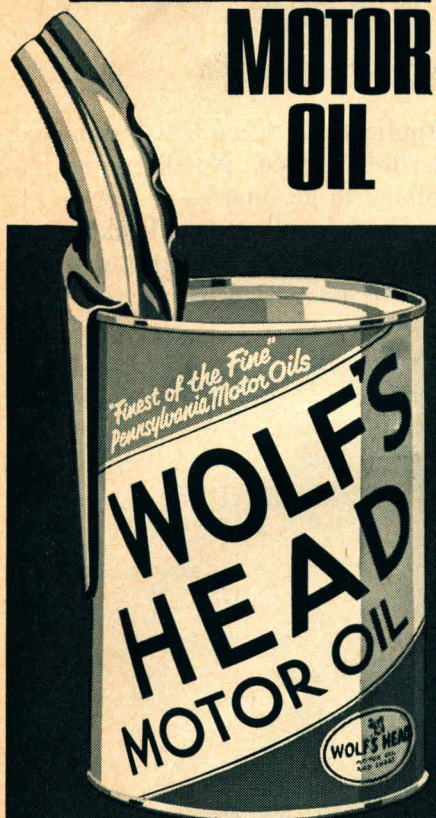


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JANUARY, 1965

Vol. 135, No. 1

# Outdoor Life

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**WILLIAM E. RAE, Editor**

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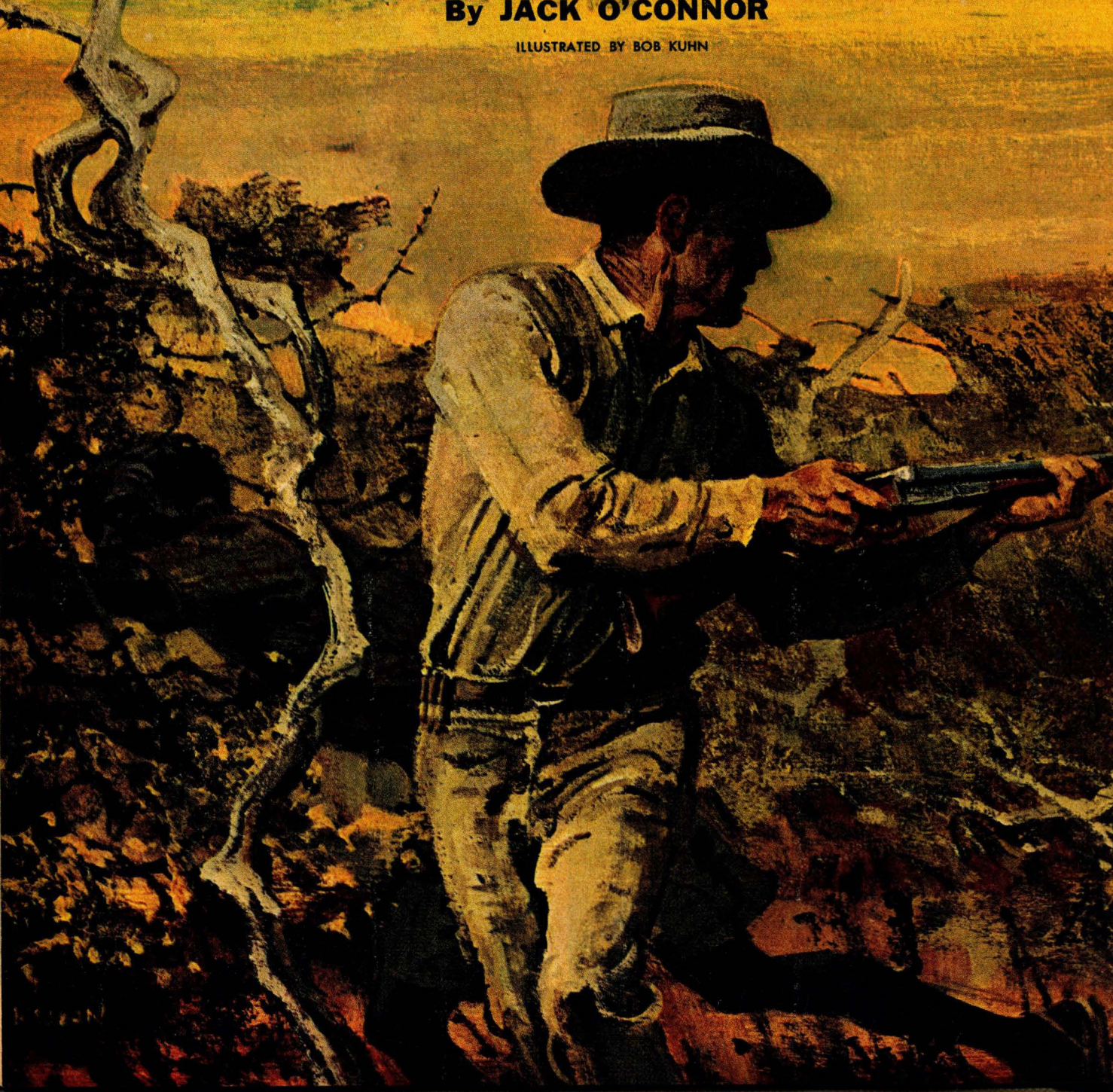
**MOST DANGEROUS GAME No.6**

