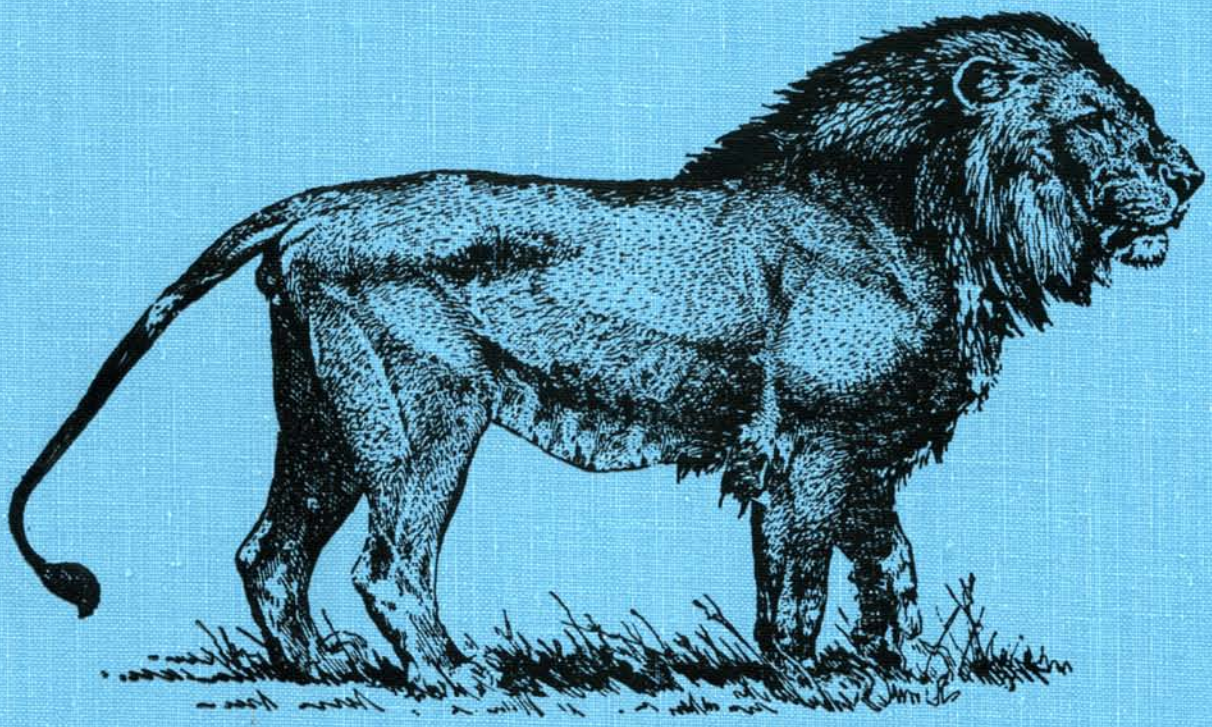
# The Last of Old Africa



Brian Nicholson

# The Last of Old Africa

# *The Last of Old Africa*

## *Big-Game Hunting in East Africa*

*by*

*Brian Nicholson*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# DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late wife, Melva, who spent so many years in East Africa with me.

It is also an element of family history for my two daughters, Susan and Sandra, and my son, Philip, who grew up in the sunlight and storm of the Selous Game Reserve.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I started to write this book in 1995. For various reasons there were repeated delays, followed by a break of nearly two years.

Many people have suggested I write an autobiography, and some have persistently followed up on this. John Moller went to much trouble to type and print the original draft of my story up to when I joined the Tanganyika Game Department in February 1950.

Others who encouraged me were Richard Bonham, Skip Essex, Trish Luke, and Sharon Barucha.

My daughter, Sandra Harwood, dedicated hours and days of her time to typing, correcting, and reprinting every page in the book and then reprinting the final draft of the entire book. It is impossible to express the depth of my appreciation for all her work on my behalf.

Sorting through and selecting photographic records of people and events involved a great deal of critical thought and discussion. My eldest daughter, Susan Testa, was a valuable aid in doing this, along with Sandra.

Without the unstinting help of my two daughters and John Moller, this book could never have been completed.

My late wife, Melva, was with me for much of the time in Tanganyika. I must acknowledge that her continuous care, loyalty, and support contributed to my ability to cope with many problems that arose over the years and on occasion contributed to my very survival. This book could never have been started were it not for her.

I wish to express my appreciation and thanks to the following people who provided me with photographs used in this book: the late Melva Nicholson; Sandra Harwood; Allen Rees; the late Dan Maddox; Bert Klineburger; Game Coin President, Harry Tennison; Susan Testa; and especially Jon Speed.

I also thank Tony Dyer for writing the foreword to this book.

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# FOREWORD

This book tells of exciting boyhood hunting years and many years in the life of a game warden in Tanganyika (now called Tanzania).

Brian Nicholson was responsible for the vast Selous Game Reserve and all the great southern ranges in Tanganyika. He was eventually responsible for about 100,000 square miles of roadless country where foot safaris were the norm. When he first moved in, it was a fourteen-day journey to his base camp. Transport started with the railway, followed by the bus and then a DC-3 flight; the last five days were on foot. Over the years he was to journey more miles on foot than by any other form of transport.

The Selous Game Reserve was nearly doubled by his legendary predecessor "Iodine" Ionides, and later by Brian Nicholson between 1951 and 1973, to a total of 22,000 square miles. It is difficult to visualize such a large area—imagine a square 150 miles long on each side. They created forty-seven separate concession hunting areas, which profoundly changed the hunting safari business in East Africa. All of those who have hunted there owe these two men a great debt of gratitude.

As game warden the author was required to try to ease the trials and tribulations caused by crop-raiding elephants and man-eating lions. After over twenty years of this work, he has probably shot more elephant, on foot and with normal sporting rifles, than any other man living today. His personal total is over 1,300, with only two out of that great number wounded and lost. He quite candidly describes these two losses. They caused him so much distress that he offered to resign his job.

At the beginning of his career he employed twenty-five scouts and his team accounted for a thousand elephant a year. By the time he resigned from the game department, his team had grown to one hundred scouts and they controlled up to three thousand elephant a year. Yet the elephant numbers remained stable or even increased. The dramatic reduction in numbers took place after he retired and was caused by poaching on a massive scale.

The hunting of man-eating lions was almost without exception a long, hard, and dangerous job. Here is his description of one exceptionally easy hunt. One of his porters had been dragged off at nighttime from within ten yards of Brian's tent. He followed the drag with his .470 and a torch, and a man to hold the torch while he shot. After a hundred yards or so they came up with the lion. "As Mbukuri took over the light," writes Brian, "the lioness sat up on her haunches staring straight at me. I shot her in the chest and she collapsed on the spot. At the rifle shot, the cub, which until then had ignored me, sat up facing us with the man's arm jutting out of each side of its jaws. I fired the left barrel into its chest too and it instantly fell to the ground. It was all over. One man and two lions were dead. The porter was buried that morning with Islamic ritual, and we moved on that afternoon, as we still had seventeen days' walk to reach Gumbiro, our priority destination for that safari."

In all he shot—in a letter to me he uses the word "destroyed"—about fifty man-eaters or stock killers. He told me that some of the stock killers he hunted would have inevitably have become man-eaters if they had been allowed to live, for they were already killing domestic dogs and hanging around human habitations. This is a significant number because of the nature of the beasts. These were cunning and furtive rogues lurking guiltily in dense thickets and well versed in the killing of man! They were not grand animals of hunting fiction, standing majestically at bay or striding out toward a bait for an easy shot from a prepared blind.

I have known Brian Nicholson for over fifty years and have been aware for a long time that he was, by virtue of his job, one of the most experienced big-game hunters of all. But it was not until I read the manuscript of this book that I realized that he is a man of many parts—a

perceptive observer, an effective and far-sighted conservationist, a white man sensitive to the beliefs, superstitions, and aspirations of the black man. He is also a sportsman who knows that the only real hunting is hunting on foot, and shooting cleanly to kill with rifles of the power to do the job. He almost always gave a safety follow-up "coup de grace" shot, which was both prudent and merciful. At no time was he ever a butcher, nor did he suffer from blood lust.

At sixteen he shot his first rhino. It was a good sporting stalk and a clean kill—but he refers to it as an execution! This showed a maturity and originality of thought far beyond the normal sixteen-year-old. His mother had asked him for kudu and sable horns to hang in her home in Kenya. About this he writes: "It is hard to say which is the more beautiful and magnificent, the greater kudu or the sable antelope, and, although common enough in the right localities, they are two of Africa's prime trophies. On this safari I shot my first specimens of each and have never shot another since."

He is honest about himself, and on several occasions he talks about his faint heartedness and the need to calm himself. In this context I am reminded of that famous old-timer Baron Bror von Blixen, who stated categorically, "Anyone who is not frightened by big game is either a fool or a liar!" Brian is neither.

He had the good fortune to work with excellent Africans. His head scout in 1955 accounted for twenty-six elephant in twenty-five rounds fired. His porters carried fifty-pound loads for about fifteen miles a day. Brian confesses: "Fit as I was in those years, I could not personally have done what they were required to do."

He does not dramatize or contrive in his writing, but often his love for the rough life in the bush is brought vividly to us. "The men were noisy and happy that night," he writes, "as they gorged on abundant fresh meat. As a result, I stayed awake and read until late. A pair of lions started grunting at intervals for a while, and near dawn a hyena made its presence known. This to me was the essence of the Africa I loved, and I could not have been more content and happy."

In all the photos of those early days he looks so young. And so he was. Just sixteen and by the time he was twenty he was a veteran! These were high school and junior college years. His was the great university of life in the bush, and he graduated with honour.

I mentioned that he was a conservationist. His handling of a pack of wild dog gives us a good example. These wild dog had their nesting burrows in an area that did not have enough wildlife to sustain them. Brian was concerned that the numbers of waterbuck and reedbuck were becoming dangerously low. He burnt rubber in their burrows, and they moved on to an area where there were more prey animals. There was a quick recovery of numbers in the area that had been left in peace.

This book is a significant addition to the sparse amount of practical information about the Selous Game Reserve. It discusses the controversial issues about hunting and conservation affecting not just the Selous but the whole of Africa. Brian gives a first-class objective view of how it was done and how it should be done. His views on elephant control are thought-provoking and based on practical experience.

There is a message here for both conservationists and hunters: that the good hunter is also the best conservationist.

Anthony Dyer
Nanyuki, Kenya
September 9, 1999

# INTRODUCTION

The title of this book refers to a period of time that has passed. Bert Klineburger has described it as "the greatest hunting era" in his book on trophy hunting. There is little doubt that in terms of sheer quantity of game and trophy quality, East Central Africa from the late 1930s up to 1973 possessed the premier hunting grounds on earth. I had the good fortune to grow up, live, and work in Kenya and Tanganyika during this period, hunting as a private individual, as a trainee professional hunter, and, for the last twenty-five years, as a game ranger. In this latter capacity I was fortunate enough to be responsible for the least-developed, most sparsely populated stretch of country in Tanganyika—Southern Province and parts of Eastern Province stretching from the Ruvuma River on the Mozambique border northward to the Rufiji River, and from the coastline westward to Lake Nyasa. This was a wild and remote area of nearly 180,000 square miles with few roads. It was one of the last places where one traveled on foot with porters for months and years on end, in the way of the great ivory hunters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—Sutherland, Bell, and Neumann, for example. The situation eroded at an ever-accelerating pace from the 1960s up to the present time. Medical and veterinary science, improved agriculture, obsession for money, and more and more land acquisition brought on a human and livestock explosion. The end result is habitat and environmental degradation and the massive illegal slaughter of animals with monetary value—rhino and elephant in particular. The wide-open spaces of Africa are shrinking, as are the wild animal populations. A new and progressively more crowded and destructive era has commenced.

This is a story that includes a lot of elephant hunting and, to a lesser degree, the hunting of other species. My story must be understood within the context of the times: forty to fifty years ago, when immense numbers of elephant in southeastern Tanganyika were a chronic and very real threat to peasant cultivation. Each family depended on the annual harvest from two or three acres of land as their sole source of food and income. Men, women, and children tilled the land by hand. Persistent raiding by elephant in particular, but also by hippo along the main rivers, could and did wipe out their only means of survival.

The only way to reduce or stop this damage was to remove or destroy the animals that were responsible. There were no social welfare programs to fall back on in hard times. As I will show, I did my best to provide protection against such damage and to evolve a more effective system.

Over one thousand elephants were killed annually by myself and the game scouts under my control, but this number was certainly below the recruitment rate of the species. The massive slaughter and decline of elephant populations in East Africa since 1977 has nothing to do with organized elephant control work or licensed hunting. It is a product of corruption and greed for money from the illegal sale of ivory and rhino horn. Poaching became possible because of the availability of rifles and automatic weapons to anybody who wanted them. These weapons came from the war-ravaged countries of Somalia, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and Mozambique—countries near Kenya and Tanzania, both of which banned hunting in the 1970s and 1980s. It is a paradox that during these years the illegal slaughter of rhino and elephant, which had large and widespread populations, reduced elephant to an endangered species and reduced rhino to the verge of extinction. It is disturbing that these same people, having wiped out the rhino and elephant in many areas, still have the weapons that are now turned against their own countries to carry out robbery and stock raiding.

There was some opposition to permitting trophy hunting in the Selous Game Reserve. The criticism came from people who had never been to the Selous and who had no knowledge of the game that lived there. I had been traveling through this country for years on foot safari, so I was aware of its vastness. It would have been difficult to eliminate poaching in the area. The Selous also was unsuitable to be a national park or a place of high-volume tourism.

The most dangerous move in the long term was legal resettlement. Although the government policy of closer concentration of people under the *"ujama"* village schemes diverted any immediate threat, I felt that unless we could make the Selous an economically viable reserve, it would eventually be lost. Having been a professional hunter in 1948 and 1949 and a member of the East African Professional Hunters Association, I was familiar with their ethical standards, vested interests in conservation, high revenues from safari clients, and the beneficial effects professional safaris had on reducing illegal hunting with minimal investment required on infrastructure.

I believe that regulated hunting in the Selous was and is a good idea. It is a high revenue earner with low capital investment and maintenance costs. This is what counts in today's world. The anti-hunting lobbyists should take note of this and the fact that controlled hunting is an important management concept for the survival of the wilderness areas in Tanzania. Nature is a hard and cruel presence, in which human sentiment and its perception of pain and death plays no part. The human being has, with his superior intelligence, managed to outmaneuver nature to such an extent that he is now in a state of global overpopulation. It is the destruction of habitat, air and water pollution, and soil erosion—not regulated hunting—that threaten wild animals today.

# Early Memories

*Chapter 1*

The late afternoon sunlight filtered through the open woodland, casting elongated shadows across the parched red earth. Occasional stubble of heavily cropped dry grass protruded from the ground, with the odd growth of low evergreen shrubs. It was the height of the dry season, and already the fierce heat of the day was abating as the sun sank ever lower on the western horizon. The highland air was still and clear, with a hint of chill heralding the cold of night.

An eight-year-old boy sat motionless at the base of a decayed termite mound, taking in the sounds and scents of the dying day: a scrub robin searching for insects under low bushes, the flight of doves just above the trees, winging their way toward some unknown roosting place, a faint whistle caused by their passage through the air. The all-pervading silence and stillness of the bush, with its intriguing smells of plant and animal life, caused a feeling of belonging and expectation in the boy; an identity with the African wilderness. As he savoured this emotion, a movement, some distance to his right, caught his eye. A common duiker emerged into view moving nervously in front of the boy, stepping daintily for a few feet, then stopping to listen intently for any hint of danger. It stopped again less than ten yards away next to some greenery and listened, then looked directly at the boy. It saw no movement and lowered its head to browse the green leaves. After a few seconds it abruptly raised its head to listen with ears set in different directions. It stared straight at the boy again and, apparently satisfied there was no danger, continued slowly on its search for food, to disappear into the trees and scrub. Dusk was now approaching, so the young boy, shouldering his air rifle, eased away from where he had been sitting. He went quietly up the steep rocky slope of the hill to the old farmhouse on top.

This is one of my early memories of growing up on a farm in the Kenya Highlands before and during the Second World War. This memory and others like it created in my mind what was to be a lifelong fascination with wilderness areas and the wild creatures of the bush. It also taught me that total immobility and favourable air currents enable one to pass unrecognized by wild creatures even at close range and in clear view. I was to discover

in time that this failing—an apparent inability to recognize an immobile object for what it really is—is common to most game animals, including the large carnivores. The primates are a notable exception, and this is possibly an indication that they have superior deductive powers compared to game animals. On one occasion—it would have been about 1939 or 1940—when wandering through the bush with my dog, it suddenly took off into some thicket, its high-pitched yelping rapidly fading as it chased some unknown animal. I followed the dog sounds as rapidly as possible through thorn thicket and rough rocky ground. The yapping was now emanating from one position, and I approached with care. As I closed in on the wildly excited dog, which was unsuccessfully trying to scale a tree, I saw that it had forced up into the branches one of the most beautiful of our medium-sized African cats. It was a caracal, well out of reach of the dog, hissing and snarling in defiance. I had no thoughts of harming this lovely creature, but I was able to observe it in awe and wonder for a minute or two. When I changed position, it saw me and came down the tree and leapt out clear of the dog, making good its escape. It is rare indeed to see the caracal in the wild, in daylight. I have always looked back on that day as one of special privilege.

# Growing Up

*Chapter 2*

I was born at Eldoret, in what was then known as Uasin Gishu District of Nzoia Province on 20 June 1930. My father, Denis Walter Dickinson, owned an undeveloped piece of land in the district. He had traveled down to the coast at Mombasa in January 1928 to meet my mother, who arrived from Britain by sea via Suez. She was then known as Frances Mary Bradshaw. They were married at Mombasa on 4 February 1928 and then returned upcountry to the mud and thatch marital home. The farm, if this few thousand acres of raw Africa could be called that, was named Karaveta. In late December 1928 my older brother Gerald was born.

This area lying to the west of the Rift Valley at an elevation of 7,000 feet above sea level is today one of the prime agricultural areas of Kenya. In 1928, this potential was not fully understood. Up to the First World War it had been famous for the vast herds of game throughout the grasslands and wooded areas stretching east from the slopes of 14,000-foot Mount Elgon to the Cherangani Range on the western side of the Rift Valley. Serious white settlement began here in about 1910. Many of the new settlers were Afrikaners emigrating from South Africa, still looking for the wide-open spaces of the Great Trek.

Serious agriculture and vast herds of game could not possibly coexist. By the time I was born, there was very little left of the wild animals that had been the glory and indeed the main attraction of this highland paradise. I have only vague memories of my time at Karaveta—watching disc ploughs drawn by oxen breaking the new land; sweating labour gangs removing trees and stumps with picks, axes, and fire; my brother and I walking with our African *ayah* (nanny) and occasionally seeing frightened antelope running away.

Nearly all the settlers of that time were strapped for funds and survived by borrowing from the banks. This persisted up to the 1940s. Every bit of income from the farm went toward basic survival and to pay off loans so that more loans could be raised. When the effects of the world recession hit Kenya in the period 1929 to 1933, loans became hard to get, and many new farms could not survive. Karaveta was one of them. When a two-hundred-pound bag of maize fetched less on the market than it cost to produce, there

*The original homestead, Karaveta. 1930.*

was not much hope for the farmer, because maize was the main agricultural crop. Chronic debt, shortage of money, and rough living conditions surely had some bearing on the deteriorating relationship between my parents. The final parting of the ways came in late 1933, and they never got back together again. My father went permanently out of my life from that time on.

My brother Gerald and I remained with my mother. She took us to Britain for a few months, and then we returned to Kenya. A trained junior school teacher, she took employment with the newly opened private school at Turi called St. Andrews. Here I received my first taste of education. What fascinated me there above all else was a vast safari outfit of Dinky trucks and minute tents owned by a boy called Bond. I became friends with him, and every bit of our spare time was spent on "safari," going around the school grounds putting up, loading, and pulling down camp, packing it into the trucks and moving on to the next "campsite" one hundred yards away. It was a very serious affair, far more important to us than any classroom work. My imagination was fired by these "safaris," and I visualized great plains teeming with wild animals of every description. The early influence of these "safaris" never left me. I cannot

*The author, age two and a half, at Karaveta. 1932.*

*The author's mother and stepfather. 1956.*

remember a time when I was not ready to go on a real safari.

In 1937 my parents finally divorced. My mother married Charles Percy Nicholson in 1938, and my brother and I automatically adopted his name. The Nicholson family owned a 9,000-acre farm at the lower northern end of the Subukia Valley. The homestead was about twelve miles from the Solai railway station, the terminus of a spur line running north from the main Uganda line at Rongai. The property was called Benton Farm, later to be changed to White Rocks on account of the considerable diatomite outcrops in the surrounding hills. Like most other settlers, the Nicholson family were having a tough time, with the added burden of huge swarms of desert locusts that wiped out the grazing and crops. Hoppers laid by the adult swarms repeated the process. Beef cattle, sheep, pigs, and chickens had been established on the farm, along with limited agriculture such as maize, fruit trees, and vegetables. It was still a wild bit of country, with assorted antelope, zebra, an occasional lion, and even more rarely elephant.

Leopards, spotted hyenas, lesser cats, mongooses, baboons, and vervet monkeys were also there in considerable numbers. My stepfather Percy, who was not a hunter, had discovered a few years previously, to his cost, that you do not take creatures such as leopard lightly. One leopard had been regularly killing sheep. Percy was called out early one morning by one of the Kipsigi herders to deal with a leopard at that moment feeding on a sheep it had killed. In his ignorance, he did not hesitate to collect his rifle

and ammunition and go down the hill with the herder to the sheep *boma*. Several Kipsigi armed with spears and clubs were gathered there. They all followed the drag mark, clearly visible in the early morning light and dew. The leopard had dragged the sheep three hundred yards into a patch of thorn thicket, backed by a steeply rising, stony hill. As the mob approached the thicket with Percy at the fore, he saw the leopard slinking away up the slope, having abandoned the carcass in the thicket. He fired and hit the animal. It went down but was immediately on its legs again and disappeared into some bush on the slope. Two of the herders quickly went up the hill, well clear of the thicket, and positioned themselves above the point where the leopard had disappeared. Percy, with the rest of the men, went directly to the bush area where the animal had vanished. He went straight in where it had disappeared, followed by the rest of the men. It was thick in there, and the leopard is difficult to see at the best of times. He had his rifle at the ready and had only gone a few yards when there was a grunting roar and the leopard was on him, chewing at his left leg. It all happened in seconds; he was knocked to the ground and lost hold of his rifle. At this moment the Kipsigi entered the fray, spearing the animal and bludgeoning it over the head until it was dead. Percy was badly mauled in the leg and was taken back to the house, where the wounds were cleaned and dressed. By next morning septicemia had set in, so he was taken to the hospital at Nakuru, a distance of about thirty-five miles over a rough road.

There was no penicillin or any other antibiotic in those days, and the doctors were unable to stop the sepsis spreading from the deep wounds. To save Percy's life they had

*Angry male leopard. Note flattened ears. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

to amputate his leg halfway up the thigh. He made a good recovery and learned to get around reasonably well and to drive with his artificial leg. From that day on, troublesome leopard on the farm were killed in baited traps, and quite a few met their end in this way. Of all the African game animals classified as dangerous, the leopard is, in my opinion, the most prone to attack man if it has been wounded. When others attack, it is usually after a lot more provocation. Today, with modern drugs and quick communications and transport, a leopard mauling is seldom fatal, and the patch-up job saves both limb and life. Back in the 1930s, however, septicemia from leopard and lion maulings frequently ended in amputation or death.

It is not easy to stop an attacking leopard. It is a small target, difficult to see and very fast, and it can inflict deep and dangerous wounds in a few seconds. My stepfather was lucky to survive that mauling and was always grateful to the Kipsigi herders for what they did that day. One of them also got slightly mauled; he made a good recovery and was forever proud of his battle scars.

The homestead on Benton Farm was located on top of a rocky hill, with fine views across the Rift Valley to the high twin peaks of Marmanet. One could also see north and south along the Rift, the whole offering a splendid panorama. Like most settler homes at that time, ours was built of mud walls and a thatch roof, with glass-paned windows, wooden doors, and a wooden floor. As one walked, the vibrations of the boards would cause the termites to rattle underneath. Once or twice a year during the rains, swarms of *siafu,* a species of carnivorous ant, would invade the property. When this happened we would camp out for a day or two until the swarm moved on. These ants were a blessing in disguise, for in their search for food they penetrated every nook and cranny in the house, and wiped out every living thing from snakes and rodents to cockroaches, termites, and other vermin. There were no rattling termites under the floor after such a visit, and the house was free of crawling bugs for a long time afterward. You have to live in a primitive property without modern insecticides to appreciate the true value of the *siafu*.

My brother and I used to sleep in an outhouse constructed of the same materials as the main house, except that it had a corrugated iron roof. A couple of leopard skins were nailed to the mud walls, and the windows were always wide open. In my imagination it conjured up an air of being on safari in the wilds. This was a semi-tamed piece of Africa. On bright moonlit nights I loved to listen to the sounds that add something special to the African night. Gazing out the window into the silver moonlit world, the calls of nightjars, scops owl, a distant hyena or jackal, and rarely the sawing cough of a leopard lent a sort of magic to the dark outline of the hills and the deep shadows across the valley. I would imagine movements under bushes and look around at the leopard skins on the walls to be sure there was no movement there. I would creep into bed under the blankets for security and warmth, and wake up at dawn to the distant booming of ground hornbills in the cold clear air.

My first gift from my stepfather was an air rifle and a box of five hundred pellets. This became my most treasured possession, and I carried it everywhere on the farm. There were a great many doves in the area of the pigsties and maize crib located half a mile from the house, and I spent much time hunting them. It was not a powerful gun, and by trial and error I found that to kill a dove I had to be within twenty feet of it. My ambition early on was to be able to bring home a sufficient number to make

a "pigeon pie." I succeeded in doing this many times, and I am sure it helped to keep the larder stocked. I also enjoyed ambushing ground squirrels. These little animals lived in the rocky hillside near the maize crib and used regular paths, or runs, to come down and feed off the stored cobs. I would conceal myself and sit motionless ten or fifteen feet from the run during the quietest and hottest hours of the early afternoon, when no people were around. The air gun would be resting against my right shoulder and across my knees. All I had to do was to line it up on the run with virtually no movement and squeeze off the trigger as the squirrel moved into the gun sights. It was very successful, and I really believed I was helping the farm by eliminating some of these pests. However, I got into serious trouble one day, and took a good beating from Percy for my misdemeanor.

It was one of those situations where, knowing the feeble power of the air rifle, I could not cause serious injury. I acted on impulse against all the rules I had been taught. I was sitting motionless and well concealed under a bush one hot afternoon, waiting for squirrels. Suddenly one of the Luo labourers, who worked at the nearby pigsties, appeared at the end of the maize crib. Looking around and seeing nobody, he helped himself to a couple of cobs and then ambled away with the loot into the bush to my front, about fifteen yards away. He had no idea I was there and, turning his back to me, dropped his shorts, squatted down, and proceeded to relieve himself. I could not resist the temptation and, targeting the shiny black backside, sent a pellet into his left buttock. The results were astonishing. He cut off what he was doing and leapt into the air, dragging his shorts up, and crashed away in panic through the bush. Not wishing to be discovered by this fellow after what I had done, I slipped away from the vicinity. Whether he took his stolen cobs with him I do not know, but later that afternoon Percy summoned me. There on the table was an air gun pellet. It seems that the man thought he had been bitten by a snake, not remembering the feeble pop of the air gun in his state of shock, and came to report for medical assistance. The pellet was embedded just under the skin and was soon extracted. Hence the summons, lecture, beating, and confiscation of the gun for the rest of the school holidays. To this day I do not regret what I did; to me it was administering a sort of rough justice.

*Left to right: Author, nine years old, and elder brother Gerald at Benton Farm, 1939.*

The pigsties in those days were crudely constructed of poles cut on the farm, sunk into the ground and partitioned into pens, the whole being covered by a thatched roof. There was always plenty of grain and mash lying around, which attracted hordes of doves and other seed-eating birds. It was an ideal hunting ground for me with my air gun. Occasionally hyena and leopard prowled around the pigsties at night. The leopard were invariably looking for piglets. They would get into a sty containing a sow and her piglets, seize one and make off with it before the sow could protect her young. On rare occasions a sow would attack the leopard and drive it out, but she would be clawed and bitten about the face and back. The leopard always escaped and the sow recovered. The greatest damage was done by hyena. These scavengers were unable to climb over the poles forming the pen. There were gaps close to the ground between some of the poles due to a bend in the timber, or where the pigs inside had forced a gap between two uprights. For some reason the pigs seemed to prefer sleeping with a snout pushed through any available gap so that it protruded into the open. A hyena sniffing about during the night would find this tidbit and with one bite would tear off the whole end section of the pig's snout. There would be uproar in the sty, and the hyena had long since departed with his hors d'oeuvre by the time anyone arrived to investigate the cause of the trouble. One would find another snoutless pig, which would have to be destroyed. Such were the hazards of rearing pigs in the African bush. The attacks of lion, leopard, and hyena on sheep, calves, and cattle were even more destructive. Leopard in particular seemed to go berserk when inside an enclosed space with the smaller livestock or with chickens and ducks, and would lash out at and kill anything that moved.

From the time of my mother's marriage to Percy Nicholson, my brother and I were fully accepted into the family. I do not recall ever being made to feel as if I did not belong, and for this I will always be grateful. Over the next several years my mother and Percy had five more children, two of whom, including the only girl, died in infancy. The oldest—Harry—and I were too far apart in age to ever be close friends, and this was also true of the two younger boys, John and Michael. Percy took on the burden of supporting my brother and me, and I was never aware of any resentment on his part. He was a disciplinarian to some extent but was also very patient and good-natured. For reasons I am unable to understand, I never really felt close to him. For his part, he did his duty toward us and was always quite agreeable to our doing as we pleased out on the farm during the day.

I preferred to be out in the bush hunting doves, and later on I hunted larger game with more powerful weapons. I was often accompanied by one or more of the Kipsigi herders, particularly to the more remote and wilder parts of the farm. My stepfather, who had little interest in hunting and who in addition had the handicap of having only one leg, was never part of this. Consequently, a close companionship developed between Arap Chuma, one of the Kipsigi herders, and me. At a later stage a Kikuyu called Mwangi, who was employed as a guard against buffalo on the wheat fields, became my constant hunting companion. These two men taught me the rudiments of bush lore and hunting skills during my adolescent years. I still remember them as good friends and teachers.

My serious education started in 1938, when my brother and I were sent to boarding school at Nakuru. I moved up through the grades until the end of 1942, when I passed the entrance examination for the Prince of Wales School at Nairobi. I completed my formal education at this school in November 1946. Throughout this period the school year was divided into three terms

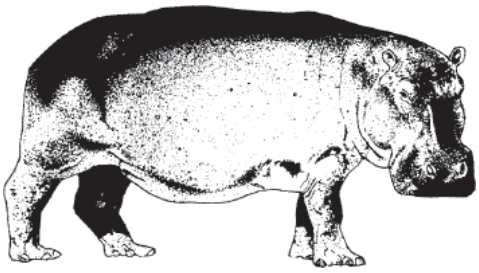
with a holiday of four to six weeks at the end of each term. At this time all students returned to their respective homes. After the drudgery of academic study, the holiday periods were the highlights of the year. They meant for the most part freedom from rules, freedom to wander off into the bush with gun and dog, and, equally important, freedom from what can honestly be said was dreadful food. I cannot deny, though, that I received a sound education and learnt some discipline. More important, I learnt something about people and made some very good friends. Fifty years on, some of these friendships still endure.

The fact that World War II was in progress during most of this period did not make things easier for the education authorities. All sorts of items, from fuel to exercise books and various foods, were in short supply. I well remember wildebeest and camel carcasses being delivered to the school kitchens for our consumption. I also remember a few of the teachers being shabbily treated and disrespected by the students for spurious reasons. One of them—Miss Zoe Goodwin—was known to speak fluent German; we therefore figured she was a Nazi spy and treated her with suitable suspicion and hostility. Over twenty years later this same lady was teaching my own three children at Lushoto School in Tanganyika, and she still had the 1936 car she had owned in my school days.

In those days, from 1938 to 1942, Nakuru School stood on the lower southern slopes of Mount Menengai, an extinct volcano with one of the world's largest craters. The school buildings dominated the surrounding countryside and overlooked what is today Lake Nakuru National Park. The slopes up to the summit of Menengai were empty grasslands where hartebeest, zebra, and eland were to be seen. To the east, the rift floor was open plains with virtually no habitation, all the way around to the acacia thorn forest fringing Lake Nakuru. It was a magnificent panorama, and one could never have imagined that it would become the settled, cultivated, and industrialized scene it is today. One of the schoolmasters, Mr. Harry Whidett, was keen on shotgun shooting. On Sundays the school sometimes went for a walk to a lava-formed kopje called Hyrax Hill. Spread out in line on either side of Whidett, we would be told to walk. Every once in awhile a white-bellied lesser bustard, or a pair, would break cover from the long grass and take to the air. Whidett would bang away with right and left barrels, and if he brought one down one of us would retrieve the bird for him. I suppose today with all these crazy do-gooders around, this might have been considered verging on child exploitation; however, we enjoyed it. The paleontologist Louis Leakey had a camp below Hyrax Hill, and he used to show us flint implements and other prehistoric objects, so one gained a little knowledge also.

# Learning to Hunt

*Chapter 3*



At some time in the early 1920s or 1930s, rainbow and brown trout were introduced into the cold, clear streams rising high up on Mount Kenya. Both species survived and bred, especially the rainbow. Every two years the family would go up there for a couple of weeks for a break from farming. We all enjoyed fishing, but this required more skill than just a baited hook and float if one observed the laid-down regulations. It was not permitted to fish for trout with any bait other than an artificial fly. Since the opportunity to practice such skills seldom came our way, it was necessary to bend the rules to enjoy a measure of success. The first time I was taken on one of these fishing trips was in 1939. I remember it well because World War II broke out while we were at Nanyuki, but we were unfazed by this historic event and carried on anyway. The route up to Nanyuki was via Thomson's Falls and then across the Laikipia Plains and whistling thorn scrub to the rented cottage on the slopes of Mount Kenya. Percy knew the road well enough, as he and his elder brother Tom had been employed in its construction during the Depression years. Never will I forget the vast concourse of wild animals all through this country. There was a constant stampede of zebra, oryx, eland, giraffe, and gazelle the whole way across Laikipia. It was a magnificent and awe-inspiring scene even for me, as a nine-year-old. That journey and in particular the ride across Laikipia has left an indelible imprint on my mind about the way Africa ought to be.

From the cottage where we stayed, on the slopes of Mount Kenya, I hunted the fringes of the nearby forest for olive and green pigeons with my air gun, but the main purpose of the visit for Percy was trout fishing. We normally started around 7 A.M. and finished around 1 P.M. Breakfast and lunch consisted of freshly caught trout cooked over an open fire on the riverbank, with chips, salad, and fresh fruit. These trout, straight from the river into the frying pan, so to speak, made the most delicious fish dishes I have ever had, and my mouth still waters at the memory of it. As for bending the law, my brother and I would disappear along the river far away from where the old man was testing his skill. We had bamboo poles with line, gut,

and hook attached; to complete the formula all we needed was a medium-sized grasshopper. These insects, floating along on a slow current, seemed to exercise an irresistible attraction to rainbow trout. It was not long before we delivered three or four to the frying pan. After breakfast Percy would send us off, first to catch him a few grasshoppers and then to position ourselves up- and downstream about 150 yards from his fishing hole to give early warning of any approaching fish guards. In this manner he would have the honour of providing for the picnic lunch. Keeping watch for the old man was by no means a tedious or dull time. In the trees along the river were troops of colobus monkeys occasionally breaking out into their fantastic hollow, drumming calls. In the forest glades bushbuck and waterbuck were to be seen, and, just to keep one on the alert, fresh buffalo tracks crisscrossed the area.

By 1943 World War II had become a global conflict. The United States had entered the war; Japan had allied with Germany and Italy. Russia was deeply involved, having been invaded by Germany. Huge battles were being fought in Russia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. Nearer home, Italy had been driven out of Somaliland and Abyssinia, but savage conflicts were taking place in North Africa, and the battle for the North Atlantic was at its peak. Everywhere the Allies were on the defensive, and no one knew how it was going to end. The colonial government of Kenya had taken steps designed to assist the British Empire's war effort. The country had become a staging area for troops and war materials convoyed around the Cape en route to the Middle East, Ceylon, and India. The farming community was under orders to grow certain priority crops in specified quantities and was guaranteed a minimum return per acre even if there was total crop failure. After the preceding years of recession, locust plagues, drought, and low prices, this meant a sure income to the farmer no matter what happened. It pulled the majority of farmers out of the demoralizing rut of debt and uncertainty, despite fuel rationing and chronic shortages of materials, fertilizer, and spare parts. Since the family farm was not in the prime agricultural area suitable for the crops in demand, Percy leased a farm fifteen miles to the south at the top end of the Subukia Valley. This was at an elevation of 7,000 feet above sea level, with greater rainfall and better soils. The main crops now became wheat and pyrethrum, both of which were high on the priority list of agricultural products. Benton Farm was put on a purely maintenance schedule, the old farmhouse was abandoned, and the dairy herd, pigs, and sheep were transferred to the new location. Subject to the availability of fuel, Percy visited Benton Farm about once every two weeks to inspect the beef herd, pay wages, and deliver any items required, such as medicines for man and beast, cattle dip, staff rations, and the like. The move to the new farm was accomplished while my brother and I were away at boarding school.

When the end of the term came and we went home for the school holidays, I found myself in a totally unfamiliar environment. This was high-altitude country, cold and wet. The terrain was quite different—undulating open grasslands, forested river valleys fringed by dense bush, and the whole backed by mature highland rain forest. Some of the wild animals that were found at lower altitudes and that favoured different vegetation—notably impala and greater kudu—were missing; and there were no zebra. On the other hand, bohor reedbuck, bushbuck, waterbuck, duiker, and buffalo were quite common. In the mature forest areas, colobus and Sykes monkeys abounded. These forests consisted of great quantities of juniper, Cape chestnut, and Podocarpus, among many other species of fine tall timber, with bamboo at the higher levels.

By the end of the December holiday in 1942 I had a month to explore this new country. In terms of hunting weaponry, I graduated from the air gun to a .22-calibre single-shot rifle and was starting to use a .303 ex-army rifle. The woodwork on the latter weapon had been modified to lighten it and to make it resemble a genuine sporting rifle. Arap Chuma was my constant companion and mentor on these explorations and hunts around the new property. Moving cautiously along the edges of thicket or forest areas in the late afternoon or early morning, we were often successful in bringing home a bushbuck, reedbuck, or duiker. The meat of the waterbuck was not considered good to eat, and although I had many opportunities to shoot one, I only did so once, and the whole of it went to our labour force. Since the new farm had been partially cleared and developed in the past, there was an established labour force of Kikuyu people, collectively known as squatters, on the place. Percy had decided to put his main effort into growing pyrethrum, with wheat as a second crop, and this existing labour force was very welcome. Pyrethrum is a low shrub that has flowers with a yellow centre surrounded by white petals. Once processed, it is a very effective pesticide, and it was in great demand. Picking the flowers was all done by hand by the labour force, together with their women and children. One of the squatters, Mwangi, had been taught to use a rifle by the previous owner and had been employed to keep buffalo out of the maize and wheat crops. He knew the area well, deep into the forest. He and I became good friends and hunted together most of the time.

I was a boarder at the Prince of Wales Secondary School in Nairobi for four years, from 1943 to 1946. I did my academic work, athletics, and team sports along with my colleagues and got my fair share of beatings for various misdemeanors. Many of my contemporaries, like me, had grown up in the bush and had similar interests. It is surprising how many of them were to have lifelong careers in wildlife conservation or become well-known professional hunters. Over the next thirty or forty years they contributed much to the conservation movement in East Africa. It is the fashion today to condemn hunting, but, properly controlled, it is an important aspect of any conservation program. As the human population continues to expand, taking up more and more land, there is a corresponding decrease in space for wild animals. The logical conclusion is that in time there will be no room for wild animals, unless they can be made into a major economic asset to the local people and the country. The professional hunter, with his wealthy, high-paying clients, certainly has a role to play in such a program.

Settlement presents a problem because it utilizes the most productive land for grazing, cultivation, and, in the drier districts, surface water. Many wild herbivores can survive on a far wider range of plants than cattle, and they are also less dependent on water. But when water supplies are protected by fences or other barriers, trees are cut down for various uses, grasses are destroyed by excessive numbers of cattle, and uncontrolled hunting causes frequent disturbance and harassment, it creates an untenable situation for game animals. Migratory animals move out, but often they find themselves facing the same problems in another area, and the migration dies. Animals that are not migratory and that remain within the area are thinned out by harassment, shortages of grazing or browse, and restricted access to available water. Declining numbers and severe competition adversely affect reproduction levels until the species is unable to maintain itself and becomes extinct within the local area. This is a progressive process, and the overall effect is to wipe out most mammalian wildlife over large areas. All over Kenya

and Tanganyika, wild animals have declined to the point of extinction. The situation will continue to worsen, but it could be checked if the local people would understand that they can gain substantial material benefits from proper management and exploitation of the game in their areas. If the local people have no vested interest in the wild game in their areas, then there is no hope for its long-term survival in meaningful numbers and variety. The extensive rangelands and tsetse-infested woodlands, where the human population is low, offer the last refuge for many game species. Their survival depends upon allowing and encouraging the local people to participate in the management of the game population and to share in the revenues derived from it.

During the first term at the Prince of Wales School there was always a certain amount of rivalry among new boys who had arrived from different primary schools. Each of us thought that the boys from other schools were inferior beings. This inevitably caused fights where everyone stood around cheering for their respective heroes. I was no exception, and I got into a fight with a fellow who was a few months older than I. The fight terminated when the free period ended and, surprisingly, did not continue later on. I do not recall what this quarrel was about, but my erstwhile opponent became, and still is, one of my closest friends. His name was Bill Woodley. We discovered that we shared a passion for hunting, wild places, and safari life. His home was on the Athi Plains not far from Nairobi, where he lived with his widowed mother, Laura Woodley.

In those days the industrial area of Nairobi had not started to spread eastward onto the plains. The Woodley home was very close to where the international airport is today. It was a totally undeveloped area, with considerable numbers of gazelle, zebra, wildebeest, and giraffe roaming about. Lion periodically moved through this country, and hyena and jackal were common. Not too far away was Embakasi Station on the Nairobi-Mombasa railway. The whole area, from the railway extending south to the Tanganyika border, was the Southern Game Reserve, and there were no fences or other barriers to impede the movement of animals. The only change the war had brought was the establishment of a huge army disposal dump near the station. Much of the captured weaponry, ammunition, and assorted military equipment was delivered here following the Italian defeats in Somaliland and Abyssinia. Laura Woodley worked at the dump and used to go there every day, and through his mother, Bill had access to equipment deposited there. Over a short period of time he acquired a collection of Italian military rifles and ammunition, which was kept at the house. There was a .22 rifle that predated the war, in addition to a long-barreled Italian infantry rifle of 6.5mm calibre and a short 8mm cavalry carbine. This last weapon we believed was very powerful, because of the gout of flame that erupted from the muzzle every time it was fired. On the top of the breech was stamped, "Hungary . . . Budapest." Because we thought this rifle was exceptionally powerful, we referred to it with some reverence as "the Hungarian Budapest." In fact, it was inaccurate and quite useless for our purposes, and I do not recall that we ever made a kill with it. It was used mainly as a trap gun against troublesome hyenas pestering the home at night.

Our common interests developed into a firm and lasting friendship, and it was not long before Bill was inviting me out to his place on the plains on long weekends. We would sneak out of the school at 4 or 5 A.M. and catch lifts with Africans going to town early on their bicycles. The ten miles or so from town was straight walking. Our route

went straight across the bush, past the Nairobi rubbish tip to Villa Franca Dairy, the owners of which were related to Bill's family. Here we would stop for some refreshment and then walk on across the plains to the Woodley home, arriving around 11 A.M. The old lady always made us very welcome; since she lived alone out there on the plains, she enjoyed the company and especially having her son stay. The usual routine was to clean the rifles we planned to use and then, after lunch, go hunting until evening. If we were successful we would carry the animal—or part of it, if it was too big—on our shoulders back to the house. The following day we would hunt until midday and then have lunch at home, clean the rifles, and start walking and hitching to the school around 2 P.M. Frequently we would arrive back after dark, not too clean, thinking up excuses for being late.

Hunting the Athi Plains was not easy and required a lot of careful and strenuous stalking. The country was flat, covered with open whistling thornbush, short grass, and occasional low mounds. Our usual quarry, Thomson gazelle, were alert and shy. It was rare indeed to successfully creep up onto a herd of these animals in this type of country, for there would always be some on the lookout while the others grazed. Because of this we always searched for a solitary ram. The technique here was to move only when it had its head down grazing and to remain motionless as soon as it started to raise it. This required constant observation of the animal, and with care and patience we would approach to within 150 yards or so and bring the buck down with a well-placed shot. By the time we had disemboweled it, carried it back home dripping with blood, and skinned and cut up the carcass, we were in urgent need of a bath, and our clothes had to be washed. With these chores out of the way, it was a pleasure to relax and reminisce as we waited for our clothes to dry.

When out hunting on the plains one day, I learnt a very sharp lesson in the safe handling of guns. I knew all the rules well enough, but like many youngsters, I sometimes needed a forceful reminder. Three of us were out hunting on this day—Bill, a fellow called Arthur Stephen, and myself. We had a 6.5mm rifle and a .22, the latter for finishing off any animal that was not quite dead. We repeatedly took turns stalking Thomson gazelle without success. It was a hot day, and we were thirsty and frustrated. We were sitting on a low mound debating whether to continue. I was holding the .22 rifle, believing it to be unloaded. Before we had decided what to do next, a small herd of cattle appeared, grazing toward us accompanied by a single herdsman. The idea occurred to us that if we could persuade the herdsman to take his cattle in the direction of some gazelle, we could use them as cover to get within shooting range. So we sat waiting for the cattle to come up. A healthy white cow was in the lead, grazing slowly along until it was about thirty feet from me. I casually said to my two friends, as I lined up the .22 on the cow's head, that if it were a buffalo this is how I would clobber it, and squeezed the trigger. To my astonishment there was a dull-sounding *thwack* as the discharge and impact blended into one. The cow collapsed, dead before it hit the ground. There was total silence for a few seconds; then the rest of the herd started to back off at the smell of blood. The herdsman came up and stared speechless at his dead cow, then looked at us in total dismay. All of us were tongue-tied with shock for a few minutes until the herder, who was a Kikuyu, recovered sufficiently to inform us of the obvious: that we had killed his cow—why? Fortunately he was not a man given

to violence, and we had a long discussion with him as to how this had happened. We explained that it was an accident brought about by a *shaitani* (devil) who had bewitched the gun and put a bullet in it without our knowledge . . . otherwise how could his cow have been killed?

After much further discussion he threatened to report us to the district commissioner and observed that as children we had no business wandering about with guns. The shrewd old guy saw that threatening us with the long arm of the law scared us and promptly demanded fifty shillings in compensation. This was a huge sum of money to us, and between the three of us we could not have raised one-tenth of it. The alternative, as we saw it, was being sent to prison by the district commissioner and all sorts of other problems. We agreed to pay the fifty shillings, hoping that Mrs. Woodley would help us out. So the matter was settled. The old lady gave the herder his fifty shillings and gave all three of us, especially me, a real roasting for careless and dangerous behaviour. It was a lesson I never forgot. To this day the first thing I do with any firearm is to check whether it is loaded or not. I felt very guilty about what had happened, and persuaded my friends that we should try to find some way of reimbursing Mrs. Woodley. We came up with the idea of holding a raffle of twenty cents a ticket at the school, with the first and second prizes totaling twenty percent of the take. Over the next two months we worked hard at this, and by the end of the term we had raised sufficient cash to pay off the prizes and the cost of the cow.

By the age of fourteen I had taken to reading all the books on African hunting I could get hold of. Sutherland, Neumann, Bell, and Selous had become my heroes. Through Bill Woodley I had met two of Kenya's old-time hunter adventurers, John Boyes and Alan Black. They were interesting and unconventional characters. John Boyes, who was known as the king of the Wa-Kikuyu, was a very old man living at Ruaraka near Nairobi when I met him around 1944. He had hunted and traded in the Kikuyu country in the late 1890s and was probably the first white man to establish himself with the Kikuyu tribe. Fortune smiled on John Boyes, for his first contact with the tribe took place in the middle of an interclan fight. The chief of one clan, Karuri, appealed to Boyes to assist him. Boyes used his rifle to good effect, ensuring a victory for Karuri, and they became trusted friends. Taking advantage of this situation, Boyes persuaded the clan to supply him with food to be sold to the labour gangs building the Uganda line. He also organized Karuri's clan to use battle tactics that ensured their success over all their neighbours. In this way the clan, along with John Boyes, became a dominant factor over a large part of Kikuyu land. Boyes was eventually arrested by the British administration, charged with being a brigand, and acquitted. He then became a successful farmer.

Alan Black lived a hermitlike existence on the Athi Plains. Bill and I used to walk to his shack, a single-room corrugated iron shed into which he had reversed his three-ton truck. The back section of the truck was his bedroom, and the dirt floor was covered with game skins. Periodically he would disappear into the low country of Ukambani for weeks at a time—no one knew where—accompanied by one African retainer. As one of the earliest professional "white hunters" of Kenya, his stories of thirty and forty years earlier were fascinating. Like so many of these old-timers, he was a little eccentric. He warned Bill and me never to bring any girls around with us because he liked to lie out

on the roof of his shack with no clothes on. When he died he left considerable wealth; he lived the way he did out of choice.

On a farm neighboring our leased property in Subukia lived an old guy named F. H. Clarke, who had been acting chief game warden of Kenya. He was one of the Lado Enclave ivory hunters in the Congo Free State at the turn of the century. I used to enjoy visiting him to talk about his experiences and browse through his collection of photographs. He also had a marvelous collection of older Africana books, which I read at every opportunity. These were mainly about hunting and exploring country virtually unknown to Europeans. Clarke, apart from being reasonably successful as an ivory hunter, got into several gunfights with Belgian renegades and their local tribal supporters. Like several characters of that era, he was forced out of the Lado Enclave under threat of death.

In the homes of these old-timers, I had no exposure to modern-day coffee-table books, studies about why animals do this and that, or wildlife management techniques. This style of Africana literature became the fashion as international concern for shrinking game areas mounted. For some people it was a means of climbing the social ladder and winning fame. Some of these scribes had doubtful credentials for such status. Scientific game cropping in the 1960s, allegedly on a sustained yield basis, led to the near-extinction of zebra, wildebeest, and other game species on the Athi Plains. Although some of these research projects have produced material of direct benefit to wildlife management, many studies have been purely academic. The most important aspect of all—the relationship between man and wild animals in terms of direct revenues and other benefits to local residents and landowners—appears to have been neglected. This important issue has only recently started to get the attention it merits.

By mid-1944, when I turned fourteen, the high-country environment of the new Subukia farm was no longer strange and unfamiliar to me. Extensive areas of rain forest were a never-ending source of adventure, exploration, and fascination. It was several miles' walk across the open country to the forest edge. Reedbuck, bushbuck, and duiker were to be found in the valleys and riverine forest between the wheat and pyrethrum fields. The real attraction, however, started at the forest edge. Here one started to see evidence of buffalo, waterbuck, and very occasionally elephant. Farther on, deep under the tall canopies of trees, was the abode of colobus and Sykes monkeys and a variety of strikingly plumaged birds: turacos, sunbirds, flycatchers, trumpeter hornbills, and the like.

At one or two places in the forest were open swampy areas fed by crystal-clear springs, each one the hub of a converging maze of game trails. Many game animals visited these places. In late afternoon or shortly after dawn, they could be seen grazing or chewing at selected spots of mineral-enriched earth. These patches of earth, or salt licks, as we call them, were a prime attraction and explained the many trails worn down by generations of animals. This earth is apparently a necessary addition to the vegetarian diet of the herbivorous game. Where there was sufficient water at these places, a variety of herons, jaçanas, and even black- or yellow-billed duck could be seen. Mwangi always said that it would bring us bad luck if we ever shot an animal at these forest salt licks, because God had made them just for the game. I never did shoot any animal there, but I spent many hours watching the shy, secretive creatures emerge from the surrounding cover to graze, nibble at the mineral-rich dirt, or drink.

The few small buffalo herds in these forests were timid and only came into the open well after dark, retreating to dense cover before dawn. They had been in conflict with the farming community for years. White farmers and their African employees had shot them at night in the wheat fields and at salt licks, and their numbers were much depleted. During the day they were hunted with packs of dogs, making them easy prey for any man with a modern rifle or for parties of Africans armed with spears. Prior to the agricultural expansion in this general area, there had been a demand for buffalo-hide shields from western Kenya. In this connection a number of white professional buffalo hunters and their armed African assistants killed great numbers of these animals, reducing the herds to a fraction of what they had once been. The remaining buffalo abandoned their former strongholds in the more open country and sought permanent shelter in the dense forests along the slopes of the Rift Valley.

In my wanderings throughout these forest areas with Mwangi, we did accidentally come across buffalo a few times. It was always in dense forest where visibility was poor. We heard them crashing away in panic more often than we saw them. When we did see them, it was invariably a brief glimpse of a black object through the tangle of leaves and sticks as the animals stampeded away. Indeed, buffalo have an acute sense of hearing, scent, and

*The author at fifteen, at Top Farm. 1945.*

sight, and after years of harassment and butchery have learned to always be on the alert. Some of the really old bulls become an exception to this endowment of highly developed senses and suffer from deafness and possibly failing eyesight. I believe it was because of this that I had my first close encounter with the species where I could actually observe the whole animal in the clear.

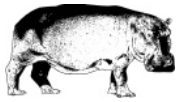
Mwangi and I were deep inside the forest, which stretched southward from the farm boundary. After sitting out a rain shower beneath massive trees, we came out into a large glade in the forest at about 5 P.M. There was no wind, and everything was wet and conducive to tempting bushbuck, duiker, and other bush-loving creatures out into the open to graze. Patches of secondary bush interspersed by open grassland was the dominant vegetational feature of this glade. It was a promising place for bushbuck in particular, and we edged our way cautiously along the fringes of the thickets, keeping a sharp lookout for any game. Such places, late in the afternoon after rain, give one a strong feeling of expectancy that grows as one moves along.

I was following behind Mwangi carrying the .303 rifle. We were making our way northward in the general direction of the farm and home. At this stage we were following a narrow game trail, which led us to a neck of dense vegetation not far from the forest edge. I took the lead and followed the trail through some twenty or thirty yards of bush with zero visibility. Up ahead I could see light through the leaves, indicating open grasslands. As we moved into the open, Mwangi gripped my arm and directed my attention to the left. Standing there broadside on was a solitary buffalo bull. When I saw the bull it raised its head from grazing and stared at us from a distance of fifteen or twenty yards. The bull was huge and very black. At such close range, the massive head and horns with glowering eyes below was an awesome sight and far surpassed anything I had imagined about these great beasts. Mwangi was whispering, *"Piga!"* (shoot) in an effort to induce me to act, but I did not oblige him. The overpowering presence of this powerful animal had hypnotized me as the tension built, and we eyeballed each other across the narrow space. Before I could recover and collect myself, the buffalo let out a snorting expulsion of air and crashed away into the thicket, rapidly distancing itself from us.

For me this was a most powerful, adrenaline-charged experience. I admit that until I calmed myself my hands trembled visibly. Mwangi, who had hunted buffalo with some success for years, chastised me for not shooting the bull and concluded that I was too young for this type of hunting. Buffalo generally are not aggressive animals, but they can be lethal when injured. These solitary old bulls also may react violently if stumbled on at close quarters. The warning calls of tick birds, or the sound of heavy breathing if the animal is lying down, serve as an early warning to backtrack and avoid a close confrontation. But if there is no such warning and the first contact is at close range, it is an even chance whether the bull will attack or run away. Similarly, if one shoots an animal and fails to incapacitate it with the first shot, the odds of the animal attacking after receiving the first bullet increase if it has seen you within a few yards before the action starts. Looking back on that first encounter, and having had much experience with buffalo since, I believe that my failure to fire at it may well have saved me from being gored or fatally injured. In that situation, I would have been required to kill the bull dead in its tracks by shooting it in the brain, and I would not have done that; I would have shot for the heart through the shoulder. My weapon was

a .303-calibre rifle, and if the animal had come for me there was no way I could have stopped it, nor could I have avoided it. The result would have been very different from what actually happened.

Mwangi had protected the wheat fields at night for two or three more years when his employment in this capacity came to an abrupt end. He was out on his usual nightly patrols around the wheat fields, armed with an ex-Italian 8mm rifle. This weapon had no extractor, so that after every shot the empty cartridge remained stuck in the chamber. Before reloading, a straight metal rod had to be inserted down the barrel to knock out the expended cartridge case. Spare extractors were not available, but Mwangi was content to use what in effect had become a single-shot rifle. He carried a length of heavy-gauge fencing wire to knock out the expended cartridge case after firing. This served its purpose well enough, but after a time he became a little careless and carried the rod thrust down the barrel for convenience. There came a night when he stumbled upon a small group of buffalo in the wheat. In the excitement of the moment the inevitable happened. He forgot to remove the metal ramrod from the barrel and fired at the buffalo. The breach and magazine chamber blew up, leaving him with serious injuries. His right hand was so badly mangled that he could never use a rifle again, and his left eye was destroyed. He was taken to hospital in Nakuru and the wounds healed over, but he never hunted or used a rifle again. At least he had his own house and a plot of cultivated land on the farm. His family all lived there, so he never became a destitute cripple. Like so many Kikuyu of that generation, he disappeared during the Mau Mau Rebellion, and I do not know whether he survived those awful years.



# First Big-Game Hunts

*Chapter 4*

My formal education came to an end in 1946, when I completed the final examination for what today is called the general certificate of education. This meant I could read and write and do mathematics up to a certain level and that I had studied such subjects as English grammar and literature, history, geography, languages, some sciences, and art. I was sixteen and had long since decided upon a career for which my upbringing, lifestyle, and interests had left little choice. My parents did not try to influence me in other directions. They agreed that a job as a game warden in the Kenya Game Department was the best slot for me. I was still too young and inexperienced to be considered for such an appointment; therefore, it was up to me to gain experience over the next few years and then apply for any sort of vacancy.

The first opportunity came through my good friend Bill Woodley during my last term at school. Over the preceding two years he had maintained a friendship with a retired Indian army cavalry officer named Colonel Charles Marriott. The colonel was a tough old soldier who had served in World War I. He came out of retirement at the start of World War II to serve as commandant at the battle training school near Nakuru. Later he was in charge of a Polish refugee camp in the Makindu area. He was a keen big-game hunter, and had done his share of pig sticking and tiger hunting in India. In the Makindu area he indulged himself by taking out various game licenses, including those required for elephant and rhino. In those days, game of all sorts was plentiful there, and it was possible to go out for a morning or afternoon hunt and collect any one of the game animals classified as dangerous. At the end of the war he resumed his retirement and moved into one of the railway quarters at Makindu. No one seemed to question his right to be there, and he stayed there for several years. This became his base for safaris into the low country of Ukambani. How Bill came to meet him I do not know, but I believe the colonel, underneath his hardboiled exterior, was a kind and generous but lonely man. He and Bill became like father and son. The colonel had taken Bill hunting for elephant and rhino many times, and he was now considered competent to do it on his own.

One weekend I met the colonel out at the Woodley home. Much to my delight, he invited me to join him and Bill at Makindu once the final examinations were over. I do not remember how it was set up, but my stepfather and the colonel met and agreed about the visit to Makindu. Furthermore, my stepfather bought me an elephant and rhino license. Suitable rifles were no problem; the colonel had an array of weapons, including two .470 double rifles, a Rigby .416 and a .350, plus a .318 Westley Richards, all in superb condition. For me this was an opportunity beyond compare. The drudgery of the final exams came to an end, and that same day Bill and I were collected by the colonel. We spent the night at the Woodley home out on the Athi Plains. The next day we took the long, dusty road to Makindu. This was November 1946, the start of my first genuine safari.

We spent several days at Makindu, waiting for the colonel's regular tracker and hunting small game for meat for the table. I also shot the rhino for which I had a license. At that time this whole area was virtually uninhabited by man, apart from small settlements clustered around the railway stations. Game was plentiful, particularly in the country lying between the railway and the Chyulu Range to the south. Rhino were common and could be seen without difficulty in any direction one took. The ease with which I took this first rhino was an anticlimax to all that I had anticipated, for this species was reputed to be meaner and more ferocious than most other large game animals. There was no sense of achievement, skill, or danger in shooting this great creature. To me it was comparable to shooting a domestic animal, like a sick bullock or mule, and I had mixed feelings about what I had done. I never took out another rhino license, and apart from two rhinos that I had to destroy in defense of life, I never personally hunted or killed another. Later, as a professional hunter, I accompanied several clients and collected rhino trophies but privately never approved of this. The rhino has good hearing and scent but poor vision. Its greatest handicap appears to me to be its very limited and sluggish brainpower. It can be a difficult and dangerous animal in dense cover and will attack or demonstrate even in open country, where other animals will take the opportunity to escape. Sometimes it will simply move around in circles in a state of apparent confusion, then rush at objects that have no connection with the original source of disturbance. It invariably becomes alarmed by the calls of disturbed tick birds but frequently fails to take advantage of this timely warning to distance itself from the danger. Such is the rhino, with its low-capacity brain. It is hardly surprising that, with its valuable horn, it easily succumbed in later years to spears, bows and poisoned arrows, and poachers' guns, to the point of extinction in East and Central Africa. I have enormous concern and sympathy for these simpletons of the bush, and it all started with that first "rhino hunt" over fifty years ago.

The colonel, Bill, myself, and Mwanzia, the senior tracker, left Makindu at dawn one morning in the old GMC truck, with the intention of collecting an impala for food. We had our meat supply early on and, after loading it into the truck, drove on toward the Chyulus. The country was open parkland with occasional baobab and euphorbia trees scattered about, along with acacias and large clumps of thicket. The scenery was made even more attractive by the small herds of zebra, fringe-eared oryx, impala, and eland that could be seen as we traveled across the plains. Then we saw a solitary bull rhino, quietly browsing about half a mile away. Every

other animal in sight was aware of us and on alert. Only the rhino was oblivious to everything other than what it was feeding on. The colonel said I should take this animal on my license, as it was a mature bull with a reasonable-size horn. He and I walked several hundred yards directly toward the rhino, which continued to browse, quite undisturbed by a *kongoni* snorting its alarm nearby. I had the .318 loaded with solids ready for use. At about 120 yards, the tick birds riding on the rhino started to *chrr, chrr* in alarm. It ignored this until we were about one hundred yards, with the birds making ever more noise. At this point the rhino turned to face us directly with its head high, clearly concerned that all was not well. The colonel indicated that I should shoot it. I lined up the .318 on the centre of its chest and fired. The rhino went to its knees, then recovered and for a minute or two spun around in circles, emitting gasping squeals, and finally collapsed dead.

Mwanzia was ecstatic, for the carcass provided him and his family with an unlimited meat supply. The colonel and Bill congratulated me on making a clean kill. The only person who was not happy was I, although I tried not to show it. I felt that this was not a hunt but an execution, that it in no way measured up to what a big-game hunt should be. There was no tracking, no danger, no skill, and no test of endurance. To me, killing this apparently blind, deaf, and very stupid creature with such ease put me in the same category as a beef slaughterhouse employee, killing equally dumb and stupid beasts. I felt no exhilaration at what I had done, only a feeling of depression and regret. The patience and stalking skill to get a single small antelope or gazelle in my previous hunting, and the unforgettable thrill of my first close encounter with a buffalo, were a yardstick against which I measured this experience.

At that time there were tens of thousands of rhino distributed throughout Kenya and Tanganyika. The game department was forever having to shoot them in various localities because of crop damage or harassment of people and livestock. In fact, at this very time a massive destruction of rhino was in progress in the Makueni area of Ukambani. It was carried out by J. A. Hunter, one of the best-known and most successful professional white hunters between the First and Second World Wars. The operation became known as "The Great Makueni Rhino Hunt." Hunter and his African game control scouts destroyed over one thousand of these animals in the Makueni area to make way for a new Kamba settlement scheme that was planned by the colonial administration. One could not have foreseen that less than forty-five years later the entire rhino population throughout the East African territories would be nearly exterminated by poachers and traders to supply the insatiable demand for its horns in Asia and the Middle East. The remnants, amounting to a few hundred animals today, are confined to heavily guarded pockets in national parks, game reserves, and areas of privately owned land.

A few days after this rhino hunt, an old friend of the colonel's arrived from India. His name was De Wet Van Ingen, and he was to join us on an elephant safari. De Wet was of Afrikaans origin. His story is unusual and came about as a result of the Anglo-Boer war, 1899–1903. The Van Ingen family, including De Wet, were deported from South Africa by the British and interned in India for the duration of the war. When the war ended, it seems the family elected to remain in India, and they have been there ever since as fully integrated Indian citizens.

Having collected all our trackers and camp staff, we set off for the Yatta Plateau and the Tiva River. J. A. Hunter, with whom we had discussed the most promising areas for bull elephant at his Kiboko camp, had suggested this area based on his long experience in Ukambani. The rough and dusty road snaked through the monotonous wilderness of Commiphora thicket and low woodland, the horizon broken by the summit of the Yatta Plateau. A line of greenery appeared as we approached the Athi River. We crossed at midday and then climbed the lower slopes of the plateau to pass through what was known as the Yatta Gap. Evidence of elephant was visible at the river, where piles of droppings were scattered along the road. Later we turned off the main road at Ikutha and followed a bush track through seemingly endless flat bush country. The monotony was enlivened by plenty of elephant and rhino sign. Late in the afternoon a gentle descent brought us to the banks of the Tiva River. At the crossing there was water seeping across the sand for a few yards. At other points nearby it was below the surface, and a shallow pit scooped out to a depth of two or three feet was enough to provide an unlimited supply of clear, filtered water. This pattern was repeated at long intervals along the otherwise dry, sandy watercourse.

We set up camp under some shady acacia trees on the riverbank. We spread a large ground sheet on the flattest surface available, then set up four camp beds, a couple of collapsible tables, and enough chairs, and that was it. The kitchen fire and the staff area were a few yards away. This complete, Bill and I took a rifle and wandered off along the sandy *lugga*, as it is called locally. The whole *lugga* was littered with both old and fresh droppings of elephant, rhino, buffalo, various antelope, and zebra. A mass of game trails led down to the water, paralleling the banks on both sides. Of necessity, game of all sorts came here to drink; it seemed to be the animal "Mecca" I had read about with such envy in the old books on African hunting. We examined the elephant tracks with special interest, identifying those of solitary and small groups of bulls as well as those of cow herds with their calves. In addition, there were rhino tracks everywhere. They, like the elephants, dug deep down into the sand to get at the water below. It was evident that buffalo, zebra, and other animals used the water thus exposed. I felt at last I had truly found the Africa of my dreams. In this harsh, arid bush country, any surface water becomes a little oasis in the dry season. The larger mammals are drawn to it out of necessity, as are a host of smaller creatures—such as the lesser cats, the mongoose, and rodents at night, and primates, birds, and insects by day. One only had to observe the maze of small tracks on the damp sand to be aware of this. Great flocks of fire finches, waxbills, and queleas were about the water all day. Doves, speckled pigeons, and sand grouse had their favourite times. Vultures and tawny eagles visited during the hotter hours of the day. I never actually saw vultures drinking; their main activity seemed to be bathing in the shallow water, presumably for cooling purposes. They would then sit around on the sand, their wings spread to dry out.

There were no villages close to this section of the Tiva River, and the only people who passed through occasionally were Kamba honey hunters and, even less frequently, the nomadic Orma with their scraggly scrub cattle. Bill and I returned to camp before dark, and before we retired for the night, it was decided that the colonel and I would hunt in one direction and Bill and De Wet would work elsewhere.

Bull elephants are less dependent on water than cows with their calves. The feeding grounds can be many miles away, and in that case they come in to drink only once in three or four days. Chewing up the succulent sansevieria is a means of supplementing their water content, as evidenced by the great wads of chewed, crushed, and discarded fibre from this plant scattered along the trail. One could never be confident of tracking and catching up with these bulls in a single day, and if one hoped to do it within that time, the hunter had to be away at first light.

For the next few days we spent our time following up the spoor of bull elephants. Mwanzia and his assistant, with their tracking skills, were an indispensable part of any success we hoped to achieve. The appearance and size of the tracks indicated whether it was likely to be an old bull, as did the size and structure of the droppings deposited along the way. The size and roughness or smoothness of the imprint in the dust gave a clue as to whether it was an old or a much younger animal. Large droppings, containing poorly digested vegetable matter, suggested it was not only a large-bodied animal but an old one, for its molars were worn out. The tusks of an elephant grow throughout its life, with the steepest growth curves during its later years. Elephants also continue to grow in body size, at least for the greater part of their lives. From this, one develops the theory that the bigger and older the bull, the better the prospects of its carrying large tusks. It is a good rule of thumb but is by no means certain. Genetic factors play their part, causing considerable variation among individual animals in the growth rate of body and tusks and in skull structure and size. Some bulls never attain large body or tusk size; others may have relatively small body size but carry large tusks. One follows the largest tracks because generations of elephant hunters, who did not have our superior knowledge of genetics and dentition, obtained the heaviest ivory by doing this.

The great value of a man like Mwanzia, or any other good tracker, is his ability to keep on the trail of an individual elephant all day long. It may sound easy to track such a large, heavy creature, but in practice it is difficult. The elephant leaves little evidence of passage over hard ground, and tracking is even more difficult when there is a covering of dry grass that is pushed, bent, and flattened by other elephant before and after the passage of the animal one is tracking. Mwanzia was an accomplished artist at unraveling these problems, following the spoor at normal walking speed most of the time, slowing up only slightly to pick his way through a maze of other tracks. Occasionally, when there was complete obliteration, we would have to cast in an arc well ahead to regain our trail.

We followed up bull elephant for four days, starting at dawn and arriving back at camp at dusk. Bill and De Wet killed a bull with moderate-sized tusks during this period, but the colonel and I were not successful. We actually caught up with our quarry on the fourth day. We had several encounters with rhino and twice were forced to remove ourselves smartly from the vicinity as one of these beasts crashed through the dense cover in our direction. Elephant bulls, some alone and others in twos or in small groups, were drinking nightly at the Tiva. We usually heard the cows and calves at the water early in the evening. They seemed to time their departure from the watering point to feed slowly through the more open country during the hours of darkness. By dawn they would be in much denser cover on the Yatta Plateau. The dense bush offered security and browse during the daylight hours. This was hot, dry country, with water available only at isolated points along the Tiva riverbed.

It was particularly hard on the colonel to follow up these bulls from the water for several hours and then make the long trek back to camp. He was no longer a young man, and he had problems with his feet. He needed to rest more and more frequently as the day progressed and by early afternoon had to stop every hour. The elephants were several hours ahead of us at the start, so it was not surprising that we did not catch up with them for the first three days. Young and keen to get my first elephant, I was understandably disappointed at the repeated failure to even catch up with the elephants, but it was not time wasted. Watching Mwanzia and his fellow trackers at work was an education in itself. After leaving the water the bulls would meander about, feeding in the more open country, heading in the general direction of the Yatta. At some hour before dawn this haphazard wandering would stop, and the spoor would hold in a steady direction toward the Yatta. When this happened, Mwanzia would comment, "They are going home now"—home meaning dense cover in which to spend the day. Once they had penetrated the fringe of the Yatta thickets, signs of feeding would start again. We would follow on until 2 or 3 P.M. in order to be back in camp by dark.

The first three hours of the day were the best. The slanting early morning sunshine defined the tracks in sharp relief against the surrounding red earth. During these early hours, many creatures of the bush were still on the move. I would see the occasional antelope, *kongoni,* and impala in the more open areas, the odd jackal trotting away or watching us from a safe distance, and dik-dik on the edge of the thickets. Bird life was active, with francolins, guinea fowls, coucals, and hornbills going about their business. A few flights of sand grouse would pass overhead on their way to water at the Tiva, and at a lower level, doves in small groups were winging their way to the same destination.

We left camp at first light on the fourth morning, but this time we omitted the customary search for fresh tracks at the water. Instead, we cut across at an angle and went directly to the base of the Yatta Plateau. The objective was to save time and to gain ground on any elephant that had drunk during the night by cutting their spoor far out from the water. If successful, this plan would save us much time following their erratic course as they browsed during the night. An hour and a half later we cut the tracks of three bulls, one large, the other two much smaller. The trackers studied these for a few minutes and decided the big bull was worth following. A mile farther on, at the start of the dense bush, we had to run for cover behind the larger trees as a rhino rushed puffing past us, out of sight but very close. Assembling again, we pressed on until our three bulls appeared to join up with a herd of cows and calves. Here, cow tracks were imprinted over those of the bulls and vice versa. It was evident that they had all been at this point at the same time. It took Mwanzia some time to sort out this puzzle, but eventually the bulls separated from the herd and settled down to an erratic course feeding through the bush.

Well before midday and despite several rest stops, it was clear that we were gaining rapidly on our quarry. We were now on top of the plateau, and the elephant droppings were intact. Elephant droppings attract birds and insects looking for food inside the piles of poorly digested vegetation. Crested francolins, hornbills, and even coucals break it up searching for undigested berries and insects. Scarab or dung beetles and others shape it into balls in which they lay their eggs or larvae after rolling them away to a suitable sight to

be buried. The larvae hatch and the ball of dung becomes their food supply. Once daylight has arrived, it does not take long for these various creatures to locate the moist droppings and break them up.

On one or two of the deposits dung beetles were arriving with a loud buzzing of wings. Breaking open the droppings, we found they were still slightly warm in the centre. While we were having a short rest and a swig of water, Mwanzia volunteered the information that there was a shallow depression on the plateau nearby, choked with dense evergreen bush. It was his opinion that our trio of bulls was bound for this safe haven. It was now nearly 2 P.M. The heat was intense, and what little breeze existed was erratic, eddying about in the undergrowth. Sweat bees, or *ndwazi*, plagued us in their search for moisture, getting into our eyes, noses, and ears. We were suddenly brought up short by the crack of a breaking branch ahead. We were getting close to the bulls, and as we cautiously progressed in poor visibility, the tension and excitement mounted.

The colonel and I double-checked our rifles and spare ammunition. Mwanzia was in the lead, followed by the colonel and me, with the other tracker bringing up the rear. It took another twenty minutes before the next warning came—a deep rumble followed by a great sigh of expelled air and the flapping of ears. We could not see anything in the dense cover, but it seemed very close to me. Moving forward cautiously another few yards, the bush thinned out a little and Mwanzia stepped out to one side, pointing to his front. The colonel indicated to me to come up level with him and whispered, "Straight in front of you." I could see the top of what I took to be a termite mound of red earth, partially obscured by leaves about fifteen yards ahead, but I could see no elephant. It took me two or three seconds to understand that the mound was in fact the top of an elephant's back. No other part of the bull was visible, so we started to move to the left in the hope of gaining a view of its head and ivory. At this moment an eddy of wind betrayed us, and with a great gust of expelled air through its trunk, the elephant crashed away through the bush and was immediately joined by the other two bulls.

In the silence that followed this stampede we moved to where the elephants had been resting. Piles of droppings had been deposited onto the churned-up earth and flattened grass. They had clearly been here for some time, each animal having selected a tree that afforded it some shade from the fierce heat of the midday sun. We followed on along the tracks of the fleeing elephants, and soon they all came together and settled down in single file, at the speed and gait that means they do not plan to stop soon. The long days of tracking, with success just out of reach, is a typical experience when hunting wily old bulls. They select dense cover deliberately for security, and I believe they are aware that certain terrain and vegetation cause wind shifts that give them added security from man. It was by now midafternoon, and the colonel's feet were troubling him, so we gave up the hunt and made our way back to camp, arriving there just after dark. So ended my first elephant hunt—disappointing, to be sure, but I had learned a lot and thoroughly enjoyed our days trekking through the bush. Never having seen an elephant before, I had the preconceived idea that they were gray. With their addiction to dust baths, however, elephant take on the colour of the surrounding earth, so my mistaking its back for the top of a high termite mound is understandable.

The safari was over, and I returned home to the farm at Subukia. It was the first half of December 1946, and my stepfather told me on my return that I had a job, which he had negotiated with the well-known game catcher, Carr Hartley. I am sure Carr did this as a favour to my stepfather because of their long acquaintance. The job started in January, and so began a valuable and interesting eleven months of catching wild animals for the world's zoos, which were restocking after the end of the Second World War.

# Game Catching

*Chapter 5*

The Hartley homestead was located on Pesi Estates at the western side of the Laikipia Plateau, close to the edge of the Pesi Swamp. The place was typical of many of the early-style settler homes in Kenya. The main building was oblong and consisted of a dining room with attached kitchen at one end and a lounge room at the other, with a spacious open porch in between. It was built of whitewashed mud walls, covered by a thatched roof over a stone floor. All the outbuildings were rondavels made of the same materials and served as bedrooms, bathrooms, and long-drop toilets. More impressive, in my eyes, were the wild animal holding pens and enclosures, together with a few animals roaming about free or chained to poles at the rear of the main building. There was a semi-adult lion with the beginning of a mane wandering about. It was crippled by rickets and, having been reared from a cub, was quite tame. A buffalo bull was running with the herd of dairy cattle, and it also never caused any trouble. Chained to poles with sleeping boxes at the top were several baboons and a vervet monkey. Only one of these primates was considered really tame. She was an Abyssinian baboon of uncertain temper and was liable to attack anyone not familiar to her. There was also a male cheetah on a collar and chain, which was attached to a running wire between two trees about forty yards apart. The cheetah, when not being exercised on a leash, spent its days lying in the shade waiting for some unwary chicken, duck, or cat to come within reach of its chain at any point along the wire run. It was able to gauge this exactly, and because of its great speed no creature that came within the limits of this perimeter had a chance of survival.

In the holding pens and enclosures farther out were a great variety of captured animals. These included nearly adult rhino; all the large carnivores; giraffe; and a variety of antelope, zebra, and buffalo. There were also several species of mongoose and small cats, and various rodents, insectivores, and birds. Ground hornbills, crested cranes, and the smaller seed-and-fruit-eating birds were in a spacious aviary with wire netting across the top and sides. Ostriches had their own enclosure. Since I had never seen some of these animals before, it

was an education just to go around the holding pens to watch them. Aardvarks, aardwolves, crested and giant rats, striped hyena, and marsh mongoose were all new to me.

On the first day, Carr sat down with me and we went over my duties. He was a strong, powerfully built man about forty years old. He had been in the game business as a hunter, game control officer, and game catcher for many years. He had broad experience, and he had scars to back up stories of his encounters with lion and rhino. Since I was a student at the start of my career and money was in short supply, he could only offer me one hundred shillings a month, plus my keep. I was so keen to get into anything connected with wild animals that this princely offer did not deter me. He told me he wanted me to learn about all the animals and then to supervise their feeding, to treat their obvious and minor ailments, such as open wounds, and to assist him in the capture of animals in the wild whenever this was required. Carr had a warm and friendly personality and was a good teacher. I learned a lot from him during the eleven months I was there, and we remained good friends for years afterward. His wife Daphne was a very different personality. She seemed to be embittered and carried a grudge against the world in general. Carr was often away on business, leaving Daphne nominally in charge of everything. She was a much happier person when all her sons were home from boarding school.

My chastisement of her youngest son Mike on one occasion was probably a tactical mistake. It certainly did not improve the poor relationship between Daphne and me. Mike was about five years old at the time and, in the way children can sometimes pick up bad vibes, was well aware of his mother's antipathy toward me. I suspect that, in an effort to please her, he crept up behind me one early morning when I was having breakfast and drove a large, curved sacking needle into my right buttock, which caused me to leap out of my chair in consternation and some pain. With needle in hand, I grabbed the kid as he tried to scuttle to safety and gave him a hard slap with an open hand on his rear end. He ran bawling to his mother, and she exploded out of her rondavel in a torrent of abuse and threats. I thought she was going to physically assault me. She never asked about the cause of the problem. Having run out of bad words and abuse, she retreated to the hut for the rest of the day with young Mike in tow. Nothing further was ever said about this incident, but I treated her with caution and avoided her company as much as possible thereafter. My relationship with Carr remained good, but with her it never got beyond being polite. Mike grew up to become a competent game catcher and professional hunter and is one of the finest rifle and shotgun shots in Kenya today.

I quickly learned the business of feeding and caring for the animals. In this I had the help and experience of a Turkana employee who was known as Fupi because of his short stature. Many of the caged animals knew him and probably feared him to some extent, because he regularly had to drive them, via a sliding door, from one pen to the next for cleaning purposes. This required a certain amount of prodding with a bamboo pole, which particularly upset the lions, leopards, and hyenas. A few days after my arrival, I was with Fupi in front of a lion-feeding hatch with a barrow full of zebra legs. I opened the hatch and one of the lions, an adult male, pushed his face through, grabbed my right wrist, and tried to pull me through the opening into the cage. It happened so quickly that I was not fully aware of the danger I was in. Fortunately Fupi dropped the zebra meat he was holding and shoved a stick through the wire, yelling loudly, which caused the lion to take fright and release me. I withdrew my arm quickly and closed the hatch. The skin on my wrist

was torn and bruised, but otherwise no damage was done. The feeding routine continued, and now I made sure the lions got zebra meat and not me.

During the first few weeks I spent a lot of time with two female rhino. In the wild, black rhino are unpredictable creatures, frequently aggressive and dangerous. These two animals, captured less than a week before I arrived, were kept in a large stockade. Ropes tied around their hind legs had caused deep cuts that penetrated through the hide into the flesh. The wounds had to be treated every day by smearing sulfathiozol ointment over and into the cuts around the feet. Initially we did this by applying it with a cloth tied to the end of a stick. However, within ten days both rhino had become so docile that I was hand-feeding them lucerne, rubbing their faces with my hand, and calling them and receiving an immediate response. They became so accustomed to my presence and to Fupi's that we started entering the stockade to clean it out or to top up the water supply, while keeping a sharp eye on the rhino. They never once made an aggressive move or showed signs of alarm. The treatment of their leg wounds was both difficult and wasteful, so I decided we could probably do it by hand. They were very fond of the lucerne fodder, so I put a pile of this down by the wall, about nine feet from the gate. The gate consisted of several stout poles lying horizontally across a four-foot-wide gap in the stockade, and I removed the lowest one so that I could escape in a hurry if necessary. We called the rhino up to the gate, and they turned broadside and started to feed on the lucerne, standing side by side with the rear injured legs close to my escape slot. Once they had settled into eating the lucerne, I crept in with my jar of ointment and as gently as possible applied it to the wounds. Fupi and I, sometimes alone, sometimes together, followed this routine until the wounds had healed. It is amazing that an animal that can be so aggressive in the wild becomes docile after such a short time in captivity. The few rhino we captured while I worked for Carr all calmed down very quickly and became equally docile.

Incidents are inevitable when dealing with captive wild animals, especially those that are allegedly tame or semi-tame. My experience with the lion had happened because of my lack of alertness at feeding time. I had another incident with an adult male common duiker, which one could normally handle without any hostile reaction. One day I went into the large enclosure where it was kept with other antelope. As I entered I noticed two female Grant gazelle lying stretched out on the ground. I went over to them and discovered they were both dead, with puncture wounds in the abdomen. Wondering what could have caused this, I became aware of the male duiker approaching me. There was something about its gait that impelled me to stand up from the crouching position beside one of the dead gazelles. As I stood up the duiker rushed at me and spiked my right leg, one horn inflicting a deep wound along the shinbone. Fortunately, there was a heavy unsplit piece of bamboo on the ground beside me. I picked this up, and as the duiker rushed in again I gave it a powerful whack on the side of the head, which stunned it. I made my retreat from the enclosure as the animal recovered and came trotting in my direction again. There were no female duiker in the enclosure, but I felt it had somehow got into a rut condition that was driving it crazy. Bearing in mind the damage it had already done, it had to be removed to a place of isolation. Fupi and I collected a length of heavy sacking material and went back into the enclosure. The duiker, apart from facing us directly as we approached, made no move until we flung the material over it. We grabbed its legs and head as it struggled. We released it into the vacant enclosure and left it there for a few days until it got over its problem, and then returned it to the antelope enclosure. My wound was fairly deep, but it healed up quickly, and I have the scar to this day.

