

# WILD LIFE



Vol. 1

3/-

No. 4

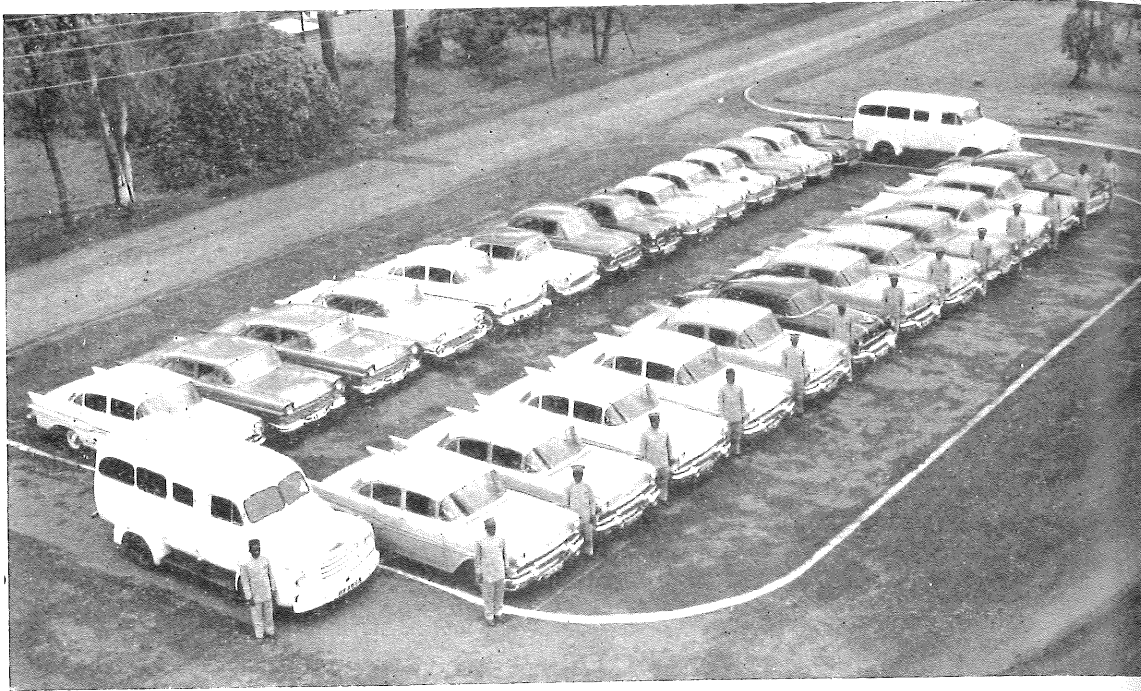
# WILD LIFE

Official Journal of the Kenya Wild Life Society

Vol. I No. 4

December 1959

Price 3/-



A section of the chauffeur-driven and self-drive cars from our Nairobi fleet.

## East Africa

FOR TOURING AND  
PHOTOGRAPHIC SAFARIS  
EAST AFRICA'S FINEST CARS  
AND DRIVERS  
OUR EXPERIENCE AND  
REPUTATION HAS BEEN  
GAINED BY MORE THAN  
30 YEARS' SERVICE TO  
THE PUBLIC.

OFFICES AT :

**NAIROBI**

**AND**

**KAMPALA**

**CABLES: OVERTOURCO.**

# OVERSEAS TOURING CO. (E.A.) LTD.

Box No. 2196, Phone 20911  
Sadler Street,  
Nairobi.

Box No. 167, Phone 3079  
Kampala Road,  
Kampala.



