

Left: The Kunene in flood. Dreaded by the Natives, full of crocodiles and visited by many elephant, the river was impossible to cross during the expedition's stay. The Native in the foreground is an Ovahimba, a wild, primitive Herero tribe of the remote parts of the Kaokoveld.

Right: *Welwitschia Mirabilis*, the botanical wonder of the Namib desert. The one shown here is a female plant. They occur nowhere else in the world.



The above two photographs, and those on the facing page, are by Heinz Roth, a member of the expedition referred to in the reader's letter below. Full results of the expedition are not yet known, but already it is stated that Dr. Koch found a very considerable quantity of new genera in insects and Dr. Lundholm 12 new subspecies of mammals. A full report on the classifications is awaited.

THE KAOKOVELD EXPEDITION. Some Interesting Observations.

The Editor, "African Wild Life."

Sir,—Permit me to offer the following comments on the "Notes on the Expedition to the Kaokoveld," which appeared in the September, 1951, issue of your magazine:—

I was stationed in the Kaokoveld from 1939 until 1942 and, as the Native Affairs Official in charge of that district, travelled about a great deal both by car and on foot. On these journeys I took particular note of the species of game encountered and the localities in which they occur.

I was told by various Europeans who had been in the Kaokoveld, and accepted it as a fact, that there are only black rhino in that district. The only interest I took in them in the beginning was to keep a safe distance between us. However, after encountering a number of rhino, I was struck by the difference in their appearance, but it was only after seeing a particularly fine specimen of the square-lipped variety between Otjikuvare and Otjovathandu that I was forced to the conclusion that there are both black and white rhino in that area.

I questioned the Native residents, who are accurate observers of animal life, and was informed that they have known all along that there are two kinds both in the Kaokoveld and in Southern Angola, viz.: the "Ongava Ondorozu" (black rhino, also known as "Ongava Okatzwii" from the noise it makes) and the "Epandangava" or large rhino. The latter was described, inter alia, as being larger than its black cousin with a broad square mouth, which they demonstrated

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Right: Mountain view of the Namib round Orubembe, the most westerly waterhole in the Kaokoveld, a very good collecting station of the expedition for mammals, birds and, in particular, insects.



Left: Lonely and dreaded Skeleton Coast. Barren, grim, water was nevertheless found 10 miles inland from Rocky Point, at Sarnias. East waterhole, and in November, 1950, black rhinoceros spoor was observed there. Springbok droppings were seen right on the beach.

by placing both clenched fists against the mouth. The difference in the names in itself is significant, but where could they have obtained accurate descriptions of the two species unless both are to be found in the Kaokoveld?

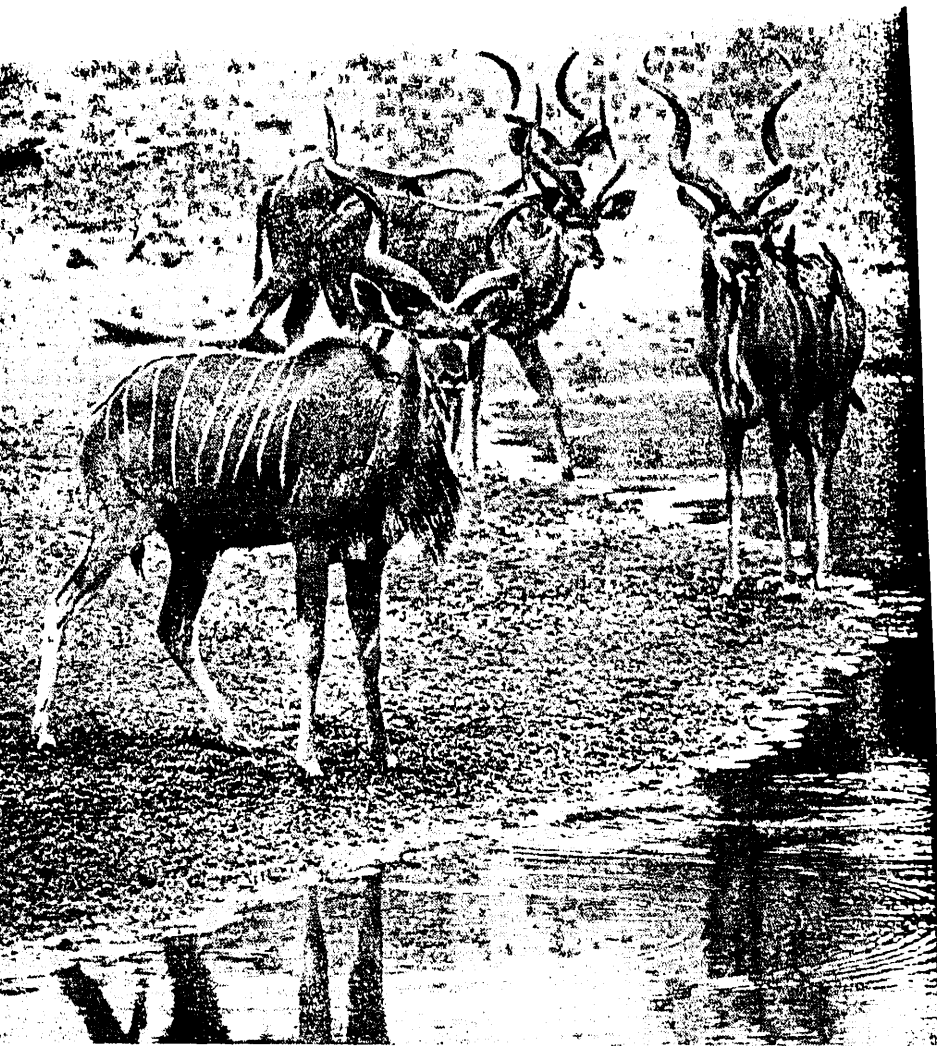
Since their descriptions confirmed by own observations, I took statements from several Natives and submitted these to the Secretary for South-West Africa with my report. I also mentioned my observations to the late Col. Denys Reitz, who erroneously referred to me as a game warden in "No Outspan."

