

BUFFALO ARE PLENTIFUL . . . "THE SUDAN APPEARS TO HAVE TWO TYPES." Right: "THE BIG TUSKERS HAD WANDERED AWAY"

BIG GAME IN THE SUDAN

Lion, buffalo and antelope in a country where, if politics permit, real hunting rather than long range shooting is needed

THE southern part of the Sudan, Equatoria and the Bahr-el-Ghazal, is very interesting to anyone who has travelled in Northern Rhodesia and Kenya, because he will find many representatives of the animals of further south, in some cases finer than he has met. Lions and buffaloes are not such fine specimens, but among antelopes the lechwe and the eland carry larger horns than their southern and eastern cousins.

Some visitors from other parts of Africa complain that game is scarce, and certainly very little will be seen from the roads owing to the fairly thick bush, but in a month I saw 738 head of 16 varieties. The country is visited by comparatively few outside Europeans and the game can only be very lightly shot, but with the exception of the hippos in Lake Nyibor all the game animals seemed to be distinctly on the wary side.

In a month in Equatoria and the Bahr-el-Ghazal I shot a lion and lioness, two buffaloes, and specimens of Nile lechwe, tiang, Vaughan's kob, white-eared kob, and defassa water-buck. Elephants are plentiful in the south, but I saw only cows and young bulls, the big tuskers having wandered away to the pools in the forests, replenished by the first of the rains.

The giant eland, one of Africa's great prizes, will only be the result of hard work or great good fortune, but Gray's lechwe—still known as "Mrs. Gray" to the native population—can be shot by anyone who is prepared to take trouble.

The lechwe carries finer horns than his distant cousin of the Bangweulu swamps, formerly so plentiful but now sadly reduced in numbers, and the white patch on the shoulders makes him very distinctive. It is good to know that strict preservation is given to this rare and fine antelope.

He is largely a marsh-dweller, and I had expected to wade through miles of swamp to get my specimen; but I was surprised to find a herd of over 200, including 15 warrantable males, on a burned grass plain with a surface as hard as iron. Patches of grass were still burning, and it was possible to stalk the lechwe under cover of the smoke. The shot was completely disregarded by the herd, and they stayed within 300yds. while the buck was being skinned.

Another extraordinary case of indifference to man was that of a herd of about 70 hippo which allowed Dinka fishermen to spear fish within 15 or 20yds. of them and only snorted or grunted in protest. One hippo's nose bore the stump of a spear, and made me wonder whether this was the source of the legend of the water rhinoceros.

This was in Lake Nyibor, which made a remarkable spectacle with thousands of pelicans round its swampy banks, and hundreds of unclothed Dinkas, some wading and some in canoes, fishing with spears and harpoons.

On the edges of the swamps and along the Nile are found varieties of the kob, some in which the

male is black with white markings and others in which the latter is scarcely noticeable except on the legs. The latter is believed to be Vaughan's variety, but there seems to be a great amount of intergradation in some districts.

Elands are animals which will not tolerate disturbance by mankind, and they are made even more elusive by parties of natives who range the forests in search of the oil-bearing nut lulu. Several times, when 10 or 15 miles of patient tracking had been completed, the lengthened stride of the eland would show that they had been alarmed, and soon afterwards I would see some natives and sorrowfully turn towards camp.

The holder of a full licence is allowed one giant eland and one Mrs. Gray, and also two other antelope rarities in the form of the bongo and the situtunga.

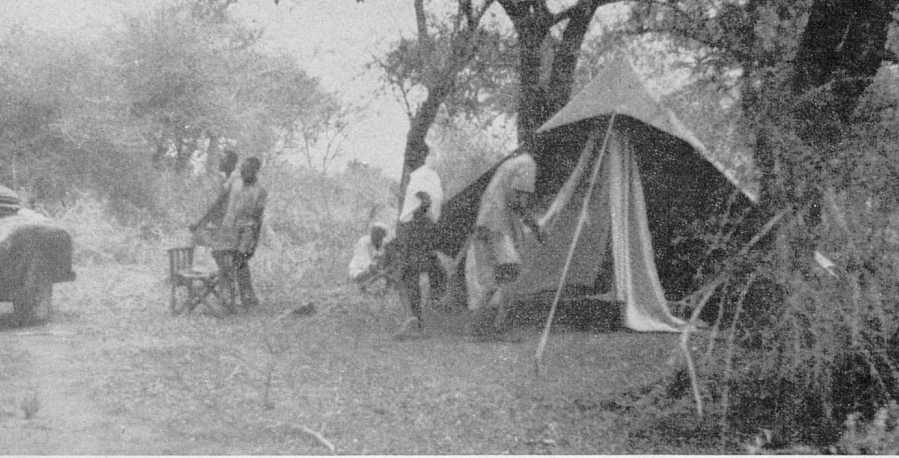
The bongo is restricted to the forests bordering French Equatorial Africa, and its pursuit takes more time than the average visitor can spare, but the situtunga is fairly numerous in the depths of the swamps. I can only recommend it to persons of light weight, who will not break through into the water which lies beneath the mat of floating vegetation on which the animal walks with his long hoofs and highly specialised feet.