Next, I had a problem with Coco, the female Abyssinian baboon. In general baboons are highly intelligent by animal standards and appear to have deductive powers that go beyond the capabilities of other wild creatures. They normally live in large troops in which there is an established hierarchy dominated by the most powerful male. But those lower down the pecking order will take advantage of any situation, even at the risk of severe chastisement, to further their own interests. This may be sex, food, objects that attract them, or even shade during the heat of the day or a desirable night perch. They seem to be territorial creatures and will move around the area as the food supply dictates. They learn very quickly what is dangerous and what is not. The adult males in particular will go to some length to defend or assist a weaker member of the troop in distress. What appears to be yawning, especially by the mature males, which have very large canine teeth, is in fact a threat display. In today's national parks some of the lodges and permanent camps have an established troop of baboons hanging about them every day. They have become used to people being tolerant and even throwing out food to them. They have consequently lost their fear of man and have become a nuisance. They enter rooms via open windows or doors and generally create havoc inside. Nobody will do anything about it, but a shotgun with small shot, applied at intervals, will very quickly teach them better manners.

Coco knew very well that I was a new boy in the local setup and in the first weeks would open her mouth wide at me in a threat display. Carr could do anything he liked with her. He would sit down on the ground and Coco would squat down behind him, grunting with pleasure as she worked on "de-fleeing" his scalp, muttering to herself and smacking her lips. Some weeks after my arrival, the Hartleys went off to Nairobi on business, leaving me in sole charge of the place. Early one morning I walked out of my rondavel to go and inspect the animal pens. Fortunately, I had very loose-fitting slacks on that day. As I walked past Coco's pole where she was sitting on the ground, she suddenly rushed me, seized me by one leg, and proceeded to tear my slacks to shreds, shrieking with anger. It was quite a shock to find this crazy ape doing her best to tear me up, so I gave her a hefty kick in the ribs with my free leg, which shook her loose. She retreated beyond the reach of her chain and stood gibbering with rage at me. This was a nasty incident, and if not for the slacks my leg would have been badly torn up. I decided that it was essential the baboon understand who her master was, and in such a way that she would never forget it.

I am sure Carr would have approved of what I did next. I am equally sure Daphne would not have done it. Hanging from the pegs in the porchway of the house were several rhino hide whips, or *kibokos*, as they are called. I took one and went straight back to sort out the baboon. She saw me coming, saw what was in my hand, and knew very well what was going to happen. She scampered up her pole and sat in the box at the top making distress noises. She obeyed when I told her to come to me, and groveled at my feet making the half-bark, half-screech of a very unhappy baboon. Holding her by the chain at the collar around her hips, I administered a good thrashing, during which she shrieked and defecated. I then let her go, and she fled to the box at the top of the pole, where she sat grunting and muttering to herself. Some hours later, when she was squatting on the ground, I paid her another visit. She was well and truly humbled, and when I sat down nearby she came over grunting with pleasure and went right into her "de-fleeing" routine as if I were Carr himself. I never had another problem with Coco, and apart from Carr himself I was the only other person who could handle her with impunity.

Game catching means spending 85 percent of one's time looking after captured animals and 15 percent actually catching them. Sometimes we would go away on safari, looking for a particular species, for as long as two weeks. More often it would be a one-day excursion to capture various antelope or zebra on the Laikipia Plains or to place box traps for leopard and other carnivores. There was still a reasonable abundance of game in some areas of Laikipia in 1947, but the war had had its unfortunate effects here too. In many areas the thousands of game animals I had seen along the main road in 1939 had declined to a pitiful remnant. Some of the ranchers and landowners had become heavily involved in biltong production from 1942 onward, under contract to the government. Thousands of tons of dried game meat were produced from buffalo, zebra, oryx, eland, gazelle, and other animals. Biltong was used to feed the African troops of the King's African Rifles, who increased rapidly once the Burma campaign got under way. The common Grant zebra is a prolific breeder, and even though the species had been shot in the thousands during the previous war years, it had made a remarkable comeback in some areas. This population was the staple meat supply for our captive carnivores.

We went out once or twice a week to shoot two or three animals—a complete rear leg for each lion, a shoulder for each leopard and cheetah, appropriately smaller chunks of meat for the mongoose, serval, and small cats, and rather more for the hyenas and jackals. The ground hornbills and secretary birds also required a meat diet, which included any rats we were able to catch. When we were unable to find any zebra, a night hunt for hares using a pickup truck and a powerful spotlight bailed us out. These little animals are extraordinarily plentiful on the Laikipia Plains and are easy to collect. Using a .22 rifle from the truck, a spotlight would hold the hare dazzled until we were within a few yards, when it became easy pickings. It usually took from two to three hours of cross-country driving at night to collect up to thirty or forty hares, which was sufficient to feed all the animals that needed meat. The truck and spotlight was also the easiest way to capture Thomson and juvenile Grant gazelle, which became totally disoriented in the glare of the spotlight. After seizing the animal by hand, one simply had to be careful as it struggled, lashing out with its sharp rear hoofs to inflict a deep cut. The legs would then be tied with straps and the animal was put into a sack, which quieted it down until release into the antelope enclosure. After a week in the enclosure these gazelles would be over the trauma of capture and would be only slightly nervous when one entered to deliver fodder.

The one animal that never became fully habituated to man in its captive status was the leopard. A shy and reclusive nocturnal prowler in the wild state, the leopard in captivity is a truly ferocious creature. Weeks after capture, a savage deep growling would rumble from the pen as one approached. Any sudden or unexpected movement at the reinforced front wire would instantly result in a coughing roar as the animal rushed up to the wire with every intention of tearing one up. Leopards of the high-country forest are large and powerful—a large male might weigh up to 220 pounds. In captivity they never ceased looking for some way to regain their freedom. Although there was little danger in capturing one, it was always a thrilling experience. The rage and ferocity of a newly caught leopard in the trap has to be seen to be believed. There was nothing ingenious about the construction of our leopard traps, but they had to be strong and durable to prevent any trapped animal from breaking out and also to survive transportation by truck over rough roads. We had several of these, all of the same design and materials. The interior measurement of each trap was nine feet long by two and a half feet wide. The frame

consisted of 4 x 4" seasoned timber and 4 x 2" supports fixed vertically every two feet on the sides and horizontally along the top. The floor, the rear section, and the vertically sliding front door were made from 4 x 2" timber. The sides and top, between the reinforcing timber supports, were heavy-gauge steel Weldmesh, fixed in place by staples. The front entrance frame extended upward to hold the sliding door, which moved up and down between wooden guide rails. A wooden plate on hinges, fixed in the centre of the floor at the rear end of the trap, had a metal eye. When the plate was raised an inch or so from the floor, the end of a metal rod, fixed to the floor, fitted through this eye. This was the trigger system that released the door when it was in the UP position. Any additional weight pushed the plate down, and the metal rod, which was attached to the top of the sliding door by a copper wire via two pulley wheels, was released from the metal eye. The sliding door was thus left with nothing holding it in the UP position and instantly crashed down to close the exit. A lump of meat, or part of a goat, was placed either on or beyond the trigger plate. There was little chance that a leopard or any other animal would secure the bait without entrapping itself. Mongooses, small cats, jackals, and the like were often caught in the leopard traps. The traps were also suitable for hyena and lion, but there was no market demand for lion, and we never actually caught one during the time I worked for Carr. Even the two adult males in the pen at Pesi were caught as cubs and raised as family pets until they became too big and powerful to remain on the loose.

The leopard is an astute and highly successful predator; despite this, it finds carrion an irresistible attraction. It is this latter trait that leads to its downfall over and over again. Ninety-eight percent of leopards taken on big-game hunting safaris are shot over odoriferous carcasses and meat set up in trees as bait, positioned to give the hunter a clear and unobstructed view from a hide or blind nearby. Leopard trophies are usually collected with little physical effort or skill. When one is shot, another will often take over the banquet within a few days. They never seem to learn that such tempting fare, hung in a tree, is dangerous. In the same way, leopards will boldly enter traps to get at the putrid meat. There was a time during the 1950s and 1960s when leopard-skin coats were the rage for fashionable society women in Europe and the United States. Pelts brought such high returns that the leopard became an endangered species. To meet the demand, both legal and illegal hunters cashed in on the animals' penchant for rotting meat. A goat for bait, at a cost of twenty shillings, was a low investment indeed for a leopard skin worth several hundred shillings. The species is territorial in behaviour, and if one locates leopard spoor in a gully or area of thicket, one can be certain that in due course it will pass that way again. The first rule is to place the trap in the general area where the spoor is located. Leopards prefer to approach a prospective meal, whether strung up in a tree or in a box trap, under cover until very close by. The second rule of success is therefore to locate the trap right alongside or even in heavy cover.

Carr had an order for several leopard, and he sent me to the lower part of the Ewaso Narok River, about twenty-two miles north of the Pesi Swamp. I took a box trap down there in his five-ton Chevrolet truck, accompanied by two Ndorobo hunters, Lagasana and Lembina, and four other men to lift the trap off the truck. We arrived late on a property belonging to an old-timer called Tommy Tomlinson. He had been suffering livestock losses to leopard and was only too pleased to have us try and get rid of one or more. He suggested a certain area on his property, and we went there. It was rough bush country, with numerous rock outcrops and gullies. We found fresh leopard spoor in the sandy bottom of more than one gully, so

I decided to locate the trap there. We spent the night in the open and early next morning set off to select a good site for the trap. It had to be in a place to which we could drive the truck with the trap on board. By 9 A.M. we had found a suitable site, and we returned to the camp and brought the truck to the off-loading point. This was on the edge of a deep gully with lots of rocks and bush around. The tracks of a large male leopard were clearly visible in the soft sandy bottom.

This was perfect leopard country, with lots of cover, rock outcrops, and gullies. Rock hyrax were abundant, and guinea fowl in flocks were visible or left scratch marks of their presence. Herds of impala were scattered about in the acacia bush, and dik-dik in twos or threes seemed to inhabit every patch of thicket. With this quantity of small game about, I felt sure that several leopard inhabited the general area. I shot an impala ram that afternoon and, after taking it to my campsite, took what meat we required for ourselves and delivered the rest, including the entrails, to the trap. Before putting it all inside as bait, we dragged the entrails in a wide arc that terminated at the trap entrance. Leopards do not have superior powers of scent, and this is very likely the reason they often do not arrive at bait until it is really high or stinking. The idea of dragging the entrails about the bush was to increase the chances of a leopard picking up the scent and following it to the bait. Entrails, with blood and semi-digested spillage coming out all along the drag mark, will leave a ground smell for up to three days or more, increasing the prospects of a leopard following it up and ultimately finding the bait. The trap was baited and set by late afternoon, and all we could do now was wait in camp and visit the site early the next day. On the first night we caught a white-tailed mongoose, and after the usual drama with a newly captured animal it was transferred to a box of suitable size with a wire mesh front and was moved to a shady spot at the camp. Late in the afternoon I reset the trap. The bait was now starting to rot and gave off a strong smell.

I placed water and a small piece of meat in the mongoose box and retired for the night after a simple meal. Lying on the ground wrapped in a single blanket, enveloped in the velvet blackness of the African night, I gazed at the vast canopy of stars, listening to the bird and insect sounds all around in the bush, and fell asleep with a deep feeling of contentment. This was the safari life, the pinnacle of my desires. I awoke shivering some time before dawn; the cold had penetrated my single blanket. Silence reigned. This is an hour when even the night birds and crickets are quieted as a new day puts a pencil-line tinge of pink to the eastern horizon. I got up, went over to the fire, and stoked it up for warmth. Shortly Lembina came and sat down with me, commenting on the biting early morning chill, and put some water on to boil. We shared this hour in silence as the sky gradually blossomed pink and red with the sunrise and the surrounding bush came alive with form and birdsong. It is a wonderful and, one feels, a sacred time of day, when the whole world is fresh and born again. As if on cue, from the awakening life all around us, Lembina speculated on what luck we might have that day. By the time we had brewed some tea and savoured it, the sun appeared low on the horizon, a faint warmth dispersing the cold of the night.

Three of us, Lembina, Lagasana, and myself, left camp shortly after sunrise. We were armed and made our way quietly through the bush toward the trap, which was about two miles away. As we approached, a pair of silver-backed jackals slunk away to our right. Lembina whispered that this was encouraging; they would normally have been expected to be much closer to the source of food—the carcass inside the trap. As we approached with some caution, the trap came into sight close by, and we simultaneously observed that the door had dropped

into the closed position. Lembina remarked in a quiet voice that something must be caught inside. The next instant a deep throbbing growl came from that direction, leaving no doubt we had a leopard in there. As we came up alongside the trap, the leopard simply went insane with rage. He could not get at us, but the sheer hate and ferocity reflected in his one yellow eye and distorted snarling features spelt out clearly enough what he would do to us, given the opportunity. This was a large male in good condition, except for a walleye. His teeth, which were on full display as we inspected our prize, were in good shape. His intermittent coughing roars and rumbling growls were audible to the men back in camp. He had scraped some skin off his nose in his all-night quest to get out of the trap, but apart from that and his walleye, he was a splendid beast, large in body with a beautifully marked coat. His walleye earned him the name of "Nelson."

We returned to camp and brought the truck up to the trap. We covered it with a tarpaulin to calm the leopard down, loaded it in the truck, and drove back to Pesi Estates, where Nelson was released into a pen without incident. Carr decided that because of his walleye, Nelson was not a marketable animal, and he intended to release him back into the wild.

Nelson was held in captivity for three weeks, during which time he remained as savage as ever. We had in the meantime succeeded in trapping a huge male forest leopard in the area of the Aberdare Mountains. With this success there was even less reason for holding Nelson, but the walleyed leopard forestalled our good intentions. In a demonstration of the enormous strength of these big cats, he broke out of his pen one night by bending the steel reinforcing rods in the roof and forcing a hole through the double layer of chain-link fencing. His escape hole took him straight into a large open-air enclosure occupied by five ostriches, which he promptly attacked and killed. He then had a feed off one of these birds before escaping into the wild. But this was not quite the end of the Nelson episode. About a month later, I had occasion to be down on the Tomlinson property again, in quest of striped hyenas. I set up a trap of the same type in the same location where Nelson had been caught and baited it with the remains of a cow that had died on Carr's Pesi estate. Nelson, since his escape, had moved with true homing instinct some thirty-five miles back to his old territory. He was caught again the first night we put the trap out, and next morning when we came to inspect it, he was every bit as savage and ferocious as before. We of course recognized our old friend, and I decided to release him forthwith.

One cannot just stand around casually when releasing a captive and angry leopard; precautions have to be taken. Accordingly, I went back to camp and, accompanied by Lembina, returned in the truck to the trap and parked some five yards behind it. From the cab window, we passed a length of strong cord over the pulley above the trap door and ran it down to attach it to the eye on the top of the door. It was then a simple exercise to pull the door into the UP position, leaving it wide open for Nelson to move out and return to the bush. Lembina and I sat in the truck cab for protection. With the cord running over the pulley wheel, we slowly hauled the door up to its limit and fixed it in position by binding the cord around the steering column. It then became a matter of silently waiting for the leopard to move out of the trap. The leopard was clearly apprehensive, and it took several minutes before it cautiously poked its head out of the open door and looked about for any signs of danger. At this point, in an effort to hasten its departure, Lembina shouted, *"Nenda!"* (go) and then thumped the side of the vehicle with his hand. In an instant the leopard shot out of and around the trap and, growling savagely, came straight at the truck, hitting the left mudguard with a solid thump before breaking off and racing for the nearest cover, tail up and rumbling to itself as it went.

So ended the Nelson saga. Old man Tomlinson no doubt would have preferred the animal dead. I felt disinclined to do this and in the interest of continuing good relations between us never let him know that Nelson was once again free to prey on his livestock.

Despite the leopard's earlier traumatic experience with an identical trap in the same location, it certainly appeared not to have absorbed the lesson about such contraptions. Its escape from Pesi some twenty-two miles away and its subsequent return to its own territory is a good illustration of the powerful homing and territorial instincts of this species. There was little to be gained by trapping this leopard again, and to avoid this I moved the trap to a site on the Ewaso Nyiro River some ten miles downstream from its confluence with the Ewaso Narok. A striped hyena was caught the first night, and by early afternoon the following day we were back at Pesi with our new captive safely housed in its pen.

Trapping the large carnivores carried with it no risk of injury to one's person. However, cheetah and the African hunting dog cannot be attracted into a trap because they feed only on fresh meat and, invariably in my experience, their own kills. Carr had no orders for African hunting dog, but there was a continuous low-level demand for cheetah, and we caught several during my time there. There was a thinly distributed population of cheetah throughout the Laikipia Plains. We would occasionally come across them unexpectedly while out after other animals. Whenever this happened all plans for the capture of other game was dropped, and all efforts immediately concentrated on capturing the cheetah. The fastest land animal on earth, it is said to be capable of speeds of up to 70 mph. It survives by hunting small to medium-sized gazelles and antelopes and is dependent on speed. It has evolved as a natural speed machine, with a small, streamlined head, light body weight, long, slender legs with powerful muscles, and a relatively long, thick tail to help it retain balance at high speed when sharp changes of direction become necessary.

All outward appearances indicate that it is a true member of the cat family. It has a rough, raspy tongue, it purrs and growls, the facial features are catlike, and the body dimensions, even if long in the legs, fit the picture. But there are some marked differences. Its vocal cords do not enable it to emit any of the assortment of roars, rasping calls, grunts, and deep throbbing growls common to its cousins the lion and the leopard. Neither does it have the massive, heavy-boned legs and the foot pads with fully retractable claws with which these big cats are endowed. The cheetah's head is small and cannot accommodate the awesome array of canines displayed by lion and leopard, and apart from a much less intimidating growl, the only other vocal sound I have heard cheetahs make is a very high-pitched, birdlike squeak when calling each other. The cheetah's long legs have evolved for the purpose of speed, and the same applies to the pads. These have semi-retractable claws for improved traction and are more compact for the same reason. The physical modifications from the true cats give it the ability to successfully hunt by sight and speed, with a minimum of stealth. However, stamina over long distances at speed is not one of its assets. A cheetah at high speed begins to suffer exhaustion within a mile if pressed. The technique of capturing cheetah then becomes possible because of this weakness. The fact that they have relatively small teeth and pads with blunt claws is a bonus for the game catcher. As noted earlier, they are not attracted to carrion and therefore will not enter traps. Our captive cheetah at Pesi would leave even mildly tainted meat untouched. The method of capturing cheetah was therefore to run them to exhaustion in a capture car (a half-ton ex-military truck) and then to manhandle them before they could recover.

Driving cross-country at speed in a truck has its hair-raising moments. Often grass cover completely conceals the ground, covering all manner of large holes and rocks and other spring- and chassis-breakers. Much of the country in Laikipia was covered in whistling thorn acacia, most of which could be simply run over by the truck, but occasionally we had to avoid a big acacia capable of wrecking the vehicle. This is not quite as simple as it sounds: The driver, while trying to maintain directional control of the vehicle over rough ground, holes, and fallen trees, at the same time had to keep the running cheetah (or whatever animal we were after) in sight until it dropped out of sight, exhausted, into the grass. If we lost it during the chase or failed to pinpoint the exact spot where it had dropped, the chances of finding it again decreased with every passing second.

Carr was a highly skilled operator. Those of us in the back of the open pickup hung on for dear life as he propelled the vehicle at 50 mph through or around every obstacle, dodging branches covered in wicked-looking thorns while trying to keep the quarry in sight and maintain balance. Suddenly we would start rapidly closing with the cheetah as it tired, and as it dropped into the grass, the truck would brake and halt beside it in a cloud of dust. My function at this point was to leap over the side of the truck and grab the cheetah by the tail and hold on for dear life. In reaction to this, the exhausted animal would normally get to its feet and start pulling directly away from me. In the meantime Carr, with a large, heavy gunnysack in one hand, would shove the sacking into the animal's mouth to bite on and would seize it firmly by the head about the ears, while the two or three African catchers tied its legs together with cord. A sack was then tied over its head to calm it down, and it was held thus until it was released into a pen back at Pesi.

It happened this way most times, but on one occasion that I remember well there was a slight hitch. After careering through the bush for a mile or so behind a large male cheetah, Carr pulled up with the animal lying opposite himself. I leapt out and had it firmly by the tail as it raised itself and, growling fiercely, started pulling directly away. Carr, with sack in hand, came around the front of the vehicle and approached it head-on to administer the usual mouth-head control procedure. The cheetah was a strong animal and had probably started to recover a little from the chase. As Carr approached rapidly, it turned away from him as if to try to escape. This brought it into confrontation with me hanging onto its tail. It promptly locked its jaws into my right hand. Carr by this time had it by the head, and in a matter of seconds its legs were all trussed up, but it would not let go of my hand and no one could force its jaw apart. We remained stalemated for two or three minutes, the cheetah growling at every movement, while somebody looked for a tire lever. When it was found, Carr took it and, shoving it into the animal's mouth alongside my hand, forced its jaws apart, and I was able to release my hand. The cheetah was then hooded with a sack and was placed in a cage when the other truck came up. My hand was bitten clean through the fleshy area of the palm below the thumb to the other side near the wrist. No serious damage was done, however, and within a week it had healed over and was back to normal. The cheetah settled down well in captivity and after a couple of months went off with a consignment of animals to the United States.

In 1947 and for some years afterward, drugs that would immobilize wild animals were not available. Capture of the larger antelope, zebra, and rhino was a somewhat hazardous affair, carried out from a speeding truck by placing a suitably knotted rope with a sliding noose over the neck of the animal. The expression "lassoing game," as if the game-catching

technique were the traditional cowhand manner, is hardly an accurate description. The rope was wound around a long bamboo pole with the start of the noose draped through a notch at the end and terminating at the slipknot located at the last twist around the pole. In this way the noose remained open until required. On coming up alongside the galloping animal, the man holding the catching pole guided the noose over its head. He would then release the bamboo pole, and the rope would automatically unwind itself as the rope tightened. Simultaneously, the driver of the vehicle reduced speed to a gentle stop, and everyone in the rear laid hold of the rope to bring the captured animal to a standstill. Generally speaking, the antelopes and zebra captured in this manner were tired after the chase and were easily subdued and hobbled. After that it was a matter of waiting for the big truck to come up and loading the captive into a crate and taking it back to Pesi for release into an enclosure. The real danger during these capture exercises was the high speed across unknown and rough ground, swerving sharply to avoid trees, termite mounds, and pig holes. The prospect of being thrown over the side or being clobbered by a branch or even rolling the vehicle was very real. Carr always seemed to have superb control of the vehicle, and we never had a serious accident or injury with him at the wheel.

One tends to think of wild game as tough, hardy animals of great endurance. This is most certainly not the case with the common zebra or the reticulated giraffe, as we discovered to our cost. These species could not be pushed at their maximum speed for more than a mile or so, and if we had not completed the capture within that distance, the chase was abandoned. On the few occasions that we exceeded this distance, before we became aware of the effects, the zebra or giraffe was invariably trembling on being brought to a halt. The loading, transportation to Pesi, and release into an enclosure took place as normal, but the animal always died within the next few hours. Unfortunately, no veterinary surgeon was available for a postmortem on the few occasions this happened, but we believed that the prolonged exhaustion during capture had placed an insupportable load on the heart, with fatal results. This apparent lack of stamina did not apply to the larger and handsomer Grevy zebra. This species is more commonly associated with the arid areas to the north. The Laikipia Plains formed the southern distribution limit of the species, and we captured several over a period of months. Some were caught after a hard chase of up to three miles, with no ill effect.

The exhilaration of careering across plains in pursuit of some fleet-footed wild creature appealed to me as a seventeen-year-old youth. I enjoyed it even more if I had the responsibility of personally driving the chase car. With the confidence of youth, accidents were things that happened to other people. One learns the hard way, and in the middle of the year I was sharply disabused of the arrogant belief in my ability to handle any situation. On that day I was on the plains searching for oryx, in the company of Lembina, Lagasana, and two other men. Lembina was in the cab with me, and the others were riding in the back. The poles and the capture ropes were in Lagasana's charge. The grass, though dry, was at its maximum height of two to three feet, so our progress was fairly slow to avoid stumps and pig holes. The extensive tracts of whistling thorn, which cover much of this part of Laikipia, are intermittently broken by stretches of treeless plains. These are often quite limited in size, but some stretch for two or three miles across before fading again into the ubiquitous thorn scrub. We were approaching one of these glades when we spotted a herd of about ten oryx some two hundred yards away between us and the glade. They let us approach for another few yards and then loped away, heading in the direction of the glade. The chase now started in earnest, as I powered the

vehicle through the scrub. As we came out into the plain, with the oryx now at full gallop, I accelerated to 40 or 45 miles an hour, in order to get alongside the herd before they entered the thorn scrub up ahead. By then we were only some ten yards behind the herd and were drawing up alongside rapidly, having selected a well-grown calf for capture. The capture crew on the back were ready, and it appeared to be only a matter of seconds before the animal would be within roping distance alongside the vehicle. Lagasana made a pass at the young oryx as the right front mudguard came up in line with it. He failed to pass the loop over its head and prepared for a second attempt. The next instant the front wheels of the vehicle dropped into a huge hole concealed in the grass cover. We were doing about 35 mph, and the vehicle rocketed out of the hole with all four wheels clear of the ground. The steering wheel spun around to the left into a fully locked position, and it stayed that way until the airborne vehicle crashed to the ground and went out of control. It came to a halt in a great cloud of dust, lying on its right side with the engine stalled.

Lembina was on top of me as I looked up at the sky out of the left side passenger window. We disentangled ourselves and crawled upward through the off-side door, which was still functioning. Covered with dust, disoriented and in a state of shock, it took a couple of minutes to recover and start assessing our unenviable situation. Fortunately, no one in the vehicle had sustained any injuries apart from a few bruises and minor cuts. At first sight it appeared that we might have dead or dying people on our hands. The entire capture crew in the back had been thrown clear of the vehicle and were lying scattered about on the plain, groaning and making no effort to get up. An examination of each individual in turn revealed no visible injuries of any consequence. With some cajoling and help, Lembina and I had them all on their feet within a few minutes. They expressed astonishment at what had happened, hardly daring to believe that they were not only alive but uninjured.

By this time the follow-up truck with additional men had arrived. It was time to inspect what appeared to be a total wreck. All the oil and water from the engine had spilled out onto the ground. Damage was superficial: The mudguards, cab, and superstructure railings at the rear were crushed. There were also some broken spring leaves and a broken engine mounting, so the main exercise was to get the vehicle back on its wheels. I organized the men now available, and with a coordinated effort we managed to roll the vehicle back on its wheels with a resounding crash. There was plenty of water and spare engine oil on the follow-up truck to replace what had spilled out onto the ground. There was nothing more to be done, so we drove slowly and carefully back to Pesi, arriving somewhat humiliated by such an ignominious return. Apart from a few vitriolic remarks, Carr let me off lightly and passed the accident off as an occupational hazard for anyone operating in such conditions.

# Capturing Rhino and Hunting Lion

*Chapter 6*

The dried-out skull of a female rhino was lying about at the Hartley homestead. There was nothing special about it until one examined it closely. More than halfway up the centre line of the skull, between the rear horn and the top, there was a deep indentation, circular in shape and about one and a half inches in diameter, as though it had been struck a massive blow by a hard, rounded object. That is exactly what happened during the capture of this rhino cow and her eight-month-old calf.

We were on a rhino capture safari on the Ongata Baragoi Plains. The area had been leased out by the government to cattle ranchers on what were known as "temporary occupation leases." The ranchers involved in this system considered the large numbers of rhino within the area a threat to their cattle. Consequently, the game department wished to reduce their numbers and authorized the capture of rhino within the area. Our camp was near the Suguta Marma springs, and from here to the plains it was a short run by car through croton bush over rocky ground. There were considerable numbers of rhino scattered throughout the bush country surrounding the Baragoi Plains. A very low thorny shrub, much favoured by rhino, grew in profusion there. During the day the rhino rested up in dense bush cover, and at night some browsed far out into the open. In the early morning it was not unusual to find several widely dispersed rhino still far out in the open, browsing their way slowly toward the cover. It was in these circumstances that we discovered the rhino cow with her calf.

It was about 7 A.M., and far out on the plains we saw two black dots, which, as we drew closer, transformed into a rhino cow and calf. We were fully equipped for rhino capture, and the method was simple. The usual bamboo pole and rope was used in the same way as for other game. But because of the weight and power of even a half-grown rhino, it was not possible to bring it under control holding the rope by hand. This problem was solved by attaching a heavy log, lying in the bed of the capture truck, to the other end of the rope. The tailgate and tubular superstructure was removed, and as soon as the noose was secured over the rhino's head, the capture car would swing sharply away at 90 degrees

and the rhino, with whatever help necessary from the crew, would pull the log out of the truck via the removed tailgate. Dragging the log over rough ground, tussocks, and other obstructions quickly tired the animal, reducing it to a state where it could be trussed up, hobbled, and maneuvered into a crate without much difficulty.

Carr was driving, and the three other men and I made up the capture crew in the back. The first move was to place ourselves between the rhino and the bush cover fringing the plain about eight hundred yards away. By this time the animals were within one hundred yards of us, staring stolidly in our direction, uncertain what to make of all the banging and clanking as the truck traversed the rough ground. At this point Carr headed straight toward the rhino, who, without further urging, swung around and broke into a fast trot, moving farther out into the open plains. We now raced up close behind the two animals, the cow in front with the calf close up behind her, and forced them into a gallop. A gap quickly opened between them, and with considerable skill Carr cut in with the vehicle between mother and calf, isolating them from each other. The cow galloped on, apparently unaware that the calf was separated from her. We now worked on the calf, ignoring the cow, who kept going away from us. As we drew up alongside the trotting calf, I put the noose over its head, watched the rope tighten, and signaled Carr to turn. In a matter of seconds, the calf was struggling, half-choked by the rope, with a heavy log dragging along the ground behind it. We put another rope onto the calf and fixed that to the stationary truck and had it anchored sufficiently well to get other ropes around its legs to hobble it. We were in the process of doing this when someone shouted a warning that the mother was coming back. She was only thirty yards away and coming fast, snorting and puffing, and had no doubt been drawn to us by the distress squeals of her captured calf.

There was no cover nearby, so all of us scrambled onto or behind the truck. The cow came straight on into the rear end of the vehicle and attacked it. Her head was low, and as she came up on the tailgate section, she made an immensely powerful upward swipe, which lifted the rear end of the vehicle off the ground. The next thing, amidst a cloud of dust, she was lying on her belly quivering on the ground with blood pouring out of her nose and mouth and welling up out of the ears. She never moved again, and was undoubtedly dead by the time any of us felt it safe to leave our refuge. When we poked a finger into her open staring eyes she did not blink, confirming to us that she was dead, so we left her and went on to fully secure the calf and load it into a crate brought by the follow-up truck. We then examined the dead female. The hide on her head, well behind the rear horn, was broken and severely bruised, but there was no other sign of injury other than a lot of gore on the ground from the nostrils and mouth. It seems that the ball hitch at the rear of the truck had taken the full impact of that powerful upward thrust, causing a severe brain hemorrhage. We removed the head and had it boiled and cleaned up in camp after removing the horn. The bone structure was severely dented with some radiating cracks, and this undoubtedly caused a massive hemorrhage. The calf, which was male, survived without any injury and was eventually shipped off to Britain with a large consignment of assorted animals.

Eric Rundgren, who in 1947 was the game control officer based at Campi ya Simba, near Rumuruti, was in the area dealing with lion that were killing Samburu stock near the Kirimun area. He had a small pack of dogs trained for lion hunting, plus game scouts and

others. When he invited me to accompany him on his safari, it was too good an opportunity to miss. Carr was not only good enough to agree to this but lent me his .577 double-barreled rifle as well. He returned to Pesi with the newly captured rhino, and I went on to Kirimun with Eric. Over the next three days we shot four lions in the area. With the aid of his Ndorobo trackers and the dogs, there was no great difficulty in coming up with our quarry, and it was really great experience for me. The dogs were a shaggy mongrel lot, but they had no real fear of lions. Most dogs, when they get the scent of lion or leopard, react in a way that leaves no doubt about their feelings in the matter. The hair rises on the back, the tail drops down between the legs, and they slink off whining to the rear. There was none of this with Eric's dogs. He said the secret was to have a large dash of Airedale genes mixed with other nondescript breeds. Pure Airedales are too courageous and simply go rushing in to be instantly killed. But mix the breed with others, preferably with good scenting abilities, and you have a lion dog. The courage is diluted sufficiently to prevent it rushing in straight to its death, but not enough to produce the mortal fear other dogs have for the big cats. Scenting ability is also important for following up cattle killers. All his dogs had retriever somewhere in their ancestry for this purpose.

It was not far from Suguta Marma to our campsite at Kirimun, so on arrival Eric sent word out to the local *manyattas* (cattle enclosures) about the purpose of our visit. We then went off for the rest of the day up past Kisima Lake onto a seasonal watercourse called the Ngare Narok. This whole area had little habitation at the time, and there was a lot of game about. We walked up the Ngare Narok toward its source on the edge of the Lorogi Plateau. It was beautiful country with large stands of yellow acacias, patches of thicket, and open glades along the watercourse. Game trails and spoor, including rhino, elephant, and buffalo, were everywhere. We came upon the fresh tracks of a small group of elephant bulls, and since Eric knew I still had a valid license, we decided to follow them up. After a couple of hours we found them in some relatively open bush. We tested the wind for direction and quietly moved forward with Eric in the lead. It was so simple, no fuss or hurried instructions, and at twenty yards' range we saw there was no suitable ivory and carefully backed off, leaving them in peace. While still observing the elephants, Eric explained in detail the vital points for body and brain shots to ensure a quick kill.

*Lion and lioness in low country bush. Northeast Selous, 1975. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

We were greeted on our return to camp that evening by a group of local Samburu men. We sat around the campfire, as it was cold, and discussed the problem of lions destroying their stock. These people are quite capable of hunting down lions themselves and spearing them to death. When such tribal hunts take place, one or more of their number invariably gets severely mauled and occasionally someone is killed in the fracas. It is perhaps not surprising that they prefer to call in the game department for assistance. Eric had successfully hunted a number of stock-killing lions over the past few years in Samburu country. The tribesmen knew his capabilities and held him in high esteem. They said there was a pride of four lions that had killed a number of cattle over the past two or three months. The attacks varied from daylight killings, when the stock were out grazing, to breaking into *boma*s at night, or causing stock to stampede by rushing through the cut thornbush enclosures into the night where they could be easily killed. Stampeding cattle at night is a favourite lion ploy. They deliberately move into an upwind position to frighten the cattle with their scent and follow this up with a demonstration rush, which sets off the stampede. As the mass of stock crash through the thorn enclosure and scatter into the open, other lions waiting downwind have little difficulty making a kill. If the herders become aware of the lions prowling about the *boma* in time, they move in among the cattle and calm them and can often prevent the beasts from stampeding. One assumes this fear of lion among African cattle is born of generations of experience. I have often speculated whether lions would have the same effect on a herd of cattle in Europe, for example.

Our chat with the Samburu came to an end with Eric telling them to bring in any lion news as early as possible. Two days later a Samburu *moran* (young man/warrior) arrived in camp very early in the morning. He said the lions had been around his *boma* all night and had withdrawn before dawn after unsuccessfully trying to stampede the two-hundred-odd stock. He and his colleagues had spent the whole night calming the cattle and keeping the lions at bay by hurling pieces of burning wood in their direction. We all climbed into the truck—Eric, myself, four game scout handlers and their charges, two trackers, and the Samburu *moran*. The four dogs were on leashes. We drove across open country for about five miles to the *manyatta*. Here some fifteen *morani* armed with spears and clubs greeted us. A couple of elders then showed us around the perimeter area of the *manyatta*. There were lion tracks from the previous night in several places about one hundred yards out or more. The *morani* then showed us where all four lions had come together and had moved off in a southerly direction toward a rocky, bush-covered, low escarpment, at the top of which the vast Ongata Baragoi Plains commenced. We returned to the truck to organize ourselves for the hunt.

Following up this group of lion was quite easy in the dry, dusty conditions that pertained. The constant movement of cattle back and forth through this country created well-defined trails of pulverized earth, which the lion tended to follow for ease of movement. Their great pug marks were clearly defined in the dust, and we were able to move along at a steady walk for some three miles from the *manyatta*. At this point they entered the moderately thick bush along the low escarpment leading up to the treeless plains of the Ongata Baragoi. Because of the changing nature of the ground and reduced visibility, our progress was much reduced. Eric and I, with the two trackers, moved as cautiously and silently as possible along the spoor that paralleled the open country below, running a few yards inside the *leleshwa* and acacia

bush cover. The Samburu *morani* and game scouts with the dogs on leashes kept well behind and below us in the open country.

After tracking less than a mile through the scrub, we found where the pride had been resting and then had moved on a short distance to rest again. The grass was flattened where they had been lying, but even more telling was a patch of wet earth with scratch marks where one of the lions had urinated before moving on. When lions stop to lie about at frequent intervals, it is a sure sign that they feel confident in their surroundings and are looking for a place to rest up for the day. A short distance ahead of this spot was a bush-choked cleft in the escarpment with plenty of shade. It was Eric's opinion that the lions were likely to rest up there for the day. The two trackers concurred with this view.

We followed the spoor cautiously to the point where the lions descended into the cleft; then we retreated to join up with the dog handlers and *morani* below in the open savanna. It was decided to send the two trackers to check the slope of the escarpment well beyond the cleft, from its base to the open plains on top, for signs of tracks that would confirm whether or not the lions had continued beyond this ideal cover. They returned after an hour or less to report no sign of tracks beyond the cleft. It seemed certain that the pride was lying up in the thick bush in the ravine. We decided that we would not use the dogs here and that they should remain with the handlers at our present position until sent for. Eric and I would position ourselves near the top of the ravine where the cover thinned out into more open low scrub below the open plains. After giving us time to position ourselves, the Samburu and the two trackers would enter in a line across the ravine and move up toward us, with the idea that the lions would move ahead of them, affording us an opportunity to shoot one or more. If driven in this manner without too much pressure, lions will generally stick to a line of cover and break out into the open when there is no other option. We believed the prospects were good that the lion would move all the way up the cleft to the top. So, making a wide arc up the slope on the far side, we came back onto the top end of it. I positioned myself about fifteen yards above Eric, with a clear view across a grassy sward onto the slope on the far side, less than one hundred yards away. The cover there was open stunted *leleshwa* scrub, rocks, and short grass. The dense bush terminated a few yards below, where Eric was waiting.

We had been in this position for only a few minutes when the trackers and *morani* started to move up the cleft, in line across it, making little noise apart from low conversation and the rustling of bush. Nothing happened until they were about two hundred yards from us. Suddenly a distinctly leonine growling followed by a medley of shouts—*"Huyo! Simba huyo!" (There! There is the lion.)*—sent the adrenaline coursing through my system. A cacophony of sound from the thick bush below, followed by the eruption of a covey of francolin winging their way up the grassy sward, meant the action was approaching fast. The next instant, two shots split the heated midday air, followed by deep grunts. At this moment I saw a lioness trotting fast, diagonally from me, up the opposite slope. *Leleshwa* bushes intermittently obscured an otherwise clear view. I lined up the .577 just ahead of her as she went behind some scrub, and as she emerged into the open I fired the right barrel and she collapsed in her tracks, still in full view of me. Carefully lining her up again, I fired the second barrel, but there was no reaction—she was dead. Reloading, I joined Eric nearby. He was not pleased with himself; he had shot a male that had got away wounded. It had been a difficult running shot, through bush,

followed by a second shot into its rear end as it galloped into cover, growling loudly. We went up to my lioness at the ready, but she was quite dead.

By now the men were coming up, so we went down to where Eric had shot at the male and followed its tracks for a few yards. There was blood on the leaves that had brushed the lion's sides as he passed, and there were a few clots and drops on the stones and ground. When all the men had assembled, we decided to skin out the lioness and send for the dogs, which would give our wounded lion a chance to die or at least become further incapacitated by his wounds. An hour later, with the pack leader and the others on leashes, we followed up the blood spoor. It took us over the ridge on the east side of the ravine in the general direction of the *manyatta* and then plunged down the slope again into thick cover. There was copious clotted blood of the deep red arterial colour. The dogs were keyed up, the hair raised on their necks and backs. Now, a wounded lion in thick bush, where visibility is but a few yards at best, is a very uncertain and dangerous proposition. One must be ready to take on an all-out charge, though this does not always happen; it may take two or three follow-ups to make the lion charge. The prospect of successfully dealing with it depends on the level of visibility in that location. Trained dogs reduce the risk level substantially simply by locating the wounded lion and baying it up well in advance of the hunter, which pinpoints the position of the lion and allows the hunter to get into a position to finish the business off.

After following the blood trail up to the edge of the dense bush, we released the dogs and followed them in as best we could. Shortly afterward a tremendous barking and yapping started some five hundred yards farther on. It seemed to stay in one place, and there was no audible response from the lion. Eric muttered that the lion was probably dead but advised us to approach with great caution and be ready for instant action. We worked our way carefully forward and finally came upon the dogs barking and worrying at the carcass of the lion. It had been hit twice and had died of internal bleeding, although the heart and lungs were intact. The Samburu came up shortly afterward and, seeing there were now two dead lions, broke into a victory chant. I was also very pleased with the success of this first day's hunting. I had killed my first lion, just short of my seventeenth birthday.

*The author's first lion, at sixteen. Baragoi, 1947.*

After skinning the lion, which had a tawny ruff for a mane, we started back for the truck left at the *manyatta*. I felt buoyed up and confident with the day's result. Walking back in the late afternoon, feeling relaxed and elated, my eyes wandered across this beautiful country stretching out to infinity in every direction. Across the plains to the north, the forested Karissa Range reared up out of the rolling savanna, and in the far distance one could just discern the Mathews and Wamba Mountains. In the east Mount Kenya reflected the setting sun from its icebound glaciers. To the west stratus clouds, tinged pink by the sunset, put the finishing touches to the glorious panorama, which to me spelt unspoiled wilderness and a freedom of spirit that no city or even ranch could induce. This was Africa at its very best.

The next morning we drove over to the *manyatta* at dawn. Eric was anxious to eliminate the whole pride because he felt that if any survived, having acquired the habit of killing stock, they would continue to do so. The Samburu, who had been celebrating for much of the night, said they had heard lions grunting until early morning from the direction of yesterday's hunt. The consensus was that these were the remaining two members of the pride searching for their missing companions. It seems that the two lions that had escaped the day before had made off in the same direction as those we had killed, but at a lower level, and had escaped detection. We came to this conclusion because we discovered their tracks from the day before on the escarpment a mile or so from the *manyatta* and then closer to the plains—the tracks of two lionesses, made during the night, going in the direction of where the other two had died.

With the dogs and their handlers well behind with some Samburu *morani*, Eric and I followed close behind our two Ndorobo trackers. Two hours later, we were back at yesterday's scene of action. Here it was clear from the lion tracks crisscrossing in all directions that they had spent the greater part of the night in this location. It was a confusion of tracks, and we only sorted out the problem by casting far ahead to locate them again heading steadily along the escarpment. The ravine of yesterday's hunt was well behind us when we paused for a break. It was now late morning, with the heat intensifying in the still air. A quiet rest and a smoke relieved the building tension, brought on by unremitting tracking of lions into increasingly thick cover. The handlers and the dogs joined us after some minutes. It was clear our quarry could not be too far ahead, for the dogs were excitable and whining a little as they panted, straining at the leashes to sniff the ground. Refreshed and more alert, we moved on in the same order as before but with much greater care and caution. A mile farther on, visibility improved to about thirty yards, and as we approached a small tree the trackers both crouched and pointed ahead. There, some thirty yards away in a patch of shade, was a lioness lying on her back with paws in the air in a deep sleep. Eric shot through a light screen of grass and scrub. I caught a very brief glimpse of the other lioness as she instantly ran away and disappeared from view at the rifle report. The animal that had received Eric's shot reared up on its hind legs with a roar and then careered across our front, growling continuously with its nose almost into the ground. It was *in extremis* and did not know what had hit it. As it moved across we both fired, and it collapsed in its tracks. Closing in cautiously, we confirmed that it was dead.

Once again the dogs and handlers caught up with us. It was decided to immediately turn the dogs loose after the other lioness, and away they went hot on the fresh scent, barking occasionally with excitement. With the lioness only about ten minutes ahead, the dogs

raced after her on a dead fresh scent and caught up with her about a mile away. This event was announced by a chorus of barking interspersed by deep coughing growls as the lioness turned at bay to defend herself. Eric and I, with the two trackers, made haste through the bush in the direction of the furor. As we approached to close range, the barking rose to a crescendo of noise as the lioness fled once again with the pack in hot pursuit. I think she somehow became aware of our approach and simply scattered the dogs in her path in her bid to escape. She bayed up again about half a mile away, and we caught up with her, backed against some rocks, sitting on her haunches with ears flattened, swiping with her paws at any of the dogs that seemed to come within range. The bush was too thick for a clear shot. She saw us and immediately went over the rocks behind her and disappeared from view, with the dogs barking at her heels. I followed behind Eric in a wild, incautious scramble through bush and over rocks in an effort to catch up with the dogs. About a half-mile farther on she was brought to bay again, growling savagely. As we approached, we could see the vegetation shaking as she fended off the dogs. She was tired and very angry and had had enough of being chivvied about. At about twenty yards' range, she saw us and without hesitation came at us, scattering the dogs like chaff in front of her. We fired simultaneously as she came, tail thrashing up and down, mouth part open and grunting. One bullet impacted on the side of the nose, exiting at the rear of the skull; the other crashed into the forward point of the shoulder, ploughing through the chest cavity. She fell dead in her tracks ten yards from us and was instantly set upon by the dogs.

She was a mature animal in fine condition and had provided me with an exhilarating experience. I was saturated with perspiration and had been in a high pitch of tension and excitement for most of the time. It was only after killing the lioness that I realized how parched I was. A good pull at the water bag and relaxing beside the dead lioness brought my adrenaline level down to normal. Eric commented that I had done all right, sarcastically remarking that I should learn to do without water all day. We skinned out the two lionesses, walked back to the truck, and returned to camp. The following day Eric returned to his base at Campi ya Simba, dropping me off at Pesi on the way. Before I left Carr Hartley for good, I hunted both lion and buffalo successfully again with Eric and his dogs. I learned a lot from him, and we remained good friends for many years. He was a rough diamond and very tough, with the seeming ability to think like his quarry. He later became a full-time professional hunter, but also continued for many years to do elephant control work on contract to the government. In my opinion, he was certainly the most competent of all the professional hunters in East Africa during his time, if not particularly suave and tactful with his clients. I certainly had much to be grateful to him for.

Until tranquilizer drugs for use in the capture of wild animals were perfected, rhino remained the prime target and the most prestigious species in the game catcher's book. A rhino hunt generally involved mounting a full-scale expedition to the area of operations, which was costly. The risk to personnel and the damage to vehicles was relatively high. But this was compensated for by the high sales value of a successful capture and the quick adjustment of the animal to its new captive status. In 1947 there were, besides Carr Hartley, only two other game catchers in the whole of East Africa who were in the market for rhino—Hugh Stanton in the Laikipia area and Willie De Beer in Tanganyika. It is not surprising that Carr was elated: After our recent success on the Ongata Baragoi,

the game department invited him to capture a well-grown calf running with its dam in the Loldaiga Hills in eastern Laikipia. By the time I had returned from lion hunting in the Kirimun area, plans were already under way for this safari. All was dependent on the newly captured calf settling down in captivity. Once this was behind us we left for the Loldaigas, prepared to camp in the hills for a week or more.

Lembina and Lagasana went off to locate their fellow Ndorobo tribesmen, as they both came from this area. Carr and I took an extended walk around the general area while the camp was being erected. The country was cut by drainage lines and occasional deep gullies. Wherever these existed they were flanked by belts of bush on both sides to a width of up to a mile in places. In between these dried-up watercourses, stands of mature acacia trees gave way to more-or-less open areas on top of the ridges with occasional rocks lying about. It was not ideal country for our purpose, but if we could induce the rhino to move into an open area where the capture vehicle was pre-positioned, Carr considered that there was space enough to effect the capture. Even more important, a way could be quickly found for the vehicles to cross any of the drainage lines without having to prepare a special crossing place. After this brief survey we returned to camp to await our two men and their friends. Lembina and Lagasana returned during the night, having found cause to celebrate the reunion with their Ndorobo relatives and friends, who arrived early in the morning.

The Ndorobo are a small tribe of hunter-gatherers living off the country on wild fruits, seeds, roots, insect larvae, and whatever edible fare they can find. Wild honey is a major item, and within their own areas they seem to know every hollow tree and crevasse in the rocks and cliffs that could attract a bee swarm. They hunt various game animals with bows and poisoned arrows and are adept at laying snares. Their days are spent searching for food or hunting, and consequently they have extraordinarily detailed knowledge of the area in general and also know what is in it and where. In former times the Ndorobo did not raise livestock, but with the cessation of constant Masai raids, brought about by Pax Britannica, things have changed. The tribe now possesses some sheep, goats, and scrub cattle. With a view to protecting this newfound nontraditional wealth, they keep themselves well informed as to the localities frequented by such animals as lion, leopard, and rhino and generally avoid grazing their livestock in those places.

There were no lion in the area at that time, but the Ndorobo did know all about the rhino cow and calf we had come to find. They were only too happy to assist in removing such unfriendly neighbours from their country. Their women and children had been frequently chased and frightened by these two animals when fetching water a short distance from the *boma*. What had really upset the men was that they now had to escort the women to the water point, for the women refused to go on their own. Furthermore, they said two of their cows had had to be slaughtered over the past year after being injured by the rhino. This had happened when the cattle were browsing in thick bush and disturbed the rhino, which panicked and stampeded through the herd, while the herdsmen scrambled up trees to safety. It is hardly surprising that the local Ndorobo were anxious to see the last of this pair of rhino. They said they would spend the night in our camp and show us in the morning where the rhino were currently lying up.

In the meantime, I went off with two Ndorobo and Lembina to inspect the watering point. This was a seepage place in a gully about three miles from camp, surrounded by thick bush, intersected by well-worn cattle trails. The rhino and her calf obviously came here frequently; their tracks, both old and fresh, were everywhere. We also found a well-used mud wallow. Impala, eland, and a solitary buffalo bull also visited this spot on a regular basis. On the way back to camp, I shot an impala for meat, most of which went to the Ndorobo as a confidence-building gesture. The rest of the afternoon was spent in preparing the capture truck for its work, sorting out the bamboo poles, ropes, and hobble straps, and cutting and shaping a heavy drag log. By evening all was in order, and we were ready to go at any time the following day.

We left camp at dawn, with Carr driving, accompanied by Lembina, Lagasana, and three other men as the capture team. One Ndorobo, who appeared to be the best-informed of all the locals, came with us as a guide. The big truck, with the remaining four labourers from Pesi and about ten local Ndorobo on board, followed behind, loaded with a large crate in case we had any success.

The Ndorobo directed us north from camp and, after crossing three or four drainage lines, bade us stop at an elevated point in open country on top of a ridge. Below, down a gentle slope, was another wet season watercourse, flanked on each side by trees and undergrowth to a depth of about half a mile. The slope up the far side was open acacia woodland, which thinned out on the higher ground to give way to an area of open grassland. The thicket in the valley bottom continued downstream in a narrow corridor. Farther up it spread out into an extensive area covering the hills. Our Ndorobo guide now informed us that this valley was the most favoured rhino resting place, and that the sire of the calf and many other rhino lived in the bush-covered hills to the east. At this point, as Carr and I were glassing the surrounding country, a flock of tick birds passed high overhead, paralleling the valley. We studied them through the binoculars until they all suddenly plummeted down to a point in the valley bottom thicket and were lost to view. There are two species of tick birds in East Africa—the yellow-billed and the red-billed. They are often found in the same areas and have similar habits. They feed mainly on ticks and other parasites that infest the bodies of many species of game animals, including rhino, buffalo, eland, giraffe, zebra, impala, and even hippo when lying exposed out of the water. I have never seen them associate with elephant or any of the large carnivores. They probably fear the long reach of the elephant's trunk and the agility of the carnivore, or maybe the tick species found on these animals are unpalatable to them. They roost high up in the trees at night and fly out at a considerable height in the early mornings to locate animals off which they can feed. They are a sort of natural health and hygiene squad, equipped with powerful bills to remove parasites from the host animals. They are attracted to open sores and wounds, which they enlarge in their search for nourishment. When tick birds drop out of the sky to some point in a thicket, it invariably means they are descending onto suitable host animals concealed therein.

We took note of this and sent two of the Ndorobo to inspect the thicket from one side to the other, well downstream from our position, while two others made an inspection well above the point where the tick birds had dropped. When they returned they reported no evidence of rhino upstream, but the other two men had found fresh tracks of a cow and a well-grown calf leading toward where the tick birds had dropped. It seemed reasonable to assume that the birds had located the rhino for us; therefore, we decided to try to flush the

cow and calf out of the valley and up the opposite slope to the open area beyond. We sent three Ndorobo well upstream to shout and generally make noise to deter the rhino from going in that direction and escaping into the extensive thickets and into the hills. I, with the rest of the men, would spread out in line and move into the area where we believed them to be, making some noise as we entered the thicket. Carr and the capture crew would take the vehicle across the valley and position themselves, ready to chase, in the open ground at the top of the next ridge. I carried a 9.3 rifle loaded with solid ammunition, for emergency. We waited for Carr to cross over and position the truck as described. In due course he arrived and signaled us to start.

We moved down the slope to the edge of the cover and spread out in line. I was on the extreme left, lined up with where we believed the rhino to be. As we advanced through the bush, the noise began: sticks banging together and whistles and shouts of "Hey—*toka!*" (go) Shortly after crossing the dry watercourse, there was a loud snort followed by the sound of smashing sticks and bush, a crescendo of shouts from the men, and alarm calls from tick birds in flight. Then all went silent. The rhino had abandoned the cover and fled up the slope. Minutes later, we heard the engine of the capture truck at high revs. Then that too abruptly ceased. We were still stretched out in line inside the thicket and were wondering what was happening when suddenly the unmistakable snorting and puffing of a rhino sounded up to my right, accompanied by breaking bush and the hysterical yelling of one of the Ndorobo. I was uncertain what was happening but felt sure something had gone badly wrong.

In the near-zero visibility, all I could do was wait with my rifle ready. The crashing and noise in the bush was rapidly approaching when I caught a brief glimpse of one of the Ndorobo, his arms out in front of him, struggling to make progress through the tangled vegetation. His babbling was cut short by violent shaking of the bush and the noise of breaking sticks and

*Rhino were hard to capture before tranquilizer drugs were available. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

snorting from the rhino. The rhino was only a few feet from me but was invisible behind the dense screen of leaves. I moved a couple of steps to the left in the hope of being able to see something. As I did so, the front half of the enraged rhino came into view through a gap in the vegetation. She had pulled up and was rapidly turning around. I thought she was going to attack me, but in reality she was going back in to have another go at the Ndorobo, who, unbeknown to me, was sprawled out on the ground, slightly behind her. I fired point-blank into her chest. The shot staggered her, and then, recovering, she turned right into the thicket and disappeared with my second bullet as a parting gift into her rear end.

I now became aware of a piteous moaning and feared the worst. Reloading the rifle, I crawled through the bush to the source of the moans. It was one of our Ndorobo helpers. He was sprawled out on his stomach with his arms wrapped around his head, calling on his mother for help. There was some blood about, and he had been stripped naked in his headlong rush through the bush. By that time some of the other men had arrived, one of them bearing the tattered *shuka* (cloth), which was all that was left of the injured man's garments. We did our best to calm him down and checked to see what injuries he had sustained. There was a nasty gash in his right thigh, which was bleeding. There were no wounds in the abdominal or chest areas. It seemed to me that the flesh wound and the trauma were not life-threatening. I was also concerned about the fate of the cow rhino, so, telling the men to use the tattered *shuka* to staunch the blood flow and wait for me, I went for the rhino. Accompanied by one of the Ndorobo, I crept along the spoor cautiously, noting great clots of blood on the ground. Less than a quarter-mile away, we found the cow dead, with the utterly bewildered calf standing beside her. It was well over half-grown and far too big and powerful to be manhandled. So we backed off and returned to the accident scene. The tattered *shuka* had stopped the bleeding, but the man could not walk, so we carried him to the edge of the thicket, sent for the truck, and made him as comfortable as possible. At about this time, Carr arrived in the capture vehicle, and without further delay we returned to camp. We cleaned up the injured man's wound, dressed it, and took him to the hospital in Nanyuki. He made a full recovery within a month.

It seems that the cow and calf had broken out onto the open area where Carr was waiting, and he immediately got after them at high speed. When all seemed to be going really well and the capture of the calf was certain, the truck ran onto an outcrop of rock and hung itself up with the right rear wheel suspended above ground. The rhino, in the meantime, turned and went back into the valley from which it had come, running headlong into our extended line. There is little doubt in my mind that the cow felt cornered and that her intention was to again attack the Ndorobo lying near her feet when I shot her. No one will ever know exactly what happened, but the evidence suggests that she sideswiped the man as he desperately flung himself sideways to avoid her. She then pulled up and was in the act of spinning around to finish him off.

The calf probably weighed no less than three-quarters of a ton and was strong enough to defend itself. We went back the next day, but nothing we could do would persuade it to abandon the carcass of its mother. When we tried to drive it off, it responded by rushing at us, and we had to run for it. Fortunately, it never carried these charges right through, but neither would it allow itself to be moved in any direction. Carr decided to leave the animal alone for a few days and went back to Pesi to attend to other business. I stayed in camp to try to keep tabs

on the rhino calf. I found that it went down to water on the third night and then moved into the valley quite close to the camp. It was browsing well and seemed to have accepted that the cow would never be with it again. Perhaps the dozens of vultures, crowding and fighting over the carcass all day and every day, meant something to it.

When Carr came back he had his brother-in-law Johnny Turnbull with him. Johnny was a lanky Englishman with little experience in this kind of work. I am not sure what his real vocation was, but I tend to believe that the weeks he spent with Carr were just filling in time while he looked for full-time work in Kenya. We located the rhino calf every morning of the next week. Twice we managed to maneuver it onto open ground, but each time there was insufficient space for the capture car to come close enough to place a noose over its head. Every time we thought the situation was just right, something unpredictable happened and the rhino made its escape. Carr christened the animal "Houdini" near the confluence of two watercourses that opened out onto a fairly large flood plain. The ground was reasonably level and smooth. The rhino occupied one of the watercourses, and by putting men on both sides and others across it upstream, there was nowhere for the rhino to go except down and out into the flood plain. Carr and Johnny, with the capture crew, positioned themselves with the vehicle to give themselves maximum space and time for maneuver, once the rhino abandoned the cover. I organized the men along each side of the thicket line and then, with two Ndorobo, entered the bush well upstream and moved down toward the rhino. We flushed the animal out of some thicket, and it moved inside the cover toward the flood plains. We followed on and it rushed off again, breaking to the right. As it emerged onto the slope, it ran into a couple of our Ndorobo stops. It started to rush at them, thought better of it, and turned back into the riverine bush and continued down the drainage line. It broke out onto the flood plain, only about twenty yards from the waiting capture vehicle. This time there was no mistake, and within 150 yards the rope was around its neck and the vehicle pulled away, dumping the heavy drag log onto the ground.

The rhino, although not fully grown, was a powerful animal and had dragged the log halfway across the plain when it got snagged. This almost jerked it off its feet and swung it around, to face in the opposite direction. It now galloped off, squealing as it went, toward where it had come from and directly at those of us emerging onto the plain. With another tremendous jerk the snared log and rope threw it to the ground. It picked itself up and proceeded to gallop back along the rope toward the snared log. Johnny, in the meantime, had left the vehicle and for some reason was trying to unsnag the log. He was intent on doing this when he realized the rhino was close by, bearing down directly onto him. Now it was his own skin at stake. Watching the performance at a distance, it appeared to me that he was in such a hurry to get away that his long legs were running before the rest of his body understood that it had to go too. He started off in a backward-leaning stance, which straightened out as he progressed. Luckily for him, the rhino went straight on, and as it reached the extremity of the rope, it broke, and Houdini disappeared across the flood plain into the bush. He was obviously thoroughly frightened and had had enough of being hounded about the area. He moved far up the Loldaiga Hills into rough and thick country, where there was no possibility of capturing him. We returned to Pesi, somewhat chastened and cut down to size by this experience.

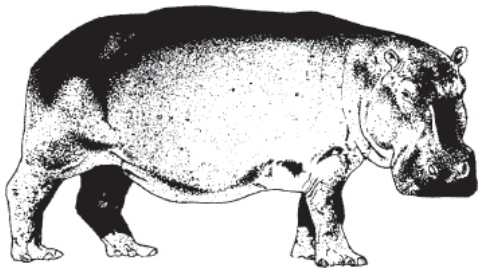
For the next three months, I remained at Pesi looking after the animals, apart from two short trips with Eric Rundgren after lion and buffalo. Carr had an order from a British zoo for two adult hippo. He located a pair that were doing nightly damage to wheat and maize farms in

the Ol Kalou area and obtained permission to capture them. I took no part in this exercise, but it was a major and very expensive undertaking. The hippo were resident in Lake Olbolossat, and to trap them, which he eventually did successfully, involved the construction of massive stockades around their favourite point of departure from the lake. Specially constructed crates were made, fitted with sprinklers to keep the hippo wet after capture. Masses of lucerne were deposited to attract their attention to the stockaded area and to entice them into the stockades and later into the crates. These were probably the only adult hippo ever to have been captured and shipped to a foreign country.

A very large consignment of wild animals was due to be shipped to Britain by the end of September. A man named Harry Hatch, who I believe was a senior employee of the London Zoo, arrived in August. His function was to familiarize himself with the animals and then take charge of them as deck cargo on the long sea voyage from the port of Mombasa to Britain. He assisted Carr at Lake Olbolossat with the capture of the two hippo and their subsequent adjustment to captivity. He also worked hard at the preparation of numerous crates needed for the many animals in this consignment. Several railway flatcars were reserved at Thomson's Falls, the nearest railhead, for the long journey to the coast. It took a full two weeks to crate all the animals and transport them by road from Pesi to the railhead, a distance of about forty miles. Carr himself organized the transfer of the two hippos from Olbolossat. By the end of September, everything was ready, and Harry Hatch, with some men from Pesi, left by rail with all the animals. Carr and his wife joined them on the longest rail leg, from Nairobi to Mombasa. It was a relief when this hectic activity was over and I was left at Pesi with very few animals to care for and little to do. I still had a valid elephant license, which expired in November, and I determined to make full use of it. Carr understood my concern about this and generously offered me the use of his three-ton truck and his .577 double rifle with ammunition, once I was satisfied that everything was under control at Pesi. Fupi was there with a couple of assistants to mind the few remaining animals and birds. All the carnivores, including the small cats and mongooses, had gone, as well as the secretary birds and the ground hornbills. There was no need for any meat supply. I arranged with Ken Randall, Daphne's brother, who owned Suguroi Ranch nearby, to visit Pesi every week in case of unusual problems. I left on safari at the beginning of October for a second attempt to collect my first elephant.

# My First Elephant

*Chapter 7*



The truck crawled up the escarpment in low gear, lurching over rocks and slipping on the mass of loose stones as we progressed toward the summit. We had turned west off the main Rumuruti-Maralal road at Suguta Marma, following a rough cattle track up the slopes, which would bring us out on the open plains of the Lorogi Plateau. I was at the wheel, and Lagasana, who was familiar with the area, was in the passenger seat. One of the kitchen staff from Pesi was there to prepare meals and do general chores around the camp. We had no tents—just blankets, a bucket or two for fetching water, cooking pots, and our clothes. A supply of *posho* (maize flour), beans, tea, sweetened condensed milk, sugar, and cooking fat, with a few tin plates, mugs, and eating utensils, was the extent of our equipment.

As we cleared the top of the escarpment the acacia thinned out to merge onto the wide-open, undulating plains of the plateau. The ground continued to rise to the far horizon. From the high points on the Lorogi Plains, stunning panoramas across the Great Rift Valley unfolded to the west. From what one felt was the roof of the world, Lake Baringo glinted in the distance far below. Beyond that, in the blue haze the pale outline of the massive Elgeyo and Marakwet Ranges formed the opposite side of this vast chasm, seeming to split the African continent from north to south. Standing there on the pale golden plains, 4,000 feet above the floor of the Rift, I was flooded with a feeling of wonder and awe—a realization of man's insignificance in the grand scheme of nature. I do not know how my men felt about this, but not one of them uttered a word until we moved on. Then Lagasana commented, *"Mungu kweli anajua ku jenga."* (God truly knows how to build.) I could only concur.

We took on board two Ndorobo from a small *boma* on the edge of the plains. They guided us to a large glade just inside the forest on the slopes of the plateau. Here there were some wells with good water, protected with piles of stones, theoretically to keep wild animals and cattle out. The place is called Oljoro Losuk. Well-worn game trails led the way to the water where elephant and other game drank regularly. For part of the year the water is at the surface; as the dry season progresses, the water table sinks

but remains exposed as wild animals and local tribesmen deepen the wells. At the peak of the dry season the water recedes to a level at which it can sustain itself, the depth of the wells being only about three feet with gently sloping sides. From the spoor I could see that elephants and many other species of animals were drinking here, so we camped under some forest trees nearby.

I did not want to fire off rifle shots close to the camp, so in company with two Ndorobo I took the truck a few miles across the plains and killed an impala for food. It was nearly dusk when we returned, so we settled down for the night after a simple meal to await what the morrow would bring. For three nights in succession no mature bull elephant came to the water, although one or two small cow herds and a multitude of buffalo, zebra, eland, and other animals arrived. The western slopes of the Lorogi in this area were covered in forests of juniper and other tree species. I took short walks into the forest and saw that great numbers of buffalo inhabited the area, as well as rhino, cow herds of elephant, and a scattering of adult bulls. I also did a fair amount of exploration with the truck on the plains to familiarize myself with the country in general. There was, in 1947, an astonishing quantity and variety of game to be seen on the plains. The only areas I can compare it with today are the Mara and the Serengeti. There were thousands of zebra, Thomson and Grant gazelle, great herds of eland, and many groups of beisa oryx, reticulated giraffe, large herds of buffalo, and an occasional rhino out in the open all day. This country had remained in its pristine state and had escaped the ravages of meat hunters during the war years. The big cats were also numerous. To me this was paradise on earth. I could never have believed, then, that in my lifetime this staggeringly beautiful country and the vast concentration of wildlife would be gone, replaced by endless wheat fields and excessive livestock degradation of the countryside. No matter how perfectly the creator has crafted the land, where nature has remained in balance for thousands of years, human ignorance, greed, and an insatiable desire for more wealth and property reduces it to an ugly and devastated reminder of his presence. What nature provides so bountifully, rapacious man takes and destroys without regret, in the name of development.

Dawn was breaking. Huddled by the fire, we boiled some water and prepared a pot of tea. At 7,000 feet above sea level the nights are bitterly cold sleeping out in the open. With hands cupped around the steaming mugs, we drank the scalding sweet beverage. The warmth and sugar energy coursed through our veins and we were ready for whatever might follow that day. Carrying the heavy .577 rifle and solid ammunition, I went to the wells with Lagasana and the two Ndorobo. We had heard buffalo and elephant at the water during the night. There was still a group of eland standing about as we approached. With a sharp bark of alarm they galloped away to the forest line. A great heap of fresh elephant droppings attracted us to the spot. The size indicated an adult bull. The tracks led off toward the forest's edge, and a great circular indentation impressed onto a dust patch confirmed that this was a large elephant. A little farther on he was joined by another bull, and the pair entered the forest together.

The older of the two Ndorobo was a skillful tracker, and, apart from one or two places where the signs were obliterated by passing herds of buffalo, we made good progress. The forest was moderately thick with visibility averaging from twenty to thirty yards. By midmorning the trail led us into a small glade where we stopped for a quarter-hour to

listen for sounds that might betray the presence of the two bulls nearby. As we waited I questioned the older Ndorobo about his past elephant hunting experiences. In the old days the tribe used to dig pits and cover them for concealment along elephant migratory paths. Elephants were occasionally caught like this and, when found in such a hopeless predicament, could be safely speared to death. The pits were seven to eight feet deep, the side walls tapering inward to a narrow floor at the bottom. An elephant falling in would thus be wedged between the two sides before its feet touched the bottom, which greatly reduced its ability to extricate itself. Sometimes the pits had pointed vertical stakes planted in the floor. An unfortunate elephant falling into such a pit would be impaled to die in dreadful agony. My Ndorobo friend, whom I estimated at between fifty and sixty years old, claimed that he had never used pits but had hunted with *wazungu* (Europeans) on a few occasions. He claimed to have hunted with R. Cunningham, who was a well-known white hunter in the 1920s, and he hunted with another white man who was killed by an enraged cow elephant in these same highland forests many years before. He was a knowledgeable and skilled old bushman, and with my lack of elephant hunting experience at the time, it was quite a morale booster to have him along. As we moved on through the forest we tested the droppings of the elephants, but they were stone-cold, so it was with some surprise that the sharp snap of a breaking branch some way up ahead brought us to a standstill.

Two or three minutes went by and it happened again, followed by a low rumble. There was no mistaking that sound, and with a quickening of the senses and a check of the rifle, we cautiously advanced. A heart-stopping, violent clattering in some dense undergrowth right alongside momentarily froze us in our tracks until we realized it was a small flock of crested forest guinea fowl breaking in panic to get away. Another cracking branch, this time much closer, echoed through the forest at this moment, followed by the sound of vegetation being brushed aside as the great beasts we were following moved through the forest. Another hundred yards and the lower-level undergrowth thinned out, and there in front was the towering back and hindquarters of a bull elephant. The old Ndorobo, his job done, fell behind and left me in front to deal with the situation. I could only see the one elephant, but its tusks were not visible from my position. The bull was about twenty yards in front of me, slowly moving directly away. The air in the forest was still, so, taking no further notice of my men, I angled out from my existing line of approach to overhaul and parallel the bull on the left side, hoping to get a view of his ivory. This would also put me in a suitable position for a broadside shot at his heart.

Rapidly, and as quietly as possible, I moved to a position to the left of and at right angles to his stern. I now glanced around to see if any of the men were with me. They were running away through the forest in panic. With the elephant only about fifteen yards away, partially concealed by leaves and bush, I wondered what the scare was about. I soon saw it, for down to the right, advancing at a fast walk straight toward me, was the second elephant. His head was high, with ears fully spread, clearly suspicious. In the same instant, with this clear frontal view, I took in the great tusks protruding from his head toward the ground. In this rapidly changing set of circumstances, I felt that I had been caught with my pants down. I had neither the knowledge nor the desire to attempt a frontal brain shot. The elephant was rapidly closing the distance between us, and my hunting companions were fleeing in disarray. Without giving the matter further thought I

fled from the scene. I soon realized the elephant was not following me and pulled up with a wildly thumping heart. I could hear the two bulls some way off stampeding through the forest. I now felt angry and depressed by what I interpreted as my faintheartedness, but what a sight those tusks had been!

By a series of birdlike whistles we all met up again, each with his own story about what he had seen and done. We quietly debated the situation for a while, then moved on once again, following the spoor of the stampeding bulls. I was not optimistic about seeing them again after my Yatta experiences with Colonel Mariott, but the Ndorobo disagreed. Since they knew the country and the local habits of the game and it was only midday, we had plenty of time. The fact is that there was no cultivation in this district, and it was not renowned for heavy ivory, so these elephant had little experience of being hunted by man. They were not like the shy and crafty old bulls in the low country of Ukambani. The Ndorobo stuck to the spoor of the fleeing bulls like bloodhounds. The gait of the bulls slowed to a walk after a few hundred yards, and within an hour they started to browse here and there while continuing in the same direction. This was a sure indication that they had recovered from the fright we gave them, so we paid more attention to the signs and sounds of the surrounding forest. Sometime later, still on the spoor, we entered a small glade, and the Ndorobo said Lagasana and I should rest here while they checked out a hollow tree nearby for honey. We had hardly rested since daylight, and I agreed. At the same time I felt that the old man would not fritter away time if he thought the elephants were anywhere nearby. I do not know if I was right or wrong in this conjecture, but they had only been gone for twenty minutes when the younger man returned to say the two bulls were in the forest close by. His companion, he said, was keeping them under observation until we arrived.

The Ndorobo led the way into the forest, moving fast along the elephant trail to a point where he had placed a bunch of freshly plucked leaves on the ground. Here we left the well-worn path and worked our way quietly through the forest to where the old man was squatting on his haunches with his back against the trunk of a massive cedar tree. As we approached he stood up and led the way through the forest, cautioning everyone to tread carefully because the bulls were close by. The puffs of dry ash shaken from a cloth bag indicated hardly any air movement, and what little there was fitfully drifted in our favour. The sounds of elephantine flatulence and sighs guided us straight to the nearest elephant. As soon as the old Ndorobo saw it, he once again dropped behind me, leaving me to handle the final act alone. Gripping the rifle, my mind totally concentrated on the task in hand, I deliberately advanced on the bull. I could see the dark mass of his body through the intervening leaves. Then I saw the tusks. From their size it was almost certainly the same bull, though I could not be sure because I never did see the tusks of the other elephant. At about fifteen yards' range I had a clear view of the elephant standing broadside to me. The long curving tusks left me in no doubt that this was what I had been looking for and hoping to collect for the past eleven months. I could hear his companion farther ahead, and it seemed the big fellow habitually trailed behind the other. I lined up the .577 on a point at the rear line of the shoulder and some way above the elbow and fired. The elephant staggered momentarily to the shot and then crashed away through the forest, the sound fading and then ceasing. The old Ndorobo was beside me now and he said to

wait and listen. Thirty seconds later there was a crash in the undergrowth where the elephant had gone, and the old Ndorobo, now beside himself with excitement, seized me by the arm exclaiming for all to hear, *"Ameanguka!"* (It has fallen.) I had been so intent and keyed up that although there was opportunity to do so, I completely forgot to fire the left barrel of my rifle.

We were not sure where the elephant was, so, replacing the spent cartridge, we carefully moved through the forest in the direction of the last sounds. Suddenly the old man pointed and said, *"Huyo, amekufa."* (There, he is dead.) The massive bull was lying on his side with no life in him. There was no sign of his companion, so we moved up to the carcass, lopped off the hairy lower end of the tail to indicate our claim to this animal, and then went on to examine the tusks. They were a well-matched pair and, when weighed for sale over a month later, tipped the scales at 82 and 84 pounds. I was naturally in a state of high elation, and my ego was further boosted by the praise and flattering remarks of the Ndorobo, who had done so much to bring about the successful conclusion of this hunt. Everyone conveniently forgot about the fact that we had nearly spoiled it on the first encounter by bolting like frightened rabbits. Neither did I draw attention to the fact that I had forgotten to use the second barrel of the rifle at the peak of the action. Under the circumstances it made no difference apart from enhancing my competence in the eyes of the men, but I knew the truth, and I wasn't about to tell them. I vowed then that the second barrel would only stay silent if I wanted it that way and not because it was forgotten. We completed a detailed external anatomical examination of the dead bull and walked nearly three hours back to the camp through the forest.

*The author's first elephant, at seventeen. Lorogi, 1947.*

During the night the Ndorobo trackers rounded up all the men, women, and children from their own and other *boma*s in the vicinity. There were at least forty people at my camp by dawn, and others were on their way. This was a festive occasion for them—a windfall of several tons of meat is a rare treat indeed. They were all prepared to camp by the carcass and stay there until nothing was left. For people in the western world it is hard to imagine the chronic near-starvation prevalent among primitive communities in Africa. It is not surprising that upon news of the availability of unlimited meat, there is a rapid gathering of the clans, so to speak.

One remaining task had to be completed on this hunt—the extraction of the tusks from the elephant's skull and their transport to my camp. With little difficulty the old Ndorobo led the way through the forest. The mob followed a long way behind. Lagasana, who came with us, left a trail of broken saplings and branches for them to follow. No doubt the old man was familiar with this forest from collecting honey and miraa (vegetable stimulant), but even so, it is impressive that he could proceed in a more or less straight line through several miles of forest with limited visibility. I believe his instinct for direction influenced our route as much as mere familiarity, and we came directly to the carcass. The old man picked several tender shoots of miraa on the way, peeling off the bark and chewing it as he wandered along. It is a mild narcotic and stimulant in which some of the highland tribes indulge. I tried some without noticing any effect. One probably has to chew it all day for the effects to become apparent. It is in great demand among the Somali people, and the trade in it there is big money.

The removal of tusks is a long and gory task requiring two or three men with knives and axes. The trunk has to be removed at its base, along with other fleshy tissue, before the tusks are chopped out of the skull. Once they are free, the sheath of bone around the internal part is removed and the tusks scraped as clean as possible. The final act is to remove the nerve filling the cavities of the tusks. Among the tribes, custom has it that if women or children, and in some cases men who are not themselves hunters, observe the nerve being drawn out it will adversely effect future elephant hunts and even their lives. While such superstitions mean little to educated Westerners, they are very real to primitive people, and it is important not to flout such beliefs if you wish to retain their confidence. With the tusks removed, the crowd of followers, who already had fires burning, were given leave to strip the carcass. The first move was to peel back the hide covering the abdomen and remove the stomach and viscera, which by now were bloated with gas. This done, a naked man crawled into the exposed chest cavity and removed the heart, lungs, and spleen. Now commenced the major work of stripping away the rest of the hide and all of the meat. Before heading back to camp with the ivory, I spent some time examining the heart and other organs. The 750-grain .577 bullet had ploughed its way through the heart, tearing up and rupturing the major blood vessels near the points of entry. No creature could survive such injury for more than a few minutes, and I was well satisfied with my performance. We returned to camp, where I rewarded the two Ndorobo and the four other men who had carried the tusks in turns. They all went straight back to the feast and two or three days of gluttony.

We spent one more night at Oljoro Losuk. The hunt had been concluded sooner than anticipated, and I did not care to return to Pesi after less than a week on safari. I derived the greatest enjoyment just from sleeping in the open under the stars, so I

decided to spend one night on the road back as a self-indulgence. Suguta Mugi lies south of Suguta Marma and is a similar spring-fed marsh in rocky ground. There was no settlement here in 1947, and this is where I decided to spend the night. There were some impala on the far end of the marsh and pairs of Egyptian geese in the water. A few gray herons and egrets stood about in the short reeds, and plovers and sandpipers skittered about on the bare sandy patches. Tracks of large numbers of buffalo and a few rhino were evident in the soft mud at the water's edge, so we camped two hundred yards away under a collection of short acacia trees in full leaf, giving plenty of shade. As the sun went down in the west, the marsh presented a peaceful, even idyllic scene, inducing a feeling of contentment and relaxation. The fire burned down to a heap of glowing embers, a log burning at one end. We wrapped up in our blankets, knowing it would smolder on until daylight. Darkness enveloped the land, and sometime later, as I gazed at the glittering stars, a distant grunting of lions came over the night air from far away. It is hard to sleep in the open when lions are about, even if they seem to be far away. The sound itself is thrilling, probably because one knows what is making it and tries to gauge whether they are coming or going by the next grunts. I suppose it is instinct sharpening the senses that keeps a man awake or at least partially alert at night when he knows lions are in the vicinity. A waning moon shed a pale silvery light on the surroundings as it descended lower in the night sky, and the lion calls seemed to come closer. One of the men placed another log on the fire, blowing the coals into life.

Virtually all wild animals become increasingly bold in their relations with man after dark. I assume that instinct tells them they are safe from the two-legged predator because he cannot see. In the case of lions, the darker the night, the bolder they seem to become. This certainly seemed to be the case on that unforgettable night at Suguta Mugi. Shortly after the moon had set, leaving us in total darkness, the lions moved to within 150 yards from where we were camped. A deep moan or two indicated their proximity, then one gave voice to a series of full-throated booming roars, gradually fading into low grunts and sighs. Shortly afterward it started again and was joined by two or three others. The sheer volume of sound seemed to make the night air vibrate as it peaked and then faded into harsh stertorous sighs. The lions were now not more than one hundred yards away, and they repeated this awesome performance at intervals until an hour or so before dawn, when we heard them softly moaning as they retreated into the bush. These "concerts," as I call them, are a rare and thrilling experience and, for all our guns, lights, and fires, make one feel vulnerable to the perceived power engulfing one's being. It is common enough to hear lions at night, but a full-blown audition like this, at such close range, is rare indeed and happens only a few times during a lifetime on safari. I have no theories on the reason for this behaviour, unless it is to attract attention to themselves, to humble and dominate us in the dark, or to simply scare the wits out of us. Whatever the reasons, it was a thrilling if sleepless night that will forever be remembered.

About this time Tsavo National Park was being formed, and I heard that vacancies for assistant wardens were being advertised. I applied for one of these posts and was short-listed for interview in Nairobi at the beginning of January 1948. I had worked for Carr Hartley for eleven months and had gained much experience. I did not care to continue game catching forever and felt it was time to move on. I had too much sympathy for wild creatures behind bars to spend a lifetime putting them there. I had hopes for the assistant warden's post in

the national parks. Failing that, the big-game hunting safaris were under way again, and I thought there might be prospects in that field too. When the Hartleys returned in mid-November I told Carr of my intention to leave at the end of the month. So, with a sense of regret, my time at Pesi came to an end.

Colonel Marriott and Bill Woodley visited Pesi at the end of November, and I took a lift with them to Nairobi. They had been away for nearly a year hunting ivory in Portuguese East Africa. At that time the Portuguese government was issuing licenses for thirty elephants at a time, and the colonel and Bill had used theirs up. We had much news to catch up on, and I learned that Bill had also been short-listed for interview for the same national parks' position for which I had applied. In Nairobi I sold my ivory and purchased a .470 Army and Navy double rifle with the proceeds. I also had an interview with a man called Turner-Dauncey and his partner Geoff Lawrence-Brown. They offered me a job as trainee professional hunter in their newly established company, Eagle Safaris Ltd. This is the job I accepted and held for the next few years, because the national parks director Mervyne Cowie selected Bill for the job for which I had initially applied. I was not greatly disappointed at this rejection because I basically wanted to hunt big game and did not think I would have that opportunity as a park warden.

# Professional Hunter

*Chapter 8*

The postwar period from 1946 to 1972 was the heyday of the professional hunter in East Africa. By professional hunter I mean the men who conducted big-game safaris with paying clients, looking for trophy animals. The so-called glamour and myths of Africa's "white hunters" had carried over from prewar years, and some of the legendary guides of that era were active or at least still alive to perpetuate their ethics and high standards. Among these were Philip Percival, O. M. Rees, T. Murray-Smith, Syd Downey, Donald Ker, David Sheldrick, Mark Howard-Williams, John Lawrence, and Bunny Allen. Younger men of similar calibre entering the profession established equally great reputations, upholding the ethics and quality of hunting until it was closed down by the East African governments (1973 in Tanganyika and 1977 in Kenya).

Big-game hunting safaris reopened in Tanganyika in 1982 and still continue in several African countries. Some of the professionals from earlier days are still operating in Tanganyika and try to maintain the old standards and values. However, some of the newcomers are deplorably incompetent and short on ethics and integrity. With these latter "gentlemen" there is no discernible love of the wild or admiration for the game they hunt. Their motives are purely commercial. It is unfortunate that in Tanganyika, at least, the ethical standards of some licensed professionals are vastly inferior to those of earlier times. There are too many bad apples today for an exclusive and honourable profession to remain as such. Steps need to be taken to weed out the incompetent, corrupt, and unethical, as was done in the past. The now-defunct East African Professional Hunters Association used to monitor the conduct of professional hunters in a spirit of cooperation with the game department. The executive committee took disciplinary measures when necessary and approved or denied the granting of licenses to trainees after a thorough check on their hunting ability and experience with clients. No organization has effectively replaced the association since it was de-registered when hunting was closed in Kenya in 1977, following Tanganyika's hunting ban in late 1973.

I was employed by Eagle Safaris for two years—1948 to 1949—under the tutelage of Geoff Lawrence-Brown. I had very little money, for I was only paid when on safari with clients and received a very small living expense account for being the company's general runabout in Nairobi. Fortunately, they had a fair number of safari bookings during these two years, each for one to two months' duration. Because I could not afford to rent accommodation in Nairobi, Geoff kindly permitted me to live in a tent erected in his backyard for a very moderate charge, which included meals with the family. There was a single guest room at the rear of the carport, rented by another trainee hunter called Bill Jenvey, who was working for another company. We became good friends and hunted elephant together on license in Kenya and Tanganyika on a few occasions in between professional safaris. Unfortunately, this valued relationship cooled twenty years later over a problem of game quotas. We were on opposite sides of the fence by then. He was the senior hunter for the nationalized Tanzania Wildlife Safaris Ltd., and I was the senior game warden responsible for southeastern Tanzania. My responsibilities included the allocation of game quotas for utilization, while Bill Jenvey felt it was his duty to get the best possible deal for his clients, which often meant an extra animal of some much sought-after trophy over and above the quotas laid down. Since I would not budge on the allocation and he would not give up trying, it not surprisingly ended in impasse between us. I have always tried to keep official and private relationships in separate compartments, but this case, regrettably, did not work out like that.

