

WILD LIFE
IN
CENTRAL AFRICA.

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"Nyasaland for the Hunter and Settler," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY PHOTOGRAPHS
AND DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR.

LONDON :
THE FIELD & QUEEN (HORACE COX) LTD.
WINDSOR HOUSE, BREAM'S BUILDINGS E.C.

chase after the elephants, I shot an impala ram. On getting to the pool where we could hear the hippos grunting and splashing, I sat down and killed five with consecutive shots. The sixth cost me three cartridges, for after my first shot at him he was only dazed, as he left the water and stood on a sandbank, where I gave him two more bullets which killed him. This may seem dreadful slaughter, but I have mentioned that the hippos do great damage to the crops, and, moreover, the inhabitants of the villages round here were suffering from a famine, as they had finished most of their last season's crop of grain. This supply of meat, of which not a pound was wasted, would give them food for some time, and put strength into those who were ill from hunger. Instead of regretting such slaughter, I would do the same again for the same purpose.

Further, the natives are not allowed to kill large game like elephants and hippos themselves, so it is a good action on any white man's part to kill it for them, as long as he does not exceed his allowance.

However, as I do not believe, now-a-days, in giving the natives great quantities of meat for nothing, and as they had plenty of goats and I wanted the milk as much as they wanted the hippo meat, I told them that I would give one hippo for one milch goat, and they were quite agreeable, and the different headmen went off to bring the goats. A large hippo weighs quite 6500lb., and a big goat certainly not more than 80lb., so they had certainly the best of the bargain.

Two of the headmen produced billy goats, saying they had no nannies, which I expect was a fib, so to square matters they had each to bring six fowls as well. This was only fair to the men who produced nannies, which are considered more valuable.

Another man who had no goats produced a pair of khaki trousers, which he said he had given fifteen shillings for in Salisbury, and on my refusing a hippo for them, as I told him I could not wear them, he almost exploded in tears, and begged me to take the pants and give him a hippo, for

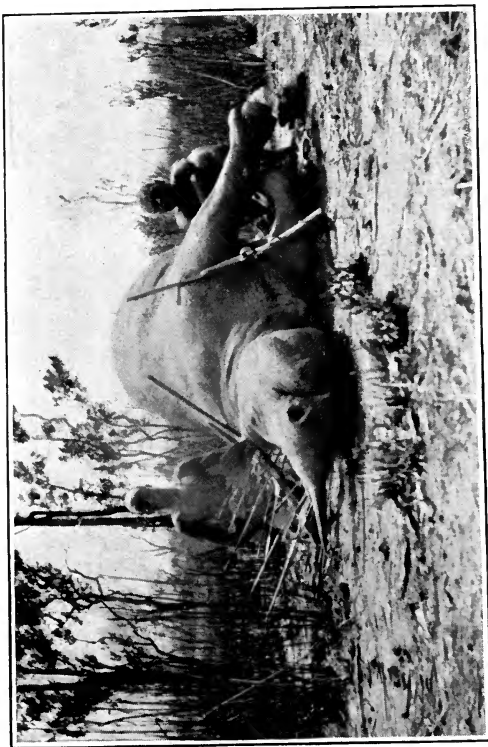
he and his people were very hungry. I relented, and he got his hippo, and I gave the trousers to my capitao (headboy).

Then the excitement began, as the men belonging to each hippo owner went in, and got the hippos out on a small sandbank, all in line. Unfortunately I had no films for my camera on this trip, so I lost some very interesting pictures. The natives had promised to keep the best of the hides, and all the teeth, for me, and they were soon busy hacking away at the meat, which they carried to the bank, where there was plenty of timber to make fires. Some of them busied themselves making stands to cook the meat on, and quite 1000 natives must have collected for the feast; and the owners of the hippos, who, except to their own families, do not believe in giving something for nothing, were busy bargaining for prime lumps of sea cow.

Another memory that comes back is a day's sport near the Rukusi stream in North-Eastern Rhodesia, where I had gone after elephants. On September 29, 1908, I had been out early looking for spoor fresh enough to follow, and I only found the tracks of a few cow elephants, which I did not want.