# THE RHINOCEROS

**He's big, strong, and stupid, and his way of solving problems by running over them makes his presence clearly undesirable**

**By JACK O'CONNOR**

ILLUSTRATED BY BOB KUHN





**T**HE RHINOCEROS is one of the world's largest land animals. The familiar black rhino weighs about 3,000 pounds, and his larger cousin, the white rhino about 4,000 pounds. By comparison, the big black African Cape buffalo weighs about 2,000 pounds, and the larger Asiatic gaur, the largest of the world's wild cattle, weighs around 2,500 pounds.

And the rhino is one of the dumbest of all animals. He cannot get it through his pea-size brain that he is not the cock-of-the-walk as he was 50,000, 100,000, 1,000,000 years ago. He is a powerful animal, he is armored with heavy hide, and on his nose he carries a wicked lance.

For hundreds of thousands of years, the rhino has solved his difficulties by rushing at them and either tossing them or frightening them away. In Africa today, a lion may pick off a rhino calf if he can do so with impunity, but he wants no part of an adult animal. I am sure the larger cave lions and the saber-toothed tigers of Europe's Pleistocene felt the same way about the woolly rhinoceros of those distant days.

The rhino has a keen sense of smell and, likewise, he hears very well. He is, however, extremely short-sighted and may see things only as vague shapes and shadows. His bulk, his strength, and his stupidity, combined with his curiosity and his habit of solving his problems by running over them, makes his presence in the neighborhood exceedingly uncomfortable. He is literally too stupid to be afraid. In the early days of the Uganda Railway that runs from Mombasa on the Kenya coast to Nairobi and on to Uganda, rhinos were very plentiful, and it was common to have a rhino take on a train single-handed. The encounter sometimes actually derailed the small engines in use then. Often the rhino was killed, but sometimes he survived.

The rhino is a vanishing species. There is not one rhino in some places today where there were hundreds 50 years ago. Nevertheless, it is still common to hear of rhinos charging four-wheel-drive hunting cars, trucks, or anything else that moves in rhino country.

In the summer of 1963, Prince Abdorreza Pahlavi, brother of the Shah of Iran, was hunting in Angola





# THE RHINOCEROS *continued*



**White** rhino, left, has huge, rectangular head, big hairy ears. The black has triangular upper lip, small, naked ears

with Mario Marcelino, the white hunter who had steered my wife and me around the previous year. The prince and Mario were tooling along early one morning through a section of the country where rhinos were often seen, when, with no warning, a rhino shot out of the bush and crashed into the front of the car, running his horn through the radiator and getting head and horn tangled up with the twisted metal of the car. As one could well imagine, the prince and Mario were a bit taken aback. How they managed to keep from being thrown from the car, I have no idea. Anyway, they piled out shooting—and that was the end of the rhino.