Our first safari came out of the blue, and long before we expected it. A young Englishman named John Lang appeared in the office one morning and said he wanted to go on a big-game hunt. He had arrived at Mombasa by ship and had come up to Nairobi by rail, and on impulse he decided to do a hunting safari for a month as the best way of seeing the country and its game. He was actually on his way to Australia with plenty of time and cash in hand. We had been caught quite unprepared. After sealing the contract we said we would be ready to leave in two days' time. A good deal of frenzied activity followed, getting the supplies, game licenses, bits and pieces of equipment, the African safari crew, and a truck to carry it all in. Geoff had his own Chevrolet hunting car, together with sufficient tentage and camp furniture. It all worked out in time, and we left with Lang for the Northern Frontier Isiolo District. He wanted to hunt rhino, buffalo, and lion, with a selection of antelope and zebra. We hired a .450 double rifle and a .318 magazine rifle for his use from May and Company Ltd. in Nairobi, so he was well set-up for his hunt.

Having checked all the equipment and supplies as they were loaded onto the truck in Nairobi, I knew what was there. But when everything was erected and in place, I was amazed at the luxury and opulence of this, my first professional safari camp. I was used to sleeping on a strip of canvas on the ground with just a blanket, relaxing by sitting on a log or stone around a fire with my men, eating *ugali* (maize) with meat grilled on the coals, and washing in a stream or in a bucket of cold water. Here there were spacious tents to sleep and eat in, X-pattern camp beds, shower and toilet tents, linen, blankets, pillows, chairs to relax on, dining tables with cutlery, crockery and glasses, and so on. I did not spurn what was to my mind lavish comfort and food—there was even a kerosene-operated refrigerator—but I did wonder why people in quest of the simple hunter's life should complicate it so much with all this paraphernalia. I had yet to learn that self-indulgence, the macho image, and childish jealousy is the cross that professional hunters have to bear with grace and self-control from time to time.

The first day we headed north, passing through Nanyuki and descending into the lower-lying and increasingly dry country to Isiolo, the start of the Northern Frontier District. We camped not far from this latter town, close to the Wajir road. The next morning we moved to Garbatula through lava-strewn wilderness and then turned north to Merti on the lower reaches of the Ewaso Nyiro River. The forest of tall, shady acacia trees along the river was a welcome change from the harsh, barren landscape we had come through. The riverine strip on both sides of the river was very attractive country, abounding in beautiful shady campsites and plenty of game scattered about in the open woodland and seasonally flooded grasslands along the river. Geoff soon accepted that I had some skill in hunting techniques and could distinguish between poor, good, and exceptional trophy heads. Being rather overweight and in deplorable physical condition, he delegated much of the nondangerous game hunting to me. During the next ten days John Lang and I had some enjoyable hunts together, and he collected several of the trophies he wanted, including Beisa oryx, gerenuk, and eland. We crept up on elephant herds to photograph them and saw at least two good trophy bulls, but he had no desire to shoot an elephant and had no license for it. Together with Geoff, we followed up several rhino, none of which carried trophy-quality horns.

We set up zebra baits in two localities for lion, but they attracted mostly females and young. Creeping up on a bait early one morning, we found a solitary male up on his hind legs trying to pull the zebra carcass down from where it was tied to the stout branch of a tree. He had hardly any mane but was big in body. John was desperately keen to shoot, but Geoff persuaded him that his chances for a better-maned specimen were good, so we just watched his antics for nearly half an hour. It became hotter as the sun rose, and he finally gave up and moved away, heading straight toward us. As the lion approached we quietly retreated, concealed by bush from his view. As he reached the position we had just vacated he immediately scented our presence and with deep rumbling growls swung around and galloped for cover beyond the bait. It had been an interesting interlude, and John got some satisfying photographs. He collected a good bull rhino at this camp, and we then moved upstream some forty miles to camp at the base of Shaba Mountain. Here we had an interesting and eventually successful hunt for a lion. It killed a Grevy zebra one night, and we were attracted to the scene by circling vultures some miles from camp. As we approached, many of these birds were perched in nearby trees, but in spite of hyena and a pair of jackals, also keeping their distance, we felt the lion had to be close by. As we cautiously approached, the vultures took off with noisy flapping wings, and the hyenas and jackals slunk away. For half an hour we sat concealed in cover, observing the kill, but nothing stirred in the surrounding bush. We decided the lion must have moved away, so, quietly rising, we made our way across the intervening ground to the zebra kill.

The tracks of a large male were imprinted in the dust, and we noted that he had eaten very little. Assuming the animal had not eaten and was still hungry, it was likely to return to its kill if we protected the carcass from the vultures circling overhead. The three trackers were directed to cut some of the stunted thorn trees growing in abundance nearby and pile them in a vulture-proof heap over the carcass. They immediately set about this task under the leadership of a Somali called Mohammed Bashir. He led them to a place near a rocky gully where small trees were plentiful. As they reached the edge of the gully there was a

deep growl and rustling in the thicket. Two of the men bolted back to us, but Mohammed stood his ground, beckoning us to come and pointing down the gully. He said he had seen the lion as it got to its feet and fled. He was very excited and said it had a dark mane, insisting we could get it if we followed it up.

It was clear that the lion had not abandoned its kill, and even though it had been disturbed, there was a good chance it would return. Geoff decided we should cover the carcass as planned and return in the afternoon to stalk up under cover. In an aside to me he said he did not want Lang to be tempted into firing at a running lion, which might leave us with a wounded beast that would have to be dealt with. He felt that a clear shot at a stationary lion on a bait offered better and less risky prospects. I silently disagreed but did not express my views, since he was the boss and I was a learner on my first safari. We piled the bush in a dense layer over the carcass, constructed a suitable blind about fifty yards away, and then returned to camp. In the early afternoon we drove out, left the truck a half-mile or so from the lion kill, and proceeded on foot to take up position in the blind. The carcass under the bush was still intact. Vultures were on the ground around it, and a few had forced their way under the protective covering. There was no sign of the lion, and the fact that these scavenger birds were dispersed on the ground all around the kill indicated that he was not close by. By dusk there was still no lion or even a hyena, so we retreated to the truck and returned to camp to try again next morning.

As dawn was breaking we crept into the blind. I had that feeling of tension and excitement, for I was sure the lion would be on his kill. Against the sky we could see a few vultures perched in the tallest trees. It was too early for the others, who had gone farther away to roost. We could hear something tearing at the kill, but it was still too dark to see. As the sky brightened, visibility increased. The protective covering over the kill had been scattered, and shadowy forms at the carcass transformed into hyenas. Jackals hovered around the rim, trying to snatch a tidbit whenever opportunity offered. There was no lion, and there was not likely to be one nearby with hyenas feeding hungrily, in total disregard of any threat in the vicinity. It was a disappointment, and we silently gazed at this primordial scene for several minutes, futilely hoping for better things.

After a while we rose and walked out of the blind. Suddenly, the hyenas fled, chattering to themselves, as they made for the nearest cover. Sure enough, the lion had returned to his kill, scattering the protective covering and then dragging it several yards into the clear. He had gorged himself and left well before our arrival. We believed that with such a heavy belly he would not go a great distance before resting up for the day. The only choice now was to follow the lion up. Geoff admonished John not to shoot until told to and cautioned him about shooting at a moving target. So we started out on the spoor, with Mohammed Bashir as tracker. The ground was soft volcanic dust, and following up the lion was easy. We proceeded in a northerly direction, the lion stopping at one point to discharge a nauseous flood of excreta—a sure sign that he had overloaded his stomach. An hour later he was still going, much to our surprise, and the spoor led us to a spring with a marshy area where he had quenched his thirst. We estimated he had been here while we were at the blind at dawn.

From the water the spoor led us to a low ridge less than a mile away. The country all around was wide open and flat, in contrast to the ridge, which was densely covered by

low green bush with loose lumps of black lava lying scattered about on the surface. The ridge and cover ran southeast for some two miles and then terminated in a gentle slope at the edge of bare open flats with scattered acacia trees. The same soft volcanic dust on the ridge enabled us to keep on the tracks, but visibility was down to a few yards. Even so, we could see over the top of the bush cover. The bush was, for the most part, vertical growth with no interlacing vines or other entanglements. There were numerous game and cattle trails through it. This enabled us to progress in a sort of line abreast formation. Mohammed followed the spoor with Geoff beside him. On his left was John Lang and then myself. The other two trackers were in line on the right. I did not feel comfortable with this arrangement, because the chances of seeing the lion in this cover were zero, as were the prospects of stopping him if he came for us. I had visions of how Eric Rundgren would have done this—by creeping quietly along the spoor and shooting the lion as it slumbered, unaware that danger was approaching.

A coughing grunt and a rustle of vegetation erupted ahead as the lion bolted. A while later the same thing happened again, and we had not even had a glimpse of the animal. When we were about 150 yards from the end of the ridge, the lion, though we could see no sign of him, started to growl savagely some twenty yards away. We all stopped with rifles at the ready; it seemed a charge was imminent. Then I saw the bushes moving as the lion moved away along the ridge. I had a sudden inspiration and, telling John to follow me, broke clear of the cover and sprinted parallel with it to the end of the ridge. John, who was young and fit, was right with me. We pulled up, breathing hard, and saw the lion come out of the undergrowth about fifty yards away. He saw us instantly and crouched close to the ground,

*John Lang with his buffalo. Narok District, 1948.*

partially obscured by low scrubs. He quickly realized we had seen him, and there followed a low throbbing growl and the lashing of his tail, and the next instant he was coming at us. I muttered to John, "Hold your breath and go for the head," and did likewise myself. We both fired together when the lion had already halved the distance between us, and he collapsed in a cloud of dust.

After a few moments there was no further movement from the lion, so, reloading my right barrel and telling John to do the same, we cautiously approached the body. I asked John to put a precautionary shot into his chest. There was no response, so we went on to inspect the trophy. He was a fair-sized lion with a hugely distended belly and, for the Northern Frontier area, a good dark mane. Two bullets had shattered his skull, but the teeth, jaws, and nose section were intact. It was a great trophy after an even greater hunt, as John put it. Geoff was a bit put out by the way I had precipitously left him on the ridge. I explained that I had acted on instinct and impulse, there was no time to have a conference on the subject, and it had ended well. He understood this well enough and said no more. John Lang was ecstatic, not only with collecting his lion but with the sequence of the hunt. He had surprised himself with his own endurance and steadfastness, and that is the best possible way for a hunt to end.

From Shaba we moved a long way south into Narok District and camped on the Talek River in what is today the Masai Mara Game Reserve. John was anxious to do some photography, and he still needed a buffalo for his collection. Buffalo and impala heads tend to run bigger in Masailand than in Isiolo District, and John got a good buffalo and an impala, along with lots of photographs. The safari came to an end with a very contented client. John Lang would be well over seventy years old now, and if he is still alive I sometimes wonder if he ever thinks of the stirring times we had hunting together in 1948.

The quality of a safari depends on several factors, of which the actual hunting is only one element. Harmonious relations between the participants is all-important. The level of compatibility, sportsmanship, ethics, jealousy, and self-interest on the part of individuals can make the experience the highlight of a lifetime or turn it into a nightmare. Most clients were happy with a representative collection of good trophies and were overjoyed with any that were outstanding. They appreciated that patience, skill, good judgment, and an element of luck combined to bring about such results. A small minority seemed to take the view that in paying for a safari they were guaranteed all the trophy heads they wanted, as if these items could be picked off a store shelf. It was our misfortune to contract a safari in which such an individual participated. This was some months after the Lang safari. In Geoff's opinion, I was now considered competent to hunt all dangerous game with clients except elephant. If there were two or more clients we generally hunted separately.

The two men, Dr. Sowers and his friend Paul Layman, arrived at Eastleigh Airport, and we took them to their hotel in town. The camp had been sent off in advance, and we left the following morning for the Lorogi Plateau. Because of the distance over rough roads we only made it to Thomson's Falls that night and arrived in camp the following afternoon. Layman grumbled that he had lost a day's hunting because of the night stop at the Thomson's Falls Hotel. He disagreed with Geoff and Dr. Sowers that if we had traveled all night, he would not have been in a fit condition to hunt. This was the first

*John Lang with his lion. Isiolo District, 1948.*

warning sign of the man's approach to what he termed value for money. That afternoon we spent sighting-in the four rifles, until everyone was satisfied that they were right on target. Later we discussed the safari finances with our two clients. They had paid a deposit up front, and the balance was due on completion of the six-week trip. A minor row with Layman developed over "the wasted day" and ended with "Doc," as we called him, persuading his friend to be reasonable. We were to learn that reason was a rare quality in Layman's mental processes.

Two days later Geoff and the two clients left to hunt early in the morning. I was told to stay behind and attend to the preparation of a few hides from animals already collected. They returned for breakfast around 9 A.M. Doc had shot at and wounded a rhino, which had escaped into the forest. The plan was to return there after breakfast and follow it up. I was told to get my .470 rifle and join the hunt, which pleased me no end. It seems that while driving along the forest line, they had seen a solitary rhino browsing along the edge. Leaving the vehicle, they had walked up to within less than one hundred yards and judged the anterior horn to be of trophy length. Doc had fired a broadside shot at the shoulder through some light bush fringing the forest's edge. Geoff and the two clients then followed the tracks to where it had joined another rhino concealed in cover, and the pair of them continued on together. Apparently there were a few spots of blood to be seen along the spoor for the first two or three hundred yards, and then it dried up. The two rhino stopped for a short while after about a mile and then continued on their way deeper into the forest. Arriving at this point, there was no further sign of blood, so Geoff decided to discontinue the hunt for the time being and let the wounded animal settle down. He returned to camp with the clients,

calculating that an hour or more would be sufficient time to allow the wounded rhino to die or at least become less alert and sensitive to its surroundings.

By midmorning we were at the point where the spoor had been abandoned. With Mohammed Bashir in the lead, followed by Geoff and the rest of us, we continued along the spoor through fairly dense forest, observing two broken-up piles of fresh droppings along the way. After some distance the ground cover thinned out, leaving a much thicker upper-level canopy in the trees. This was a considerable improvement, for we could now see twenty yards or more and, by crouching and looking forward from close to the ground, farther than that. Having transected this section of low visibility, where the risk of a very close encounter was a real possibility, Geoff called a halt to ease the tension that inevitably builds when following a wounded and potentially dangerous quarry. While the others rested I suggested to Geoff that Mohammed and I continue along the spoor for a limited distance in order to save time when everybody was ready to move. He agreed to this on condition that I did not penetrate areas of dense cover and that I would return within an hour. Twenty minutes later the ground cover was starting to thicken up again, and I was about to return to the rest of the party when we heard what sounded like heavy breathing. Moving carefully forward, making every effort not to crack dry leaves and twigs underfoot, we discovered the two rhino, both lying on their bellies sleeping. Fortunately, no tick birds were present and the air was still. Both were partially obscured by vegetation at about twenty yards away. I could see part of the body and head of the nearest animal and the back of the other one beyond it. It was impossible to determine which was the wounded rhino, as no blood was visible. I felt it was unwise to linger so close to the sleeping animals in case they caught our scent and rushed off in alarm again. We quietly retreated and rejoined the others a short time later.

I reported our discovery to Geoff, telling him that I could not identify the wounded rhino but that the front horn of the nearest animal to us was certainly over twenty inches in length. I told him they both appeared to be sleeping, and there was no sign that either was suffering from gunshot wounds. Since we did not know which animal was the wounded one, Geoff proposed that we take both rhino to be sure of collecting the injured one. I considered this a bad suggestion and said so. I was overruled, and the proposition was put to the clients. They both had rhino licenses, but there was an element of doubt about the horn quality of one animal, since I had not been able to see its head. The clients accepted the proposition after Geoff made it clear to them that the trophy quality of the second animal was unknown. The first priority was to get the wounded animal, which was known to have acceptable horns because it had been seen when Doc shot at it in the morning. Layman accepted the element of chance, agreeing to take the rhino with no fresh wound in it, regardless of the size of the horns. With this resolved, we set off with Mohammed and myself in the lead and found the rhino resting just as they had been. Geoff thought the beast closest to us was the one Doc had wounded but was by no means sure. He started to move to the right, accompanied by Layman, and had gone a few yards when something alerted the sleeping rhino. They both started to rise, and instantly a fusillade of shots rang out, initiated by Layman and followed by Geoff and then by Doc, whose shot floored the rhino closest to us. This all happened in a matter of seconds, and neither rhino moved more than a foot or two from where they had being lying, and they died there.

A quick inspection of the carcasses revealed that the rhino initially wounded by the doctor was indeed the same animal he had just killed. The original wound was superficial. The bullet had cut a shallow furrow in the hide for a few inches across the chest at the base of the neck. The other animal was virtually fully grown and on the point of separating permanently from its dam. It was a bull, but, being barely adult, its anterior horn was hardly ten inches in length. It was a miserably embarrassing trophy. This unhappy discovery precipitated Layman's instant rejection of the agreement. Geoff did not respond immediately to this provocation, and, removing the horns from both beasts, we returned to camp, calling in at the *boma* of the Ndorobo on the way so they could go and collect the meat. I do not know what was said in the mess tent later, but by evening the tension between Geoff and Layman seemed to have eased. After dinner I was told that another rhino license, at company expense, would be purchased for Layman. I was sent to the district office at Maralal to buy it the next morning. There were many rhino in the area, and Layman shot a fine bull a day later.

To my mind Layman's reneging on the agreement was shockingly deceitful and illustrated well his twisted morals. At the same time I had some sympathy for him, as the solution to the wounded rhino problem was in fact the worst choice of all. If the action had not been suggested in the first place, or if Layman had not agreed to accept unreservedly the second rhino, this wasteful killing could have been avoided. An alternative way of identifying and destroying the wounded cow, without shooting the second animal, could have been found. For example, by making a faint noise or rustling some leaves, both animals would have been alerted and stood up to initially face the direction of the sound. The wounded cow would have revealed dry blood on her chest area, and her grown-up calf would have been identified by his lack of horn development. There is blame on both sides, but an agreement is binding. To default on it as Layman did is morally unacceptable, throwing into clear relief the level of the man's integrity.

It was time to leave the Lorogi. Our next camp was on the Kipsing sand river. To get there we spent a full day on the road, followed by the big truck and crew, winding through the spectacular hill country along the Kisima to Wamba Road. We turned onto the direct road to Isiolo, in the hills, crossing the Ewaso Nyiro River at the Barsalinga drift. The Kipsing was some twenty miles beyond this crossing. Apart from an occasional Samburu *manyatta,* there were few people in this country. It was arid and had nothing like the game to be seen on the Lorogi Plateau. But it was a good area for the dry country game species, such as lesser kudu and gerenuk, both highly prized trophy animals. Crossing the Kipsing, we worked our way upstream along the left bank until we came upon a small *boma* occupied by a family of impoverished Somalis. Mohammed, being a Somali himself, was able to converse with these people. They complained of being harassed by lions every night and begged us to help them. This was interesting news, so we set up camp under some spreading acacia trees close by. Two of the Somali men accompanied us, one for each hunting car, and their local knowledge was invaluable. I was assigned to hunt with Layman.

The following day we positioned a zebra bait, hung from a tree on the opposite bank of the Kipsing, about forty-five minutes' walk up the sand river from the campsite. In the afternoon we collected a boar warthog and placed it also in a suitable tree, some distance downstream. Nearby there was a small rocky hill covered in dense bush, with

a lot of cover leading down to the tree line of the riverbed. I considered this to be an ideal place for a leopard. Geoff had also put up baits in other places. It often takes two or three days for lions or leopards to be attracted to a bait. The reason for this, I believe, is that neither species has exceptional powers of detecting dead animals by scent. Until the odour of decaying flesh and leaking abdominal gases becomes strong, they may pass close by a dead animal without becoming aware of its existence. An early attraction, say overnight, is undoubtedly brought about by vultures congregating and dropping from the sky onto trees close to the bait. I have on several occasions observed lion and hyena in daylight, following the flight line of vultures gliding down to a carcass lying out in the bush. I am sure leopard do the same thing.

During the days that followed we hunted in the mornings and afternoons up to dusk. Both Doc and Layman managed to collect gerenuk and lesser kudu. The latter antelope are prime trophy animals, with the males carrying tightly spiraled horns, tipped with white points. They are extraordinarily graceful creatures and in my opinion are the most perfectly proportioned of all the African antelopes. They are bush- and thicket-loving browsers and are especially attracted to *Acacia mellifera* for food. The well-spaced vertical stripes against a gray background break up the body outline, making the animal difficult to detect in cover. It blends so perfectly into the surroundings of dappled light and shadow that until there is movement, like a flickering ear or a switching tail, it is easily overlooked. Sedately moving through the bush browsing, lesser kudu are like gray wraiths and magically vanish if one takes one's eyes off them for a moment. There has been much theoretical speculation about protective colouration in animals. The lesser kudu certainly presents a strong case in support of it.

We were sitting motionless on top of a kopje one morning, studying an extensive belt of wait-a-bit thorn thicket with binoculars. There was no sign of life, and after about thirty minutes I was on the point of moving on when a movement attracted my attention about two hundred yards away. I focused the glasses onto the point and waited. After a few minutes what had appeared to be a faint shadow moved again, and I was able to make out the vague outline of an animal. As I watched, two adult female lesser kudu accompanied by a calf moved out of the cover to the right. They wandered slowly across a narrow glade and faded into the bush on the far side. The shadow I had been watching followed them. It was an adult male with fully developed horns. Layman had by now seen it and watched its progress across the glade. He wanted to take it at long range there and then. The distance was considerable, and because the animal was walking directly away from us I said that, despite Layman's scope-mounted, .300 magnum rifle, the chances of a clean kill were not good. He was trembling with excitement and was not very pleased when the kudu entered the far thicket and the opportunity passed. The kudu stopped in shade on the fringe, and I could still see it. The females and the calf were just a little beyond the bull, where I picked out an occasional movement. I explained to Layman what our next moves would be: that he should follow right in my footsteps, stop if I stopped, and crouch or crawl if I did so. He complained that he could have collected his trophy and that I had frustrated him, casting aspersions on my competence because of my age and lack of experience. I ignored this derogatory tirade and urged him to follow me as quietly as possible. Having actually seen this great trophy on the hoof, he desperately wanted it.

We retreated down the rear side of the kopje, circled around, and entered the thorn thicket, threading our way carefully through to the point vacated by the lesser kudu. Some thirty yards out in the open glade was a decayed termite mound with thicket growing on it. Maneuvering to place it as cover between us and where I supposed the bull to be, we crawled across to it. With binoculars in hand I edged my way through the thicket on the mound until I had a view of the bush line ahead. The lesser kudu bull was still standing in the shade, but now at only some fifty or sixty yards' distance, facing away to our left. I signaled Layman to join me, indicating he should take extreme care and say nothing. He was sweating heavily and breathing hard. After he positioned himself alongside me I indicated where the animal was standing. He could not see it. Although the kudu was not aware of our closeness, I was worried that it might spook at any second, as the species have very sensitive hearing and sharp eyesight. With the faintest whisper into Layman's ear I explained guide points to the animal's position and asked him to carefully raise the rifle to his shoulder and search the locality through his telescopic sight. The bull flicked its tail, and this gave Layman a fix, enabling him to see it clearly through his gun scope. He sighted long and carefully, then fired. There was a solid *thunk* on impact, and the kudu staggered and disappeared.

There was no sign of it when we got there except a heavy blood trail leading deeper into the wait-a-bit thorn. About a hundred yards along the blood trail, I suddenly saw the kudu in a hunched-up attitude, screened by vegetation. Layman was unable to distinguish it from the enveloping bush, and since it was so close I dared not say anything even in a whisper. After less than a minute it moved on slowly, then vanished. It was clearly hard hit, so I suggested to Layman that we wait for a while and hopefully it would expire in that time. I also said that if it was still alive when we found it again, it would perhaps be advisable for me to finish it off at once, to which he agreed. As we moved on, I was sure that we would find it dead. The blood loss was extensive, and no kudu would go such a short distance unless mortally wounded. We crept through the wait-a-bit making much more noise than I cared for, but it could not be helped. Suddenly the kudu, which was by now lying down, rose in front of me and started to painfully move away. It collapsed at my shot and expired. As we examined this great trophy Layman reproached me for not waiting to give him the opportunity. At that specific moment, he was in fact trying to unhook himself from the thorn thicket and was not in a position to shoot, but he would not admit it, nor would he admit that I had done this with his agreement. There is little one can do to satisfy this "spoilt child" mentality, so I left him to harbor his grievance and went off to fetch the hunting car and trackers behind the kopje.

Unfortunately, this final episode with the lesser kudu, plus his memories of the rhino fiasco on the Lorogi Plateau, seemed to rankle in Layman's mind, resulting in another clash between him and Geoff over dinner that evening. By now we had attracted both lion and leopard to the baits, and Doc at this stage had not collected either of these species or a lesser kudu, but this made no difference. Doc was delighted with his friend's success that day but was a little wistful about his own prospects of collecting such a trophy. He well understood the chances of circumstance, place, and time. I do not remember how the subject came about. I do recall being humiliated and angry when Layman complained that he was being "railroaded," as he put it, by being made

to hunt with an eighteen-year-old youth and therefore being denied equal opportunity to collect prime trophies—in this case lion and leopard, which neither he nor Doc had collected at this stage of the safari. Geoff responded by saying that he could not concur with the implied slur on my competence but suggested it would be best for Layman and Doc to arrange between themselves who hunted with whom each day. Consequently, the next day I hunted with Doc.

We left camp a little before dawn the next morning in the hunting car and left it about a mile from the lion bait. Approaching along the bottom of the gully that ran into the Kipsing, we quietly crept up a shoulder to look across the sand river at the bait hanging from a tree one hundred yards away on the other side. Studying the surroundings for several minutes, we could see no sign of lion. A pair of hyenas were leaping up and trying to snatch pieces of the odoriferous meat, without much success. Crossing over the sand there were fresh tracks of lion, and we found that a small portion of the bait at the lower end had been torn off. It was hung too high for them to tear it apart but low enough to be enticing. The lion had of course gone, but I was optimistic about results for the following morning and resolved to be in position at first light, to follow them up if necessary. I felt they would not go very far away to rest up during the day. We returned to the vehicle and continued on our way.

I left the car at the edge of an extensive tract of wait-a-bit thorn. Accompanied by Doc, I moved cautiously along the edge of it, checking with binoculars everything visible ahead. In this way we located another lesser kudu bull browsing along the fringe of the bush. After a careful stalk Doc took a shot at about 150 yards' range, and the bull dropped in its tracks. He was an old solitary male with a fine set of horns. We were well pleased with our morning's hunt. In the afternoon we visited the leopard bait, sitting patiently for two hours in the blind, but the leopard did not show. His tracks indicated that he was a mature male. These animals will return to a bait again and again, often growing bolder about it each time if there is no disturbance. I was optimistic as we returned to camp in the dark, for I felt sure the opportunity would present itself soon.

Leaving camp well before dawn the next morning, Doc and I with two trackers arrived in the dark at the head of the eroded gully near the lion bait. The sky brightened, and we slowly made our way down toward the Kipsing. By the time we started creeping up the shoulder of the gully, it was light enough to see clearly. Making our way carefully up the slope, over quartzite stones and grit, we had not quite reached the point where the bait would be in full view when I observed a lioness moving off across the slope on the far side of the Kipsing. She was trotting fast and angling away across our front. I immediately dropped into a squatting position, and Doc was there right behind me. Seconds later, as I was wondering what had frightened the lioness, the lion appeared. He had an average mane and was also trotting fast, following in the tracks of the lioness. I whispered to Doc to take him in the shoulder. At that instant the lion must have sensed danger and from a fast trot pulled up in a semi-crouched position, looking straight at us. He then took off, and in the same instant, Doc fired. There was savage growling as the lion took the shot and disappeared over the ridge line. Kobresh, the tracker who was with us, was still standing, and I think the lion had stopped after seeing him.

After a few seconds the sound of a coughing grunt reached our ears, coming from the direction where the lion had vanished. Kobresh immediately said it was dead, explaining a

common African belief that the death song, which we had just heard, is a sign that its spirit is taking leave of its body. Many tribes believe this spirit takes the form of a hairball that is occasionally found in a lion's stomach. Kobresh, who was from the Waikoma people of Tanganyika, firmly believed this and said he would look for the hairball when we reached the dead lion, as it had potent and magical healing powers. We crossed the sandy bed of the Kipsing and walked up the slope beyond, to the point where the lion had disappeared. Less than one hundred yards away he had collapsed onto his belly, and he made no move when we tossed precautionary stones onto him as we drew close.

The hairball was never found, but Doc had got his lion and was ecstatic about it. I left him and the tracker there and returned to camp to bring up the hunting car. After photographing the trophy, we loaded it into the vehicle and were back in camp within half an hour. The lion was deposited at the skinners' tents for preparation and salting. The customary song for a successful lion hunter was sung as the safari crew carried Doc around camp at shoulder height. Naturally they all expected a reward from him for their congratulatory exertions. We were having breakfast when Geoff and Layman returned to camp and joined us at the table. Doc took them over to inspect his lion, which the skinners had already started working on. I do not know what Doc said to his obnoxious friend, for we finished the meal and then Geoff and Layman went off in their vehicle. Layman had not said a word about Doc's success, and clearly there was no part of the great feeling of camaraderie between hunters on the successful conclusion of a hunt. We spent the rest of the morning with the skinners working on the lion trophy. A few local Samburu and the men from the nearby Somali *boma* were also there, clearly pleased about the demise of their enemy.

At about 4 P.M. Doc and I walked downstream to the leopard blind and made ourselves as comfortable as possible. I expected a long wait. To increase the prospects of success it is necessary to remain silent, not talking or fidgeting about. The leopard hears and sees well and will shy away from any place, should its suspicions be aroused. Biting flies, irritating sweat bees, and itching ants all have to be tolerated and removed with no sound. Some people take a book into the blind with them, but I am sure that even the faint sound of turning pages can cost you an opportunity to take a leopard. The sun was sinking to the horizon with what seemed to be gathering momentum. Each passing minute between now and dusk increased the prospects of the leopard putting in an appearance. All my senses were directed to the tree with the bait and the surrounding bush cover. I was wearing my usual attire of khaki shorts, shirt, and tackies. Something started crawling up the outside of my upper thigh, and, carefully reaching to the spot, I pinned the thing to my flesh, through the shorts material, to crush it. As I did so it felt as if a hot coal had pressed against my thigh. The entrapped object was hard, and before I managed to crush it, two or more hot coals had been added. My first instinct was to leap up and shake it out, but I managed to put mind over matter and control any convulsive movement. Having crushed it, I dislodged it from my shorts. My leg felt as if it were on fire by this time, and I was curious to see what had caused this torment. It was what we call a ground wasp. These insects have a wasplike head and thorax, no wings, and a large black abdomen with white spots all over. They have a vicious sting that is normally used for paralyzing prey such as caterpillars or soft-skinned insects. The pain had lessened by now, and I was able to sit though it without excessive discomfort. It is fortunate that I am not particularly allergic to insect stings.

Staring silently at the bait, only moving my eyes to view the immediate surroundings, I became aware of a faint noise. Then, as if by magic, a large leopard appeared silhouetted on the horizontal branch from which swung the bait. It walked calmly along to where the warthog was suspended and tried to reach down to it with one paw. I pressured Doc's upper arm to alert him, and he lined up his already-positioned rifle. The leopard stood up and was looking about when the rifle shot shattered the evening calm. The leopard collapsed and clung to the branch for a few seconds, then slowly lost its grip and fell to the ground with a solid thud. I could see it lying there and kept it covered with my rifle for a few minutes in case it started moving. Nothing happened, so we left the blind, both of us ready for instant action. Advancing to the spot, we found the animal dead. A high-velocity silver-tipped bullet through the heart of a high-strung creature like a leopard means instant death. I believe that the feeble attempt to hang onto the branch was only a reflex action and that it was already dead. However, one must exercise caution because, if not cleanly killed, the leopard can play possum and become galvanized into ferocious action as you come close. Alternatively, it may lie motionless for a few minutes until it thinks nothing is approaching and creep away into cover. From the hunter's point of view, that is when the real danger and difficulties begin. Kobresh, who was sitting concealed in cover by the Kipsing two hundred yards away, now appeared and congratulated Doc on his trophy. An adult male leopard is a truly magnificent creature, and no matter how many times one sees leopards they give off that aura of feline power, grace, and danger, more so than any of the other big cats.

Kobresh returned to camp and came back with the truck driver at the wheel of the hunting car. We loaded the leopard and after flashbulb photos immediately returned to camp. A lion and a leopard, both good specimens, called for celebration drinks. The happy occasion was marred by another exhibition of jealousy and spoilt child behaviour. Under the influence of alcohol, Layman now asserted that he had been set up and that a deliberate plan had been arranged to ensure he did not collect his lion and leopard. He further asserted that the balance of the safari still had to be paid and that the money would be divided into a fifth for each of the big five prime trophies—lion, leopard, rhino, buffalo, and elephant—and those not collected by him would be proportionally deducted from the final payment. An unpleasant exchange of words between him and Geoff ensued, with Doc doing his best to mediate and bring his friend around to a more conciliatory frame of mind. Layman went off to his tent, and Geoff discussed the problem with Doc. He said Layman's attitude was incompatible with the safari and that the remaining month should be canceled, and we should pack up and return to Nairobi the next day. Doc's later intercession with Layman saved the safari.

We moved from the Kipsing to the Ngare Mara in Isiolo District for a few days, where Layman collected his lion with Geoff. He never did get a leopard, because he was incapable of sitting quietly in a blind for more than a few minutes at a time. From Ngare Mara we moved to the Tana River, camping on the south bank downstream from Garissa. This was one of the best areas for bull elephant in Africa at the time. We all hunted together and collected two reasonable bulls with a local Korkora guide called Malimu Manza. The bulls would come in at night to drink at the river and, more often than not, would leave the extensive riverine forest belt to feed far out into the dry thorn scrub country to the

south. The elephants could usually be observed from a considerable distance, were easily approached, and presented minimal difficulty in making a clean kill. The two elephant collected on this trip had tusks weighing between seventy-five and eighty-five pounds each. Had Layman been a more reasonable man, I am sure Geoff would have worked a lot harder to obtain bulls with larger tusks than this.

The final hunting area on this safari was in what was known as the Southern Masai in Narok District. Layman had overcome his reluctance to hunt with a "teenage youth," so once again I found myself hunting in his company. The area had a reputation for quality buffalo trophies, and we spent much time searching for a really big head. This all ended in an incident that very nearly terminated my hunting career. The buffalo when wounded becomes a dangerous adversary. This was brought home to us on the way into the area when crossing the Loita Plains. There were no established roads in those days and one went across country, navigating with the help of distant hills, riverbeds, and local terrain. We were well out into the plains when a stationary truck appeared in the distance. Assuming they had a problem, we went over to see if we could be of any assistance. It turned out that they were cooling the motor off, and we helped them with some water for this purpose. In the rear section, lying under a blanket on a mattress, was a professional hunter called Roy Macalpine-Lenny. He had been badly gored by a buffalo the previous evening and was being taken to hospital in Nairobi for treatment. There was no way we could help, so, wishing him luck, we continued on our way. Lenny was admitted to the Nairobi Hospital but was very far gone and died shortly afterward. In those days there were no air charter services or airfields, and the beating he received lying in the back of the truck surely contributed to his early demise. It was a timely warning to be careful with these creatures, but in the arrogance of youth I did not believe anything like that could happen to me.

One morning Layman and I were cruising across the countryside in the Siana area. Mohammed Bashir and another tracker were with us. On the far slope of the valley close to the bush line near the top, we saw a solitary buffalo bull with his head down, grazing. I parked the vehicle in the valley bottom, and we worked our way around on foot to approach the buffalo from downwind into the breeze, which was blowing from the southeast. There was no cover on the grasslands to conceal our approach, but by moving only when the bull's head was down in the grass grazing, we arrived at a position approximately two hundred yards from him. Studying him through binoculars I confirmed that the spread of his horns was well above average. The lack of hair around his eyes and over the nose area meant he was old, which in turn ensured that the boss would be hard and solid.

We remained motionless, crouched low on the ground, until he turned to the right and resumed grazing, presenting us with a rear-end view. Taking advantage of this, we narrowed the distance between us to about one hundred yards. We were on the open plain with no cover for concealment. As we sat on the ground I whispered to Layman to line up his rifle over his knees and hope the bull would turn again, offering a suitable broadside shoulder shot. This happened after about five minutes. The buffalo had no idea we were there when Layman fired, using a .375 magnum with solid ammunition. The bull received the bullet and was galvanized into instant motion. He galloped to our left for a short distance, during which time Layman fired and hit him again. The bull

then turned for the thicket line in that curious head-up, rocking gait, which indicates uncertainty of the direction of danger, and disappeared into cover carrying with him a third shot from Layman's .375.

Layman was sure that he had hit the bull in the heart area with his first shot but was uncertain about the other two. I told him that I did not know how thick the cover was inside and that it was preferable that just Mohammed and I checked this out first on our own. He agreed to this with the proviso that, if it was a manageable situation, we would fetch him. This was a good plan, as I did not want him along at this stage of the hunt and could make sure he was not called at any stage. We returned to the truck and parked it where the action had been. Time passed quickly as we drank coffee from a thermos flask. It was at least an hour since the shooting, and I decided it was time to go and check on the bull. Taking my .470 double, Mohammed and I entered the cover, leaving Layman sitting in the car with the other tracker. The interior of the thicket was all in leaf and very dense, with visibility measured in feet. The soft humus soil made spooring easy. Apart from an occasional speck, there was little blood to be seen. Fifty or sixty yards inside, the bull had stopped galloping and slowed to a walk. This was a hopeful sign, as after the shock and fright of receiving three bullets he would not have slowed up so soon unless he was in a bad way. We continued along the spoor with Mohammed doing the tracking and me holding my rifle ready for instant action, for the visibility did not improve. Looking back on this hunt, I realize that I should not have continued, for it was a situation I could not control if the buffalo charged. We should have waited several hours for the gunshot wounds to take effect before following up in such hazardous circumstances. I knew it at the time but could not bring myself to admit defeat. This misguided ego factor could easily have cost Mohammed and me our lives.

Cautiously moving along the spoor, there was a sudden crashing in the undergrowth, which receded as the buffalo rushed away. I now took the lead and, with infinite care and a mounting feeling of high tension, continued to follow up. Progress was slow and conditions remained bad. It took about half an hour before we caught up with the bull again. This time there was a loud snort, and the receding crashing in the thicket ceased after twenty seconds or so. We sat silent, straining all our senses to locate the bull, but to no avail—the bush was silent as the grave. Moving on with even greater care, I stopped and crouched on my haunches, trying to see ahead under the leaf cover at ground level, when I heard a twig snap. Swinging the rifle in that direction, still squatting, a tremendous bellowing roar and crashing bush shattered the silence. I could see nothing. Then an indistinguishable black hulk appeared almost on top of me. With a finger on each trigger I fired both barrels simultaneously into the middle of this mass and at the same moment flung myself to the left in an effort to avoid it. I took a heavy blow on my right side, which sent me sprawling to the ground, and I lost the grip of my rifle. All this happened in seconds, and I distinctly remember the buffalo passing right over me. The bull continued to bellow and grunt as I recovered, picked myself up, and retrieved my rifle. He was on the ground, struggling to rise, with his eyes fixed on me with a ferocious stare.

Fumbling in my right bush jacket pocket, I quickly got hold of two cartridges, reloaded the .470, and finished off the struggling buffalo. Mohammed now reappeared. He had quite rightly made himself invisible when the crunch came and was now only concerned with my welfare. It was not until he drew attention to it that I became aware of numbness

and some pain in the area of my right shoulder, upper arm, and ribcage. We sat around unwinding for several minutes, and I then sent Mohammed to fetch Layman and the other tracker. The buffalo was a fine old bull with a horn spread of forty-nine inches. Layman arrived in due course and once again complained that he had been left out of the action. I explained that if he had been right behind me in his usual follow-up position, he would have taken the full impact of the charging buffalo and would almost certainly be dead by now. He accepted this logic with bad grace, and moved over to inspect his trophy. The great spread of the horns soon had him in raptures, and he forgave me for not getting him killed. I removed my bush jacket and requested Mohammed to check the injuries to my shoulder and ribcage. The numbness was wearing off by now and was replaced by a dull ache. He said I was turning black all down my right side, but there was no blood. Probing gently, he could not locate any broken bones. I put my jacket back on and we went to the dead bull to examine the bullet wounds and go over the scene of action from the point where the buffalo started his attack.

It was only thirty feet from where I had crouched on the ground, peering along the lowest level of the thicket, to the point where the buffalo started his attack. The enraged and badly wounded beast knew exactly where I was. In a great surge of power, backed by his massive weight, he launched himself at me, smashing through the dense bush, and was right on me within a second or two. When I peered in his direction, without seeing anything, he must have thought himself discovered, thus triggering the charge. After I fired both barrels together into him at point-blank range and attempted to evade him, he definitely passed right over me, the curve of his horn or some part of his shoulder knocking me sprawling into the ground. Had he remained on his feet, there is no doubt he would have instantly been onto me again and finished me off. These animals do not give up easily when maddened by wounds and harassment. I do believe that the bull had all four feet off the ground when I fired and he passed over me; otherwise, he surely would have collapsed on top of me instead of a few feet beyond, in line with the direction of his charge. Examining the body in detail, we found three shots in the abdominal area, one of which had ruptured the liver and from which he would have died before too many hours passed. The two shots I fired together with the .470, it seems, had gone off fractionally apart. The first took him in the centre of the chest and passed through the heart. The other bullet, a little out of line, shattered the shoulder. This is what caused the bull to collapse when he hit the ground, preventing him from getting to his feet again to finish me off.

I spent the next three days in camp, stiff and sore from the beating, developing multi-hued bruises and abrasions. I thought long and hard about this very close call and concluded that no matter how humiliating or fainthearted it might appear, it is far preferable to retreat from a situation over which one recognizes one has no control than to end up a mutilated and probably dead hunter. I had learned a valuable lesson.

The safari was over, a fine example of how personal tensions, jealousies, and tactlessness can play havoc between individuals, to the point of almost prematurely ending the hunt. Doc and Layman flew back to the States, Geoff got his money—and we parted cordially. I can say, however, that Layman is the sort of character I can easily do without on a hunting safari.

During my two years with Eagle Safaris Ltd. I did eight safaris as an assistant hunter to Geoff Lawrence-Brown. At the end of this period, in December 1949, I became a member of

the East African Professional Hunters Association and was qualified to conduct professional safaris on my own. Being only nineteen years old, I think it unlikely that, with my age in mind, clients would have accepted me as their sole guide and protector. Be that as it may, I had gained a lot of hunting experience, especially with those species classified as dangerous. I had also learned to recognize trophy heads and how to put together a full-scale safari outfit, including crew.

Our safaris had covered much of the prime hunting areas of Kenya and northern Tanganyika. I saw sights unlikely to be seen again in East Africa. For example, when hunting one morning in the Lake Manyara area of the Rift Valley in northern Tanganyika, fifteen black rhino were in sight at the same time along the thorn forest edge of the western shore. That year the lake was dry, and a vehicle could drive across with no difficulty. Lake Manyara is a national park today, but the rhino there have been wiped out by poaching. There is not even one left. On the Tana River between Garissa and Bura, in company with a lady called Eilene Lloyd, we came upon a group of sixteen bull elephants in the riverine forest. Every one of these bulls carried tusks of sixty pounds each or heavier. The largest had tusks estimated at better than 140 pounds each. Today one would be lucky to find fifty-pound tusks without much time and difficulty. The rapacious and uncontrolled slaughter of elephant during the late 1970s and 1980s has wiped out the mature elephant populations over much of East Africa. The great numbers once dependent on the Tana River during the dry season are today a small fraction of what they used to be.

This is a very depressing situation that is repeated again and again throughout the great game areas of East Africa. It is a product of corruption and the illegal flow of precision rifles and automatic weapons into the hands of people whose sole motivation is hard cash. It is indeed sad to visit these areas, where there is no human population pressure and still there are no elephant herds or bulls and no rhino where only a few years ago they used to be in great numbers. In the pre-independence days, before the massive influx of precision weapons to sub-Saharan Africa, there was always a level of illegal hunting, but it was mainly with primitive weapons and snares. The poaching of animals of all species, with the possible exception of leopard for a while, was well below the annual reproduction rate, and this, together with legal hunting, was no threat to the survival of any species. Professional hunters, with their safaris scattered throughout the game country

*Weatherby safari—Merrill Porter with leopard and Mohammed Bishir on far right.*

for much of the year, were a definite deterrent to illegal hunters. Trophy hunting is, of course, a highly selective sport, limited in extent. It is for the most part directed toward mature males only. It has no effect on game populations, and it is beneficial to some species. Take, for example, a large lion accompanying a lioness who is either gravid or feeding cubs, during a season when game in the area is scarce. The big male will monopolize the kill, particularly if it is a medium- or small-sized kill, to the point of leaving the female with insufficient food to rear her young. The cubs suffer from chronic malnutrition, become diseased as a result, and die. It is paradoxical, I suppose, but by destroying the big male in such circumstances, one actually contributes to an increase in the population.

I did observe, however, when I was in the hunting safari business, that selected game species were adversely affected within some limited areas. The reason was the lack of any management policy by the game department—they exercised no control over the numbers of any particular species of game animal being hunted and shot in a given area. Possession of a game license entitled the holder to shoot in any area that was not a game reserve. Neither was there any limit to the number of game licenses that could be issued. The result was that an area of easy access would acquire a reputation of being good for lion or some other high-priority trophy species, and that species would be hunted by successive safaris or even by two or more safaris at the same time. The trophy animals would be hunted and shot in excessive numbers in that locality. Over a period of two or three years the hunting pressure not only reduced the numbers of mature males but made the surviving animals so wary that the hunter no longer found it worthwhile to go there. The only redeeming feature of this was, of course, that the species left alone would recover in numbers. If an animal quota had been laid down in the first place, such a situation would not have arisen. Lake Manyara through Mto wa Mbu northward along the Rift to Ngaruka was such an area in Tanganyika. Maned lion in the Mara/Talek sand river areas were affected in the same way in Kenya. In both situations the game department should have laid down and enforced a quota of selected animals during the year.


*Merrill Porter with lion. Weatherby safari.*

During my time as a professional hunter I never accompanied any celebrities on safari. However, I did meet some interesting people. I think it was in 1948 that a man who was to become one of America's best-known gunmakers came on safari. His name was Roy Weatherby. He came out with a large group of hunters, and they were split into four separate safaris. Roy, with two others, came with Geoff and myself. We had a very successful six-week hunt in the course of which Roy had to divest himself of his principal preconceived ideas about the killing power of the rifles he was building. He was a ballistics nut and had developed rifles designed

*'Round the campfire—Left to right: Merrill Porter, author, Doc Nickelsen, Roy Weatherby.*

to fire their projectiles at extraordinarily high velocity. He theorized that the impact on an animal would create a shock wave in its body that would be instantly fatal. His rifles and cartridges were good, due to the high velocity and flat trajectory over long range, which made them very accurate. He collected a wide range of trophy animals, but none of them confirmed his shock theory. However, even without the magic fatal shock wave, Weatherby magnum rifles have been popular with hunters for many years and are still sought out today.

By the time I had completed five or six safaris with clients, it had become clear to me that hunting with and for other people was not really my ideal of life in the bush. I was not free to do more or less as I pleased, to enjoy the solitude and grandeur of the African wilderness and to be among wild animals without having to respond to endless questions and tell long stories. In December 1949, quite by chance, I heard of a vacancy for an elephant control officer in the Tanganyika Game Department. I immediately applied and in January 1950 was invited for an interview by the chief game warden. He offered me the position and I accepted, effective 1 February 1950. My two years' experience in the hunting safari industry had made this possible; however, my personal experience hunting elephant for their ivory in Kenya and Tanganyika also enhanced my acceptability to the Tanganyikan authorities. A brief record of these hunts is worth telling.

# Ivory Hunting

*Chapter 9*

There is a vast swath of country that starts in northeastern Kenya and stretches southwest for several hundred miles into the Monduli, Kondoa, Dodoma, and Manyoni Districts of northern and central Tanganyika. It varies from one to two hundred miles in width. Much of it is uninhabited or sparsely populated by man because of limited water supplies, poor agricultural soils, and arid to semidesert conditions. The country is for the most part flat, mixed acacia and Commiphora woodland and scrub merging into Brachystegia and Combretum woodland in the far south with limited grass cover on the ground. Mountains and highland areas—Marsabit, Mount Kenya, Kilimanjaro, Ufiomi, Hanang, et cetera—are located mainly on the western periphery. Three major rivers cut right across this vast area, flowing from the west to the Indian Ocean: the Tana, the Galana, and the Ruvu, with a small section of the Great Ruaha on its eastern fringe in the far south. Tributaries in the form of sand *lugga*s—some of which have water at isolated points close to the surface—and widely separated springs, along with seasonal rain water pans, supplement this otherwise scarce commodity.

Nomadic tribesmen—Somali, Galla, Orma, and Masai—move about the northern and central parts of this harsh country with their stock, in the dry season concentrating around permanent water in deep wells and along permanent rivers. Farther south, scattered communities with little livestock survive on subsistence-level cultivation. A great variety of game animals are thinly distributed through most of this country, with large concentrations in one or two widely separated pockets. Before the 1960s, considerable numbers of elephant were to be found throughout, tending to concentrate around permanent natural water supplies in the dry season and dispersing into a widely scattered population during the rains, drinking from seasonal water pans and streams. It was a population largely unaffected by cultivation and the inevitable clash with man that agriculture brings about. So far as I know, there is no record of any consistent elephant hunting in this country to supply the ivory trade of the nineteenth century. Until the late 1960s, licensed hunters took a low percentage out of

the existing bull elephant population. Perhaps the greatest hunting pressure on the species during these years was the activity of Waliangulu and Wakamba poachers in the area lying between the Galana and Tana Rivers. This was effectively controlled and eliminated in the 1950s after Tsavo National Park came into being. Efficient anti-poaching patrols and well-coordinated undercover operations removed from the field not only the leading poachers but also the middlemen and some of the Indian traders who were buying up the illegal ivory. Much of the credit for this successful cleanup must go to my old friend Bill Woodley and his boss at the time, David Sheldrick.

Apart from the occasional killing of young elephant by lion, the elephant population had no predator enemies and died of disease and the periodic effects of drought. Because of this and the low level of human activity directed against the population, elephants evolved to maturity, a high percentage living to old age. Bearing in mind that the elephant's body and tusks grow throughout its life and the rate of ivory growth increases as it gets older, it is logical to assume that in this very mature population a higher proportion of large-bodied elephants with above-average tusk size existed in the area described. Add to this the favourable genetic factors that affect the thickness of the tusks and their rate of growth in individual animals, this becomes a certainty. In my opinion this vast stretch of inhospitable country was, up to the late 1960s, the finest big ivory area in East Africa and probably on the entire continent. By big ivory I refer to tusks weighing 70 pounds each and over. Such ivory was collected in many places outside this area but never in the same quantity, and it had a much lower average weight per tusk when assessed on the basis of all trophy ivory collected during the period 1946 to 1969. As a matter of interest, the two largest elephants ever taken, in terms of tusk weight, came from within this area. One was shot by an employee of an Arab trader in what is recorded as Kilimanjaro District, in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The tusks of this bull, which are now in the British Museum of Natural History, weighed well over 200 pounds each. The second-largest pair of tusks came from a bull shot in 1969 or 1970 in Manyoni District, close to the southern limit of this great elephant area. The tusks weighed 204 and 198 pounds. These tusks were confiscated because the bull was shot by a man who was hired by the license holder to do his hunting for him. The last information I had on this pair of tusks was that they were in the government ivory room at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

The magic weight, and the ambition of most elephant hunters, is described in the expression "hundred-pounder," which means tusks weighing 100 pounds each or more. There is little doubt that more hundred-pounders came out of this elephant country than any other area of comparable size in Africa between 1946 and 1969. It is depressing to record that today only a small relic remains of this great elephant population, and that bull ivory weighing as much as 60 pounds a tusk is rare. The bulk of the remaining elephants are within the national parks and game reserves of Kenya and Tanganyika. Many parts of this still sparsely populated country no longer have any elephants at all. The slaughter of elephant is due to corruption and the massive flow of illegal light automatic guns and rifles into Kenya and Tanganyika from war-torn neighbouring countries such as Somalia, Uganda, Mozambique, southern Sudan, and Ethiopia. Professional hunters and other license holders were never a threat to the elephant population. The illegal slaughter of elephant has decreased considerably over the last four years for the following reasons. First, the international ban on the trade of ivory led to a sharp fall in the market value of this product. Second, the disappearance of

elephant from many areas where they were once numerous, due to excessive poaching, made the operations of heavily armed gangs far more difficult and less profitable, and they turned their attention from elephant hunting to highway banditry and stock rustling.

From the late 1940s to the late 1960s no one could have predicted that such a situation would develop. As a young professional hunter, I took elephant bulls on license every year as a means of gaining the necessary experience for my career. The sale of the ivory was also a means of supplementing a very low income. I had been with clients at the death of several bulls in 1948 to 1949, but I had actually killed only one elephant at the beginning of this period. Since large ivory was, without a doubt, the most prized trophy of all, learning to acquire it was top priority for me.

Sometime in 1948 Bill Jenvey and I both had time to spare between safaris, so we headed to the lower Tana River with one elephant license each. The long haul from Nairobi via Thika and Mwingi to Garissa on the Tana involved an overnight camp about sixty miles from Garissa. The badly corrugated road and occasional sand drifts were not conducive to speed in my old Ford truck. The gray, arid bush country offers uninspiring scenery all the way. After checking in with the district commissioner at Garissa on the second day, we recrossed the Tana to the south side and then turned east to follow the river downstream along an old Desert Locust Control track, which paralleled the river some distance out from the riverine forest. It was hot and humid, and apart from the odd flock of vulturine guinea fowl and a few gerenuk, dik-dik, and Somali camels and goats, there was little to be seen along the way. Our interest was sustained by both fresh and old tracks left by elephant herds and occasional groups of bulls or solitary beasts. These animals were coming in from and returning to the dry bush country after drinking at the river and feeding through the lush riverine forest. We eventually camped about fifty miles from Garissa before reaching a small trading centre and river-crossing point called Bura. It was midafternoon, and it was uncomfortably hot. By the time we had unloaded the truck and fixed up our camp beds after the long haul from Nairobi, I had had enough for the day. We hired as local guides a couple of Somalis who seemed to be knowledgeable about the local area and had news of elephant bulls. We arranged for them to remain with us during our stay in the area.

Bill decided to go off in my truck late in the afternoon for a look around in the hope of collecting a vulturine guinea fowl for the pot. The guides went with him, and he arrived back in camp just after nightfall with a couple of birds. He then waved the severed hairy end of an elephant's tail in front of my face. With glee and self-satisfaction he described what had happened, adding that he believed the tusks would exceed the magic hundred-pounder figure. It seems he drove out of camp, through the riverine forest, and back onto the track to Garissa, where he shot the two guinea fowl with my .22 rifle. At this point they left the track and headed south with the truck through some open slightly undulating country. Ten minutes later, one of the Somalis standing in the back said there was a solitary elephant moving in the direction of the river along a lower-lying depression to the right, less than a mile away. After checking the wind direction, Bill, carrying his .465 Holland & Holland double rifle, walked rapidly through the intervening bush with the Somalis and had no difficulty in closing with the bull in open thorn scrub. As it walked past at some thirty to forty yards, he lined up his sights slightly in front of the ear orifice and dropped it dead in its tracks with a side brain shot.

It was now getting late, so, after severing the tail and examining the tusks, they returned to the truck and came back to camp. The priority next morning would be to extract the tusks, so we put all the tools for this work into the truck, ready for an early start. During the night a herd of elephants passed close by the camp to drink at the river. At about 2 A.M. one of them started squealing in anger. This was followed by the sound of heavy animals crashing through the surrounding forest and then a gigantic splash in the river, when everything quieted down again. Thinking we might have an elephant stampede through the camp, I was quickly out of my bed with my .470 rifle in hand. It was too dark to see anything, but nothing further developed and I went back to bed. In the morning, as soon as it was light, I went to check out the elephant spoor. It was all cow and calf tracks. On the ground was evidence of the cause of the disturbance. It seems that a hippo had somehow upset a cow elephant, and when she asserted her superior size and power, it made a run for the river with the cow in hot pursuit. At the point where the hippo reached the riverbank there was a ten-foot vertical drop to a deepwater channel below. To avoid the angry cow, the hippo had no choice but to plunge straight over the bank into the water with a gigantic splash. Elephant are normally very tolerant of other species of game in their vicinity, and one can only speculate as to the cause of this midnight upset. Immediately after this little investigation, I left camp with three local Korkora men to search for and follow fresh bull elephant spoor. In the meantime Bill went off to retrieve his ivory with our two Somalis.

We paralleled the river downstream, staying inside the broad belt of riverine forest in the hope of cutting suitable bull tracks going down to or returning from water during the night. We

*Bill Jenvey with his hundred-pounder. 1948.*

found the tracks of two cow herds within half an hour and then ran into a third group feeding in the forest. Circumventing them, we pressed on and shortly afterward cut the spoor of two adult bulls heading away from the river to the dry bush country to the south. The ground at this point was clear of grass and soft enough to show a clear impression of the footprints. The front footprint of the larger of these bulls had a diameter of about twenty-four inches, and the indentations on the soles were quite shallow and smooth compared to those of the smaller animal. This indicated a mature and possibly old bull and was therefore well worth following. The spoor took us directly out of the riverine forest into the dry scrub country to the south. There was no sign of feeding along the way, and I began to think the bulls might be heading to some far-off feeding area and that we could have a long and weary day ahead of us. It is in fact common for such bulls to select a suitable feeding ground a long way from the nearest water, coming in to drink only once in three or four days.

We were about two hours' walk into the scrub country when some slight greenery started to appear amongst the dead-looking bush and trees. At this point the two bulls split up, and we began to see evidence of feeding in the form of leaves and small, freshly broken branches on the ground, along with occasional heaps of droppings. As we progressed, the feeding activity became more noticeable, until we arrived at a point where a tall but slender acacia tree had been pushed over. Here both bulls joined together again. They had obviously spent some time here. All the leaves and tender twigs at the crown of the tree had been demolished, and much of the bark had been stripped. They had also worked hard to dig out the roots from the hard ground and consume them. The

*The author with his seventy-five-pounder. Malimu Manza and Mohammed Bashir on author's right. 1948.*

immediate vicinity was well trampled, and there were several piles of droppings. This had all happened well after sunrise, and I now felt sure that they would not be too far ahead. The time was about 10 A.M., the sun was fierce, and it was likely that the bulls would by now have sought out a suitable tree for shade.

At midday we were on a low ridge looking down a slight incline into a shallow depression, but the view was obscured by intervening bush. One of the men climbed a low tree nearby, and no sooner was he up there than he started signaling for the rest of us to come. He said he could see two elephants some way off under a euphorbia tree in the depression. I climbed up to join him, and sure enough, there was the euphorbia about one mile away with two elephants in deep shade below. It was too far to assess the ivory, but I assumed they were the same bulls we had been following all morning. The prevailing wind was coming in from the east and had been steady all day. To approach these bulls from our present position we had to have the wind in our favour, so we made a wide arc to the north of them to circle around to the west. There was no difficulty in locating their position, as it was marked by the lone euphorbia, which happened to be the largest tree in the area, towering far above the surrounding scrub. An hour later we were directly downwind from them. We heard clearly the sound of flapping ears and occasionally a blast of air as one of them blew dust over himself. Leaving two of the men where we were, I advanced toward the euphorbia with the other fellow behind me. Soon I could see the top of the head and back of the one bull. Another thirty yards on I could see them both clearly. The one standing nearest to me was broadside on, facing toward my left. The other, a much smaller animal, was quartering away to my right. The larger bull had about five feet of ivory showing in both tusks, and although it was on the thin side I decided he was good enough for me.

The approach up to within thirty yards offered unobstructed visibility. I was all keyed up for the climax to the hunt and decided that I would go for the brain. I lined up on the elephant's head, just in front of the ear orifice, and fired the right barrel of my .470. The bull's hind legs collapsed, throwing his head momentarily up, and he sank to the ground and rolled onto his side. The smaller bull rushed away for a few yards, pulled up with his ears spread, swung around to look for his companion, and turned away and disappeared into the bush. This was a perfect brain shot, and the elephant was dead before it hit the ground. All elephants fall in this way when shot in the brain—the hind legs collapse first, even if the elephant is in full charge toward the hunter. If the brain is not hit, depending on the power of the rifle and the margin of error, all four legs will collapse if the bullet is very close to the brain; if it is well wide of the mark the elephant will stagger and recover. A bull elephant floored by stunning in this way will in fact recover and get to its feet again and depart.

We removed the tail end and returned to camp, arriving at about 5 P.M. Bill Jenvey was there, having recovered his tusks. The next day we spent extracting the tusks from my elephant. Both of his went a little over one hundred pounds each; mine weighed seventy-six and seventy-nine pounds, respectively. They were long but not thick.

At the end of the rains in 1949 I had a month to spare before the next safari with clients. I was anxious to see more of the hunting areas in northern Tanganyika. To accomplish this, I decided to do a safari there and took out two elephant licenses, hoping that, if I were successful, the sale of the ivory would at least cover my costs. In those days there was no immigration or customs control at the border, so after checking through the Tanganyika police barrier, then located at Longido, we proceeded via Engare Nanyuki and Sanya Juu to Moshi. I had

Mohammed Bashir and a cook for company. In the morning I visited the game department headquarters at Lyamungu and bought two elephant licenses for eight hundred East African shillings. From there we headed south across the Sanya Plains and through the Leletema Range on the track to Nabarera and Kibaya in the Masai steppe. It was dry but attractive country, and since it was so soon after the end of the rains there was plenty of grazing about with numerous herds of assorted game. Masai cattle through parts of this country were scarce due to tsetse fly infestation.

Between Nabarera and Kibaya, I met a Bedford one-and-a-half-ton truck approaching from the opposite direction. I pulled off to one side of the track, and the other vehicle came to a halt beside us. A very short white man emerged. He was a veterinary officer in the government service, and his name was Keith Thomas. We chatted for a bit, and I asked him for any news on elephant. He called up his servant, a man called Reuben, and asked him what information he had. He stood smartly to attention and, pointing to the north, announced: "The elephants are over there." Since "over there" could have been anywhere between our meeting place and Ethiopia, and no specific places were mentioned, I was not overly impressed by this local expertise. Some years later, I came to know Keith Thomas well when we were both game rangers in the Tanganyika Game Department. On this occasion he did not attach much value to Reuben's information and suggested I make further inquiries at Kibaya, a small trading centre some fifty miles farther on. With that we went our separate ways. There was a well-defined range of hills far ahead, and Kibaya was located at the foot of them. We pulled up at an Arab *duka* (shop) for fuel and were immediately surrounded by a crowd of Masai, who appeared to have nothing better to do but lounge around the shops all day. I got into conversation with an elder, and he told me there were lots of elephant around. He suggested I take him with me to his *manyatta* and he would arrange for a couple of *morani* to show me the elephants. I was totally unfamiliar with the country, so I accepted this offer.

It was late in the day, so I camped that night near Kibaya. The old man turned up early next morning and we left, heading west on the track to Kondoa Irangi until we reached his *manyatta* at Mrijo. Here there was permanent water in the sand river, and some Warangi tribesmen had penetrated this Masai country to establish some cultivated patches. We had seen evidence of elephant along the track, so it came as no surprise when these people claimed that there were many in the area and that their crops were being raided nightly.

We set up camp in a shady spot. The old Masai departed for his *manyatta* nearby, to return later with two *morani* who were eager to act as local guides. By evening we were all set up to start the hunt next morning. No bulls came down to drink during the night, so, together with Mohammed and the two Masai, we cut through the bush toward some hills about five miles away. The Masai said there was an area of thick bush and forest at the base of the hills much favoured by elephant as a resting place. There were in fact intermittent and quite extensive areas of dense bush all the way to the hills, and we saw plenty of spoor that was a day or more old. At the base of the hills we found a large herd of cows and calves, but I could not see them all because of the intervening bush. To solve this problem and in the hope of spotting any bulls, we climbed up the slopes to a point some two or three hundred feet above the surrounding country. As we sat on the edge of a rock face, a magnificent panorama presented itself. We could see the elephant herd in the thicket immediately below, and beyond that the seemingly endless bush and open savanna stretching to the horizon.

The hills at Kibaya were clearly visible some twenty miles away, and far beyond, the faint outline of another range could be seen. The Masai said that it was called Talamai and that there were many elephants there. As we watched I was thrilled to see a herd of greater kudu emerge from a line of thicket a few hundred yards away and browse along it, to disappear again shortly after. I had never seen greater kudu before, and for this reason alone, the time and effort taken to arrive at this point made it more than worthwhile.

After an hour or so on the hill, we descended, working our way in a wide arc back toward Mrijo. At about 2 P.M., moving through an area of open woodland, we cut the spoor of three bull elephants. The ground was hard, partially covered in two-foot grasses, so it took a while to assess the status of these bulls from the size of their tracks. It turned out that, so far as we could judge, two of them were mature animals worth following. They had passed this way many hours before, probably before sunrise that morning, and were heading in the general direction towards Mrijo. Despite this, we decided to follow them up. From that point Mohammed took the lead and was assisted in the tracking when necessary by the Masai *morani*. The direction held good for about an hour, when they turned left and the distance between us and the camp started to increase. One of the *morani* said the elephants were going toward an area of dense thicket some distance away, and he thought that they would be in the thicket. We reached the thicket area as the sun was sinking. We could not possibly come up with the bulls before dark, so the hunt was abandoned.

Our limited water supply was finished, we had no food, and we were tired. The camp was some four hours' walk through mixed woodland and dense thicket, with plenty of thorns about. Frequent signs of rhino and solitary buffalo bulls had been evident all day. The question now was whether to sleep in the bush or risk the long trek to camp in the dark. I asked the Masai if they knew of any water nearby, and they said that all the rainwater pans were dry or contained only liquid mud. Then his face lit up, and he said there might be some water contained in a baobab tree nearby. He explained that the tree had a large hollow area in the trunk shaped by the outgrowing branches, and water during the rains filled it up to a level where it lasted two or three months in the dry season. We set off at once and reached the tree at dusk. Other locals knew about this secret water deposit, for there were pegs for climbing driven into the soft wood of the tree all the way up to the hollow section, where there was a long stick with an open calabash tied to the end for scooping out water. The Masai climbed up and dipped the calabash into the hollow, and we all heard the splash of water. We sent the water bottles up to him and had them filled. What a relief, especially as the water was clear and had no smell. We soon had a fire going and prepared to spend the night there. Despite the continuously burning fire it was cold, and we spent the next hours in some discomfort, so we were glad to be on our way as soon as we could see at dawn. We were back in camp by midmorning and rested up that day. For me a chicken stew and a brew of strong, very sweet tea renewed my energy. After over twenty-four hours of continuous exertion, great thirst, no food, and extremes of heat and cold, a camp, no matter how simple, becomes a sort of five-star hotel.

That night two big bulls came in to drink after at least two herds of cows and calves had arrived and departed. By 8 o'clock the next morning we had followed the bulls to where they entered dense bush. It was still in leaf, and visibility was measured in feet. They were feeding as they moved through this tangle, and ten minutes after entering it, with Mohammed in the lead, we came across a pile of droppings still warm even on the outside. They were obviously

not far away, and the level of tension rose fast. We had heard no elephantine sounds but proceeded with caution along the spoor. I doubt we had covered 150 yards from the warm droppings when suddenly, not far ahead, there was a crashing of bush, which rapidly faded. The bulls had scented us and stampeded. We advanced quietly to where they had been standing and sat around relaxing for a quarter of an hour to give them a chance to settle down again. There was little wind in this thicket, but it was fitful, and the smoke from my cigarette shifted direction. It was this shifting air that had alarmed the bulls, for they had scented us at less than twenty yards from them.

We now started after them again and followed with extreme care, stopping every forty to fifty yards to listen intently for any sounds that would give away their position. Hunting in near-zero visibility is slow, nerve-racking work with a progressive buildup of tension. It is necessary to ease off at regular intervals in order to remain cool and capable in a crisis. An hour later, Mohammed and I thought we heard a faint sound to our left front. It could have been a squirrel or a thrush moving in the bush. We stopped—nothing was visible and no further sound reached us. I got down on my knees and peered ahead at ground level, where the leaf cover is thinner for the lowest three or four inches. As I looked, something moved, accompanied by a faint scraping sound about thirty feet away. It moved again, and I recognized it, in the deep shade, for what it was. It was an elephant's foot, and the toenails were clearly visible. I was wondering what I could or should do in this situation when the elephants moved off again. This time there was no stampede, but we could clearly hear them softly brushing through the bush. It was an impossible situation. Twice we had come up with them, and, apart from a look at the foot of one animal, we had seen absolutely nothing.

*Long, heavy ivory is hard work to find. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

One of the *morani* said the bush thinned out some way ahead in the direction the bulls had taken. Hoping he was correct, I decided to continue the follow-up after resting for a while. I was beginning to feel uneasy in this impossibly dense cover but felt better for the short rest. Half a mile farther on, the bulls altered direction away from where the cover was supposed to thin out. There were now copious amounts of loose droppings along the way, which was a sure sign that the animals were becoming nervous. Soon they crossed their own trail and our trail from earlier in the day. This did not seem to disturb them. They knew they were being followed, and it appeared they were determined to stay in this dense cover. Some time after crossing our inbound tracks, we heard the elephants moving again from a position very close to us. We stopped at once and then moved on a few yards to where they had been standing. There was no sound, so we sat around quietly to gain some relief from the continuous tension. I reasoned with myself that the animals knew they were being followed; they were in a highly nervous state, which could lead to a deliberate attack on us by one of them. In this sort of cover I felt my prospects in successfully dealing with such a situation were virtually zero. Under the circumstances I felt strongly that it would be foolish, possibly fatal, to continue pressing my luck in a situation over which I would have no control. Memories of my close call with the buffalo in 1948 crowded my mind. The two Masai also said they did not think these bulls would now move into more open cover. The decision was made, and we moved out of this tangled vegetation and were back in camp by late afternoon.

During our frequent halts during the day's hunt I had questioned one of the Masai about his comments regarding elephants at Talamai. He said he had been there several times driving cattle, purchased by Somali traders, on their way to markets at Korogwe and Tanga. He said there were always elephant drinking at the springs at the Kijungu trading centre, at the base of Talamai Mountain. He gave me the name of a Mbondei tribesman who lived there, acting as the local guide for anyone hunting the area. I decided that evening to move to Kijungu the next day and try my luck there.

Traveling back along the road, we again passed through Kibaya and nearly three hours later arrived at Kijungu. Talamai Mountain was in full view much of the way. It rose steeply at Kijungu for several hundred feet, then leveled out for some twenty miles in a northerly direction, dropped again, and terminated in an isolated peak crowned with rock. Springs at Kijungu sustained the local trading centre and cattle there. I camped near the water and located the man mentioned by the Masai without difficulty. We had a long talk, and he certainly appeared to be knowledgeable about the surrounding country and the elephant population there. He told me there was a large rainwater pan with plenty of water still in it, not too far beyond the rocky pinnacle at the northern end of Talamai Mountain, and that there were some bull elephants drinking there. There were also many bulls and herds of cows and calves in the country between Kijungu and another group of permanent springs at a place called Samatwa to the southeast. In between, at least two water pans still held water. His view was that bulls attracted from a wide area were drinking from the isolated water pan to the north. Why go to the other area, which was overrun with cow herds and a choice of at least four drinking places. This made sense to me, so I told him we would go to his choice of hunting country the next day.

To get there we followed the main road to Handeni to a large black cotton plain. I was interested to see two herds of white-bearded wildebeest there. They were probably the extreme limit of the eastern distribution of this species in Tanganyika. We turned left off the road at the

plain, working our way through open woodland in the general direction of the Talamai pinnacle. Eventually we struck a well-worn cattle trail and, after following it for forty-five minutes, came into the clear at a large water pan. All around it was bare sandy soil, and there was no vegetation in the water. Great heaps of elephant droppings, fresh and old, were dotted about the perimeter, and a pair of Egyptian geese were in the water. It was late afternoon, and large numbers of mourning doves were coming in to drink. There was also a large flock of guinea fowl scratching up the dust at the edge of the trees. It looked an ideal and exciting place to me. A walk around the pool simply confirmed this. Tracks of rhino, buffalo, giraffe, eland, zebra, and other game were in profusion. More important, from my point of view, were the tracks of several bull elephants.

With the objective of creating as little disturbance as possible, I placed the camp under a shady tree about a mile from the water. In late afternoon I took my .22 rifle and wandered down to the pool and managed to pick off two guinea fowl for the pot. I then stayed until sundown, watching the game coming in to drink. My time was well rewarded as I watched the fascinating sight of a falcon taking a dove in flight. It fell to the ground where the falcon recovered it and disappeared into the surrounding trees. There was no human desecration here. It was very beautiful—nature at its very best.

Starting as soon as it was light, we had two long days following bull elephants from the water. On the first day we came up with three bulls in midafternoon in light bush country. One had tusks that I estimated to be seventy to seventy-five pounds each. I was willing to take the bull but was persuaded otherwise by my Bondei friend, who said there was a good possibility of getting much bigger ivory. We arrived back in camp well after dark, tired and thirsty. The following morning we started again at dawn and followed two bulls until late afternoon. All day there was little sign of them feeding or resting up. So we gave up and arrived back in camp long after dark. I was disappointed and was beginning to believe that many of the bull elephants watering here were simply passing through en route to some distant feeding area. In the two days' hunting from this water pan I estimated that I had walked fifty miles. On the third night I slept heavily. In the morning, sitting by the fire drinking tea with the men before light, they asked whether I had heard the lion and leopard during the night. I had heard nothing. We went down to the water as soon as we could see, and sure enough, the tracks made by a pride of four lions were visible in the mud at the water's edge. Of greater interest were the tracks of four elephants, two of them mature bulls, the other two smaller animals. Mohammed had heard them at the water about three hours earlier. So we started off once again on what I assumed would be another long follow-up.

The bulls spread out and started feeding as soon as they left the water pan, knocking over odd trees and eating the bark, roots, and leaves. It was an indication that they were not on trek to some distant place. After an hour they stopped for a rest, and since the droppings at this point were still slightly warm inside, I estimated that they were now only one and a half hours ahead of us. After a while they started heading toward Talamai, and we followed them into dense bush surrounding the pinnacle. Shortly after entering this bush area we heard breaking branches and throat rumbles some way ahead. The bush was all in leaf and very dense, and I really did not want a repeat of the Mrijo episode. We decided the best thing to do was cut across to the rocky pinnacle and scale it to survey the area from above and try to locate our quarry. It took us an hour or so to work our way through the dense bush and climb up onto the rocks. From here there was a panoramic view all around, and we could clearly see the limits of the dense bush area where it met the open

Commiphora woodland. Halfway between the slope from our position to the start of the open woodland we could see the backs of two elephants right in the centre of the dense cover. Studying the situation, we located the other two as they moved through the bush feeding. No tusks were visible from this position, and there was little choice but to try to approach them in the cover in the hope of checking out the tusks' size. A gentle breeze was blowing consistently in our favour. I knew that we could close with them, but it was a matter of luck whether we would be able to see the ivory in that tangle of vegetation at ground level. After watching them for some time to determine their direction of travel, we departed from our elevated position and worked our way directly toward the bulls, who were about three hundred yards away. Visibility was very poor, and I knew that whatever happened it was going to be a close-range encounter.

As we worked our way forward, sounds of feeding came ever closer. We were making some noise ourselves as we forced our way forward through the dense bush, but it did not seem to bother them. I assumed they must have heard us and had taken the noise as emanating from one of their own number. We were now very close to the nearest bull, and I took the lead. I judged him to be about fifteen yards away but could see nothing through the mass of leaves. I indicated to Mohammed and the local man to stay where they were. With the .470 ready for action and with some trepidation, I maneuvered as quietly as possible toward the bull. I worked my way through the dense overhang of leaves and, as I came clear of it, found myself looking at a huge bull facing toward me at about twenty feet range. I could only see part of his face and a section of what was an immensely thick tusk descending out of its socket to disappear into bush three feet below. The tusk was huge and I assumed the other

*The author with Talamai bull, a ninety-five-pounder. 1949.*

would match it. The situation called for a frontal brain shot, and I decided to go for it. As I brought up the rifle the bull raised his head and with spread ears swung it to the right. I instantly saw that the other tusk was broken off some three feet below the socket. It is possible the movement of raising my rifle was seen by the elephant. Whatever the cause, the moment I saw the broken tusk I abandoned all thought of killing him, ducked out of sight in the vegetation, and worked my way backward to increase the distance between us.

I met my two men, and they said the elephants had moved off farther down the slope. It did not sound as if they were disturbed or alarmed in any way. My head-on confrontation with the bull at very close range, the view of that gigantic tusk, the decision to go for a frontal brain shot immediately followed by my precipitate retreat without firing, and the prospects of the elephant following me through brought on an adrenaline-induced high that is impossible to describe. I needed a few minutes to normalize my system. While we were sitting around we heard the elephants break a branch some way off. It was proof that they had not gone far, nor were they alarmed. It was the signal for us to get moving. Picking up the tracks where I had left the big bull, we followed them for about half a mile. There was no letup in the density of the bush, so consequently I was far from convinced that a favourable situation would arise and bring the hunt to a satisfactory conclusion. At about this point all four bulls joined up and, altering their direction of travel slightly to the right, moved on in single file, leaving a trail that we could follow more easily and quickly.

We listened intently for a minute or two and didn't hear anything, so we continued along the tracks. A little while later the sky began to appear through the bush ahead as if the vegetation were thinning out. There was a small, circular, grassy glade about sixty yards in diameter in the middle of the thicket. The tracks led us right to it, and there, standing around right in the clear, were all four bulls. The bull I had seen earlier with the broken tusk was the closest. The other tusk was huge. It protruded out of his head about seven feet and was immensely thick all the way down. He was a large animal in body, so that tusk would have had an overall length of ten feet or more. The small bulls were the farthest away, with ivory weighing twenty-five to thirty-five pounds. The other big bull was over to the right at a range of about twenty yards from me. He had two thick but relatively short tusks when compared to the other fellow. I estimated their weight at about ninety pounds each and decided to take him. It was a clear and easy shot, and I put a bullet into his brain from a slightly rearward angle. His hind legs collapsed and he was down. The big old bull shuffled off, disappearing from sight in the thickets. The two young bulls looked for a moment as if they might become a problem, but, on seeing the old one moving away into bush, they followed him.

The tusks from this elephant weighed out at ninety-seven and ninety-three pounds, respectively, and had a circumference at the point of exit from the head of twenty-two inches. To this day I do not know if I should have taken the old fellow. His single tusk was not only longer than the ninety-seven-pound tusk but also noticeably thicker. To me it is nearly impossible to accurately judge ivory weight when tusks are of this size. A difference of one-quarter inch in circumference either way results in a huge change in the weight. Add to this the size of the nerve cavity, which again affects the weight, and you have a pressing problem trying to assess it. It seems that the nerve within the tusk starts to shrink as the elephant enters old age, and the area of shrinkage is filled in by ivory growth. The bull with the big tusk was an old animal. I think that the tusk would have

certainly exceeded 150 pounds. Many years later, in the mid-1960s, in the early days of professional hunting in the Selous Game Reserve, I assisted a professional hunter and his client, Mrs. Alice Landreth, to collect an elephant that also had one broken tusk. The tusks from this animal weighed 142 pounds and 96 pounds, respectively. I mention this because, although memory fades with time, I know that great elephant bull in 1949 had a much bigger tusk than Alice Landreth's bull.

I would probably have had more success at this water pan had I continued the hunt there to fill my second license. However, time was getting short and I was running out of cash. I decided to go to Tanga on the coast, register and sell my two fine tusks, and then work my way back to Kenya, hunting along the way. I collected an elephant with tusks weighing about eighty pounds each at Toloa, close to the Kenya border east of Lake Jipe. But before arriving there I had my first experience of a tuskless bull elephant in the foothills of the Usambara Mountains.

Looking for bulls one morning along the Umba River, we came across a place where a large herd of cows and young had been during the night. Among them we noticed some very large bull tracks, larger than any I had ever seen. We were accompanied by some local Wasambaa who told us that they had often seen this bull in their crops and that he had very large tusks. That settled the question of whether we followed up this herd or not, so away we went. We came up to them in an area of forest on the lower mountain slopes. Visibility was reasonably good at forty to fifty yards, and we quickly located the bull at the rear of the herd. He was huge in body, towering above the other elephants. I crept up to within twenty yards of him and, try as I might, was unable to discover any sign of tusks. I could hardly believe it, but there just weren't any. His mouth was all pinched in; there was no bone structure in the head where the tusks' socket should have been. Checking over the rest of the herd, I found no sign of any other bull and had to accept the fact that the big bull we had followed was a freak. The two Wasambaa, of course, claimed that this was a different animal than the one they had first seen. I do not believe they had any knowledge of this herd; they were simply hoping that I would kill an elephant, thus supplying them and their village with unlimited meat.

The story of the tuskless bull in the Usambara Mountains has diverted me from the subject of ivory hunting. From 1947 to the end of 1955 I took a total of fifteen bull elephants on licenses. Every time I took out an elephant license in Kenya or Tanganyika, it was with the hope that I would find the hundred-pounder at the end of the trail. To collect such a bull would involve a combination of luck and perseverance, hunting in what one considered the most likely areas. I did in fact collect only one hundred-pounder during the course of all these hunts. Some of the bulls I shot were close to the magic figure, carrying tusks of more than ninety pounds. The main problem for me was the time factor, and because of this I invariably collected the first bull I came across with reasonable-sized ivory. When I eventually collected the only hundred-pounder on license, it was pure luck and in an area well outside the prime big ivory country of East Africa.

It was November 1952. I was returning to my base at Mahenge in the low-lying country below the 4,000-foot range where my headquarters was located, and I camped on the Luhombero River upstream from where the Mbalu River joined it. This point was on the western boundary of the Selous Game Reserve, so I could not hunt toward

the east without entering the game reserve. A walk of an hour or two to the west and southwest were scattered agricultural settlements. For many years cultivation protection against marauding elephants had been going on around these settlements, and I had done a fair amount of this work myself during the past few months. The long-term effect of these operations was that the elephant population was reduced to a young average age. Fully mature animals were few and far between, and the prospects for big ivory were very low indeed.

My license was due to expire by the end of the month, so I was prepared to take any bull I came across with tusks of thirty pounds each or better. After setting up camp and organizing the porters' rations, I left at about 3 P.M. in company with Muhawe, one of my game scouts, and Mbukuri, my regular tracker and gunbearer. There had recently been heavy rains, and the country was fresh and green with miles of germinating fresh grass. It was beautiful and restful, making walking easy and relaxing through the open *miombo* woodland. We had paralleled the Luhombero riverine forest upstream for a while when we heard elephantine flatulence ahead of us. The wind was steady in our favour, so we continued in that direction. A large decayed termite mound with a couple of large tamarind trees growing on it appeared a little away ahead of us. Around its base was a collection of bushes forming a circular area of light thicket, and the elephant sounds seemed to be emanating from there.

At some thirty yards' range we saw the animal, a young bull, lying flat on his side on the lower part of the mound. He seemed to be asleep, but periodically the tip of his trunk would rise and sniff at the air and then relax back to the ground. The easiest

*The author with hundred-pounder. Luhombero, 1952.*

way to get this bull, whose tusks I estimated at about thirty-five pounds each, would be to send Muhawe upwind of it to frighten it onto its feet and make it abandon the small area of cover and move in my direction. I told Muhawe what to do, and he immediately came up with an alternative idea. He said a very big tusker was known to be in this area somewhere. Over the years it had been sought after by European officials from Mahenge. He said a previous district commissioner named Donald Battey had actually seen it once. He suggested that we leave this young bull alone and continue on our way. If we did not come across another elephant bull we could always come back to this one and collect it later. I agreed to this, so we backed off some distance and circled around to continue our search, leaving the young bull to its siesta, blissfully unaware of his dangerous situation.

By about 5:40 P.M. we hadn't seen any more elephants, and I told Muhawe that we would return to the young bull and take it. He responded, "Bwana, let's cross the river and check the other side, and if we see nothing we can recross again when we reach a place close to where the elephant is sleeping." We crossed the river and, moving out about a hundred yards beyond the riverine forest, started paralleling it downstream. The sun was low by now, so we walked fast with the intention of arriving at the sleeping bull on the other side before dark. The country was open woodland covered with a carpet of fresh, bright green grass. An open glade, or *ulambo,* as they are locally called, started to come into view two hundred yards ahead of us, and a herd of Lichtenstein hartebeest were grazing near it. They saw us and, making their sneezelike alarm snorts, started to canter toward the glade.