### CONTENTS

Editorial .. .. .	5
Taming Two Leopard Cubs	7
The Streaky Serin.. ..	11
Ngorongoro Crater ..	12
Gertie and Amboseli ..	16
Nothing to See in the Park?	20
Bird Haunts Around Nairobi .. .. .	27
Counting Game from the Air .. .. .	31
Mt. Kenya Safari Club ..	37
Game in the Aberdares ..	40
Children's Section ..	46
Using Drugs to Control Game .. .. .	49

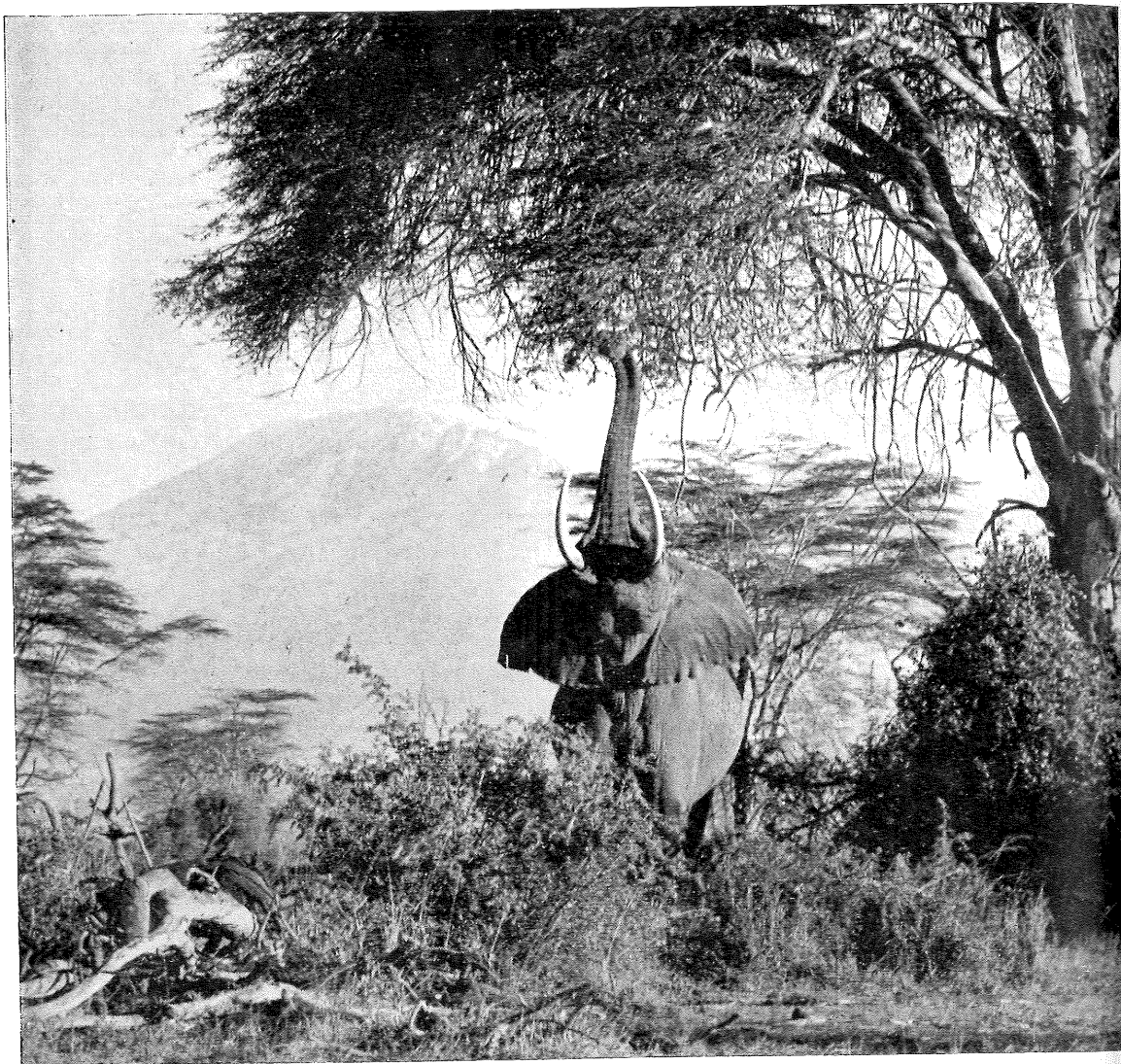


Editorial & Advertising Offices  
Consular House  
Coronation Avenue  
Nairobi Box 8983  
Phone 26762.

