861, that was over 12 feet, the skin, when removed, measured 13 feet 5 inches.

Sir G. Yule, K.C.S.I., has heard once, at least, of a 12-foot tiger fairly measured, but 11 feet odd inches is the largest he has killed, and that twice or thrice.

Col. Ramsay killed a tiger in Kumaon, 12 feet. I have myself seen and killed tigers over 10 feet, and have notes of some: one, for example, killed in Purneah, in 1869, 10 feet 8 inches in length.

Gen. Ramsay mentions the skin of a tiger partly killed by himself near Benares that measured over 12 feet. This had no doubt been stretched, but it was a very large tiger.

Col. J. Sleeman does not remember having killed a tiger

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measuring more than 10 feet 6 inches in the skin. He saw the skin of one at Dinagepore, over 12 feet in length; this was also no doubt stretched. Col. J. Macdonald has killed a tiger of 10 feet 4 inches. He says: "I do believe tigers have exceptionally reached 12 feet."

The Hon. R. Drummond, C.S., killed a tiger 11 feet 9 inches in length before being skinned.

Col. Shakespeare killed a tiger of 11 feet 8 inches.

In regard to the allusion to Buffon's tiger of 15 feet, and Hyder Ally's of 18 feet, I refer to but to express my distrust of them.

It is needless to adduce further evidence. I repeat that though male tigers over 10 feet may be uncommon, they do *occasionally* (and I said no more) attain the greater size.

June 17

J. FAYRER

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