It was at this stage that we saw the rear end view of a large elephant bull standing in the glade plucking fresh grass with his trunk, shaking the moist earth off it, and shoving it into his mouth. I moved up quickly, and by the time the hartebeest moved on again I had a clear view of the bull from the rear. I could see one very long tusk on his left side and caught occasional glimpses of the other through his legs as he moved his head about, reaching for tufts of grass. He was about 150 yards away, and at this moment the hartebeest went prancing past him, snorting in alarm. This immediately upset the elephant, and he

*The author with tusks weighing 103 and 101 pounds. 1952.*

started to shuffle directly away from us, swinging his head from side to side to see if there was any danger behind. I wanted this bull, and I had to act fast. I took off at an all-out sprint, moving out from in line with his stern to an angle of about 45 degrees. The distance between us was now seventy yards, and he was alarmed and starting to move fast. I knew that I could not get any closer—it was now or never. I stopped and, holding my breath to steady my aim, lined the sights up on his neck well behind and level with the ear orifice and fired the right barrel. The bull simply collapsed to the ground, all four legs together, rolled onto his side, and continued kicking with his rear legs. I knew by the way he fell that he was only stunned by the impact of the 500-grain .470 bullet, so I raced up to him, reloading the right barrel as I ran, and put a second bullet at point-blank range into the top of his head, shattering the brain before he could recover.

This was an amazing piece of luck. During the next twelve months I saw thousands of elephants all over Ulanga District and hunted a great many on elephant control operations. I saw a few bulls with tusks of fifty to seventy pounds but none with tusks that came anywhere near this one in size. Back at Mahenge, the tusks weighed in at 103 and 101 pounds. I had got my hundred-pounder, but just barely.

In 1954 I was on foot safari making my way toward Rungwa Game Reserve in Iringa District. There is an uninhabited spring at a place called Mkwambi in the extreme south of the great dry elephant country described earlier. I had seen evidence of big bull tracks there on an earlier visit and determined to investigate the prospects of filling my latest two elephant licenses. We collected two local guides from a small village about twenty miles from the camp. They claimed to have lived at Mkwambi some years before, and as there was no settlement there now, some local knowledge would undoubtedly be useful. It transpired during the next few days that they were still familiar with the country, spending time there each year honey hunting and probably hunting game for meat. Because the available water was so restricted in quantity, I put the camp some distance from it to avoid disturbing animals, in particular elephants that might visit during the night. Some bulls and at least two small cow herds were using the water.

This was the southern limit of the vast dry elephant country stretching to the north, the vegetation being in a sort of transition status between Commiphora/acacia scrub and the Brachystegia/Combretum woodland commonly referred to locally as *miombo* country. These woodland types were interspersed with areas of dense thicket and occasional seasonally flooded grasslands dotted with a few large acacia trees. There had been some unseasonal rain at the time of our hunt, and this had brought in great swarms of red-billed quelea weaver birds, which were nesting in the large acacia trees. The night passed peacefully until about 4 A.M., when an elephant was heard feeding close to the camp. From then until half an hour before daylight the animal could be heard breaking branches, pushing over the odd tree, and rumbling once in a while. It sounded like a solitary beast, and I was anxious to have a look at it. At 5:30 A.M. I was by the campfire having a cup of tea. The elephant, which had been feeding nearby only a short time before, could not be far away, so I decided we would follow it up at first light.

We were shortly on our way—the two locals, Mbukuri, and I—and came across the animal's tracks within two hundred yards of the camp. He was a fully grown solitary bull, and the trail led us south into an extensive stand of mature *miombo* woodland. Visibility in this sort of country is good, and I expected the bull to lead us right through it into

*Mbukuri with second Mkwambi bull.*

thicket somewhere ahead. It came as a surprise that half an hour later and still in the open woodland, a bull elephant appeared, traveling at an all-out run to our right and coming in our general direction. He had good ivory of better than seventy pounds a side, and I immediately decided to take him. I did not know what had frightened this bull, as he was running very fast with his ears partially spread. He also appeared to be in mating condition, as his penis was out about two and a half feet in a great arch, swinging from side to side in time with the momentum of the run. He came past me still going all-out about thirty yards away. I fired just ahead of the ear hole. The effect was startling, as I had clearly failed to hit the brain. On impact the bull seemed to take off and make a power dive face first, straight to the ground. He came down on his chest and tusks, with both front legs stretched out to the rear, and started struggling to get up. I ran up beside him and put a bullet in his brain as he tried to rise. He collapsed and rolled onto his right side. At this point I noticed that his penis was fully extended with a well-developed, hooklike curve at the end. It was covered in a slimy substance and was ejaculating great gushes of semen, forming an opaque mucus pool on the ground. I have little doubt that this bull had been engaged in sexual activity and had no idea that we were in his vicinity. There was evidence of elephant cow herds in the area, but whether any of these had fired him up I do not know. It occurred to me that to die in the throes of a gigantic orgasm is as good a way to go as any. The rest of the day was spent extracting the tusks, which later weighed out at seventy-eight and eighty-three pounds—a very good return for less than an hour's walk.

I still had one elephant license to fill, and since there were a number of bulls in the area I decided to continue the hunt from Mkwambi. The next morning at daylight we visited the watering point. It was immediately evident that a number of elephant bulls and breeding units had come in during the night. There was so much trampling around the watering place that we had to make a careful search in a wide arc to locate the tracks of individual animals. In this way we located the tracks of two bulls, a large one and a

much smaller companion. These two appeared to be fresher than any of the others and seemed to offer the best chance of success, so we set off to follow them up. They moved through an extensive belt of *miombo* woodland and then penetrated an area of thicket, feeding as they went. The line of travel was not consistent, and as the hours passed I was ever more convinced that we would certainly catch up with them. Close to midday we entered another area of thicket, still following their tracks, and after penetrating it for a couple of miles stopped for a rest at a point where the bulls themselves had stood about for some time during daylight. The piles of droppings were still warm inside, and patches of ground were wet and muddy with urine. As we rested, a honey guide arrived with its irritating chattering call but, getting no response from us, left after twenty minutes. We moved on well after midday. The honey guide had clearly gone its own way, much to my relief, for these birds can be a real nuisance to the hunter, their chattering call causing many animals to be on the alert.

The tracks led us into an area within the thicket that was cut by drainage lines. As we were working our way through these we heard a branch break to our left. I now took the lead and, checking the wind direction, found it to be more or less static. I headed straight for the point where the noise of the breaking branch was heard. The bush was thick but workable, and I saw the rear end of one of the two bulls about fifteen yards away. I could not see his companion. It was standing dozing in a shallow depression in deep shade. I had to work fast now to avoid alarming the pair if the wind moved at all, as we were very close. I indicated to my men to follow and moved out to the left to position myself for a broadside shot at the area of the brain or the heart, whichever offered the better opportunity. A minute or two later I was broadside onto the bull at about thirty feet from him. The tusks were intact and big. His head was in the clear, and I dropped him dead in his tracks with a side brain shot. There was silence for a few seconds; then the smaller bull appeared. His tail was up and he looked aggressive. He made a demonstration charge in our direction and pulled up beside the carcass of his companion. He then turned and went rushing off in the opposite direction, squealing with rage. I decided that we should move a little farther away until we were sure that the young bull had departed, so we retreated about

*Ivory from two days' hunting at Mkwambi—97 and 94 pounds; 83 and 78 pounds.*

fifty or sixty yards and sat quietly awaiting developments. The young bull, with occasional squeals of rage, came rushing back to the carcass and hung around there for half an hour or so. Then all went silent. We waited for a long time but heard no more sounds. I crept cautiously back to the carcass with Mbukuri, fully prepared for trouble, but the young bull had gone. This was a relief to me, for these young askari bulls can become aggressive and dangerous. They are often protective toward the older animal to whom they have attached themselves and will sometimes demonstrate toward and even make a determined attack on any object that they think has caused the disturbance.

It was now possible to inspect the old bull in full detail. He was a fine old tusker and carried ivory that weighed out at ninety-seven and ninety-four pounds, respectively. It was a successful end to the safari, and one could not have wished for better results in only two days of actual hunting. I was also in luck with the bull I had taken the day before, as his tusks were quite undamaged despite having gone down at an all-out run.

Heavy ivory has been recorded all over East and Central Africa, but results over the years indicate clearly that it seems to have been more abundant in the big ivory country described earlier. Within this basically arid country, every group of bulls and even solitary beasts that I followed up carried heavy ivory. When I hunted with clients the results were similar, and in situations where there was a large group of bulls together, two or more invariably carried heavy tusks. I never observed any areas outside this stretch of country where there were even remotely comparable numbers of bulls carrying heavy ivory. I'm sure the nature of the country itself has some bearing on this, in that it is not suitable for agricultural activities, and the small number of nomadic cattle herders coexisted with the elephant herds without hostility or competition. Some people postulate that the quality of the elephant diet is the reason for the heavy ivory growth. I do not believe this to be correct. If diet has any effect on tusk growth, I think it is minimal. The key factors are longevity and genetics. Anywhere there is consistent elephant hunting above a certain level—such as elephant control and cultivation protection—the average age of the population decreases and the prospects of heavy tusks proportionately decrease. Genetics is important in shaping the hereditary characteristics of various elephant populations. Generally speaking, an elephant capable of carrying heavy ivory must have a massive bone structure in the head. Without this it is not possible for thick tusks to develop. When comparing the massive framework and heads of elephant bulls in the big ivory country to those in the eastern and southeastern provinces of Tanganyika, it is evident that the latter population even in old age has smaller and narrower heads, and the ivory is consistently thin, even if it is often long. Of the many thousands of bulls I saw in southern Tanganyika, I do not recall ever seeing one with tusks that impressed me by their thickness relative to length. An example is the heaviest tusk to come out of the Selous, which weighed 142 pounds and had a circumference at the lip of only 20½ inches. This thickness carried down for most of the tusk length because of age, accounting for its weight. Tusk circumference in the big ivory country may reach 22 to 23 inches. In the *miombo* country of western Tanganyika the situation was different. Many of the mature bulls there had thick ivory, but it tended to be short. This brings me to the final genetic factor that I believe is important for the development of big ivory. Heavy tusks of well over 100 pounds each are a combination of thickness and length. To produce such tusks the rate of ivory growth must be combined

with time. This situation is reflected in bulls of every age in a given area, so that a bull with a rapid rate of tusk growth has longer ivory at any stage in his life than bulls of similar age that are in a slower growth category. A bull in his prime, using his fourth set of molars, with 70-pound tusks, is in a rapid-growth category. He will be into the 100-pound tusk weight or more by the time the sixth set of molars comes into use. An elephant that does not have the rapid ivory growth rate or that has inherited the smaller head structure that only allows for thin ivory will seldom produce ivory in excess of 70 pounds per tusk, and often much less.

The genetic factors noted above, combined with the full natural life span of the elephant population in the big ivory country, is reflected in the number of large-tusked elephant bulls found there up to the early 1970s. Since then, massive poaching of elephants by Somalis and other tribesmen armed with automatic weapons has decimated these great elephant populations. Their first choice is invariably the larger animals in each group or herd, and this has left a greatly reduced population with a low average age factor. With proper control such poaching would never have happened, and there is no doubt that the level of legal hunting on license in eastern Central Africa could never have had such a devastating effect on the overall average age factor of the elephant population.

# Elephant Control Officer

*Chapter 10*

On 1 February 1950, at age nineteen, I joined the Tanganyika Game Department. I had been interviewed by Monty Moore, a First World War Victoria Cross, who was the head of the department, based at Lyamungu on the slopes of Kilimanjaro. My official title was elephant control officer, and I was to be based at Liwale in Southern Province. He could not tell me much about the work except that I was to thin out the large elephant population, particularly the numerous herds affecting an area being developed and financed by the British government. This project, known as the Ground Nut Scheme, continued for several years. It was a costly failure, eventually producing harvests of ground nuts at a cost of one pound sterling per nut, it was said. The centre of operations for this scheme was located at Nachingwea, some ninety miles from Liwale along a dirt road that was impassable to vehicles for nearly six months each year during the monsoon rains.

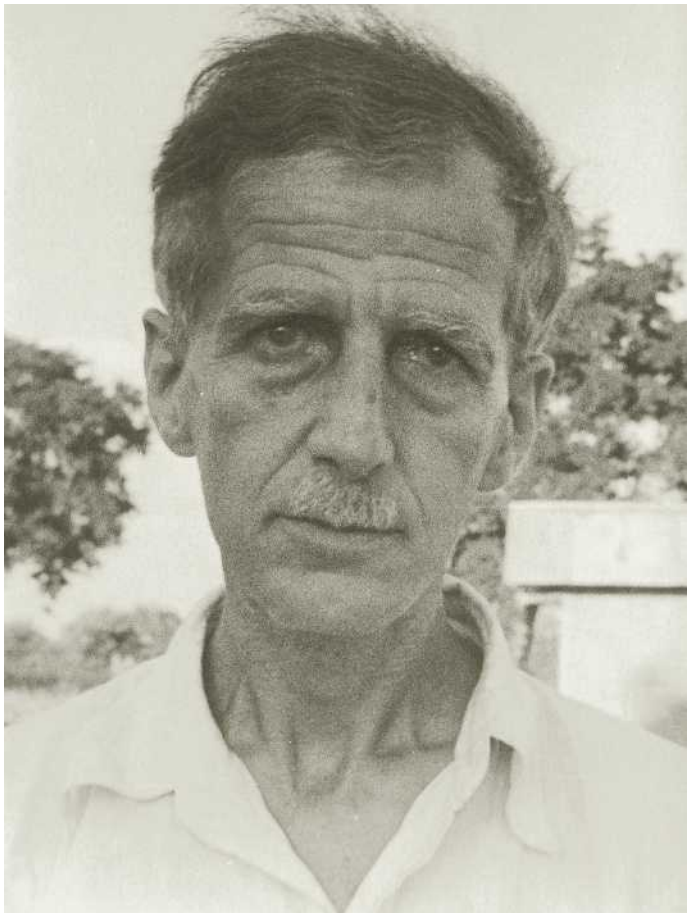
I suppose I must have impressed Monty Moore sufficiently to be offered the post. I suspect that the main factor, however, was that no one with greater experience than myself was prepared to take it on at the very low salary offered—50 pounds per month. I was not interested in income but in a way of life that I hoped would be similar to that of the elephant hunters during the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century. These old-timers—among them James Sutherland, Micky Norton, and John Deacon—had hunted what was to become Southern Province during the British mandate administration of German East Africa, renamed Tanganyika after the First World War. In particular I had been impressed by James Sutherland's book *The Adventures of an Elephant Hunter,* which was about his ivory hunting in this part of the country.

I had spent one year as a game catcher and two years as a trainee professional hunter up to this time. These were all motorized safaris done in considerable comfort. The hunting consisted of guiding other people and all the social life that went with it. I earned three times as much as what I received as an elephant control officer. But as I have said earlier, money was not important to me then. I found that the continuous company of clients and the way

we lived to be far removed from my ideal of safari in remote areas of wildest Africa.

I eventually arrived at Liwale after a rather tedious journey lasting nearly two weeks. I traveled by train, railway, and bus; by air in an East African Airways DC-3, by truck to Ruponda via Nachingwea, and on foot with porters for the last eighty miles. At Ruponda, which was the district headquarters at the time, I was issued with basic camp equipment, and I bought some food supplies and engaged a cook. Five days later I arrived at Liwale, having been delayed at the flooded Mbwemkuru River, where there was difficulty in getting the porters across. None of them could swim. They and the camp equipment had to be propelled across by local Africans who, for a fee, could swim balanced or hanging onto calabashes to keep them afloat. The far bank was reached about two hundred yards downstream from the starting point.

At Liwale I met the senior game ranger for Southern Province, Constantine John Philip Ionides. Of Greek origin, he was a fourth-generation Briton who, until I arrived, had been the only white man resident there since 1936. He had been in the regular British army in the South Wales border regiment and, after serving in India and on secondment to the Kings African Rifles based in Tanganyika, quit the army in about 1926. He became an illegal ivory hunter in the Eastern Congo and in the Mahenge District of Tanganyika. He joined the game department in 1933 on contract to reduce the elephant problem in Kilwa District in Southern Province, and from there he became a game ranger on the permanent staff. Ionides, known to most people as Iodine, was without a doubt one of the greatest naturalist-hunters Tanganyika has ever had. He also became a world-famous herpetologist. This man was my nominal boss for two years, and I consider myself fortunate not only to have served under him but to have had him as a very close friend and mentor until his death in 1968.



*C. J. P. "Iodine" Ionides.*

I spent three days at Liwale. I had my own thatch-roof residence but spent most of each day up to one or two o'clock in the morning talking to Iodine. He briefed me on my work and on his policies on game control and conservation, which included the Selous Game Reserve. He also gave me advice on dealing with elephant breeding herds, and lions that had a habit of eating people from time to time throughout the Province. I had been present at the death of quite a few trophy bull elephants, including some which I had shot on license; but I had never dealt with breeding herds and up to that time had never experienced a charging elephant. Iodine had stopped hunting elephant by the time I met him, but over the years he had killed several hundred in all sorts of conditions—open woodland, dense thicket, forest, and high grass flood

plains—so he was able to give me a lot of pertinent advice concerning my new job. He worked out a tentative itinerary for my first safari, since I was not familiar with the country. I left on foot with porters after three days, with an arrangement for us to meet up again at Liwale after two months. James Abdulla, a senior game scout with experience of elephant control, was to accompany me on this safari to assist wherever necessary. He had served with Von Lettow Vorbeck's army in the First World War. He was also a longtime elephant control scout in the game department under the British administration.

The Tanganyika Game Department in those days was a small and relatively unimportant organization responsible for game control and protection throughout the whole country. Its effectiveness in any sphere of its work depended largely on two factors: first, the competence and energy of the game ranger in his area (or range, as it was called), and second, the district administration. If the district commissioner was indifferent or even hostile to wildlife and its effect on the people in his district, little could be achieved in that area by the game ranger. Most district commissioners were indifferent, some were openly hostile, and few were very supportive of matters pertaining to wildlife. Tourism had not evolved as a source of revenue and employment. The colonial government tolerated the game department as an organization that financed itself from the sale of ivory recovered from elephant control operations. Most of this ivory came from Southern and Eastern Provinces. The game department itself had no overall long-term policies or plans and took it upon itself to protect every last animal in the country, unless it had been bought on license, regardless of local conditions of settlement, agriculture, and other factors. The department's functions regarding elephant and other game control and the revenue therefrom was all-important, but no system of effective control existed.

On a countrywide basis, the game department was badly understaffed for whatever purposes it was required. In 1950 there was the head of the department, whose official title was game warden, with eight game rangers and one elephant control officer responsible to him for all preservation and game control work throughout the country. Each ranger had a vast area to cover, and he recruited, trained, and armed African game scouts for work in the field up to an approved limit. Their competence was largely reflected in the quality and energy of the game ranger who recruited them. If he personally did a lot of elephant control work and dealt with other troublesome, potentially dangerous species, spending much time on foot safaris and vehicle safaris, the game scouts were in general more competent and active. If he spent little time on safari and had minimal interest in the hunting aspect of the work, the game scouts in his area became unreliable and lazy. At the beginning of 1950 there were some three hundred game scouts in Tanganyika, with over one-third of them in Southern and Eastern Provinces because of the demand for protection of crops against elephant. The game ranger distributed his game scouts to each administrative district in his area according to its level of elephant population and related crop damage. A head game scout was posted to each district, and he was responsible for the competence and to some extent the training of his junior colleagues. They were all issued with .404-calibre rifles and were an armed, uniformed force. Most of the head game scouts and many of their juniors in Southern Province were very competent elephant hunters and bushmen. They took great pride in their work, cultivating a strong esprit de corps. In Southern Province a game scout was held in high esteem by local society, and this in turn was beneficial to all aspects of the department's field work.

I have often been asked how control of ammunition expenditure was maintained. Apart from checking a man's competence in the field personally and chitchat with local people in

the bush on my constant rounds of foot safari, it came down to statistics. At the end of each month every game scout had to account for each expended cartridge with the same number of empty cases. He also had to produce the tail of every elephant he had shot. This had to tally with the number of ivory tusks delivered by local chiefs to government with a statement of the areas they came from. Game scouts were permitted a maximum average of three rounds per elephant killed and accounted for. If this average was higher, an investigation would follow and the scout, depending on what was found out, would be reprimanded, dismissed, or reduced to the status of a porter for additional training. This did keep the standards on elephant control work reasonably high and reduced the incidence of killing game animals for meat or trading live ammunition. I well remember in 1955 head game scout Mbaya Selemani returned twenty-six elephant for the year, expending twenty-five rounds of ammo. At the other end there were a few men who, for whatever reason, never got near the minimal level of skill required and were dismissed.

The recruitment of a game scout to the permanent staff was an extended procedure designed to permit assessment of the man's character, as well as his abilities in the bush and his reactions in proximity to elephant and other dangerous game. All recruits were volunteers and worked as porters attached to game scouts on elephant control duties in the range. They accompanied the scout on his travels, carrying his equipment, preparing his food, assisting with tracking, and being with him when he closed with troublesome elephant and destroyed one or more. The recruit might continue in such a position for a year or two before being recommended to the head game scout of that district. He would then continue to perform similar duties, but if the head scout found the man satisfactory, he would teach him how to use a rifle and the show him the anatomy of the elephant. The recruit would be with the head scout for three to six months, during which time he would normally shoot two or three elephant under supervision.

If the recruit did well, he would be sent to Liwale or possibly would be attached to my safari as a porter if I was in that district at the time. Another two or three months would be spent on safari, either with me or my most competent senior scouts, for a final assessment. If this went well, it simply remained for a vacancy to come up in the permanent staff establishment, and the man would be appointed. Until a vacancy came up, however, he would continue working as a porter while his training was polished up to a higher standard. With the long procedure one got to know a lot about the man, his capacity for endurance and his integrity. After the training period, the only qualification a man had to have before appointment as a game scout was the ability to read and write Kiswahili. Some of the men had learned this in junior school; others learned it during the training period. It was a successful system because it was seldom necessary to dismiss a man after he became a game scout, and the few who were dismissed were usually the by-product of superstition and matrimonial difficulties. For example, if a man experienced an unprovoked attack from an elephant or some other dangerous game animal, his tribal traditions had taught him that this was because his wife was being unfaithful. No amount of logic or discussion on the subject could convince him otherwise, and the result was frequent wife beatings, a rapid deterioration in performance on duty, and eventually dismissal.

One man who did not have to go through this long training procedure was named Mbukuri. He was from the Wangindo tribe in the Liwale area and was employed as my orderly. His duties included tracking down whatever species of animal was being hunted, carrying my rifle

or second rifle when I required one, reloading when in the thick of elephant control operations involving cow herds, issuing food to the porters every day, and generally reporting to me on their morale and sorting out their minor complaints and problems. The Wangindo had become agriculturists since the end of the Maji Maji rebellion, which was put down by the German administration in about 1905. Previously they had been mainly hunter-gatherers living in dense forested areas to avoid the constant raids by the Wangoni people who lived to the west in what is today Songea District. The Wangoni tribe were descendants from a breakaway *impi* (a Zulu fighting regiment) of Shaka Zulu's powerful Zulu people in southern Africa. Mbukuri was one of the small minority of Wangindo who still followed the old traditions, and he had developed the skills of his ancestral hunter-gatherers. It was his skill as a tracker in particular that persuaded me to engage him full time and put him in uniform without the normal long period of training. He never did become a qualified elephant control scout because, for reasons beyond any explanation I can offer, he was incapable of using a rifle competently and never came close to passing the range firing test. However, his ability to follow game animals over any sort of ground more than compensated for his failure with firearms. This was especially so when following elephant and, even more so, lions that had become man-eaters. He stayed with me until he retired in 1960, and died three years later of some tropical illness. I never met another man with tracking skills equal to Mbukuri's, and he was indeed a rare find in southern Tanganyika's agriculturist tribes.

Being part of the civil service, there was always a flow of official correspondence, circulars, and returns that had to be responded to within a reasonable time. Because I (and before me Ionides) spent up to eleven months of the year away on foot safari in mainly remote areas, it was necessary to maintain contact with base at Liwale. This was done by recruiting men we referred to as *tarishi*s (messengers) into the permanent staff. I had two of these men, so that there was always one on his way with post to meet up with me somewhere in the bush, and the other returning to Liwale with draft replies along with blank sheets of paper I had signed for the clerk to type out, and any private letters for posting. The mail runners were men with remarkable stamina; they could cover thirty to forty miles per day for days on end across country in all weather conditions. Never once did I have any items go missing, and so far as I know neither did Ionides before me, except once when the mail runner was killed and eaten by a lion when walking at dusk between villages in Tunduru District.

Because there were few roads through much of Southern Province and none at all in the vast Selous Game Reserve and the adjoining extensive uninhabited country, and there was only a single one-and-a-half-ton Bedford truck allocated to the Range, all my safaris up to 1956 were on foot with porters. The game scouts also were dependent on porters to do their work. All my porters were volunteers from the Liwale area and would sign on for the duration of a safari, which could last up to five months, with an average length of about two months. At the end of each safari there were always some who requested employment on the next safari starting in two or three days. In settled country where food and accommodation for the porters was supplied by the village head man, ten or eleven men was sufficient. However, in areas where we had to carry food stocks and tentage for the porters as well as for myself, up to forty men would be recruited, the majority of them carrying loads of sorghum flour and beans to feed themselves. The more porters one had, the more food had to be carried to feed them, so this aspect was a vicious circle. On

long safaris through the Selous Game Reserve where often one was over a hundred miles from the nearest food source, the resupply points had to be worked out carefully and in detail to enable one to cover all the areas to be visited. The necessity of arriving with the safari at the prearranged food resupply point within two or three days of a stipulated date was important; otherwise, the men who had carried the food in would eat much it while waiting for my safari to arrive. Porters were the main means of transport for myself and all the field staff in my range, and as such were the backbone of operations for all work on elephant control, which included dealing with man-eating lions, anti-poaching work, and managing the huge uninhabited tracts of the Selous Game Reserve. The Southern Range covered an area of nearly 100,000 square miles, stretching north from the Ruvuma River on the Mozambique border to the Rufiji River south of Dar es Salaam, and from the coast westward to the eastern shores of Lake Nyasa.

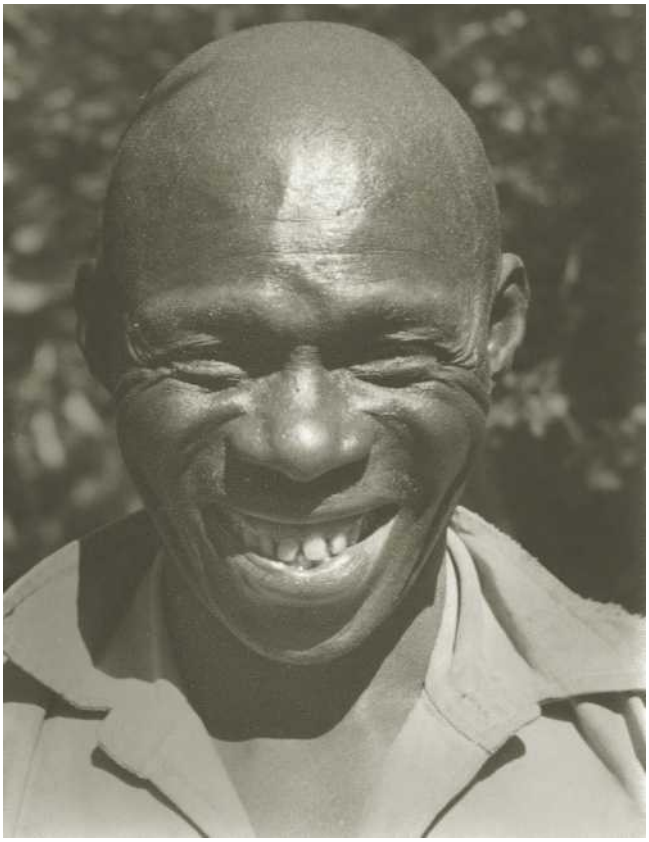
I always had the greatest admiration for my porters. They carried loads of about fifty pounds each on their heads over all terrain, and despite averaging some fifteen miles a day, they were always cheerful and cooperative. They had incredible stamina and lived under rough and tough conditions. Fit as I was in those years, I could not personally have done what they were required to do. All of these men were of the Islamic faith and therefore would not eat elephant meat, which was readily available when I was on elephant control operations. In the Selous Game Reserve and adjacent uninhabited areas, I would shoot a buffalo for them about once every ten days or so. Meat is a much sought-after luxury to the Africans of this part of Tanganyika, as there is no livestock due to heavy infestation of the tsetse fly. This regular supply of meat kept the men happy and no doubt induced some to offer their services for the next safari. I should mention here that in areas where the locals were either pagan or Christian they ate the meat of elephants killed on control work. In Masasi District and in parts of Songea and Tunduru Districts I would often have as many as four hundred people—men, women, and children—following my safari around, living off the meat from elephants I killed on control operations. Unfortunately, such activities were sometimes a drain on my limited medical supplies. These people, after disemboweling a carcass, would crawl right inside after what they considered tasty morsels such as the kidneys, heart, and fat. Fights would break out inside the carcass over such items, and I would be called upon to treat one or more of their number for deep stab wounds.


*Game scout James Abdulla.*

That first foot safari under the guidance and advice of game scout James Abdulla was a learning experience for me. I became familiar with the sorting out of equipment into head loads; rationing of food supplies; dealing with head men of villages where we camped or passed through; porters' complaints, requests, and general morale; and assessment of elephant damage to growing crops and other reports pertaining to these animals. Most important, from a

personal angle, I gained experience on dealing with large and small elephant-breeding herds and crop-raiding young bulls throughout this two-month safari. I killed some forty elephant during this period, mainly cows and near-adult animals, together with young bulls responsible for crop damage. These bulls were usually in groups of two to five animals but were not running with the breeding herds, although I concluded in time that they were attached to them by some form of communication, and their movement into and out of feeding areas was affected by the presence or absence of breeding herds. My first encounter with elephants was something of a disaster. It was at this time that I lost the first of only two elephants I wounded during many years of elephant hunting, which encompassed the destruction of some 1,300 head.

On the fourth morning out from Liwale I was up at dawn and, in company with James, Mbukuri, and two local villagers, trekked away from camp through mature and relatively open *miombo* woodland toward the upper Mbwemkuru River. After some twenty minutes we cut the spoor of a group of four young bulls, clearly defined in the wet grass after the previous night's rain. Mbukuri immediately started the follow-up, carrying my government-issue .404 rifle. This was a rifle manufactured by Vickers with a Mauser action and a 4-round magazine, and I was using it because the game department had no .470 ammunition for the double Army and Navy rifle I had brought with me from Kenya. As we followed the bulls in the direction of the Mbwemkuru River, the nature of the vegetation began to change from primarily fire-resistant, mature *miombo* open forest to secondary bush known locally as *mafundo,* consisting of regrowth of varying density in areas that were at some time in the past cleared for cultivation. The elephants had spent a considerable time grazing and browsing in this area, and consequently by 10 A.M. they were not far ahead; their droppings were still slightly warm on the surface. The locals insisted that the bulls were heading for an area of thick riverine forest along the river to rest up for the day. We were still in the *mafundo* secondary bush when the sound of a breaking branch nearby brought us up short. A steady breeze was blowing across us from east to west, and the elephants were to the south. With a cotton cloth filled with ash for testing the wind direction, we moved toward the sounds of the feeding elephants but angling in a southwesterly direction to place us in a better position to avoid detection by scent at close range.



*Game scout and tracker Ali Nassoro Mbukuri.*

I took the .404 rifle from Mbukuri and quietly worked a round into the chamber. James took the lead. After about two hundred yards he moved to one side and pointed ahead. The bush had thickened up considerably, mixed

with rather tattered tall grass, making visibility difficult at fifty yards. I could see part of an elephant and could hear at least one or more beyond it. From the moment the elephant had indicated its position up to the point where I could see a part of it, the tension had been building in me. I now took the lead and, with rifle ready and moving with infinite care to avoid noise, I approached to about twenty yards' range of the nearest and only visible animal. I could see its dark shape through a lot of intervening vegetation and felt sure I could place a bullet through its heart. Raising the rifle and lining up on where I believed the heart to lie, I fired and immediately reloaded. The bull wasted no time in moving and before I could fire again had vanished from sight. We could hear the elephants rushing away from us through the bush for a few seconds, and then all was silent. Moving up to where the bull had been standing, the sign of his startled movement on receiving my shot was clearly visible in the soft rain-soaked soil. We followed his line of stampede and after thirty or forty yards found blood on some leaves on the left side and then some scattered drops farther on, adhering to the grass lower down toward the ground. This was a wounded elephant, and I had to deal with it. I discussed the situation with James, and we decided to wait half an hour before following it further.

The search for this wounded elephant, with Mbukuri tracking, went on without letup for five hours. The occasional blood spots ceased altogether after we had been following for less than an hour. The four bulls did not stop except momentarily, and there was no evidence to indicate that the wounded beast was weakening or tiring. In midafternoon a downpour continued for nearly an hour, after which we were unable to distinguish the trail of our four bulls from that of a large herd of elephants that had crossed and recrossed the spoor we had been following. As the sun was finally sinking to the horizon we gave up, and in the humid heat of the early rains we made our way back to camp with the aid of the two local men. I was very despondent about this first result of my elephant control work, so much so that I wrote a note to Iodine offering my resignation. When his reply came back some weeks later, I had already been quite successful and had recovered from the lack of confidence induced by the loss of that elephant. He further made me understand that this sort of incident was a "one-off" thing and that to walk out of a job because of it was not a wise decision.

Some days later, after several successful elephant hunts in the Mbwemkuru and Kilima Rondo areas, I moved camp to the upper reaches of the Lumesule River. There were a few scattered villages here and, from the sign on the ground, a large number of elephant. It was here that I had my first experience of how savage a tuskless bull elephant can be. Early one morning, once again in the company of James, Mbukuri, and two local men, we cut the spoor of a large breeding herd. Mbukuri noted that among them were the tracks of a very large bull. After a couple of hours of easy tracking we came up with the tail end of the herd in *mafundo* secondary bush not far from the Lumesule River. There was a large cow to my front at about twenty yards' range, and I could see the whole of her head clearly. The wind was blowing across left to right between us, and she did not know we were there. She was grazing (plucking grass with her trunk), and only the eyelid of one eye was visible as she looked down straight at the ground. I took careful aim with my .404 rifle at a point just in front of her left ear hole and fired, instantly reloading. She collapsed hind legs first with a slight upward jerk of the head and rolled onto her side on the ground. There was a stunned silence for a few seconds, then the noise of large numbers of elephant stampeding away from us. At the same time an angry trumpeting squeal, repeated over and over, started some way ahead and appeared to be getting closer. We just stood where we were and awaited

developments. This was a very angry elephant looking for trouble, and it came into sight at about fifty yards' range, making a lot of noise at full run with head high and partially spread ears. James immediately said it was a "boody," or tuskless bull, and that it would come straight for us when it got our wind. I told him not to shoot unless I failed to stop it. It was a huge-bodied animal, certainly a bull, and its line of advance would take it some twenty yards to our right.

There was too much intervening cover to be certain of killing it at this juncture. We had waited for a few more seconds when the situation dramatically changed, cutting the air flow to our right. The angry squealing instantly stopped, and the elephant, now silent with head lowered and ears about one-quarter cocked, bore down on us at speed. It was about twenty yards away, and at this point our two local guides had had enough and bolted for their lives. Since we were all motionless up to this point, I do not think the elephant had seen anything; he was attacking purely on scent. But when the two locals bolted, the movement immediately drew his attention, and with a shrill squeal and head even lower he came on at great speed. I was lined up with my rifle on his head at a central point on an imaginary line connecting the ear holes on each side of his head. It was a cool and deliberate aim squeezed off in textbook style, and the bull collapsed on impact, hind legs first, about fifteen yards from us. James and Mbukuri had stood rock steady with me during this drama, and it gave me a good feeling to know that I had such men for hunting companions. The 400-grain, .404 solid bullet had penetrated the brain, and the bull was dead before it hit the ground. I was benefiting from some of Iodine's observations—that tuskless bull elephants were exceedingly dangerous beasts and that to stop a charge with a front brain shot one should go for the centre point on an imaginary line from earhole to earhole across an elephant's head.

After a few minutes, when they were sure it was safe, the two locals reappeared, clicking their tongues in wonder that the rest of us were still alive. We removed the tails from the two dead elephant and started back for camp. I was elated by the day's results and the experience with my first charging elephant. Thanks to Iodine I knew what I was doing. The whole episode lasted only a few seconds, but my mind functioned at white heat, while events seemed to take place in slow motion. I lined up the rifle and squeezed off the trigger in a deliberate and controlled manner, never having any doubt as to the final outcome.

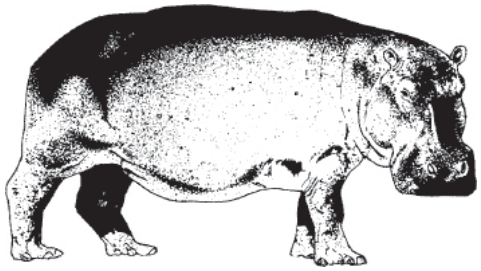
One must always be aware of aggressive bad temper in a tuskless bull elephant. Any elephant can be dangerous, but the tuskless bull is probably more dangerous than normally tusked elephants. Tuskless females are not, in my experience, in the same league as their male counterparts. This is perhaps fortunate, as in some areas the tuskless female can constitute up to 20 percent of adult beasts, while the adult tuskless bull is quite a rare phenomenon. Another aspect is that the tuskless bull at maturity is on average considerably larger in body than a normal tusker, while with females I have not observed any noticeable difference. Only a few tuskless bulls reach maturity, leading one to speculate that there is high mortality in such animals as they grow up. Iodine suggested to me his theory that the mature "boody" grows so large because the energy that normally goes into ivory growth is diverted to body development. He may well be right, but I tend to believe that they are exceptional specimens physically, and have to be, to survive rough treatment of cows in competition for food that requires the aid of tusks to procure, such as bark and root.

I have never yet found a mature tuskless bull outside of a breeding herd. In such company, particularly when conditions are dry and little suitable grass is available, there is continuous conflict between him and other members of the group. A cow will use her tusks to lever out a tail end of bark from a tree, while the bull stands nearby, biding his time. As the tail end of bark becomes available the boody, with much noise, will rush in and with his far greater weight push the other elephant out of the way and strip the bark from the tree with his trunk. The same situation applies to riverbanks, where digging for mineral-impregnated soil requires tusks. When the bull is much younger and smaller he faces severe retaliation, and this in my opinion has two results. Abnormally large physical specimens grow up to be very big and bad-tempered. Those that are not abnormal physically do not survive into maturity and die of starvation or, probably more often, are killed or die of injury inflicted by mature females. There is no doubt that genetics are a major factor in the existence of both male and female tuskless African elephants. On a number of occasions I have observed herds or family groups of elephants with mature females who have no tusk growth, accompanied by calves who show no signs of tusks at an age where tusks should be visible, and who have no sign of the bone structure necessary for tusks on the sides of the mouth. On the rare occasions when I have found a tuskless bull dominating a group of females, many of the younger animals, male and female, are tuskless. For this reason I treated tuskless elephant as vermin and destroyed them at every opportunity in the probably forlorn hope of reducing this genetic impact on the overall elephant population in southeastern Tanganyika. It was a forlorn hope because in some areas as much as 20 percent of the population can be tuskless females and immature bulls.

After several more successful days hunting elephants on the Lumesule, I started back for Liwale. New rifles had to be zeroed for accuracy, and I was due to meet up with Iodine for a review of my work and other matters.

# Hunting in the Eastern Liwale District

*Chapter 11*



I arrived back at Liwale in the latter half of March. After the many successes on elephant control work during the past two months, I was full of confidence and felt I could handle any situation that might arise in the bush. Iodine had returned a couple of days before, having been in northeastern Lindi District hunting a lion that had killed some ninety people in two and a half years. Hunting these man-eaters sometimes takes weeks of patient work involving difficult tracking. In this instance he was lucky, in more ways than one.

Shortly after Ionides arrived in the area and arranged with the local villagers to bring him any information pertaining to this lion, it visited his camp late one night. The lion entered his tent through the open flaps at the front and seized a rolled-up valise near his bed, quickly retreating with it into the darkness outside. Iodine woke up and glimpsed the animal as it departed. He immediately rose, taking his loaded rifle from beside his bed, and followed the lion into the dark with a flashlight. The animal abandoned the now-destroyed bedroll within the camp area and slunk away into dense bush nearby. Iodine summoned his two game scout orderlies, and they found there was no way of following the lion in the darkness. They stayed awake for the rest of the night. As dawn was breaking they heard the lion grunt briefly a short way off.

As soon as it was light enough to see clearly, they started the follow-up along its tracks. The lion moved away from the camp, from the position it had taken up after discarding the bedroll, and moved into a valley choked with dense secondary bush in full leaf. The ground was for the most part clear of grass and seedlings, with rain-softened, dark soil. The spoor was easy to follow, and although visibility was limited to a few yards in most places, Iodine hoped that in view of the fact that the lion had not eaten for at least eight days, it would be hungry and on the move this early in the morning. An hour later, as they emerged from dense thicket into a more open expanse, they saw it walking directly away from them about twenty yards away. Iodine, who had a very limited number of

.470 shells for his double rifle, fired into its rear end below the root of the tail using a solid 500-grain bullet. The lion collapsed but immediately got to its feet and rushed away, growling loudly. The second round from Iodine's double staggered the beast but did not stop it. They followed it up to where it disappeared into denser cover and then stopped to relax and let the adrenaline return to a more normal level before continuing the follow-up.

Some fifteen minutes later they heard a series of coughing snarls quite close by, and Iodine was sure it was the lion's death song. Even so, they waited for another twenty minutes, as a wounded lion in such cover is not something to be treated lightly. Taking great care and moving slowly, inspecting every square foot in detail, and in a high state of alert, Iodine, who was in front, suddenly saw a part of the lion's body lying flat on the ground a few feet away. There was copious diarrhea and blood all over the place. He shot one barrel at what he could see, but there was no reaction from the lion. He reloaded and approached the remaining few feet with great caution to find the lion dead. It was an adult male with a scruffy mane. Iodine stayed in and near the area where this lion had been killing people for about three weeks, since he was not entirely convinced that this was the animal that had killed some ninety people. Over the next few years there were no further reports of people being killed and eaten by lions in that area, so one has to assume it was the same lion. There will be more about lions later.

Iodine suggested I visit this area and southern Kilwa District on my next safari, for great numbers of elephant were damaging the crops of white sorghum planted by the local people as their staple food for the year. He also brought up the subject of the elephant I had wounded and lost. He listened to my description of the incident, and I agree with the assessment he made. His view was that because of the diffused light and shadow in the bush and the intervening vegetation, I had miscalculated the angle at which the bull was standing in relation to my position. He thought that it was not fully broadside at right angles to me but was facing away at a 45-degree or greater angle and that my shot—apart from the strong possibility that it was deflected by intervening vegetation—probably did not enter the chest cavity at all and left the beast with a simple flesh wound. This would account for the limited blood that rapidly dried up and would explain why no elephant was later found dead of gunshot wounds in the area.

During my three days at Liwale, Mbukuri was organizing fresh porters for the next safari. I also had to test a shipment of twenty new .404 FN rifles and take in the worn-out old Vickers rifles that had been in service since the 1930s. The game department had also agreed to supply me with .470 solid ammunition and had sent some five hundred shells to Liwale. I took over most of them, leaving about one hundred for Iodine.

Wherever Iodine was, he always had his field staff out looking for snakes. If a snake was found they would call him, and he would go off to identify it and, if it was of sufficient interest, catch it. This is just what happened on my first morning back in Liwale. We were chatting on the veranda of Iodine's house when one of his men came in to report two spitting cobras down a hole in an old decayed termite mound. Iodine immediately collected his goggles, snake-catching sticks, a couple of strong cotton bags, and a box with a wire mesh front. He invited me to join him. I knew little about snakes, so I was purely a spectator, and what I saw that morning did little to increase my interest.

The two black-necked spitting cobras were deep inside the old termite mound about one mile from Iodine's house. These snakes are normally solitary and can grow up to seven feet long, although the average is four feet. They are relatively thick, powerful reptiles, ranging in colour from a dull brown to occasionally shiny black. They are highly venomous. The fangs are perforated on the front side of the tip, so that when the mouth is open and the poison sacs in the head are under pressure from contracting muscles, a poison spray squirts out for a distance of up to nine or ten feet. This is a defensive technique used by the cobra to keep danger away. The snake seems to deliberately go for the eyes, and this can cause temporary or even permanent blindness. By the time we reached the termite mound a crowd of local villagers had congregated there, all making a great deal of noise and offering expert opinions. Iodine's staff moved them away and, after blocking up all but two exit holes, started to dig out the mound from the side with picks.

Half the mound had been dug out when a flurry of excitement sent all but me scurrying away for safety. I personally kept well back. Iodine, now with his goggles on, moved to the broken-up wall of the mound and was able to see part of the body of a snake. He had his specially designed snake sticks with a metal grab at one end. Carefully inserting this in the cavity, he grabbed the snake and pulled it into the open, writhing and biting the stick. It was a big, thick black-necked spitting cobra about six feet long. Having got it clear of the debris, Iodine laid it on the ground, and one of his men took over the grab. Taking a pair of flat metal tongs and a forked stick, Iodine pinned down the snake's body some six inches behind the head. He then gripped the head with the tongs with just enough power to hold it firm without doing damage. He instructed one of his men to remove his goggles, and then, with his hand in a cotton bag held inside out, took the snake firmly just behind the head. With his free hand he seized it halfway along the body. His intention was to have his assistants feed the body into the bag and then release the head, leaving the whole snake inside the bag.

*Ionides with puff adder.*

This was a powerful snake, and I could see Iodine was having difficulty holding its body firm against its muscular contractions. At this moment the second snake appeared at the hole where Iodine was squatting. Suddenly he stood up and stepped back, shouting for water. The second snake had ejected a load of venom into both eyes, and he was temporarily blinded with his hands full of angry cobra. The second snake had in the meantime retreated into the hole. Someone eventually arrived with a calabash of water. Iodine, holding the snake's head pointing well away from him, asked me to splash water into his eyes. This I did, and after filling a basin from the calabash he was able to put his face right in with eyes open and rinse them thoroughly. The first indication that he was regaining control was that the pain in his eyes was subsiding fast, and he was able to see. He was at the limit of his endurance, holding the snake in his hands, and now worked rapidly to fix it in the bag with the top tied and drop it in the box brought along for this purpose. It had been a painful and increasingly dangerous experience for Iodine; however, this in no way affected his intention to capture the second cobra. After resting until his eyes were more or less free of pain, he and his men went after it again, and it was put in its bag less than an hour later.

Iodine caught and handled great numbers of snakes, including black and green mambas, three species of cobras, all the viperine snakes, boomslangs, and many mildly venomous or nonpoisonous snakes. He collected at least one species that was new to science. Apart from contributing a great deal of knowledge on distribution and habits of various species of snakes, he regularly milked snakes for their venom, crystallized it on glass slides, and sent the product to various institutions for the manufacture of anti-snakebite serums. I have many times been questioned on the chances of being bitten by poisonous snakes in the bush. The danger is present, of course, but I would rate it very low against, for example, being run over by a vehicle in a city. Snakes in Africa are numerous, but like most wild creatures they prefer to avoid contact with man and probably with most other animals except prey. Snakes are warned of the approach of another creature by vibrations felt through the ribs, and the usual reaction is to move away. Consequently, unless one is specifically looking for snakes and knows where and what to look for, one seldom sees them.

Perhaps the snake with the most awesome reputation in Africa is the black mamba. The species is well distributed in east Central Africa, from sea level up to at least 6,000 feet. They run up to nine or ten feet long and have been recorded up to fourteen feet in southern Africa. They are a highly venomous, neurotoxic, front-fanged snake, with the ability to move fast by snake standards—say between 6 and 8 mph—over short distances. Their reputation for aggressiveness and making unprovoked attacks on man is unjustified, in my opinion. In the course of my foot safaris I have come across large black mambas on a few occasions, and only once did the snake show signs of fear or anger. This happened one morning when I was trekking with porters along the upper Matandu River. The country had been burnt off. It was July, the coldest time of year, and the mamba was lying out sunning itself to raise its body temperature. It either saw or heard us approaching and stirred into action, moving across our front with its head raised about a foot from the ground and its modified hood (a sign of anger) spread in the neck area. It seemed to glide effortlessly and disappeared down a hole in an old termite mound.

A local Mgindu man was killed by a black mamba near Liwale, but he was just unlucky. He had cut a lot of mature grass for hut thatching, tied it into large bundles with bark, and left it for some time to dry out. Later he returned to collect it and was placing one of the last bundles on his head when the mamba, which had concealed itself inside, panicked as the man lifted the load to place on his head. It came out and bit him in three places and made off into the bush. The man was dead within thirty minutes. All the cobras will retreat from man if they can; but, like other species of snakes, poisonous or otherwise, they may be attracted to human surroundings or into human habitation in pursuit of natural prey. Thus, if large numbers of rodents—rats and mice and the like—live among humans, you can expect a snake or two to appear in time. If the rodents are eliminated, the snakes move on. Basically, a snake will not go for a man if it does not feel threatened. The point to remember here is that it may feel threatened and react before one is aware of its presence—for example, when one walks close to or even onto a snake in the dark. This is particularly so with puff adders, which are highly poisonous, nocturnal, and generally very sluggish. In the early morning cold of June and July in southern Tanganyika I actually trod on a moderate-sized puff adder, and apart from some "huffing" it just moved on and made no attempt to strike. I was lucky it was so cold that morning; I believe the low temperature made it unusually sluggish.

One day at about midday my porters were clearing a space in the long grass for my tent and kitchen area. I was sitting in a camp chair in a cleared space in the shade of a tree. My feet were up resting on a roll-up type X-pattern camp table, and I was reading. A rustling noise to my left made me look in that direction. In a few seconds the head and front parts of a large spitting cobra appeared. It stopped to check out the cleared space, and I remained motionless. Seeing no movement, it must have decided it was safe to cross the clearing, and on it came. It passed between my chair and the table right under my legs and disappeared into the grass cover on my right, where a pair of yellow-vented bulbuls (birds) broke into alarm calls at the sight of it.

In the more than fifty years that I have lived and traveled in the bush of eastern Central Africa, leather gaiters or similar equipment for protection from snakebite have never been of any importance. For years on end, I, with my staff and porters, have always traveled barelegged on foot. During that time only one porter was bitten by a snake, and that was at night on the camp perimeter. It appeared to me to be a small snake, for the fang marks were very close together with minimal penetration of the skin on the man's foot. He was in a state of mild shock but had no pain. I kept him under observation, but by morning there were no signs of swelling or poisoning, and I concluded the snake was harmless.

Through a wide arc to the east of Liwale is a vast area of country that is largely uninhabited by man until one reaches the western limits of settlement in Kilwa District. I routed my safari through this country and, on arriving close to the coast, planned to deal with large numbers of elephant located on the Mbarawala and Rondo Plateaus. Both of these areas were permanent strongholds of elephant, with villages scattered along the slopes and farther away in the undulating woodlands with valley bottom cultivation on the alluvial soils. The two plateaus were separated by the lower reaches of the Mbwemkuru River. The elephant population regularly moved from one plateau to the other and no doubt felt secure in those areas due to dense equatorial-type forest covering the Rondo and

extensive, nearly impenetrable thicket over most of the Mbarawala. This latter thicket area consisted of closely grown saplings with leaves and branches starting close to the ground and going all the way to the top. I knew of only one man besides Ionides—game scout Sungura—who had been able to deal with these elephant successfully on a regular basis. His real name was Waziri Saidi, but he was known as Sungura because in local folklore the *sungura* (African hare) is a clever and cunning creature capable of outwitting all others. To successfully hunt elephants in the Mbarawala thickets it was believed a man had to have superior cunning and abilities with which no ordinary mortal was endowed. There will be more about Sungura later.

On the first day out I camped about three hours' walk from Liwale at a village called Mikunya. Elephant were numerous in the area, and every night young bulls entered the sorghum fields. I spent two days hunting some of these raiders and destroyed five of them. There were also many groups of cows and calves in the general vicinity, but there were no incidents with them. In the meantime the local head man organized four extra porters with head loads of *mtama* (sorghum) flour, and we walked the four hours through mature *miombo* woodland most of the way to Liweya. This is a seasonally flooded area of open, uninhabited grassland, the home range to a fair quantity of game. On the way we had seen several small groups of elephant, a large herd of buffalo, and some Lichtenstein hartebeest, Nyasa wildebeest, zebra, and Livingstone eland. Some of these animals do not occur in Kenya or farther north in Tanganyika. The Nyasa wildebeest is marginally larger than the white-bearded species of the Serengeti and has a black mane and beard and a white bar across the nose below eye level. The Livingstone eland is also marginally larger. The mature Livingstone eland is darker in colour and has average size horns larger than the Patterson eland to the north. They are magnificent creatures and, like eland anywhere, tend to be shy and alert at all times.

Some time after setting up camp at Liweya, game scout James wandered off into the bush unarmed, following a honey guide. He suddenly appeared where I was resting in the shade to say he had been attacked by a buffalo. There was no sign of injury about his person, and I asked him to explain. It seems that the honey guide led him toward a small stand of trees about three miles from the campsite. As he passed an extensive growth of tall grass he heard movements of what he thought was a big animal. Being alone and unarmed, he immediately moved to a smallish tree three or four yards away, and as he climbed up to about eight feet off the ground a solitary buffalo bull rushed out of grass toward him, passing right below. At this point it altered direction and continued at a gallop toward the stand of trees. It seemed to me that since we would be in uninhabited country for three or four days, this might be a good opportunity to acquire some meat for the porters. Accompanied by James, Mbukuri carrying my .470, and a couple of porters, I left camp for the scene of action.

Arriving at the tree where James had taken refuge, Mbukuri backtracked the buffalo to where he had been lying in the tall grass. Everything seemed normal about the animal; there were no signs of blood or other discharged matter. On reaching the tree James had climbed, the buffalo did not stop but altered direction by some 90 percent and headed downwind at an increased speed. After about 150 yards he altered course again toward the small stand of trees mentioned before, slowing to a walk when he was about one hundred yards short of them. I believed the buffalo had run toward James

in confusion rather than in fear or anger. He had only altered course and increased his speed at the tree where he had scented a man nearby. He slowed to a walk when he realized he was not being followed, and I now felt sure we would find him resting in or near the trees. Keeping a sharp lookout ahead, I followed Mbukuri along the spoor, my .470 loaded and ready for instant use. There was no sign of the buffalo at the tree line, so we continued with great care, and after one hundred yards, near the far side of the trees, there was a crackling of dense dry grass. The buffalo was on his feet and staring at us from about twenty yards away. I had a clear view of his head, which was well up, and his chest. I fired the right barrel into the centre of his chest, and he collapsed onto his knees bellowing, pivoting himself sideways into a broadside position. I fired the left barrel into the shoulder, which sent him to the ground flat on his side.

The bull was finished, and after examining him for any signs of injury I sent James off to collect the porters to butcher the carcass and carry the meat back to camp. This meant I had to stay camped at Liweya for another two days to allow the buffalo meat to be smoke-dried. It suited me, as I was keen to have a good wander around this attractive area and learn something about it. The porters were all back with the meat a short time after dark and set up racks of green wood on which to lay strips of meat for smoke-drying. The men were noisy and happy that night as they gorged on fresh meat. As a . I stayed awake reading until late. A pair of lions started grunting at intervals for a while, and near dawn a hyena made its presence known. This to me was the essence of the Africa I loved, and I could not have been more contented and happy.

I spent a wonderful two days with Mbukuri and James walking through the Liweya area. Although the quantity of game was low compared to such places as the Serengeti, it was more varied. Because of the high grass and therefore the reduced long-range visibility, game was more numerous than casual observation would indicate. To arrive at a more accurate census of the game population, spoor observation is vital. An unusual scene that I will never forget was spread out across a wide plain we came upon at about 10 o'clock one morning. Apparently the short grass on this hardpan soil was perfect for grazing, for a large number of game animals were scattered about it, including species that are principally browsers. Drawing on past experiences, I reflected on how perfect this area was for a hunting safari with clients. We spent about one and a half hours watching the scene and saw zebra, Lichtenstein hartebeest, and Nyasa wildebeest, all in reasonable numbers; a herd of three hundred buffalo; a herd of some eighteen sable antelope with two black bulls; a small herd of impala; several oribi; and a herd of about forty eland. Looking back on the wonderful scene in this prime seasonal grazing area with a scattering of gnarled African blackwood trees *(Dalbergia melanoxylon),* I feel very sad that with the expanding human populations and inevitable environmental destruction, such scenes, once an accepted part of the old Africa, are now exceedingly rare, only to be seen in national parks.

After a six-hour walk from Liweya I camped near a small hill called Litou. To the east and south, scattered settlements extended right to the coast. Great numbers of elephant were about, and there was nightly damage to crops, mainly by bulls and sometimes cows and calves. The local people were understandably concerned about this. One must bear in mind that men, women, and children cultivated the land by hoeing two or three acres by hand, planting, and then protecting the growing crop for twenty-four hours per day.

It was an exhausting task. In daylight, baboons, vervet monkeys, rodents, and vast numbers of seed-eating birds such as quelea had to be driven off. At night, elephants, bush pigs, hippos, porcupines, and even some species of antelope moved in for their share of the goodies. Most of these creatures could be frightened away by noise—shouting, blowing horns, and beating tins. But elephants in particular often ignored the racket and would continue feeding on crops as long as it was dark. On most occasions, the amount of damage reported was much exaggerated, but occasionally it was severe, as was the cumulative effect over a period of weeks.

I was employed to reduce the elephant population in Southern Province. The best and quickest way to do this was by hunting the breeding herds rather than the solitary bulls or small groups of bulls, which were responsible for 80 percent of crop damage. I had by then also noted that dealing with the cow herds or family units seemed to reduce the bull activity in the areas concerned. I did not know why, but I suspected the bulls were somehow linked with the female groups, although not physically with them. I was anxious to discover the reasons for this. From this point on I decided to concentrate on these breeding groups of elephant and observe the reactions of the bulls.

Early the following morning, we went part of the way up Litou Hill to see if we could locate elephants in the surrounding country. Mbukuri first spotted a small group of cows in open country about three miles to the northeast, and we decided to get right after them. In the meantime James Abdulla and two locals had proceeded higher up the slope and told us they could see several groups of elephant feeding in the same general area. Checking the wind direction with the bag of ash, we moved off in that direction. I was carrying one of the new .404 FN rifles with three rounds in the magazine and one in the firing chamber. We were well prepared for any eventuality: Mbukuri had my .470 with both barrels loaded, and I had ten spare shells in my bush jacket pocket; James had his issue .404 and spare shells. One of the locals who was thoroughly familiar with the countryside was in the lead. As we came off the hill and entered the flat country, the effect of the continuing monsoon rains was all too evident. The ground was a waterlogged expanse of squishing mud, covered with grass about five feet tall, interspersed by Combretum bushes and trees and the occasional large, fruiting Sclerocarya trees. Fresh, recent, and old elephant tracks and droppings were everywhere, but since we knew roughly where some groups of elephant were, we made our way as rapidly as possible in that direction. In the interim several groups had joined each other, and after an hour of fast progress we came on the very fresh tracks of a large herd of cows, calves, and probably young bulls. They were moving in the same direction as we. The air flow was dead calm, so we continued along their trail, with Mbukuri now in the lead.

After about a mile of easy tracking I saw an elephant one hundred yards ahead, its back and head clearly visible above the surrounding grass. As we approached, several others came in sight to the left and right, and there was a group of six a little way beyond the adult cow I had originally seen. I took the lead and moved carefully up to within twenty yards of the cow as she continued to graze with her trunk, shoving clumps of grass into her mouth. These new .404 rifles had crude sights consisting of a *V* at the rear and a pyramid with no bead as a front sight. I had to line up the sights with the tip of the pyramid just visible in the base of the *V* and fire. The cow collapsed dead

from a side brain shot, but when I rapidly reloaded, all the shells in the magazine were thrown out and fell to the ground. I had just passed the .404 to Mbukuri and grabbed my .470 from him when another cow appeared out of the grass on our right, coming at a run directly toward us. James, who had seen that I had a problem with the .404, now decided he had to act. What mental process came over him I cannot imagine. The approaching elephant was still coming on fast and was only about twenty yards away. James, instead of shooting it, merely held his rifle across his front and stood slapping it and shouting, *"Ana kuja kutu shambulia!"* (It is coming to attack us) while standing rooted to the spot. By now I had the animal covered with the .470 and floored her with the right barrel, but she was struggling on the ground and started to screech. I finished her off and reloaded both barrels.

Then Mbukuri, pointing ahead, said a whole mob of elephants was coming at us. What looked like a great wall of elephant heads, trumpeting and screeching, was bearing down on us at thirty or forty yards' range. It looked very serious. There was a large cow matriarch in the lead, and I dropped her with a frontal brain shot at about twenty yards. The animals with her immediately pulled up and, with much squealing, milled about. Some attempted to raise the fallen cow. I reloaded and, trying to select the largest animals, killed one with a bullet in the brain and with the second barrel hit another with a raking shot from a rear angle to the heart. All the elephants had now retreated a short distance but were still making a lot of noise, and then they came rushing back in our direction as I reloaded. Again I took the leading animal with a frontal shot, and the others pulled up and started milling about in confusion. I reloaded the right barrel and shot another with a side brain shot, while James started shooting with his .404. Before I could stop him, he had hit two more; he seemed to be oblivious to anything apart from the elephants.

It is hard to estimate the total number of elephants when involved in such a rapidly changing situation. I believe this was a temporary concentration of not less than fifty or sixty animals. In the wake of the action it was now very quiet, and I sat around with the men to have a smoke and relax for a while. The next move was to follow up and hopefully locate the carcasses of the three elephants hit with body shots—one by me and two by James. The animal that had taken my raking shot to the heart was found lying dead one hundred yards away. James, in the meantime, had gone off with one of the local men to search for the two elephant he had fired at. I was still inspecting the dead elephant, which was an adult female, when James returned to report that one of the animals he had fired at was lying dead about four hundred yards away, but he had not seen the other one, which he said was bleeding heavily and moving north with a group of others.

After cutting the tails off the dead animals we took up the trail of the last wounded elephant. As soon as I saw the blood that had spilled from the beast I was sure it would not be far away. James's bullet had penetrated at least one of the lungs, for the light-coloured, frothy blood from this organ covered the grass along the trail. An elephant hit in the lungs tries to avoid drowning in its own blood by blowing it out in great quantities through the trunk. It was in company of at least ten other animals, and they were moving fast in a tight group in a northerly direction. The long grass, in a swath several feet wide, was flattened by their passage with loose droppings all along.

Loose bowel movements are often a sign of thoroughly frightened elephants and may continue for some distance when they start to settle down in a fast walk. We followed the well-defined trail for some two miles, and at this point the still-copious blood trail veered off to the right into a low depression of very tall, dense grass. Nearby was a large termite mound with two well-grown tamarind trees. I sent one of the local men up one of these trees to look over the sea of tall grass ahead to find out if he could see anything. Well before entering the grass, the elephant, still bleeding from the lungs, had slowed to a walk and was alone. I felt sure that it was not far ahead. The man up the tree came down after a few minutes without seeing anything, so we continued cautiously into the long grass where visibility was reduced to a few feet.

Mbukuri was in front with James and me, following with rifles at the ready for trouble. The local men remained well to the rear. After entering the grass the elephant followed an erratic course and then came to a halt after two or three hundred yards. The grass was flattened by trampling over a small area, and there were great gushes of blood blown out of the trunk over the ground. We could not hear any sound, and I felt certain that laboured breathing would have been audible if the elephant were anywhere nearby. Because of the poor visibility I felt far from confident that I could deal with this elephant if it chose to attack us. It would be impossible to fire until the animal was within a few feet of us, and even then it might be partially obscured by vegetation. I recognized a situation over which I would have no control. To continue on under such circumstances was not only foolhardy but stupid, so we retreated to the higher ground where we could

*Tails from elephant shot on control work.*

relax and look over the sea of grass for any signs of the wounded elephant. All indications were that it could not last long with such a continuing loss of blood, but often things are not as they seem in such situations. If we waited for another hour or more I hoped that the elephant might reveal its location by sound or even become visible. Alternatively, if by midafternoon we had observed no sign that it was still alive, I was ready to follow on along the spoor assuming that it had died.

It so happened that we did not have to wait long for positive signs that there was a dead animal out in the long grass. Mbukuri, who was overlooking the area from up a tree, drew my attention to some descending vultures beyond the point from which we had turned back. As we watched, more vultures were homing in on the already dropping birds, which were disappearing into the grass. It could have been any animal lying dead there, but I believed it was more than coincidence that the elephant we were following, and which was hit in the lungs and bleeding heavily, had been moving toward where the vultures were dropping. So we moved back into the long grass and took up the blood trail again. Following with great care and ready for instant action, we continued on beyond where we had turned back. Twenty minutes farther on, the sound of bickering vultures ahead reached us clearly, from the direction in which the spoor and blood smears on the grass were leading. I was sure by now it was James's wounded elephant, and as we came through the dense grass, a noisy flapping of wings drowned all other sounds as dozens of vultures struggled to take off and lift. The wretched beast was lying on its side, dead, covered in blood and vulture droppings. The hide was still unbroken, but the visible eye on one side had been picked out and some tears and damage were visible around the anus. It was another cow. She had been hit high in the lung area, causing internal hemorrhage and bleeding at the entrance and exit points of the .404 solid bullet. It was a relief, not to mention a great easing of tension, to recover this animal dead in cover, where the odds would have been heavily against us if she had been alive and had charged.

Back in camp that evening James came over to my tent for a chat. He apologized for causing such a problem with the wounded elephant. I consoled him with the fact that we had at least recovered the animal and then asked him what went wrong when he kept on slapping his rifle instead of dealing with the elephants coming toward us. He said it was the work of a *shaitani* (evil spirit). We had both been *rorgwa* (bewitched), because my .404 rifle had thrown out all its shells, and he had done what he did involuntarily. I pointed out that without my .470 as a backup at that point, we might have been pounded by that bunch of elephant. He was philosophical about that, saying that whoever had "*rorgwa*ed" us did not have *dawa* (medicine) as strong as mine, so I had won. Among other things I explained to James my growing belief that the cow and juvenile groups were somehow linked to the appearance of bulls and their constant crop raiding, and that the next day we would walk in a wide arc around the Litou settlements checking spoor rather than actually looking for elephants. He replied that the whole area was full of elephants and was skeptical of my views.

In fact we spent three long days walking through the area. On the first day we were to the south and southwest, where the primary cover was low-country bamboo. During the rains the bamboo is all in leaf and hangs in what can best be described as dense green curtains. Little if anything can be seen beyond such a curtain, and as one moves

through it, it may open up into a dimly lit gallery with a higher canopy of leaves supported by clumps of bare bamboo stems, before closing in again a few yards farther on. There was fresh evidence of several small groups of elephant in this area. We followed up one of these herds, consisting of cows and young, and I shot two of them. It was during the process of maneuvering up to close range of a large female that I received, not for the first or last time, a heartstopping fright.

I could hear the cow a few yards to my front. She was screened by bamboo leaves and did not seem to be aware of any approaching danger. I was bent over double with my rifle ready as I moved toward her, keyed up as I always was in such situations. I had just observed a part of the elephant through a gap in the vegetation and was on the point of moving to my left, hopefully to see a vital part of her anatomy. As I did this there was a loud rushing noise in the undergrowth just to one side of me, and I instantly swung the barrels onto the sound, ready to fire if an unseen elephant erupted onto any position. The noise faded away and the cow elephant moved ahead out of sight, no doubt disturbed by the commotion. The culprits turned out to be a family of bush pig, which had panicked and bolted at my proximity. After this little drama I gave myself a few minutes to recover from the tension and then followed the cow up again. She had moved on a short distance, and I found her in company of four others that were standing in a nervous group facing in different directions, trying to locate the source of the noise and possible danger. I killed two out of this group, and the remaining animals stampeded away to join up with others who were farther on. Such incidents occur from time to time when one is hunting and never fail to instantly raise one's adrenaline level. In this incident the culprits were bush pig, but the same effect is caused by panicking red-legged or crested francolin, elephant shrews in forest country, and occasionally red duiker or even bushbuck.

For the next two days we covered most of the surrounding areas within a few miles' radius of Litou. There was little doubt that the disturbances caused by my hunting activities had frightened most of the elephant population out of the area. We came across hardly any fresh spoor, except that of bulls heading away from the settled areas and generally in the same direction as the groups of females and calves. It was significant to me that when I moved camp toward Kiperere and the Merui River in more bamboo country to the east, no further reports of elephant damage to crops around Litou were received.

In fact, Litou had no further elephant damage until June, two months later, when once again various bulls entered the fields. At that time of year the *mtama* is mature at seven to eight feet tall, with the seeding crop at the very top. Selective feeding by elephants is conspicuous then, for the seeds seem to be the sole attraction, as opposed to the growing stems at an earlier stage of growth. Crop raiding invariably happens at night, and when the *mtama* is fully grown and seeding, it is normal for an elephant to move along the edge of the field, doing little damage to the plant stems but pulling the seed heads off with its trunk and passing them into its mouth. With minimal trampling of plants the damage does not look severe until you look at the seed heads, which will be missing for as far as the crop extends. The actual loss of food to the villagers is far greater than the trampling and grazing of younger plants earlier in the year. The crop is eventually harvested by cutting down each individual *mtama* stalk, leaving it lying on the ground for a few days and then lopping off the seed heads for storage in specially

Ngokwe *raider in leafless bamboo.*

constructed huts, or *ngokwe,* which are raised a foot or two above the ground and have a thatched roof. Even at this stage, when the monsoon rains are finished, bull elephants are still intent on getting some of the seed. At night they come in right alongside the residential huts, pull the roof off the *ngokwe,* and scoop out bundles of seed heads, keeping it up all night. The beating of tins, shouting, and general noise generated by humans has little effect on them; they simply carry bundles of seed heads away, consume them, and return for more. The people are understandably too frightened to leave their huts during these raids, so the bull has a largely undisturbed repast. In fact in July 1950 I had an exciting experience with a mature bull elephant doing this at Kiperere village, an hour or two's walk from Litou.

The bull had spent most of the night gorging on mature seed heads after removing the thatch roof of a *ngokwe*. Following him up after daybreak, there were occasional piles of droppings with undigested seed in it. He soon entered an extensive area of bamboo, which, being deciduous, had shed all its leaves after the rains. Farther on he joined up with a large breeding herd and was tagging along at the rear. We came up to him with little difficulty. He was standing broadside on at about fifty yards, covered by a dense crisscross pattern of leafless bamboo stems. I could see other elephants beyond him but was prepared to take out this offending bull, which was, for the time being, attached to the herd. The disturbance of killing him would have the desired effect of badly frightening the other bulls. Somehow the bull seemed to know that he was in danger. He stood broadside on to me, tail partially raised with ears one-quarter spread. The tip of his trunk was down near the ground, twisting this way and that searching for scent. One front foot would be raised slowly, moving forward and back, and then, stealthily, he would do the same thing in slow motion with the other

foot. Watching this bull I had a strong feeling he knew I was near and would attack if he knew my precise location. To avoid this I wanted to shoot him in the brain but could not do so because of the mass of crisscrossing hard bamboo stems. I stood there for some seconds, hoping he would move into a more favourable position.

The air had been dead calm initially, but when I glanced at the ash bag Mbukuri was gently shaking, I noted a slight drift of ash in the direction of the bull. It would be a very short time before our scent reached the bull, so, unwilling to shoot through the bamboo stems, I went for a body shot to the heart. Gently raising my .470, I picked a gap through the bamboo by half-crouching and fired the right barrel. The bull staggered slightly and, turning in the same instant, came rushing at us in an all-out silent charge. I had no time to reload, so I was dependent on the left barrel of my .470 to get us out of this predicament. At an estimated range of twenty yards his head seemed to be in the clear. Taking deliberate aim at the centre of his forehead, at a point where an imaginary line joining the ear holes on each side crossed, I fired. The bull collapsed in a heap but instantly tried to rise on his front legs and turning to my left. I could see his mouth was open, and there appeared to be an astonished rolling of his left eye, the white of which I could see quite clearly. The bull was badly stunned and struggling to his feet when I took the .404 rifle from Mbukuri and put him out for good with a shot in the brain from about ten yards. When I examined this animal I saw that the failed frontal brain shot had been a bit off-centre and high. I am sure that bullet was deflected by a hard bamboo stem. The hunt had ended satisfactorily, and the breeding herd was thoroughly frightened and abandoned the area. The bull was a mature beast with tusks weighing about fifty pounds each. I believe he was in breeding condition and searching for a cow coming into heat. If this is correct, it is possible that this was the cause of his aggressiveness.

# The Mbarawala Plateau

*Chapter 12*

I trekked via the Kiperere and Merui settlements to the lower Mbwemkuru River, which was still flooded. Throughout this area there were herds of elephant and numerous groups of young bulls. I hunted these animals from every camp and then crossed the river to visit the forest area on the Rondo Plateau. In this equatorial forest left over from another era, there were few elephant and very little other game. There was a large human population, mainly Wamwera people, all around the plateau, and the disturbance factor inside the forest was high. A British timber company from Burma, called Steels, had acquired a concession from the government to exploit the mature African mahogany trees to be found there. Large-scale habitat and environmental damage is probably the surest and quickest way to displace wildlife. I believe such damage caused the elephants to abandon the Rondo Forest.

I then returned across the Mbwemkuru and camped near a local chief's headquarters at Ndandawala, at the southern base of the Mbarawala Plateau. This was the place where Iodine had shot the lion that he believed had killed some ninety people. Bearing in mind the fact that no one was convinced of the man-eater's death, I made sure my porters and staff had some sleeping accommodation and instructed them not to wander about in the late afternoon, after dark, or before full daylight. Also, as a precaution, I had a stout stockade placed around my tent in the hope that I would be awakened by any lion trying to get in. It is not easy to sleep well when there is a possibility of being dragged out of bed at night and eaten by a lion.

Game scout Waziri Saidi, popularly known as Sungura (mentioned in an earlier chapter), was based at Ndandawala. He reported to my camp that afternoon, having been out dealing with a troublesome hippo all morning near the river. He was a man of about fifty-five, white-haired but still very active. We had a long talk about things in general. He was sure the man-eating lion was the animal killed by Iodine. He also said elephants in large numbers were up on the Mbarawala Plateau, damaging crops in surrounding

settlements. It seemed to me that although there were numerous elephants throughout this low-lying coastal area, their main stronghold and therefore the key to easing or eliminating the crop damage was to frighten them off the Mbarawala Plateau. The plateau was five or six hundred feet above the adjoining country, averaging ten miles across and extending northward parallel to the coast for twenty-five miles, terminating at a source of permanent water called Mahokondo. The slopes, with many valleys, drainage lines, and freshwater seepages, were covered in dense secondary bush, with occasional open woodland stretches of *miombo*. The top of the plateau was for the most part flat with shallow depressions running across it. The vegetation over most of the flat part consisted of nearly impenetrable stands of saplinglike trees, with virtually zero visibility except along the few elephant paths that crossed it. The visibility along these paths was also limited, and they tended to lead from one large tree to another. These trees were few and far between, and the elephants used them sometimes for resting places. The saplings throughout were close together and grew to a height of up to thirty feet. Apart from using their regular trails, elephant tended to avoid this tough and resistant growth. Even these heavy animals found such cover difficult to penetrate. The depressions had less sandy soils, with a growth of mainly dense secondary bush and a few large trees scattered throughout. Water seepage places occurred at one or more points along these depressions and were regularly visited by elephant at all seasons.

I saw little evidence of other large mammals on the plateau. Small creatures included red and blue duiker, elephant shrew, bushbuck, cane rat, and leopard. Vervet and Sykes monkeys were there in small numbers, and I heard galagos sometimes at night. All of these creatures were mainly to be seen in the secondary bush of the depressions; most of these animals, apart from elephant shrews, appeared to avoid the flat areas of saplings. There was little grass cover in these areas, but pepper ticks swarmed everywhere, and I suspect that the ticks, combined with a lack of suitable food, accounted for the scarcity of smaller mammals. The blue duiker is by far the smallest of the antelope in southeastern Tanganyika and is locally called *ndimba*. Local belief credits this tiny antelope with a remarkable technique of self-preservation. It is said that when pursued by a predator, it selects a convenient overhanging horizontal branch, and as it passes below, the *ndimba* leaps up to hook its tiny straight horns over the branch while the predator passes beneath, leaving its prey unharmed. They do not say how females, which have minute horns, survive in such circumstances.

I hunted elephants on and near the Mbarawala several times over the next few years. Initially, in company with Sungura, Mbukuri, James, and two locals, I spent nearly a week inspecting the southern-central and adjoining slopes to try to familiarize myself with local conditions. Working our way through this unattractive forest and thicket day after day, I found it impossible to see any animal in the dense leafy sapling areas and accepted the fact that the main effort would be in the lower-lying depressions. Even though the vegetation was extremely dense, occasionally we could actually see elephant in it at a few yards' range. Sitting one morning in the shade of a large tree on an elephant trail, I questioned Sungura about how he managed to get close enough to see an elephant in such bush, let alone shoot it in a vital part. His answer was interesting and surprising. He first admitted that he had never been able to come up close to and see an elephant clearly enough to shoot it except when they were resting under one of the widely isolated large trees. In such instances the

elephants stood in a tight group directly under the tree, in a space that had been trampled flat over a long period of irregular visits. The ground in such resting places, although infrequently used, was inches deep in dried droppings and litter from broken branches and chewed bark. The elephants would rest in these places for two or more hours before moving on to feed, or they would rest in the lower-lying secondary bush of the depressions or on the slopes of the plateau.

Sungura would locate the elephants by sound—throat rumbling, blowing dust over themselves, or flapping ears. If the air was still or blowing in his favour, his porter would take his water bottle and any other items he was carrying and move some distance off the elephant trail to await Sungura's summons to join him. With his .404 rifle loaded and spare ammunition in his jacket pocket, he would approach the resting elephant until he judged that he might be close enough to see one or more if he ascended a sapling some twenty feet high. Having shinned up the sapling with his rifle slung across his back, the most taxing work now started. He seldom saw the elephants from this point; he then had to crawl from one sapling to another at a considerable height above the ground. It was slow and strenuous work to cover a distance of fifteen yards or more before the animals came into view. Sometimes they would scent him on eddying air currents and move out in a hurry, but if they were still there he would shoot one in the brain. Once the ensuing commotion had stopped and he was sure his elephant was dead, he would slide down the sapling and summon his porters. The dead elephant's tail would be taken off and they would mark a route back to his base so that the carcass could be found a few days later to recover the tusks. He said he no longer hunted like this because, about a year before, a group of stampeding elephant had crashed through the forest below him, colliding with the tree he was clinging to, and he was thrown to the ground. Luckily, by then they had all passed, and he picked himself up, recovered his rifle, and gave up the hunt.

Having related this rather unpleasant experience, Sungura became angry when Mbukuri, a much younger man, unintentionally insulted him by commenting that his ability to move from one tree to the next must mean that he was related to the baboons. The fact that Sungura was able to successfully hunt elephant at all in this sort of vegetation was a feat in itself, and there was no way that I could emulate his methods. My control work was done in a more conventional way. On most occasions when I came up with elephants in this type of cover, I deliberately disturbed them with shouts or whistles, and they invariably abandoned it for secondary bush areas, which were never too far away in one of the depressions. Apart from the fact that there was abundant fodder and water in these places, I believe that the elephants felt they could move more quickly and easily while concealed in adequate bush and therefore had an increased sense of security.

I never was able to clear all the elephants off the plateau, although an estimated 70 percent did move westward to the upper reaches of the Mavuji River and north from there toward the Selous Game Reserve. The remaining 30 percent seemed to be a hard core of small breeding groups. No matter how often or how hard these animals were hunted and harassed, they just moved around and around this limited area, becoming increasingly timid and nervous. I think these herds had never been out of the Mbarawala environs and therefore did not know of any other area in which to take refuge. The most difficult aspect of elephant hunting on the plateau was actually being able to see an elephant at all. Many times I approached to within ten yards of a herd or small group of bulls without seeing any

part of one, let alone a vital point to shoot at. It was nerve-racking work, and I always felt the odds were stacked against me. I gave up even trying to get close with elephant for a shot in the flat areas of sapling growth. I was sure I would not be able to stop any beast that made a determined attempt to attack us, because I could not usually see more than ten feet in any direction from where I was.

One morning I shot a young bull standing with females and a couple of calves under one of the large trees referred to earlier. We heard the elephants ahead of us at about one hundred yards' range. We were following them along one of their regular trails. I had my .470 and, accompanied by Mbukuri, took the lead, instructing Sungura to follow some yards behind and to shoot any elephant he saw that appeared on either side of us or even behind. We crept along the trail, and as we approached the trampled resting place under the tree, chinks of sky started to appear ahead between the leaves. We were very close to the elephants at this stage, but I could not see any part of one. I guessed that we were only about ten yards from them, and with no visible sign of a body I debated the wisdom of continuing. I moved forward, and there above and in front of me was the shoulder of an elephant. I decided to shoot it in the heart and hope for the best after that. The barrels were probably not more than ten feet from the elephant's hide. With a feeling of intense apprehension, I fired the right barrel. The wounded elephant immediately rushed away in the direction it was facing. I heard the others following it and then complete silence. Mbukuri and I remained motionless, waiting for an indication that any elephants were still lingering in the dense bush. Sungura joined us after three or four minutes, and we moved up to where the elephant had been standing when I shot it. The forest around was still silent, and after another ten minutes we started along the spoor of the stampeding herd. They kept along an elephant trail at speed but made no attempt to leave it at any point. With zero visibility, tension among us running high, I thought to myself, *I must be mad to continue on in these circumstances.* We proceeded with great caution, making no noise. We found the elephant I had shot about one hundred yards along the trail, lying dead on its side. It was a young bull about eight and a half feet tall at the shoulder. The other six or seven herd members, including at least two calves, had continued on along the trail at the run. It was a relief to recover this elephant, but once I had done this, I felt the risk factor in such situations was far beyond the acceptable. From then on my technique in this sapling jungle was to deliberately move the elephant on to the depressions, where visibility was somewhat improved.

As my experiences with elephant hunting on the Mbarawala illustrate, a large-bore rifle is indispensable if one is to survive. The previous generations of elephant hunters—James Sutherland, Arthur Neumann, C. J. P. Ionides, George Rushby—all used big rifles. So did the most successful of my generation—Eric Rundgren, Tony Henley, Allen Rees, and myself, operating on elephant control work in Tanganyika and Kenya. In Uganda Deaf Banks, Somaki Salmon also used big-bore rifles on elephant control work.

W. D. M. (Karamojo) Bell is the only one of the great elephant hunters of the past who consistently used a small-bore rifle. He was, by all accounts, an unusually skilled rifle shot, which no doubt helped. However, he was hunting undisturbed country in what is today northern Uganda. The elephants had never before heard rifle shot and took little notice of it when Bell came up with them. He was in relatively open country dealing with bulls and for the most part had little to do with herds of cows and calves. I do not believe that any

man using a small-bore rifle on full-time elephant control work would survive long under the conditions in which I had to hunt. As the following anecdotes illustrate, you cannot put a bullet into an elephant's brain if it is impossible to see the point to aim at. It becomes a matter of luck, with odds against you, that the bullet will penetrate this organ. A light solid bullet of under 250 grains from a small-calibre rifle will have minimal effect on any angry or stampeding elephant if the brain is missed. At best it may deflect the animal, and if this does not happen, chances are you will be dead or severely injured. The impact of a solid shot weighing 400 grains or preferably more will floor the elephant and leave it stunned, even if the bullet misses the brain and passes close by it. If the shot is very wide of the brain, the colossal impact on the animal's head will, in most cases, be sufficient to turn it well off course and leave the hunter free to follow up and finish off the beast later.

In late May 1951 I was back in the Mbarawala area. A full month before arriving, I had sent word to the head game scout in Kilwa District, Nonga Pelekamoyo, of my intentions regarding the elephant population on the plateau. He was instructed to hunt and harass the bulls and family groups of females and young throughout the settled areas in the vicinity, taking another five scouts who would operate individually to thoroughly disturb them. I knew from previous experience that disturbed or frightened elephants in this area invariably sought refuge on the plateau. Nonga and his men did a good job, and by the time I arrived most of the elephant population had moved onto the plateau. When I had first started hunting there, I found that, when thoroughly disturbed and under prolonged stress, elephant groups or family units will join up and combine into larger herds. I do not understand why, but I think possibly the saying "safety in numbers" is relevant, and they have a sense of increased security when they do this.

James Abdulla by now had returned from annual leave and resumed normal duties in the Liwale area. Mbukuri was still with me in his usual capacity, and Nonga had asked me to take along a young recruit game scout named Saidi Nassoro Kibanda. Over the years Kibanda became a head game scout and was the most competent elephant control scout I ever came across. Apart from being a very good rifle shot and a first-class bushman and hunter, he had a charismatic and unusually calm personality. It came as a great shock and personal loss to me when he was killed by a cow elephant in 1969.