Colour blocks for the cover by Messrs.  
Schwitter Limited, Basle. All black &  
white blocks by Patwa, Nairobi.

Published quarterly  
by King & Charles,  
Box 8983, Nairobi  
for the Kenya Wild Life  
Society.

Copyright 1959 by the Kenya Wild Life  
Society.



Alan Root

**I**N September we carried a short pictorial article on the famous Amboseli rhinos, Gladys and Gertie. Here Major W. H. M. Taberer, Warden of the Amboseli National Reserve, gives a much fuller account of their lives, and describes many more of the famous animals which can be seen there. This article also tells the full details of how Gertie's world record-breaking horn came to be one of the shortest in the rhino world.

Our coloured front cover picture this quarter is

## AMBOSELI *-nique and wonderful game reserve*

unique as Gertie no longer sports the fantastically long horn depicted there. We are deeply indebted to Mr. C. A. Spinage for this unrivalled study of Gertie before her catastrophe.

**T**he Amboseli National Reserve has always been recognised as one of the best wild life sanctuaries in Kenya but until the Royal National Parks took over the administration and developed the area for tourists, comparatively few could get in to see the game, as it meant organising a large and expensive safari to do so. Now a well equipped lodge has been built and two reasonable roads of access constructed, making travel much easier and even the smallest car can enter and move around the area. Thousands of visitors attracted by the many facilities offered at the lodge come each year to Ol Tukai to see and photograph the wonderful display and variety of game.

When the area was first opened to tourists the animals were inclined to be a bit shy due to having been shot from time to time either for their trophies or to make biltong, but with closer control they have come to realize that they are not being hunted and have gradually, over the past 10 years, accepted that man, with all his strange smells and noisy devices, means them no harm. Today after many years of peaceful existence and close protection some will barely raise a head at the approach of a car.

So peaceful is everything that some of the more regular habitues are known by sight and even by name and several through press and film have achieved fame and become wild life personalities, and as a result of this tameness the staff have found them easier to study and got to know more about them and their breeding habits. Most of the better known individuals are still with us, a few have passed on to better grazing grounds, but all have played a part in making Amboseli one of the most wonderful wild life sanctuaries in East Africa.

There is "One Tusk Charlie" the old bull

elephant with only part of his left tusk remaining, who still roams the forests; and "Kania" the great lioness with a blind blue eye. She led the family of 16 living near the lodge which now, after her untimely death have taken her name and are known as the Kania Pride.

Mr. "Cutty" was the first of the rhino to get accustomed to cars and settle down. Always fighting with others his cuts and bruises were responsible for his nickname. He too is no longer with us.

