

## STRIPED SCOURGE OF ASIA...

# The *BENGAL TIGER*

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*On the page opposite is the eighth painting of a notable series by one of the nation's most talented wildlife artists, who was specially commissioned by this magazine to depict—in full color—the world's largest game animals in their native habitats*

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**B**y and large, the Bengal tiger is the most feared of all wild animals. To millions of Asiatics he is a scourge—a cunning cattle thief and a murderer. But to many a well-heeled sportsman or Oriental potentate he is the most magnificent of all big-game animals, the true king of beasts. Few trophies—even the African lion—rival the tiger for sheer breath-taking beauty and majesty.

By nature, the Bengal tiger epitomizes every perverse, cruel, and unpredictable trait of the cat family. Often he seems to delight in slaughter for its own sake, and year after year he takes a dreadful toll of human life in densely populated India. One tiger is credited with having killed eighty natives in a single year!

Ordinarily, though, the tiger is no particular menace to the sportsman. Since hunting afoot in the steaming jungle would be not only dangerous but almost unbearably uncomfortable, the hunter usually shoots from a machan, or platform, built a safe distance above the ground in a tree. Or if he can afford the expense, he can hunt in perfect safety from the back of a specially trained elephant, while a small army of beaters tries to send a tiger in his direction.

The machan hunter climbs to his

platform at dusk and resigns himself to a long wait. Usually he is armed with a large-caliber British rifle, a .450 or .500, although one of the powerful H. & H. Magnums, .300 or .375 caliber, would be effective. The sportsman must be alert for every sound, since the tiger always approaches the bait—a tethered live animal—very cautiously, often circling it for some time before coming in to make the kill. As the cat pounces, the hunter takes careful aim in the dim light of the moon, squeezes off a shot, and gets one of the most desirable of all big-game trophies.

Although tigers are found only in Asia, they range over a vast portion of that continent, from northern China to the Malay Peninsula. The Bengal of India is the biggest of all, averaging nine or ten feet from nose to tip of tail, with an occasional animal running to eleven or twelve feet. Average weight exceeds 500 pounds.

Unlike the lion, which is a scavenger, the tiger prefers to kill his own meat. When he develops into a cattle killer, as often happens, he does a tremendous amount of damage in the course of a year. And when he becomes a man-killer, the natives know no peace until he has been tracked down and destroyed.

PAINTING BY BOB KUHN