My setup had changed since the year before: I had bought another double-barrel full ejector .470 rifle by Jeffery's and a new .404 magazine rifle with Mauser action by the same maker. The whole consignment of faulty FN .404 rifles of a year earlier had been returned to the makers and had been replaced by others.

I instructed Nonga to spread his game scouts at various points around the Mbarawala Plateau to continue harassing any elephant still in or moving into the settled areas. I also instructed him to try and check on elephant leaving the plateau as a result of my activities and to see how far they were going. On the first day I hunted the full length of one of the depressions. We came up with a couple of bulls quite early, but they got our wind and moved on without our seeing them. Following along their spoor, we came onto the trail of a large herd that the bulls seemed to have joined. We were in very dense bush laced with a vinelike creeper locally called *upupu* and by whites called "buffalo bean." *Upupu* is a most uncomfortable ingredient of this secondary bush, and one tries to avoid it as much as possible. The fruit, hanging in clusters from the creeper, is a beanlike pod, covered in fine golden-brown hairs. These hairs fall out when the wind moves them or when the

pod is shaken by someone bumping the vine. On contact with the body, the hairs set up a severe irritation, and if you collect a big enough dose it can drive you to distraction. With much discomfort from the *upupu* and heat at midday, we caught up with the herd. The light wind was erratic, as indicated by the ash bag. It would move slowly one way, then another for a few seconds, and then veer again. We had to reach the elephants before any scent-laden air beat us to it.

With my Jeffery .470 in hand, Mbukuri behind with the other also loaded, and Kibanda with my .404, we moved as fast and quietly as possible toward the invisible herd. The dull thud of elephant droppings just ahead and its strong, fresh smell brought me to a full stop. I could not see anything but knew I was very close to an elephant. A rustle in the bush above and slightly ahead attracted my attention. There, a few feet away, feeling its way among new leaves and twigs, was the end section of an elephant's trunk. I could see the two "fingers" and the coarse hairs and nostrils of the prehensile terminus of this organ. I backed off a yard or two slowly. I felt too close for comfort, and there was nothing I could do. At this moment the elephant must have got our scent and with a huge sigh moved off in a hurry, which set all the others in motion directly away from us. We could still hear the herd breaking branches and an occasional squeal. We figured they had all gone and started after them again immediately with Mbukuri in the lead. We were able to see a few yards in front of us and from left to right because of all the trampling the elephants had done. I had just stopped Mbukuri so that I could remove my bush jacket and shake out the *upupu* hairs when there was the distinct swish of vegetation to our right front. The next moment a large cow elephant appeared, coming straight at us at speed. There was no sound coming from her, and at about thirty feet I could see her tusks protruding from a tangle of vegetation spread over her head. I had only a second or two to act, and fired into the middle of this rapidly approaching heap of leaves and things. At the impact of the 500-grain solid bullet she collapsed to the ground, rolling onto her side, hind legs kicking. I quickly moved around and put my second bullet through the top of the head into the brain. The elephant had known exactly where we were, had waited deliberately for us to get close, and had come in an all-out attack, picking up a mass of loose vegetation on its head. So far as I could judge, my first bullet had gone high, missing the brain by a considerable margin, but the enormous impact of the .470 had stunned the elephant, giving me ample time to finish it off. A small-calibre rifle would not have done this, and either I or one of my men most surely would have died.

At the end of the wet season in 1955 my duties took me once again to the Mbarawala area. Because of the distances and time factor involved every day when hunting elephant there, I had found that staying out, sleeping at whatever point dusk found us, was the most effective way of keeping the pressure on these herds, who were by now very timid. I would take sufficient basic food—rice or *mtama* flour, tea, sweetened condensed milk, and sugar and salt—with a couple of cooking pots, a kettle, mugs, and a four-gallon can of water, which kept us going for three days, and we returned to camp by the end of the fourth. This continuous hunting brought us into contact with elephant groups every day, sometimes several times a day. At the end of the fourth day we would arrive back in camp worn out and would rest for a couple of days and then repeat the performance. The effect of such hard, slogging, dangerous work caused a disturbance factor high enough to make the area untenable to the bulk of the resident elephant population. However, a relatively small number never did move out. These

were small groups of mainly immature animals that probably did not know of any other area to which they could go. The net result within the Mbarawala area was a dramatic decrease in crop damage by elephant for a prolonged period.

In the dense secondary bush, visibility was often a crucial factor when we finally made contact with a group of these elephant. I adopted a method that increased the risk but also improved the number of visible contacts that ended in one or more dead elephant. Most of the day the airflows in this bush were gentle but erratic; consequently, a slow approach with constant testing of the wind usually terminated with the animals stampeding before we saw them. I decided that on hearing the elephant we should make straight for them as fast as possible, without testing the wind, until one or more came into view. I would put in a fatal shot if possible and then stand silent and ready for any further developments. Frequently we found ourselves with elephant in front and others to the right, left, and even toward the rear. These latter animals could be a serious threat when the action started. To attempt to protect ourselves from such unexpected attacks, I instructed Kibanda to be prepared for them and to deal with them if I was otherwise occupied. There were several such attacks, and Kibanda handled them well. Only once did we have to follow up and finish off an animal that recovered to escape the melee.

One early morning before dawn, a large herd of elephant passed our overnight camp. As daylight increased we could still hear them some distance away as an occasional branch was broken. We had a quick drink of sweet tea, tied up our few belongings into small, tight loads for the porters to carry, and set off in the general direction of the sound of the elephants. After a half-hour we cut their concentrated spoor. They had stopped feeding, had bunched together, and were heading along the depression toward the western slopes of the plateau. It was easy tracking, and as we approached the edge of the plateau they started to spread out again, feeding. It was still early and the air was calm when we heard a branch breaking in the bush-covered downslopes ahead. Keeping to elephant trails as much as possible, we approached the elephant, which were now clearly audible. As we came onto a tiny space of bare ground, which had been caused by an elephant indulging in a mud wallow some time before, Mbukuri stopped, pointing ahead and whispering, *"Mmoja huyu."* (There is one.) The wallow was twenty feet across at the most. At first I could see nothing but leaves; then a movement focused my attention on a small gap, and in this space I could see an elephant's eye, wide open, and a section of head broadside almost to the ear hole. The range was between twenty and thirty feet, and I immediately fired the right barrel, killing the elephant with a side brain shot. I reloaded and waited in silence for any move from other nearby animals. Within seconds the crashing of bush and an angry trumpeting started as the herd moved rapidly away from us.

Kibanda then indicated a mob of elephant approaching at speed from our rear right. Fortunately, they went right past and moved farther to the right to join up with those ahead. Apart from a brief glimpse of the back of one animal, we were unable to see them at all. We remained motionless and silent as the herd departed; then a faint swish of leaves to the left focused our attention there. I caught a brief glimpse of the top of an elephant's back as it moved along. We followed its progress by sound. It was moving slowly and in remarkable silence in such dense cover, stopping momentarily every few yards and then moving on again as though it were looking for trouble. It moved across our front and was curving around to the right. I knew

*Mbarawala cow killed at a few feet.*

this elephant was looking for us and would attack once it knew where we were. An occasional view of the top of its back as it moved was all we could see, and it was close. Following my signaled instructions we very quietly backed off to the far side of the mud wallow to give me a little more space to handle the developing problem. Some very tense moments followed. I had my .470 at my shoulder with safety catch off as I waited. Kibanda, who had my .404, was also prepared for whatever was to come. Mbukuri was ready with my other .470, and the porters were crouched down in the bush behind for concealment.

The elephant—which turned out to be a cow—suddenly seemed to know exactly where we were and from a position about fifteen yards away came straight at us in a silent rush. I could not see her until she started to burst out of the undergrowth across the mud wallow twenty feet away. At the same instant, she actually saw us. She reached forward with her trunk, certain of grabbing me, and let out one high-pitched squeal of anger. It all happened so fast that the best I could do was fire into the centre of her head, and she went down, hind legs first, with her trunk still stretched out ahead of her as she rolled onto her side. I had in fact hit her in the brain more by luck than by careful aim; there had been no time for that. I covered her, ready to use the left barrel if I had to, and became aware of what a close call this had been. After a short interval, with no indication of any more elephant nearby, the tension eased. Everyone started to describe his version of what had happened, and I was promoted in their minds to the greatest elephant hunter of all time. I measured the distance from the spot where I had been standing when I shot this cow to the nearest point of her trunk, and it was three feet. I think that if I had been using a small-bore rifle the momentum of the oncoming elephant would have carried it right up to and possibly onto me. I would have been crushed by it, despite the fact that it was already dead. Luck played a part in my being able to brain this elephant just as it appeared. Although she was a determined beast, I think it likely that had I missed the brain, the impact of the 500-grain bullet would have turned her sufficiently for me to escape injury. A small-bore in a similar situation would have made little difference, and one of us would have been killed.

# A New Elephant Control Technique

*Chapter 13*

From 1950 to 1956 the emphasis was to reduce the elephant population in Southern Province. I had been employed in order to achieve this and an additional twenty-five game scouts had been authorized. A second elephant control officer, Barry Roberts, was also recruited in late 1950. He was a good friend of mine from Kenya who had hunted successfully for about a year before returning to Kenya to continue as a professional hunter. About one thousand elephant per annum were killed in Southern Province during this period. It is doubtful the overall elephant population was reduced. Some areas certainly had few elephants remaining, such as Lindi and Ruponda Districts south of the Mbwemkuru River and Eastern Masasi District, adjoining projected developments of the Nachingwea-based ground nut scheme. However, in Liwale, Kilwa, parts of Masasi, and throughout the Tunduru Districts, there was a noticeable increase in numbers. My assignment was to reduce the elephant population.

There were no guidelines as to how this was to be done, other than by shooting. Ionides had drawn my attention to the problem at our first meeting. According to my personal observations and the results from game scouts dealing with raiding elephants, bulls were the main problem. At an early stage I started trying to find a more effective method of crop protection, and this inevitably led to researching what elephant lived on, what induced them to move from one point to another, and herd organization and the relationship of the scattered bulls to the herd. Despite extensive collections of plants frequently consumed by elephant, selected foods did not appear to be a controlling factor, with three exceptions. Where there is palatable grass in quantity, the elephant becomes principally a grazer; if the grazing becomes scarce its diet is supplemented or replaced by leaves, bark, roots, and the like. Grazing is scarce for much of the year, from when the grasses mature until fresh regrowth after the annual fires. I did find, however, that elephant were specifically attracted into areas where the *mugongo (*Sclerocarya*)* trees were bearing fruit in sufficient quantity. The same situation applied to

fruiting Borassus palms. They were also attracted in the early rains to limited areas where *mninga (Pterocarpus angolensis)* trees occur in large numbers. The roots of these trees appeared to be the attraction, and they could get at them more easily when the ground was softer and the smaller trees pushed over more easily. The *tagalala (Terminalia spinosa)* trees also attracted large numbers of elephant to areas where they were dominant. Elephant would go for the bark of this species for a short period in the early rains when the sap was rising.

Although these various trees seemed to be the main attraction to a specific area, and could be considered elephantine delicacies, at no time were they the main bulk food needed to sustain health. The *mugongo* is the only tree that can hold elephants in an area for a prolonged period. The reason is that if the trees are many, the fruiting continues for several weeks, and as long as there is adequate bulk food and nearby cover for refuge, elephants will remain until the fruit supply declines. The fruit is a plumlike growth with a soft skin, and when ripe it falls to the ground in considerable numbers and ferments. The odour of the fermenting fruit is noticeable from some distance. Elephants will pick up the fruits and swallow them whole in quantity. There is undoubtedly an alcoholic content in these fruits, and the process continues as it passes through the digestive system. I have never seen evidence that the effects make elephants more aggressive, but on some occasions I have found them lying on their sides flat on the ground, snoring loudly. I always assumed this to be a sort of drunken stupor; elephants frequently lie down but do not normally snore.

After several years of hunting troublesome elephant in Southern Province and Mahenge District of Eastern Province, I came to one conclusion: that the breeding cows with attached immatures and calves had a direct bearing on the arrival of bulls and the start of crop raiding in settled areas. The great majority of elephants directly responsible for crop damage that were shot by game scouts were young bulls. It also became apparent that whenever they appeared, a search of adjoining bush revealed groups of cows and young. The number of bulls, and occasionally cows and young, entering cultivated land in any area was normally related to the size or number of breeding herds occupying the surrounding bush. If these herds were frightened well out of the area, the raiding bulls would move out at the same time. Conversely, one could go on for several days following up and shooting the bulls, and others would be back into the crops the next night. If, in the course of hunting bulls, one happened to thoroughly disturb a breeding herd, they would all move on for less hostile country. I could not spend much time studying individual animals or groups of cows and young, but I came to the conclusion that the young bulls, which were very much in the majority, moved in coordination with breeding animals at all times and that there had to be some form of communication, since the males and females were rarely found together. After a great many trials all over my range, I proved to myself that by making a general area untenable to breeding herds, crop raiding stopped for a period, sometimes up to a full year, greatly reducing the number of elephants that had to be shot.

In the course of this work I made some discoveries on the structure of large elephant herds and groups of females and immatures, and I made this information available in a paper on elephant control in 1956. It is interesting to note that although my duties never allowed time to observe any specific elephant population continuously or to recognize individual animals for the purpose of prolonged research, my conclusions were confirmed many years later by Ian Douglas Hamilton at Lake Manyara in northern Tanzania and by others in Tsavo National Park in Kenya. Briefly, what I discovered was that elephants

Mninga *tree destroyed by elephant for food.*

exist in what can be called family units. These units are made up of a few adult cows with immatures and small calves. The unit is usually from six to ten beasts, controlled and led by the oldest cow. Bulls grow up in the unit until ten to fifteen years of age. At this stage they either leave the unit of their own accord or the cows force them to leave. The unit appears to be a permanent grouping in which most, if not all, are related. Several of these units may join up to form a large herd. When it breaks up, each unit remains intact and continues as before. From an elephant control aspect the unit is important because the bulls are attached to the unit, though they do not actually run with it. Wherever the unit goes, the bulls follow. This is why it is important to make an area untenable to the family unit or units to get rid of the crop raiders.

The mystery of communications between elephants over distances of several miles was solved in the 1980s by two researchers working with elephants in Amboseli National Park in Kenya. It seems that elephants can communicate over long distances by making an ultra-low-frequency sound that is inaudible to the human ear. I understand that the women researchers were even able to record these sounds on sophisticated equipment. To me this information explains how the troublesome bulls knew when and presumably in what direction to go.

The basic technique of crop protection comes down to this: Locate and thoroughly disturb all family units in the affected area, even if they are established several miles away. It may be necessary to shoot one or more to achieve this, especially if there are several units scattered about. The bulls, mainly young animals, will move out, following the family units. If only the troublesome bulls are followed up from the damaged crops, this can go on for days on end, resulting in many more dead elephants

than when dealing with the family units first. I put this system into practice many times, and it always worked. Unfortunately, the game scouts were unable to do it consistently because of pressure from local villagers who wanted revenge on the animals that had eaten their crops. If the game scout ignored raiding elephants and spent a day or two looking for family units, he would be accused of cowardice or incompetence and threatened with bad reports to the local chief. Two of my head scouts put this system into practice when the pressure was not too high and found it worked well. These were both men of great local prestige and moral strength.

Although elephant numbers were dangerously depleted by massive ivory poaching and habitat degradation in the late 1970s and 1980s, control work is still necessary in some areas. Now that wildlife research is an accepted part of management, the methods I have described should be introduced. The elephant, for all its reputed intelligence, is the stupidest and most persistent of game animals when it comes to learning that raiding crops is a highly dangerous thing to do. Elephants quickly learn that thunder flashes are harmless and ignore them. Shoot a bull or a cow in a field of sorghum or corn, and others with it will move off, returning to the same place on the same night to get shot again. To thoroughly frighten them out of what they think are secure daylight refuge places is the best way to obtain lasting success.

# Ruvuma Safari

*Chapter 14*

In late July 1950 Iodine went on a long leave, accumulated during his service in the army during World War II and his normal game ranger duties from 1944 onward. His service in the army as an acting major terminated after the battle for Gonda in Abyssinia, where the *supremo* of the Italian forces, the Duke of Aosta, made his last stand. Iodine spent all his periods of long leave hunting for rare game trophies, presenting them to the Coryndon Museum in Nairobi. Over several prolonged hunts he collected giant eland, white rhino, addax and Nubian ibex in the Sudan, mountain gorilla in western Uganda, okapi in eastern Congo, Abbot duiker in Tanganyika, and yellow-backed duiker and bongo in Kenya. To the best of my knowledge most, if not all, of these mounted animals are still at Nairobi's National Museum.

With Iodine absent for nine months I was left in full charge of the Southern Range. This suited me fine. By now I had a lot of elephant control experience; I knew the system, the game scouts, and many of the local chiefs and was familiar with the policies. I had heard about the Ruvuma River from some of the game scouts, and I decided to visit the area and trek along the river upstream in Masasi, Tunduru, and Songea Districts. It was said to be excellent game country, much of it uninhabited by man. It was also the border between Tanganyika and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique).

A day after Iodine's departure I left Liwale, to return nearly three months later. I routed my safari southwest, dealing with elephant herds along the way, until we reached a place called Kibendenga. This point was some thirty miles west of the Ground Nut Scheme's agricultural activity. The government was hoping to establish a sawmill there and had placed an elderly couple from London to set it up. It would be hard to find people less suited to live in the middle of the African bush. They were terrified of the herds of elephant that moved about the surrounding area, often destroying the vegetables they were trying to grow. Baboons, or "moonkeys," as the wife would call them, appeared in daytime, "pulling nasty faces" and barking at her.

It was easy enough to get rid of the baboons. Taking my .275-calibre Rigby rifle, I concealed myself in some undergrowth near the vegetable plot. Baboons are highly intelligent, sharp-sighted creatures, and they learn quickly. I knew nothing about the social or leadership structure of these animals but assumed there was a dominant male. I decided to shoot the largest male I could see and then assess the results. In the area there was only one troop of twenty or more animals. Most mornings they searched for food through the surrounding low-country bamboo, arriving at the vegetable plot in early afternoon, when they knew there was minimal human movement around the plot. Not having been shot at before, they were quite bold and took few precautions when approaching the feeding ground. On the first afternoon that I set up my ambush, the apes appeared in less than an hour. These were several females and young, who moved unconcernedly about, pulling off tomatoes and beans, stuffing their cheeks to bulging sacks as they went. I remained concealed, waiting for a big fellow. A short while later there was a scuffle and shrieking in the thicket beyond, and then a big male appeared, walking arrogantly into the plot. He was soon followed by another male and then by more females with young behind them. The big dog baboon by now was in an upright position, sitting on his butt and surveying the scene about him. I shot him in the chest and he went down. There was panic among the others as they ran for cover. The second male, at the report of my rifle, moved away fast for about fifty yards and then stopped and stood on his hind legs to check out the scene. I shot him dead also and, coming out of my place of concealment, walked across the plot to make sure the two apes were dead. As I

*Elephant crossing swamp. Northeast Selous, 1975. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

*Greater kudu collected for author's mother.*

was doing this a baboon appeared in a tree some way off. Alarm barks and screeching of young emanated from there. I fired an off-the-shoulder shot at the baboon in the tree and missed. All went silent.

During the next three days the troop was nowhere to be seen. In the vegetable plot, which also had an irrigated half-acre of dry-season corn, I observed some elephant damage. Hunting these animals for two days frightened them out of the area, and the London couple now felt they would survive the wilderness for a while longer. There was a dirt track for vehicles that went east to a fuel depot at a place called Mtua, where it joined up with the Ground Nut Scheme road network out of Nachingwea. What happened along this track shortly afterward confirmed my belief that this out-of-place couple were in far more danger from themselves than from any wild animal. They were driving to Nachingwea in an open, short-wheelbase Land Rover that had no doors on it. He was driving, she in the front left seat and one of their African workers in the rear. At a speed of about 20 mph on a straight section of track, the vehicle hit a patch of soft sand and lurched violently from one side to the other. About 150 yards beyond this sand pit the African, who must have been a very simple fellow, tapped the husband on the shoulder and said, "*Memsahib hayupo.*" (Madam is not here.)

The husband, who had not noticed anything, asked, "Where is she?"

The answer came back, *"Ameanguka."* (She has fallen.)

Hubby now pulled up, turned the car around, and went back down the track, to find his wife unhurt, plodding along the wheel marks. I have no record of what was said to whom when they met up. Tunnel vision would be a generous description for such an unobservant man.

I had received a letter from my mother in Kenya, along with a book for my twentieth birthday in June. She had requested me, if possible, to obtain trophy heads for her home, and I decided to try and get her a sable antelope and a greater kudu. Both are spectacular trophies well worth having.

Greater kudu are bush-loving antelope, very astute, with good vision and hearing. They are mainly browsers, and while hunting at Kibendenga I had noted quite a bit of kudu spoor in the bamboo areas. In company with Mbukuri and James, we left camp at dawn on the third morning and followed the track from Kibendenga westward toward Kilima Rondo. The idea was to follow up any kudu spoor we found. We were passing through a section of bamboo when we came across the spoor of a solitary bull. The sun was just starting to rise, and I figured the bull would continue feeding and moving about for at least another hour. It would be much easier to see now than later, when it would be standing motionless in bush cover for shade. With my .275 in hand we followed its meandering course through the bamboo. Because of the mass of dried leaves on the ground it was impossible to avoid some noise, but we kept going. After a while the kudu left the bamboo and moved into an open area of scattered *Combretum ternifolium*, and we noted that the kudu was browsing on freshly sprouting leaves. I was sure it was not far ahead, so we proceeded along its spoor with great care. The Combretum started to thicken up, and it was at this point that Mbukuri and I saw the rear end of the animal. We stopped and crouched down on our haunches. It was at right angles to us with its head shoved well into a bush covered in leaves. It was unaware of our presence. We had waited motionless for two or three minutes when it backed out of the bush to reveal a fine pair of spiraling horns. The kudu was certainly good enough for me, and without further hesitation I shot him in the shoulder with my .275. We waited a short time, followed him up, and found him less than one hundred yards away, lying on his side dead. He was a magnificent creature with a fine set of horns, which, when eventually measured around the curves, went 54.5 inches. James and I stayed with the kudu and sent Mbukuri to bring along some porters to carry the meat back to camp.

While the meat was being smoke-dried for the porters, I took the opportunity to read the book I had received as a birthday present. It had some interesting comments about baboon behaviour. The author clearly suffered from excessive imagination and lack of experience. I have hunted baboons since the age of ten on the farm in Kenya, and, child that I was, never felt I was in danger from them. The author, however, claimed that baboons are emotionally unstable and liable to attack man with little provocation. Thus, if you are walking along and there is a troop on the cliffs or in trees nearby and you sneeze, it can send them into hysterics and they will attack and pull you to pieces. It is what I would describe as hysterical rubbish. In all my time in the wilds of Africa, I have only once come across an incident of baboon aggression. This happened near Kiberege in Mahenge District in 1953. It involved an old, solitary male baboon, which is unusual in itself. He had taken to regularly raiding cassava cultivation in a small area. He had also learnt that women and children could do him no harm but that adult men were dangerous. The result was that when women

or children tried to chase him out of the cassava, he would demonstrate at them to frighten them off. If men came along, he would make for the surrounding forest. His contempt for women developed to a level where he actually chased a woman and bit her in the leg. The large canines severed an artery, and she bled to death. I happened to be passing through Kiberege on safari at the time, and the incident was reported to me. I went to the area, located the baboon, and shot him dead without any difficulty. He was in good health with no injuries. The local villagers had named him Bireko, because he was so well known.

From Kibendenga I trekked southwest to the Lukwika sand river, intending to follow it downstream to its junction with the Ruvuma. There were a great many kudu all through this country, and I saw at least two that had better heads than my Kibendenga bull. But I was not out for any records; in fact, I never killed another kudu. I hunted elephant at various places all the way to the Ruvuma, but south of a rock outcrop known as Matekwe I came across a situation that was somewhat chilling. In a stretch of uninhabited country we came upon a strong gushing spring of clear water. There was a large fig tree growing out of the rocks here, and under this we found drying human remains that had been partly eaten. The victim was an adult male about thirty-five to forty years old. The flesh of the thighs and arms was gone, and the ribcage was partially chewed up. The head, neck, shoulders, lower legs, and feet were intact and putrefied. There were no vultures about and no tracks of hyenas or other scavengers. Some ten feet up the tree was an *ulingo*, or rough platform used by locals for killing game that came to drink day or night with poisoned arrows or muzzleloader guns. The remains gave off a powerful and sickening odour, and my porters were unwilling either to inter them or to camp at the springs overnight, because of *shaitani*. I therefore had only a short time to try to understand what had happened.

The *ulingo* was badly damaged, with some of the crosspieces broken or missing. The dry grass placed in it for comfort was churned up, and half of it was on the ground at the base of the tree. There was quite a bit of blood on the sticks and grass, and blood was smeared on the trunk of the tree. No tracks were visible on the ground, which was rock and very hard earth covered in dead grass. There was leopard and lion spoor a little way off in soft mud at the edge of the spring. The one solid piece of evidence we had was clearly defined claw marks up the tree from about four feet above the ground right to the *ulingo*. Lions do not usually climb trees unless there are low branches or the trunk is at an incline they can negotiate. Neither of these conditions pertained here. I could only conclude that the man had been in his *ulingo* waiting for game and had fallen asleep at night. A leopard had seen him and, when all was still and quiet after dark, had climbed the tree, taken the man by surprise, and managed to kill him after a struggle. Whether he was eaten while up the tree or on the ground I could not tell, but the lack of any scavengers suggests it was probably the former. Up on the *ulingo,* lying loose, we found a bow and several poisoned arrows, an axe, and a large knife. A gourd with water still in it was on the ground with a tattered *kikoi,* shirt, and sandals. That night we camped at a village on the upper Lukwika and informed the head man about what we had seen. He promised to send people to the spring and take care of the remains. We left it at that, and I never heard any more about it.

Before reaching the Ruvuma I met up with John Blower, the provincial forest officer for Southern Province. John had an elephant license but had never hunted an elephant before and no doubt wanted to benefit from my experience. He was a tall fellow well over six feet and was a great walker. He was very keen on wildlife, and at the Lukwika and Ruvuma confluence he was about to get a taste of what wild animals are all about.

On the far side of the Ruvuma there was a Portuguese administration post called Ngomano. A large river called the Lujenda joined the Ruvuma from the south. At that time, in 1950, the Portuguese were building a new road from a town named Mweda, westward toward Lake Nyasa. It was being constructed by hand labour. To feed all these labourers the Portuguese employed what they termed professional hunters. These men were an assortment of Portuguese, other European types, and half-castes. They did virtually no hunting themselves but employed African hunters armed with rifles to shoot anything and everything that came in sight. I am told they were carried about by porters in a hammock-type contrivance called a *machila*. This shooting drove much of the elephant population in that part of Mozambique north across the Ruvuma into Tanganyika. Thus, in southwestern Masasi, Tunduru, and eastern Songea Districts, the elephant population increased dramatically.

A mile or two before reaching the Ruvuma we were met in the usual courteous manner by the local *jumbe*, or head man, and the elders. As we walked, it became apparent from his conversation that they had problems with some wild animals. I told him to wait until we set up camp and then to come and have a talk. The Ruvuma at this point is an impressive river flowing through a broad, shallow valley. I could see the Lujenda on the opposite side, and it looked almost as wide as the Ruvuma, which was several hundred yards across. Great, pure white sandbanks on both sides threw the water into relief. In the river were islands of considerable size, also with sandbanks. Patches of dry-season corn grew close to the water line in places, separated by dense, tall *matete* grass standing ten feet tall. Riverine forest with spectacular stands of the tall straight Sterculia trees were to be seen on both banks and on the islands. Schools of hippo could be seen all along the river, and in early morning and late afternoon plenty of crocodiles were visible, lying close to the water on the edge of the sandbanks. The local people were Makua tribesmen who combined subsistence cultivation with fishing activities in dugout canoes. On the Tanganyika side of the river, the Lukwika was dry sand all the way across with water at two to three feet below the surface. Dense, tall grass, forest, and secondary bush up to half a mile wide grew along both sides of it. Beyond the riverine belt along the Lukwika and the Ruvuma, open seasonal flood plains extended to the start of rising ground some distance away. Villages were located on the higher ground, and a few temporary dwellings, far apart from each other, could be seen in the seasonal flood plains.

My camp was located close to the Ruvuma and Lukwika River junction under two large shady acacia trees. Later that afternoon Ali Mkwanda, the head game scout in Masasi District, arrived. He was there when the *jumbe* came along with his cronies. It seemed that these people had a collection of problems with wild animals. The main culprit was a leopard that had been killing people for more than a year. All its victims were women and children. At the time of my visit, according to the *jumbe,* it had killed twenty-four people but had not eaten any of them. He claimed all the attacks took place in daylight, and the leopard had been driven off the kills every time by people. He claimed they did not know how to make a

trap, and whenever they hunted the leopard it could not be found. My ability to offer relief to these villagers was limited. Unless the leopard killed someone and I was able to follow it up and shoot it, or kill it as it fed on the corpse, how could I know if it was the killer? Following up a leopard by spooring it is in any case a nearly hopeless task because of the difficulty of seeing the tracks.

Other problems posed the same quandary. A woman had recently been taken by a crocodile, and the dry-season corn was being ravaged mainly by hippo but also by elephant. There were great numbers of crocodile in the Ruvuma; how did one select the right crocodile? One could shoot hippo at night in the growing corn, but there were hundreds of them in the river, and shooting a few would bring little respite. The same applied to the elephants, and there was no way I could follow them into Portuguese territory. Both hippo and elephant crossed the Ruvuma whenever they wanted to. After the *jumbe* had left, I had a long chat with Ali Mkwanda about the problems that had been raised. He said the hippo, elephant, and crocodile problems existed at all times, year after year, and had no lasting solution. But the leopard was another problem. The local Makua were in dispute with the Mawia tribe across the river over land and cultivation claims to islands in the Ruvuma. It was on these islands that they were able to grow dry-season corn, and because of this the crops were a priority issue to all the local people—Makua and Mawia. He said they would not say anything about it to me because the Mawia had powerful *uchawi* (witchcraft) and had sent the leopard that was killing them, because of the land dispute. It is difficult for a white man to accept such superstitions, but they are a fact of life to the Africans in these remote areas and induce such apathy that they are incapable of improving their lot. The appearance of the Mawia, with their filed teeth and tribal markings, does nothing to dispel the local belief in their supernatural powers.

Over the next few days we shot several crocodile and hippo. One of the reptiles had brass bangles in its stomach; I assumed it had caught a woman at some time in the past. I took some hippo meat and placed it in a suitable position up a tree in thicket, intending to attract a leopard to it. On the second night a leopard fed off the bait, and on the following afternoon I placed myself with Mbukuri in a hide between the bait and the riverbank. The leopard did not show up then or on the following night. On our way back to the camp after the second night's vigil, we were crossing the dry sand of the Lukwika riverbed. Near the far side we came upon the fresh tracks of a leopard and followed it upstream for about three hundred yards. It crossed over to the side we had come from, went up the bank, and led on into the bordering tall grass and bush. It was loose, sandy soil here, and Mbukuri had followed it with no difficulty for about thirty minutes when it altered direction and emerged onto open burnt-off flood plain. The ground here was hard, with little cover apart from the odd Combretum bush. Our progress was now reduced to a snail's pace. There was no cover ahead where a leopard was likely to lie up, and this probably was not the man-killer; I knew there was more than one in the area. We were very slowly making progress over the hard ground and were casting about for a lost trail when a distant shouting by a man and the high-pitched screaming of women started up ahead. There was a slight rise of land in that direction, and we could see the tops of a few small mango trees, which indicated habitation.

The calls and screaming were so urgent that we were sure something drastic had happened. The tracks we were following with such difficulty were heading in that

direction, so we abandoned the spoor and legged it across the burnt-off plain toward the mango trees in the direction of the noise. We arrived there out of breath and could see the top of a thatched roof over a dense growth of cassava bushes. We ploughed on right through this to the source of the noise. Here we found a bare clearing of hard earth between three small huts. A man and two women were standing there, the women still wailing. The man was looking about with a small axe in his hand as the women were handling a form stretched out on the ground. As soon as the man saw us, he ran up to say a leopard had just attacked his child and then had run away and disappeared into the cassava. Mbukuri went up to where the women were wailing and trying to help a young girl lying motionless in a pool of blood. There was nothing we could do to help her; she was already dead. She had been severely bitten in the back of the neck at the base of the skull—the wound was, I think, instantly fatal, causing vertebrae or brain damage—and she had been torn open with a huge gash in her side through which the liver was protruding. Mbukuri and I had a quick search through the cassava undergrowth surrounding the huts, found where the leopard had left it to run off toward the Lukwika riverbed, and returned to the distraught family at the huts. It seems that they had just sat down on the ground outside one of the huts to have some *uji* (gruel) for breakfast. The bowl of food had been placed before them when, without any warning, the leopard came out of the cassava. It was a horrifying experience for this family, and I promised to do all I could to get the leopard. There were two smaller children hiding in one of the huts. Like all the large carnivores, leopards are attracted by juvenile animals, presumably because they are easier to catch, and this includes man. Before Mbukuri and I left, I emphasized the danger to this family, telling them not to allow the children to wander about outside under any circumstances.

*John Blower and croc. Ruvuma River.*

It was now about 9:30 A.M., and we took up the spoor of the leopard where it left the cassava patch. Once it stopped galloping, it was such hard work following it that I decided to cut straight over to the Lukwika riverbed. I was thinking about collecting another hippo meat bait and setting it up there. I also wanted to examine the sand for tracks all along the riverbed to see if this leopard, which was a large male and definitely a man-killer, regularly moved about there. We reached the riverbed and very shortly found leopard spoor. We found more spoor as we went, all appearing to belong to the same adult male. I

was optimistic that this area was the heart of the man-killer's territorial hunting ground, and I believed one or two baits of hippo meat would entice him to his death. We were about two miles from camp and still following the Lukwika when, as we came around a bend, there was an adult bull elephant. He was on the dry sand at the bottom of a broken-down and eroded bank, on top of which there was tall grass and bush. In the centre of the riverbed was a small island in the sand, with a thick cover of tall grass growing on it. It was an ideal place to ambush a leopard, so I decided to kill the elephant where it was against the bank and set up a hide on the island, which was less than thirty yards away with an unobstructed view. Moving quietly along the sand until the island was between us, providing good cover for the final approach, I closed with the elephant. It was a very easy situation, and the elephant never knew what hit it as it went down to a side brain shot. I was sure, and Mbkuri agreed, that the man-killing leopard was along the Lukwika quite close to the elephant carcass and that if the leopard did not actually find it himself, he would be attracted to it by descending vultures. We made some limited incisions into the elephant's gut to produce smell and then went over to the island a few yards away. Here we carefully cut out a space in the tall grass and an access path from the far side, so that we could move in and out quietly and have a sufficient view of the carcass. We then left for camp, and I planned to check early next morning for evidence of the leopard visiting the carcass during the night.

*Bull hippo crop raider. Ruvuma River.*

*Bull elephant that attracted the man-killing leopard.*

John Blower was in camp, having spent most of the day shooting crocodile. I told him about our morning following the leopard, the elephant carcass, and my plans to get the leopard. He asked if I would mind if he came along, and I had no objection as long as he remained absolutely still in the hide with no scratching and fidgeting. The next morning we left camp at dawn and half an hour later cautiously crept into the hide. There was no movement there, and the vultures were dropping onto the ground beside the carcass. This was a reliable sign that no large carnivore was nearby, so we went across the sand to it. I felt my luck was surely in, for there were the leopard's tracks, and they looked the same size as those of the animal we had followed the day before. The fact that it had arrived on the very first night indicated to me that it was currently resident in this area of bush. It had also attempted to eat where we had cut the gut area of the elephant, with limited success. It was hungry and would return that evening. Without any further disturbances we left the scene and returned to camp.

I was sure this leopard was hungry, having been at the elephant carcass the previous night but unable to open it up sufficiently for a full feed of meat. While I did not anticipate it would revisit the bait until dusk or just before, I decided to be in position in the hide by 3:30 P.M. Accordingly, John, Mbukuri, and I left camp an hour before that. We arrived on the opposite side of the Lukwika under cover and found a lot of vultures sitting on the carcass and the sand. We carefully entered the hide without disturbing the birds. I had my .404 rifle ready, and we waited in total silence. A few minutes after 4 P.M. the vultures suddenly took off in panic and soared in the sky or settled on nearby trees. Nothing happened for a few minutes; then some of the vultures started swooping in again. There were only a few of them on the ground when they panicked again, and almost immediately the leopard's head and shoulders appeared out of some grass at the top of the crumbling riverbank. He stopped, motionless, looking first at the carcass and

then up- and downstream along the sand river. I shot him quartering on to me through the forward point of the shoulder. He collapsed in his tracks and then slowly slid forward on his belly halfway down the sandy bank. We sat motionless for some minutes. There was no further movement from the leopard, and I was sure it was all over. I had reloaded on firing and moved out of the blind to cautiously approach the dead animal. Mbukuri tossed a piece of hard wood onto it as I stood ready with my rifle, at a few yards. There was no response, so I went right up and touched an eyeball with the tip of my rifle barrel, and it stayed still and open. The leopard was dead, and I was very sure it was the killer. There were no more leopard killings after this day, so we were right.

The news of the death of the leopard spread quickly within the local community. Early next morning the *jumbe* and other men came to my camp to thank me and for the first time opened up about their superstitions. They said I had very powerful *dawa* (medicine), which had defeated that of the Mawia, and there would be no more trouble over the ownership of the islands in the Ruvuma. Whether this was so I do not know, but other interesting details came to light. The leopard I had killed was an adult male in his prime in top physical condition. All his teeth were good, and he had no sign of new or old injuries. The locals had a prolonged discussion on deaths attributed to this animal, including the girl who had died the day before. Taking only women and children as its victims, it had killed twenty-five and clawed up several others. The animal had not eaten any of its victims, but it was in top condition. It was clearly able to hunt its normal prey and did so successfully, or it would have been in starving condition. The reason for its

*The man-killing leopard and James Abdulla.*

frequent attacks on man is a mystery, unless it suffered some mental imbalance or was compelled to do it to satisfy some instinct.

We moved camp the next day. John followed the Ruvuma upstream to the junction of the Lumesule, and I cut across via a line of kopjes to the same river farther upstream. From there I moved back to the Ruvuma well above the Lumesule. On the way back to the river we heard several rifle shots, and I assumed correctly that it was John shooting his elephant on license. When we next met some months later at Lindi, the provincial headquarters of Southern Province at the time, I asked him why he had used so many shells. He looked surprised and said, "You didn't hear that, did you?" He then requested me not to mention it to other people. His story about his first elephant was a one-shot success, and I didn't let on otherwise for a long time. At some time in the next two years he did a long safari on foot through the Selous Game Reserve without approval from Ionides. Like most rangers in their own areas, Iodine looked upon the Selous Reserve as his personal playground. He was hostile to anyone going into it, and it was illegal to do so without his permission. He had never met Blower but because of his unauthorized foot safari in the Selous Reserve did not think highly of him. The incident rankled in his mind until they did meet; then they became good friends. Their first meeting was a great embarrassment to Iodine. I heard and saw it all. Blower transferred from the forest department to the game department at the end of his tour of duty in 1951. In 1952 a new game warden named Swynnerton had taken over from the retired Monty Moore, and he called on all his rangers to attend a conference at the department's new headquarters at Tengeru near Arusha. We were all in a large room waiting for the next session to start when Blower came in, having just arrived back from long leave. He was introduced to everyone, but Iodine, being hard of hearing, missed the name. Later he and Blower started a general conversation about the control over game reserves and the exclusion of people, residence, and the like; and Iodine went into a monologue about this awful fellow Blower who had the temerity to enter the Selous Reserve without permission, stating that he should be flogged. At this point John said, "I am Blower." Iodine was speechless for a few seconds. A shocked and embarrassed look came over his face, and then, taking John's hand, he apologized, and the incident passed into obscurity. Blower, after serving as game ranger in the Serengeti, based at Banagi, fell out with the new game warden and transferred to Uganda, where he eventually became chief game warden.

The country along the north side of the Ruvuma was largely open *ulambos* (open, seasonally waterlogged flats) with a scattering of Combretum and acacia trees and the odd, large termite mounds on which large shady tamarind trees had grown to maturity. Between the *ulambos,* low, gently sloping ridges covered in taller Combretum and Brachystegia woodland provided shade and cover for many animals. Kudu were to be seen sometimes, as were Nyasa wildebeest, Lichtenstein hartebeest, zebra, impala, and lots of common waterbuck. There were quite a lot of buffalo running in herds of fifty or more, and the river held hundreds of hippo all along it. Elephant trails bisected the whole country, and we heard lions most nights. One of the commonest animals was the sable antelope. They were to be seen in herds of up to thirty head, and there were many solitary or paired males. It was a magnificent game area, enhanced by the fact that there was no human settlement along this section of the Ruvuma.

My first priority here was to check on meat hunters coming in from Mozambique. We covered the area right up to the Muhuwesi junction in detail without apprehending anyone. A dead cow elephant with tusks intact was found near the Muhuwesi, and we found two other pairs of elephant ivory, the bodies long since disintegrated. The fact was that these animals had died of natural causes, and the hunters from across the Ruvuma were not operating here. Having satisfied myself in this respect, I took a day off to try for a bull sable. There were plenty of them about, but during the preceding days I had seen one jet-black bull with a herd, carrying a pair of horns much larger than any of the others I had seen. I set off one morning, in company with Mbukuri and James, direct for the general area where I had seen the bull. Sable normally spend the day in woodland, moving in search of fresh germinating grass at night. After the annual fires set by man, the sable first appears on the edge of woodland on the downslopes to the *ulambos*. In the *ulambos* it is to be found in depressions where there is still the odd rainwater pool or any seepage zones where the water table is higher than the surrounding land. We spent the whole morning zigzagging along two ridges examining the slopes and *ulambos* on either side, being careful not to stampede zebra and other species along the way. We saw two herds of sable and a solitary male, but not the one I was after. At noon we stopped for a rest until 3 P.M. As the sun started to move westward and the heat declined, we moved onto a third ridge to follow the same technique, with the wind blowing steadily toward us. We came upon a buffalo bull standing in shade and moved around and past it at two hundred yards' range without being seen.

A short time later, as we descended a slope, we saw a mixed herd of Nyasa wildebeest, zebra, and hartebeest grazing far out on the *ulambo*. Remaining in cover and watching them, Mbukuri told me to look right along the plain. There I saw a herd of sable starting to emerge from the woodland onto the far side of the *ulambo*. I estimated they were not less than five hundred yards away. The best way to approach them was to retreat into the woods on our side, work our way to a point opposite them, and then return to the limits of the *ulambo* and check out any bull running with the herd. Twenty minutes later we were settled on a termite mound under a large tamarind tree, concealed by secondary bush growing on it. There were five sable females and calves grazing fresh grass at a seepage area three hundred yards away. There were eleven in the herd with this big bull, so we awaited further developments, hoping the one we wanted would appear out of the far woodland cover. An adult bull then appeared, but I could not tell at that range whether it was the one I had seen previously, so I decided to get closer, which meant crossing the open ground toward them. I now left my men at the termite mound and, taking the .275, moved back into the cover of the woodland behind. There was a slight dip running toward the centre of the *ulambo* with occasional short stretches of unburned grass along it. Sable are keen-sighted, and I had to cross the *ulambo* without their seeing me. Once I was in the dip, I discovered that by crawling on hands and knees the fold in the ground concealed me. I moved in this manner for about one hundred yards before cautiously rising to observe the sable. They were still grazing, and a second black bull had now appeared in the clear, standing between the other male and the females and calves. There were a total of eleven animals out there grazing, and I hoped it was the right herd.

I could see that the last bull to appear was larger in body than the other, and although it was still too far for an accurate judgment, it seemed to have longer horns. There was

a patch of unburned grass between us, which I estimated to be about 150 yards from the herd and a bit closer to me. I decided I had to reach this cover to put me within range of the bull to assess the quality of the trophy and to shoot it. Crawling on all fours over burnt-off grass is tiring work, and I was blackened with ash. I rested for a few minutes and then started toward the grass cover. It was not quite tall enough to give me complete concealment as I crawled, so I now had to drag myself forward flat on my belly until I was close enough under the level of the grass to crawl on hands and knees again. I reached the cover in an exhausted condition and remained motionless for several minutes to recover. Removing my hat, I very slowly raised myself so that I was able to observe the herd through the top of the grass. The bull had moved in my direction and was now standing facing me, well within range. I could see the horns curving high up over his head and sweeping back to his rear. There was no doubt about the quality of this trophy. Slowly rising from my crouched stance, with the .275 at my shoulder, I stood up. The bull instantly saw me and snorted loudly in alarm. Before it could decide to run, I fired into its chest and it went straight down. I walked rapidly up to it as the rest of the herd made for the woodland beyond. The sable was dead by the time I reached it, and I saw at once that it was a really fine head. When the skull and horns had dried out a few weeks later I measured them at 45½ inches around the curve. I now had the trophy heads my mother had requested and was sure she would appreciate them. It is hard to say which is more beautiful and magnificent, the greater kudu or the sable antelope, and although common enough in the right localities, they

*Sable antelope collected for author's mother.*

are two of Africa's prime trophies. On this safari I took my first specimen of each and have never shot another since.

I sent James to fetch some porters at camp to come and carry the meat in. It was late when he left, so it was no great surprise that Mbukuri and I spent the night with the sable. We degutted and butchered it by firelight, grilled the kidneys and heart for a meal, and spent the night sitting or lying close to the fire for warmth. We heard lion grunting some way off at odd times nearly until dawn, and at least two spotted hyenas hung around for several hours and managed to make off with the sable's discarded intestines. James and a half-dozen porters arrived two hours after daybreak. The distance to camp was much farther than we thought, so he had arrived there well after nightfall. Unsure he could relocate us in the dark, he had wisely decided to wait until daybreak before returning.

I continued the trek upstream along the Ruvuma until we reached Ligweja Island. This was the start of settled country again, with dispersed villages spreading west into Songea District and north to Chief Mperembe at Kalulu near the southern boundary of the Selous Game Reserve. The people here were all of the Wayao tribe. Traditionally they were militant people; many of the men who had served with the German army in German East Africa during the First World War were recruited here in Tunduru District. Prior to colonization by the Germans they had cooperated with the Arabs during the slave expeditions and had been armed with muzzleloaders by them for this purpose. Out of this a sect known as Warumba had evolved, which, though no longer active, is still very much part of the Wayao tradition. Basically, they were ivory hunters and would disappear on extended safaris into the bush, hunting elephant with their muzzleloader guns. There were rituals to be observed when an elephant was killed. No one other than appointed individuals was permitted to see the nerve from an elephant tusk being extracted or to see it anytime thereafter. It would be taken away to some unmarked spot and buried. It was firmly believed that catastrophe in some form or other would hit them if an unauthorized person saw the nerve. I hunted elephant all through the Yao country. The tusks from most elephants were extracted and transported to the *boma* at Tunduru by arrangement with the local *jumbes* and subchiefs. But on the few occasions when I organized this myself, there was always an appointed *mrumba* to extract and then remove the tusk nerve. As a matter of interest, the game scouts were considered Warumba because of their successful elephant control work.

*Head game scout Mungumbele Miregu.*

Mungumbele Mirego, the head game scout of Tunduru District, met me at Ligweja. Among the work subjects we discussed were unsubstantiated reports he had received of a white man

living farther upstream on the north bank of the Ruvuma. He was referred to as Bwana Krosho, but his real name was Conrad Klose. Apparently he had lived there for many years, supporting himself from income derived from the purchase and resale of ivory in Mozambique. Mungumbele now had reports that he was arming local Africans to shoot elephant and collect the ivory for him. There was no confirmation that any part of this ivory trade was being conducted in Tanganyika, and there was no law on our side to prevent him from hunting and trading across the river in Portuguese territory. There were rumours reaching Mungumbele that the *mafundi*, or African hunters, on his payroll were killing elephants in Tanganyika. We were shooting many elephant on control work, under close supervision. In these circumstances the death of a few more elephants would not affect the overall population and might even be beneficial to crop protection. What was of concern to me, bearing in mind the elephant hunting Warumba traditions of the Wayao people, was that such illegal activities could instigate an ever-increasing search for ivory, and illegal hunting would be difficult or impossible to stop. Such were my thoughts on the subject, but there was little to be achieved with scant information. I needed to be better informed on Klose's current activities. To do this I instructed Mungumbele to recruit some *askari kanzu* (informers) to keep me updated. They were to be paid for their results from a special fund we had for this purpose.

It was not until the following dry season in 1951 that sufficient evidence against Klose had been reported to me. I decided to visit and confront him. In company with my colleague, Barry Roberts, we drove to Tunduru and down to Klose's house on the Ruvuma in the government truck. We had picked up Mungumbele and two of his *askari kanzu* at Tunduru. Klose was not at home. His house servant said he had gone to Dar es Salaam and did not know when he would be back. The information we had was that his *fundi*s were shooting elephant in Tanganyika and that the ivory was brought to him at night and stored somewhere on his property. It was a large mud and thatch house overlooking the Ruvuma, comfortably furnished and clearly his permanent residence. To the rear of the house was a separate building designed with three separate rooms in a single row, each with a wall-to-wall ceiling of boards about eight feet above the floor. We camped on Klose's property and interrogated his servants and their wives about his activities and whether ivory was ever delivered and stored. They pleaded total ignorance of such matters and, not surprisingly, were negative about everything to do with their employer. Our information was that there actually were a number of elephant tusks hidden in the buildings somewhere. Klose owned a small vehicle in which he had gone to Dar es Salaam, and it was simply not big enough to haul concealed elephant tusks around the country. I felt that we had to search the property, but to do this we needed a search warrant. Leaving Roberts to guard the place, I drove to Tunduru the next morning. The district commissioner, who was also a magistrate, listened to what I had to say and issued the warrant, attaching a police constable to be present during the search.

By evening I was back at camp, and we searched the property the next day. In company with the police constable, we entered the main house but found no trace of ivory there and saw no indication of secret storage facilities. I had an uncomfortable feeling and even guilt about intruding on the owner's privacy and was only too pleased to leave the main house to search the elongated storage building to the rear. Each room had a separate entry door, with no connecting doors inside. We therefore had to break the locks to gain entry to

each room. There were no windows, and it was very dark inside; it was necessary to use a flashlight and lamps to search the interior of each room. We found nothing of interest, and I was beginning to think that if Klose had any tusks, he had buried them in the bush nearby or had even asked one of his staff to hide them in a hut elsewhere. As we had a second look around the rooms I gained the impression that something was not quite right, that the combined length of the three rooms did not seem to match the overall length of the building. I drew Barry's attention to this apparent discrepancy. To check it out we measured the length of the building and then the length of each individual room. There was a difference of several feet. Taking into consideration the average thickness of dividing walls, there was a space unaccounted for, and we were sure there had to be a sealed-up, narrow fourth room. To discover where it lay, we bored holes through the dividing walls of each room and found a gap six feet wide between the "common wall" of the right and centre rooms. We now took a crowbar into the right-hand room and went to the dividing wall of the centre room and dug a hole we could get through. The wall was made of clay and sticks, and it only took ten minutes to do this. The flashlight beam only showed a bare dirt floor to the opposite wall, and after the damage we had done, I crawled through feeling a little apprehensive. I directed the beam to the far end of the room, where, to my relief, was a pile of elephant tusks neatly stacked, lying on the floor. I do not remember now how many there were, but it was close to fifty, with a few weighing forty to fifty pounds each and the rest in the twenty- to thirty-pound range.

We transported all the ivory up to Tunduru and handed it over to the district commissioner. Later I had to appear in the magistrate's court, but Klose pleaded guilty and I was not required to give evidence. The ivory was confiscated, and Klose received a small fine and was permitted to return to his house on the Ruvuma. I had never met him until I saw him in court. He was an old man in poor physical condition and had been interned as an enemy alien throughout World War II. He was a relic of German East Africa, living in a world that was, to him, hostile and new. The rise of Germany and Hitler's demands for the return of colonies taken at the end of World War I had given him some optimism. With the defeat of Germany in 1945, Klose turned to the only means of survival he knew. I felt great sympathy for him; had I known his situation I would not have had him charged. I was duty-bound to confiscate the ivory, and this, with a warning, would have been enough for the old man. I never learnt what happened to him after that but hope he did not suffer great poverty and hardship as a result of my actions.

After leaving the Ruvuma River I trekked in a northerly direction through scattered Yao settlements to Kalulu, where Chief Mpirembe had his headquarters. He was a portly and very courteous man with a large number of people living under his jurisdiction. Ionides had cultivated his friendship and cooperation over the years, because he lived close to the southern boundary of the Selous Game Reserve. The arrangement between them was a sort of trade-off, whereby elephant control work in his chiefdom would be effective and continuous in return for tight control by the chief over his subjects entering the Reserve. It worked well for all the years I operated in the Selous and surrounding country. It was in support of this agreement that I carried out some intensive elephant hunting operations along the Nampungu and upper Muhuwesi river valleys. I found Chief Mpirembe particularly interesting. He had accompanied the famous elephant hunter James Sutherland on safari before the First World War. He was in his late teens

*Lichtenstein hartebeest in* miombo *woodland. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

then and was with Sutherland on his safari to the Luwegu and Luhanyando Rivers, where there were scattered villages that are now uninhabited and within the Selous Game Reserve. It was in these areas that Sutherland collected some of his best ivory, running up to 150 pounds in a single tusk. He remarked, with a twinkle in his eye, that Sutherland was a real man and was known locally as Njala Kiuno. *Kiuno* is the small of the back and pelvic area on a man, and *njala* is local dialect for "hungry." From this description it seems that Sutherland, in spite of the tough life he led, still enjoyed some home comforts. There were many elephants in the Nampungu Valley, which was a broad alluvial flatland covered with long grass (a species of Saccharum—wild sugar cane) and extensive patches of *Combretum constrictum* around seasonal rainwater pans and areas of flooding. Up the slopes on both sides, mature *miombo* forest was established where visibility was over two hundred yards. Annual fires had removed the lower grass cover. In the valley bottom, patches of dry-season corn had been planted close to the shallow riverbanks, and frequent visitations by elephants at night were slowly destroying it all. Small villages at intervals were located on the higher ground, well back into the *miombo* woodland. The Nampungu and upper Muhuwesi both flowed through extensively settled country in Mpirembe's chiefdom.

I was determined to do as much as possible, at least to ease the problems of elephant damage to their dry-season crops. It was relatively easy to locate the elephant herds and bulls by keeping to the high ground on either side of the valley from where they were often visible out in the long grass. Having located a herd and keeping a continuous check on the wind direction, we would make our approach and deal with them. If they became alarmed they were reluctant to leave the long grass in the flats. Rather than go up and through the open *miombo* and settlements, they preferred to move along the valley keeping to cover. Apart from the corn there was a lot of fresh regenerating grass throughout the area and many fruiting Borassus palms. I did not think there was any chance of them moving away for several weeks unless they were thoroughly disturbed. I estimated that there were not less than one hundred animals along a twenty-mile stretch of the Nampungu and just as many established on the Muhuwesi. They were in family units of up to ten to twelve head with one larger herd of thirty or more. Every day we also noted small groups of bulls or solitary animals.

After surveying the distribution of the elephants on the first day, I moved my camp to the Nampungu close to a village in the *miombo* high ground roughly in the centre of the stretch of valley most thickly occupied by the elephants. On the first day of hunting I killed sixteen elephants from six separate groups. Twice I had a situation with mobs of elephant coming fast toward me led by a large cow. Each time, I floored the leader at close range with a frontal brain shot, while the rest milled about confused before stampeding away from us. There is little doubt in my mind that the leading cow, in such incidents, is in fact charging and will kill any man she gets to. But those with her are followers, and one must assume that the leading cow is a matriarch who is followed wherever she goes, especially if a state of alarm and fright exists. I hunted and dealt with two small groups of elephant the next day, and already there was a noticeable decrease in their numbers. On the third day nearly all the family units had gone. Having walked for a few miles up the valley, we were satisfied that we had cleared the area of elephants and were about to return to camp. At this point one of the local villagers called us from the far side of the valley to say there was an elephant in his corn plot even now. It was midmorning by then, and it was highly unusual for a crop-raiding elephant to be feeding on cultivated land in daylight, let alone at 10 A.M. Accompanied by our local guides, we crossed the half-mile of valley bottom and met up with the man who had called us. He told us the elephant, which was a bull, had chased him off earlier when he tried to move it by shouting. He said it was *mkali kabisa* (very fierce) and begged me to shoot it. We followed him downstream along the edge of the tall grass for about half an hour. Then he stopped and said his *shamba* was near a Kigelia tree, which was visible over the top of the grass. A few yards on, we came to the footpath he regularly used to get to his land and followed this toward the riverbed. Quietly moving out of the grass onto the two-acre cornfield, we could see no elephant. We then moved to where he claimed the bull had been when he came to call us. It had pulled out and eaten quite a number of growing corn plants, and we saw where it had pursued the man when he shouted at it. It had demonstrated by moving in his direction some fifteen yards and then continued to pull out corn. It had since moved off into the long grass, where we would have to follow and destroy it.

Rather than immediately follow it into the long grass, I sent Mbukuri and James, with the owner of the *shamba,* to follow parallel along the valley on the high ground to see if it could be located. They returned after an hour, having had no luck. We now had to follow up its spoor. I did not know it then, but I was about to learn another lesson in elephant hunting. Despite elephant tracks all over the place in the long grass, Mbukuri was able to follow our bull quite easily. It was some two hours ahead of us and initially was still feeding. The tracks indicated a fair-sized animal in body, and he was clearly not disturbed. Because of the large number of elephant that had been occupying this valley, trampling and grazing had improved visibility to fifteen yards or so in most places, with a few stretches where it was not possible to see more than four to six yards. We finally heard the elephant ahead, splashing water and mud over himself, and came to a position where only the top of his back was visible. We could see the mud and water being blown over his shoulders and back. He had been moving upwind all the way, into a steady breeze that showed no sign of veering or slackening off, so we felt confident, close as he was, that the wind would not betray us. He was standing by a mud wallow surrounded by dense *Combretum constrictum* bush, and there

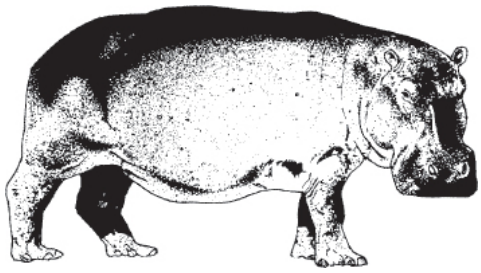
was no way I could move in there for a clearer view of him. After some minutes he moved on, still heading upwind, and as he did so I moved around the bush in the hope of catching him in the clear. No such luck; all I got was a brief glimpse of his rear end as the long grass closed in behind him.

The wind continued to blow steadily, and the elephant was unaware of our proximity. We followed straight behind, hearing clearly the rustle of the grass as he moved through it. As long as he kept moving, the noise he created tended to cover any noise from us, which we tried to keep at a low level. The locals had by now dropped well behind; I was in the lead with Mbukuri, next followed by James. A game scout stayed with the local guides to look after them and keep them quiet. Moving forward with a heightened sense of tension, I suddenly saw the bull's rear end in front of me some twenty feet away. He was motionless with his trunk visible over the top of his back, feeling for the wind. From his attitude he appeared to be suspicious. I had to do something quickly, but no vital part of the bull was visible, so I decided to try to turn him into a more favourable position. The elephant was motionless, so, seizing a handful of long grass stalks, I shook them hard, creating a loud rustle. He instantly swung around to face the sound, and I found myself almost under his tusks, looking up into his mouth. His trunk was up and his ears outspread. Since we were motionless, I do not think he saw us. I fired the right barrel of my .470 upward into his mouth, and he collapsed backward, rolling onto his side. I put a second shot into his chest as he lay on his side to be sure, and it was all over.

What I had not observed up to this time was that an elephant turning in a hurry like this pivots on its hind legs, bringing its head some ten or more feet closer than before. Attracted and, I suppose, alarmed by the rustling grass immediately behind, it ended up towering over me, putting me in a situation from which there was no escape, short of killing the animal. I took care never again to place myself in such a situation. The elephant population moved out of the Nampungu and Muhuwesi Valleys, retreating north toward the Selous Game Reserve, and I again returned to Liwale, via Mpirembe.

# The Northern Wilderness

*Chapter 15*



To the north of Liwale lay a vast wilderness with no human habitation. It had been thinly populated in the past, but widespread outbreaks of sleeping sickness had led to the disappearance of several villages. The whole area was heavily infested with tsetse fly, which carry the parasite trypanosome, one form of which affects man. It is the cause of sleeping sickness, or trypanosomiasis, as the disease is known to medical science. To break the cycle of infection it is necessary to eliminate the main host, man. During the 1940s the government compulsorily removed all residents of this area, the last of them departing in 1948. They were resettled at Ilonga in the west, Liwale in the south, and Njinjo in the east. The game department was requested by the administration to ensure that no resettlement took place anywhere in the vacated areas. Part of this country was already gazetted game reserve, and it was Ionides' policy to include the rest of it also. Over the next twenty years I managed to add all this country, plus some other bits and pieces that were ecologically important, to the Selous Game Reserve. It is worth recording that from late 1950 up to late 1973, when I resigned from the game department, no cases of sleeping sickness among my staff or visiting safari parties were reported. Tsetse fly were as thick as ever—we all got bitten over and over—but the trypanosomiasis cycle had been broken and the disease eliminated.

In late October 1950 I set out on my first safari into the great northern wilderness. The part I trekked through for the next five weeks was not part of the Selous Game Reserve at that time, but what I saw convinced me not only of its importance as a great game country but also of its ecological importance to the long-term survival of many species. Two days' walk downstream along the Liwale River brought us to the last villages, and three hours later we arrived at a permanent pool on the same river called Kihuramira, about two hours' walk from where it joined the Matandu. As we approached the narrow rim of forest around the pool I could hear loud grunting, bellowing, and high-pitched sounds from inside the forest cover. The place was a congestion of hippo trails leading out into the *miombo* woodland about

*A territorial dispute. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

us. With Mbukuri and a man named Mbaya Selemani, who was familiar with much of this wilderness, we entered the forest along a hippo trail. We soon saw the pool with two large schools of hippo wallowing in it. On the far side, in shallow water, two bulls were facing each other, one standing, the other sitting on his haunches. Both had their mouths partially open with a gap of two or three feet between them. Each time the standing bull moved toward the other, the bull on his haunches would bellow and grunt with his mouth wide open, raise his rear end and back off from his adversary a few feet, and then sit again. It was apparent that the standing bull was dominating the other, which groaned and bellowed at every move. After several advances on his retreating opponent, the dominant bull suddenly moved in close and pushed and bit the other bull as he tried to turn around and retreat. I had the impression that the animal making all the noise was the one getting the worst of the conflict. The aggressor made little noise.

Hippo are to a large extent territorial animals. In the dry season the males will savagely fight an invading bull until one or the other moves away. They frequently get killed or die of wounds inflicted in these contests, which can last for several days. The territorial disputes seem to involve only limited sections of a river; the surrounding grazing areas are a free-for-all for any hippo in the river. During the rains they will move about the country over distances of up to forty or fifty miles, lying up in rainwater pools during the day. Grazing at night at any time of year is an individual affair, and they only congregate in large groups when reentering the river for the daylight hours. I think it probable that the same hippo congregate at the same point on the river every day. Kihuramira was a deep, isolated, permanent pool, heavily polluted by three separate schools of hippo totaling over one hundred animals. Hippo live entirely on grass, and where there is any concentration of them, grazing becomes scarce in the dry season within a three-mile perimeter of their refuge in the river. Other species of grazing animals tend to move farther away at the peak of dry season, partly because the hippo clean out most of the grass, but also because they make it unpalatable by defecating over grass and shrubs whenever the urge takes them. The hippo scatters the dung in broken up bits all about it by thrashing its short tail vigourously. Throughout southeastern Tanganyika hippo are common in all the major rivers and lakes. There are also many crocodile in the same waters, some of them huge reptiles up to sixteen feet long and weighing more than a ton. Although crocs will readily feed off any hippo carcass, I have never seen any evidence that they attack hippo or their young. There seems to be a neutrality between these two species

that enables them to live together in the same waters without hostility. It is not uncommon to find hippo and crocodile lying close together on the same sandbank. The hippo's only enemy, apart from man, is the lion, but more about that later.

I trekked down to the Matandu River from Kihuramira and followed this attractive river for four days to a small conical hill named Kitumbi Mkwera. Although this country had been vacated by man only a few years before, the assorted game population was good. I saw many elephants and buffalo and evidence of several black rhino. Small herds of Nyasa wildebeest, zebra, Lichtenstein hartebeest, impala, eland, and kudu were to be seen every day, and I also saw two herds of sable antelope a little north of the river toward the Tundu Hills. Moving north from Kitumbi Mkwera, we reached the southernmost part of the Lungonyo flood plain, a very different habitat from the *miombo* and mixed silver Terminalia and Combretum we had been in.

The Lungonyo Plain is a flat expanse of treeless short grass, with a shallow drainage line running north through it to the groundwater forest and springs at Kingupira, where it becomes a defined riverbed. There are two large baobab trees close to the west side toward the southern end of the plain, where there is also permanent water in the drainage line. This place is, not surprisingly, called Mbuyuni (place of baobab). The plain looks as though it were once a lake. On each side of the Lungonyo Plain is a broad band of very flat, hardpan soil. The dominant tree here is the acacialike *Terminalia spinosa* with short grasses at ground level. Widely spaced rainwater pans were to be found throughout this country, some of which lasted almost through the dry season to the start of the annual rains. Walking through this very attractive country we saw abundant game, attracted by an endless carpet of bright-green, sprouting new grass. What impressed me most were the endless strings of guinea

*Eland in the Selous Game Reserve. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

fowl wherever one looked and the incredible numbers of warthog. In later visits the warthog were always there, but I have never seen guinea fowl in such numbers again anywhere.

The various antelope, wildebeest, and zebra were very timid for an area where no people were supposed to exist, and it soon became obvious why. At every water pan, dry or otherwise, were one or more *ulingos* in the tamarind trees that invariably grew beside them on old termite mounds. It behooved us to keep a sharp lookout for the people who had built these *ulingos*. As we approached Kingupira we were rewarded by seeing a man descending from a tree. We thought he had seen us and was trying to escape. We covered the quarter-mile between us at the run and found him collecting water at the pool below the trees. At this point we saw the *ulingo* with two men still up there, so without checking our speed we arrived at the base of the tree and captured our prisoners. The other guy had taken off and was nowhere to be seen. Our prisoners were armed with bows and poisoned arrows and claimed they had only arrived that day and had had no opportunity to kill any animal. We tied them up with bark rope and proceeded on to Kingupira Springs, where we camped and interrogated our prisoners. These people were Wangindo and had come from a village about five hours' walk away. The village was located in an area where they were not supposed to live, so I decided to go there and see what else they were up to. But before doing that I spent several days walking around the Kingupira, Ngarambe, and Lungonyo flats, keeping our prisoners under guard day and night.

There were a lot of lion here, and one night we were treated to an awesome chorus at close range by a pride that roared continuously for about two hours. I had only twice before heard such a performance—at Suguta Mugi and on the Grumeti River on the edge of the Serengeti Plain in 1948. One morning we were out early as usual when we saw a large lion lying out in the clear 150 yards away. He saw us at about one hundred yards' range and with rumbling growls loped out of sight. My curiosity was aroused because the animal had been panting heavily before he made off, without any obvious reason. As we approached where he had been, there were mounds of freshly dug-up soil a little way off. We went there to find a fully grown boar warthog lying dead, bitten through the head by the lion. The hog had been chased by the lion and had taken refuge down an aardvark hole. Looking at the line of excavations, it was obvious that the lion had then set to and spent most of the night digging the hog out, chewing through tree roots that impeded his progress. This explained his exhausted state. I have seen evidence that lions have some knowledge of their prey. They know warthogs can be panicked into abandoning a hole if they think they are being dug out; therefore, the lion scratches around on the surface at the top of the entrance and seizes the panicked pig as it emerges. In this particular instance the old boar stayed put, but it was a shallow burrow in soft ground running parallel with the surface, only twelve inches above. The lion seemed to know this and spent most of the night digging along the line of the burrow, until the pig tried to make a break.

I had sent for the head game scout of Kilwa District, Nonga, to assist in dealing with the poaching situation, since he was responsible for the Lungonyo-Kingupira area. When he arrived we set off, with our prisoners leading the way to their village. After walking some hours through uninhabited country, we entered a concealed valley in the hills lying east of the Lungonyo plain. There were ten houses here with their *ngokwes,* along with two dozen people including women and a few children. Before further interrogation I ordered Nonga and Mbaya to search all the houses with the help of my

porters. We recovered nearly two hundred dried-out hides of various antelope, three elephant tusks, and a pot full of fresh poison for smearing onto arrowheads. This was clearly a community whose main occupation was hunting. Since the *mtama* harvest from July was being stored in several *ngokwes,* they had a limited area under cultivation. It was always difficult for me to lead initial interrogation because of the nervous state of these bush people when confronting a white government official. Nonga therefore took on this function with Mbaya, assisting him. They quickly disposed of the usual excuses of lack of food or cash, and reported back to me with evidence of a thriving racket in game meat. All the men were involved in it and had customers arriving with cash in hand from many hours' walk away. Because the government had prohibited settlement throughout this wilderness area, and it was the responsibility of the game department to enforce this law, I had no option but to remove them totally.

I summoned all the men to tell them that their houses would be destroyed after a one-day grace period to remove their belongings. Before setting fire to all the huts late the next day, a request was made by the owners that two extra days be granted before destroying the grain storage *ngokwes*. The extra time was needed to prepare the grain for transport in head loads to settlements near Njinjo, where they intended to move. I agreed to this, and on the second day, with all the men under guard, I moved my camp to a long-established village some three hours' walk to the east. The *ngokwes* had all been cleared, and the women were making up the final loads of grain into packages made of the inner bark of mature *Brachystegia* trees. At midday I sent Nonga, accompanied by two of his subordinate game scouts who had arrived from Njinjo, back to destroy the empty *ngokwes*.

A month later, I found out that Nonga and his colleagues had routed indirectly back to our previous camp via some small settlements outside the closed sleeping sickness area and had burned down some thirty additional houses on the way. I do not understand what triggered Nonga's reasoning. Perhaps he thought the good old days of Wangoni raiding and pillaging had returned. I learned about this when I arrived at Kilwa Masoko, the district headquarters. The prisoners had been taken to the chief's court at Njinjo and convicted for illegal residence in a closed area, hunting without licenses, and trading in game meat. They were given the option of a fine or one month's hard labour, and they paid the fine. They or anyone else never attempted to return to the closed area again, and their hunting and game meat racketeering died. A district officer from Kilwa heard reports about Nonga's burning spree when visiting Njinjo to inspect the records of the lower court there. The convictions were upheld, and further inquiries confirmed reports of the additional hut burning by Nonga. This in turn was passed on to the district commissioner at Kilwa, who confronted me with it when I arrived at the end of December 1950. Pleading ignorance, I was shown written statements by people affected. I had certainly not authorized Nonga's actions, but after calling on Nonga for an explanation, I had to agree that it happened, and since I was the senior government officer in charge at the time, I was obligated to take responsibility for it.

After leaving the Lungonyo and having finalized the handing over and prosecution of my prisoners, I routed through the Matumbi Hills near the coast to deal with elephant complaints. I then walked south to the *boma* at Kilwa Masoko, arriving there between Christmas 1950 and the 1951 new year. The timing was deliberate; being a loner, I wished

to avoid being invited to join in any festivities during this period. I thought I could account for and renew my safari cash imprest, which consisted of a full head load of copper ten-cent coins for the purchase of food for porters, at the rate of 30 cents per day per man. Unfortunately, the *boma* cash office had closed their accounts for the year and were unable to attend to my needs until 2 January. I was compelled to remain at Kilwa until then and camped under some mango trees near the district commissioner's house. I was invited to join in his New Year's Eve celebration, which was to be held on the beach below the senior residential houses after nightfall. I made my way there well after dark and found all the white government officials and their wives there drinking and having a good time. Little did I realize that I was shortly to experience something akin to what an elephant must feel when receiving a side brain shot.

During the evening the district commissioner, Geoffrey Alsebrook, and an assistant, Ken Mortlock, had an ancient cast iron black-powder cannon delivered to the beach and placed a short distance from where we were all sitting on the sand. An announcement that it was to be fired off at one minute past midnight was accepted without qualms. The cannon was a great chunk of iron on a trolleylike structure with small iron wheels and certainly weighed more than a ton. Just before midnight Alsebrook announced that the cannon was to be fired, and Mortlock, who claimed to have a blasting certificate, proceeded to load it at the muzzle. I do not recall much of what happened next. I was aware of a monstrous explosion, a gigantic blow in my right temple, and a feeling of floating in space. I recall realizing that I was flat on my back on the beach, waving my arms and legs about but unable to rise or change my position. Slowly things returned to normal, and I recovered sufficiently to be able to stand up and walk, albeit with a shocking headache and blood all over my face, neck, and right shoulder. The headache stayed with me for ten days; then I was sent down to Lindi for X-ray examination and expert medical attention. It seems that this black-powder cannon had been loaded with gelignite by the blasting expert. He and Alsebrook had stood at the rear to light the fuse. The next instant the whole cannon disintegrated, leaving the wheels still on the beach. Luckily, most of the shrapnel went to the right, where no one was sitting. The two men at the rear were untouched. Those of us to the left were in the path of a few pieces blown in that direction. I collected a piece in the side of the head, the district officer's wife Ivy Hildersley had an arm broken by shrapnel, and an agricultural officer named Pinaar was blown to the ground. There were no other injuries because the main force of the explosion went to the right.

My checkup at Lindi showed no fractures or other damage to my head, and I had a few days to fill in before flying back to Kilwa on the scheduled flight. I stayed with John Blower and told him about the great game country I had just visited. I was sufficiently impressed by it to feel it warranted inclusion within new boundaries of the Selous Game Reserve. This could not be done, because the descriptions had already been accepted for gazetting in 1951. However, to start the ball rolling, I persuaded Blower to recommend that the whole area be made a forest reserve. This would at least reinforce the rather vague restrictions that prevented residence there because of sleeping sickness. People could enter but were not permitted to reside or cut trees in forest reserves. I also made an approach to the provincial commissioner, head of the civil service in the province, for his support. Up to this time I had never met this very senior official, whose name was

Andy Pike. I believe he was an Irishman, well over fifty-five years old. I did not know what his views were on game and wildlife in general. I made an appointment and arrived on time, to be ushered into his spacious and well-furnished office by a junior district officer, who then left. Stretched across one wall was a map of Southern Province. After stating my case for an extension to the game reserve, he asked me to indicate the area I was talking about. Having done this, I returned to my seat. Then Pike went over to the map and ran his finger along the boundaries we had discussed. He had a harsh, grating voice with a noticeable accent, and he turned to me, saying, "You are sterilizing the land," and showed me the door. The whole area, and more, eventually became part of the game reserve, but certainly not with any help from Mr. Pike. It seems he was one of those administration officers who, throughout his long career, had remained hostile to wild animals and considered them a threat to the African peasantry out in the bush.

# Some Man-Eating Lions

*Chapter 16*

In April 1951 I was walking to a place called Gumbiro, just north of Songea, some 250 miles west of Liwale. Complaints of a lion there were becoming almost hysterical; repeated telegrams from the district commissioner at Songea reached me with every mail *tarishi* (messenger). According to these telegrams, the lion had taken one hundred people and had evaded all attempts to either hunt it down or trap it, and the district commissioner demanded my personal intervention in this affair. The southeast monsoon rains were at their peak, and even the main road from Lindi to Songea was closed due to endless mud and washed-out bridges. I was walking direct to Gumbiro through uninhabited country most of the way, along the Nangunguru Ridge and then across the flooded Mbarangandu River and up a tributary from the southwest called the Kiloweru. The Nangunguru Ridge, as mentioned earlier, is a major watershed.

One night we camped at the source of the Mlembwe River to the north and the Ruhuhu River flowing to the south. In the preceding six weeks I had received reports of four people taken by a lion on the lower Mlembwe. The settlements where this had happened were far down the valley, thirty or forty miles away, and none of us suspected there was any chance of a closer acquaintance with the man-eater in this remote place. The camp was on flat ground in mature *miombo* forest with dense grass cover averaging five to six feet tall. A well-established elephant path followed the ridge and passed through the camp. It was hot and humid when I went to bed that night. I was under a mosquito net, and to increase the air circulation the front and rear flaps of the tent were rolled up wide open, as were the walls on both sides. A few yards to the right rear of my tent was a grass oblong kitchen hut, erected that afternoon for protection from the rain. Three sides were closed by thatch and one end was open. In the centre were three stones around a fire. Two men were sleeping in there, one on each side of the fire. To the front right about twenty yards away the porters and game scouts had their camp. This consisted of erected tents and a tarpaulin in a space cleared of grass. There were some twenty porters and three game scouts sleeping there.

Some of these men were sleeping in the open near a large central fire, which had burned out, leaving a layer of hot coals.

Rain in the late afternoon had stopped, leaving a heavily overcast sky and a very black moonless night. I retired to bed in my tent at 9 P.M. At 2 A.M. I was awakened by a lot of yelling from the kitchen shack near my tent. The yelling was instantly taken up in the porters' camp. At the same time I heard the sound of a heavy creature galloping past the right side of, and very close to, my tent. It then swung around to the front, and I heard a thump on the ground and tearing noises at the spot. I always went to bed with a large flashlight under the mosquito netting and kept a loaded rifle on the floor for any emergency. Seizing the flashlight, I pulled up the net and swung my legs so that I was in a sitting position on the edge of the bed. Flashing the light out to the front, I saw two lions with a man between them, lying on their bellies tearing vigourously at his torso. The lioness then immediately rose, picking up the man's body, and disappeared into the surrounding grass, followed by the other lion, which was a male cub three-quarters grown. The remaining man in the kitchen shack was yelling out *"Simba, simba, simba,"* and this had been taken up by all the porters in an absolute bedlam of noise. I pulled on my shorts and runners and emerged from my tent. A few seconds later I was joined by Mbukuri, muttering *"Simba"* over and over again in a tense half-whisper. I told him to be quiet and to do exactly as I told him. We would follow the lions into the long grass with the aid of the flashlight. I told him I would carry my .470 and the light until we came up with them. He was to follow behind and take over the light when I was in a position to shoot, keeping the beam over my right shoulder along the barrels of the rifle and onto the lions. He understood, and we moved after the lions.

The grass was wet and tall, and it was easy to follow the drag mark with the aid of the light. With every nerve on high alert, we moved into the grass and heard the lions feeding after about one hundred yards. I advanced carefully and came around a sharp bend along the drag line, and there, ten or twelve feet away on flattened grass, were the lions lying on their bellies, tearing away at the man's flesh. The lioness was nearest to me, chewing at the man's left thigh. The cub had removed the man's arm at the shoulder and was licking at the gore of the wound. As Mbukuri took over the light, the lioness sat up on her haunches, staring straight at me. I shot her in the chest and she collapsed on the spot. At the rifle report, the cub, which up to now had ignored us, sat up facing us with the man's arm jutting out of each side of its jaws. I fired the left barrel into its chest, and it instantly fell to the ground. It was all over; one man and two lions were dead. After checking out the bodies I told Mbukuri to go and calm everyone down and call four men to carry the dead porter to a more suitable place. Everyone remained wide awake for the rest of the night and was very subdued, keeping the campfires burning brightly until daybreak.

As soon as it was light enough to see well, Mbukuri and I set about studying the spoor of these two lions to get the full picture of what had happened. We found the lions had followed our trail along the elephant path and then moved over to and around my tent, the pug marks being all around and close to it. At one point the lioness's nose would have been a few inches from my head, with only a mosquito net between us. From there they moved to the porters' camp. It was evident they had walked around the tents and then in between some of the porters sleeping in the open. Nothing appeared to attract them there. They then went directly to the kitchen shack near my tent, moved all around it, and then, ignoring the wide-open end, clawed out part of the

*Lion that killed one of author's porters. 1951.*

grass wall on one side. The lioness moved in. Standing with her front paws on the man sleeping by the wall, she leaned forward past the fire embers between the cooking stones and grabbed the other man by the head. She then dragged him out, moving in reverse. It was about now that the man being stood upon woke up, aware of a heavy weight on his chest, and instinctively put his arms up to ward off the weight. The lioness growled savagely as his arms went around her neck, and this woke him up fully in a screaming panic. This set off the uproar in the porters' camp, and the lions bolted with their prey past my tent to the front, which is what woke me. I doubt if the dead porter felt anything at all; his skull was crushed by that first bite, with brain tissue spattered about his head.

The lions were hungry and thin but otherwise in good shape. These were in fact the lower Mlembwe man-eaters, and it was just our bad luck that they were almost certainly changing their territory when they attacked my camp. I believe they had abandoned the Mlembwe settlement area and were moving across the Nangunguru Ridge to hunt the Ruhuhu Valley on the south side, which had several villages along it. The porter was buried that morning with Islamic ritual, and we moved on that afternoon, for we still had nearly seventeen days' walk to reach Gumbiro, our priority destination on this safari. Before continuing with further episodes with lions it may be useful and informative to relate what I have learnt about these animals over the years.

There is a widespread belief that a lion, once it eats human flesh, wants to live off man in preference to any other animal. In southeastern Tanganyika man-eating is more widespread and more frequent than in any other area I have heard about. There lions kill as many as two hundred people each year; but it is a seasonal phenomenon that occurs between late

March and July, when lions go hungry for long periods. This comes about because, first, there is a low game population in the areas settled by man; second, it is the hardest time of year for lions to hunt their normal prey successfully. When the monsoon rains start, what little game is available in the settled country disperses because unlimited water and quality grazing are now available everywhere. Lions in these areas kill an average of less than once a week. When the grass in the *miombo* country is at its maximum length—from March until July, when the annual fires burn it out—game animals become more difficult to hunt. With poor visibility, noise, wide dispersal, low numbers, and prey more on the alert because of all the cover, the rate of successful kills declines to as little as one per month, supplemented by snacks such as an occasional cane rat or other rodents. There are no domestic stock in this country, and lions will start taking man because they are hungry. Often, before doing so, a lion will hang around settlements at night for a week or more, catching dogs and cats before taking a man. In most cases that I have dealt with, these lions are not old or crippled. At the end of the rains and when the tall grass is cleaned out by fire, the same lion survives on wild game well enough, and man-eating stops until the following year. The cause of man-eating is purely and simply hunger, not a preference for human flesh. Injured or crippled lions also kill people out of necessity to survive. Where livestock exists they will go for it instead of man; that is the reason man-eating lion are rare in cattle country.

An interesting phenomenon with some man-eaters is their persistence in going for a particular individual. The porter who was taken by lions in my camp is a case in point, and I will highlight other incidents in my experience that point the same way. My theory is that each of us has an individual aroma; thus, a dog can pick out his master from among any number of other concealed people. The lion finds one person's scent more attractive or possibly less repellent than another's and will go to considerable trouble to get that person. I hunted a lion in 1957 in the Lusewa area of south Songea District and managed to kill him after a protracted hunt. He displayed a remarkable persistence in his attention to one wretched man, who was killed and eaten. This animal, a mature male, had killed and eaten a dozen people between March and June that year. One night he broke into a hut, killed all four people inside, and then dragged one of them outside and ate him. I responded to a request for help and arrived there by truck late on the second day after the attack. Mfaume Ali Kawawa, the head game scout of Songea District, was already there and met me on arrival. He had been there for over two weeks trying to deal with this lion without success. He was one of the most competent men in the range, and although he made many attempts—sitting over a partially eaten corpse one night, baiting several traps with bush pig (which lions prey on), and following it up to shoot—all of them failed. This was an indication that we had a wary animal to deal with. Mfaume informed me that its kills were spread over an area I calculated to be approximately one hundred square miles, and it never killed in the same place twice in succession. Within this area were several small villages. Since there was no way of knowing when or where the next attack would come, I decided to establish my camp in a central position and await developments.

There is a great deal of superstition among the local tribespeople about lions that turn to killing and eating man. They believe the man-eater to be a reincarnation of a deceased person who kills individuals or their descendants who wronged it in life. They also believe that some families have magical powers *(uchawi)* to send a lion to kill people in revenge for perceived

wrongs committed by individuals or a community. There is near-paralytic fear of man-eaters because of this. In desperation they will attempt to hunt down a man-eater to kill it, but this is seldom successful, and it requires no great intellect to understand why. After a kill a great many men are summoned by a recognized drumbeat called in local dialect *ngula mtwe*. The beat matches the syllables of these two words and is easily recognizable. Upon hearing it, all the men within a radius of four or five miles arm themselves with whatever weapons they possess and proceed to the place where the drum signal is coming from. The result is that a group of heavily armed men—with muzzleloading guns, small spears, and bows with poisoned arrows—congregate and proceed to follow the lion's tracks, beating through thicket or long grass and any other suspect cover in which the quarry may hide. Such efforts seldom result in the lion's demise, and tend to make it wary and timid in daylight hours. The men deliberately make so much noise as they go that one is inclined to believe that they want to be sure they do not catch up with the lion.

