

CATALOGUE OF TYPE—SPECIMENS IN THE ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

PART 1.—GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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The extensive zoological collections of the Zoological Survey of India Calcutta, known as the Standard or National Zoological Collections, constitute by far the largest collection in India and cover all groups of animals from Protozoa to Mammals. They include the early collections made in the nineteenth century by the Asiatic Society of Bengal (now the Asiatic Society), Calcutta, then by the Natural History Section of the Indian Museum from its inception, in 1875 to 1916, and, finally, by the Zoological Survey of India itself from its inception in 1916. The collections are built up primarily by (i) the collections brought back by our Survey Parties from all over the country ; (ii) by exchange with, or donations received from, scientific institutions and individuals all over the world ; and (iii) by purchase either from recognised specialists or from reliable zoological collectors. Before being registered in our records, the collections are carefully identified either by the specialists of the Survey itself or, for groups where specialists are not available in the Survey, by experts from outside.

The collections mainly cover the Indian Region, namely, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Ceylon and Burma. But there are valuable collections from some of the neighbouring countries, such as Afghanistan, Iran, Thailand, Malaya, etc., and small collections from Ethiopia and certain regions of Central Asia are also present. A total of over 6,00,000 specimens, comprising over 42,000 different species, are present. Among these are nearly 13,000 "Type-Specimens" (such as holotypes, cotypes, syntypes and paratypes) belonging to several hundred species. These Types are of great importance to taxonomy since in the event of divergence of opinion about the identity of a species and the validity of names, the type-specimens constitute the final court of appeal. For this purpose type-specimens here, as well as in most of the museums of the world, are given special care and attention and are generally distinctively marked (by coloured labels, for example) from the general collections. For some years past, the Survey has been segregating these Types and also preparing card indexes and catalogues of them. It is proposed to publish these catalogues as and when they are completed for each group. Their preparation is a laborious task and takes time. The catalogue of fishes, which is now ready, has been prepared by Dr. A. G. K. Menon and Mr. G. M. Yazdani, and is being published as Part 2 of this series. It contains 441 species and 1,638 specimens belonging to 86 different families of fishes.

It is hoped that the Type Catalogues will be of use to taxonomist all over the world.