

The
HUNTING & SPOOR
of
CENTRAL AFRICAN
G A M E

With life - size Illustrations
of most of the
G A M E T R A C K S

By Denis D. Lyell

Author of "Wild Life in Central Africa"
"The African Elephant & its Hunters"
&c. &c.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Philadelphia
J. B. Lippincott Company

Notes on the Elephant, Rhinoceros, and Hippopotamus

CENTRAL AFRICA has a wonderful wealth of fauna and much game still exists in the wilder parts of that country, and through strict game regulations it is to be hoped that it will last for a long time in the future.

The following notes of the game mentioned in the above heading, as well as those to follow on the smaller animals, refer to the territories of Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, and Northern Zambezia. I mention this because it is known that the habits of game vary slightly in different localities in Africa, due probably to the extent the game is hunted by white men and the indigenous native inhabitants.

In the countries I mention much molestation made game shy and wary, particularly elephants ; but I believe in parts of Kenya Colony those animals, instead of being inclined to bolt as soon as they scent, see, or hear human beings, are apt immediately to act offensively. After all, one cannot blame them for doing so, as it must be very uncomfortable for almost every pachyderm who gets within 100 yards of a white man to receive a bullet in a non-vital part of his anatomy, for I believe many carry old wounds !

It is unfortunate for elephants that they grow a substance which is so valuable and so much sought after as is ivory. To exist he has to eat much food, so when natives are killed, or have their fields ravaged by troops of elephants, the Government is obliged to take

For brain shots nothing is better than a small-bore rifle such as a .256 or a .275, used, of course, with solid bullets (see Frontispiece). For body shots I think a novice might be safer when using a .470 or some such large bore, because they have a greater striking energy.

When he gains further experience, doubtless he will find that he can do just as good work with the smaller weapon he uses for antelopes, for accuracy is quite as important as striking power even against such a mighty animal as an African bull elephant. By writing this I do not mean to infer that .470 rifles are not accurate, but there is no doubt it is easier to shoot straight with a small bore than a large one, and a small bullet in the right spot is better than a big one in the wrong.

THE BLACK RHINOCEROS

(*Rhinoceros bicornis*)

NATIVE NAMES

<i>Language.</i>	<i>Native Name.</i>	<i>Language.</i>	<i>Native Name.</i>
CHINYANJA	. <i>Chipembere.</i>	CHINGONI	. <i>Mkbombo.</i>
CHIYAO	. <i>Chipembere.</i>	CHISENGA	. <i>Pembere.</i>
CHIKUNDA	. <i>Ntema.</i>	CHIBISA	. <i>Ntema.</i>
CHITONGA	. <i>Chipembere.</i>	SWAHILI	. <i>Kifaru.</i>

Longest horn known (anterior), 53½ inches. From Kenya Colony.

Average specimen of horn (anterior), 20 inches.

Height at shoulder, about 5½ feet.

Approximate weight (♂), about 2 ton.

The Black Rhino (few ever speak of it by its full name) is not so plentiful in Nyasaland as it is in Northern Rhodesia, and even in the latter country it is such a retiring animal in its habits that unless one gets into really wild country it is seldom seen. Its favourite

habitat is hilly country on the slopes of which is plenty of thorn bush, for it seems to like eating stuff that at first sight would seem not only to be highly indigestible, but most disagreeable as a nourishing food.

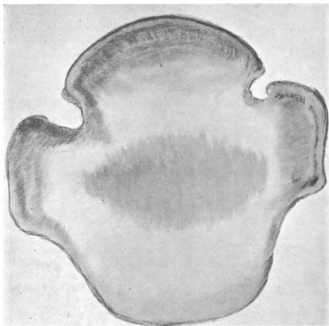


PLATE III.

RHINOCEROS (♂)

(Half life-size).

As this animal inhabits rocky country at times, the spoor is sometimes indistinct and is difficult to find. On sandy ground, however, it often shows clearly and is then easy to follow.

It drinks nightly, I believe, and must travel long distances to water, because it is often seen, when spoorred up, many miles from a river or water hole.