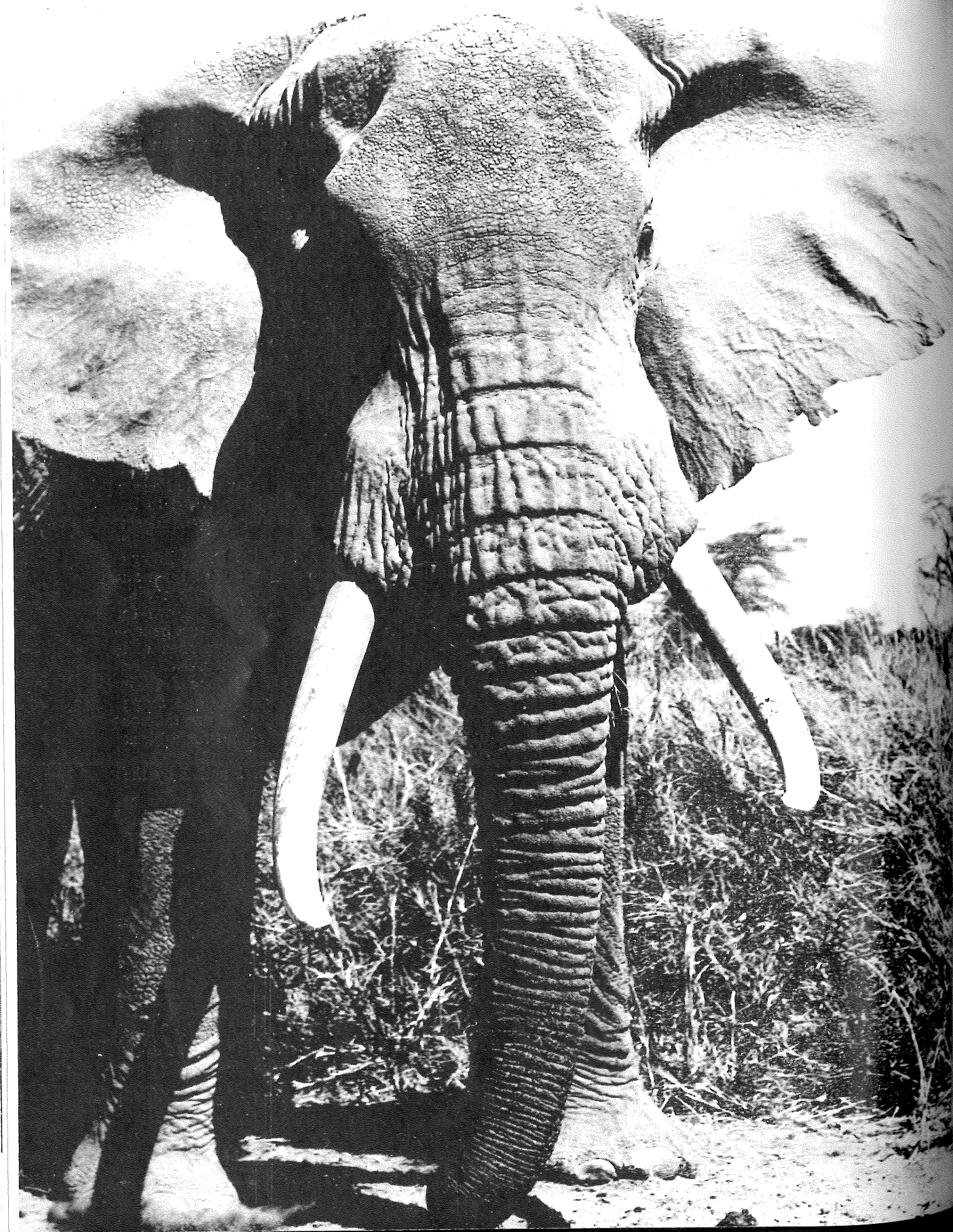
"Tukai", was a near full grown rhino who, quite unconcerned about the noises of the camp, took up his quarters in front of the lodge. He excelled the day Her Royal Highness The Princess Margaret came to stay at Amboseli by standing in full view of the royal party just beyond the garden fence. Unfortunately he fell to the lions and was eaten after he was killed in a remarkable battle by the two full grown sons of Kania.

"Ndundu", "Mjinga" and "Pixie" are all rhino with certain characteristics and about whom there is a story; and "Sinya" the lioness who, because she was misbehaving, had to be trapped and was released after being held six days.

Those are just a few of the better known personalities; there are others, but of them all "No. 1" and "No. 2" the two old rhinos with enormously long horns and better known to visitors as "Gladys" and "Gertie" must be recognised as the two most photographed and spectacular animals in the Reserve. These two fabulous creatures carried longer front horns than any other rhino known to be living and it is quite possible that both at one time or the other bettered the world record for a black rhinoceros.