The white rhinoceros is strictly preserved. He can be seen and photographed, but it is only rarely that a specimen may be shot, for a museum, and for the ordinary sportsman the species is not included in the licence. Shooting of the black rhino is also forbidden.

Lions are fairly plentiful in Equatoria, and are not protected by the game laws; they are to be found by spooring in the soft sand between bushes and the high grass, and are accordingly by no means easy to bring to bag. Indeed most of the game in the forested parts can be secured only by spooring, but this is



THE WHITE RHINOCEROS CAN BE PHOTOGRAPHED, BUT ONLY RARELY SHOT Right: MARABOU STORK ON A TREE-TOP



“BOYS” STRIKING CAMP. THEIR “COURAGE, COURTESY, AND KINDNESS WERE OUTSTANDING”

real hunting, as opposed to mere long-range shooting on open plains. One curious point was that I could not find the mysterious “nail” in the terminal tuft of the tail.

Near Mongalla the game scout and I followed the tracks of a big male for two miles in the sandy patches between bushes and clumps of high grass until a loud roar told us that his “patience was exhausted.”

A shot in the chest at 60yds. knocked the lion over, and the next development was a convincing rush towards us by the lioness, growling savagely. She fell to the shot. The lion had disappeared in the grass; he came out, roaring loudly and swinging his big head from side to side, and required two more shots before he collapsed. The lioness regained her feet, and closed the distance to 10yds. before a final shot settled her. The lion, who had a fairly good tawny mane, measured 9ft. 5in. straight, and the lioness 8ft. 8in..

On two other occasions we speared lions, but the tracks were lost in stony ground.

Buffalo are plentiful and move about in herds of 30 to 100, but the occasional solitary bull is a dangerous beast, and in the course of a month's wanderings in Equatoria I heard of several cases of attacks on the inhabitants. Some of these attacks were apparently unprovoked, but many buffaloes are speared and the “crusty” ones may be the survivors of such an experience. The bull which charged me out of a clump of grass may have been one of them—the Dinkas had recently been hunting buffaloes, with fatal results for one man.

My buffalo appeared from a belt of high grass 20yds. away, coming towards me at a gallop. A shot between and just above the eyes did not stop him, but he threw up his head and the next bullet took him in the throat. By this time he had reached me, and I pushed the muzzle of the rifle into one of his eyes. Then as he swung his head I threw myself flat on my face, to get away from those menacing horns. He kicked me on the head, shoulders and neck, and smashed my rifle. A few moments later I was underneath him, and, seeing daylight between his hind legs, I crawled out covered with blood, mostly the buffalo's. He slowly subsided and died. The game scout had been unable to help me, as he had had four misfires.

This bull was of quite a different type from one

shot 200 miles further south, a fortnight later. The first was brown with a smooth boss to the horns, the tips of which were hardly recurved at all. The span was 34in. The second was considerably larger in the body, much darker in colour, and with horns of the ordinary Sudanese variety, 39in. outside. The Sudan appears to have these as two quite distinct types.

In view of the close quarters at which lions and buffaloes may be met a heavy rifle is desirable, and a double .470 is probably the best, although the .375 can be aimed more quickly in an emergency. There is very little country in which long shots are needed. My own experience, and that of others, is that cartridges seem to deteriorate rapidly in that climate, and it is most important for the sportsman to take fresh ammunition from England with him. The carriage of rifles and safety cartridges is now permitted in aircraft, and mine travelled with me. The cost of air-freight is high, but nothing is more infuriating than to arrive at one's base to find that goods sent by sea have not arrived.

