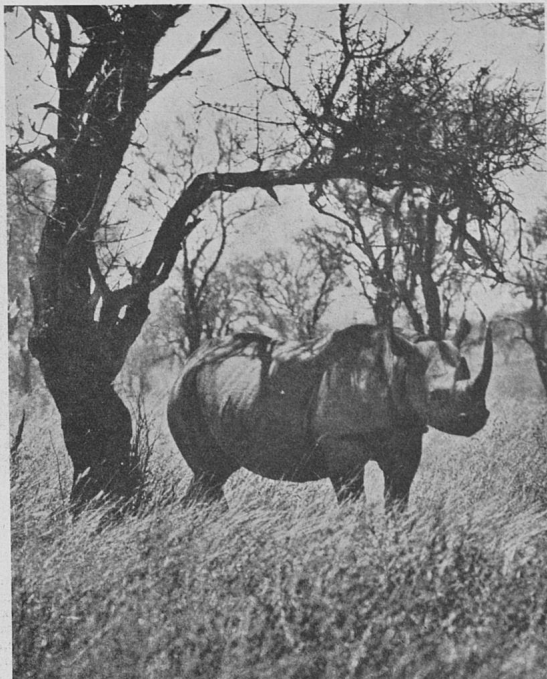


A ZAMBESI HUNTING GROUND

Some First Class Fishing and Shooting

By J. P. KAY ROBINSON



ELEPHANT AND BLACK RHINOCEROS

THAT one of the most interesting hunting fields in the entire continent should be one of the most accessible, and, at the same time, one of the least known, is just the sort of paradox that Africa loves to offer.

If you will glance at a map of Northern Rhodesia, and trace the course of the Zambesi River for some two or three hundred miles to the north-west of the Victoria Falls, you will cover the ground that I would recommend. During September and October, when most of the forest waterholes have dried up, you will find as big a variety of big and small game along the banks of the river as can be found to-day anywhere in the world. You will not find it necessary, in fact, to leave the immediate neighbourhood of the river at all. If you are a fisherman you will not want to.

There are a number of kinds of edible fish in the Zambesi, but only two, the tiger fish and the yellow (or *Mushuna*) bream, that can strictly be called game fishes. Both species take spoonbait freely, and may be caught either by trolling or by spinning. Connoisseurs have said that the tiger fish is supreme among African table fishes. It is also, I would add, the boniest. Small tiger fish may, however, be put through a mincer, "bones and all," and form a welcome change to ordinary camp diet. The yellow bream I consider to be hardly surpassed by any salt- or freshwater fish in the world. It may be caught at midday by casting into deep water off sandbanks. The tiger fish may be caught anywhere, anyhow and at any time.

There is one important preliminary step to be taken in relation to this trip. Practically the whole of the Upper Zambesi lies within the Barotse Native Reserve, and it will be necessary for you to obtain the permission of the Paramount Chief of the country before a licence can be granted to you. This can only be done through the Government of Northern Rhodesia. In order to avoid delay when you arrive at Livingstone, your application should be made at least two months beforehand.

The following points are worth remembering:

(a) Servants. A cook and personal servant are indispensable. A "general" is a useful addition. There is usually little difficulty in engaging these in Livingstone, but you should be prepared to wait a few days if necessary. Bad servants mean a bad trip. Care should be taken to see that one of your servants at least speaks English, otherwise you will be severely handicapped in all dealings with local natives.

(b) A local guide should always be engaged when possible. The country is densely timbered, and the river twists and winds to such an extent that once you are out of sight of your tents you run

the risk of becoming hopelessly lost.

(c) Having had one or two uncomfortable experiences myself, I would strongly urge you not to leave your boats when actually travelling. It is easy to say that you will just wander along the bank and wait for the boat to overtake you. This is more easily said than done. A tributary or a swamp intervenes and cuts you off from the main river, or you are tempted to follow up a herd of game and lose your bearings. Whatever the cause, a night spent up a forest tree, with the stir and rustle of soft-footed things in the darkness beneath you for company, can be a ghoulis experience.

All your travelling and camping will, of course, be done in an entirely "self-contained" manner. The Zambesi barge is a craft of from 35ft. to 40ft. in length, and is propelled by sixteen to twenty paddlers. It has a beam sufficiently wide to allow

may be tempted to linger by the spectacle of avocets and black-winged stilts feeding unconcernedly within a few yards of your boat.

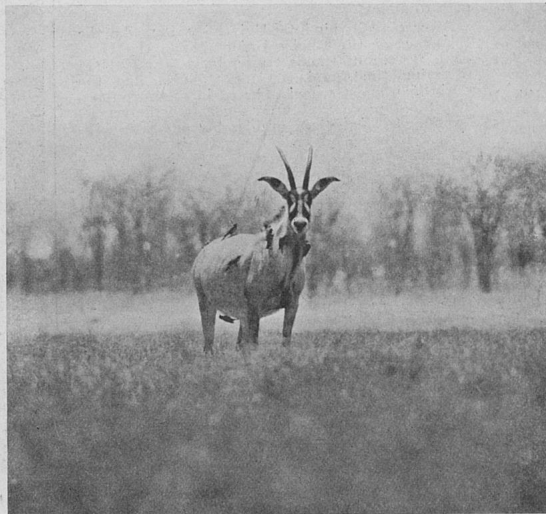
Katima Molilo ("the fire-quencher") is the first of the great rapids, and marks the beginning of your best days. For the next week or ten days you may travel by comfortable stages; breakfasting before you start in the morning, going ashore for lunch, and camping each night in a setting of wooded islands and black-fanged rapids. Game is so plentiful throughout this region that to recommend this or that locality more than another becomes a matter of some difficulty.

You will, however, be well advised not to camp at Ngambwe Rapid, at Kali, or at Sioma. These are the recognised halting places of large convoys, and are shunned in consequence by every experienced traveller. Sioma is, or should be, the turning point of your trip. It takes, roughly, a fortnight to get there. As the return journey is downstream, and occupies less than half that time, you will be able to take things very easily indeed; even to the extent of camping for several days in any locality that particularly pleases you.

The question of expense is always a difficult matter to deal with. So much depends on the personal tastes of the individual. Leaving out stores and equipment altogether, therefore, I would put the actual expenses of the trip from Livingstone back to Livingstone at the round figure of £100 for one person for a month.

The main items of expenditure would fall under the following heads: (a) Transport of stores and personnel by motor lorry from Livingstone to Katombora (the point of embarkation), say, £5 each way. Total, £10. (b) Hire of barge and paddlers for one month, probably £40 or £50. (c) Game licence, £25. (d) Servants' wages for one month: Cook, 30/- to £2; personal boy, 25/- to 30/-; general servant, 10/- to 15/-; Say, £4 to £5. Add 30/- for food for the trip. (This will consist of native meal, salt, beans, monkey nuts, etc., and, as local produce is not always easy to get, should be purchased in Livingstone before you start your journey).

On the principle that three servants can look after two or even three people as easily as they can look after one person, it will be seen that the only additional expense that falls into the foregoing category is that of the additional game licences necessitated. It should be borne in mind, however, that a Zambesi barge, while exceedingly comfortable for two persons, is decidedly cramped for three.



ROAN ANTELOPE

Note the wattled starlings, called locally "fish birds," clinging to the antelope's sides

two passengers to sit in comfortable chairs side by side under the awning amidships. Your baggage, with your servants perched atop of it, is packed immediately behind you. The first three days of your journey will lie through the desolate and comparatively uninteresting Caprivi flats, and you may decide to hurry through. The fishing here is excellent, however, and if you are a naturalist you