They were christened Nos. 1 and 2 by the

*full of animal personalities*



rangers at Ol Tukai. Gladys by virtue of having the longer horn by several inches was No. 1. Unfortunately in 1955 she lost nearly 18" off the tip so Gertie took over pride of place as her horn was now the longer, though the Rangers continued to, and still do, call her number two. After this sad accident Gertie became the most sought after animal in Amboseli. Almost every visitor to Ol Tukai lodge would on arrival enquire of her whereabouts and would depart with a happy sense of having seen her or captured her picture or perhaps with a feeling that the trip, was not after all, quite complete as Gertie was in a mood and would not show herself.

### Gertie's behaviour patterns

With all this attention Gertie became so tame that she would lie in a dust bath with her offspring and allow several cars at a time to approach within 30 feet and not bother to get up and often just continue to sleep. There have been incidents: when she refuses to move some unkind visitor, wanting action in his pictures, may deliberately drive his vehicle at her and on such occasions she will take her calf off and disappear into the bush to sulk for several days and not be seen. Such behaviour is as good as a report to us that there is, or has been, a hooligan in the area who has disturbed her, as she seldom otherwise hides herself except when calving or mating.

I first saw Gertie in 1947; she was then living round the Ol Toroto water holes in the vicinity of Kitirua and some 7 miles from her present habitat. She was running with a 2-2½ year old calf at the time and was most aggressive, practically unapproachable in a vehicle; she would either charge on sight or disappear in a flash. Gladys too was in the same area and the two would often be together. Gradually as the wells in the outlying areas began to dry up and more and more Masai brought their cattle in to the much needed waters of Kitirua the two old girls with a number of other rhino moved away and took up their headquarters near Observation Hill in which area they are now living and where they came in more frequent contact with motor cars and human noises. At first they were very shy and nervous and would either charge or hide but after a couple of years had settled down realising that the noisy monsters on four wheels presented no danger.

It was in 1953 that Gertie settled in at her new home bringing with her a newly born bull calf. This little oddity had only half a tail,

and no ears at all, and soon received the name of "Pixie". The two presented a rare sight. The mother with the incredibly long horn and the curious little son with just two holes where the ears should be. They were the real show piece of Amboseli and as a result took longer to settle down on account of being so much in demand. However, once they realised there was nothing to fear they became the tamest and most tolerant of all.

There was great consternation when at the end of April, 1956, Gertie suddenly disappeared leaving behind a forlorn Pixie who was then only 3½ years old. Gladys and family took the little chap over and allowed him to join them. However, only two weeks later and amidst great relief and excitement Gertie suddenly reappeared and was seen proudly displaying to a party of six others, including Gladys, a tiny and timid but nevertheless complete female calf. Pixie was allowed to join his wee sister and the three roamed together for two years.

On March 17th, 1958, Gertie mated with a bull strange to the area. Fortunately the event was witnessed by a party of visitors so we were able to keep a record of the date. March 27th 1959 was a sad day. Gertie and her calf had been seen at midday in a wallow; she was again seen at 4.30 p.m. that afternoon but minus about a foot of her wonderful horn. Between these two times she went to the swamp for a drink returning to the same wallow, and though we searched both ways along her tracks and for several days dug round the wallows with a tractor, and by hand, we never found the tip. Although this was a great loss we had expected it to happen as the end was wearing very thin through dragging when she was feeding low and no matter in what position she was lying the tip was always resting on the ground. Poor girl she did look odd, but only four weeks later she was to look even odder.

" . . . irascible gentlemen . . . "

About 18 months ago the swamp levels suddenly began to rise and spilled over to start the Semak River flowing again. This additional water had attracted a number of new males to the area and in an encounter with one of these irascible gentlemen Gertie lost the remainder of that beautiful front horn which broke off right at the roots. This was indeed a major tragedy. She was seen a day after the battle bleeding profusely from the hole where the horn had been. The entire Ranger force

(continued on page 26)

# BIRD HAUNTS AROUND NAIROBI

IN addition to our own resident ornithologists, there is a constantly increasing number of visitors to East Africa who are keenly interested in birds. Many of these visitors can spend only a few days in Nairobi, during which time they would appreciate the opportunity of seeing something of our bird-life. The following list of good birding localities, easily accessible from Nairobi during a single day's trip, has been drawn up specially for their guidance.