It is quite common for hunters after game in the brush—lion, elephant, kudu—to be charged by a rhino. Often the rhino is just coming up to investigate at a nice brisk

trot, but sometimes, as was the case with the one that tried to bowl over the prince's car, he means business. I was once hunting oryx and lesser kudu in the thorny brush of Kenya's Northern Frontier District when I saw a rhino trotting upwind toward me, snorting like a steam switch engine. My gunbearer and I stood still, but I was set to shoot or dodge, whichever seemed best. But when the rhino got about 30 yards from us he slowed down and apparently forgot what had riled him. His head went down, his eyes closed, and he appeared to have fallen asleep. My gunbearer and I sneaked off, and that was the last we saw of him.

The funniest rhino story I have ever heard was told to me by my friend Robert Chatfield-Taylor. He was hunting elephants in the Northern Frontier when, just about dusk,

the hunting car got stuck in the sands of a dry wash the Somalis call a lugger. The two gunbearers and the white hunter were trying to get it out and Bob was standing by when he heard a tremendous snorting and a crashing of brush, and a rhino came trotting up to investigate.

Startled half out of his wits, Bob rushed to the hunting car and grabbed his double .470 to defend himself. The white hunter, who had enough troubles just then anyway, was furious. He grabbed a handful of sand, threw it in the rhino's eyes, and shouted, "Bugger off, you bawstard!" The rhino buggered off.

The rhino is a very ancient animal. In the incredibly remote Miocene and Pliocene, rhinos occupied both eastern and western hemispheres, and in the form of the now extinct woolly rhinoceros they ranged over Pleistocene Europe. Today, they are found only in tropical Asia and Africa. The Indian form is now found only on the Assam Plain. The Javan rhino inhabits Bengal, Burma, the Malay Peninsula, Java, Sumatra, and Borneo.

There are two species of rhino in Africa, the "black" and the "white." Actually, neither species is black nor white. Both are a dull gray. Rhinos, like hogs, like to roll in mud and dust, and often one sees red rhinos, white rhinos, and blue rhinos, depending on the color of the mud they have wallowed in. A rhino I shot in Tanganyika in 1953 looks in the movies I took to be so light a gray he is almost white.

The largest of the African rhinos is the square-lipped, or "white" rhino, which, except for the ele-



**Without** warning, the rhino shot out of the bush and crashed into the prince's car, running its horn through the radiator





**Grabbing** a handful of sand,  
the white hunter threw it into  
the rhino's eyes and shouted  
loudly for it to go away. It did

phants, is the world's largest land mammal. He is called "white" because the early Dutch settlers referred to him as the "wyt" rhino, meaning the one with the wide, square mouth, since "wyt" is the Afrikaans word for wide. Because one rhino was called the "white" rhino, the other became the "black" rhino.

The same thing happened when Lewis and Clark, who were used to the whitetail deer of the East, first encountered another sort of deer. This was the mule deer, but it had a different type of tail so they dubbed it the "blacktail." Later, on the Pacific Coast, they ran into a deer that actually had a tail black on top instead of having the dinky, little white tail with the black tip of the mule deer. The term "blacktail" for mule deer was widely used over the West when I was a boy, and is still the common name for mule deer in some areas.

The black rhino is an odd enough animal, but the white rhino is such a strange-looking beast that he appears as if he belongs to another world and another era. He differs in many ways from his cousin the black rhino. He has an enormous rectangular head and large, hairy ears, whereas the ears of the black rhino are smaller and almost naked. The white carries his tail looped over his back, the black his up in the air like a radio antenna. The



**Knocked** from his cot, the hunter saw his tent,  
loosely draped around a rhino, vanish into the night

white rhino is a grazer, the black rhino a browser. The white rhino is a much less nervous and irascible creature than the black.