When travelling along the dried up bed of the Rukusi, we found the spoor of a big bull rhino which took us along the banks of the waterless bed for some distance. At last it led us to the higher country, over undulating hills with many thorn trees here and there. At this time of year big game does not seem to care, if not harried much, to travel far, as the heat of the sun is tremendous and it makes the animals lazy. About 10 a.m. I sat down to make a cup of tea and eat a little food; and as I always carry a big gourd of water, and often a lump of dried meat for my men, they also had some refreshment.

After smoking a pipe of tobacco we took up the spoor again. Machila, a fairly good tracker, was spooring, and I was walking to one side keeping my eyes ahead and to the flanks. Suddenly I saw a grey object just like a big rock, and snapped my fingers to draw the attention of the men. At first I was not sure whether it was not a big



RHINO ♀ SHOT IN NORTHERN RHODESIA, †

boulder, as there were many about there; but as we watched we caught the movement of a rhino's ears.

It would have been better had I whistled to make the rhino stand up and give me a chance of a good shot, for a sitting animal presents a poor target, if one wishes to get the bullet to a vital spot and kill quickly. However, I thought I could kill him quite well as he was, so sat down, and took a shot with a single .400 cordite Fraser rifle at his shoulder.

After the shot the cartridge jammed in the breech, which is not unusual with single falling-block rifles, and the rhino gave a startled grunt, and was on his legs and off before I could get the refractory case out and loaded again. We all ran after him and saw him disappear into a large patch of light coloured grass that threw off a very strong glare which nearly blinded me. Rushing along in this way I suddenly found myself within a few yards of the rhino, which had come to a stand half broadside on. There was not much time to waste, so I threw up the rifle, and got in a fine shot right on the point of his shoulder, and he dropped in his tracks. As he kept twitching his ears and eyelids, I gave him another bullet from my .303, which settled matters.

He had very nice horns, the anterior one measuring slightly over 20in. He was a very large bull in good condition, and his feet were big, so I took the front ones as trophies. The natives then cut off his tail, and we tramped back through the heat to the village, where a refreshing bath and good lunch awaited me.

It is very pleasant returning to camp after a successful day, and how different a man feels then compared to a long day's tramp when he has met with bad luck; or, worse still, wounded and lost a fine animal. In one case the exhilaration felt makes the miles slip past as nothing; in the other every step drags, and one's bad spirits are reflected on the faces of the natives.

I shall now change the scene to the Chiromo marsh, which is situated near the Shire river to the south of the Nyasaland Protectorate. On September 28, 1910, I was

camped at Muona's village and had spent several days looking for a good buffalo bull. There were plenty of buffaloes about, but up to this time I had not come on a very good bull, and often the tracks were hardly fresh enough to be worth following.

On the morning of that day I determined to get away very early, so got up before sunrise and dressed and breakfasted by candle light. As the darkness of night gave place to a soft grey light we left camp and went to some big maize fields to see whether game had been feeding on the dried stalks. All game is very fond of these stalks and come long distances to feed on them, and fresh spoor can usually be found in these places. In less than an hour we found the night tracks of three buffalo bulls, which, judging by their steaming dung, had just left the spot. We were soon going behind them, and had not got more than 300 yards into the thick bush and grass when a man who had climbed a large anthill said he saw them.

I was soon alongside him, and following his directions I looked ahead and saw the head and horns of a buffalo, which was evidently standing and listening, as he doubtless had heard us in the bush. I had a .404 magazine rifle which had a drag pull, and as I had not used this rifle much I made a mistake in not shooting with my 7.9mm. Mauser which I knew well. I forgot the drag pull of the .404, as my 7.9mm. has an ordinary pull, so I made a bad shot and missed the bone of the neck. However, there was no doubt that I had struck the buffalo somewhere, for he grunted in an angry manner as he ran off with the other two. Then began one of the most exciting days that I have spent in Central Africa.

On reaching the tracks, there was a lot of blood scattered on the leaves and grass. About 8 a.m. we disturbed the buffaloes, which ran off again before I had time to get the rifle to my shoulder. After this we found the wounded bull had taken a line of his own, and on comparing the tracks I was glad to see that his were much larger than those of his companions.

RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros bicornis*)

(The black rhinoceros).

NATIVE NAMES.

Chinyanja - - Chipembere. | Chingoni - - Chipimbere.

Approximate weight, ♂ 7000lb.

Good average front horn, ♂ 18in.