The natives seem to fear it more than they do the elephant, or any other game classed as dangerous, and when disturbed at close quarters the animal usually behaves in rather a fussy way and gives one the impression that he means to be nasty ; but I never found him particularly dangerous, and when classifying the dangerous animals I would put him last.

It has the strange habit of returning to the same spot to deposit its droppings, and after doing so it rakes them about with its feet and horns, and I imagine this trait may have caused the natives to consider it a bad-tempered animal.

My old friend, Major (then Captain) C. H. Stigand, was severely injured by one in 1905 ; and another acquaintance, Mr. D. D. Dobson, whom I knew at Fort Manning in Nyasaland in 1912, was killed by a black rhino near Ngara in 1916.

Dobson, like Stigand, was a very powerful fellow, and in his younger days had been a famous Rugby football player, but he seems to have been taken unawares by the animal and received a dangerous wound in the abdomen which caused his death within a few hours.

When disturbed he always runs up-wind, and in his efforts to get the wind to his liking he will often charge through a line of carriers, who seldom wait but throw down their loads and make for the nearest tree when there are any in the vicinity.

Rhino are much easier to kill than bull elephants, and I would put them on a par with cow elephants in their tenacity of life. They have to be hit right, naturally, but there is little difficulty in flooring a bull rhino with a .256 rifle if he gets the bullet low through the shoulders.

There are no white rhinos in the countries I write of, and the

main difference between the two species is that the white is larger in body and has longer horns, is square-lipped, instead of prehensile as in the black.

Why they were called white and black I do not know, for they are both the same colour, which is a slate gray.

The white (or Burchell's) is a grass feeder, so has certainly more sense than his congener, who delights in chewing thorns. I think the black rhino eats grass occasionally, for I am sure I have seen digested grass in their droppings.

The black rhino has very poor sight, and I doubt if he can see much more than 50 yards, and that is probably the main reason why he is inclined to be fussy and excited when come on by human beings. His hearing, too, is not very sharp, but he has an acute sense of smell, although I do not think he can scent danger nearly so far off as can elephants, buffaloes, and the antelopes.

This species used to be exceedingly plentiful in Kenya Colony, and there are instances told by travellers and hunters of up to twenty being seen in a day's march across the plains, and in scattered bush, and many incidents of the animals charging through the "Safari" are on record. More than three are seldom seen together, which will consist of a pair of adult animals and a young one.

Black rhinos are very fond of wallowing in mud, and their bellies are often covered with dried slime. Then they often use trees as rubbing posts, and a flat rock is sometimes found smoothed by the beasts scraping their abdomens back and forward along it.

I have seen big maggots in them, and these must cause the creatures much irritation, and they are often covered with big ticks. They must fight a good deal in the breeding season, as the bulls as

well as the cows are often scarred by long wounds. Their horns are sharp, and they have great power in their neck muscles.

The horns of rhinos are simply composed of solidified hair substance. Occasionally the posterior horn is found longer than the anterior one, and long ago this difference was the cause of dividing the animals into several varieties. I shot a rhino with a knob behind the two horns, and have heard of a few others with the same addition. A specimen is recorded with five distinct horns.

The tick birds sit on them and search for these vermin and the maggots they occasionally harbour, although when I have seen maggots they are usually in the belly of the animal and not on the back.

Owing to their solitary ways they should last for a long time in Northern Rhodesia, but on the plains in Kenya Colony I fancy this species may soon become a bush and forest dweller so as to escape persecution. On the plains he is easily seen, and easily shot when come on by chance.

In Northern Rhodesia he is really a sporting beast, for he has to be spooed up to be found, and when come on in the bush is often at close quarters; so is a much more valued trophy to the man who has to travel in the heat a long way to find him than would be a specimen casually seen in the open and killed.

In Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game*, there is a statement regarding a black rhino having weighed 2388 lb.

This beast must have belonged to the small race of black rhino found in Kenya Colony, for I am certain a large Northern Rhodesian bull would easily scale about twice as much, so the 2 ton I give is, I am sure, about correct.