In consultation with Mfaume, I hired a few men locally as porters, left the truck at Lusewa, and walked the next morning to a small village, where we arrived at about 10 A.M. The rest of the day was spent building a stout stockade of poles around the campsite for protection at night. With no reports to act on for the next two days, I wandered casually about the surrounding countryside to get some orientation on the lay of the land and to look for any lion spoor. I discovered the spoor of a large lion in two places, but it was not fresh, and it was not necessarily that of the man-eater. At one point it had chased a warthog for over one hundred yards and failed to catch it. From the spoor we found in dried-out mud in a valley bottom, it appeared that the inner pad of the right front paw was missing. This observation turned out to be of great assistance, because it was a sure identification of this lion, which in fact was the man-eater. Neither Mfaume nor any of the locals had noticed this up to then, and once again it was Mbukuri's skill that noticed this at once.

On the third morning in camp we heard the *ngula mtwe* drum call and immediately proceeded there, arriving a half-hour later. A woman had been killed and dragged away at dawn. She had apparently emerged from her hut to answer the call of nature and had been killed a few yards away and carried off. Her children in the hut waited for her return and when she failed to reappear after a longish time started to shout out their alarm. The adult men immediately went to the hut, saw lion spoor and the place where the woman had been soundlessly killed, and got out their drum to send the message. Examining the scene of action, it seems the woman had squatted down on her haunches within a patch of cassava plants ten yards from the hut. The lion was concealed right there, knowing the habits of his prey, and immediately seized her by the head, killing her instantly. He then lifted her in his jaws and retreated into the *miombo* forest for nearly two hundred yards. Here he disemboweled her and had his feed. The lion had had adequate time to have a full meal. Apart from her head and feet, there was little left of the woman but a few cracked bones, a section of rib cage, and the pelvis, lying about on the blood-soaked, flattened grass. We examined this gruesome scene, and, remembering our observations over the previous two days, I told Mbukuri and Mfaume Ali to look for and carefully inspect any clear tracks they could find here. It was the lion with a missing front right toe. We knew now that the tracks we had seen previously belonged to the man-eater. Having seen the identification mark, we did not necessarily have to wait for

a kill but could follow the lion any time we came across his fresh spoor. We followed this lion all day from the place he had eaten the woman but never saw him. He kept to the mature woodland, and his first resting place was in thicket on a termite mound. By the time we found this he had seen us from a distance and moved on into a valley bottom full of thicket and long grass. Reaching the fringe of this, we sat down to rest and, more important, to give the lion time to sleep, for I thought it likely he would lie up for the day here. After a heavy feed, lions will often move into cover where, I suppose, they feel secure, and will sleep heavily, even grunting and growling sometimes in dreams. By creeping along slowly and quietly I have been able to approach a sleeping lion to within ten feet and kill it.

An hour later we moved slowly on along the spoor. It meandered along the valley thickets for over a mile, and I was expecting to find signs of the lion lying down, but none appeared. He then left the thicket for open woodland, where, at another termite mound, we again disturbed him without seeing him. This happened once more before we gave up for the day with the light failing. It had now become apparent that with all the chivvying about by armed hunting groups in the past few weeks, the lion had his own technique for avoiding them. During the next ten days I found and followed the fresh spoor of this lion on two occasions, which was proof enough he was still in the area. On each day we followed him he would rest in open *miombo* woodland where visibility was good. He seemed to purposely avoid heavier cover, but we never saw him once. I decided that I had to adapt my methods to his, and on the next hunt I intended to study the terrain ahead with field glasses. The idea was to try and pick out large termite mounds covered in thicket at a range too far for the lion to see us approaching. I was sure that he was deliberately placing himself to rest in positions where he could see us in good time to make his escape. An interesting observation was that he was not bolting from cover on the termite mounds but moving off at a walk to his next vantage or resting point. When we saw what appeared to be a suitable mound, Mfaume and I would make a very wide circuit to arrive at a position a few hundred yards beyond it. It was all guesswork and a question of luck. I hoped the lion, on seeing Mbukuri and the remaining followers approaching, would move toward my position so that I could shoot him.

The following night the lion killed a young man a little way from my camp, illustrating deliberate selection of an individual and persistence in getting that particular person. There were tribal circumcision rituals taking place at this coldest time of the year. A couple of circumcision experts had arrived at Lusewa, and many people from the surrounding villages had made their way there for the ceremonies before and after the initiation rites. Two young men had arrived at a village and, finding everyone had already departed for Lusewa, decided to follow, even though darkness was falling. They set off, and soon it was completely dark. About a mile from the village the young fellow at the rear was seized by a lion. His companion, armed with a spear and a club, went for the lion and frightened it off his injured friend. He then picked him up and with difficulty carried him back to the village. The mauled victim was placed in a hut, and, after binding up his wounds on the shoulders and neck, the companion laid him on a bed and went out, closing the door securely. He must have been an incredibly brave young fellow, for now, in complete darkness with no light and only primitive weapons for defense, he set off alone for Lusewa to raise help. A large crowd of men arrived back at the village around midnight, led by the survivor. What they found was a shocking example of

lion persistence. It had broken into the hut where the injured man had been left by crashing down the secured door. It had then seized the man, dragged him out and into the surrounding bush, and eaten the greater part of him. I received the news that same night early in the morning when some of the men came to my camp.

There was nothing I could do until daylight, so we made up a big brew of tea and drank it, and left before dawn for the village, arriving at sunrise. By this time a lot more armed men had arrived, but I did not need their assistance. I told them to stay there and went after the lion with Mbukuri, Mfaume Ali, and two locals familiar with the surrounding country. Once again the lion had fed well, leaving only the head and part of the legs and feet of his victim. The spoor was our same lion with a missing front toe. After its large feed I thought the lion might revert to more normal behaviour and make for cover to sleep it off. My intention was to wait for an hour or more after we followed to the edge of dense cover, to enable him to go into a deep sleep. We followed his spoor through open woodland for at least an hour and to a termite mound where he had rested and then moved. It seemed that he was into his usual routine, so we decided to wait a while to give him a chance to settle down. I knew that if he behaved as before, our prospects of seeing him were slim indeed, and my only hope of success was to outmaneuver him. I followed Mbukuri, stopping every forty or fifty yards to search with field glasses for distant termite mounds or thicket patches far ahead. Soon I was able to discern a termite mound some five hundred yards ahead through the trees.

I now told Mbukuri to give me at least thirty minutes to make a diversion far out and circle around to a point beyond the mound. Mfaume accompanied me. Mbukuri was then to keep along the spoor wherever it went, but to whistle through his fingers if it diverted from where Mfaume and I would be waiting. We arrived at our interception point and waited. Sometime later a whistle to our left indicated the lion was going elsewhere, so we joined up with Mbukuri again and continued along the spoor. Several stops later I managed to make out a thicket-covered termite mound a long way ahead with open sky beyond it, an indication of a drop-off in the lay of the land. Once again Mfaume and I did our wide circular maneuver, ending up between four and five hundred yards beyond the mound, with a depression choked with long grass beyond us.

Once again we waited, and ten minutes after arriving Mfaume said he thought he saw something moving through the short grass to our front right. Slowly raising the field glasses, I studied the grass cover and soon saw the lion walking calmly along, disappearing into patches of longer grass for a few seconds as he went. He did not seem to be the least bit nervous, stopping occasionally with head up to look back to where he had come from. If he continued along his line of retreat, he would move too far from us, and if there was to be any chance of nailing him we had to move. To give greater coverage I told Mfaume to remain where we were and to shoot the lion if it came within range. I moved off to the right, bent double in an effort to remain out of sight. After moving about two hundred yards I stopped to check things out. Carefully rising, I immediately saw the lion, by now less than two hundred yards away, still walking unhurriedly along but now heading toward the left. I remained motionless and, as it progressed, realized it would not come closer than 150 yards to me on its present course. I picked a tree as a point of reference to shoot it if it had not altered course toward me by then. As it approached this point I shot it with the right barrel of my .470. It grunted and, turning away, galloped toward Mfaume. I fired again, but heavy rifles

are not the best for any sort of long-range shooting, and I missed. I was reloading when I heard a single shot from Mfaume and then silence. With my .470 ready I quickly made my way over to his position. He said he had seen the lion at about fifty yards, passing the far side of his position. It had disappeared after the shot, and Mfaume, an unusually small man, had not been able to see it again. Mfaume and I advanced on the spot, ready for any eventuality, and found the lion dead. A quick inspection of its right front paw revealed a missing pad and claw but no scars or marks to tell us how this might have happened. My shot, which was a solid, hit the lion too far back and had gone through and out the other side, wasting much of its impact energy. Mfaume hit it at the base of the neck with his .404, killing it instantly. This was very good work and saved us the dangerous job of dealing with a wounded lion.

I never did manage to kill the Gumbiro man-eater on my 1951 safari, because of the fear and superstition of the local people. As stated earlier, this lion was reported to have taken at least one hundred people. Mfaume Ali and some of his game scouts were there and had made several attempts to kill this lion, by setting baited traps, waiting in ambush near uneaten corpses, and following up spoor in the hope of seeing the lion and shooting it. During the wet season of 1950 Mfaume had shot and killed an adult male near Gumbiro, but the killing had continued without a break. I spent some two weeks there in late April and May 1951 but received no reports at all during this time, although one man was killed and eaten and another mauled.

I was actually following up a lion when we came to a place where the local villagers had gone out of their way to deliberately obliterate the tracks well ahead of us, so that we could no longer follow it. It is a situation that is inexplicable to any rational person. All these people had been and were still living in a state of daily terror. All of them were at risk, shutting themselves up in their huts before dark, not to emerge again until daylight. The lion took to killing at any time of day, so that people moved about to the fields or between villages in armed groups. Even this did not deter it, for there was at least one incident where a large group of men and women were walking to a place called Mbunga along a district road. One of them dropped a bit to the rear and was seized and killed by the lion. It seems the animal trailed along behind such groups with the intention of getting a straggler. It certainly had knowledge of their routines. Booze was indirectly the cause of several of its kills. Throughout the Gumbiro area the people grew and cultivated a species of bamboo that produced an alcoholic drink. The white man called it bamboo wine, and when it was fresh it was a very pleasant drink. However, it fermented quickly and within a few days turned into a powerful spirit like booze. The method used to collect this stuff was to lop off the top of a new stem and attach a container to the side. Overnight the sap would continue to rise and would flow over into the container, which was collected the next morning. The process continued for two or three days until the sap supply ceased and the shoot died. It seems that for some of the men the lure of booze outweighed the fear of death, and they would regularly go to their bamboo stands to collect every day or two. The lion was clearly aware of this custom, and it would wait concealed in the bamboo stands and grab any man that came there. Many of its victims were killed in this situation. The alarm would only be raised when the guy failed to return to his hut after an hour or more, by which time the lion had eaten enough to keep him going for a while. The seeds for this lion's death lay in his habit of frequently ambushing his victims in the bamboo booze groves. Some time after

I had abandoned the attempt to get rid of him he attacked a man collecting booze. No one knows what happened, but the man was armed with a spear. His relatives discovered his body in a bamboo stand with his neck, head, and shoulders severely mauled. He had not been eaten at all, but his spear was found nearby with blood all over it. It seems that during the attack he managed to thrust his spear into the lion, severely wounding it. Whatever the cause, lion killings in the Gumbiro area stopped from that day on. The lion's body was never found, but I believe it was the spear wound it received from its last victim that killed it, maybe days later in some remote cover.

Hunting man-eaters can be very nerve-racking work, since it is often in places of poor visibility because of dense bush. They are not usually attracted to baits put out for them and seldom return to feed off a victim they have killed. Because they are man-eaters, one feels obligated to follow them under any conditions and to risk shooting with the probability of wounding the animal instead of killing it on the spot. One then has to hunt out a wounded lion, probably the most dangerous of all the big African animals.

In 1956 I was at Mtwara on the coast hunting a lion that was supplementing its normal diet of bush pig by taking the occasional man or woman. This had been going on for a long time. Mtwara is an area of extensive secondary bush interspersed by shallow valleys covered with tall nine- and ten-foot dense grass tangled with bush and vines. One night a man who had been drinking the local brew was returning to his house and never arrived. His wife and relatives set out the next morning to find him and discovered his remains a short way off a footpath in a thicket. Word reached me early, and in company with Mbukuri I arrived there by 8 A.M. There was little left of him but his head and feet, and the lion had gone away with a full belly. Because of its apparently engorged condition and the surrounding dense bush, I felt that it would not go far before lying up to sleep off its meal. To improve our prospects of finding the lion in a deep sleep, we waited for another hour before taking up the spoor.

In this coastal bush the ground is generally free of grass or other cover and the soil is soft. Visibility is near zero except close to the ground, where it may be anything from ten to thirty feet. Mbukuri took up the trail, followed by me. In order to reduce the noise level moving through this dense cover, we did not take a local with us. Moving slowly and carefully, crouched almost double, at times on hands and knees, we had progressed for nearly an hour when we came to a place where the lion had lain down. From here it started moving erratically, lying down in several places, then moving on again. We knew the lion was not far off, for its movements clearly indicated it was looking for somewhere to finally lie down and sleep. In these situations the tension is intense, and I like to stop every fifteen or twenty minutes to ease it off and have better control over my reactions. We were sitting silent on one of these occasions when we heard a muffled growl ahead and to one side. There was no question what it was, and we now had positioned it roughly twenty yards away.

I took the lead, .470 in hand with one soft and one solid round in the barrels. The air was calm, but lions are not well endowed with scenting ability, so this did not bother me. Crawling forward under considerable tension, I progressed slowly and quietly in the direction of the growl. I saw something a few feet ahead and stopped, staring at and around it for some seconds. I then saw slight movement and realized it was large flies, and with that the lion's mouth and teeth came into shape. It was lying on its back

in a deep sleep with its mouth open. As I realized this, it rolled away from me onto its side and out of sight. I moved very carefully, and a patch of hide became visible. I knew which end the head was, but I could not be sure what part of it I was looking at. With such an opportunity I felt I had to do something, even if in more normal circumstances I would have backed out. I considered and then discarded the thought of making a sound or whistle to disturb it and make it get up, because it would still be invisible and would bolt if thoroughly disturbed. I finally moved over a little to my right and saw what I thought was the rear end of the rib cage. I decided to shoot, hoping to hit the heart. I fired the softnose bullet from the right barrel. There was an almighty grunting roar and crashing of bush, and the lion was gone.

Both Mbukuri and I were saturated with sweat and just stayed where we were for the time being. We needed relief from the built-up tension and had to think about our next move with a wounded lion on our hands. The cover here was so uninviting that I considered calling it a day and going back to camp to search for the animal the following morning. I also felt that I might have inflicted a fatal wound, and if we waited for a while we might find it dead. I finally decided to wait half an hour. Having heard no sound, we started along the lion's trail. There was some blood along it and then frequent loose droppings, which is a sign of a hard-hit animal. Under indescribable tension we crept along the spoor until the ground started to slope down to a depression and the thicket opened out a little. As the thicket gave way to long grass, we both heard a low moan ahead. As I moved another step forward, a deep growl pulled me up short with rifle at my shoulder, ready to fire. The next instant the lion, with grunting, coughing growls, appeared, with its mouth half-open, coming straight at me. My sights were instantly on its nose, and I fired, bringing it down in a heap ahead of me. I put the second barrel through the top of its neck ahead of the shoulder blade. The first shot had shattered the skull, but it had all happened so fast that the next shot was an automatic reaction.

After relaxing some ten minutes we examined the carcass. This was an adult male in good condition but a bit thin. My first shot, when I wounded it, had plowed through the liver and inflicted a mortal wound. Had we waited overnight we undoubtedly would have found it dead. It got into eating man because of hunger. This is an area devoid of game, and it had probably existed on bush pig in these dense thickets all its life until for some reason it could not kill often enough. It had given Mbukuri and me a very tense and exciting hunt. To finally succeed in eliminating it made us both feel elated and *uchawi*-proof.

Back in camp, I was met by a messenger from the district commissioner, Mtwara. The note advised me that my wife had been admitted to hospital at Nachingwea to have our first child, Susan Karen. I left at once by Land Rover and arrived that night to see her, going straight to the ward covered in dust and grime.

I hunted one lion that definitely took to eating people out of hunger caused by previous injuries. The animal, again an adult male, was in Liwale District just north of a village called Kibutuka, on the road from the Mbwemkuru River to Liwale. During the rains in 1958, I was doing elephant control work at settlements along the river and had stopped for two days at the newly completed bridge when the call came. A man arrived at my camp at around 8 A.M., on a bicycle, saying he had been sent to report that a villager had been seized and taken away by a lion at 9 P.M. the previous night. I had Mbukuri and Kibanda with me on this safari, and we were happy to go after it, but there was a problem

of distance. After some haggling, we managed to hire two more bicycles and left for the scene of the killing shortly afterward. Passing Kibutuka, we arrived at the village a half-hour later. There were already some thirty armed men there, making a great deal of noise and claiming to be ready to hunt. This had been going on for the past two hours, indicating their zeal was for noise rather than action. Telling them to relax and ease up on the noise, I said I would let them know if their assistance was required. The man had come out of his hut the previous evening and was walking to another hut in the village when he disappeared. It was a dark night, and one supposes no one was concerned about this man's movements or whereabouts. The discovery that he was missing was not made until early the next morning when some blood and lion spoor was found in between the huts of the village. The people straightaway concluded someone had been taken by a lion. They soon ascertained who was missing, and the *ngula mtwe* drums spread the news fast. They had not attempted to follow the lion beyond the immediate village space, so we had a clean start and hopefully an undisturbed lion to hunt.

As it turned out, this was without a doubt the quickest and easiest hunt for a man-eating lion I ever had. The three of us moved off to the point where the spoor and the drag mark of the man's body left the bit of cultivated cassava and beans, at a drop-off of the land into an area of low-country bamboo. It was all in leaf, draped in a dense green curtain of leaves. Underfoot was damp, short grass and bare patches of earth. The drag mark left by the lion carrying its kill was very clear to see, and we were soon inside the bamboo cover, out of sight of the village, with Kibanda in the lead. We could clearly hear the noise still emanating from the people in the village, which was unwelcome and irritating. Inside the bamboo the visibility varied from near zero at some places, invariably opening out into open spaces under a canopy of bamboo hanging over under the weight of its own foliage. The vegetation was all damp, so we made hardly a sound as we progressed, and the air was still. After only about half a mile Kibanda suddenly stopped and said he thought he had heard something ahead. We waited for several minutes, and, hearing nothing more, moved on along the spoor. Again, a sound that we all heard brought us up short, straining to hear a repetition of it. We could still hear the villagers quite clearly, and I really did not think the other sounds were of significance. I could not imagine a lion being totally indifferent to human noise and remaining unmoved for several hours. Kibanda stopped again after one hundred yards, his hand up to halt us, his stance indicating he had again heard something. We stood silent for some moments; then we all heard a sort of sigh and a faint clicking sound repeated a few times. It was nothing we could recognize or interpret, but the faint sigh made me think it could be the lion.

We now proceeded along the drag mark with extreme caution, passing through a screen of bamboo foliage into a glade. Then, as we penetrated another overhang of leaves, Kibanda dropped to one knee, signaling me to come up alongside him. There in a clear space was the lion, sitting on his haunches half-facing away from us. His head was down, and he appeared to be picking at something on the ground, making the strange clicking noise each time he moved his head. I gave him a shot raking forward from the rear ribs toward the off-side shoulder. He went down and then reared up on his hind legs, dropping down again facing toward me. I had the fleeting impression of a huge prancing dog as I shot it again in the chest and it crumpled to the ground, dead. This lion was in starving condition, just

skin and bone with very little mane. The object on the ground was the remains of the man he had taken more than twelve hours before. The intestines had been removed, a small amount of meat had been eaten from a thigh, and the pelvis was exposed; the rest of the body was more or less intact.

The cause of the lion's emaciated condition—and, incidentally, the reason it had devoured so little of its victim in over twelve hours—soon became obvious. There were several suppurating wounds in the throat, with pus and other fluid oozing out, encrusting and staining the hair of the mane. Probing as deeply as possible into these wounds with a small knife, I felt something hard and extracted it. I did not know what to expect; I thought the holes were probably bites it had received in a fight with another lion. The object turned out to be a broken-off porcupine quill. We found the remains of one other quill during our postmortem, along with three other septic holes. These wounds had penetrated as far as the larynx, into the throat proper where the food passed through. The whole section was gangrenous, with a sickening odour. The wretched animal could not swallow, and its stomach was completely empty. The clicking noise we had heard earlier I am sure was made by its teeth as it tried to detach small bits of meat to swallow, for it could not consume large pieces in the normal way. This also explained why it had taken so long to eat so little.

It is not uncommon for lions, after a run of bad luck in their normal hunts, to go for smaller animals to ward off hunger. They will catch cane rats, ant bears, dassies, and other smaller creatures. The porcupine is not an infrequent prey, because it is a slow-moving

*Lion and victim. Kibutuka.*

nocturnal animal, and I suppose it provides a more substantial meal than any others of the rodent family. It has, however, a dense cover of protective long, hard quills over its back, and a lion has to get past these to effectively deal with it. A lot of people believe that the porcupine has the ability to shoot quills at a predator to keep it away as it makes its escape. This story is based on imagination. The porcupine has a tough, flexible hide covering its back, in which the quills are rooted. It has considerable muscular control in this area and can make the quills stand up or lie flat, move them from side to side with the quills erect, and forcibly jerk the hide in any direction to deliver a strike. I saw a porcupine do this when I cornered it, then approached it with a piece of vertical planking in front of me as protection. In every instance I can remember, the porcupine has shuffled straight at me sideways, with the quills erect and tilted toward me. On reaching the protective plank, there is a violent jerk with quills striking the plank with considerable force. If the quills penetrate at all, they come out. Penetration of flesh would be deep, and it is possible that some minute device keeps quills in place and even enables them to work their way deeper. In the case of the lion with the throat wounds, it had made the mistake of trying to kill a porcupine and ended up starving. There is no doubt that had I not shot it, it would have died of starvation within a short time.

All carnivores, large and small, must have a level of intelligence, as opposed to pure instinct, that enables them to survive in the wild. Lions are no exception, and it shows in their acquired knowledge of prey and in their search for food. They will adapt their methods according to local

*The same lion after being carried to Kibutuka village.*

circumstances, hunting certain species by stealth and others by stampede and ambush, according to the nature of the country and even the habits and strength of the prey itself. In an area where a man-eater is operating, the most dangerous time for man is around dusk and again at dawn. The lion learns from experience that people tend to sit around outside for the evening meal at this time at their ease, making it a simple matter for it to creep up and grab its victim. The chances of follow-up in the dark are slight. It also knows that at dawn single individuals may come out of a hut and follow a daily routine of going to the toilet area outside. The lion sets up an ambush and takes the man silently, without alarming others still inside. The Gumbiro man-eater knew very well that regular early morning visits by individuals to their bamboo groves gave him the opportunity to ambush them in the bamboo.

To me the lion's apparently natural fear of man is not instinctive but is acquired through experience. The cubs remain with the lioness until they are virtually full-grown, and it is during the last eighteen months before they leave her side that they are taught to hunt and learn the country. If during this adolescent period they are taught to move off or conceal themselves when a human appears, they will do so throughout their lives unless driven by hunger to attack him. They also learn when man is not dangerous and can be ignored. This is particularly noticeable in the national parks and in some game reserves such as the Masai Mara. Lions in these areas are reared in the wild in the same way as others in unprotected country, but there is a difference insofar as man is concerned. Many of them are around cars full of people at close range from a very young age, and they mature under these conditions. Vehicles are not edible and are therefore of no interest from this point of view. When people sit at the windows of these cars and on the roof, lions undoubtedly see them and recognize them for what they are. It is my belief, however, that to them a human in or on a four-wheel vehicle poses no threat, and vehicle and occupants are ignored. Their reaction to a man on foot is quite different. They will conceal themselves or, if the man is very close, turn savage. These opposite reactions by lions are a product of learning and adaptation gained from experience and are not typical of lions in unprotected areas.

The fact that a pride of lions will deliberately set up an ambush by some members, while others circle around to stampede the game toward them, must mean that some thought has gone into the exercise. On one occasion I found a pride of sixteen lions feeding off two wildebeest while another two carcasses lay untouched nearby. The stampede had careened onto several waiting lions, who pulled down any wildebeest that were close enough to be grabbed. A question I am asked is what is the lion's favourite meat. I do not think there is one, and thinking like this is putting human fastidiousness into the lion's thought processes. In general it is a law of averages, whereby the commonest animal in a given area becomes the most frequently killed. Lion kill other animals among a whole range of species because they happen to be there at the right time. Where wildebeest or zebra are in large numbers the hunting technique is often by stampede and ambush; eland, waterbuck, topi, and buffalo are stampeded sometimes too, but more often they are taken as the result of a careful stalk and rush at close range.

Stealth is very important when a lion or lions are after a buffalo adult. This is a powerful beast, well able to defend itself against a lion. Lions will take considerable pains to try and avoid injury to themselves when hunting. They are particularly liable to be hurt when

attacking a buffalo. In this circumstance the dominant practice is stealth and a very close approach before seizing the animal; without complete surprise the hunt will most likely fail. Lions normally seize an animal by the throat, drag it to the ground, and suffocate it. If the attempt is botched with a buffalo, the lion will not get another chance and may be injured in its second attempt. At a place called Angai, south of Liwale, a lion died of injuries inflicted on it by a bull buffalo as a result of a bungled attack. The buffalo, incidentally, was severely mauled by the lion and in the course of the fracas had run into a hard wood stump, which penetrated its chest. It was dying not far off when I put it out of its misery. In the Lungonyo–Kingupira area of the Selous Game Reserve the most usual lion kills are warthog because they are so common. In the Madaba and Mbarangandu Valleys buffalo are everywhere and for this reason are most frequently killed. Along the Kilombero River east of the vast flood plains, hippo are to be found in the thousands. During the dry season after the annual fires have swept through, plentiful palatable grazing becomes scarce along both sides for one and a half miles or more inland away from the river. This situation is exacerbated by the numbers of hippo and by the fact that they are entirely grazers. By mid-September many grazing species such as wildebeest, zebra, and buffalo have moved to higher ground where there is permanent water. Eland and impala, which can survive on browse, remain in reasonable numbers. But these are astute, sharp-sighted herbivores, and I think lions find it difficult to catch them often enough to survive easily; consequently, they take to killing hippo.

Now the hippo is a large powerful beast weighing up to three tons. Its hide is incredibly thick, and this, combined with its massive body, must present a serious problem to a lion trying to make a kill. Lions will go for calves most of the time, but on several occasions I have seen adults, male and female, that have been killed. I was never able to find a wound that could be considered fatal inflicted by a lion on any of the adults. Every carcass was covered in claw marks and bites all over the back and top of the neck, as if a lion had been riding on it. It baffled me for a long time how a lion could kill such a massive creature, until one day I saw a female hippo and calf in a real panic, breaking into a gallop. They normally walk but break into a trot like a pig if alarmed. A gallop is the sort of thing they would do only if desperately frightened. I do not know what set off the hippo and calf; it might well have been a lion, but I did not see it. In this gait they are an extraordinary sight, with all four feet off the ground in a sort of bounding motion, requiring a great deal of energy. They resembled flying salami sausages, and it was quite comical to watch. This sort of gait must be a last resort to escape a lion riding its back on dry land. Since these situations develop well away from the main river, the hippo is compelled to gallop for a long distance to the haven of deep water. At some stage the hippo collapses and does not recover, so the lions have several feeds over the next few days. Not being a veterinary surgeon, I can only guess at the reasons for the hippo's collapse. Bearing in mind my experiences at game catching in 1947 and the effects of extreme physical exertion on two species of herbivorous game animals, I think heart failure is a rational assumption.

When not lying about and sleeping, lions spend much of their time hunting prey. They are not the most efficient of predators and will feed off carrion if it is available. In this respect they will, like hyenas, observe the flight of vultures, follow to where they are dropping to the ground, and take over the prey. With all the elephant control work in the settled areas of

Southern Province, lions would frequently feed off the carcasses—so much so that I believe the level of man-eating would have been much higher had this situation not offered alternative food. I have frequently found lions feeding on decaying elephant carcasses where the odour was unbearable. To see a lion with its muzzle, chest, and paws covered in putrid slime tends to make a mockery of the noble king of beasts as depicted in legend. They are immensely powerful creatures although, in my opinion, less so than leopard in terms of weight in proportion to size. A leopard will carry up a tree an animal equal to its own weight, such as an adult impala, whereas a lion must exert itself considerably to drag a similar animal in proportion to its own weight. This it does by seizing it by the neck, straddling it with all four legs, and dragging it along the ground, with frequent stops.

Because the lion is such a large and powerful animal, it has no natural enemies once it becomes adult and remains in good condition. When still small cubs, however, lions are in danger every time they are left alone while the lioness is away hunting. Large prides generally leave at least one adult to protect the cubs, and the survival rate improves. Animals that will kill and eat unprotected small cubs are hyena and, to a lesser degree, baboons. Baboons in my estimation do more damage to the newborn young of many mammal species. They kill ground-nesting birds and even dig out and destroy eggs in crocodile nesting sites. Baboons are a scourge to conservation and agriculture. Old, sick, or badly injured lions will be attacked, killed, and eaten by hyena packs, and this is probably how most lions finally reach the end. In Southern Province there is a widely held belief that wild dogs will attack lions and that the best way to frighten a lion away from a camp at night is to imitate their hunting call. I have in fact tried this without success. In the mid-1960s field staff at Kingupira in the Selous Reserve reported an incident of interest in this respect. We had previously put in an airstrip there and had established a small ecological research station. One morning a lioness was observed on the airstrip with several wild dogs harassing her. The game scouts thought they were only playing with her. She had moved across the airstrip and backed into a small thornbush when the dogs surrounded her, rushing in from different angles, thoroughly stirring her up. This went on for a long time, with the dogs getting bolder and the lioness showing signs of tiring. Eventually they overran her from all sides and she died.

Lions are prolific breeders, producing up to four cubs at a time, and there is no definite time of year for mating. Mating is a noisy affair lasting nearly a week when the female is receptive. It is on record they will actually mate up to fifty times in a day, and I have personally observed the act taking place approximately every fifteen minutes over a two-hour period. Gestation is short for such a large animal, about half that required for a woman.

The lion is a strong swimmer, crossing deep channels on the Kilombero flood plains without hesitation. The most striking example of lions swimming came to my notice in 1951 at Kilwa Kisiwani. This is an island in the deepwater bay of Kilwa Masoko on the Indian Ocean coast. Four lions swam to the island from the south mainland and remained there for nearly ten days hunting bush pig. They then swam back by the same route to the mainland. The distance of deep water in each direction is at least one and a half miles.

# Safaris in Western Tanganyika

*Chapter 17*

In late 1951 Ionides returned from his long hunting safari to Sudan. My fellow elephant control officer, Barry Roberts, departed to return to Kenya and resumed his career guiding clients on hunting and photographic safaris. The hut-burning incidents of a year earlier had come to a head, and as a disciplinary measure I was ordered to leave Southern Province and report to the chief secretary in Dar es Salaam for a reprimand. This official, a South African named Bruce Hutt, who was head of the civil service, seemed to understand well enough what had happened and realized that I was not the character described by an idealistic and prejudiced administration officer. In a written report I was described as acting like a "jack-booted Nazi burning and looting his way across the country." He informed me that I was being transferred out of Southern Province as a form of punishment and that I was to proceed to Tengeru for further instruction from the game warden. Southern Province, the most remote and underdeveloped part of Tanganyika, was graded by officialdom as a punishment station, and it was ironic that my removal from it should be regarded as a punishment.

Before Ionides' return I managed to do a foot safari lasting three months through the Selous Game Reserve. Among other areas, I visited Madaba, Shuguli Falls, and the lower Luwegu River and its spectacular tributaries to the south—the Mbarangandu and Njenje Rivers. On our way to Madaba, at a place called Nambarapi, Mbukuri showed me an old steam engine, its great iron wheels partially sunk into the sandy soil. It was originally built in Germany in about 1870 and was shipped to German East Africa before World War I. It was apparently used by the German army to drive a flour mill and accompanied them on their retreat south of the Rufiji River in 1917. It was abandoned at Nambarapi when the impressed labour, used for towing it through the bush, deserted. Mbukuri's father was one of these men. Over the years most removable parts had been taken by local Wangindo people—brass plates and fittings for ornaments and bits of cast iron for fashioning into hoes, knives, and other tools.

The Mbarangandu and Njenje Rivers were spectacular broad valleys separated by the Ngurungwa Range. Both valleys were bound on both sides by low red soil cliffs, which appeared to have been formed by faults in the earth's crust in the remote past. Even at the peak of the dry season, the Mbarangandu had unlimited grazing and water for over one hundred miles along its length. In later years it became my favourite part of the Selous Game Reserve, with its huge elephant and buffalo populations and other species covering the whole spectrum of mammals in southern Tanganyika. Walking for days along this beautiful river, one was never out of sight of elephant. Once again the thought crossed my mind how perfect some of this country was for hunting safaris with paying clients. Before transferring out of the Southern Range at the end of the year, I raised the subject of hunting safaris in the Selous with Ionides. Iodine was ultraconservative about such issues, and game reserves were sacrosanct. To suggest allowing hunting safaris was to him blasphemous, so I dropped the subject for the time being.

I returned to Liwale at the end of 1953 and took over the range from Ionides permanently. Much of the intervening two years I was based at Mahenge, where the entire western part of the Selous Reserve and the vast Kilombero flood plains were my responsibility. The conflict between agriculture and elephant was widespread. The country was more varied than in the Southern Range, and game was plentiful throughout. One species was new to me. This was an antelope called the puku *(Adenota vardonii),* related, I think, to the kob family. It occurred in great numbers, but its habitat was restricted to the great flood plains along the Kilombero River from Utengule in the southwest to Boma ya Ulanga where they terminate just inside the Selous Game Reserve. The species only occurred in two other widely separated pockets in Tanganyika at the time—Mwaya at the northern extremity of Lake Nyasa and north Rukwa Lake

*Young sable bull in* miombo *country. Western Selous Game Reserve. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

in the southwest of the country. I am told that the puku has completely disappeared from Lake Nyasa, and today its numbers are much reduced in the north Rukwa area and the Kilombero flood plains.

Before arriving in the Mahenge Range I spent a few months based at Nyamirembe on the western shores of Lake Victoria. There was a small game reserve along the flats bordering the lake up to an escarpment to the west. It was an interesting area because it held not only a considerable number of buffalo, some elephant, and black rhino, but also roan antelope and sitatunga in the papyrus swamps along the lake edge. It was also the absolute northern limit of the range of sable antelope. This reserve was the crowning achievement of the game ranger normally based here, who was now absent on leave. His name was Brian Cooper, nicknamed "Walky Talky" because of his fondness for walking and nonstop talking. I never knew him well but considered him an oddball because of his unpredictable, forgetful, and strange behaviour. He must have been approaching fifty and had a high forehead and little hair above that. One morning before he departed on leave, I was sitting on the small veranda of the house. Cooper appeared with a large mirror and a razor and, after placing the mirror on the table, studied himself carefully, running his fingers constantly over his nearly bald scalp. He then applied the razor to remove the remaining hair on that part of his head. Having completed this exercise and studied his reflection again, he announced that everything was now in order. I had no idea why he was doing this and mildly inquired what was in order. He looked at me as if I were an ignorant youth and said, "Taking the hairline further back makes me look distinguished." Such vanity was quite beyond me, so I held my peace and ignored his antics until he departed on leave the next day.

I did two foot safaris in the Nyamirembe Range while I was there, and also a longish safari by truck through Karagwe in Bukoba District. Karagwe chiefdom in early 1952 was sparsely populated on its western border along the Kagera River, which was also the border with Rwanda. There were many black rhino in the hilly country, and an elephant with tusks weighing about 130 pounds each had been taken there on license by a district officer shortly before my visit. Some years later it became a favourite hunting area for Uganda Wildlife Safaris, operating out of Kampala.

On the safari through Karagwe chiefdom I had my first opportunity to see the sitatunga antelope clearly. This creature belongs to the bushbuck family but has adapted itself to living permanently in swamp. To enable it to move about on soft ground or dense floating vegetation, its hoofs are greatly elongated for better weight distribution. I think it probable that if it were restricted to hard ground, the hoofs would wear down to normal size. After leaving Bukoba I drove up to and along the Kagera River. This is an enormous waterway with great papyrus and reed swamps stretching for miles. I arrived at a place called Kyerwa overlooking the swamps. In front of the campsite was a large area of short grass and reeds on which were grazing elephant and buffalo, all partially submerged in water. Late that afternoon some sitatunga started to appear, all of them walking with apparent ease on top of the floating mass and grazing. Eventually I could see seventeen in sight at the same time, including one albino, which came to within twenty yards of the edge of the water, with two others nearby. The albino was an adult male with fully developed horns; the others were female. I decided to creep down under cover for a close look with binoculars. After studying them for a while I stood up in full view, and all three sitatunga

moved rapidly away and disappeared. They had deliberately submerged themselves in deeper water to escape detection. The animals farther out either moved off into papyrus cover or submerged. Moving back up the slope to my original vantage point, I waited to see if any would return to the open. After a wait of about twenty minutes a sitatunga appeared out of the water and slowly moved onto a grazing patch. Shortly after that the albino came in sight in a similar way, but some distance from where he had submerged. By sundown, when great swarms of mosquitoes took to the air, ten of the seventeen sitatunga were again visible. There are plenty of crocodiles in the Kagera River, but I do not know if they prey on these antelope. It would be surprising to me if they did not. From what I observed at Kyerwa, it seems obvious that sitatunga can move about submerged and can breathe by exposing only the nostrils to the air. I was never able to see sitatunga clearly in the Nyamirembe Game Reserve or later at Lake Burigi.

After returning to Nyamirembe from Karagwe I managed to collect some Wazinza porters and did a three-week foot safari to Lake Burigi via the *boma* at Biharamulo to purchase food supplies. I remember this safari as the most uncomfortable I have ever done. It poured every day, and from Biharamulo to Lake Burigi I had to follow a single valley all the way to the lake. The valley was choked without letup the whole way, with tall dense grass averaging eight feet or more. It was all mature and pollinating. I was leading, and Mbukuri and I had to crush it down ahead of us for several days with no game trails to follow, for there was no heavy game about until very close to Burigi. It was uninhabited by man, so there were no footpaths. After a day or two I started to itch all over; I seemed to be allergic to the grass pollen. It did not leave me for over a month, when a medical officer recommended that I souse myself in vinegar twice a day. We arrived at Lake Burigi on the fourth day. The grass on the low hills near the lake and the flats around it were grazed right down by great herds of buffalo. The relief from the long grass only lasted until sunset. At this moment an incredibly loud, humming whine started as great dark clouds of millions of mosquitoes took to the air. It was not possible to eat in the open, so I had to sit on my bed under the mosquito net for dinner every night, until I left the lake. The porters and staff spent their evenings sitting in dense clouds of wood smoke, so I imagine they were happy to leave the lake behind after walking all around it for three days.

At the Game Rangers Conference in May 1952 I met Keith Thomas again. He had transferred from the veterinary department the previous year and was posted to Tabora in Western Province. I was discontented with my area on the western side of Lake Victoria. There were too many people and not enough wide-open spaces. I suggested to Thomas that since his range was so large, it might be more manageable if Kibondo and Kahama Districts came under me. He agreed to this at once, and we saw Swynnerton, the game warden, about it and the matter was formalized. I had already been notified of my transfer to Mahenge in July 1952, so a safari to the Malagarasi River and the Moyowosi flood plains in Kibondo District became my first priority for the time remaining to me at Nyamirembe.

The Malagarasi is one of the major rivers flowing into Lake Tanganyika, and it forms the border between Kibondo and Kasulu Districts in its upper and middle reaches. It is joined by the Moyowosi in the extensive flood plains and swamps lying to the north of Tanganyika's central railway, which crosses the country from Dar es Salaam on the coast to Kigoma on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika. On my return to Nyamirembe in early June, I set about organizing a safari to the Malagarasi and arrived there by truck at the bridge across

the river on the Kibondo to Kasulu Road. From this point onward, downstream, there were no settlements or roads, so I had to arrange for porters and food to last for four weeks. A local chief, resident some fifteen miles along the road to Kibondo, recruited twenty young men of the Waha tribe for me.

Two days later, after securing the vehicle under guard at the bridge, I left with the Waha porters downstream along the river. They were good men and I did not have any problems at any time with them. Of my old staff I still had Mbukuri with me and two domestic servants including the cook. I also had a game scout from Nyamirembe called Musa Rajabu, who was the only person with us who had some knowledge of this country. In previous years he had worked here for the Red Locust Control Organization, which had cut tracks, now totally overgrown, along the edge of the Moyowosi flood plains. He remembered the names of key localities, such as freshwater springs and miniature lakes. I had heard vague reports of abundant game on the flood plains. I had also heard about a man named Edmund Sunde, who apparently worked at the Geita Gold Mines near Lake Victoria. Two years before, on the Malagarasi, he had taken on license an elephant bull that had tusks weighing in the region of 180 pounds each. I still had a valid elephant license and hoped I would be equally lucky.

Trekking downstream along the east side of the Malagarasi, we were in *miombo* woodland with occasional *ulambos* crossing our route and draining into the river. On the western side there were areas of high grass seasonal flood plain, with a few huts and patches of cultivation. These people had dugout canoes and no doubt hunted game for meat across the river on a regular basis. There was not much game to see as we walked through this country, and what we saw was timid and never let us approach too close. I checked a few bull elephants but saw nothing good enough to take on license. In this *miombo* country we saw sable and roan antelope in small herds, topi, Lichtenstein hartebeest, and two or three small herds of buffalo. It was disappointing as a game area, and I assumed the low numbers and shyness of the game were due to frequent harassment and hunting by local people living on the Kasulu side of the river. This situation changed when we arrived at the point where the Malagarasi joined the plains stretching east and south to the Moyowosi swamps. At this point the land was at a marginally higher elevation than farther out, with short grass and no trees. Where the tsetse-infested woodland ended there were immense herds of cattle. The local people

*Inquisitive buffalo with trophy bull in the lead. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

were migratory Watutsi from the west who did not practice any agriculture. They were fine-looking people living off their livestock in very primitive conditions. They had no knowledge of any areas outside their tsetse-free plains, and their only concerns were grazing for their herds and keeping lions away from them at night. On these short grass plains fair numbers of topi, zebra, and eland were to be seen, and the Tutsi herders said there was much more game to the north along the western edge of the Moyowosi flood plains.

Although I was due to leave western Tanganyika for Mahenge shortly, as game ranger it was a duty and a pleasure for me to know about the distribution of wildlife in my range. My decision was to turn north and follow the western edge of the flood plains. As we approached the woodlands again, the flood plain area between actual grassland and swamp narrowed to two or three hundred yards, increasing in places to large flats where the soil and seasonal stagnant water precluded any tree growth. Because the water, grazing, and tree cover were all nearby, the game population seemed to increase by the mile. We started to see buffalo herds of three hundred head and more every day, along with a lot of topi and eland. Early burning by honey hunters had improved visibility considerably, and there were collections of assorted game wherever there was fresh sprouting grass. What was interesting here was that the swamp- and water-loving sitatunga were coming right out onto dry land to graze and could be seen at all hours of the day. Some clear freshwater springs that flowed toward the flood plain proved to be an absolute paradise for game. The place was named Murungu, the groundwater forest there being visible from a long way off. I camped here for four days, walking about the surrounding country and observing the wonderful showing of game. I found a solitary, very large-bodied bull elephant one morning and moved up close to him to check out his ivory. He had tusks that I estimated at about eighty pounds each. I could not make up my mind whether to take him and spent at least a half-hour dithering with this problem. Finally I decided, illogically, that to shoot him would create too much disturbance in this lovely area. Having decided, I left the bull quietly grazing on fresh grass and shortly after came upon a solitary bull buffalo. The porters needed some meat to supplement their ration of maize flour and beans, and with no sentimental thoughts about disturbances we crept up to twenty yards from the bull and put him down with a well-placed shot in the shoulder. I left Musa Rajabu with the carcass and went back to camp about one hour's walk away and sent Mbukuri back with most of the men to collect the meat.

That night we were all treated to a magnificent concert by four lions. They started grunting and moaning some distance away at about 9 P.M. At 2 A.M. they reached the campsite and started full-throated roaring, all joining in and taking over from each other. All would go silent for a while, then it would start again, and so it went on until dawn. The volume of sound seemed to make the air vibrate, and being so close induced a feeling of some tension and expectancy in a mesmeric way. I got up at dawn and there they were, two big, heavily maned lions and two lionesses. As soon as they saw me they slunk away out of sight into some long grass, and we neither saw nor heard any more of them. All through this area, from south of Murungu northward to two water pans just inside the woodland and to Bweru again at the edge of the flood plain, there were great numbers of lion. I came across them several times without specifically looking for them. The manes—tawny, auburn, and largely black in colour—were of the best trophy quality. This alone made it an area worth visiting for any hunter with clients. Great numbers of buffalo, defassa waterbuck, sitatunga, and other species were a bonus. In later years I organized for an airstrip to be put in at Murungu and

arranged for the old Red Locust control tracks to be reopened. A company called Afriventures, which included such well-known characters as David and Anton Allen, Jens Hessel, and Glen Cotter, was given it on a concession basis and had excellent results.

Regarding the quality of manes of lions, I think this is largely a question of genetics rather than the amount of thorn scrub and ambient temperature in these areas. This is particularly noticeable in the Selous Game Reserve, where the average mane carried by a mature male seems to get progressively better the farther west one goes. Some of the heaviest manes I have seen were on the Kilombero flood plains, where the daytime temperatures can be very high and the coarse, dense Vetiveria grass would in theory thin out long hair as much as any thorn scrub.

The final leg of this last safari in western Tanganyika took me to the Ibanda plain, a large open grassland with permanent water in the middle of *miombo* woodland. After making camp, the porters went off to hunt cane rats. Some of them entered a patch of tall grass to drive the cane rats out into the open, where the rest of them, armed with sticks, were waiting. With much noise and thrashing of grass the beaters advanced, occasionally shouting out that they had seen one. As they approached the limit of the tall grass, the odd cane rat came running out and was immediately pursued and clobbered by the now-excited men. Very close to the extremity of the long grass, there was a sudden commotion accompanied by much shouting and incipient panic. About four men were standing in the open when a warthog rushed out of the grass straight at them in an effort to escape the beaters. The four men panicked and started running in all directions, shouting. This totally confused the hog, which swerved in one direction and was confronted by one of the running porters, then swerved again, to collide with another nearby. The porter went down as if poleaxed, probably thinking his time was up, and the hog went straight on at a gallop and disappeared into long grass. The porter picked himself up, trembling with fright, because it had all happened so fast that he still was not sure what had knocked him down. Everyone thought it was all a huge joke. Unfortunately, the guy had a nasty cut in his leg below the knee, caused by one of the hog's tusks. I bound this up for him after cleaning the wound and applying a liberal sprinkling of sulphanilimide powder. By the next morning the pain was gone and he was able to walk with only a slight limp. In his opinion it was all worthwhile, for cane rat is the favourite dish of many tribes, and his colleagues had managed to kill several that day. I assume the warthog was a female, with much smaller tusks than an adult male.

# Trekking through the Ulanga Range

*Chapter 18*

In July 1952 I arrived at Mahenge, the *boma* of Ulanga District. It was a huge area encompassing sections of all the main rivers that eventually joined to become the Rufiji. This river is the largest waterway in East Africa, after the Nile in Uganda. The vast Kilombero flood plains, the Luwegu, and the Great Ruaha River in its lower reaches are all part of this system. Much of this country was sparsely populated or uninhabited, including the whole of the western part of the Selous Game Reserve. Other major geographic features consisted of mountain ranges like the Uzungwa on the western side, Utemikwira in the southwest, the Wandwewe Hills in the south, and the Mahenge Range itself, isolated in the surrounding low country.

I met Bill Moore-Gilbert at the Mahenge *boma* and took over his quarters in the old fort built by the German government before World War I. Bill had joined the game department just a few months before, coming from service with the police force in India. He was now proceeding to Mbeya for further instruction under George Rushby, the senior game ranger in Southern Highlands Province. Having done several foot safaris in the range, Bill was in a position to pass on some useful initial assessments of the game situation in parts of the range such as the Kilombero flood plains.

I decided my first safari had to be to the far south and eastern areas within the Selous Game Reserve. I recruited sufficient porters and walked through the length of the Mahenge Mountains and down to the Kilombero flood plains, which I followed south to Utengule, the headquarters of *Mtemi* (chief) Tuagali. To this point and on to Kilosa Kwa Mpepo there were scattered settlements, buried in the long Vetiveria grass. Local damage by elephant all along my route was evident, and I took longer than anticipated to reach Utengule. I hunted elephant wherever they were causing damage and killed twenty-three between Mahenge and Kilosa Kwa Mpepo. There was great excitement among my porters as we neared Utengule. I still had Mbukuri with me, and I had also brought along another game scout, Mohammed Mhawe, because he knew much of the country and the local customs.

He told me the *mtemi* had a great number of wives and that the porters expected to have a good time with the "hungry" ones.

On the night of my arrival at Utengule I came close to shooting one of the *mtemi*'s women. I was camped in a grove of mango trees near his huts, and retired to bed in my tent at about 9 P.M. Later, after I had extinguished my hurricane lamp, I heard something moving about outside the tent beyond the opposite wall to my bed. The thing then started to slowly force the wall upward. My first reaction was that it was a lion trying to get in. Quickly pulling aside the mosquito net after taking hold of my flashlight, I moved to a sitting position on the edge of the bed, loaded rifle ready and directed toward the sounds. I sat ready to blast its brains out as it came in under the canvas wall. A few seconds later a nervous female voice said, *"Hodi hodi?"* (May I come in?) and I replied with the conventional *"Karibu"* (Come in) and told her to come through the front where the flaps of the tent were wide open. She did this and immediately sat down on the ground sheet, looking at the floor. She was a girl of about sixteen, very nervous and dressed in a cotton wrap known as a *kanga*. The situation was becoming a little embarrassing, for I was beginning to suspect what it was all about. I asked her what she was doing here at night, and she said the *mtemi* had sent her to chat with me. Had she been one of the lovely ladies I had known in Kenya, I am sure we would have "chatted" all night. Unfortunately, I have never found African women sexually attractive, so I had to think up some excuse without hurting her pride. I told her to thank the *mtemi* for his kind consideration and welcome. Then I explained that I had walked a long way that day, hunting elephant and moving camp to Utengule, that I needed rest and maybe tomorrow night would be better. She agreed, and with obvious relief at not having to go through such an ordeal with an unknown white man, she departed. To ensure there was no repetition, I moved camp to the Pitu River the next morning.

From there I went to a subchief at Kilosa Kwa Mpepo. Here I hunted for several days, for the subchief recruited another fifteen porters with head loads of flour for each of them. I now began a trek of more than four weeks through totally uninhabited country. I planned to check out the country and its game population, plus the western boundary of the Selous Game Reserve. The maps showed the boundary as a theoretical straight line running north from the Songea District boundary over very broken and difficult country to the Luhombero and Mbalu river junction due east of the Mahenge *boma*. There was no way this could be recognized on the ground, and I doubt that any game ranger, or even any white man, had ever been through that country. To me it was as much an exploration of unknown country as any other duty. I have always had a strong desire to see what is over the next hill or beyond the far horizon, so I was excited by this journey into the unknown.

We followed up a stream called the Misima for three days. It was a very narrow watercourse with incredibly steep, high hills crowding it almost to the water's edge on both sides. It was difficult even to find sufficient level space on which to camp every night. This valley did in fact cut through the Wandwewe Hills. No settlement had ever been here, for there was insufficient flat land for cultivation, and tsetse infestation was heavy. The three nights we camped on the Misima were very uncomfortable and disturbed because of *siafu* (carnivorous ants), which come out after dark in great swarms and attack every living thing from small insects to elephants. These ants seek moist

conditions in the dry season and stay there until the rains start. Along the Misima with its steeply rising, well-drained hills, the moist soil close to the stream probably attracts every *siafu* swarm in the area. It is a most distressing experience to wake up in the dark feeling things viciously biting one's body all over, and then, putting on the flashlight, to see the bed, tent walls, mosquito net, and floor alive with these small, dark brown insects. One has no option but to move out, brushing off the biting ants until one reaches ground that is free of them and staying there until the ants have moved on, which is usually not until the next morning. Insecticides and kerosene will keep them at bay, but on foot safaris in those days we never had insecticides, and kerosene was carried only in small quantity for the hurricane lamps. The only natural thing I ever saw that appeared to be able to stop *siafu* was another ant, locally known as *sangara*. These creatures seemed to be territorial, permanently occupying large areas of flat sandy soils. About the same size as the *siafu,* they are very fast-moving, have weak mandibles, and occur in great numbers. They are no threat to man or any other mammal, reptile, or bird. When *siafu* appear in their territory the *sangara* swarm all over them, squirting formic acid or some other substance onto them. This kills the *siafu*, which seem to have no defense against attacks from *sangara* ants.

We left the Misima River and cut across the Wandwewe Hills for a few days, to the Rondo River flowing east to join the Luwegu. It was incredibly hard going for me and even more so for the loaded porters, for there was no watershed or ridges running south, forcing us to cross a succession of deep, steep gullies and valleys. Many of these were a thousand or more feet deep, and going down was nearly as tiring and just as slow as going up the other side. Walking from daylight to late afternoon with occasional rest breaks, I doubt we ever covered more than six or seven miles in a straight line. Despite this very broken terrain, there were some animals all through it. Buffalo and elephant were common, and there were quite a lot of sable antelope and eland. We saw no sign of man until we reached the Rondo River. This was a large permanent stream with a sizeable waterfall a short distance before it joined the Luwegu. It was here that we came onto and captured a group of about ten poachers. They had killed a buffalo and a couple of hartebeest, the meat of which was being smoke-dried on racks for transporting to their villages a long way to the south in Songea District. They also had two *goboris*, or muzzleloader black-powder muskets, a supply of powder, and a bag full of iron balls. I confiscated all these items, depriving them of the means to hunt in the future, and told them to depart for their villages. I had neither the time nor the staff to take the matter further. They were all out "fishing" when we arrested them. They were using the sap from a plant locally known as *mtutu*. The sap is produced from crushed leaves, shoots, twigs, and bark and is diluted with water to increase the quantity. A pool of slow-moving water is then selected, like the base of the waterfall where we caught them, and the sap is released into it at the upstream end. It is a poison that stuns and probably kills any fish taking it in through the mouth and gills. Affected fish quickly float to the surface, belly up, and are collected and smoke-dried. Apart from all the meat they had prepared, there were also three or four head loads of dried fish.

From the Rondo-Luwegu junction I walked down the Luwegu to the gorge at the eastern end of Irawola Mountain. By then, after some long treks from my various camps,

I had decided on a revised western boundary for the Selous Game Reserve in this sector. Basically, it followed a tributary of the Rondo up to Lyambepo Hill, then along a watershed to Mtarika and Irawola Mountains. The country along the Luwegu here was open rolling hills with a lot of waterbuck and buffalo about and some mature bull elephants with the best ivory I had yet seen in southern Tanganyika. Although there were also many hippo and some crocodiles in the river, it was fordable on foot at any point. I left the Luwegu at the gorge to cut across country on the eastern side, to the upper Luhanyando and then down to the Luwegu again. From this point on, the game population increased dramatically due to a change in the terrain. The river valley broadened into large flats with adequate grazing all along.

I also had some interesting experiences with elephant and hippo on this safari. Arriving at the Luhanyando-Luwegu junction, I crossed the Luwegu again to visit another major tributary called the Lukula. Following this downstream, I camped for the night on high ground overlooking the flats where another river, the Chihi, joined it. This was a spectacular sight. Both rivers were mainly white sand, two hundred yards across, with a trickle of water along the sand. I think there were between two and three hundred

*Normal water in the Luwegu River during dry season. 1952.*

*Elephant drinking through holes dug through the sand at Luwegu River during the drought of 1953.*

*Luwegu River dried up in 1953 except for deep holes near rock outcrops at the edge of the river where hippo concentrated.*

elephant in sight, two big herds of buffalo totaling not less than one thousand head, plus several groups of waterbuck, Nyasa wildebeest, zebra, eland, hartebeest, and impala. After watching this grand sight for a while, I noted a very large-bodied elephant with several others in long grass. When it finally moved into open ground, I saw that it was a "boody"—a tuskless bull. I decided this animal had to be destroyed, so with Mbukuri and Mhawe we descended to the flats and moved up close to the bull. However, by the time I arrived in a position to kill, I thought it would be a crime to shatter this fantastic scene with gunfire, so we backed off and returned to an elevated point of vantage to continue watching it all.

Some of the elephant were feeding toward where we had abandoned the bull and on reaching this point were startled by our scent and retreated. The boody instantly became aware that all was not as it should be and moved to the place where the cows had been. At this point he picked up our scent from our tracks and, with a sharp squeal of anger, tail up and ears spread out, put his trunk to the ground and started to follow us by scent, rather like a dog hunting. In this posture he followed at a shuffle directly along our tracks, short squeals of anger coming from him every few minutes. We watched this performance with amazement. As he got closer we retreated toward the campsite some way behind us. He reached the place we had just vacated, stopped to sniff all over the ground with his trunk, and then came on again, still following our scent. We were about one hundred yards from him in very light cover. I was beginning to feel this was a crazy animal that might follow us right into camp if we went that way. We retreated another hundred or more yards, and I decided that if he still came on I would have to shoot him. With his trunk still sniffing the ground he came right on along our tracks, so I waited until he was twenty yards away and dropped him dead in his tracks with a frontal shot to the brain. Having inspected this crazy animal and finding no reason for his aggressive behaviour, apart from a tuskless head, I went back to look over the scene we had left. Some of the elephant groups seemed to be alarmed, but the buffalo and other game were all there grazing peacefully.

Breaking camp the next morning, we followed along the Lukula to the Luwegu. The quantity of lion spoor on the sandbanks was amazing, and we really expected to come on them at any time. On the way we saw vultures dropping to perch on trees some way off. We went over there, approaching cautiously, and had almost reached the point where the vultures were getting uneasy and starting to fly away from us when a rumbling growl and rustle of grass stopped us. A lion, lying some yards from the others, had seen us and slunk off. As we moved forward again, there were more growls, but this time we saw several tawny shapes moving away into cover. Then their kill came into view. A large male with a good dark mane was still feeding. He saw us and made straight for some long grass. They had killed a young buffalo bull and had eaten a large part of it. Judging by the quantity of meat consumed, not less than six lions had been feeding most of the night.

One day we stopped at about 11 A.M. for a rest on the banks of the Luwegu. I was on a high point overlooking the river. In front of me was a small tin box, and I was sitting on a rolled-up valise. My servant Masudi was preparing a pot of tea. I had a loaded rifle beside me in the usual way as I relaxed in the shade of a tree. The porters were passing to my left along a curved hippo trail leading to the water in front of me, but they were hidden by

the high bank. They were making a lot of noise, and perhaps I should have been aware of what they were up to; but at these infrequent breaks on the march, I tended to allow them to fool about and let off steam as a sort of relaxation therapy. Suddenly, without warning, they all came running into sight and straight past me, saying, *"Kiboko"* over and over again as they went. Something was wrong. Taking my rifle with safety catch off, I was just in time to see a large bull hippo, mouth partly open, come into view in hot pursuit of the last porter. I must have moved, because at that moment he opened his mouth even more, exposing the great lower teeth, and rushed straight at me. I had barely time to raise the rifle—which was my .404—and fire point-blank into his head from the front. He collapsed with a crash, inertia carrying his head right onto the tin box, crushing it badly. By this time I had removed myself from the comfort of the valise and was a yard or so to one side, and I shot the beast again in the side of the head below the ear. A few minutes later Masudi, Mbukuri, Mhawe, and the porters reappeared, all clicking their tongues and muttering *"Lo, lo, lo."*

I had my tea after extracting the tin box from under the hippo jaws and straightening it out as best we could. I then investigated what had caused this unexpected attack by the hippo. It seems that as it reached the water the hippo was in shallow water between two deeper pools. It tried to move upstream to a pool and was pelted with stones. It then turned back to make for the pool downstream and ran into another

*Hippo demonstrating. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

shower of stones. During all this stoning the porters were making a lot of noise, and the hippo, being frightened and no doubt confused, rushed at the porters. They fled for their lives up the bank and on past me. Hippo will often demonstrate at people but usually do not come out of the water. I collected all the men and reprimanded them for causing a most dangerous situation and threatened them with pay cuts should they behave in such a fashion again.

On that same safari I had another incident on my own with a bull hippo. We were heading back to Mahenge, following up the Luhombero River from where it joins the Kilombero. This was all mature *miombo* woodland with a narrow belt of riverine forest along each side of the river. At this point the riverbed was very deep, with sheer banks, and apart from isolated pools and seepages along its course, it was dry because the rains had largely failed that year. To cover more distance each day, we were cutting across the bends and loops of the river's course. But we had to find suitable places to descend and then ascend the riverbanks. Hippo trails that were deep and worn but steep provided suitable access in most places. They were covered in overhanging bush and forest and became tunnellike passages to the riverbed. My routine was to slide down one of these passages with a loaded rifle to check it out before allowing the porters to descend. This particular hippo slide was very steep and overgrown. Squatting on my haunches, zero visibility ahead apart from the narrow slide, I slipped down the slope, stopping with a thud on dry white sand as I emerged. Recovering my poise, I immediately found myself eyeball-to-eyeball with a bull hippo. He was as surprised as I was. He was broadside on barely ten feet away, staring at me. Very slowly I tried to reverse back into the tunnel with my .470 at the ready. When I tried to go backward in a doubled-over stance up a steep gradient, this no doubt increased my body movement to a level that the hippo could not accept at such close range. Raising his head, he turned directly toward me with his mouth partly open and started to come. Before he had completed the first step in my direction, I shot him in the centre of his face below the eyes. He went straight down onto his belly but struggled to rise. I fired the left barrel into the top of his head a little forward of his ears and it was all over. Reloading the rifle, I waited for a couple of minutes for any signs of recovery and then whistled for Mbukuri to join me. We inspected the dead hippo and called the porters to come down the hippo slide to the riverbed.

The hippo has never been considered a trophy or a sporting animal. This is a reflection of its idle existence in water. Apart from submerging to escape detection or simply to wet its hide, the hippo seldom reacts to man. But the species can be dangerous and aggressive. Individual bulls will take up residence in a section of river, usually on a bend, and become hostile to any large creature entering their territory. They will attack other hippo and will demonstrate at elephant; I have even seen them object to Egyptian geese settling in there. Man is no exception, and these bulls will go out of their way to attack dugout canoes passing by. The local Wandamba riverine tribe on the Kilombero are well aware of the location of any aggressive bull in the river. On two occasions they asked me to kill solitary bulls in the river because they had become excessively dangerous. These bulls do not lie out on the banks sunning themselves but remain quietly lying low in the water. When they hear or see a canoe approaching they submerge, move into deeper water, and then poke their eyes and nostrils out to relocate the canoe. They seem to know the deeper channels the canoe will follow and move submerged toward

it. As it closes on their position the attack begins. The hippo rapidly moves submerged to the canoe, and his line of approach can easily be seen by a wave on the surface caused by water displacement as it moves along at speed. Reaching the canoe, the hippo, if his timing is right, will come up under it, throwing it partly out of the water, along with its occupants. In the alternative, it will surface alongside the canoe in an explosion of action, try to climb on board, or bite great chunks of wood off the gunwale, sinking it in the process if it is a small boat. It is a tense few moments as one watches the water displacement wave getting closer and closer, waiting for the hippo to break the surface in order to clobber it in the head with a heavy rifle bullet.

The Wandamba are a riverine tribe found only on the Kilombero flood plains. They build their own dugout canoes, large and small, and survive on fish, eggs, young water birds, terrapins, and hippo. They seem to have a digestive system, evolved over time, that is able to cope with rotting fish and meat in an advanced stage of decay. They have their own specialized and very skilled technique for hunting hippo with harpoonlike spears. Several of them go out onto the river in three or more small dugouts, which are usually in poor condition. There are two men in each canoe, armed with paddles and poles for propulsion and hippo spears. These are very long shanks of iron with a small narrow blade and barbs at the end. The shank is fitted into or bound to a wooden shaft eight or nine feet long. Attached to this is a sizable float, made of local materials, on a long rope of plaited grass. The hunters select a school of hippo, carefully noting any adult bulls to be avoided, and quietly approach standing up in the canoes. Arriving where the hippos have submerged in the deep water, with all the canoes close together, they feel about at the bottom with harpoons, hoping to find a female or a young animal. They are apparently able to tell by feel what part of the body they are touching, and the first man to think he can inflict a mortal wound shoves the spearhead downward with all his might. As the injured animal moves off underwater, he releases the harpoon float and from that point onward follows the float wherever it goes. The same performance is repeated at every opportunity. If the hippo attacks a canoe, the men jump into one of the other dugouts and wait for it to submerge before recovering their own canoe, if it is still afloat. With continuous harassment and repeated harpoon injuries, the animal becomes exhausted and either drowns or surfaces, more dead than alive, to be finished off. If it drowns, the hunters know where the body is lying and wait two or three hours for it to float to the surface. This is caused by gaseous inflation of the gut. I was invited to join in one of these hunts but was not game enough to do it. The little dugouts are very unstable and have minimal freeboard. There is no way I could have remained on board for long. Hippo will attack a person in the water, and occasionally someone thrown out of a canoe will be bitten. With the massive teeth of a hippo, a single bite can often be fatal or crippling.

On dry land hippo will sometimes attack man, even when he is not between the hippo and the water. Walking up the Kilombero on the north side on one safari, I came on a bull making his way toward the river one morning. He was about one hundred yards away, on the other side of a gully. As we approached, he came to a stop and then, with his mouth slightly open, turned and walked slowly and deliberately toward us. We stood our ground watching him, assuming his chosen route into the river was into and down the gully. He disappeared from sight and reappeared on our side of the gully about fifty yards away. As soon as he saw us again he broke into a fast trot, coming straight

at us with mouth partly open. We remained motionless; I was prepared to shoot him if necessary. The bull came to a halt twenty paces away, his head up swinging from side to side. He seemed to have lost sight of us, although we remained in the clear motionless. I suppose he must have decided he had seen us off, for he now turned and went back to the gully and down to the water, where he announced his arrival and victory with a series of loud grunts and snorts. There is little doubt in my mind that had we attracted the bull's attention after he stopped, he would have attacked and I would have had to shoot in self-defense.

One of my game scouts was killed by a hippo in long grass on the Mbarangandu River one year. The hippo was apparently coming from a lagoon near the main riverbed and was moving away from any protective water when it met up with the game scout and his porter in long grass. It went for him at once, and he and his porter ran for their lives. The porter escaped, but the hippo caught the game scout after a short distance and bit him once before making off into the long grass away from the water. The porter returned to look for the scout later and found him lying on his side dead, with a profusion of blood on and about him. Another game scout and porter on that patrol arrived at the scene and moved the corpse to a place for burial. They then returned to Liwale to report the death. It seems that the game scout had been bitten through the lower part of the back and the groin, where two large, deep gashes were to be seen. The aorta and possibly other arteries were severed.

*Pete and Minnie Wessels in linked canoes. Kilombero safari.*

One early morning at Liwale a man reported to the game scout's lines that there was a hippo in his cassava patch. One of the younger scouts took his .404 rifle and accompanied the man to where the hippo was seen. There were several acres of dense cassava in leaf, and they could not see or hear anything. They had continued for a few minutes when the hippo suddenly rushed at them from the right side and seized the game scout before he could use his rifle. His companion fled back to the lines to report that the game scout had been killed. Head game scout Mbaya Selemani and another scout immediately accompanied the man back to where the accident had occurred. They found the game scout dead. He had almost been bitten in half. They followed up the hippo and found it still in the cassava close by, and Mbaya shot it. On close interrogation the man who was with the scout said he had seen the hippo actually catch him and watched it for a few seconds before fleeing. According to him, the hippo seized the scout across the central section of his body. It then sat back on its haunches and shook and chewed him as his companion watched. The body lacerations and wounds seemed to confirm this horrific confrontation. No one could tell where this bull hippo had come from. There were no hippo anywhere near Liwale, but this incident happened at the peak of the monsoon rains. At this time of year hippo will wander for miles across the country, lying up in daylight in water pans, flooded gullies, and pools. They may move fifty or sixty miles from their dry-season territories. The females and young do not seem to travel so far afield.

Walking along the upper Mavuji River on a wet-season safari, we were in an area devoid of any suitable dry-weather hippo habitat. It was about 11 A.M. when we arrived at a small gully, and I moved downstream a few yards to cross over via a conveniently located rock in the middle of the water. I was about to step onto the rock, which was smooth with a layer of dry mud on top, when some instinct told me to look again. There was something about it that seemed a bit odd and unnatural. I backed off a few yards and picked up a dried-out branch and lobbed it onto the rock. It immediately surged upward out of the water as a full-grown hippo rose to its feet and, after standing motionless for a few seconds, ambled off at a walk down the gully. I do not care to think too much about what might have happened if I had stepped onto it. The pool was barely big enough to accommodate its body, but there it was, apparently quite happy to spend the daylight hours there. No human settlements existed anywhere near the area, which might explain its indifference to adequate water protection.

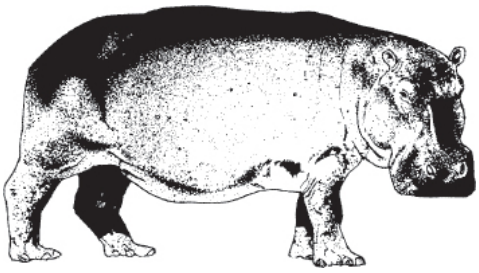
Conventional advice is that if you do not want to be bitten by a hippo, do not get between it and the water. This is certainly worth remembering, but as the foregoing indicates, there are other circumstances in which hippo can be dangerous. In the 1960s I employed a man named Pete Wessels to crop crocodiles in the major rivers in the Selous Game Reserve. This was a time when I had been authorized to set up projects aimed at making the reserve a self-financing organization. Pete was one of East Africa's great bushmen, and his wife Minnie was of equal calibre. They had hunted crocodiles for a living for many years. It was while engaged in crocodile hunting that they experienced a typical attack from a hippo. Minnie was making her way along a tunnellike hippo trail in high grass, moving away from the river. Suddenly a hippo appeared ahead going in the opposite direction. It no doubt felt cornered and barred from its refuge in the river and rushed at her. She was not carrying a rifle at the time, and tried to avoid the

animal by throwing herself sideways into the wall of grass. It seems that the hippo took a swinging bite at her as it passed. It was a near miss, and her check and eye area were slashed open. Fortunately, the hippo now saw its way clear and continued straight on to the river and safety. Minnie recovered to continue her life in the bush with Pete, but reminders of the ordeal are still visible on her face.

Most animals prefer to keep a healthy distance from man, but the hippo does not always fit into this picture. At Kingupira there are great numbers of hippo in the permanent water there. On many occasions I have camped near the edge of the ground water forest. Every evening without fail two or more hippo have come close to the camp after dark and have spent an hour or more just staring at us from the shadows. Put a powerful beam on them and they present their rear ends; when it is switched off they make an about-turn. Maybe the lights in camp fascinate them.

# Hunting the Kilombero Flood Plains

*Chapter 19*



The monsoon rains of 1953 were a failure. They started in December 1952, gave the whole range a good soaking through January, and then degenerated into occasional storms or local showers in widely separated areas. The flooding of the Kilombero Plains, normally massive, was minimal. I left Mahenge with porters in mid-January, intending to spend much of the next two months traveling by dugout canoe through this area. The bulk of the human population lived around the fringes of the flood plains where large numbers of elephant and buffalo existed. Consequently, a never-ending stream of complaints about crop damage stretched our abilities to meet the demand to the limit.

At the time I had a total of twenty game scouts to cover the whole range, including the western part of the Selous Game Reserve. There were two head game scouts—Abdulla Mwidini, based at Mahenge, who was responsible for all staff south of the Kilombero, and Daniel Nyalenga, based at Ifakara, who was responsible for all staff north of the Kilombero. Since arriving in the range I had made a point of having them accompany me on elephant control to show them, first, that I could do this as well or better than they, and second, to hopefully raise the overall standards of work. Unfortunately, the Mahenge-Ulanga area had been neglected due to lack of senior staff. Apart from Bill Moore-Gilbert, who had been there for only a few months, there had been no game ranger since the late 1930s. The older scouts talked about the last one, "Fairey" Fairweather, who was referred to as Bwana Forrowa. He apparently covered much of the range on foot safaris doing elephant control work from time to time. According to them he appeared to have a fondness for bottled products, which would immobilize him at a camp for days. Without leadership and supervision over this long period, many of the scouts had become lazy and incompetent—or perhaps they simply had never known anything else. I checked out every single scout in the range on elephant control work in the first six months of 1953, and replaced half of them with new recruits. The result was a competent force of men with high morale and a desire to achieve a reputation for themselves.

I walked first to Lupiro and then for a few days along the edge of the flood plains, doing elephant control work at large settlements such as Madabadaba, Mtambura, and Malinyi. Hunting in the tall eight- to ten-foot grass was difficult, and many times I could not see the animals at all. It was in these areas that I used a method that was by and large successful but nearly ended in disaster on the first attempt. Stories related in books by a few of the old ivory hunters induced me to think in terms of using ladders. Frequently I would come up to within a few yards of an elephant in the tall dense grass of the flood plains, unable to see any part of it. Moving in closer would put me at little more than arm's length and in a situation completely out of my control. It was frustrating to know that elevating myself a few feet would bring the animal into view but that I didn't have the means to do it. Returning to camp after such a day, I gave the matter some thought. I discussed it with Mhawe (Mbukuri being away at Liwale on leave) and decided on the next hunt to take along a couple of long poles used for propelling canoes. The idea was to place the ends firmly on the ground, with a man on his haunches holding them in vertical position on each side of him. With rifle ready I would then stand on his shoulders with arms wrapped around the poles, holding them against my ribs for support. At a signal he would then rise, both of us maintaining our hold on the two poles, until I was clear of the grass tops and was able to see ahead and all around. A ready-made ladder was too bulky and awkward to carry for miles through long grass, swamps, and water. There were no trees to lean it against, and to hold it in position would have required at least two men.

*Disturbed cows and calves. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

I tried out this pole system the next day. We came up with a herd of elephant after following them for an hour or so through unrelieved dense grass about eight or nine feet tall. The wind was steady, and when we were still some distance away we could hear them. One of the local guides took the two poles, held them vertical with bases on the ground, and crouched. Taking the poles between the inside parts of my arms at the elbows, I placed a foot on each shoulder and told him to rise slowly. This he did without mishap, and soon I had a clear view across the top of the grass. A large cow was standing broadside on one hundred yards away, and there were several others dotted about beyond and to one side of her. My perch on the man's shoulders was too unsteady for a long shot like this, so I told him to lower me to the ground. This was a good practice exercise. My position up there was firm enough to shoot with enough accuracy at shorter range. We then moved forward toward the nearest cow I had seen. Explaining to the local guide what he had to do, we worked our way up to an estimated fifteen or twenty yards from the elephant, and he positioned the poles and crouched. Carefully climbing onto his shoulders and adjusting the poles in my arms as best I could, I signaled him to rise. As I came clear of the grass there was an elephant only ten paces away. She was suspicious and had her head well up, ears spread but still broadside on. Lining up the rifle a little in front of the left ear hole, I fired. The next instant I was flying through the air and forward in a more or less horizontal altitude. As I hit the ground, the left barrel of my .470 went off with a deafening blast to my left ear. I was confused, but, picking myself up from the ground and the tangle of grass with the rifle still in my left hand, I automatically reloaded.

There was silence around me for some moments; then Mhawi and a trainee game scout, Amati Myonga, came cautiously to where I was standing. The two locals showed up a little while later, still very nervous about some imagined catastrophe. I was upset about what had happened, and my ears were ringing from the blast of the rifle going off close to my head. I asked the man I had been standing on what he thought he was doing, throwing me to the ground like that, and without awaiting his reply went to where the elephant had been. She was lying on her side, dead. As least this was proof that the technique worked. Having disciplined my "ladder" to keep steady, I knew I would use it again. Sitting about around the dead elephant, the "ladder" made his confession. He said he had never been that close to elephants before and was scared out of his mind before he lifted me clear of the grass. At the report of the rifle he could take no more, released his hold on the two poles, and bent forward, throwing me headlong to the ground and bolting to the rear. The others, including the game scouts, had instantly panicked and legged it also. Mhawe had pulled up after a few yards and returned to see what had happened. It seemed to me that to use a raw Mbunga peasant on this sort of work was not the wisest of choices. From that day on Amati Myonga became the "ladder," and I successfully concluded a number of elephant hunts in high grass with him in this way.

I now needed to go right through the flood plains and up the other side along the bottom of the Uzungwa Range. At Malinyi I managed to hire two large dugout canoes, one thirty-five feet long and the other a little shorter. All the porters and my equipment, plus myself, servants, and two game scouts, were accommodated easily by these two boats. Not far upstream from Malinyi, two large rivers—the Luhudji and the Mnyera—joined to become the Kilombero. The local tribe here—Mtemi Tuagali's

people—are Wambunga. They operate canoes but are not so skilled or knowledgeable about the river as the Wandamba who live and fish along it all their lives. My porters were all Wapogoro from Mahenge. None of them could swim, so I wanted the best possible crews for the canoes.

We moved off downstream for several days, camping on great sandbanks each night. Many of these were the chosen nesting places of African skimmers, amazingly fast and graceful birds, with an extended lower part of the beak for scooping up insects or other food off the surface of the water. Their nests were hollows in the sand with two or three eggs in each. They did not seem to make any attempt to camouflage them, and I imagine monitor lizards and other predators took their toll. The whole of this section of the Kilombero is fairly slow-moving, maybe one or two knots, and it is deep, with a rich supply of fish off which the Wandamba and numerous crocodiles live. It is impossible for someone with my upbringing to understand how the Wandamba can survive eating the rotting carrion that is a regular part of their diet. We were drifting downriver one day when the Wandamba saw a rotting fish floating on the surface, white belly up, some way off. I had no wish for a closer acquaintance with it, but they insisted it was very good for them. We put into a sandbank nearby, and, chucking all loads out of the smaller canoe, they went off to collect the dead fish. It smelled so bad that there was no way we could travel with it, so we made camp, and the Wandamba had their Christmas party that night, eating every last bit of the fish, which weighed at least fifteen pounds. It was locally called *mjongwa* and is related to the catfish, but instead of a long dorsal fin the length of its back, it has one that terminates about midway and is then replaced by another fin of cartilage tissue before the tail section. These fish have huge heads and can weigh over one hundred pounds. Other fish in the river included tigerfish, bream, catfish, tilapia, squeaker, kitoga, and many smaller species. Hippo were in great numbers all along the river, and we were twice bumped by them as we traveled. These were big heavy dugouts, and the hippo, instead of uplifting or overturning us, no doubt received a bad headache instead. The whole area was covered in long grass, mainly Vetiveria, but enclaves of short growth appeared at intervals. Invariably there were numbers of puku on these enclaves, and sometimes buffalo, waterbuck, and elephant were to be seen. We heard lion every night without exception. It was altogether a memorable experience traveling down this great river, made all the more pleasant by mosquito-free nights and cool breezes on the sandbanks where we camped.

We eventually abandoned the canoes a few miles upstream from Ifakara and continued on foot up the other side of the flood plain, following along the base of the Uzungwa Range rising to 8,000 feet on our right. Settlements existed all through the foothills and adjacent flats. The escarpment itself was covered in dense rain forest, where, in addition to the usual forest game, red colobus monkeys existed, and I personally think the rare Abbot duiker may be there. I had an interesting experience one afternoon walking through uninhabited country that had been burnt off earlier but where regeneration had not progressed much. We were in clear, open short grass and stubble, passing by a slight dip with much longer unburnt grass along it. Mhawe and I were together. I was carrying my .404 rifle. A strange on-and-off thrashing sound attracted our attention. We could see nothing, but the noise continued and seemed to be moving toward us. Moving slowly and carefully, we advanced toward the grass, hoping to discover the cause of the noise.

We were about twenty yards from it when my foot accidentally caught on a dry twig, causing a loud rustle. Instantly, to our amazement, an adult leopard came bounding out of the grass straight toward us looking from side to side. We both stood motionless, and I already had it covered with the rifle. It stopped between five and ten yards from us, head up, still looking from side to side and straight at us. It remained thus for several seconds, and I could only think it had not seen us, because we remained absolutely still. I then deliberately moved my shoulders, keeping the rifle lined up on it, to see what it would do. As soon as it saw the movement it recognized me for what I was. Its eyes seemed to open wide in astonishment, its face underwent a change of expression, and then it turned and took off, tail in the air, back into the safety of the tall grass. I did not see any cane rats, but I am sure this leopard was trying to drive them into the open to catch and eat. The accidental noise made it think the cane rats were leaving the cover, and out it came straight to the noise in hopes of catching a meal.

A day or two after this amusing incident we were approaching a tributary of the Kilombero called the Mgeta. A man came into camp to say he had been sent by the local *jumbe* with a report that a woman had been killed by an elephant while trying to frighten it out of her crops the previous night. We crossed the Mgeta the next morning and then turned left, downstream, toward the flood plains, arriving at the place where the woman had been killed about midday. The *jumbe* had met me on the way in and

*Elephants in swamp. Northeast Selous. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

came into camp to tell me what had happened. Like all settlements with cultivation in southern Tanganyika, a structure called a *kilindu*, often raised on stilts, is constructed in each field. The woman, one of two wives, had been told by her husband to spend each night in the *kilindu* he had constructed, to frighten wild animals out of the growing patch of corn. She had done this and reported several times that there were three elephants that came into her plot and others nearby at irregular intervals to feed on the corn. They had become bolder as the nights went by and had arrived at the stage of ignoring all the tin beating and shouts meant to scare them away. Two nights before, the same thing had happened, but when the woman started shouting, one of the bulls moved up to the *kilindu* and pushed it over, smashing the stilts and superstructure in the process, and killed the woman, who was presumably in the rubble. She was found the next morning with tusk wounds in her chest and abdomen and one thigh crushed. No one will ever know why this bull had turned so savage, but it is a fact that individual elephants can vary enormously in disposition from day to day or even from hour to hour. They can be indifferent, then seem to become suddenly hyped up, to go back to normal after an hour or so. When hunting or dealing in any way with elephants at close quarters it is desirable to assess this aspect of any visible elephants before making a final move.

In addition to the three bulls, there was a large herd coming out of the flood plains, probably ravaging crops nearby also. The *jumbe* requested that a game scout be permanently stationed at his village to deal with troublesome elephant and hippo. This was not possible; I did not have enough men to position at every place that needed them. But I told him I would try to deal with the big herd of elephant in the morning. While doing this he was to check on whether there was news on the three bulls and have the report ready in camp when I returned. We left it at that and parted company.

The next morning two local Wambunga men came into camp shortly after dawn. They said some elephant had been bothering them during the night and they could still hear them in the tall grass when they left the *shamba*s. We wasted no time in getting started, and I was on my way with Mhawe and Amati Myonga carrying my two .470 rifles. The cultivated lands had been raided by three different groups of bulls, numbering two to four during the night, at well-separated places. There was also older spoor going back several days, and in one place a herd of cows with calves had done some damage. I was confident that if I could locate the breeding herd and frighten them out of the area, the problem with the bulls would be solved also. Questioning the locals closely, it transpired that there was an extensive swamp not far away, and there were always lots of elephant there. Assessing all the information available, I decided to proceed in the direction of the swamp and if we came onto any spoor of a herd with cows, to follow them up.

Leaving the *shamba*s behind, we made our way through acres of long grass and not unexpectedly came upon the fresh trail of a large herd. It is always difficult to judge numbers from spoor alone in such terrain, but we thought there could be twenty or more animals. This is what I was looking for, and we started after them. One of the local men was carrying two canoe poles, so I felt prepared to deal with the herd in any cover on the flood plains. They moved directly to the swamp where we found them. The amount of trampling and grazing all along the edges was extensive, with little left of the long grass. Elephant, buffalo, and hippo droppings were everywhere, and the place appeared to be a

veritable stronghold of these three species. Some of the elephant were well into the swamp where some papyrus was established, but a group of eight was still in the clear. I moved straight up to these, after checking the wind, and shot a tuskless cow. The rest of them rushed for the swamp and, with a great deal of noise in the water, were soon out of sight. Removing the tail from the dead boody cow, we went into the swamp after the others. I was determined to chase these animals right out of the swamp, knowing that if I did not, crop damage would resume within a day or two.