The white rhino has longer horns than the black, and, in both species, the female has longer and slenderer horns than the male. The record white-rhino horn is a very old one from a beast shot in South Africa by Sir W. Gordon-Cumming, a British hunter, explorer, and nobleman. The front horn is  $62\frac{1}{4}$  inches long, and the rear one is  $22\frac{1}{4}$ . Another is recorded that is  $56\frac{1}{2}$  inches long. The record black rhino horn is  $53\frac{1}{2}$  inches long and is from Kenya.

There are two varieties of white rhino, the southern and the northern. The southern was at one time extremely common all over South Africa between the Orange River and the Zambezi. Many were killed

by early settlers and hunters. By 1880 they were rare, and early in this century only about half a dozen remained in an isolated part of Zululand. A reserve was established for them. They slowly increased, and now there may be about 500. The remaining northern white rhinos are scattered over a wide area in Uganda, Chad Republic, the Central African Republic, and the southern Sudan. The entire population of the northern white rhinos is now believed to be about 1,100.

There are more black rhinos than any other existing species of rhinoceros, but in most areas of Africa where they were once common they are now rare. My wife has made safaris in northern and southern Tanganyika, in Mozambique, and in Angola and she has never laid eyes on one. The (continued on page 121)



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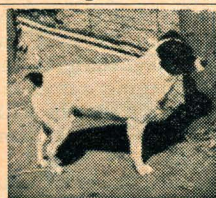
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## THE RHINOCEROS

(continued from page 39)

only place I have ever seen more than one or two in a day was in the northern frontier district of Kenya. On a short safari in Angola in the late summer of 1962, I saw two rhinos, one with excellent horns. My wife had chosen to sleep in that morning. Later the big rhino was shot by another hunter.

There is now no open season on rhinos in Uganda and Tanganyika, and in Kenya a license is allowed only on a safari of 35 days or longer, and then only in certain parts of the country. For instance, the Aberdares and Mount Kenya are closed completely. In Angola, where there is a pretty fair supply of rhinos, the government charges \$750 for a rhino permit.

The black rhino, instead of having the wide square mouth of the white rhino, has a hooked, triangular upper lip. The point is prehensile, and he uses it to strip off the leaves and twigs he feeds on. The black will stand around five feet high at the shoulder and weigh from 3,000 to 3,500 pounds. In spite of his great bulk, he is light on his feet, and a trotting rhino seems hardly to touch the ground.

All rhinos carry half a dozen to a dozen tick birds, which I understand are a species of starling, around on their backs. The birds are supposed to earn their living by eating ticks off the rhino, but the folds of a rhino's skin, particularly around the lower parts, are generally crawling with ticks. The tick birds have better eyes than the rhino, and when they see something strange they fly chirping off the rhino's back. The rhino then charges around, blowing and snorting, to try to catch the scent and locate the danger.

Old Faro, as he is called in Swahili, is found from Ethiopia to the Zambezi and westward to Chad, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, and the Cameroons. Rhinos are supposed to be coming back in Chad, but although I covered many hundreds of miles there in 1958 I did not see one.

The rhino was once commonly found in quite open country, and he was likewise seen abroad at all hours of the day. When Theodore Roosevelt hunted in Kenya and Uganda in 1910, he saw and shot many rhinos, white as well as black, in the open.

Today, the rhino has been so persecuted he is more generally found in heavy thorn brush, and if he is seen in the open it is usually at dawn and at dusk. In fact, in many areas, stirring up a drowsy rhino is one of the hazards of hunting the beautiful greater kudu, since both species like dry, thorny hills.

The rhino is a slow breeder. One calf is born at a time after an 8½-month gestation period. The calf is suckled for two years, and the cows do not breed oftener than every two or three years. It is common to see a cow rhino with a calf several years old and almost as large as she is. Where modern man with his rifle does not enter into the ecological picture, the rhino can in-



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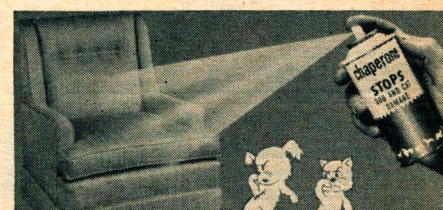


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crease even with his slow rate of breeding and his lack of intelligence because he is just about without natural enemies. But if the rhino is hunted much, his numbers go down because the species is slow to replace itself.