A licence costs £60, and three elephants can be shot at £15 each, payable after the animal has been bagged, provided one has the full licence already. The shooting season is from January to April, the latter month being remarkable for its thunderstorms; and the country varies from the forests of Equatoria to the plains, swamps and lakes of the Bahr-el-Ghazal. Juba is a good base, where lorries and cars can be hired and stores bought, and most of the travelling can be done over roads which vary from good to something resembling the corrugations of North Kenya.

One can only speak with the highest praise of the “boys,” whose unflinching courage, courtesy, and kindness were outstanding. The whole demeanour of the local inhabitants is genial and friendly. Their clothing seems to be well adapted to the 90 degree steamy climate, being limited to a bead necklace and a sort of churchwarden's pipe.

Altogether the White Nile provides a good shooting country for the man who is willing to work hard for a few specimens of game not obtainable elsewhere. But it is no paradise for the motor car hunter or the man who is not prepared to perspire freely.

GAMOOS

THE RECORD CARP

FISHING with a companion in a private lake in Herefordshire on October 3rd Mr. Robert Richards, of Gloucester, caught a mirror carp of 31lb. 4oz.—a new British record. The event has already been recorded in *The Field*. Here are the details of how it was done.

The pool is just under three acres in extent, 22ft. deep in the middle but shallow at the edges. It may be of ancient origin. It was made certainly not later than the seventeenth century, and it possibly dates from Roman times. When the owner bought the property in 1927 there were no fish in the pool. But abundant *polyzoa* weed was blocking pipes which fed farms on the estate; so in March, 1934, 50 mirror carp were introduced to clear it.

They have bred and have eaten the weed—something to note for owners of pools where this weed is troublesome—and the record fish is undoubtedly one of them. The owner tells me that from time to time monstrous carp are found floating dead, and have to be taken out and buried.

Mr. Richards had fished the pool on three previous occasions this summer without success, but on October 3rd he happened to strike one of those days when the big carp were ravening. After catching several small fish in the 4lb. and 5lb. category he was broken by a very big fish, and shortly afterwards broken again in the same place.

After this there was a lull and he changed his position, but having no bites there he returned to his former pitch, and at once was into the big carp. It took Mr. Richards 15 mins. before it came to the gaff. He was using a roach rod, a nylon line of 6·1 breaking strain, and a No. 10 hook tied direct to the line. His bait was honey paste.

The short time of 15 mins. to land this fish on comparatively fine tackle is noteworthy. It can be explained perhaps by the fact that the pectoral fins and tail of this specimen were small compared with the size of the fish. I have seen 17- and 18-pounders with larger fins and tails. Mr. Richard Walker, of Hitchin, that king of carp fishers, who has taken casts of this specimen, tells me that it was “a mountain of flesh.”

This new record shows that big carp will feed readily at the end of the season, and in this they resemble big trout. They feed very well at the beginning of the season in mid-June, for they are hungry after spawning (though in actual fact they spawn up to the end of June).

In July and August they find much of their food on the bottom, and devour the larvæ of the mosquito. I have proved that this year by watching the carp in my own pool. By August they are lethargic and full-fed, and then they come on again just before retiring for semi-hibernation.

The capture sheds light, too, on the age to which carp live, which has long been in doubt. This specimen was not more than 20 years old, if we consider the time the fish were introduced and the weight of the fish when put in. I doubt very much whether carp live more than 50 years, in view of the fact that the very big fish are found floating dead in the pool.

It has always been suspected that 30-pounders did exist in British waters, but up to now this has never been substantiated. Hitherto the record was held by Mr. Albert Buckley's 26-pounder from Mapperley in 1930.

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THE FIELD ANNUAL

THE FIELD ANNUAL for 1952 is the perfect Christmas gift for all who take an interest in country things. The new edition maintains the high standard of its predecessors, and includes authoritative articles on such subjects as farming, falconry, gardening, the turf, natural history, cricket, archery and cooking, in addition to expert contributions on field sports. The Annual, in fact, covers every activity of interest to the countryman. The wealth of fine illustrations includes 16 splendid colour plates of the quality which has distinguished all previous editions of The Field Annual. There is also a complete reference section of practical use to farmers, sportsmen and countrymen.

The Field Annual is supplied in an attractive carton, ready for sending by post as a gift, and copies are obtainable from most good bookshops price 12/6, or The Publisher, The Field, 8, Stratton Street, London, W.1, will send it to any address in the world, price 13/5, including postage. A greetings card will be included giving the name of the sender.



SAMPLE OF SUDAN SHOOTING COUNTRY—FOREST AND MOUNTAIN