The elephants went through about a quarter-mile of dense papyrus in water up to my chest in places. We then emerged onto an island covered in tall grass. Before moving on, we noticed we all had several leeches clinging to us. To remove them, we applied the hot end of a cigarette to each of the slimy creatures. Two hundred yards into the long grass we heard the thud of droppings hitting the ground. We became aware that there were elephants standing silently in front of us. Telling Myonga to set the poles up on the ground, I whispered that if he threw me he would be sacked and would suffer unmentionable injuries to his person. Climbing onto his shoulders and encompassing the poles in my arms, he raised me slowly above the grass tops. An unexpected sight greeted me. There were elephant on three sides of us, the nearest only ten paces away to the right and others in front and to the left. It was a formidable spectacle in this sort of cover. There were at least ten in sight, and we had very nearly walked right into the middle of them. After the shooting they were disturbed and nervous, trunks raised here and there searching for tainted air. I shot the animal on the right through the lungs, for the head was partially covered in grass. It rushed away, and those in front and to the left started to head in its direction, one of the latter passing close by in front of me at full run. I fired the second barrel into the side of its head, and it went down, hind legs first.

Myonga now lowered himself and me to the ground. He had come through this test with honours, and I was very happy with his steadfast stand. The elephant in front, an adult cow, was dead. From there we went after the lung-shot animal. There was no chance that it could survive long. For twenty paces along its spoor the grass all around was saturated in pink frothy blood, and this continued for over one hundred yards, when we came up on its rear end. It was swaying on its legs with raised trunk blowing lung blood all over the place. It then collapsed and with great difficulty rose again, stood for a few seconds swaying, and fell again for good. We had killed three elephant out of at least twenty and probably many more. They were now thoroughly disturbed, and I felt we had almost certainly frightened them out of this stronghold.

We were back in camp before midday. I changed my shorts and shirt, which were damp and covered in mud and blood, had a bite to eat and drank some sweet tea, and felt rejuvenated. The guys who had gone to check out the three bulls were back. They had been into the *shamba*s again and were reported to be in an extensive area of tall *swagu* (Vetiveria) grass bordering the fields. I sent Mhawe with some of the local people to extract and bring in four tusks from the two normal cow elephants. Accompanied by Myonga and the two men with reports about the bulls, we set off, carrying both my .470 rifles and adequate solid cartridges. Arriving at the *shamba* where the bulls had been, we were directed to a point on the edge of the long grass where they had entered early that morning. This was so tall that even a large bull would be completely submerged

in it. There was no way of knowing how these bulls would react to encountering man in their selected refuge area, although the chances were that it would be the same as most other elephant under similar circumstances.

In order to cut down on noise as we proceeded through this dense tangle of grass and creepers, I instructed the two locals to remain behind. Myonga followed me with one of my .470 rifles and ammunition; I took the lead carrying the other rifle, two spare shells in my jacket pocket, and the ash bag for testing wind direction. We followed the bulls through impossibly dense tall grass, to break through untouched cover to join another trail farther on. After half an hour or more, the top of a Kigelia tree became visible ahead and to our left. As we progressed, the elephant's spoor started to curve around toward the tree, but we could no longer see the tree because the grass was well above our heads. A short while later it came in sight again less than one hundred yards away. As we approached, audible sighs or expulsion of air indicated that the bulls were resting in its shade during the heat of the day. I moved carefully forward; the irregular sounds increased as the distance between us became less. I was no longer following their spoor but picking my way through the grass along trails leading in the right direction.

We were now only a few yards from the Kigelia tree, and as I emerged, bent double, from under a heap of overhanging broken grass, I came into full view of the three bulls standing under the tree in a cleared trampled space. The nearest bull was broadside on to me, facing to the right about fifteen yards away. Another of equal body size was standing directly behind and parallel to him, facing toward the left. The third animal was in the shade of the tree beyond them. I could only see part of him, and he appeared to be facing away from us. Ideally, in this sort of cover, I wanted to kill all three bulls in this one place, but I was far from sure I could do it, and much depended on their reactions to the first shot. I decided to kill the nearest bull with a side brain shot. This would make him collapse, hind legs first, exposing the head of the one behind him, which I hoped to put down with another side brain shot with the left barrel. A quick change to my second rifle, I hoped, would provide me with an opportunity to destroy the third bull.

With Myonga right beside me I lined up on the closest bull and put him straight down. As his hind legs gave way and he collapsed, I swung onto the bull that was behind him with its head fully exposed. By the time I was onto him he had started to move to the left in the direction he had been facing. He went straight down as I fired the left barrel, hit in the brain. Grabbing my second rifle from Myonga, who took the used one, I was in time to fire at the third bull. He had already run off for the long grass beyond but, probably realizing he was on his own, turned to the left and was by now moving just inside the outer fringe of tall grass. I could not see him clearly, so, thinking I might not get another chance, I fired both barrels one after the other at him. The first shot into the head area staggered but did not fell him. The following bullet I fired into his shoulder through grass and then lost sight of him. Changing rifles again, I told Myonga to stay with the two downed bulls and if any of them showed signs of revival to finish them off with my second rifle. With the Jeffery's .470 in hand and reloaded and two extra shells in my pocket, I went after the wounded bull. I could only get through the cover by following where he had forced a passage, and without taking any great care I followed as fast as I could. I unexpectedly caught up with him after a very short

distance. I saw his great gray rear end appear in front as he started to pivot around toward me. I put both barrels into his head as he swung, which again failed to bring him down and instead put him back on course going away from me. By the time I had reloaded he had vanished into the grass.

I was angry and surprised that I had failed to bring this bull down a second time, and without waiting to ease the tension went straight on after him. There were now great clots of blood on the grass and ground and a small quantity of frothy lung blood splattered about on overhanging vegetation. This was obviously a very sick elephant. He now had three 500-grain solid bullets somewhere in his head and another in the body that appeared to have damaged a lung. This increased my determination to get the bull but did nothing to make me more cautious or skillful in what I was doing. Moving along the copious blood trail, I made no effort to be especially quiet and was obsessed with catching up with him again, afraid of losing him wounded. Once again I came up with him sooner than expected, but this time he had obviously heard my noisy progress and was already coming at me when I saw him. He was very close, and I had my rifle at my shoulder and fired into his face, which brought him to his knees, but he immediately rose again, and as he did this I fired the left barrel into the base of his trunk, with no effect. I was out of ammunition, and in any case there was no time to reload. I took off back down the trail I had been following, conscious that the bull was coming along behind me.

*Attacking cow elephant. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

Time is an unknown factor in this sort of situation, but I had only gone a few yards when I tripped and fell flat on my belly on the ground. I had a feeling that this was the end of the road for me, but I knew I had to remain motionless. I could not see the elephant, but he must have been standing with his head right over me. I could feel the flattened grass under me moving under his weight. His breathing and a gurgling sound was right above me, and I felt something warm on my neck and arms. My mind was a blank, apart from responding to feel and sound. I had the sense that everything was in double slow motion, which seemed to happen every time I found myself in a really bad situation. Eventually I heard the grass rustling clearly, and all went silent. The breathing and gurgling ceased, as did any movement of flattened grass stalks under me.

I waited for what seemed a long time without hearing anything and then very slowly raised my head a little and looked from side to side and behind. There was nothing to be seen. Carefully getting to my knees, I looked and listened intently—nothing. I sat like this for a good five minutes, and all was silent and still. It seemed the bull had gone, so, carefully rising to my feet, I took off back down the route, rifle in hand, to where this had all started. I came leaping out of the grass surrounding the Kigelia tree. There were the two dead elephants, and Myonga appeared from where he had been sitting behind one of them. Taking one look in my direction, he ran headlong for the tall grass, yelling as he went. He had my other .470 rifle with him and a haversack with all the spare shells in it. I was really hyped up after my latest experience and went after him at twice his speed. I caught him tangled in some dense grass, and his yells turned to terrified hysterical screams as I seized the haversack for some shells. A hard slap across the face brought him back to earth, and he took the haversack off his shoulder and handed me two packets

*Bull that soused me in blood, with Amati Myonga.*

of five shells each. I loaded my Jeffery's .470 and took the remaining eight shells from the packets, putting them loose into my pocket. It was only at this point that I became aware of my appearance, which no doubt was partially the cause of Myonga's panic. My face, neck, arms, hat, and jacket were covered in blood from the wounded elephant, and suddenly appearing out of the long grass I must have presented a terrible spectacle to anyone. In addition, Myonga told me that he thought I had been tusked and that the elephant was hot on my heels.

It was by now late afternoon, and I had fully recovered from the last hour or more of pressure. Myonga suggested we go back to camp and come out the next day to search for the wounded bull. My inclination was to get on after it now. It had five heavy rifle bullets in the head and one in the body. The quantity of blood it was throwing out indicated a very sick animal. With these thoughts in mind I decided to follow it up again. Checking that both my rifles were loaded, we started after the wounded bull. Reaching the place where I had gone down, there were great gouts of blood everywhere and lumps of congealed blood a foot long or more lying about the place. I felt sure this had all come through its trunk, preventing it from scenting me, and so I had survived. From this point on we followed the elephant with much care. Great quantities of blood splattered the surrounding grass and ground, along with copious loose droppings. The elephant came to a halt some three hundred yards from where we parted company. It was bleeding profusely, and I did not think it could survive long. After a brief rest we pressed on and came up on the bull after twenty minutes. Once again I was presented with its stern a few yards away. I told Myonga to loudly rustle the grass to attract its attention, while I stood ready to shoot when it turned. There was no reaction, and I think it was past caring what happened. There was no way we could get through the grass alongside it and be sure of a clear view, so, failing again to attract its attention, I shot it in the hip-pelvic joint area and it went down struggling to rise. I finished it off with a bullet through the top of the head into the brain.

Before leaving for camp we inspected the carcass for bullet wounds. The body shot had passed through a lung but may not have been fatal in the long term. The first shot into the head had blown most of the left eye out and caused other internal damage. The other shots in the head had undoubtedly caused severe hemorrhage and internal bleeding to the extent that its trunk was blocked with blood, ruining its powers of scent. I had escaped with my life because the bull could not scent, it was at least 50 percent blind, and possibly its hearing was affected. The injured lung no doubt contributed to its state of exhaustion and weakness. It is a noticeable phenomenon that many of the larger mammals seem to develop what might be termed a shock-resistant condition, following on a badly placed first shot. Whether it is the influence of a massive infusion of adrenaline into the system or some other reason, I do not know. The possibility of such a thing happening underlines the importance of doing everything possible to make the first shot fatal.

After removing the tails from the three dead elephants, Myonga and I made our way through the sea of long grass to the *shamba*s and back to camp. We were met by a crowd of men as we came out of the grass. When they saw us they all started clapping and yelling. They had heard all the gunshots during the afternoon and Myonga's yelling when he panicked. The long delay before we appeared made them think there

had been an accident. They had gathered together with the intention of searching for us. There was much relief among them that evening, and it became a good reason for a drinking party.

I stayed on at the Mgeta River for another two days, but no more reports of elephant damage came. I felt I had achieved good results and was ready to move on upstream along the western edge of the flood plains. We left the next morning. We crossed the Kihanzi River in due course and camped at Chita. After dealing with some crop damage problems there, we moved back to the flood plains proper to a unique area known as Msita. This is a small hill at the extremity of a peninsula of mature *miombo* woodland extending far out onto the plains between the Kihanzi and the Kilombero. There was no human habitation here, and it was a game paradise. Huge concentrations of puku, buffalo, waterbuck, and eland collected here at the height of the floods. Consequently, great numbers of lion and leopard moved in but only a few hyenas. In the *miombo* woodland I saw sable antelope but no kudu or impala. The flood waters reached the high mark some way out on the plains from the higher-elevation woodland. The great numbers of grazing animals kept this border between the two habitat types free of long grass, creating a third habitat with excellent grazing, with a scattering of African blackwood trees *(Dalbergia melanoxylon)* for shade. I walked across this area and spent time in the woodland checking it all out. It was all top-quality game country, and some years later I organized for the Tanzania Wild Life Safaris Ltd. to bring their clients in by air after we put an airstrip in. Because the peak period was during the rains and all hunting was on foot and by canoe, it never gained the popularity it deserved with safari operators.

From Msita I moved camp three hours' walk across the plains to a watercourse called Gawiro. There was a section with water all year round. That night a tremendous commotion started in the water, moving along the length of it, and then faded out. It was then repeated, and this went on all night. Initially it sounded like hippo or crocs thrashing about, so I went to the bank and put my flashlight on. The cause of the noise was huge swarms of fish, all leaping about and thrashing around on the surface. I never discovered what motivated all this action—food or predators.

Buffalo have a reputation for ferocity and vindictiveness, which in my opinion is hardly justified. They can be very dangerous when shot and wounded. In such circumstances they will usually make for cover to escape. But when the wounded animal knows it is being pursued it will deliberately wait in a place of its choosing and attack when a person comes close. On rare occasions a bull will attack as soon as it is hit if the hunter is close and it knows where he is. "Unprovoked" attacks usually occur with old bulls in thick bush. I believe these old animals suffer from deafness and do not hear a person approaching until he is very close. The animal may well be lying down when it suddenly sees a man close by, and may attack out of fear and feeling it is unable to escape. Descriptions and claims of whole herds attacking en masse are a misjudgment of such incidents. Near Gawiro a herd of between two and three hundred buffalo came thundering across the plains straight at myself and the porters. I told the porters to put their loads down and stand firm. They came up to about fifty yards, a solid black mass, the leading animal being jostled and pushed forward by those behind. We walked toward them, and they broke, turned around, and lumbered away. This was curiosity, not hostility, and I have experienced such incidents on several occasions.

In due course I arrived at Utengule once again to start on the last leg of this safari. I hired two dugout canoes, and left the next day to travel downstream in easy stages to the ferry crossing on the Ifakara to Mahenge Road. At that time crocodile skin for handbags, shoes, and other items had become fashionable in Europe and North America. Every river of any size in eastern Central Africa that harboured the reptiles was being hunted by a profusion of people of all races. The Kilombero had great numbers of crocodile but for some reason was not "discovered" by hunters until 1951. From then on they came in ever-increasing numbers. The objective of my canoe safari was to find out what these guys were up to. Hunting crocodile in daylight required an accurate small-bore rifle. The reptiles quickly learnt that any boat or people on the bank were dangerous and avoided them by submerging and, on surfacing, only showing the top of the head and nostrils. This is a small target, often in sight for a very short time, requiring accurate shooting at ranges of one hundred yards or more with limited time to do it in. Such skills were beyond the abilities of most of the incoming crocodile hunters. Failing all else, many of them resorted to putting great chunks of meat, from any animal they could kill, onto very large hooks attached to a thin cable anchored at the bank. They did hook a few crocs in this way, but it was never enough to meet their expenses.

Following the Kilombero down, I found dozens of crocodile hunters—Africans, Arabs, Seychellois, and mixed-race people—all looking for quick money. Crocodile hide taken from the lower sides and the belly was selling at eighteen East African shillings (then at par with the pound sterling) to the inch measured across at the widest part. This was big money for this sort of people, but lack of ability prevented any of them from making a fortune. I discovered that side racketeering was evolving parallel with the trade in croc skins. Some elephant and game animals, in particular puku, were being killed also. Elephant tusks were handed in as found ivory and the government reward paid. No doubt some ivory found its way onto the black market also. Puku were shot for baiting crocodile, the meat put on hooks or the carcasses anchored to stakes driven into hard ground on the banks and left to rot. Any remaining meat and often freshly killed puku were smoke-dried and sent downriver by canoe for sale in Ifakara. I estimated that 95 percent of the croc and puku were being killed at night after being dazzled by spotlights.

This unsavoury situation was exacerbated by many individuals who were fringe criminals and thugs. I was shocked and depressed at what I found. Few of the people in these small camps had game licenses to hunt any game animal, and they were in illegal possession of shotguns. I was not in a position to arrest them all, so I confiscated their guns and exhibits, such as puku and crocodile skins, and told them to report to the police at Ifakara to recover their property. I arranged with the police to arrest and prosecute these individuals when they arrived, and to retain the guns permanently. An altercation and unpleasantness occurred with one individual, whom I suspect was on drugs of some sort. He had the skins of several game animals and crocodile in his possession. I told him I was going to confiscate the lot, along with a shotgun for which there was no license. He immediately became abusive and said he would shoot me if I tried to take anything and started to reach for the gun. He was sitting down, and as he started to rise I jumped onto him. As he fell to the ground, the two game scouts with me piled in and tied him up with rope. The guy then started begging for forgiveness. We were only four hours upriver from Ifakara, so I sent Mhawe down there to fetch Daniel Nyalenga, the head

scout, and a police constable to take the man to the "lockup" there. In the meantime I kept him tied up, and the next day he was on his way to prison.

By the time the safari was finished I had removed over half of the so-called crocodile hunters, but I needed some means of keeping them out permanently. During the next two or three days I gave this matter some thought. Perhaps watching the varied bird life on the river relaxed me sufficiently to ease my hostile intentions toward many of these "scumbags," as I termed them. The assorted herons, skimmers, kingfishers, plovers, egrets, cormorants, geese, ducks, and lily-trotters certainly were a relaxing influence. I finally decided to use the letter of the law concerning this invasion of my range and to impose a total ban on night hunting. There was quite a howl of complaints about this when it was enforced. The law forbade all hunting at night. Crocodiles were unlisted vermin that could be hunted without license. There was a slight ambiguity here, because it was accepted that vermin could be killed any time, anywhere, if they became a nuisance. A short while later I had Gerry Swynnerton, the game warden, on safari, and he agreed to fully back my decision. It put an end to the scramble for crocs on the Kilombero and incidentally prevented the slaughter of many game animals.

I do not think that any amount of hunting could wipe out the crocodile in such big rivers as the Kilombero-Rufiji system. They quickly become shy of people and boats of any type and will submerge as soon as they come in sight. They understand the danger connected with powerful light beams more slowly. Eventually this becomes the only means by which the average crocodile hunter can kill them, but in time they develop a tactic for evading this also. The eyes show up at a considerable distance, but this has to be reduced to twenty yards or so for the hunter to see the exposed part of the head at which to shoot. They learn to submerge in good time as the light approaches. As often as not they will surface for air under floating or overhanging vegetation and cannot be seen even by spotlight. Crocs under six feet long are not worth taking, so no matter how many larger reptiles are taken, the stock of young crocs is always there to grow to maturity and reproduce. In the early rains large crocs can be taken well away from the main rivers, but most of the crocodile hunters were not aware of this. It is a time when the bullfrogs come out of their dry season hibernation, occupying shallow rainwater pans. These are often some distance from the river, and many crocs will go there to feed on the bullfrogs. Because of the shallow water and the limited area it covers, big crocs are more vulnerable to a man with a gun.

# Safari with the Boss

*Chapter 20*

In April 1953 Gerry Swynnerton, the head of the department, arranged to do a short foot safari with me. I welcomed the safari, as it would give me an opportunity to discuss with him a range of issues that needed his support—boundary amendments to the Selous Game Reserve, night hunting of crocodiles, and general staff matters. He was a man who had achieved much in the short time he had been in his position. Senior and junior staff increases had been approved, departmental funds increased, and a disciplinary code for an armed paramilitary force instituted. He was a wildlife and safari enthusiast with whom I had much in common, and I enjoyed his company. The safari started off badly, as I went down with an attack of malaria. Despite taking a quinine tablet every day, I regularly got malaria two or three times per year. Gerry produced the latest drug for malaria on the market, and we were able to continue on our walk after three days. I cannot remember what the stuff was called, but I have never had a bad bout of malaria since.

We trekked down past Funga to Boma ya Ulanga, just inside the game reserve. Below this point near Manane there is a large island in the middle of the river. Approaching it, we saw a dugout canoe anchored below a steep bank. We had no means of getting to the island, so it was necessary to adopt a deceptive strategy to entice the canoe and its owner to come to us. We decided to send a Mbunga porter, who was carrying head scout Nyalenga's kit, from Ifakara. The people on the island were probably Mbunga from Msolwa or Ifakara and spoke the same dialect and had the same customs as the porter. He was told to call the people on the island and say he needed help because he had left a friend badly injured by a hippo upriver and his canoe was sunk. We hid in the bush silently while he did this. A man responded to his call and listened to the sad story. He disappeared back into the trees on the island and reappeared ten minutes later with another man in a larger canoe from around the far side of the island. They pulled the canoe in close to our side, tied it to a tree root, and came up to meet our porter, who then enticed them away from the bank out of sight of anyone watching. Here we confronted them, warning them to make no noise. There were

eight of them. It seemed their main activity was fishing with nets, and they hoped to hook a crocodile or two. They had only been there one day. They had three dugouts, and had come from the Msolwa to the Kilombero and down to Manane.

With six poachers still on the island, no doubt waiting for their two colleagues, we could not risk spooking them in daylight, so we waited until dark. With Nyalenga and Mhawe plus the Mbunga porter and one of the prisoners, we crossed over to the rear of the island when it was dark, anchoring beside the other two canoes. Leaving Mhawe to look after the boats, the prisoner guided us to the campsite. All six men were around the fire and leapt to their feet when we rushed in on them. Two bolted into the dark, but the others surrendered, and we secured them with ropes. The two who had run had not appeared at the canoes, so we assumed they were hiding somewhere on the island. It was small, so I figured there would be no difficulty finding them. They could not escape; the river was too deep and full of crocodiles. We took all our prisoners and the three canoes back across the river, set a guard over them, and retired for the night. The next morning, leaving Myonga and some porters guarding the prisoners, I returned to the island with the two other scouts and the Mbunga porter. It was evident that the two men who had escaped were not there, but we found fishing nets, salt, cooking pots, and other bits and pieces, which we destroyed. Returning to camp, I sent off all the poachers to Ifakara under control of head game scout Nyalenga for prosecution in the local court for illegal entry and fishing in the game reserve.

Gerry Swynnerton and I continued our safari, cutting across to the Luhombero and up to the Mbalu and out of the reserve to Ilonga, the last major settlement southeast of Mahenge. Here I had the misfortune to injure my back when hunting crop-raiding elephant. I followed four animals from the *shamba*s, eventually catching up with them in dense riverine thicket. I could hear and smell them very close by. They stampeded away, curving around to the right and coming back in a parallel line toward me. Thinking to cut them off, I moved fast with little forward vision toward the line along which they were approaching. Suddenly I stepped through a tangle of grass and thicket into space. I landed in a heap several feet below and could hear the elephants passing close by but out of sight. I started to rise but was paralyzed by a sharp pain in the back. Standing up, I could not straighten my back but was able to take a few steps forward in a bent-over position. If I tried to straighten up, severe pain halted the effort. Gerry Swynnerton, Mhawe, and Myonga then caught up with me, and with their help I was able to walk slowly and painfully back to camp. I had apparently stepped into space over an invisible vertical bank covered in bush. The elephants were clearly aware of this bit of topography, for they had gone down a regular trail farther along and then turned back below the bank to continue on past where I fell.

We arrived at camp some time later, and I lay curled up on my camp bed until the next morning. My back did not seem to be any better; it was very painful trying to walk. Gerry then suggested I be carried, so I sat in a chair carried by four porters for two days, by which time the pain had eased and I was able to straighten up with an effort. At this point the road from Mahenge to Ilonga was passable to vehicles, and we finished the last few miles in a Bedford truck. Gary Butler, the medical officer at Mahenge, checked me over, decided I had a badly pulled muscle, gave me ointment to rub on every day, and said I would be fit in ten days or so if I rested on a bed. So ended my safari with my boss. The two men who had escaped us at the island were picked up at Msolwa and delivered to the lower court at Ifakara. They had swum across the river to the north bank, regardless of large crocs, and walked home to their village.

# Unexpected Close Encounters

*Chapter 21*

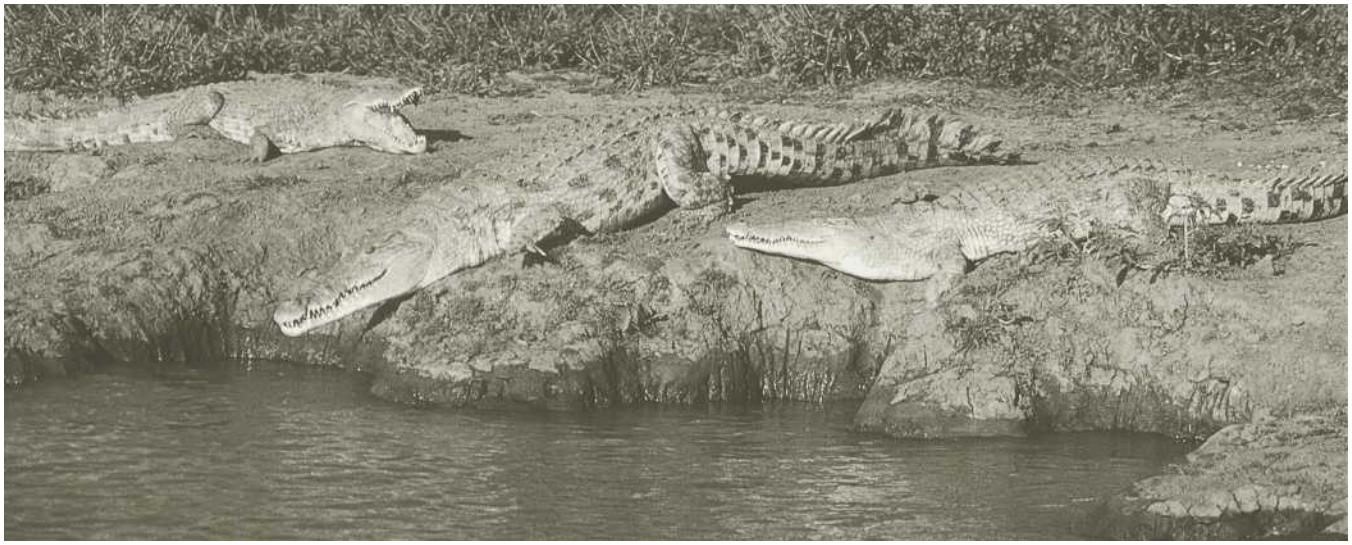
Through the balance of the largely failed wet season of 1953, I hunted elephant on control work along the northern foothills of the Uzungwa Mountains, including the Magombero Forest. There were a great many elephant in this relatively small area. Although numbers of the normal *miombo* elephant—which have smoother hides than those inhabiting the harsh dry acacia and Commiphora bush in central and northern Tanganyika—were to be seen, there were many of a smaller stature. I measured a number of these among those I shot, and none of them exceeded eight and a half feet at the shoulder. They did not appear to mix with the larger beasts visiting from the adjacent flood plains and *miombo* country. No matter how high the pressure of hunting or the disturbance level, they would not move out of the Magombero. I came to the conclusion that these family groups and their bulls had been resident in the forest for many generations, had evolved a growth pattern to suit their environment, and could not be moved out of the forest because they had never been anywhere else and did not know where to go.

Walking with Mbukuri across the plains east of the Magombero near the Msolwa River, we saw a group of about eight elephant approaching us. Two of them were adult tuskless females. Mbukuri had been with me at the deaths of a great many elephant by now, and I thought this might be an opportunity for him to upgrade his ability for future control work. It was open country, with all the elephants in the clear. We positioned ourselves downwind on a large termite mound and let the herd approach, grazing as they came. I told Mbukuri, who had my .404 rifle, to wait until they were broadside on to us as they passed and then to shoot the nearest tuskless animal in the heart. As they came alongside the termite mound, I watched him carefully. A tuskless female was twenty yards away, and he was lining up on her. I could not help noticing that the muzzle of the rifle was not stationary and in fact was moving about in small arcs. I whispered to him to relax and hold the rifle steady on the heart area. This did no good, and I knew he would end up wounding the beast, so I told him to stop. I then shot both tuskless elephant as part of a long-term policy to reduce this common genetic aberration in the species in this part of Tanganyika. It is hard to understand how a man like Mbukuri could stand rock solid with me in the face of certain death on so many occasions

and yet be unable to control himself or keep cool when he personally had to deal with the situation. He never did make the grade to an independent elephant control scout.

Returning to my camp at the Magomberu, I spent a few more days there assessing the elephant population and discovered two species of primate that I had not seen before. Some troops of the shorter-haired black-and-white variety of the colobus monkey *(Colobus angolensis)* were resident in the forest and could be seen every time I went out. The rarer red colobus also existed there in smaller numbers. The former were also to be seen in the riverine forest along the Great Ruaha River nearby. I saw only one group of the latter in a section of forest along the river, which later was cleared to form part of a Dutch aid sugar production scheme. I also demarcated the Selous Game Reserve western boundary between the Msolwa and Great Ruaha Rivers. By this time the rain had ceased, and I was able to continue with the major part of this safari trekking down the south side of the Ruaha to its confluence with the Rufiji, up the Rufiji (here known as the Ulanga River) to Shuguli Falls at the Kilombero and Luwegu River junction, then back up to Ifakara along the Kilombero River. Camping at the last settlements close to the game reserve at Kidatu, I organized extra porters and purchased about twenty head loads of maize flour for use on this longish walk through uninhabited country. I also contacted and arranged for head game scout Nyalenga to deliver another ten loads to Shuguli Falls at the end of June. The Great Ruaha River has a belt of riverine forest along both banks for several days' walk downstream into the game reserve, when it thins out to become open Combretum bush land in undulating country with wide-open *ulambos* to the south.

A number of incidents with wild animals on this safari illustrated that even when not hunting and therefore not deliberately provoking them, it is important to exercise care and be on the alert. We had stopped for a rest by the river, and there was a large dead tree projecting far out into the water from the bank. When walking I always carried a stick about five feet long to remove thorns or other small obstructions from the trail and to break up elephant droppings to check their temperature for freshness. I moved out as far as I could along the horizontal tree trunk, using my stick to test the depth of water in the river. I was about



*Croc basking on the Rufiji River. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

to start back for the bank when Mbukuri said, "Watch out, there is a hippo coming down with the current." I was in a very exposed and vulnerable position, so I wasted no time in moving quickly back to the bank. As I reached this safe position a large crocodile, with jaws open, exploded out of the water right beside the tree trunk where I had turned back. It then sank out of sight, to be seen no more. Mbukuri had seen it coming down some twenty yards upstream as it poked the top of its head out of the water for a couple of seconds. Because it was black, he mistook it for a hippo, and I certainly owed him my life because of his early warning. The crocodile, which probably was not less than twelve feet long, had obviously seen me near the end of the fallen tree trunk. Thinking, I suppose, that it could seize and drag me into the deep water, it deliberately stalked me. As a final check on my position, it barely exposed itself a few yards upstream as it drifted down with the current. It took me a matter of seconds, after Mbukuri's warning, to remove myself from my vulnerable position. In that very short time the crocodile traveled submerged and erupted out of the water right where I had been. Half its body came right out above the surface, jaws open, intending to seize me and take me with it as it went under again.

Crocodile as small as six feet will sometimes attack people or other creatures such as monkeys, baboons, dogs, and even water birds. A six-foot crocodile can probably be fended off by an adult man, but even so, it will leave behind some nasty wounds on any part of the body it seizes. There is, however, no escaping a large crocodile of say nine feet long or more, because of its enormous weight and power. Their technique is to seize and hold the prey, at the same time pulling it into the water to drown. They have no cutting teeth or molars, and everything they eat is swallowed whole. Fish form the greater part of their diet, supplemented by bullfrogs, other crocodiles of smaller size, and mammals drinking or feeding at the water line. A larger mammal has to decompose before the croc can eat it, and the croc will stash it away in some place for this purpose. But if there are other crocs around, they will move in for a feed too, often tearing the body apart. One of their methods—and I have seen it demonstrated on a decomposing hippo carcass—is to seize a protruding part in the water and propel themselves into a fast rotating movement, twisting the seized appendage off the body and swallowing it.

When traveling along these crocodile-infested rivers one has to take precautions when bathing in the river or even when fetching water for the camp. A crocodile will note the regular use of a particular point and will set up an ambush there. The porters, who know this already, have to be reminded to exercise caution. I personally always selected a place with very shallow water only two or three inches deep covering an extended sandbank, where no crocs, large or small, could approach close enough for an attack without being seen in good time. Lacking such conditions, I would bathe in a bucket of water in camp. In many of the big rivers in southern Tanganyika the bed is often an extensive stretch of sand. Because these conditions are not conducive to adequate production of fish, their average density is low, and crocodiles in such places tend to be hungry and dangerous. They fight among themselves and frequently eat each other. It is not uncommon to find crocs with a leg or a large part of the tail missing.

Throughout this safari along the big rivers there were large numbers of hippo and elephant. We often saw rhino and found their fresh spoor several times a day. One rhino rushed puffing and snorting toward the line of porters, who dumped their loads and ran for safety in all directions. The animal was resting on an island in the Ruaha River when we first saw it. Becoming aware of humans nearby, its line of retreat took it straight across the

river channel separating us, giving the porters plenty of time to escape. It disappeared into the riverine forest and we saw no more of it. Such incidents do have a good effect on porters who habitually lag well behind the main column. We kept running into elephant every day, usually with no problems; I would make sure they had all passed ahead of us moving away from the river. Satisfied that it was now all clear, I would tell the men to pick up their loads, and we would be on our way again.

One morning, however, in a dense broad band of forest, we overlooked a large cow out of a herd of about twenty head. They had all cut across the hippo trail we were following some way ahead. We waited for any stragglers, and when none appeared after a few minutes we moved on, the porters in tight single-file behind. We were past where the herd had crossed ahead of us when an angry elephant squeal erupted behind and close by. It seems this cow had dawdled below the steep riverbank to our left after the others had gone. She was now moving along to join up with them when she was suddenly cut off from the others, and, no doubt feeling cornered with a large river behind, she came on at a run, squealing with rage. In one fast motion the porters dumped their loads and legged it for dear life. The cow, which was a bit confused, started after one man, gave him up, and went after another, running in the direction the herd had taken. I could now only hear the commotion moving rapidly away from us—the man yelling as he ran and the elephant blowing short, sharp squeals. Eventually all went silent, and Mbukuri and I moved over fast in the direction of the last sounds. We called the man several times, but no response. Farther along the trail left by the elephant, we found a cloth the man had been wearing hung up on a bush. Still no response to our calls. Another piece of wearing apparel appeared on the ground. I was now seriously worried, thinking the man had been killed. Continuing along the trail, we came to a parting of the ways—the elephant spoor breaking off to the right and the man's

*Ruaha buffalo attack. Note scrotum torn off by lion.*

running foot prints going straight on. This was evidence that he had escaped and was quite a relief to us. We then started to call him again and continued in the direction he had taken. Moving and calling every few yards, we eventually got a distant response. The guy had kept going for at least four hundred yards after the cow left him and then had climbed high into a tree, where we found him. He would not come down until we arrived. He was nearly naked, badly scratched by thorns everywhere and trembling uncontrollably. He had believed he was going to die. He said he felt the air from the elephant's trunk blowing on him as he ran. Be that as it may, we returned to the porters and loads, found a *kikoi* for him to wear, and made camp nearby so that he could recover.

On the last day before leaving the riverine forest along the Ruaha, we had a run-in with an old buffalo bull. Walking in single-file as usual, following a well-worn hippo trail close to the riverbank, Mhawe, who was in the lead carrying my loaded Jeffery's .470 on his shoulder with barrels pointing forward, suddenly halted, muttering, *"Nyati,"* (buffalo) and was turning to run. At the same moment I saw the buffalo bull, rising to its feet from a lying position right on the trail we were following. I grabbed the rifle from Mhawe, transferring it straight to my right shoulder in firing position, pushing the safety catch forward as I did so. By now the buffalo was coming straight at me, only six or seven paces away. I shot it in the head, and it went down on its belly and stayed there. The bullet had entered high up the face, penetrating and shattering the brain. The porters had all dumped their loads and had run to the rear. Within a few minutes they came drifting back, making nervous jokes with each other and clicking their tongues loudly with amazement at what had happened. We now examined the bull. He was old and had clearly been attacked by two or more lions at some time before. It seems they had lost the element of surprise and the bull had managed to drive them off. He had received a mauling but might well have recovered in time. There were claw wounds on his rump and face and probably some bites also. The lions seemed to have been reduced to grabbing at any extremity within reach. His scrotum and the whole sheath of the penis had been torn off. The tail was bitten through in several places and the anus severely torn. The bull was down in weight but, judging from the stomach contents, was able to graze and digest some grass.

This was an unexpected feast of meat for the porters, so we camped nearby for the night. Before butchering the carcass, I had the men roll it down the riverbank onto a sand bar, where there was better light for photography. The next day we stayed put while the buffalo meat was smoke-dried. I spent my time walking inland, away from the river, to see more of the country. Once into the rolling *miombo* we began to see a good selection of game animals. Sable antelope were fairly common, as were Nyasa wildebeest and zebra. Many buffalo and elephant were to be seen, and we twice saw black rhino and a lot of spoor. Up to now we had seen no evidence of poaching, but this was about to change. I think the poachers avoided the extensive riverine forest belt along the Ruaha River because of all the elephant, rhino, hippo, and possibly even buffalo that inhabited it. Farther on, there was open country right to the river on both sides and adequate game for their needs. Once we entered the open country we soon found abandoned camps. Without exception these poachers were after crocodiles, as was evident from bits of unusable skin, remains of animals killed for bait and food, and piles of used-up flashlight power cells.

We found several hurried evacuations, and it was evident that advance warning of my approach had been received all along this part of the Ruaha, and on up the Ulanga

to within twenty miles of Shuguli Falls. I had little doubt that word had spread from Kidatu about my safari. To my thinking this was not necessarily a disaster, since the ultimate objective of patrols into and around the game reserve was to deter people from entering, rather than to capture dozens of them on each safari. This situation would come about by developing a regular anti-poaching system and establishing permanent patrol posts at strategic locations. This was in fact achieved over the next few years. Poaching was reduced to a minimal amount confined to the fringes of the game reserve, which proved the correctness of my theory. Looking at it from the poacher's point of view, he stood to lose far more if caught in a remote area far from his village, for he would lose guns, ammunition, accumulated wealth from illegal hunting, and all associated equipment and food. In addition he might be fined heavily or go to prison for a lengthy stay.

Trekking upstream along the Ulanga, which is the central section of the Kilombero-Rufiji river system, we entered a much dryer area. Rhino in particular were noticeably more numerous here. We saw one or more every day and crossed fresh spoor even more frequently. Great numbers of hippo all along the river had cleaned out most of the grazing, making zebra, wildebeest, and buffalo scarce. Early one afternoon we were walking along, porters strung out in single-file behind, when a pair of lions came in sight. They were lying down in the shade of a large tree overlooking a sandbank, which sloped down to the river 150 yards away. They saw us approaching and disappeared below the slope between them and the sandbank. We continued on for about half an hour, and I decided to make camp. The site selected was flat ground in deep shade overlooking a narrow sandbank leading to the river. Later I went off with Mbukuri to see if we could relocate the lion and lioness we had disturbed earlier that afternoon. We found no sign of them but did see a hyena trying to compete with a collection of large crocodiles feeding on a hippo carcass at the edge of the water. It was partially torn open in the rear abdominal section, with intestines protruding. The crocs were all in shallow water nearby and would move in one at a time to try to drag more out and, having torn off some, would retreat some way off to swallow it. Invariably it was the biggest crocodile who successfully took over the carcass, threatening any smaller reptiles that came too close. The hyena never got a chance to steal a morsel. It would approach cautiously, moving its head up and down in an effort to locate where the crocs were lying. Several times it got within feet of the dead hippo when a croc, with mouth open, came rushing out of the water at it in a most hostile manner. The hyena fled every time, to pull up as soon as the crocodile stopped. Then it would lie down for a few minutes to make another approach when all seemed quiet, with the same frustrating results. As a matter of relevant interest, I once watched a pair of lions feeding on a dead hippo near Shuguli Falls. It seems that when they found it, crocodile were already feeding on it. One croc, measuring nearly eight feet long, was dead and partly eaten. It was some yards from the water's edge, and I assume the lions killed it there. Quite a number of crocs, including some large ones, were nearby in the water but made no attempt to threaten the lions.

In camp that evening I retired to bed in my tent. My servant Masudi always put an iron bucket full of water in front of and to the side of the tent for my early morning wash. By 10 P.M. all was quiet, the porters lying about in the open around several cooking fires. Knowing how these people feel, with their deeply ingrained superstition about lions, I am sure that their fears had some bearing on what happened some hours later.

A rhino approached the camp, possibly on its way to drink at the river. It came to a stop not far from the rear of my tent, puffing and snorting loudly as it realized there were humans nearby. What happened next was enough to send the rhino galloping away, snorting in alarm and panic. The porters, in a comatose state when the rhino first announced its presence, instantly assumed the lions we had seen nearby that afternoon had arrived. The porters' yells of panic as they awoke and ran in whatever direction they were facing created absolute pandemonium. I was still pulling on my shorts before leaving my tent to find out what was happening when a pounding of running feet approached rapidly from where all the noise was coming from. I assumed someone had been grabbed by a lion, but it was dark and I could not see anything. The sound stopped momentarily near the rear of my tent, and then the man, realizing he was on his own, turned to run for the river. He came pounding along parallel to the tent and, as he passed me, collided with a horizontal tree branch that took him across the forehead. He collapsed onto the bucket of cold water, cutting his face, and started screaming, *"Nime kamatwa"* (I have been caught) repeatedly. He thought, in his befuddled state of mind, that a lion had got him and that this was the end. Flashing my light about, I could see no reason for alarm and shouted for Mbukuri and Mhawe to calm everyone down. I turned my attention to the now hysterical guy groveling in the dust by my tent. Order was soon restored, and the men were all laughing, each blaming the other for what had happened. The only injury was to the man who had collided with the branch and cut his face on the iron bucket by my tent. A few bits of elastoplast put him right, and he carried his load well enough in the morning.

Shuguli Falls is a spectacular sight. It is located at the confluence of the Kilombero and Luwegu Rivers, with 95 percent of the water supplied by the Kilombero. Starting a distance upstream along both rivers, the terrain has a stratum of continuous jagged rock. The Luwegu, which is normally a perennial river here, flows through a series of broken rock channels, with little vegetation other than occasional clumps of reeds and a little short grass, right to where it joins the Kilombero at right angles a short distance above the falls. The Kilombero, however, with its huge volume of water, develops a delta over a mile wide at the junction and extending westward upstream for some three or four miles. It is dominated on the south side by Mberera Mountain. The whole length of the Kilombero delta consists of dense forest, cut by numerous deep and shallow fast-flowing channels and a number of minor waterfalls. At Shuguli itself the combined volume of water from these two great rivers is compressed into a space only twenty feet wide. The actual drop is not very high, but the sheer volume and velocity of the water going through it causes a constant roar with a halo of spray and mist obscuring the fine detail. At the bottom is a very deep elongated pool, the water eventually spreading out into the broad Ulanga River, as it is known, from here to sixty miles downstream, where it joins the Great Ruaha and is then called the Rufiji.

In the pool below Shuguli Falls there is usually good fishing to be had, probably because the fish are forced to congregate at the bottom since they cannot get up the falls. I camped here for a couple of days. I had taken the spleen from a freshly dead hippo we had found that morning. My normal practice anywhere along the Kilombero was to fish for the great *mjongwa* to be found in the river. They are a species of catfish but can reach over one hundred pounds in weight. I fished for them because I enjoyed it and also to feed my men. The spleen from any large mammal is ideal bait for bottom fishing because the blood seepage is an irresistible attraction to the big fish. The concentration of fish below Shuguli was such that one seldom had to

*Start of Kilombero Delta above Shuguli Falls.*

wait more than five minutes for a strike. This would be repeated all morning at every cast. I used a rod and reel with 50-pound line. A fish would strike and generally would make two powerful runs before giving up and being wound in to be gaffed. On a good morning I could sometimes bring in up to four hundred pounds of fish for the porters, and I much preferred this to having to shoot some animal for them.

Moving from Shuguli up the Kilombero toward Ifakara on the last leg of this safari, I came upon an interesting situation, considering the preference lions seemed to have for hippo in this area. We were approaching a watercourse near where it joined the main river. There were high, vertical banks on each side, with some large trees on top throwing shade across the bottom. Looking up and down the watercourse before finding a way down, I observed an adult hippo bull lying in a shallow pool near the main river. It was not deep enough for him to submerge and was just wide enough for him to lie lengthwise. Between him and the opposite bank there was a short stretch of flat, dry, white sand with shade covering the area. I figured we would cross the watercourse a little farther up and away from the hippo, to give it plenty of space and time to get to the deep water in the river if he got nervous.

Satisfied none of my porters would be in any danger, I was about to move off when something caught my eye in the shade-covered sand. I was much surprised to see a dark-maned lion lying on his back with all four legs up against the vertical bank. He was in a deep sleep and had no premonition we were there. Signaling the porters to retreat and sit down with no noise, I sat down to watch and await any developments. The lion was less than ten yards from the hippo,

which in turn was in shallow water without any other protection. After ten or fifteen minutes the hippo became aware of something that disturbed him and stood up with a surge of water. The lion immediately rolled onto his belly and lay there tensely watching the hippo, only a few yards away. I thought, *Now I am going to see how he will kill the hippo.* They both remained motionless for a minute or two. Then the hippo slowly turned 180 degrees and, without hurry or alarm, plodded out of its puddle along the watercourse to the river. The lion watched steadfastly all the time, remaining on its belly. I had hoped to see something dramatic, but these two animals seemed to be indifferent to each other. It was time to move on, and when I stood up the lion saw me at once and, turning, started off in a crouching stance in the same direction as the hippo, keeping close to the bank. Then, with a low growl, he broke into a fast trot along the watercourse for a few yards and up the opposite side and disappeared. He had a good heavy dark mane. I always felt privileged to see these great cats in such completely undisturbed circumstances.

All along this part of the Kilombero there are islands of varying size, and we took care to approach and survey each one carefully for signs of crocodile hunters or fishermen, but found none. Excessive numbers of hippo were all along the river, and already the grazing was being cleaned out by them. Later that year they started dying by the hundreds along the Kilombero/Ulanga and Ruaha Rivers and were reduced to a remnant along the Luwegu. The failure of the rains, together with overgrazing, put them in poor condition, reducing their resistance to disease and parasites. Many hippo gave up leaving the river at night to graze and seemed to

Mjongwa *fish taken below Shuguli Falls.*

*My safari at eastern limit of Kilombero flood plains.*

survive on accumulated body fat for weeks at a time. When a hippo in top condition is shot at the end of a normal wet season, it is possible to get up to three four-gallon tins full of rendered fat from a single adult male. The fat is white and tasteless.

A lot of elephant were concentrated along the river and its immediate environs, especially in the sector from Manane at the limit of the flood plains, going upstream to Boma ya Ulanga and the Msolwa River junction on the western boundary of the game reserve. Several times I saw both bulls and cows with calves crossing the river or its channels. They seem to have a high specific gravity, for in the deep water where they have to swim they stay low in the water, with just the top of the head and back visible. Every few yards the trunk is raised for air, and progress is slow. The mother looks after the calves and helps to propel them across, assisting if there is a steep, slippery trail out of the water. Elephant do in fact spend long hours feeding in flooded areas, often in depths where small calves are compelled to swim or float for long periods. Elephant, even when accompanied by small calves, do not seem to be concerned about crocodiles. On the section of river near Boma ya Ulanga the elephant spend much time in the water, and there are a lot of large crocodiles. In contrast to this I did receive a game scout report, in later years, that a medium-sized crocodile was found dead, smashed into the fork of a tree. One can only assume an elephant did this, since it is the only animal with the strength and means to do it.

Despite the apparently high specific gravity of elephant, it seems when the herd is feeding for hours in water too deep for the calves to stand in, they have the ability to float. In this connection an interesting observation was passed on to me in the late 1960s by my colleague Allen Rees. He reported seeing an adult elephant drifting down the river, all four of its legs appearing above the surface from time to time. He thought it was a dead animal and was taken by surprise when it bumped into a sandbank, picked itself up, and wandered off. There is no doubt elephants enjoy being in the water.

# The Western Selous Again

*Chapter 22*

From the beginning of August until mid-September 1953, I walked through settled country in the far southwest of the Mahenge Range. After dealing with troublesome elephant once again along the edge of the Kilombero flood plains, I followed up the Mnyera River and cut across the Utemikwira Highlands in the spirit of exploring new country. It was cold, and near-treeless hills stretched on forever. A few sable antelope and small numbers of buffalo and elephant existed here. From a game point of view it was a disappointment, so I turned south to cross the Luhudji River into an area known as Matumbi. Here an isolated pocket of Wangoni people lived under a woman chieftainess named Binti Otilia. It was an area of high ridges separated by narrow valleys, and covered in dense secondary bush. Patches of cultivation—mainly cassava and hill rice—were haphazardly scattered through the whole area. There were a lot of elephant about, and I killed several in a week. But it soon became apparent that due to the nature of vegetation, the broken terrain, and, more important, the widely and thinly spread cultivation, effective control or removal of the herds might take weeks or months. I was due to return to the Liwale Range in December and was anxious to do a long safari into the Selous Game Reserve before then. So I returned to Mahenge, arriving there in late September. With fresh porters and adequate food supplies, I was on my way again at the beginning of October. From the veranda of my residence in the upstairs section of the old German fort, one looked straight across miles of country to the southeast and the Mahoko Hills. I planned to visit those hills on my safari and continue on to the Luwegu and beyond from there. Apart from the real pleasure and contentment I got from wandering through wild and remote areas, there were more serious and mundane matters to be resolved. In the previous months I had realigned much of the western boundary of the Selous Game Reserve, but the southern boundary in the Liwale and Mahenge Ranges still needed attention, and this was one of my objectives for the safari.

On 1 October, I trekked from Mahenge with some forty porters, many of them carrying food to feed themselves and several game scouts. It was not possible to send a porter back to

settled country on his own, so we drew rations from four loads at a time. When finished, the four porters, accompanied by a scout, were sent off together. Frequently the men returning home at various stages would bring in supplies to a prearranged food dump at a later date, accompanied by the scouts who had escorted them out.

There were water pans located in mature *miombo* forest lying between the Luhombero River and the Mahoko Mountain. I spent a few days camped by the pans, called Kikuyu and Luhanyota. They still had a little water, despite the drought conditions, and a fine selection of game animals was to be seen in the vicinity of both. Greater kudu were particularly numerous and could be seen drinking at both pans every afternoon. Elephant and a few rhino were also drinking here, the latter only after dark. There was a stretch of high ground called Miniha dividing the Luhombero and Lukula Rivers; this was the last point of reference in my recent boundary appraisal. I was now able to describe the remaining part using natural features. From Miniha there is a watershed connecting it with Mahoko Mountain. This, together with a well-defined drainage line rising on Mahoko and reaching the Luhombero upstream from the Mbalu junction, completed the western boundary description features. Added to those of my earlier safari, they became part of the new recognizable boundary I was describing. At the Luhombero the boundary went downstream to the Mbalu and then on as already legislated.

Having sorted this out to my own satisfaction, we moved on to Mahoko for a few days. It is a prominent feature rising well above the surrounding *miombo* forest. Looking to the east, the Luwegu could be seen along its entire length from the Lukula to the Mbarangandu River junctions. Irawola and Mbarika Mountains on the western boundary to the south were clearly visible, as were Mberera near Shuguli and Nandanga Mountain in the far distance. It was an altogether awe-inspiring view over a vast and totally wild country. It was all part of "my" game reserve. There were several herds of sable antelope on and around Mahoko Mountain and quite a lot of greater kudu, at least two fair-sized herds of buffalo, plenty of elephant, and several black rhino. On the northeastern side, rocky cliffs provided sanctuary for klipspringer, one of which came to a sudden end as I was watching them early one morning. These small antelope are able to move with the agility of mountain goat over rock face and cliffs, their hoofs being specifically adapted to this sort of habitat. They tend to come down off the rocks in the late evenings and early morning to graze on more level ground.

On this particular morning I had been watching three klipspringer with binoculars, grazing in an open, gently sloping bit of sandy soil close to a jumble of great rocks leading up to some cliffs. There was sudden panic as a leopard streaked out of concealment in some low bushes and seized the nearest klipspringer. The remaining two, one of which was not fully grown, escaped into the rocks. Having killed one, the leopard, after lying by it for a few minutes, proceeded to devour every last bit except for the intestines and stomach. The leopard will often take a kill up a tree, wedge it in a firm position, and feed off it at leisure. In this area, at that time, hyenas were not in great numbers, and the leopard, apart from feeding on a very small antelope which it consumed in less than an hour, was probably aware that it was not going to be interfered with. I do not know if a solitary hyena could ever take a kill from a leopard, but two or more hyena will. To neutralize this threat, the kill is placed out of reach up a tree, where the leopard will often stay with it, even when not feeding, to keep the vultures away. I referred earlier

to the ability of large carnivores to learn the habits of their prey in order to survive. It is doubtful if a leopard, agile and fast though it may be, could be successful in catching a klipspringer in large rock formations. The scene just described was an example to me that the leopard knew where and when these klipspringers would be vulnerable and acted accordingly.

After leaving Mahoko Mountain, we arrived at the Luwegu River, to find it had dried up in the drought. It is normally a flowing river two hundred yards across. The water is shallow, only inches for the most part, at a maximum three feet deep. Deeper holes near rock outcrops are occupied by hippo, crocodile and swarms of fish. Now it was white and in places damp sand right across, with no surface water at all. Green grass was growing on the damp sand, and there were waterbuck and some zebra grazing there. I usually felt some unease when crossing the Luwegu, and always had a rifle at the ready in case a hungry croc tried to grab one of us. Now one could cross from one side to the other at any point without even getting one's feet wet. With great numbers of animals of many species feeding on the sprouting grass, it was a memorable experience. Walking up the river for a few days to the Lahanyando junction, we were treated every day—almost every hour—to the spectacle of elephant and other animals. We saw black rhino, lion, and a pack of nine wild dog. Lion were noisy every night without fail; judging from several kills, they were preying mainly on the great herds of buffalo. These were easy enough to locate because of the flocks of egrets that accompany them all day. They live on insects disturbed out of concealment by the passage of these great beast, often one hundred or more in close ranks.

At the Lukula junction with the Luwegu is the one remaining relic of settlement along these rivers. The people were all moved out years before because of sleeping sickness, and

*Herd of buffalo on Rufiji flood plains. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

they resettled at Ilonga in the Ulanga District and in Ndapata, sixty miles east in Liwale District. These people were all Wangindo and naturally wanted to maintain contact with each other. Ionides, as the game ranger at Liwale, was faced with the choice of forbidding people to walk directly for two or three days between Ndapata and Ilonga or to allow it in a controlled way. Iodine was well aware that if he made it illegal, travelers would simply make their own way across, spreading out on any number of routes through the bush. Consequently, a regular footpath was authorized as the only route with specific overnight camping sites—at the confluence of the Ndapata and Njenje Rivers; Kibaoni at the Mbarangandu River; and Lukula at its junction with the Luwegu. They were not permitted to carry any weapon that could propel an object, such as arrows, shot, and slugs. They were allowed to carry axes, pangas, or spears for self-defense or camp chores. The system worked well for all the years I worked there, and men in company with women and children traveled this route all through the dry weather. In the rains the rivers were unfordable. There are many lion all along this route, but only one incident was reported to me. This happened at Kibaoni at the Mbarangandu crossing. A man traveling alone slept there one night. Some time during the night a lion grabbed him in the abdominal part of his body as he slept, carried him off for a few yards, then released and abandoned him. The next day he was found by some people passing through, still alive. Before he died he said the lion dropped him because he was yelling so loudly. This could not have been a hungry lion or it would have killed and eaten him. There was no other person within miles to disturb it. Lions do seem to be curious at times, often becoming playful at the same time. I personally think this unfortunate fellow was the unwitting victim of a lion just fooling about. Anywhere in southern Tanganyika lions are potential man-eaters, and care should be taken, particularly on very dark nights, when they seem to become extra bold in their contact with man. In this case I think that the man being entirely alone, and sleeping on the ground, was the cause of what happened to him. Many years after I had left the game department I heard reports of two people being taken and eaten by lions while staying in professional hunters' camps located in the southern section of the Selous Game Reserve.

Reaching the Luwegu-Luhanyandu junction, no part of the former river had flowing surface water, but there was plenty of sprouting fresh grass on the damp sand, and great numbers of animals were to be seen along the whole route. At the Luhanyandu we found the tracks of a bunch of eight people and followed them up. They traveled up the sand-river bed and we caught them a short distance from the Luwegu. They had been there a few days and were clearly not hunting for meat. All of them were middle-aged gents who said they had lived here at one time and had come to *tambika*. This is a form of ancestor worship traditional with the Wangindo people. It was the sort of activity I wanted to discourage. After recording their names and village I gave them a choice of either going to the local court at Ilonga and probably to prison for a month or two, or collecting, at my expense, eight head loads of porters' food and meeting me at Mkangira, the Luwegu-Mbarangandu junction, in a month's time. They would get no pay for this work, as a punishment, and would stay with my safari carrying food or equipment until the end. They accepted my second proposition and left the next day, with one game scout and several porters whose food loads had been used up. They would all be part of the food resupply already arranged before I left Mahenge. We followed the Luhanyandu upriver almost to its source. It has no surface water except occasional stretches of seepage or the odd pool. The valley broadens out some three hours'

walk before it reaches the Luwegu, with plenty of game animals to be seen. Farther up, gentle hills slope right down to the banks of both sides, where small herds of sable antelope and the occasional jet-black solitary male are to be seen.

One day vultures attracted my attention to a small valley nearby. There we found a dead young bull elephant, with its tusks intact. It had been there for three or four days, and the belly was bloated to an enormous size. The rear end and trunk had been mangled by hyenas, several of which were working at it when we arrived. The tusks were loose due to decomposition and came out easily by pulling. After removing the putrid nerves and cleaning them up to get rid of the stench, the tusks were carried back to Mahenge when the next four men whose food loads were finished returned there. Examining the young bull to find out why it died, we could find no bullet or poisoned arrow wounds, so it was not the work of poachers. There was, however, a hole in the chest, circular and over one and a half inches in diameter. There was no way to be sure what had caused it, but it looked like a tusk wound from a mature cow. There is no doubt, in my opinion, that the matriarch and other adult females in elephant groups make life difficult for subadult bulls in their family units, forcing them to leave. The result is that numbers of these young animals are attached to but not actually running with the herd. It is probable that some are more reluctant to leave the cows than others and end up being seriously injured, like the one we found.

Three days' walk from the Luwegu junction, we camped one night near a small but deep pool of water at one side of the Luhanyandu. It was in a rock crevice that broadened at the lower end onto a patch of sand. The water was dark, and I could see quite a number of small catfish milling about just below the surface. There was no evidence of anything larger in the pool, like tracks on the sand spit or terrapins in the water. The porters had dug a hole in the sand of the main riverbed for camp water, and one of them who had been pottering about was by the pool at some stage. Later he came to me and said he thought there was a crocodile there. I went there late in the afternoon and sat in a concealed position to see if his suspicions were correct. All was quiet for some time, and I was about to return to the camp when a seven- or eight-foot croc suddenly surfaced in the centre. It poked its head out into the clear with a foot-long catfish in its jaws. It then suddenly raised its head to an angle of 45 degrees out of the water and with a flip opened its jaws, and the fish fell freely into the throat to be swallowed whole. The croc then submerged out of sight. The performance was repeated once more just after sunset with a similar-sized fish. I suppose the narrow confines of the pool and the number of fish made it easy for the crocodile to catch one at any time. Like all reptiles, crocs have a low rate of metabolism and can survive on little or no nourishment for long periods. There were enough small catfish in the pool for this croc to survive until the rains started again. The fact that it was in a place where the nearest alternate water at the Luwegu River was three days' walk away illustrates how far these reptiles can move in the wet season up flooded riverbeds and gullies.

After a week we arrived at the Ligombe River, flowing east to west into the Luwegu a short distance downstream from the Rondo River coming in from the west. The Selous Game Reserve here followed the Ulanga and Songea District mutual boundary. It was a straight line on a map, totally unmarked. Local tradition accepted the Ligombe River as the dividing line here. I followed it up to its source and then continued over the watershed

*Bull elephant with long but thin tusks. Mbarangandu River.*

to cross the Kilowero River on the other side. From there we cut across due east to the upper Mbarangandu to a point where the Misine River joins it. This latter river rises at the Nangunguru Ridge, which already formed part of the Selous Game Reserve southern boundary. Rivers with broad valleys, permanent water, and plenty of grazing and browse on both sides are not suitable game reserve boundaries. This was the situation on the upper Mbarangandu, where the boundary coming from the east followed a line drawn on a map to the east bank of the river, then downstream for some thirty miles below the Kilowero River and up this to another theoretical map line. To me it was vital to eliminate this great wedge from an ecologically important part of the game reserve along the Mbarangandu River. By the time I left this extreme southern area I had revised the boundary to eliminate the Mbarangandu wedge, as I called it, and included natural features, easily identifiable on the ground, along the whole southern line.

Having sorted out a description for the whole southern boundary of the game reserve, we turned north to follow the Mbarangandu downstream, to meet up with additional food supplies at Mkangira where it meets the Luwegu River. The whole length of this river is fantastic game country. There had been no elephant control work here since the last settlements were moved out some ten years previously. Consequently, the average age

of the elephant population was much older than in places nearer the boundaries, where damage to crops by elephant inside and outside the reserve resulted in some being shot every year. This in turn kept the age factor relatively low. The growth of elephant ivory became apparent as I trekked northward, where tusks estimated at fifty or sixty pounds each were to be seen on most days, and more rarely others from seventy to one hundred pounds each. The genetic influence on ivory growth became prominent all over the section of the Selous Game Reserve south of the Ruaha and Rufiji Rivers, as the average longevity increased over the next fifteen years. Elephant free of control operations, bulls in particular, were able to grow to full maturity and old age. Not only did average body size increase, but also tusk development. A genetic characteristic of the ivory was that it tended to be long but relatively thin. Mature bulls elsewhere, including those in similar habitat types, on average had thicker ivory.

All along the river we saw rhino and their fresh spoor. We had another unfortunate incident one night at the Humbalilo River. We camped as usual in a shady spot close to a large sandbank. High humidity and air temperature tempted the porters to sleep out in the open on the sand. It was a bright full moon, almost like daylight on the white sand. Everyone was asleep when one of them woke up and saw a rhino's snout very close to his own. He let out a shriek and started getting to his feet to run for it, and this instantly woke all the other men up in a panic and started them off running in every direction. Once again a rhino had ambled quietly into a camp full of men without being aware of it. The rhino also panicked when the pandemonium started and went for the porter nearest to it.

*Rhino drinking at Mporoto. Mbarangandu River.*

It tossed the man into the air, who by some miracle landed uninjured in an isolated bit of scrub a few feet away. The rhino was in the process of attacking the same individual for the second time. One of the game scouts had by now come to life, with his .404 rifle in hand, and shot the rhino before it reached the porter. It collapsed in its tracks with a shattered spine, thrashing its head up and down and squealing loudly. The whole camp was by now abandoned, and I approached the rhino with my .470 rifle ready for use. In the bright moonlight I could tell it was paralyzed by the earlier shot, and put it out of its agony at once. The porter was still in the scrub moaning and calling for his mother. Mbukuri and Mhawe had both arrived by now, so we retrieved the porter, laid him on the sand, and with the aid of a flashlight examined him for injuries. Apart from abrasions in the hip area he seemed to be in good shape. I told him to stand up and walk, which he did without difficulty or pain. He had recovered from his fright by now and was rapidly acquiring hero status with his colleagues. He had escaped almost unscathed, and I can only think that the rhino had picked him up between the front and rear horn, then thrown him with a toss of its head into the scrub. I was thankful that it was a bull rhino; a cow with a calf or gravid would have been much worse.

As we progressed northward along the Mbarangandu, the river became dryer until at Kibaoni the water was two feet below the riverbed. Holes for watering, dug by elephant, rhino, and warthog, pitted the sand. These places were used by the other game for access to water. Rhino had increased in number progressively as we moved northward. Kibaoni was so named because Ionides had put a game reserve notice board there when the river was the eastern boundary of the Selous Game Reserve in this sector, to notify people using the public foot path that they were entering a protected game area. There were no travelers there on this day, and we went on to camp at the Likale swamp alongside the river. It had largely dried up with the drought, but some hippo were still there in

*Elephant near Kilowero. Mbarangandu River.*

a muddy slush; and feeding across it and around the edges were buffalo, waterbuck, wildebeest, zebra, eland, and impala and perhaps the finest kudu bull I have ever seen. In later years this swamp filled with water as normal, until about 1966, when it became dry, and it has remained so over since. When this happened I could not understand why, as we had had successive years of adequate rainfall. Walking around it, I found the answer at its closest point to the river. Hippo, moving in and out over the years, had worn a trail so deep into the riverbank that it worked like a drain hole, completely draining this valuable swamp. All the teal, geese, and waders were no more, but at least they could fly to other suitable places.

As we continued, day after day, on our way to Mkangira at the Luwegu junction, the numbers of rhino and greater kudu increased. There were a lot of lions along the Mbarangandu, many of them with fine manes. A couple of weeks earlier we had come across a pride of twelve, including several cubs about six months old. Now, downstream from the Likale swamp, we were leaving higher ground on the western edge of the valley to cut through an extensive stand of tall wild sugar cane (Saccharum) grass. Because of the great numbers of elephant, buffalo, and the odd rhino habitually resting up in such cover, I was in front with Mbukuri, each of us carrying one of my .470 rifles ready, loaded, and on SAFE. I was not sure if we could find a suitable way through the tangle, so I told the porters and the other game scouts to wait while Mbukuri and I checked it out.

When we were about fifteen yards from the edge of the grass an unmistakable lion growl greeted us. We could not see it, but it had warned us to come no nearer. We stood still for a few moments, and with deep growls a lioness appeared with tail thrashing up

*Kudo bull on the run. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

and down. She looked very nasty and threatening, but pulled up after five yards or so, growling loudly. We started to slowly retreat, walking backward and covering her with my rifle. When we had retreated a few yards she demonstrated at us again, stopping some ten or twelve yards from us. Again we retreated, and she repeated her hostility a third time. It was a tense situation, but I reasoned that if she really was bent on clobbering us she would have come on right through with it by now. She stood growling, ears flattened and tail swishing from side to side. We started to retreat again, and her growling increased in volume as we moved. Suddenly she turned and, still growling loudly, trotted fast back into the long grass. These were all demonstrations to keep us away from her resting place. I did not observe any cubs, but I am sure she had some hidden there and did not want us anywhere near them. We obliged her quickly.

Approaching the junction of our river with the Njenje—an equally big tributary from the southeast—one could not help noticing the increasing numbers of greater kudu. We camped at the Njenje and walked around the area for three days. It was rough, broken country with all the usual game species to be seen, but the greater kudu were by far the commonest creatures. I came across the remains of several that had been killed by lions and possibly wild dog, which I saw along the Mbarangandu not too far away.

The last leg to Mkangira was only about three or four hours' walk, and we arrived before 11 A.M., to find all our new food supplies and porters waiting there. The prisoners from the *tambika* party had done a good few days' work. They had done no harm to the animals, so I released them to go home and kept the men I had with me whose loads were finished.

A few days later we reached Shuguli Falls where the Luwegu and Kilombero join. I again saw a leopard with a kill on this sector, and it was an amusing sight. We were on the move early one morning when suddenly a tremendous shrieking and barking of baboons started beyond a bush-choked gully directly ahead. Running quietly forward, I crossed the gully by a well-worn game trail and came onto an open area on the other side. I immediately saw a leopard, probably female, judging by its size, with a female baboon it had seized by the neck. The mob of baboons making all the noise were up trees beyond the open space. Three adult males, spread in line at right angles to the leopard, were behind and within fifteen yards of it. They were shortening the distance between themselves and the leopard, and appeared to me to be moving in a threatening manner. They were probably less than ten yards from it when the leopard, without releasing its prey, stopped and looked behind at the baboons. All three instantly fled for safety and made no further attempt to follow the leopard, which by then had vanished with its prey.

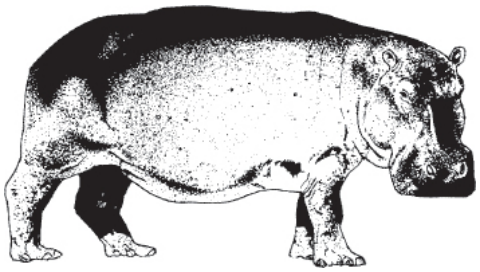
At Shuguli Falls I camped under trees at the edge of the forest growing in the Kilombero delta. The Luwegu had no flowing water, but the last few hundred yards had stagnant and slowly drying pools among a mass of ragged rock formations. Lots of marabou storks, Egyptian vultures, and a few fish eagles were on the ground and flapping about. We had arrived at about 10 A.M., so, taking a rifle, I left the porters setting up camp and walked across to the rock formation on the Luwegu to see what all the birds were doing there. Vultures will regularly rest on the sand with wings spread out to dry after wetting themselves in the water. But this did not seem to be that sort of activity. Reaching an elevated position on the rocks, I carefully glassed the whole rock strewn area. I first of all spotted some hyenas moving about and every few minutes eating something. Then I saw a solitary lion with an average mane, doing the same thing. This was unusual: There had to be some very good

reason for the large carnivores to be moving about in the open in hot weather at this time of day. The carnivores had disappeared into cover by midday, so I made my way across the Luwegu rocks to see what they had been doing. I discovered that most of the stagnant pools were full of rotting fish floating about, belly up. The smell was bad, and I assumed they had been trapped by the shrinking waters of the Luwegu and had died of lack of oxygen in the stagnant water. The lion, hyenas, vultures, and storks were all feeding on rotting fish. I suppose carrion is rotting meat of any description, but I was surprised to find a lion indulging itself on this unusual mess.

I arrived back at Mahenge at the end of November 1953 and packed up to return to Liwale a few days later. No game ranger was being sent to take my place. I was not happy about this, but at least I felt I was leaving a competent force of game scouts. In addition I had sorted out the Selous Game Reserve and before leaving submitted the boundary description to the game warden for his approval.

# Southern Highland Interlude

*Chapter 23*



I left Mahenge for the long haul to Liwale in late December. I had my own one-and-a-half-ton Bedford truck by this time, and my entire personal possessions, cook, and domestic servant took up less than half the space available. There were no roads or tracks straight across to Liwale from Mahenge, so I had to route on poorly maintained dirt roads for about eight hundred miles via Ifakara, Mikumi, Morogoro, Dar es Salaam, Utete, and Njinjo. The new main road for Morogoro and Iringa was under construction at the time, and it crossed the Mkata Plains. This area held a lot of game, including all the large animals. Rhino were there in reasonable numbers, and I noted the wildebeest seemed to be an intermediary form between the Nyasa and the white-bearded. They lacked the white bar across the face of the former and, like these, had a black instead of white beard. The area was to become a game-controlled area within a couple of years and in ten years was upgraded to national park status. The main problem affecting game conservation in the Mkata Plains was the excessive human population around the fringes. Several large sisal estates, with their labour-intensive work forces, existed all along the northern section and the high-density peasant cultivation to west and east. Unpopulated country stretched to the south, right to the northern borders of the Selous Game Reserve.

From Dar es Salaam I drove down the only road south, crossing the Rufiji River by ferry at Utete, where I took a back road to Njinjo to join the vehicle track from Kilwa to Liwale. I had by now been three days and nights en route. The rains had already started this far south, and I figured I had just made it in time. I had an hour's travel by truck to reach Liwale when we sank up to our axles in mud on the flats in the Choya and Mukukuyumbu area. There were no people here, so the three of us spent the next two days covering fifteen miles, repeatedly digging and jacking the truck out of waterlogged ground. At Mukukuyumbu there is a tall stone memorial in the middle of nowhere, in honour of two bishops and four nuns butchered there in about 1904 by the

Maji Maji rebels. Apparently they were not aware that a serious rebellion had broken out against the German government and were heading for Liwale to start a mission there. To this day no Christian missionary has ever succeeded in doing this. The Maji Maji rebellion was the largest and most dangerous conflict in German East Africa until the First World War. It was called Maji Maji (water water) because the rebels were told by witch doctors and elders that partaking of the water would make them immune to rifle bullets. This magic water is supposed to have come from Ngarambe near Kingupira, which I have written about earlier. It seems the sacred water lost its protective properties fast, for the German army responded with devastating results to the Wangindo and Wangoni people.

Iodine was at Liwale when I arrived there. It was very good to see him again, and we had much to talk about. There were problems in the far west of the range in Songea District, and he wanted me to proceed there and sort it all out. Just after the 1954 new year I was at Songea, still sorting out a house and administrative matters with the district commissioner, when a telegram arrived transferring me immediately to Mbeya to take over the Southern Highlands Range. Eric Lock, the game ranger there, had suddenly died. Apparently he had attended a party on New Year's Eve and had taken in a fair amount of alcohol. He was interested in snakes and usually had a few in captivity at his house. From what I was told, he allowed a bird snake to bite him. It was believed to be mildly venomous but not dangerously so. It took firm hold of his finger and hung on for minutes before releasing its jaws. Twenty-four hours later Eric was not feeling well at all. It did not occur to him that this had anything to do with the snakebite, and he refused any treatment after his wife suggested it. His condition continued to deteriorate, and he was dead forty-eight hours after being bitten. From what I remember, an autopsy showed severe internal hemorrhage. The poison fangs of the bird snake lie at the back of the mouth. To give a full bite the snake had to place its mouth right over the object, and this is what it did with Eric Lock. The doctor at Mbeya was of the opinion that the alcohol in Eric's system reduced his natural resistance to the poison and contributed to his death.

I spent six wet months in the Southern Highlands Range and found it a rather dull and uninspiring area. I walked twice through the Rungwa Game Reserve, collecting two reasonable pairs of elephant tusks at Mkwambi on license, before entering the reserve on the second safari. I also spent time at Wangingombe in Njombe District, which some years previously had seen the worst outbreak of man-eating lion recorded in Tanganyika. The last of the Wangingombe lions, who had been causing terror and immense damage for five years, had been destroyed in 1950. George Rushby, the game ranger in charge at the time, had killed a few of them; the others were taken in gun traps or shot by game scouts assisted by the local Wabena people. There were no reports of lion problems when I visited the area, but local information tended to confirm that contained in the game department records. Unlike Southern Province, there were plenty of cattle in this area, and the lions seemed to habitually prey on them and on man. Of the thirty lions killed here between 1945 and 1950, seventeen of them were found on human corpses. They are reported to have killed not less than one thousand people and three thousand head of stock during this period. I do not know much about the customs and beliefs of the Wabena people, but I could not help thinking that

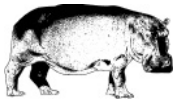
indoctrination and beliefs in the supernatural did not help in the elimination of lions that were constantly killing men and livestock over such a long period in a relatively small area. Just to the north of this area in Iringa District, a traditional warrior tribe known as the Wahehe never had this problem, and I doubt they would have allowed such a situation to develop. I personally enjoyed testing my skills and abilities on man-eating lions and at the time of my visit to Wangingombe was a little wistful that none of them were still around for me to hunt.

I paid a visit to Lake Rukwa and went crocodile hunting with Jack Bousefield, who lived there. He told me that since he started in the crocodile skin business, he had shot over fifteen thousand reptiles in Lake Rukwa alone. I hunted a few elephant in Njombe District and dealt with a large settlement of fifty huts in the part of the Rungwa Game Reserve that became the Ruaha National Park of today. At the end of June 1954 I returned to Liwale.

Ionides was all hyped up when I returned and was about to leave for Newala on the Mozambique border. He was heading for the Makonde Plateau, overlooking the Ruvuma River. It was covered in dense secondary bush, a relic of the equatorial forests that once existed. Villages were scattered throughout this unattractive and gameless country, and I wondered what Iodine's excitement was about. When I was away in the Southern Highlands Range, he had received a report from a guy called Johnny Hornstead about a snake that he thought might be a gaboon viper. The species had never been recorded in Tanganyika. My return to take over the range gave him the time to concentrate on his favourite subject, herpetology, and he wasted no time in setting off with porters for Newala District, where the plateau is located. This became a sort of snake-catching crusade for his last years in the game department and into his retirement after 1956, when he bought a house at Newala and based himself there permanently. There he found not only gaboon vipers in large numbers but an unlimited supply of green mambas. The vipers lived on the ground in dense undergrowth all over the plateau. Scattered throughout this cover, numerous abandoned mango and cashew nut trees provided a favourite habitat for the green mambas. Like everything in the natural world that interested him, Iodine would go to extreme lengths to increase knowledge of the subject and to collect specimens for scientific, medical, or personal study. I once witnessed his attempts to evolve a level of natural immunity in himself to neurotoxic and haemotoxic snake venoms. I watched him provoke a juvenile black-necked spitting cobra into biting the little finger of his left hand. Putting the cobra back in its box, he then sat back in his deck chair, perfectly relaxed, and wrote detailed notes, including time records, of his physical condition as the venom affected his system. When he decided it had gone far enough, he injected himself with serum and continued to record his condition as it improved. He did these experiments with small puff adders and night adders also.

Once organized at Newala, he spread the news of his requirements for gaboon vipers and green mambas by offering a cash reward to the person who located one and was then able to lead him to it. It is incredible to me that in the sixty or more years that Europeans—officials, missionaries, and the like—had been in the Makonde Plateau area, the gaboon viper was never recorded, and nothing was known about the existence of huge numbers of green mambas. Over a period of four or five years Iodine collected some four thousand gaboon vipers and over five thousand green mambas within a ten-mile radius of the *boma* at Newala. He collected smaller numbers of other species, including

two species of cobra, boomslangs, and puff adders. The only other time I saw him really excited about a particular area was some years later, when he had been to Lake Baringo in Kenya and caught more black mambas in two weeks than he would have taken in two or more years elsewhere.



# I Take Over Liwale Range

*Chapter 24*

The Selous Game Reserve was a huge area of wilderness, and traveling always on foot limited one's ability to visit even the most important areas more than once or twice per year. Having acquired a Land Rover and a government Bedford truck, I felt I could improve on this performance by putting in a few dry weather tracks. I started by clearing the old track to Madaba from Liwale. This was all slow-going hand labour, and as usual, available funds were limited. However, it had now become evident to the economists in Dar es Salaam that tourism was a source of revenue, and the game warden, Gerry Swynnerton, used this as a basis for obtaining an increase in funds allocated to the department. He had also introduced the concept of designated controlled hunting areas for visiting hunters, and pushed for the establishment of an independent national park organization. All of these programs or projects had been accepted by government and were in place and were being implemented. Unfortunately, Swynnerton was seriously injured in a car accident at about this time. He recovered sufficiently to resume his duties but suddenly died. He was replaced by the temporary appointment of existing subordinate staff who did not carry the same authority, administrative ability, or long-term vision, resulting in a general slowdown of progress, until Major Bruce Kinloch from Uganda was appointed in 1960.

Since joining the Tanganyika Game Department at the beginning of 1950 I had only taken one month off duty, when I went home to Kenya in 1953. After visiting my parents at the old farm, which had been rechristened White Rocks, I enlisted in the Kenya Police Reserve (KPR) for the duration of my leave. The Mau Mau Rebellion was at its peak, and I felt honour-bound to do my part in its suppression in any way possible. I was assigned to a settler's house on Laikipia near the Burgeret River. The family had been massacred and the house burnt. It was converted into a police post with a barbed wire apron around it, slit trenches at each corner, and a sandbagged tower with a Bren light machine gun installed. Two other KPR officers were also there—Barry Roberts, who had previously been in southern

Tanganyika, and Sugden, plus some twenty armed constables, mainly from the Luo tribe. Mbukuri was also there to look after the "bwana." He no doubt had heard all sorts of stories about the fierceness and cruelty of the Mau Mau gangs and was as nervous as the Luo policemen about an attack.

My most vivid recollection of this time was one night, when Barry Roberts, who was in command, decided on a practice alarm to test out the efficiency of our force in an emergency. Well after dark he started blowing the alarm signal and shouting commands for the men to enter the slit trenches and repel the supposed assault. Sugden and I, with a sergeant, were up in the tower manning the Bren gun, all the outward-shining floodlights were on, and Barry was at the radio transmitter. All quieted down, and, leaving the sergeant with the Bren gun, Sugden and I descended to the ground and went across to inspect the situation in the slit trenches. All the constables at each trench were lying in a heap at the bottom, many without their rifles or ammunition, and could not have defended the post against field mice, let alone hopped-up armed terrorists. I could not find Mbukuri until the very last, when I discovered him at the very bottom of a tangled heap of legs, arms, and bodies. Repeated practices after this raised the standards to an acceptable level.

In 1954 I again took a month off duty on local leave. The Mau Mau was still undefeated, so I joined the KPR again but this time was attached to O Company of the Kenya Regiment based at Muguga. They were involved in undercover operations in the indigenous forests along the eastern wall of the Rift Valley and into the Nairobi suburbs. Information would come in and we would go out, sometimes blacked up and dressed as terrorists, to contact a gang and deal with them as best we could. I was involved in three successful operations during this assignment, operating with Stan Blezzard under the command of Captain Francis Erskine. They were both fine soldiers and were repeatedly successful in "pseudo-gang" operations.

By the time I returned from Kenya a passable track had been cut by hand labour as far as Madaba in the centre of the game reserve. I proceeded there by truck with porters and spent a week walking all along the three rivers that formed the core of this area. It was bounded in the north by Nandanga Mountain and in the east by two areas of high ground covered in dense forest and thicket called Liwande and Mkwihi. The three rivers were the Madaba, Mbwera, and Mikalambiro, which joined up within a quite short distance of each other to become the Madaba for the rest of its course to the Ulanga below Shuguli Falls. The three rivers formed a huge amphitheater of lower-lying country with unlimited grazing, browse, water, and scattered salt licks. I found a substantial mature elephant population with bull ivory often exceeding sixty pounds per tusk and the odd really big fellow of one hundred pounds or more.

Sitting on a termite mound with Mbukuri and Mbaya Selemani one afternoon, we were watching a bull elephant, with tusks weighing about eighty pounds each, grazing on fresh-sprouting grass along a seepage area. He was one hundred yards from us, and beyond was a wide-open, extensive *ulambo* with small herds of game scattered about it. In these conditions elephant will stay grazing within an area of a few hundred square yards for several days, eating nothing but fresh new grass. They scuff it out of the ground with one of the front feet, pick it up with the trunk, knock the soil off on the ground against a leg or tusk, and pass it into the mouth. They stand looking straight down; all one can see of the eyes is the top

eyelids. They seem to become oblivious to anything around them and are easy to approach within a few yards without any cover at all. The only thing to be careful about is noise and, most important, to remain motionless if the eyes open. There was no reason to go closer to this fine bull, so we just watched him for half an hour or more. The wind must have shifted, for he quite suddenly raised his trunk, sniffed the air, and rushed off at a full run as if he had had a really bad fright. We stayed where we were as he cut right across the *ulambo*, the other game moving out of his way as he came to them. I expected him to disappear into the bush on the far side. To my surprise, on reaching there he turned to follow along the edge of the open plain, still at full run. He continued in this manner, making a great arc around the *ulambo* and finally heading directly back toward us. We remained as before on the termite mound and watched him approach. He had covered nearly two miles at speed and showed no signs of easing up. He ended up right where he had been grazing before and stopped immediately upon reaching this point, and then started grazing again as if nothing had ever disturbed him. It was an amazing performance, and one cannot analyze what mental processes prompted such clownish activity.

In many parts of this area and especially in seasonally flooded sections, a grass much favoured by elephant and other animals, Echinochloa, was the dominant ground cover. On Nandanga Mountain and high ground to the east and southeast were the Mkwihi and Liwande Forests. Many of the rivers, including the Madaba, Mbwera,

*Mature tusker. Nandanga Mountain.*

Kitope, Kipilipili, Mbapo, Namatete, and Mswega, rose here. It was a paradise for elephant, and there were black rhino throughout. The elephant did not normally establish themselves deep into these forests, and moved out when the rains started into the areas where this Echinochloa grass was growing in profusion. Iodine loved this area best of all and naturally told me much about it. As game country it came up to and exceeded my expectations. He always said that he would like to be buried on Nandanga Mountain at a point overlooking the Mbapo. This is where I laid his ashes in 1968, his last resting place, with a monument and plaque presented by the East African Professional Hunters Association in memory of the greatest of Tanganyika's hunters, conservationists, and game rangers.

Walking around Nandanga in an arc west and then northeast, we reached the Mswega. All along it was mature *miombo* woodland and possibly the heaviest tsetse infestation I have ever seen. They were like swarms of bees following us, and every porter had dozens on his back as we walked. Visitors to such areas are driven to distraction by these blood-seeking flies and often develop great welts at the site of every bite, sometimes developing a fever from the toxins. Having been in tsetse country for some years, I barely noticed the bites and certainly never suffered in the way newcomers do. Game animals were in reasonable numbers in this tsetse country and appeared to be immune to trypanasomiasis, which kills all domestic stock, including dogs. Most of the country lying to the east of the source of the Mswega River was outside the Selous Game Reserve boundaries as described in the 1951 Game Ordinance, including the Lungonyo Plains and Tundu Hills, south to the Matandu River. Potentially this was some of the best game country we had. It was now an official forest reserve, as a result of my discussions with John Blower in 1951. But I knew that it was ecologically important for the long-term survival and possible development of the Selous. With this in mind, I headed for the Lungonyo via the Lukuliro flats to once again work on revising a boundary description.