In some areas, rhinos have been killed off to make room for native settlements. In his book, Hunter, H. A. Hunter, the Kenya white hunter, tells of having killed several hundred rhinos in an area where some Wakamba were to be settled and which was being cleared of brush. Many have been shot in the Rhodesias, along with thousands of head of other game, because of the theory that game carries the tsetse fly. Now these areas have no game, but they still have the tsetse fly.

Rhinos have decreased all over the world in modern times, however, because rhino horn is valuable, much more valuable, pound for pound, than ivory. And the reason the horn is valuable is that the Chinese entertain the superstition that it is a powerful aphrodisiac. The fact that the notion is completely without foundation does not keep the horn from being in great demand and fetching high prices. In East Africa, the horns of rhinos that have been poached are generally sold by African hunters to Indian traders and then smuggled out of the country on Arab dhows. The horn eventually reaches China. I understand that those who use it cut a very thin sliver from the the horn, powder it up, and drink it in a cup of hot tea.

When rhinos were plentiful, they were slaughtered by the hundreds for their horns. In an old African book by Fredrick Courtney Selous, the explorer, museum collector, and writer, I find the following:

"One trader alone supplied 400 Matabili native hunters with guns and ammunition, and, between 1880 and 1884, his store always contained piles of rhinoceros horns, although they were constantly being sold to traders and carried south. It sounded the death-knell of white and black rhinoceros alike in all the country that came in reach of those Matabili hunters."

The fatal horn of the rhino is actually not horn at all but hair that grows together, and the "horns" are attached to the hide instead of the skull. Unlike true horns, they have no core. As I mentioned previously, the record black-rhino horn comes from Kenya and is 53½ inches long. This is the only black-rhino horn in the latest Rowland Ward's Records of Big Game that is over 50 inches, but 12 are 40 inches or over, and 44 are over 30 inches long.

Many excellent rhino trophies have been taken by Americans, several fine ones by hunters I know. Dean Witter, the San Francisco financier and experienced hunter, has taken two rhinos that went over 30 inches in Tanganyika. Frank C. Hibben, the anthropologist and writer, has a rhino trophy with a front horn of 31½ inches, and Elgin T. Gates, with whom I hunted in Chad in 1958, took a 29¾-in. rhino in 1956. Boyd Williams, of the Williams Gun

Sight Company, has a rhino trophy with a very long front horn. I have never measured it, but I'd guess it goes around 30 inches.

Probably the most photographed rhino that ever existed was a lady rhino named Gertie, who for years lived in the Amboseli National Park in Kenya. Gertie's front horn went forward at an angle of about 45°. It was unmistakable, and I have seen Gertie's picture printed dozens of times. After she had modeled for years, Gertie managed to break off about half her horn, and it runs in my mind that someone told me a poacher finally shot her for the other half.

Almost always a rhino's front horn is longer than its rear one, but occasionally the rear horn will be as long or longer than the front one. Many persons simply want to be able to say that they have shot a rhino, and consequently some pretty small rhino horns have been brought back from Africa and proudly mounted. I have seen them as short as eight inches. My one and only rhino trophy is nothing to write home about; the front horn is only a bit over 20 inches.

Just how dangerous are rhinos? As is the case with the rest of Africa's dangerous game animals, opinions differ with the experience of individual observers. Some men who have spent years in the bush say they would hardly consider them dangerous at all, adding that to be hurt by a rhino a man would have to be either careless, unlucky, or stupid. One white hunter I know was run over, badly frightened, and terribly bruised by a rhino. He considers Old Faro the most dangerous animal in Africa because, he says, the rhino is the only African animal that will habitually attack unprovoked and unwounded. He says you can be tossed, trampled, gored, or killed by a rhino you were not hunting and didn't even know was in the country.