The rhino, as he is generally called, is fairly abundant in some parts of the country where there is a good supply of thorn trees and bushes, as this variety does not eat much grass; in fact, some naturalists say he never eats any grass, although, judging from the contents of the stomach of one I opened, I think that on occasions he feeds on it. His food is bark and twigs torn from thorn bushes, and he must have extremely powerful digestive organs to thrive on such food.

The natives seem to fear the rhino more than they do the elephant, buffalo, and lion; why, I fail to know, as he is not usually a dangerous animal to go near.

He has a fussy appearance, and, as he has the habit of knocking about his dung, the natives think this proves him to be bad-tempered. He has certainly a weird, antediluvian appearance, with his armed head and small, pig-like eyes, and his mouth has what one might term a dyspeptic look; and I can hardly blame him, for a breakfast, lunch, and dinner of thorn and bark must be a most unsatisfactory diet. Perhaps the rhino feels annoyed that Nature has not given him an appetite for more succulent vegetation, like the eland, sable, and kudu.

As thorn bushes are often found on rough, stony hills the rhino is frequently seen in such places, and they are interesting beasts to track, as on hard ground they sometimes leave a very faint spoor. The Machinga Mountains in North-Eastern Rhodesia are full of rhino, and they wander down to the valley of Luangwa River, where their footprints will often be seen. Here they are very easy to

follow, as the soil is soft and sandy. Unlike elephants, they do not form herds, and it is usual to find them singly or in couples—a male and female—and sometimes such a pair will be accompanied by a calf.

Why *Rhinoceros bicornis* should be termed the black rhino I do not know, for I carefully examined a white and black specimen in the Cape Town museum, and I failed to notice that there was much difference in their colour; and, moreover, neither follow their names, as they both appeared to be a slaty grey colour.

The black rhino walks with his head held high, and I have read that the white variety holds his head low, and close to the ground.

The latter is a much larger and heavier beast, and measures much more at the shoulder, and he also grows much larger horns.

In the country I write of a 2oin. front horn is quite a good one, but in British East Africa the black rhino grows much larger horns than this.

They are very easily killed with modern rifles, and any small bore high-velocity rifle will account for a rhino quite easily. In fact, one only realises the power of such rifles when he sees how easy it is to kill elephants and rhinos with them, and it seems to me that it requires a really big and heavy-boned animal to fully bring out the power of such weapons.

Rhino flesh is often full of maggots, and the beasts themselves are usually covered with plastered mud, as, like pigs, they delight to wallow in muddy holes. Elephants have the same liking for mud holes in very hot weather, and I have seen a deep hole filled with mud and water which was just like a huge bath. I once followed a bull elephant that had just had such a bath, and he left mud on the trees as he passed, and it was possible to get a good idea of his height by these marks.

Rhino will often be found near elephants, so I suppose they leave each other alone; although they never intermix as antelopes of different species often do. The natives do

not interfere much with rhino, and old iron bullets are not so often found in their bodies as they are in those of elephants and hippos.

Very few of the two latter animals will be shot without such projectiles being found, especially if they are old.

It is a good plan to get pretty close to rhino (as it is with elephants) so as to get in a good first shot, which is always the most important one.

Rhino and elephant when wounded badly do not stop quickly, as do antelopes, and they have the habit of walking on until they drop, so as long as the beast is in sight keep on shooting carefully, if it has already been hit.

HIPPOTAMUS (*Hippopotamus amphibius*).

NATIVE NAMES.

Chinyanja - - Mvuu. | Chingoni - - Mvu.

Approximate weight, ♂ 6000lb.

Good average tusk, ♂ 20in.

This animal is often described in old sporting books as the "sea cow," but I never saw the least resemblance to a cow in a hippo. Some years ago his ivory was much used by dentists for making false teeth, but since other compositions have been introduced it is no longer used for this purpose. In South Africa hippo hide is in great demand for making whips, although it is not so strong as rhino hide. However, hippos are much more easily found than rhinos, and many of them have been slaughtered in the rivers and lakes near civilisation. While going from Tete to Chinde some years ago, in a houseboat, I saw about 150 of these animals, and shot several for my men; and on other occasions I have seen plenty of them in the Zambesi, Luangwa, and Shire Rivers. In Central Angoniland there are plenty of hippos in the Bua River, and in other small rivers, and in Lake Nyasa they are abundant; so with all