It might interest readers to know that Steinhardt in his book "Ehomba" also mentions a "Breitmaul Nasshorn" (square-lipped rhino) which he saw in the Kaokoveld. Despite the expedition's discouraging report, I am convinced that there are both black and white, (or "square-lipped") rhino in the Kaokoveld and accept full responsibility for being primarily responsible for the so-called rumour, and feel confident that time and a thorough investigation will prove the correctness of my assertion.

On one occasion I saw a few black-faced impala (the only kind in the Kaokoveld) at a waterhole a few miles south of Kaoko-Otavi and, during 1940/41, the Natives reported their presence between Tjapi-Tjapi and Zessfontein. Impala are known to visit a number of places far south of their habitat, the Kunene River.

The remarks about the quagga are extremely interesting because in 1941 ex-Sergt. de Witt, formerly of the Kamanjab Police, made a statement to me, which I submitted to Head Office, that on some of his patrols to the Kunene Mouth he saw a few quagga in the Namib.

During 1940/41 there was a small troop of Zebra on the plain west of Oruwanjai. One animal had the usual stripes on the head, neck and shoulders but the rest of his body was a uniform darkish colour. Unfortunately, I could never get close enough to it to ascertain whether the absence of the stripes was natural or due to a skin



Four kudu (or koodoo: Afrikaans, koedoe) bulls at a water-hole in the Kruger National Park. The female of the species (*Strepsiceros strepsiceros*) is hornless as a rule, though individuals have been known to carry small, irregularly-shaped horns. 60 inches, measured over the curve, represents a good head. (One shot by Selous measured 64 inches over the curves and 41 inches straight). The Somali kudu is a smaller animal, the largest head mentioned in Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game* measuring 57 inches and 39½ inches. Many authorities place the kudu above the sable, roan, eland and gemsbok for grandeur and general beauty. The foremost animal in the group shown here is a fine adult bull. Behind it stand two younger bulls, with horns in various stages of growth, the foremost of the two bearing a pair very like those of nyala horns (for which they are often mistaken when in their first spiral). Note the hump, mane and fringe, the rounded ears and two white spots under the eyes (sometimes they merge into a single bar) — all useful distinguishing features. (Photo: Dick Wolff).

disease such as mange. On the other hand, it might have been a hybrid.

I have often wondered whether the extinct quagga was a genuine species or a hybrid. If the former, why did it become extinct at such an early date when the various sub-species of zebra and other varieties of game managed to survive? It is common knowledge that the Afrikaans speaking people still refer to zebra as "kwagga" and early writers on the subject also might have used the name indiscriminately, or else to differentiate between certain zebra sub-species, with the result that we are today under the impression that "quagga" were far more numerous than was actually the case.

A. M. BARNARD.
Pretoria.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—In a letter received from Mr. Carp at the time of going to Press, it is stated that a fresh report has just come to hand to the effect that quaggas have been seen in the Great Fish River valley in South-West Africa. As Mr. Carp points out, it all sounds "too good to be true" but there remains the slender possibility that quaggas may survive to this day, in which case their re-discovery would be "the find of the century."

SNAKES IN FACT AND FICTION.

The Editor, "African Wild Life."

Sir,—In the December 1951 number of your magazine B. J. Bridge questions the lengths of various snakes given by an author described as a well-known explorer.

I have not read the book in question but agree with Mr. Bridge that a python killed in Northern Rhodesia measuring thirty-eight feet is highly improbable.

It is my opinion, and I have kept a card-index of all snakes I have examined in this territory during the course of the last three years, that the average length of the python *Python sebae* in Northern Rhodesia is twelve feet and I believe that the authentic record is seventeen feet.

It is generally accepted that of the giant serpents, the Reticulated Python *Python reticulatus* of Malaya attains the greatest length. Raymond Ditmars, Curator of Mammals and Reptiles at the New York Zoological Park, has spent many years attempting to discover the record length for this species. He gives it as thirty-three feet. Referring to *Python sebae* he gives the maximum length of twenty feet.

When the author refers to cobras of eight feet he is more accurate. The Black-lipped Cobra *Naia melanoleuca* does grow to eight feet on occasion. In the Barotse Valley the Egyptian Cobra *Naia haje* has been known to attain a length of ten feet.

D. C. BILLSON.
Kitwe, N. Rhodesia.

EXAGGERATED CLAIMS?

The Editor, "African Wild Life."

Sir,—I was pleased to see Mr. Bridge's letter in your issue of December, Vol. 5, No. 4. (See "Experience—or Exaggeration?" page 337-8.—Ed.)

The book in question was written by Count Gatti, I think, and the *Star*, Johannesburg, published a review of it some time ago and also gave a short note by me on the subject in "Stoep Talk" under the heading "Gatti's Lions."

I consider the writer's statements and claims are exaggerated, and I challenge him to prove to your satisfaction that he shot 32 lions in the space of two months. In fact, I doubt if that number of lions have been shot in Zululand since the death of Chaka. Can he get the Native Commissioner or any other reliable person to verify his statement that lions were going off in broad