I have made no attempt to enumerate the wealth of bird-life to be encountered throughout East Africa—for instance the Nairobi National Park, of some 40 square miles on the outskirts of the city, has a list of birds recorded which exceeds the total for the entire British Isles! However, I have mentioned a very few of the more interesting or characteristic species which are to be encountered in each area.

I shall deal with the bird localities according to habitats, apart from the two National Parks.

## NATIONAL PARKS

**1. Nairobi National Park:** This is an area of mixed habitats, comprising open plains, bush, riverine and savannah acacia woodland, dry highland forest, a river and artificial dams. Representatives of two endemic African bird families, Hartlaub's Turaco and the Speckled and Blue-naped Colies (Mousebirds) occur. Plains species include Masai Ostrich, Kori Bustard, Secretary Bird and six species of vultures. Marabou Storks congregate around the dams and indulge their curious courtship behaviour regardless of human spectators a few yards away.

**2. Aberdare National Park:** This is largely a region of alpine moorland, where the visitor will encounter several high country sunbirds—Malachite, Scarlet-tufted Malachite, Golden-winged Tacazze and Kenya Double-collared. These brightly plumaged birds are especially attracted by orange-flowered *Loranthus* bushes. During the winter months the moorlands are a favoured hunting ground for Steppe Buzzards, various species of Harriers and many other kinds

—JOHN G. WILLIAMS—

*Few people realise that Kenya has as rich and varied a bird-life as it has unique and wonderful larger game animals. While safaris to Africa to shoot, photograph and see big game are, and have been, commonplace the future may well bring large numbers of bird-lovers only interested to view our beautiful and colourful birds.*

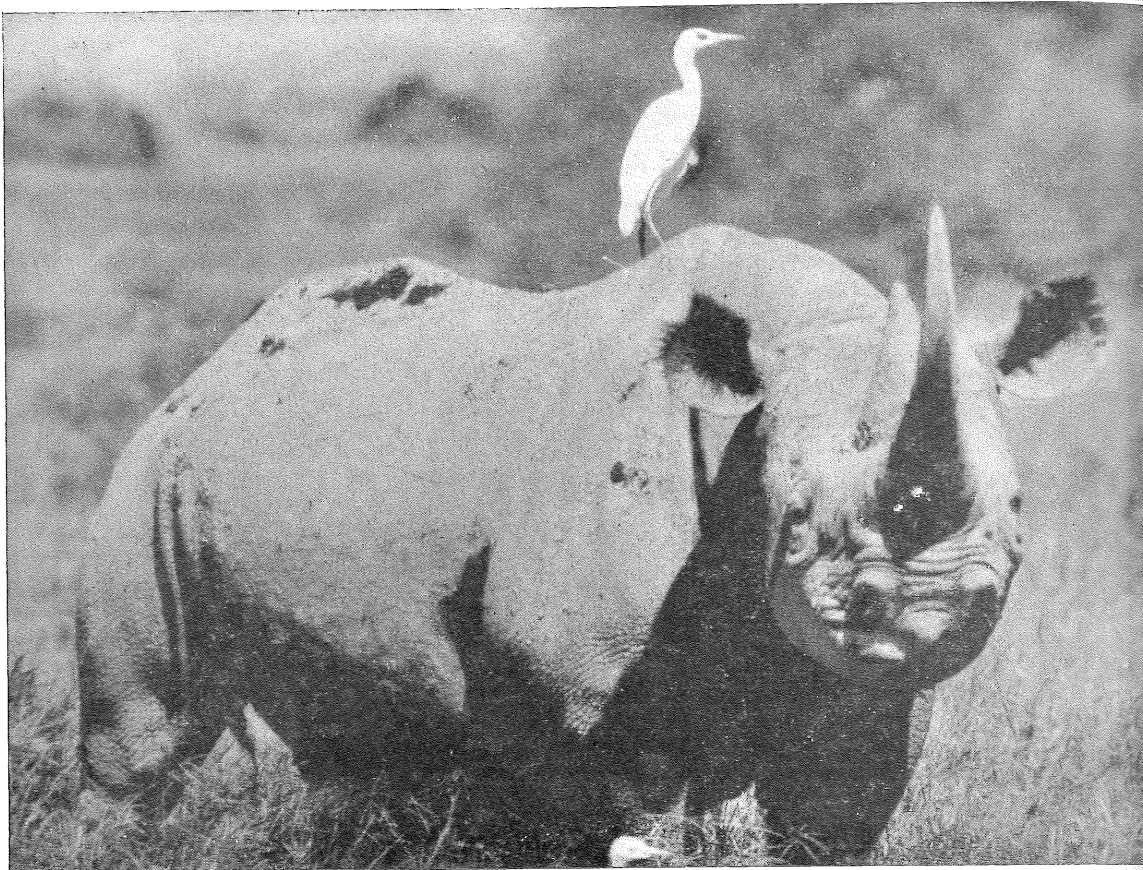
of birds of prey.