In the old days of foot safaris, when white hunters and clients headed for the bush followed by long lines of porters carrying burdens on their heads, it was routine to have some ill-tempered old rhino come charging down to route the porters, put them up trees, and scatter tents, chop boxes, and camp furniture all over the countryside. In those days of many rhinos, those leading safaris always loaded their rifles, watched nervously, and hoped for the best whenever a rhino was sighted. One gruesome story I remember reading was of a slaving safari of Arabs and Swahilis who were headed back toward Mombasa with a long line of bush-country natives all chained together by the necks. According to the story, a rhino came charging out of the bush and hit the line of slaves with such velocity that every one of them died with a broken neck.

A rhino is a creature of habit. He generally waters between 8 and 9 o'clock at night and always comes and goes by the same path. Woe to the safari that unwittingly camps on a rhino's path. One chap I know had just



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got to sleep one moonlit night when he heard a mixture of snorts, grunts, shouts, and yells, and an instant later he was knocked out of his cot and his tent vanished as if by magic. He has a vague recollection of seeing his tent, loosely draped around a fleeing rhino, disappearing into the bush. The members of the safari were upset, but no one was hurt. Then and there they moved camp 100 yards out of the rhino trail. Next day they found the tent.

Powerful rifles and full-metal-jacketed (solid) bullets are usually recommended for rhinos, and for all I know they may be the best idea. Rhinos are big brutes and their hides are thick. Thin-jacketed, high-velocity bullets would probably go to pieces pretty badly on a rhino, and most expanding bullets would probably give unsatisfactory penetration on a rhino's heavy shoulder blade. However, many rhinos have been killed with such mild rifles as the 7 x 57 Mauser, the 6.5 mm. Mannlicher-Schoenauer, and the .303 British—if round-nosed, full-metal-jacketed bullets are used and the shots well placed. D. W. M. Bell, that great Scot ivory hunter, killed many with the round-nosed solid military 7 mm. bullet.

As with any other game, shots on rhinos should be well placed, no matter what the hunter uses. One chap I know chased a very good rhino over half of Africa plinking it with a .300 Weatherby. Another had a tough time knocking off his rhino with a .375 Magnum and the 300-grain solid bullet.

Syd Downey, dean of East African white hunters and one of the partners in Ker & Downey, the Nairobi safari firm, says rhinos are easy to kill with a bullet through the lungs or one that breaks both shoulders. An old-time South African hunter said they went down within a few yards with a shot that went through both lungs, but that if only one lung was hit, they could travel a long way even though bleeding heavily at the nose and mouth. That is something that can also be said of moose and elk.

Rhinos seem easy to stop or turn with heavy bullets fairly well placed. When Martin and Osa Johnson were making their famous African movies, some of their most thrilling bits of footage were the pictures Martin took of Osa stopping charges by rhinos. She was a pretty little brown-eyed woman about five feet one inch tall, and her favorite rhino rifle, I believe, was a .405 Winchester. She used to let the rhino get within 25 or 30 yards, then she'd shoot and down they'd go. I have seen other movies of charges that have been stopped, and in all the cases that I can remember, the rhino went down when hit. If he got up, he had had enough and didn't come toward the camera.

My one and only rhino didn't appear to me to be very hard to bring down. It had been shot in the guts with an arrow on which the poison was not very strong. It made the rhino sick and mean. It had chased and hurt several natives, and when my safari went

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through the Tanganyika town of M'Bulu, a game ranger asked us to knock it off.

I was chosen. When we found the rhino standing under a tree, I would not have been more surprised and excited if it had been a dinosaur. I tried for a heart shot at 125-150 yards, but my rhino fever must have made me jerk the trigger, as the rhino ran off. I found out later that the 480-grain solid bullet from the .450 Watts, wildcat predecessor of the .458 Winchester, had struck low and behind the heart.

I had expected the rhino to come raging down on me like an avenging spirit, stick his horns into my quivering abdomen, and throw me over a thorn tree. Instead, he whirled and ran.

Right then I really distinguished myself. I stopped my swing, and the bullet went right past the rhino's ample fanny. Then mentally I gave myself a swift kick, swung well ahead of the fleeing rhino, and fired with the rifle moving. I heard the bullet strike and saw the rhino stumble. When he had run about 50 yards he fell, and he was dead when we got to him.

