

More on Rubbing Stones

I wish to tender the following information which you may care to pass on.

(a) Vol. 25 No. 1 - C.J. Skead's Rubbing Stone-Puzzle.

I have come across numerous rubbing places in my travels, but can only think of 5 such places where the rocks were other than sandstones.

In the Kafue National Park in Zambia I know of 3 such rocks (still being used) but in each case there is the possibility that water had something to do with it somewhere along the line (none of these rocks were faceted as shown in Mr. Skead's photo - probably because the present rock is granite and does not have an angular structure.)

I draw attention to the possibility of water action as one such pinnacle was smoother on the north east side than elsewhere. I noted at the time (1960) that this rock probably rested in the river bed (Kafue) and was worn by the current.

These rocks are still being used by wildlife, especially buffalo and elephant. The latter sit on the rocks and rub after they have had mud baths - but the evidence of their rubbing is plain.

I have recently seen one such site in the Wankie National Park (rock appears to be shistose) and will endeavour to get a photograph of this for you.

Sandstone I have often seen worn right down.

One rubbing stone on Lake Tanganyika in Zambia (shistose) is well used and smooth/worn - but here again water could have helped or triggered off its use.

(b) Vol. 25 No. 2 - Mr. Covy's Request Ratel/Honey Guide etc.

Having spent the greater part of my life in

the bush where both Honey-Badger and Honey Guide were common. I can truthfully say that if there is an association it must be very rare or secretive.

This association is often referred to by Africans but then they also claim that Honey Guides will lead on to snakes and lion etc.

As to whether the Honey Guide arrives before the hive robber, this is conjecture. I have in fact shot these birds to get rid of them when hunting lion - they will keep on for hours returning each time to lead you on. I would accept that they guide as I have often followed them or noted their direction of their flight when I know of other hives in the vicinity.

With regard to their reward of grubs, which Africans insist you lay out after robbing a hive (if you don't they will lead you to a snake or lion next time). I have yet to see any of these birds come around for their reward - I must admit that I have never gone into hiding and watched for their return.

Often when having been led up to a hive and deciding after sounding the tree trunk that it would be too much work to cut the honey out the honey-guide has readily taken over again leading me on.

Johannesburg

J.M.C. UYS.

I would like to give my experience of rubbing stones (See March issue). My photographs show two different "rubbing stones" of our Kaokoveld (north western region of South West Africa).

One stone, shown on No. 1, is frequented by elephant and warthog only after the animals have had their bath. Stone No. 2, is used by rhino only. We have seen and found that the rhino will not use the elephant stone and vice versa. The elephant will pass the rhino stone, although sniffing at the stone without rubbing. So also does the rhino when passing the elephant stone - the rhino does not even bother



about the rubbing stone of the elephant.

The elephant stone is approximately 160 cm. high and about 1,000 meters from the fountain, and the rhino stone approximately 80 cm. high and about 500 meters from the water. The elephant (for that matter also the Warthog) rub their sides, chest and buttocks whereas the rhino will rub the underparts of the body, the belly and the hind quarters. As one can see from the rhino stone, the top of the rubbing stone is also worn.

The white deposit on the stones is the lime and mud from the fountain. One must appreciate the length of time it must have taken to smooth down these granite rocks, especially taking into consideration the fact that the elephant migrate to better feeding areas when the food gets scarce or if the rainfall has not been too good. In that area, near that fountain, we have never observed more than ten to twelve elephant, mostly less, and it must have taken decades to smooth these stones.

My wife and I wish to congratulate the Wildlife Society of its great effort (and partial success) in assisting and persuading the authorities to increase the size of our Etosha Pan towards the western region - the actual breeding ground of our elephant, rhino and lion, and many other species of game. We also, having an intimate knowledge of the Kaokoveld, maintain that part of this area should be strictly proclaimed breeding grounds for wildlife in South West Africa.

Johannesburg

R. GRAMOWSKY.

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Top: Rhino Stone.
Right: Elephant Stone.

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