## LAKES

**3. Lake Naivasha:** Naivasha differs from the other three accessible Rift Valley lakes in being fresh, not brackish water. About one sixth of the lake area is a maze of papyrus swamps, pools and channels, which may be explored by rowing boats available for hire at the local hotels. Here, in secluded lagoons, may be found three species of grebes and many of our rarer ducks. The African Maccoa, the drake splendid in his chestnut and black plumage and vivid cobalt blue bill; White-backed Ducks which take wing only after a coot-like flurry over the surface of the water; and, rarely, the most beautiful of East African waterfowl, the Pygmy Goose.

14 different herons and egrets may be seen, including the stately Goliath Heron. In the shallows, especially during the spring and autumn migrations, many parties of waders may be observed. Lake Naivasha is a great place to see and appreciate the field differences between Marsh Sandpiper and Greenshank, for both are common. African Skimmers occur throughout most of the year and are generally found associated with Grey-headed Gulls.

**4. Lake Elmenteita:** Elmenteita, a shallow



*Buss-backed egrets, or tick birds, can often be seen on the backs of rhinoceros and other animals catching insects. They also give warning to the short-sighted rhino that danger is approaching.*

## AMBOSELI (from page 19)

started at once on a search. Tracking back they came on the scene of battle and from there took up the hunt in earnest eventually recovering the horn several days later.

This unfortunate accident made not the slightest difference to her nature; she was as quiet and placid as ever. However, Gertie was to have her reward and to hold her head even higher. On the 13th July last about 2.30 p.m. she produced another little son exactly 16 months after she had mated. This was a great event and what a consolation prize for having become the ugliest rhino in the area where she not so long ago was the proudest and most picturesque of them all. She has now produced five calves since I have known her, and I sincerely hope she will have a lot more.

Gertie has featured in several films and papers in many parts of the world have reproduced photographs of her. Recently a very well known London illustrated paper showed a picture of Gertie and calf which achieved the distinction of being awarded the prize for the

photograph of the month. There is no doubt that she can lay claim to being the most photographed living wild animal in the world.

The broken part of the horn recovered measures 39½ inches and by projecting a side view of Gertie on to a screen and blowing the picture up to a size that fitted the piece exactly I have been able to measure the missing bit as being 14¾ inches. If these measurements are correct, and I don't believe they can be much out, where, did she stand, with her 54½ inches in the record list for a normal rhino horn and where in turn was Gladys whose horn was at one time several inches longer?

So much more has to be told of this magnificent creature whose existence dates back to before World War II when she was known to the Masai as "Koormi" (one with a long nose or someone with a long reach), but now there is only space to recount a few of the incidents during the life since 1953 of this most famous of all wild animal personalities, GERTIE OF AMBOSELI who once again becomes the true "No. 2".