That was a rhino that had to be shot and might very well have died anyway since he had a bad abdominal wound. Yet I felt strangely guilty for having shot this visitor from the Pliocene, this strange and stupid creature from out of ages past. I'll never shoot another.

I have known persons who have been mauled by lions and knew one hunter whom a lion killed. I have known several who have been mauled by leopards and tossed by elephants and buffaloes. I have never known anyone who was badly hurt by a rhino, but perhaps that is because there are not many rhinos any more. After all, a rhino killed tough old Bwana Cottar, an American who was one of the best and bravest white hunters in all East Africa. THE END

**GREAT LITTLE CAT**

(continued from page 27)

that's worth hunting with hounds, I'd put the black bear at the top. In my book, for suspense and thrills, nothing quite matches bear chasing. Second place would go to the wild boar as I have hunted him in the mountains of eastern Tennessee, though his range is too limited and his numbers too few to make him of interest to sportsmen in general. Third would be the bobcat.

Many houndmen will balk at the idea of ranking the little short-tailed cat so high, especially of giving him a place ahead of mountain lion or red fox. But with few exceptions, those who don't appreciate him have never tried him.

He's extremely shy and secretive, but not difficult for good cat dogs to find and run. Once they take his trail, he shows as many tricks as the smartest coon. He's light-footed and long-winded, has fantastic staying power, and does his running in very tough places. He is reluctant to tree, so unless the dogs can bring him to bay on the

ground—and he's no soft touch for that, either—the hunter often has to intercept stubtail and do his shooting as the cat is driven past, usually in the thickest cover. The bobcat's circles are smaller than those of the fox or coyote, so there is more opportunity to head him off. And though he's small, he's hell on wheels in a fight. As one old Iowa hunter remarked, "Ain't nothing can comb burs out of a hound's coat like a big bobcat."

Finally, the bobcat is so widely distributed that there are only a few states where sportsmen couldn't hunt him if they wanted. He's found in every state except Alaska and Hawaii, in southern Canada, and over most of Mexico. Liking wild, rough country and dense cover, he is most abundant in New England, the mountains of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Tennessee, northern Michigan, Oklahoma and Texas, and the mountain states of the West. He does not need large blocks of unbroken wilderness, however, as the mountain lion does, and can make out nicely in places where wild land is mixed with farms and crossed by roads. Even such farming states as Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Kansas still have scattered bobcat populations.

Stubtail doesn't mind living close to people as long as he doesn't have much to do with them, and he gets along all right on the fringes of civilization. Not many years ago, a stray bobcat prowled into the yard of a park ranger at the Proud Lake Recreation Area near Milford, Michigan, about 35 miles from downtown Detroit. It licked the pants off the ranger's dog before it was treed and shot. A couple of springs after that, the wife of one of my neighbors surprised what she thought was a big tomcat in her garage. When she went for the creature with a broom, it spit, snarled, and streaked out like greased lightning. Only then did she see that it had a bobbed tail. That happened just a few miles farther from Detroit than Proud Lake.

In New England and the Great Lakes states, stubtail keeps to evergreen swamps. In the South, he likes canebrakes, brushy woods, or tangled river bottoms. In the mountains of the West, he goes for canyons and rough draws with thickets of sagebrush, juniper, and mountain mahogany. Wherever he lives, he knows the most inaccessible retreats, and if trouble looms he seeks them out. In many places he's more plentiful than sportsmen realize. His choice of habitat, his nocturnal habits, and his stealthy ways leave little sign of his presence. The average hunter could spend weeks in a good bobcat area and never suspect there was a cat.

The black bear, unless he's made bold by hunger, is no slouch at keeping out of sight, but you're far more likely to blunder into him than a bobcat. In a lifetime of outdoor activities, except for times when bobcats were driven past me, treed, or brought to bay by dogs, I've seen exactly one, and that was only a fleeting glimpse.

One November afternoon, a hunting