It was rather uninspiring *miombo* forest as we trekked east for some days, but this all changed when we arrived at the Lukuliro flats. Once again we were entertained by the nightly grunting or roaring of lions; and considerable numbers of plains game, buffalo, and elephant were to be seen all the way to the Lung'onyo and the springs and forest at Kingupira. I crossed the Lung'onyo and spent some days on the Ngarambe, which is a dry sand-river bed, with water below the surface at certain places. It has alluvial fertile soil with unlimited grazing and browse, making it the key factor in holding large populations of game in the Kingupira area. There were no people living there in 1954, and it was a major game concentration

*African wild dogs at Kingupira.*

area. It was well into the dry season now, and apart from one or two nearly dried-up water pans on the western side of the Lungonyo, the only permanent surface water was in the ground water forest at Kingupira and along the ditchlike drainage line coming out of it.

The common waterbuck *(Kobas ellipsyriminus)* seems to depend on at least some permanent water in its habitat and will unhesitatingly run into water when pursued by wild dog or lion or other animals. I arrived at a figure of sixty-seven waterbuck, including calves, around Kingupira. These were an isolated population; there were no waterbuck populations closer than thirty or forty miles in any direction. It took no great observational skills to conclude that these waterbuck were declining in numbers. The cause of this was wild dog. There were at least three packs of ten to fifteen dogs living in the area for prolonged periods. As I found out over the next few years, each year the dogs arrived in late June to pup down in a system of extensive underground burrows, and other groups would move in at intervals for the same purpose, using the same burrows until late October. Probably the most successful hunters of all the large predators, wild dog selected waterbuck as prey in order to feed themselves and their growing pups. Until the pups were old enough to hunt with the pack, they were weaned and fed on regurgitated meat taken from the kill. When old enough to accompany the adults, the pups were then removed from the burrows and learned to hunt on impala and juvenile warthogs. Another pack then moved into the vacated burrows and started killing the waterbuck. This lasted for nearly four months of the dry season each year. The waterbuck population recovered to a degree during the rains as animals moved north from the Matandu River and south along the Lungonyo from Lake Utunge wa Ngwenda at the Rufiji River.

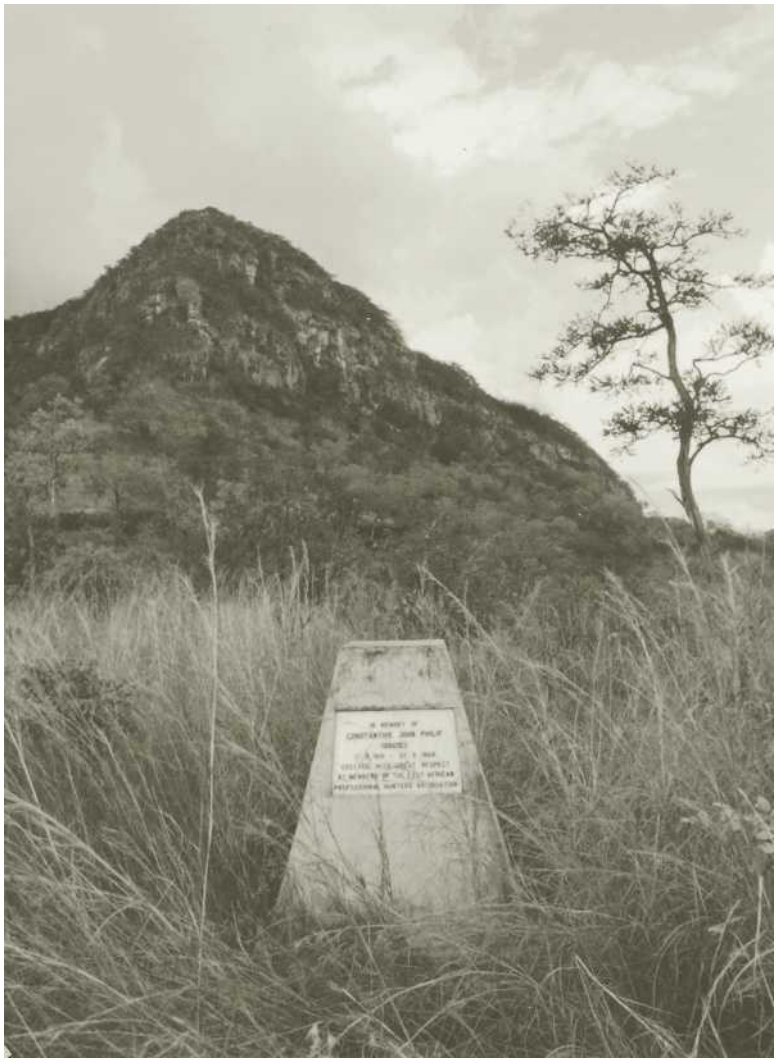
Other regular prey animals were bohor reedbuck, which lived in the grass flood plains close to Kingupira. One year the waterbuck were reduced to seven head. The numbers of reedbuck were harder to assess, but it became so difficult to find one reedbuck or evidence of their presence that I considered them on the verge of extinction in the area. There were great numbers of warthog and impala—I watched a pack of dogs hunt and kill four impala in one day. Wildebeest, zebra, hartebeest, and eland, among others, tended to remain out of range of hunting dogs when they were breeding, retreating well back to the Tundu Hills.

*Wild dogs with pups in* miombo *woodland. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

I was worried that the dogs would eventually wipe out the waterbuck and reedbuck at Kingupira, so I decided to try to make them abandon their selected breeding burrows and find new sites too far from Kingapira to affect the endangered species there. Each burrow had several exits, and I used firewood to smoke the dogs out the first time. They removed themselves but each year took up residence in alternative

burrows. Eventually, in the early 1960s, when I had put a dry weather road system through the area, I used burning rubber as the main smoke ingredient in the burrows. This seemed to have the desired effect, for they never produced pups there again. I found their new breeding burrows far back in the Tundu Hills. In the meantime waterbuck had increased to over forty head, and reedbuck are once again quite common. Just as important, wild dog have a stable population, breeding regularly every year. Whether it is the same all over East Africa I do not know, but I have noted that the number of males in packs and among pups exceeds the number of females in southern Tanganyika by a ratio of about 3 to 1. Wild dogs are smart animals. I have never seen them kill an adult warthog, because they know they risk serious injury if they try. However, they train pups on warthog piglets, a maneuver calculated to create total confusion among them. As the sow trots or gallops away with piglets ahead or at heel, she is threatened by one or two dogs, and others rush in as she swings about, scattering the confused piglets. As soon as one piglet is at a safe distance from the sow, one or more adult dogs grab the piglet. The pups go in to attack, preventing its escape, and are left to consume it. The first month or two of a piglet's life is fraught with danger not only from wild dog but also from martial eagles and other large birds of prey and lesser carnivores. Their chances of survival into adulthood is probably less than 50 percent.

My revision of the realignment of the game reserve boundaries in the eastern section was now completed with some changes, and was approved by the government and legalized in about 1958. I now went across the Tundu Hills and on to the Muhinje Valley and Lake Luwimbi. On the way to Liwale from there I arrived at the Mahonga water pan, which still held some water, and found a bull elephant there with tusks of not less than 100 pounds each. He was a magnificent sight and further underlined my belief that growing numbers of our elephant were now reaching maturity and old age. At Mitungule on the reopened track to Madaba, my truck, which had returned to Liwale, arrived after a couple of days to take me back to my base.



*Ionides' last resting place on Nandanga Mountain: "In memory of Constantine John Phillip Ionides; 17.07.1901–27.09.1968. Erected with great respect by members of the East African Professional Hunters Association."*

I spent the balance of the 1954 dry season walking through the country southwest of Madaba, taking in the Likuyu, Mihangalaya, and Mliwasi river valleys. I then trekked up the Njenje River to its source near a scenically beautiful area known as Lulira. This was another natural amphitheater in the bush, with the Njenje River and a tributary converging in the centre alongside a small lake. I spent a few days with Mbukuri walking over the surrounding country, including Ngurungwa Mountain to the west, forming a watershed between us and the Mbarangandu River. While engaged in these activities I instructed Mbaya Selemani to try to shoot a buffalo for meat for the porters. This turned into a long, drawn-out, and potentially dangerous exercise. One evening he was waiting for me in camp to report that he had wounded a solitary bull. It had run off into long grass downstream along the Njenje Valley. It was still active and had escaped both times he came up with it on the follow-up. It was too late to do any more that day. Early the next morning we went to where he had stopped the follow-up the previous afternoon. He had shot it once in the shoulder area and had put it up twice in long grass without being able to see it again.

Mbukuri now took up the trail, he and I carrying my two .470 rifles loaded with solids, Mbaya with his issue .404. The wounded bull kept to the long grass close to the river for a mile or so and had spent much of the night lying down at two places. There was a little blood on the grass at the first point, but none after that. The bull then crossed the river during the night, plodding across the two hundred or more yards of soft white sand, to enter more dense, tall grass on the western side. Visibility was near zero in this stuff, and we stopped every few yards to listen for tick birds or any other sound that might betray the animal's position. The sudden swishing of vegetation and heavy hoof beats brought us to a tense halt, momentarily expecting the bull to burst through the cover onto us. It went away from us, and we continued the follow-up. I had been clobbered once by a buffalo and was well aware of the danger in following up a wounded bull in this sort of cover.

The bull was moving downwind all the time, but we had to stay on the spoor or lose it. Shortly after we disturbed it in the long grass it turned westward and left dense cover for light secondary bush and woodland on the slopes of Ngurungwa. This was a relief to all of us, for we could at last now see ahead and around us for thirty or more yards. This was important because, as with all dangerous game animals, once the buffalo realizes it is being hunted, it is more likely to attack its pursuers. In the cover in which we were now trailing it, I felt sure I would have time to effectively deal with the bull if it came for us. It continued moving downwind, and, having excellent scenting powers, it ran off each time we came anywhere near it. The situation repeated itself seven times, without the bull making any attempt to come in our direction. It eventually crossed a ridge to enter a shallow valley with a narrow *ulambo* along the bottom. Down here the wind was at right angles, blowing gently downhill. As we approached the *ulambo* the buffalo appeared from behind light cover, lumbering slowly across it. It appeared to be worn out, galloping slowly with much effort. It was about one hundred yards away, and I put two solids into it from a rear angle, both shots hitting with an audible thump. The bull did not even stagger and disappeared into the tree line on the far side of the *ulambo*.

I told Mbaya to shoot it if he saw an opportunity and not to wait for me. Since he had wounded it the previous day, the animal had been disturbed eleven times and

shot three times. I could not believe that it would just keep running away. We had followed across the *ulambo* into the tree line for about two hundred yards when we saw it standing, head down, in light bush and grass. It was apparently unaware of our proximity and was possibly *in extremis* and did not have the strength to react. Using a small tree trunk beside me as a support for the rifle, I lined up on the base of its neck and dropped it dead in its tracks. It was a relief to conclude this hunt, and we now had plenty of meat for the porters to see us through to Liwale. Mbaya's shot of the previous day had gone right through the buffalo, too high and too far back to damage organs in the chest cavity. I think that with this wound alone it might have recovered in time.

# For Better or for Worse

*Chapter 25*

During the 1955 wet season I worked almost exclusively on elephant control in various locations in the Southern Range. All civil servants in the British Colonial Service were required to take six months' leave every three years. I had now done four and a half years and had accumulated two months of local leave, which was optional. I was instructed by the game warden to proceed on compulsory six months' leave in June. This was fine by me, as I had saved up money, and I also had purchased one of the first long-wheelbase Land Rovers to be imported into Tanganyika. I decided to spend my whole leave period in Kenya, searching for the biggest tusker ever seen. I figured if I could thoroughly search the arid country lying between Tsavo National Park and the Tana River, I might be lucky. I was prepared to hire donkeys and travel by foot to otherwise inaccessible parts of this country, theoretically hunting areas that were totally untouched. I invited my old friend Bill Woodley to join me, and he was keen to do so. I never did get to take my big-ivory safari into the dry country, however. Civil service bureaucracy intervened shortly before my leave was due to start. I was told that regulations required that I spend a minimum of three months outside Africa, in Britain, Europe, or some such place. I now revised my big-ivory hunt for September to November, after three months in Britain.

I flew to Britain in a BOAC Argonaut from Eastleigh Airport, Nairobi. It was a long, tedious journey—we refueled at Entebbe, Khartoum, Cairo, and Athens before reaching London. My first nights in London were spent in an apartment near the London Zoo, and the familiar sound of lions roaring every night gave me some contentment. Apart from that, I felt lost and totally out of my element in a society that hardly knew the continent of Africa existed. I met a few young guys from East and South Africa and found myself part of a young society of colonials from all over the British Empire. They were a fine lot of fellows and girls who made it possible for me to remain sane and even enjoy myself during those three months.

Having led a monastic life out in the African bush for all those years, I initially went crazy over every reasonably attractive girl I met. Since there were millions of them about,

*For better or for worse—with my Aussie bride. January 1956.*

I was not fazed for more than a day or two when one of them told me to get lost. About ten days before I was due to return to East Africa I went with a group of young men and women to a place called the Overseas Visitors Club. A privately owned establishment catering to visitors to Britain, it had become a popular entertainment and meeting place for the young set. When we arrived, most of us a little inebriated, there were already a lot of people there, some of them dancing, others just sitting around the dance floor, and there was a mob at the bar trying to drink each other under the table. I had no knowledge of dancing—I did not know the difference between a waltz and a tango. My technique was to hold the girl in some sort of embrace and shuffle around the floor with her without any regard to the rhythm of the music. Somehow, in the boisterous fooling about before arriving at the club, my shirt had been ripped down the back. I left my jacket in the foyer with a club attendant and went into the main room with the rest of our party.

I am more introvert than extrovert, but this is reversed with the addition of a little alcohol, and I was soon on the dance floor with one of the girls, impressing her with my skill by crushing her toes at every step. Going around the floor I noticed a very attractive young lady sitting with a female friend near one wall. Each time I passed I studied the subject carefully, finally deciding I wanted to meet her. She did not seem to have a male partner, so when the next dance started I went over to her and invited her to dance. Her first response was, "Oh, you are the fellow with the torn shirt," and she rose to accept my

*Melva with first tusks on our trial safari.*

invitation. We met every day after that until I returned to Kenya. I discovered she was from Australia. Her name was Melva Lorraine Peel, and she had been visiting Britain and Europe between jobs in London for two years. She was now thinking about returning home to Melbourne. By the time I left for Kenya I knew I wanted this woman to share my life, so I suggested she stop off in Kenya on her return to Australia. She agreed to do this and arrived at Nairobi's Eastleigh Airport a month after my return. My plans to hunt that elephant with record-sized tusks had by now disappeared in the dazzling halo of romance, which had smitten Melva and me.

Melva had spent her entire life in a great city and was used to having well-dressed, clean young men as her escorts. On the day of her arrival from London, starting at 4 A.M., I had driven over two hundred miles from Voi, in Tsavo National Park, along a rough dusty dirt road. I was dressed in tattered shorts, a bush shirt, and gym shoes with no socks. I had not shaved and was covered with dust, and no doubt I looked pretty grimy. She must have been shocked at the sight of me, and it was almost enough to send her fleeing back to London. We overcame that hiccup and decided to do a safari as a trial run, to see how she would feel about spending a large part of her life doing just that. After my time in London I was low on funds, so I went to Tanganyika, where I bought two elephant licenses, hoping to cover the costs of the safari and other expenses by the sale of ivory. I still had two months of leave before returning to duty. Mbukuri and my personal servant Masudi met us at Arusha in Tanganyika, and we went first to the Umba River, where I shot an elephant with one hundred pounds total weight of ivory. We then moved to Manyoni District in central Tanganyika, where I shot another elephant carrying

*The engagement ring bull with Melva and the author. 1955.*

160 pounds of ivory. These two bulls were the last I ever shot on license, although I continued to do elephant control work for many years.

Melva settled in easily to life on safari and was sure she could make it a permanent lifestyle. She was fascinated by the beauty of the country, the wild animals, and the indigenous people. Early on she had been nervous at merely driving into the bush off the road, thinking the tires of the Land Rover would burst on being penetrated by grass and sticks. Cooking on an open fire was a novelty, and semi-naked black "warriors" were an awesome sight. By the end of the safari these things had become part of normal life for her, and traveling in wild places seemed far superior to the suburban existence she had grown up in. The sale of the ivory covered not only our expenses but also the cost of Melva's engagement and wedding rings. So the greatest safari of our lives started, only ending almost forty-three years later when she passed on to the happy hunting grounds.

# Opening Up the Selous: A Beginning

*Chapter 26*

When I returned to duty in January 1956 with my new wife, I had to move from Liwale and base myself at Nachingwea, the headquarters of the Ground Nut Scheme and now also the district headquarters, formerly in Ruponda. Iodine was still living at Liwale but was about to move to Newala in pursuit of snakes. It was not possible for Melva to live at Liwale on her own, and I did not expect her to, so we had arranged to move into a house at Nachingwea. I remained there for another six years, and all my children—two daughters and a son—were born there.

The original Ground Nut Scheme, with grandiose ideas of thousands of rippling acres of ground nuts, had degenerated into a series of farms, each managed by a white man. These farms now grew corn, rice, ground nuts, soya, and fruit. Cattle were also introduced, with limited success. The town, such as it was, had a central workshop, hospital, post office, two Indian-owned shops, a social club, and rows of residential houses, many of them empty. The district administration was also based there. Most of this disappeared over the next few years, and the town became primarily a military base with facilities for training freedom fighters operating in Mozambique, Rhodesia, and South Africa. It was and still is an unattractive place with penetrating red dust in the dry season and glutinous red mud in the rains. I spent as little time there as possible. Once the children started arriving, Melva found herself alone in the house for long periods, and it was not surprising that she grew to hate the place. It was a relief to both of us when I was finally transferred elsewhere in Tanganyika. However, our time in Nachingwea was not wasted.

Over the next four years my views on hunting by organized professional safari companies had matured, and although they had not yet been accepted by game department headquarters, Swynnerton was interested. I had convinced him that it was not possible to retain huge areas like the Selous Game Reserve as unproductive tracts of land indefinitely. Once settlement moved back in, there was no valid reason to keep them out, and we would eventually lose it all. The government found it unacceptable

*Elephant control ivory at Liwale Fort with Melva and Susan. 1957.*

to maintain the reserve for the sole use of wild animals for purely aesthetic and environmental reasons. The fact that Tanganyika was moving fast toward independence was of concern, because local politicians, seeking popularity for themselves, tried to use the issue as a means to drum up anti-colonialist support. Fortunately, the independent government, once firmly established, went the other way, concentrating people in accessible areas, by force if necessary, in a system they called *ujamaa*. In theory, forcing isolated or scattered communities throughout the country into specific areas would give the people better medical, educational, agricultural, and—just as important—ideological benefits. I was not involved in the implementation of *ujamaa,* but I certainly supported it strongly in various reports concerning crop protection and retaining game reserve boundaries. Gerry Swynnerton died in the mid-1950s, but I kept the issue alive with his successors, George Rushby and later Keith Thomas, until a permanent director was appointed in August 1960.

From 1955 to 1960 I established a system of dry-season vehicle access tracks in the southern part of the Selous, in addition to traveling on foot with porters into every part of it. I gained a working knowledge of the terrain, habitat types, and game populations. This put me in a position to provide constructive recommendations, and I implemented proposals when requested to do so by Bruce Kinloch, who was appointed director in 1961.

There was a hitch before the eastern boundary I had recommended became law. This had to do with the Ngarambe River area on the Rufiji and Kilwa District border near Kingupira.

As I have mentioned earlier, it could be an ecologically vital part of the Lungonya area if we wished to develop and maintain the maximum game population there. People who had been moved out years before under the sleeping sickness evacuation were agitating to return, and they raised the matter with Young, the district commissioner of Rufiji, based at Utete. A very senior member of the provincial administration who had been at Utete for twelve years, Young considered himself the "father" of his people; and their interests, even if wrong, took top priority. He was one of the old school, and administered his district accordingly. Offenders brought before the district courts often received corporal punishment as part of their sentence, and Young, despite his "fatherly" affection, used it frequently. In his office at Utete, I saw several hippo hide whips hanging in a row on the wall. He said that when an offender was sentenced to a flogging, he was given the choice of selecting which whip to be flogged with.

Tom Unwin, district commissioner at Kilwa at the time, who was very junior to Young in terms of service, was a keen wildlife man and all along had supported my boundary proposals where they touched on his district. A meeting at Njinjo between the three of us was now arranged. Unwin, for all his support and good intentions, got Young's back up at the start of the meeting by appointing himself chairman because Njinjo was in his district. To open the discussions he made a short speech beginning with the remark, "I have come here with a completely open mind, and can see no reason to change it." It quickly became obvious that Young was not going to stop people from resettling Nagarambe, and in fact he said he would encourage them to do so. The boundary battle was lost, so I amended the original description to exclude the Ngarambe River, and this finally became law in about 1958. The Lungonyo/Kingupira area is fine game country today, but if we had been able to keep the Ngarambe River, the game population, especially elephant and buffalo, would be much larger.

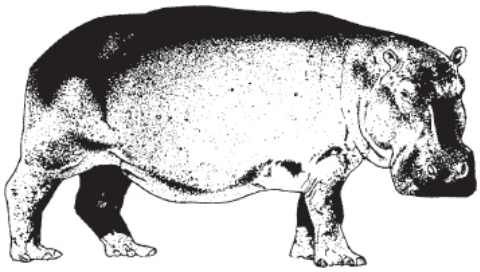
By the time I left the Southern Range in late 1960, the beginnings of a dry season vehicle track system existed, permanent patrol posts in strategic locations were in place, and a system of patrolling by other game scouts covered the whole part of the Selous in the Range. Increases in junior and senior staff had been approved. Johnny Hornstead, among others, was appointed as a temporary elephant control officer in Kilwa District. Allen Rees, one of the best hunter naturalists in the country, took over the Mahenge Ulanga Range, which I had left in 1953. He was to become my closest colleague during the years we opened up and developed the hunting safari industry in the Selous Game Reserve. His wife Margaret accompanied him on most safaris, whether by foot, canoe, or vehicle. She also contributed to our knowledge of the natural history of the area. Another young fellow I met in the late 1950s was Terry Irwin, who was employed by DeBeers on an extensive survey of soils for diamond-bearing properties. He also joined the game department and worked for a few years on elephant control before becoming a successful professional hunter.

Toward the end of 1960 I was transferred to Arusha in Northern Province. There had been complaints that elephant and lion had become a menace to agriculture and stock in various localities—including elephants on Kilimanjaro, Monduli, and the Mugara farms just south of Lake Manyara National Park. Lions were frequently taking livestock on a very large cattle ranch called Farrab II, lying between Lake Manyara and the Tarangire Game Reserve (as it was called then). It seems that the owners of these properties had met the

governor of Tanganyika recently when he toured Northern Province and had demanded action from the government to eliminate their problems. The matter was of course referred to the game department, and because this was high-powered stuff, my transfer there came through with very little warning. The thought of leaving hot, humid Nachingwea and its red dirt sent Melva into ecstasies, especially with the prospect of living in an attractive small town like Arusha. By December we were in Arusha and established in a government house. The department head office and staff had been shifted to Dar es Salaam.

# Northern Tanganyika

*Chapter 27*



Shortly after arriving at Arusha, I was in the range office one morning trying to familiarize myself with the most pressing issues of the time when I received a telephone call from the district commissioner, Moshi. He urgently requested I report to him that morning concerning a herd of elephant causing mayhem in the Rombo chiefdom on the northern slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. Moshi was fifty miles away. The old dirt road, along which I had occasionally seen rhino near the northern fringe of the Sanya Plains in 1951, was now a hardtop highway. The call came through at 8 A.M. and I arrived at his office before 10 A.M., equipped to camp out for a day or two along with Masudi and Juawatu, the head game scout of the Northern Range.

At Moshi the district commissioner supplied us with a *tarishi* to show us the way to the place from which the reports had come. At the chief's headquarters we were directed to the place where the trouble had occurred. The local people here were the Wachagga tribe, who had cultivated great quantities of coffee and bananas, among other crops. I was shown several small thatch-roofed huts and banana stands that had been severely damaged. One elderly man had been killed. There were elephant footprints going in all directions haphazardly, as if several had been milling about. The local villagers were still in a state of shock, but the details of what had happened emerged. Elephants are usually familiar with the time and distance factors in their movements. They invariably arrive after dark in permanently settled areas, whether just passing through or seeking food, and are well away and entering cover for a daytime retreat before or a little after dawn. This was a group of eleven elephants, including two small calves. They appeared to have misjudged their timing, because they were in the banana plantation around the village, in the middle of heavily populated country, at daylight. They had come from the sparsely populated Masai country to the north and were presumably heading for the indigenous forests on Kilimanjaro. At daylight, with a few people already moving about, the elephants took refuge in the only cover available—the banana plantation.

Word spread fast, and soon dozens of people converged on the plantation from the neighbouring villages, all talking and shouting as they pointed out the elephants to each other. This made the animals extremely nervous and hyped up. They remained within the banana trees until some bright young men brought along several dogs. These rushed close to the elephants, yapping at them, and the elephants went berserk, charging at and chasing anything that moved. The elderly man was apparently caught as he tried to escape from one of the damaged huts. As the elephants became increasingly enraged and dangerous, the people fled, and the elephants, concentrated into a tight group, moved downhill at a run, ignoring people, dogs, livestock, and banana trees as they went.

By the time I arrived at the scene it was approaching midday, so without wasting time Juawatu and I, with a couple of locals, got onto the spoor and started after them. The elephant were heading north and seemed to have some destination in mind, for they kept bunched together and maintained a constant direction. It was all open acacia country once we were away from the mountain vegetation zone, and the locals said there was no cover until the other side of the Tanganyika/Kenya border. I had no authority to enter Kenya and had to give up the hunt. These elephant had been badly scared, and I was confident that there would be no repeat performance. I camped overnight near the scene of the trouble and returned to Arusha the next day.

A day or so later I camped near the southern boundary of Lake Manyara National Park, close to the Mugara farms. The national park had been a controlled area until shortly before and was administered by one of the game department game rangers based near Mto wa Mbu at the northern end. I called on him to let him know what I was doing, then drove south through the park to where I had camped. There were several farms in the Mugara area, all owned by white people. Corn and papaya were the main crops, and the papaya was being plundered by elephants from time to time. There were several small groups of elephant cows in the forested slopes of the Rift Valley escarpment, plus a number of bulls on their own or in twos and threes. There was no barrier along the national park boundary, and some of the elephants that were moving in and out of Mugara were coming from farther away—Tarangire, Mbugwe, and Galapo Mountain—in a seasonal movement that took place when the country was at its driest. I saw adequate evidence of this in the form of well-worn trails and spoor. My past experience had convinced me that the only way to reduce or stop the damage on the farms was to make the whole forest area on the Rift Valley escarpment south of the national park boundary untenable to the female elephant groups. The papaya plantations were particularly vulnerable to elephant damage, for the elephant went for the individual tall, slender, fibrous palms, smashing them to pieces. The fruit was of no interest to them, but the soft fibre of the trunk and leaves they found palatable. The purpose of these plantations was, as I understood it, to produce the basic raw product for the manufacture of papain, an ingredient in some medical drugs.

Over the next two weeks I shot several elephant in the escarpment forests, and by the end of that period they had all deserted the area. I did not hunt them in the southern section of the national park, but the bulk of the elephants there had moved north also. The Mugara farm problem was over for the time being, but during the next four months I

had to visit the area twice more to deal with decreasing numbers in the Rift escarpment forest. A noticeable increase in the stable population in the undisturbed northern part of the national park was also evident.

Next I was called to deal with lion at Farrab II cattle ranch. Once again this was a product of conditions resulting from development. The once-teeming herds of game on the Ardai Plains had been wiped out; the migration from there and from the Simanjiro Plains across to the Rift Valley and Tarangire River involved ever-smaller numbers of wildebeest and zebra. Farrab II was spread right across their routes from Essimingor Mountain southward. During the Second World War, most of the game on the Ardai Plains and around Essimingor and Monduli Mountains was destroyed to make way for a wheat scheme that failed. The area had never recovered. Game animals in small numbers are always warier than if they are there in the thousands, and this is surely one of nature's ways of protecting a species from extinction. The ranch had now established thousands of cattle permanently in this country, and lions that would otherwise be chronically hungry took to preying principally on cattle. My sympathies were with the lions, but I had no choice in the matter and had to make some effort at least to reduce the numbers of cattle being killed. This was open shortgrass plains country with an occasional rocky or bush-choked gully traversing it. Mbukuri was no longer with me, but I had a Ndorobo called Sambeki in his place. He had a good understanding of the bush but was only a moderate tracker, and we could not make sufficiently fast progress following lion spoor to be successful. By collecting a number of local Masai, who had a vested interest in destroying these lion, I beat out the most likely gullies and killed two. Most times they would not come out of cover and instead broke backward through the beaters and escaped.

I now took to spending the day locating a gully that had signs of lion hiding in it and relating that to the closest vulnerable cattle herds. I cruised slowly about the intervening area after dark in my Land Rover, with Sambeki using a powerful spotlight. I killed another three lions in a week doing this and decided that was enough. A few cattle were killed later by a solitary lion, but the main slaughter had stopped and did not recur while I was based at Arusha. Shooting lions from a vehicle with the aid of a spotlight at night is not lion hunting. It is lion killing, and is rightly illegal when hunting on a license. Their eyes reflect brilliantly in the beam of a spotlight and can be seen from as far as the beam reaches. They are dazzled by it and, apart from showing signs of uneasiness sometimes, can be followed and shot dead at close range. There is little danger in this and even less skill. Any man or woman who kills a lion in this manner in the name of sport on a license, apart from breaking the law, is making a mockery of all the ethics and traditions of big-game hunting and is a disgrace to the fraternity of sport hunters.

When I returned to Arusha, I received the news that an acquaintance of mine had been killed a day or two before in a car accident on the road from Nairobi to Arusha. His name was Jack Carlyon. He had recently become a full-time professional hunter and was good at it, and this was a sad loss to the community in Arusha. Shortly after this, a man came to my office asking to see me. He said he was one of Carlyon's trackers and had been waiting for him in Arusha. Now that the "bwana" was dead, he no longer had work; could I help him? So started my association with Goa Mwakangalu, which has continued for over thirty-five years. About twenty-two years old then, he came from the Taita tribe in Kenya and hoped to become a full-time gunbearer and

tracker. Jack's death had wiped out those ambitions. What really motivated me to employ him as a possible replacement for Mbukuri was his claim to be part Waliungulu. This is a very small tribe of no more than four hundred people, who traditionally live by hunting. Some of the greatest ivory hunters, trackers, and bushmen come from these people. Their country is the arid zone in Kenya stretching north from Kasigau Mountain across the Galana River and on toward Garsen at the lower Tana River. They make their own Acokanthera poison for arrows that are some five feet long. The bows they make are incredibly powerful, requiring a lot of strength and the right technique to be fully drawn. This combination is especially designed for killing elephants, whose ivory, sold on the black market, gives the Waliungulu their main livelihood, along with some rhino horn. A five-foot arrow fired from twenty or thirty yards into the soft part of an elephant's anatomy would bury itself right up to the feathers. I am told that fresh poison can kill an elephant in twenty minutes, but I imagine this depends on where the animal is hit and how rapidly the poison circulates through the bloodstream.

With Goa's background I had high hopes that he would be as invaluable to me as Mbukuri had been. He turned out to be a good tracker but not in the same class as his predecessor. Having spent a few years in school at the most formative time of his life had blunted his overall skills as a bushman, but much of this was polished up after a few safaris with me. The first time we hunted elephant together I was reminded of that first hunt with James Abdulla and Mbukuri, for I lost one wounded. It was to be the second and last elephant that I shot and failed to recover, although the circumstances were very different.

I next received a report concerning a productive European-owned farm on the slopes of Monduli Mountain. Monduli *boma*, the district headquarters for Masai land, was some way down the slopes. Farther up in the extensive forests was a spring of clear, uncontaminated water from which a gravity-fed pipeline had been installed for irrigation and domestic use at the farm and other places. According to the report, a pair of bull elephants were repeatedly breaking the pipe at night, causing a shortage of clean water in Monduli and insufficient supplies for the farmer's irrigation system.

Monduli is only about twenty miles from Arusha along what is known as the Great North Road from Cape Town to Cairo. We arrived there in midmorning, and after seeing the district commissioner, I went up to the farm to get the latest news about the pipeline. It had been repaired, but if previous experience was any indication, the bulls would break it again soon. I set up camp on the edge of the forest farther up the mountain from the farm and, with a local Masai and Goa, went into the forest for a look around. There were plenty of elephant tracks about, also buffalo, a few rhino, and eland. Colobus monkeys kept pace with us in the treetops. I told Goa to follow up some rhino spoor, which he did without difficulty for a mile or more. The idea was to test his ability, and, being satisfied, I called him off before we came up with the beast. Two days later the farmer sent one of his labourers to my camp with a note saying there was no water coming through the pipe and he thought it had been broken again. I replied that I would check it out and if the elephants had done it I would follow them up.

We followed up the pipeline into the forest. It had been badly bent at a join, where water was gushing out onto the forest floor. The elephant tracks and general trampling and digging left no doubt who the culprits were. They had discovered that the pipe held

water, and breaking it provided adequate drink, mud, and slush in the forest close to cultivation containing favoured foods—in this case experimental coffee trees, wheat and green vegetables, and assorted fruit trees. The elephants had caused some damage to crops during the night. They then followed up the pipeline to where they broke it. The water and mud created by the leak had occupied them until some time before dawn, when they moved off up Monduli Mountain. Goa took up the spoor. Both bulls were feeding as they went, at some distance from each other but repeatedly joining up. Their progress was unhurried, and I was confident that they would not go very far. They moved away from the pipeline and fed through a nearby valley, resting at one point for a while where there were two large piles of droppings. I found the droppings to be still slightly warm in the centre and figured it was less than two hours old.

It was now approaching 10 A.M. The fact that the two bulls were not in the least disturbed and were feeding and resting as the mood took them meant they were not far away. We were far into the forest of Monduli and were starting to find evidence of other elephant in the area too. Turning to the left, the bulls now started to ascend a slope where the lower-level vegetation increased in density. It was all evergreen, subject to frequent mountain rain showers and heavy early-morning mist. Proceeding through this, we came to a halt, then moved alongside the buttressed trunk of a large tree. The crashing of bush coming in our direction, accompanied by puffing snorts, indicated a rhino objected to our presence. In a few seconds the cow appeared, trotting across the sloping ground twenty yards uphill from us, accompanied by a three-quarter-grown calf. She entered the crosswind carrying our scent and broke into a gallop, disappearing into the undergrowth a second or two later. Like many of these highland forest rhino, she had a well-developed, long, thin anterior horn, which I guessed was at least thirty inches long. We stopped here for a break, and I had a cup of tea from the flask. It was a cold day with a heavy buildup of cumulus cloud overhead. We were all a little short of breath, as we were now well over 7,000 feet altitude.

As we rested we were again alerted by the sudden crack of a breaking branch, coming from farther up the slope. The airflow, though not strong, was not in our favour, so, on leaving the tree at which we were resting, we moved well over to the right before continuing uphill. A few hundred yards farther on we again heard timber breaking but over to our left and across wind, in a suitable position for a direct approach. I put Goa in the lead now, carrying my backup .470 rifle; I had the Jeffery's; and the local Masai brought up the rear. Goa at this time had no training in the use of firearms, but I had drilled him in reloading a double rifle and the changeover if needed. This was montane forest, and the density of cover varied from fifteen yards visibility to over fifty yards or more where stands of fully mature, large trees dominated the scene. Making our way silently toward where we had heard the timber breaking, the incline slowly got steeper. By the time we came up to the bull I could see his head clearly and a vague outline of his body through leaves at about ten yards' range. The wind was light and was now drifting across our line of approach. I was a little concerned about the slope, as it was now so steep that I thought the elephant might roll downhill on top of us if I dropped him with a brain shot. These thoughts had barely entered my mind when Goa's hand and arm appeared to the left of my face, shaking the ash bag, indicating the wind was now starting to shift toward the elephant. I had a few seconds to act, so, raising the rifle, I dropped him with a side

brain shot. He went down, hind legs collapsing first, rolling onto his side with the head downhill, and was then still. I now reloaded the right barrel and stood motionless to await any further developments.

Our Masai guide had stopped when we were some distance from the elephant and was nowhere to be seen, so Goa and I were alone. The other bull we knew was beyond and to the right of the one I had shot, and I was particularly listening for any indication of what he was doing. He remained silent for nearly a minute after the rifle shot and then started moving downhill and across toward us, probably hoping to locate his late companion. There is something sinister about an elephant when it starts moving, with little sound, toward a point of danger. So often in the past it had been the prelude to a premeditated and determined attack, and I had that intuition now. I was not in a position, on this steep slope in fairly dense cover, to feel totally confident about the outcome. Indicating to Goa to follow me, we made our way quickly and without noise to the dead elephant ten yards away, and took up a position between his front and rear legs, with the body forming a sort of protective barrier between us and the approaching second bull. Now a tense few minutes followed, and we listened to him slowly approaching with very little sound and frequent stops. I could see nothing other than a dense wall of leaves over the top of the belly of the dead elephant. Its fall had crushed and pushed saplings, undergrowth, and creepers into a dense tangle behind which the second bull was approaching. I was expecting him to move around it and come after us with his obviously hostile intentions. Suddenly there was a loud crashing of vegetation, and the next instant the elephant's head, held well up with ears extended, appeared, moving fast straight at me and towering over the dead elephant's belly section. Its trunk was curved in an arc toward its chest, and it made no sound. Its stance was like that of an angry elephant at the end of a demonstration to chase off some unwanted intruder. I had stepped back from the dead elephant, dropped to one knee, and, firing upward into the elephant's mouth with both barrels, saw its head jerk upward and back, out of sight. As I grabbed my other .470 from Goa, who was crouching beside me, the bull had recovered and rushed away into the forest.

I still do not know if this animal knew that we were sheltering behind his late companion's body, and whether he had rushed in for the last few yards as a demonstration to help his companion. Elephants will do this often enough in an effort to protect other members of their group, and even attempt to move a downed animal or support one still on its feet away from the danger zone. They also appear to remember places where others of their kind, presumably companions or family unit members, have died. Following up elephants, I have found them on several occasions to alter course to a quite different direction and proceed in a closed-up group until reaching the remains of a dead one that has died as much as two years before. Here, one or more will sniff the bones with the trunk and pick up one or two and toss them away. After mooching about for a time, they will bunch up and move off again in the original direction, or spread out feeding. Maybe sentimental journeys and remembrance are not a human monopoly.

The second bull on Monduli Mountain had got closer to Goa and me than one could ever want. We sat around talking quietly for a while and had attracted the Masai guide by whistling until he rejoined us. We were about to start the follow-up of the wounded

bull when Goa picked up something from the ground between the dead elephant's legs, close to the belly, saying, "What is this?" I took it and realized at once that it was the remains of a shattered molar. There was only one place it could have come from, and that was the jaws of the wounded bull. When I fired upward into its mouth, one of the 500-grain bullets must have smashed through its jaws, blowing out this molar. I could not tell whether it was a top or bottom molar, but it had fallen to the ground right where we were crouched. Goa, I know, put it in his pocket, whether for strong medicine or a souvenir I do not remember. We followed the wounded bull until about 4 P.M. There was a little blood along the spoor, but the animal was moving strongly and fast. Then the rain that had been building up all afternoon started. It came down in sheets and was icy cold. We were drenched, and all the spoor was washed out. The rain eased off after an hour or less; we were soaking wet and freezing cold. There was nothing to follow, so we went back to the dead elephant, removed its tail, and returned to camp, leaving a marked trail as we went.

*Game scout and tracker Goa Mwakangalu. (Photo: Courtesy of Susan Testa. 1998)*

The next day, the weather had cleared. Taking the same Masai guide and some labourers from the farm, we went back to the dead elephant to remove the tusks. Together with Goa and the Masai I spent the next two days searching Monduli Mountain for any sign of the wounded elephant, without success. It was the second elephant I had ever lost wounded, and I was somewhat

depressed about it. These things do happen, especially in the conditions, circumstances, and numbers of these beasts that I had to deal with. One just has to live with the occasional failure.

Having sorted out the pipe-breaking elephant at Monduli, I continued from there westward to Engaruka and Lake Natron in the Rift Valley, passing the 10,000-foot active volcano, Oldonyo Lengai, on the way. This wilderness was a barren moonscape with what looked like meteorite potholes in the ground. Due to overgrazing by Masai cattle, there was not much game, even on the sizable mountains Gilai and Kitumbeni. At the few watering points, though, often piped from higher land, there were thousands of black-faced and chestnut-bellied sand grouse from 7:30 A.M. to about 9 A.M. To see them in such numbers was a treat. There were no regulations governing the number that could be shot or the time of year. The prime shooting period is through the dry season, and this, or part of it, is their peak breeding period. The slaughter of these birds at this time was excessive and sadly abused by some shotgunners, but those shot are a fraction of the young (hatched and unhatched) that do not survive because the parent birds have been killed.

There had been complaints of elephant damage, mainly breaking fences, by the wheat farmers at Olmolog on west Kilimanjaro. From Lake Natron I went up to Longido near the Kenya border and then to a place that I remembered from 1949 as a fine game area. It was called Ngaserai and lay between Longido and Mount Meru. In 1949 it held a fine variety and quantity of game. Since the distant past, the water had been provided by an artificial channel from a permanent river on Mount Meru. I do not know if it was dug by the German or British government, but it certainly turned this country into a wildlife paradise. The channel came to be known as the Masai Furrow. I arrived there with great expectations, to be sadly disappointed. If ever there was an example of environmental degradation, this was it. Over the years the Masai had brought in cattle by the thousands, along with goats and sheep. The land could not carry this quantity of stock, year in, year out. These were fragile soils, held in place by shallow-rooted grasses. The cattle, goats, and sheep grazed this down to the roots, eventually pulling out the roots in their search for sustenance. With nothing to hold the topsoils firm, dry-season winds developed into huge dust storms, and rains washed away the rest in raging muddy torrents. By 1961 this whole area had become a barren wasteland with plenty of water in the Masai Furrow. Game birds that thrive in arid conditions, such as sand grouse and yellow-necked francolin, were numerous enough, but the grazing game animals had gone. Gerenuk and lesser kudu were still to be seen, plus some Thomson and Grant gazelle, which seem to survive somehow in the most desolate conditions. There were, of course, plenty of starving cattle. Ten years before, there had been grass here; now there remained only bare ground under a scanty covering of weeds.

It was a pleasure to leave the dust clouds and depressing desertification of Ngaserai for the well-managed wheat farms on the western slopes of Kilimanjaro. Here I met Derek Dunn, who was managing a farm close to the forest edge on the mountain and guiding hunting safaris when he had time. From him I gained the impression that the damage to fencing was the work of the odd bull elephant. The following day Derek and I followed a solitary bull up the mountain into the extensive forest, where

I shot it by midmorning. The elephant problem in the Olmolog/west Kilimanjaro area was almost nonexistent, and I authorized Dunn to deal with any troublesome beasts there. I now returned to Arusha, visiting a farm at Sanya Juu on the way to look up an old acquaintance called Meerstaad, who had helped me with useful information in 1949 on my first elephant hunting safari there. I remembered him as a generous and knowledgeable host, and I was shocked and saddened to learn that he had been killed by an elephant he was hunting in Masailand some years before.

The principal purpose of my move to the Northern Range was to deal with elephant damage at the Mugara farms and eliminate the stock-killing lions at Farrab II. This was now sorted out, so, still having three months to go before proceeding on compulsory long leave, I turned my attention to more general range matters. Motorized poachers were a problem in one or two restricted areas, the worst being the Simanjiro Plains to the southeast of Arusha. I camped for a while at Komolo, where there were a couple of Ndorobo *manyatta*s near the northern edge of the plains. These people were on the verge of starvation because they did not practice agriculture, and much of the plains game, which they were by law permitted to hunt for food, had moved because of constant harassment by motorized hunters. Sambeki came from here, and through him I arranged for the Ndorobo to report vehicles taking this route to the Simanjiro. In order to assist their memory and observational powers, I manipulated some of the government funds allocated to the range and supplied them with small amounts of food at intervals. This kept starvation at bay and kept me informed on who was shooting up the game on the nearby plains. The main culprits were a white farming community at a place near Arusha called Oljoro. They were people from South Africa of Afrikaans descent, with a long tradition of game hunting for biltong production. Their destructive shooting activities were straightforward and easy to control. Leaving Oljoro, they would drive out to the Simanjiro Plains in one or more vehicles, chase after any animals they saw, shoot one or two, and degut and load the carcasses, to continue on in the same manner until they had a full load. The vehicles were usually pickup trucks.

Following their vehicle tracks in my Land Rover, I recorded which animals had been killed and where they had been degutted. I prosecuted those who had no licenses in the district court; most of them were fined and their rifles confiscated. Those with licenses seldom filled in the record section for the animals they had shot; they simply carried the license as a precaution and shot the number of game animals permitted over and over again. At least they had purchased licenses, which was a mark in their favour, so when I came up with these guys I would ask for their licenses, listen to the unconvincing excuse that they were just about to fill them in, and then make them do so in front of me with a ballpoint pen. Sometimes the filled-in records would have to be corrected upward to tie in with the evidence I had observed along their vehicle tracks, and there would be profuse apologies and excuses of poor memory. Word spread quickly about my activities on the Simanjiro Plains and other areas, and the scourge of biltong production ceased.

One of the worst incidents involved a family called Van Emminus from Oljoro. They were operating with a three-ton truck, and I followed them for miles across the plains, counting several places where wildebeest, hartebeest, and one eland had been taken. They then got onto a track leading through wait-a-bit thornbush *(Acacia melifora)* and

woodland right to Oljoro. Before reaching there I came on the whole family parked in open woodland with their truckload of dead animals. There was a small tractor and slasher cutting hay, and it must have been there all day, as there was a great heap of cut grass piled up in one place. Van Emminus, who was a big, rough-looking fellow with a large beard typical of the old *voortrekker* Boers, was unable to produce any license for himself or other members of his family. He claimed he had a license at home on his farm and had forgotten to bring it along and was very sorry about that.

At this stage Goa came up to me and said he wanted to show me something, so I left the old guy to stew for a bit and went with Goa over to the heap of cut grass. He drew my attention to lots of flies around it and said he thought there might be meat concealed underneath. Borrowing a pitchfork from the tractor crew, we started to disperse the cut grass and discovered two adult lesser kudu rams hidden there. They had been shot by Van Emminus early that morning on his way to the Simonjiru Plains, for collection on his return. He said he had no idea how they got there. The whole family was by now nervous and sullen, and I was anxious to get this business over with. They loaded the two kudu onto their vehicle, and I told them I would follow them to their farmhouse at Oljoro. The only license Van Emminus produced there had expired more than twelve months previously. The large sheds nearby were festooned with biltong hanging from wires, and several sackfuls were lying on shelves. He had broken every rule in the Game Ordinance, had lied about his license, and was one of the worst and most destructive individuals to be allowed to travel about the bush. I confiscated his rifles and ammunition and all his biltong, meat, and hides, and handed the matter over to the police. He was prosecuted and fined heavily and lost all his guns and the truck. Shortly after that he left Tanganyika for South Africa.

The Tarangire River in Masailand was the last of the really great game concentration areas left in Northern Tanganyika, outside of Lake Manyara, Ngorongoro Crater, and the Serengeti Plains, all of which were in or to the west of the Rift Valley. Melva and I had spent a few days camped there in 1955, and it was her first experience of game in such numbers. Apart from the plains animals, a lot of elephant and buffalo, rhino, and all the large carnivores were to be seen. It had been wide open to hunters then but was now a game reserve with a research establishment run by Hugh Lamprey, who had joined the game department in 1951 as a biologist.

There was now a well-used bush track into the game reserve, so I went with Melva and our three children to Lamprey's research centre. There was a thatched rondavel for accommodation, and we stayed there for a few days while I thoroughly combed the whole reserve—first, to familiarize myself with it and with the game distribution; second, to check for evidence of poaching or illegal entry. I was also interested in understanding what Lamprey was doing. Basically, he was trying to calculate the game population on a square-mile basis, which would enable him to relate the vegetational cover in each area to its capacity for wild animals. By extrapolation he would then be able to work out a theoretical density of game for the whole reserve, related to vegetational cover. The term "game density" or "populations" was converted to varying degrees of biomass, measured in terms of overall weight of the combined species per given area. He derived the figures from demarcated lines over a measured distance, called transect lines, and every day Lamprey's game scouts made counts along the transects and recorded them. They had

been trained by Lamprey and their work was analyzed by him. Over a period of two months, when I frequently visited the research program, I observed that on days when it was very rainy, the game scouts did not go out at all along the transects or anywhere else but still produced recorded counts. I doubted the reliability of these figures and informed Lamprey.

The boundaries in the south and west of the Tarangire Game Reserve were unmarked lines on maps. I had time to spare, so I went right along them on compass bearings. It was mainly Commiphora and acacia woodland, and the quickest and cheapest way to demarcate the lines was to nail white-painted metal discs onto tree trunks, each in sight of the one on either side of it, all the way. The reserve later became a national park, and no doubt a more permanent boundary line is now in place.

During my time in the Northern Range I became aware that tourism was on the verge of becoming a major industry. The longtime trophy-hunting safaris had established operations that regularly took in parts of Tanganyika and Kenya. Purely photographic trips were now becoming increasingly common. Attempts to bring some of the best-known game country within reach of people who were not very wealthy was under way, heralding the start of package tours and hordes of packed minibuses. Hotels or lodges to cater to this trade had been constructed at Lake Manyara, Ngorongoro Crater, and Fort Ikoma. Others would appear shortly on the Serengeti at Seronera, Lobo, and Ngorongoro. Tanganyika progressed from internal self-government to full independence as a Republic in 1961. Its early policy was to push the development of tourism as a major economic asset, and Bruce Kinloch, head of the game department, took full advantage of this vis-à-vis development funds for wildlife projects.

A couple of months before I left Arusha on long leave, I met Rolph Trappe, whose family had been in Tanganyika since before the First World War. They owned a farm on the eastern slopes of Mount Meru, which included the Momela Lakes. In 1951 I had met Trappe's mother, who at well over seventy was a remarkable-looking old lady. She had jet-black hair, a weathered, sunburned face with clear, steady eyes, and the appearance of one who had spent years in the bush. I was told she had been a professional hunter and guide in her younger days. Rolph was a professional hunter, successfully operating entirely in Tanganyika. He claimed that he had seen bongo on Mount Meru but that no specimen or firm evidence of their existence there existed. With his help I hired donkeys to carry camp equipment and did two safaris into the general area where he claimed to have seen these magnificent antelope. I made the first trip in company with my old friend Bill Jenvey. It was not a success because two of the donkeys were unable to continue up the steep slopes due to exhaustion. The second visit was longer, but although I searched through a lot of forest and high-level bamboo, I saw no evidence of bongo. It is possible that in the vast trackless forests on the mountain, the elusive bongo may exist, but I am inclined to think that in all the years the area has been explored and climbed, some solid evidence would have emerged by now. The local Wameru and Warush tribesmen have no legends or stories of such a creature.

At about that time there was much talk about the yeti, or Abominable Snowman, in the Himalayan ranges of northern India. I am sure this is what prompted Trappe to confide in me one day that he had once observed a strange, humanlike creature on Longido Mountain. This is a 9,000-foot-high isolated massif of great rocks and cliffs in Masailand, none of it

inaccessible or unexplored. Trappe had implied the presence of a sort of "abominable rock man" on Longido Mountain. Trappe and I got to know each other quite well, and I came to the conclusion that he was a man who was taken in by myths but that he was a keen wildlife conservationist.

Trappe wanted to sell his farm in the Momela Lakes section without endangering the wildlife on it, and in this desire lay the real value of my contacts with him. There were a lot of rhino, buffalo, and elephant there, and also eland, bushbuck, and giant forest hog. I took up this matter with John Owen, the director of national parks, and eventually this resulted in the creation of Meru National Park, which included the original Ngurdoto Park, the Momela area, and Mount Meru itself.

# Cattle Killers at Kongwa

*Chapter 28*

By the time I returned from long leave in 1961, Tanganyika had become a fully independent country. I had opted to continue working under the new government, which took over from the British colonial administration. Bruce Kinloch, who continued as head of the game department, had revised the structure and hierarchy. Game rangers were now game wardens and head game scouts became sergeants. Field staff who had achieved a certain level of education, subject to their length of service and competence, filled the newly created position of game assistants—an intermediate level between sergeants and game wardens. The rank-and-file game scouts remained as before. Although Kinloch knew who was to be appointed under his new scheme, it still awaited final approval from government, so I was temporarily posted to Dodoma in Central Province, mainly to fill in time.

It was a rather dull and desolate area, without any top-quality game country. A mix of nomadic cattle people and agricultural tribes eked out an existence on poor soils with little rainfall. I hunted a number of elephant on control work in Dodoma, Manyoni, and Kondoa/Irangi Districts and visited a place where an acquaintance of mine, District Officer Gerry Nettleton, had been killed by a bull elephant he had wounded on license. Some of my short stay at Dodoma was taken up in dealing with a longtime stock-killing lioness at Kongwa Ranch in Mpwapwa District. The ranch was another relic of the British government's ill-fated Ground Nut Scheme. It had originally started here, then moved to Nachingwea in Southern Province and to Usoke in Western Province, when the Kongwa pilot scheme failed. Large areas of dense bush land had been cleared for cultivation, but several isolated tracts covering two or three thousand acres remained untouched. There was also a long ridge near the ranch house on the western side of the cleared land, which was covered in dense bush and rocks. With the failure of ground nuts, the cleared country was turned into a cattle ranch, running high-grade beef stock numbering over four thousand head.

A European manager called Clayton was in charge of all this. An experienced cattleman in his mid-fifties, he lived in the ranch house with his wife. Apart from raising quality beef

cattle, he was also trying to teach the local Wagogo people how to improve their own scrawny animals. I met Clayton and his wife not long after I arrived at Dodoma, following up on a report that one of his steers had been killed. Accompanied by Goa, I went directly to Kongwa Ranch. Clayton offered me accommodation, and Goa stayed in his servant's quarters. It was too late in the day for me to do any follow-up, but Clayton had left the carcass where it had been killed and had covered it with bush to keep vultures off, as I had requested over the telephone. The lioness, accompanied by two six-month-old cubs, had not eaten much, and I hoped she would return to the kill the next night. As we relaxed at the ranch house that evening, Clayton gave me a rundown of this lioness's activities. She had been around for at least two years and had killed several thousand pounds' worth of grade cattle. Several attempts to shoot her—by waiting over kills, poisoning carcasses, and organizing beats through likely places—had failed. Clayton was really concerned about this lioness and did not seem at all confident that I could solve the problem. My colleague, Bill Moore-Gilbert, lately based at Manyoni, had attempted to hunt her on several occasions without success. A game scout who was based at the ranch informed me that he had been with Moore-Gilbert on each hunt, but because of the dense nature of the bush where she invariably lay up in daylight, they never got close enough to see her, and she simply ran off every time they got near her.

I noticed the game scout was wearing great big army boots, and when I inquired whether he and Moore-Gilbert wore such footwear when hunting, he replied in the affirmative. I told him to report to me early next morning without the boots. When hunting lions in dense cover, two things are of paramount importance. The first is timing. When following up a lion when it is still wide awake, it will always hear you before you are close enough to see it. The second is noise. This must be kept at the lowest possible level while moving through dense cover. Having got the timing right by giving the lion time to settle into a heavy sleep, one does not want to throw this advantage away by waking it up with great boots cracking dry sticks and rattling loose stones. I always wore light gym shoes and shorts wherever I was, hunting or just trekking. In this sort of hunting khaki or other slacks are also a noisy and disadvantageous item.

The next morning, with Goa and the local game scout minus boots, we cautiously approached the kill. The lioness with two cubs had gone, but she had fed heavily during the night. With Goa in the lead we followed the spoor to the edge of the dense bush on the ridge, about two miles from the ranch house. It was still early, so we ate breakfast at the house and then returned to this point. It was now about 9 A.M., and the sun was well up and it was getting warm. Goa took up the spoor with me behind him, followed by the game scout. We slowly and carefully worked our way through dense bush, most of it in leaf after recent rain, and after about half an hour stopped to ease the tension and to rest. We had covered a distance of little over a mile when we heard a faint *hoo* to our front and left. We were at a point where we had followed the spoor up and along the ridge and then turned left in the direction of the ranch house. We now knew in which direction the lions were, and we knew they were close. Continuing with extreme care, the spoor took us back down the slope a little way and then paralleled it into an area of rocks and thick bush cover. Goa suddenly stopped and silently pointed to his left, and it took me a second or two to make out a small patch of lion hide a few feet away. At this moment another faint grunt reached us, indicating the lions were sleeping deeply and dreaming. I could not tell whether this was an adult or juvenile animal, or what point of its anatomy I was seeing. I took a chance on it and fired a softnose .470 bullet into the

middle. There was an immediate deep growl and crashing bush as a lion rushed away from a position we had passed. Then everything went silent, so, reloading the right barrel, I moved cautiously toward the animal I had shot, its patch of hide still visible. It was not more than five yards from where I had fired. It had not moved and was dead when I reached it, the bullet having by luck shattered the heart. It was one of the cubs, so the problem remained unresolved. After a heavy feed followed by a bad fright and one cub lost, the lioness was not likely to be back killing cattle for a few days. I told Clayton I was leaving but asked him to phone immediately if there were lion kills on the ranch. Although only a cub had been killed, he was far less skeptical about possible future results.

I made a short visit to the Bahe depression, after spending a day at Dodoma, and then went up to Kilima Tinde and Kondoa Irangi, dealing with complaints of elephant damage. It was raining and wet for the two weeks I was away, and after lots of digging and jacking up the vehicle I was happy to get to Dodoma. The most interesting spectacle on this safari was the migration of tens of thousands of duck into the seasonally flooded Bahe flats. There was a message awaiting me from Clayton, saying his cattle were being killed again. This was no surprise, and the next morning he called again to say a steer had been killed the previous night. Once again I went straight to the ranch, taking my eldest daughter Susan with me for company. I figured the matronly Mrs. Clayton would not mind keeping an eye on her at the house while I went after the lioness. We arrived at the ranch at about 2 P.M., and, leaving Susan with the Claytons, I went straight out to the scene of the night's kill. The carcass, covered in thornbush, had been fed on by the lioness and one cub, and the lioness

*Goa holding head of the Kongwa cattle killer and standing next to author's eldest daughter Susan.*

was undoubtedly the same animal I had hunted before. The steer had been killed in open grassland a few hundred yards from an extensive area of uncleared natural thicket of a thousand or more acres. I was confident that the lioness and cub were inside this area and that there was a good chance of coming up with them. I told the local game scout to stay at the kill and wait for me.

Goa took up the spoor with me following. I felt there would be less noise with two of us instead of three. The heavy rainclouds were building by now, and I was anxious to get on with this hunt before the rain wiped out all tracks. Slowly moving through the thicket, carefully moving dry sticks or branches that might give us away, we had covered some two hundred yards when we found a spot where the lioness had been lying down for some time. The earth and leaves were compressed on the ground. It appeared she had spent most of the day there. After resting for ten minutes we continued, and then the rain started. It came down in driving sheets of icy water, but we went on, and within three minutes there was a pug-marked trail in newly soft mud, with water still filling the pad depressions. The lioness was very close, and there was a fresh trail in the new mud that even a blind man could follow. It was still raining heavily, and I am sure the noise of it beating on the leaves and bush prevented the lioness from hearing us. I took the lead, .470 rifle in hand, with Goa behind carrying the other rifle. We had not gone far, the rain pelting down, when Goa touched my right elbow. Looking around, I saw he was pointing to his right, and, following with my eyes, I immediately saw the lioness not more than ten feet away. She was lying on her side facing away from us with her back facing the direction from which the rain was blowing. I could not see her shoulders and head, but the back from halfway along the pelvis and hips to the root of the tail was in the clear. No sign of the cub was visible. Raising the rifle without sound and oblivious to the pouring rain, I deliberately aimed for the spine between the hips and fired. There was a tremendous roar, and the next second the lioness's head with glaring yellow eyes, mouth and teeth agape, appeared at the end of my rifle barrel. I fired the left barrel into her open mouth, shattering the vertebrae in her neck, and she sank to the ground dead. My first shot had totally paralyzed her rear quarters, causing her to swing on her haunches toward me, using the powerful forequarters for mobilization. The double-barrel heavy rifle has more than once saved me from an otherwise guaranteed mauling.

The rainstorm eased off shortly after this, so, leaving a marked trail of broken branches, we went back to the vehicle at the kill, cold and drenched to the skin. On the drive to the ranch house, I told Clayton we had eliminated his problem. The cub had not showed up when Goa and I attempted to call it before we left its mother. It had responded a couple of times but never came close. It was too young to survive on its own and must have died shortly afterward. Changing into dry clothes, we returned with six labourers to the dead lioness and dragged her out of the thicket into the open grassland. I still had a camera in those days and photographed Susan holding a rifle by the lioness. We then loaded it into my Land Rover and took it to the ranch house for Clayton to pray or gloat over.

# Looking for Devils

*Chapter 29*

By the time I arrived at Morogoro, 120 miles inland from Dar es Salaam at the coast—a major town by Tanganyika standards—the restructuring of the game department was completed. From a wildlife point of view, Tanganyika was divided into four regions with a senior game warden in charge of each, excluding the national parks, which were controlled by an independent organization. I was appointed senior game warden for the whole of eastern and southeastern Tanganyika. It was a huge area stretching from the Mozambique border northward to the Pangani River south of Tanga, and westward from the coast to the start of the highland areas of Tukuyu, Mbeya, Njombe, and Iringa. It took in all my old stomping grounds of the Selous Game Reserve and the Kilombero flood plains and also included the Mkata Plains, now called the Mikumi Controlled Area. The other three senior game wardens were based at Iringa, Tabora, and Arusha.

The dynamic Bruce Kinloch was head of the department in Dar es Salaam, and he was certainly making things move as the new Independent Government searched for every means to increase revenues, earn hard currency, and make Tanganyika a viable country. The reorganization of the game department as a division within the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources marked the beginning of wildlife development programs. The introduction of para statal organizations was part of the same policy; and the College of African Wildlife Management, at Mweka on Kilimanjaro, came into being to train future black game wardens. Also, game-controlled areas were expanded, and a national safari hunting company, Tanganyika Wildlife Safaris, came into being. This para statal was initially designed to operate in places such as the Selous Game Reserve, under tight control. A love of wild places and animals and a deep interest in them is what motivates game wardens; it cannot be learned in a classroom, and few of the Wildlife College graduates had these underlying qualities. Their efforts had disastrous results during the 1980s. Rhino were reduced to near-extinction throughout the country, and elephant populations were decimated, nearly 100,000 wiped out in the Selous Game Reserve alone. Low morale, lack of funds and equipment, soaring black market prices for ivory and rhino horn, and massive corruption in

government combined to generate unprecedented levels of ivory poaching and racketeering for at least ten years, during which the use of fully automatic rifles was commonplace.

Perusing the records in the range office at Morogoro, I found little useful information. I was particularly looking for material pertaining to that part of the Selous Game Reserve in which I had never worked—the area lying north of the Great Ruaha/Rufiji river systems. I found a sketch map buried among other papers, which indicated a huge lake covering a large part of the northeastern corner. I knew this was fictitious, and this underlined the importance of my seeing the whole area on the ground. The former head game scout, now game assistant, at Morogoro, called Selemani Msemwa, had been in service with a succession of game rangers, and I invited him in for a discussion on the subject in the hope of learning something from him. He warned me never to penetrate that area because it was full of "devils" and I would never come back. It was clear that neither he nor his subordinate game scouts ever went there, and they could not provide any useful information. I told him to prepare for a foot safari with me to see if we could find any of his "devils." In a last attempt to put me off, he said that there was no water in the area and that we would die of thirst.

My first safari to this area was on foot, and apart from capturing a number of "devils," it was an eye-opener for me. I traveled by truck from Morogoro, with sufficient porters on board, to the eastern boundary on the Kisarawe/Mroka road. Here the truck returned to Morogoro and on to Kisaki, close to the northern boundary, some seventy miles to the northwest of where I was dropped off. My plan was originally to cut diagonally across this part of the reserve to Kisaki, purely as a familiarization safari to learn something about the country, the game populations, and any problems that might exist. I assumed Selemani Msemwa's "devils" were poachers and was certain we would come across evidence of these people.

Mroka was in fact a point where a flowing deepwater channel of that name rejoined the Rufiji River on the north side. It diverged from the main river near Kipambawe some thirty or more miles upstream and was called the *Simbani* (the place of lions). Along its length it connected a series of five small, shallow lakes stretching in an arc from northeast to southeast along the fringes of the seasonally flooded plains bordering the main river. These lakes, which never dried up, were favoured fishing areas for the local Warufiji riverine tribe. From west to east the lakes were named Tagalala, Msine, Nzerakera, Siwandu, and Mzizimia. The whole area between them and the main river was flood plain covered in dense tall Vetiveria grass, cut by flood channels and dominated by thousands of Borassus palms with dense growths of *Combretum constrictum* bush along the channels. On the other side of the lakes, short grass hardpan soils, dominated by attractive open *Terminalia spinosa* woodlands, stretched away to the north into seasonally waterlogged black clay plains with mainly African knob thorn *(Acacia nigrescens)* and sausage (Kigelia) trees. This habitat terminated at higher ground approaching the northern boundary of the reserve at the Mgeta River.

Expecting to find many poachers in this area, I had collected most of the game scouts from Rufiji and Kisarawe Districts, along with their porters, at Mroka. I also had Goa, Selemani Msemwa, and an elderly game scout from Morogoro called Mohammed Athmani to assist in covering the whole of this northeastern corner of the reserve. The situation was far worse than I ever anticipated. We followed around the line of all the lakes and by the time we reached Tagalala had over fifty poachers under arrest, along with about thirty muzzleloader guns, some clearly stamped "Tower" by the manufacturers in the previous century. These weapons no doubt dated to the old slave-raiding days by the Arabs and may even have come

from askaris accompanying Livingstone and Stanley when they trekked westward from Bagamoyo after leaving Zanzibar. I now had the problem of far too many people to feed, so I sent Msemwa to Kisaki. There was a motorable track from there to Kipambawe on the Rufiji River, put in originally by the Germans and British in 1917 during World War I but reopened and periodically closed by the game ranger at Morogoro. Msemwa arrived with the truck after three days, and I sent him and the prisoners off to Morogoro for prosecution. Most of these people had been arrested at or near the three central lakes. The bulk of them were Wazaramu tribesmen from Kisarawe District, hunting game meat for sale in their district and especially in Dar es Salaam. An odd one out was a Mluguru man who acted as a guide for poaching groups and also as a hunter. His name was Toboke, and I kept him back to make use of his local knowledge.

There was still a fair amount of plains game in the area—wildebeest, zebra, eland, impala, hartebeest—and there were many buffalo and elephant in the long grass of the flood plains. A scattering of rhino was also in the area, with bigger populations along the Msine and Behobeho Rivers up to and along the bush-covered slopes of Mtundusi and Nkuru wa Tambura Hills. Around Siwandu, Nzerakera, and Msine Lakes we found miles of crude bush fencing, some of it taking root in the soil, radiating from each lake like spokes on a bicycle wheel. Every forty or fifty yards there was a gap with a wire loop set up in it to snare any animal passing through. We found several dead wildebeest and zebra and one greater kudu uncollected and rotting. The poachers had so much meat that this was surplus and could not be used. Some of these fences ran on for five miles or so into the surrounding plains. Over a period of time, we collected several tons of wire snares and destroyed all the fences.

*Captured "devils." Northern Selous Game Reserve. (Note loads of dried game meat) 1962.*

*Northeastern Selous giraffe. 1962.*

I now saw giraffe for the first time in the Selous Game Reserve. They do not occur anywhere south of the Rufiji River. After several safaris I estimated their total population in 1963 was approximately forty head. With effective protection over the next ten years this figure more than doubled. I am told today, thirty-seven years later, that there are now several hundred head. There is similar habitat to the south of the Rufiji River and along the western side of the Lungonyo plain, but it seems the river is an impassable barrier to the species, for they have never been recorded there.

Toboke, the prisoner I had detained, now informed me that on the high ground behind Mtundusi and Tambura Hills was an area called Yuno, which was open country along both sides of a ditchlike watercourse known as Lugorogoro. He said all the poaching fraternity from Rufiji and Uzaramu in the east, Uluguru in the north, and Kidodi in the west met up and shared the hunting in this area without animosity. The name Yuno was an adaptation of the word UNO (United Nations Organization), where all the world leaders met in peace. Elsewhere in this northeastern corner of the Selous Game Reserve, each tribe claimed a monopoly of the game and hunting in various sections, and savage fights took place, sometimes with fatalities if strangers moved in. I walked all through the so-called Yuno area and along the Sumbazi River. There were a lot of rhino, sable antelope in smaller numbers, and all the other species. The open areas along the Lugorogoro was the western limit of giraffe in the game reserve. We arrested a group of

poachers here from Kidodi, one of whom had an unlicensed .375 rifle and ammunition. All these people were sent back to Morogoro and were tried and imprisoned, and the rifle and two muzzleloaders were confiscated. Slowly breaking down Toboke's reserve by questioning him through Mohammed Athmani and Goa, he told us the main route to the lakes from Uzaramu was via a secret spring in the extreme northeast corner of the reserve, at a place called Nzasa, so I decided to go there before news of my actions became too widely known.

We routed via Matambwe, on the old German road, to the Mgeta River and followed that to a small hill called Kinyanguru. This was all great game country, with the water-dependent animals drinking at the river. From the hill we made our way to Kidundulima, where there was still water in a pan, and a lot of buffalo and other game were drinking there. The next stop was at the Mgeta and Ruvu river junction, followed by a six- or seven-hour walk through waterless *miombo* woodland to Nzasa. Here we caught another gang of some fifteen poachers armed with muzzleloaders, a shotgun, and coils of fencing wire for snares. This was to be their last stop on the way to Nzerakera Lake some ten waterless hours away. I relieved them of that toilsome journey, took everything from them, including their names and village headmen, and sent them home. Nzasa is a small gully with a sandy bottom, and water can be obtained by digging down a couple of feet at one spot. It is clean and drinkable but limited in quantity, taking several minutes to fill up a small excavation. It is close to the edge of the very large waterless flood plain called Mkigura, which is said to be the original course of the Ruvu River when it flowed into the Rufiji. It now flows northeast into the Indian Ocean near Bagamoyo. Apart from greater kudu there was little game in this area. I had accomplished what I had set out to do and had a clear picture in my mind of the terrain, game population, poaching, and how to control the area. One could cover most of it by vehicle across country, which was to make future safaris relatively easy and more frequent. As in the south, a system of fixed patrol posts strategically located, backed by fully mobile patrols, would control illegal entry. Over the next two years we put over two thousand of Selemani Msemwa's "devils" in prison, and I retired him from service.

There remained only two sections of the Selous Game Reserve with which I was not familiar and which were part of the old Eastern Range, plus the Mikumi Controlled Area. The part abutting and lying north of the Great Ruaha River was next on my itinerary. I walked through this area with porters and two guides who knew the country well. We traveled by truck to Kisaki at the southern end of the Uluguru Mountains and down a rough but motorable track through the Lomanga area to the Ruaha River. The track had been put in some years before by Bill Dick, who was the game ranger, and it reached the Ruaha at a place now called Kambi ya Dicki. From here I walked westward through mainly mature *miombo* woodland, parallel to the Ruaha River, to a small hill called Ngolwe, not far from the western boundary. There were some rhino and sable to be seen, a lot of elephant, and a few small herds of buffalo and eland, but there was little evidence of poaching. I assumed the people from Kidodi, Kidatu, and other settlements found it easier and more profitable to hunt the Yuno area farther east. I then turned north to visit the 4,000-foot Malundwe Mountain, the northwestern corner of the game reserve. This again was all undulating and broken country of mature *miombo* with heavy forest on Malundwe and wide belts of riverine forest in the valleys. Logging tracks intersected part of the area from a sawmill located near Kidodi on the Mikumi/Ifakara

Road. While a number of species of game animals inhabited the area, it was not of ecological importance to the game reserve, and I put it at the bottom of my list of priorities.

By the end of 1962 the decision to utilize the Selous Game Reserve as a destination for professional hunting safaris was approved, and it became a top priority to establish access routes by vehicle, divide the Selous into defined hunting areas or blocks, lay down annual quotas of animals that could be hunted in each block, and introduce a system of trophy payments for maximum revenue, as opposed to the general and special licenses in use elsewhere in the country.

I had four senior staff in my region at the time, two of whom were mainly tied up with crop protection—Johnny Hornstead in Kilwa and Terry Irwin in Ulanga. Allen Rees was at Mahenge in immediate charge of all wildlife concerns there and in the western section of the Selous Game Reserve. He had been there some years and was as familiar as I with the terrain and game populations in the eastern part. I went to Mahenge and we went on safari together to discuss and establish a system of development, game quotas, and control applicable to the whole game reserve. In the meantime I stationed Terry Irwin at a place called Kikaboga in the Mikumi Controlled Area, to set up anti-poaching operations there and assess the game population and distribution. Terry had not been in the game department very long at this time, but he had gained a fair amount of experience in the northern and western parts of the country and had been on elephant control work in the Magombero Forest in Ulanga District. He had originally recruited the Ndorobo, Sambeki, whom I knew and used at Arusha. Over a period of five years we managed to open up the Selous Game Reserve to hunting safaris to a level where maintenance costs and indirect earnings to the country in hard currency were several times more than operational and maintenance costs combined. It was divided into forty-seven hunting blocks, each with its fixed annual quota of game animals, and could be booked for the duration of one or more hunting safaris, provided the safari did not exceed the quota of any species. At the completion of the safari, payment was made on basis of game animals killed at a set rate per species, prime trophy animals being more expensive than others. Any animals lost wounded counted against the quota because we believed these would not survive. A game scout was attached to each professional hunter to report independently on animals killed or lost wounded, and to assist in guiding the safari in the hunting area.

The government invested considerable funds in developing the Selous Game Reserve infrastructure of dry-weather roads, airstrips, and ferries at three places across the Kilombero/Ulanga/Rufiji river system, which flowed through the middle of the game reserve. Before these came into service, to cross from one side of the river to the other one had to do a round trip of as much as three hundred miles. On the Kilombero, Ulanga, and Rufiji sections of the river, ferries were installed at Mlahi, Tenende, and Kidai, respectively. They were of even more value for administrative purposes. By 1968 there was a total of about two thousand miles of dry-season track, twenty airstrips capable of taking twin-engine aircraft, and three central workshop facilities in strategic locations for maintaining equipment and fuel storage. Road equipment had progressed from hand labour to five Cat 12F graders, four Ford four-wheel-drive tractors with hydraulically operated dozer blades, and six Ford tractors with rear power takeoff for rotary bush slashers attached to each machine. We evolved a technique of road clearing whereby, starting from scratch through virgin bush, we averaged six to seven miles of reasonably smooth motorable road per day. The alignment of the roads and destinations

was directed by me; and by Allen Rees in the western part of the reserve. The original ferries we built of timber on site, but these were replaced by steel pontoons that were built in Dar es Salaam and transported in sections for assembly on the river.

From the start of the ferry installations my intention was to avoid any engine-propelled vessels because of maintenance difficulties. Instead, a nylon rope was fixed across the river, and the ferry was attached to it by adjustable pulleys at each end to set it at an angle to the current, which would drive it across. Reversing the angle, it returned. I had an amusing time with one of the first College of Wildlife Management graduates named Komba, who was sent to me for further experience at the time I installed the original ferry at Kidai on the Rufiji River. He could not understand the principle of water power that would take us across the river. Everything was set up, with the front end of the ferry angled upstream. He and I, with other staff, were on board, and I gave the order to push off into the current, which was running about three knots. We crossed the river in seven minutes or so, creating a slight bow wave up front. Komba was amazed, as he could find no visible sign of power—engines, paddles, or poles—and he now approached me with a sly smile on his face, asking, "Now, how are you going to get back?"

*Author and his wife Melva with Cessna 182.*

Reversing the angle of the ferry on the pulley ropes so that the rear end was now upstream, we pushed off again and went surging back across the river. Komba was speechless and, on reaching the sandbank at our starting point, went away on his own, leaving me and the crew anchoring the vessel, inspecting for leaks, and the like. After a few minutes he returned and, coming on board, said, "Sir, I wish to speak with you privately."

I said, "OK, go ahead."

He wanted secrecy, not just privacy, and insisted we go to the far end of the ferry completely out of earshot. We moved there, and I asked him what the problem was. With some diffidence and shuffling of feet he finally said, "Sir, after what I have seen today, it will be a long time before I can be an expatriate." I think he felt he had been let down by his college.

Wildlife organizations in East Africa were now becoming air-minded; Tanganyika after independence took up this trend. The game department acquired a total of three light aircraft during the next few years, which were of great value in the Selous Game Reserve and elsewhere. To keep up with this development I eventually learned to fly, but I always reminded myself that airplanes tended to make game wardens lazy on the ground. I obtained my private pilot's license in 1969. The ability to fly our aircraft myself was a great benefit in all my work until I left the game department in late 1973. However, in the very early stages, when I had little pilot experience, I nearly wiped myself out in an accident. This is what happened.

I had a total of sixty hours' flying time, forty of them spent learning to fly in the States. I had trained in a small tricycle under Carriage Piper aircraft. Having converted my FAA license to its Tanzanian equivalent, I was issued a Super Cub, which is a tail-wheel aircraft. The landing technique is more critical on this aircraft than on tricycle landing gear. If you do not get it right the aircraft will bounce along the airstrip or ground loop. I checked out with an instructor at Dar es Salaam airport and made several perfect three-point landings, and he signed me off. Over the next week or two I was bouncing the aircraft on landing as often as otherwise. I went back to the instructor to find out what I was doing wrong. We did a few circuits at the airport, and he impressed upon me the importance of holding the stick right back on landing to pin the tail wheel to the ground.

A week later I flew into an airstrip at Kibaoni in the middle of the Selous Game Reserve in response to a radio call from Gordon Matzky, a U.S. aide volunteer who was assisting us with development work. He needed to fly along a rocky ridge near the Luwegu River to find a point where he could put a road going down it and continuing up to the Luhanyandu junction. I arrived there at about 9 A.M. with spare parts, personal mail, some food supplies, and my young son as the only passenger. We made a perfect landing and after leaving my son in camp, Gordon and I took off heading west to check out the road alignment. We arrived back overhead Kibaoni at around 2 P.M. It was hot and still with occasional thermals eddying into the sky. We made our final approach a little high to be well clear of the low hill with an anti-poaching patrol post on top of it. I put on 10 degrees of flap and cut the power to descend. The aircraft would not come down, being held aloft by ascending warm air drafts from the ground. To counter this I put the nose down, which had the desired effect, but our speed built up as we approached the threshold of the runway. It was a two-wheel landing, and the speed was still too high as we touched the ground. Without realizing our speed was still too high, I brought the control stick right back and held it there. The aircraft immediately left the ground in a nose-high altitude, stalled, and crashed back onto the ground tail first with a tremendous spine-jarring thump. It bounced into the air again as I pushed the throttle to full power, which checked our rate of descent and caused a much softer landing.

Deciding to go around and do it properly, I left the power on and started the takeoff roll. The aircraft now started to turn left, and vigorous pressure to the right rudder pedal had no effect. The speed was picking up fast, and I was beginning to panic. We hit a line of dirt left by the grader on the edge of the runway, bounced into the air, and plunged into a sea of fifteen- to twenty-foot grass with the stall warning hooting loudly. We emerged from the grass, Gordon yelling in the rear seat, heading for the middle of a large Kigelia tree 150 yards away, the stall warning still hooting and long grass stems snagging around the wing supports and landing gear struts. To avoid the tree, I banked the aircraft to the right because there was no response

*Poachers's base in the Rufuji flood plains. Note the meat and fish drying racks in the foreground. Crocodile skins and giant tusks were recovered here. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

to the rudder pedals. As we banked, Gordon shouting even louder, we lost a little height, and the right wing tip caught the ground. From that moment we were cartwheeling through the grass and finally came to rest on the wheels back on the runway, fuel pouring all over us. Gordon somehow crashed his way headfirst through the roof Perspex (Plexiglas) and legged it fast away from the aircraft. I still had the presence of mind to push the master switch off and was out the door running also.

We stood some two hundred yards away watching the wreck, expecting it to go up in a sheet of flame any second. It did not happen, so after an hour we went to see what was left. The aircraft was a write-off, both wings crumpled and bent, as was the fuselage. The engine was at a right angle to the fuselage with the propeller curled and bent at both ends. Looking at the tail section, we discovered the reason for lack of control on the rudder pedals. The tail wheel, on that first violent bounce, had been pushed up and jammed into the base of the rudder, making it inoperable. There was nothing more I could do except go to Gordon's camp, get on the radio to Melva in Morogoro, tell her what had happened and let her know that we were all unhurt, and have her arrange for an aircraft to come and collect us. This she did, and a good friend and experienced commercial pilot called David Pyetan came in the next day. My son and I flew out to Morogoro with him in a Cessna 182 after he insisted on putting me in the left (command) seat.

# Start of Hunting in the Selous

*Chapter 30*

The first visitor to hunt in the Selous Game Reserve after approval of the decision to allow such activities was John Secondari, author of the book *Coins in the Fountain.* He was a director of special projects for the American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). He was assigned to East Africa to produce a film about conservation, including some of the old-timers who made the public aware of such a need. One of these was the late Philip Percival, a founding member of the East African Professional Hunters Association in about 1933. His brother Blaney Percival was Kenya's first game ranger before the start of World War I. Secondari needed some footage on crop protection by the game department, and I was told to take care of this aspect and give Secondari VIP treatment. He arrived very early in the dry season, accompanied by only one cameraman, Hank Toluzzi. The movie was to be titled, if I remember correctly, *The Irreplacables,* to take the form of a documentary.

The camps were basic—there were no film stars, hangers-on, or luxury equipment. The visitors brought their own food supplies, which no doubt made life in the bush easier for them. Secondari was no hunter, but he was sufficiently interested in the subject to want to experience it and was granted special permission to take one elephant and one lion. Johnny Hornstead joined us on the Matandu River, where we dealt with elephant bulls breaking down *ngokwes* holding stored sorghum. I shot one of the bulls in tall grass on a flat, seasonally flooded area alongside the river. It was some distance upstream from the westernmost village on the Matandu. Because lions had been roaring at night in that direction I decided to check out the carcass to see if lions were feeding on it. There was no way I could approach it quietly because of the dense dry grass, but when I reached the carcass, there were signs that lions had been attracted there to feed. I brought some labourers along and put them to work to increase the open area of flattened grass around the carcass. I then cut a narrow trail for a quiet approach from higher ground, leaving a screen of cover near the space around the dead elephant below shoulder height and short enough for Secondari to have a clear view and to shoot if he stood up.

I returned to camp before midday and found everyone assembled. They had been out with Hornstead to deal with some elephant downstream. Secondari had a .375 magnum rifle with an assortment of silver-tip and solid shells. We now checked out this rifle on a target nailed to a baobab tree near camp. That afternoon I went back to the high ground overlooking the flood plain where the carcass was and stayed there watching with binoculars. Beyond the tall grass was an area that had been burnt. It was early in the dry season, so it was not a clean burn, but one could see anything moving there. About half an hour before sunset I suddenly saw two lions walk through this burnt area, heading for the elephant carcass. They had good manes for this area, one being predominantly black. They disappeared into the long grass. Shortly afterward a mass of flapping vultures rose into the air, which satisfied me that the lions had arrived at the carcass.

Early the next morning, John Secondari, Goa, and I left camp, hoping to find the lions feeding. I was hoping we could get the one with the dark mane. Secondari had his .375 carried by Goa, and I was using a newly acquired .416 Rigby rifle imported from Britain. At the start of our approach path through the long grass, I impressed on John the importance of silence and no talking. I had already told him that we would go in bent over double to the screen cover. I would then check to see if the lions were visible, and if they were, I would signal him to stand up with the rifle at his shoulder, off safe, and ready to fire. My intention was to back him up with my .416 as soon as he fired. I did not want to be plowing around in this sort of cover searching for a wounded lion.

We set off along the cleared approach path through the long grass. We had to cover about two hundred yards, stooped over and moving quite slowly. Secondari was in his fifties and was in poor shape physically, and I had not taken into account that such a posture might be a strain on him. We were over halfway to the blind when I thought I heard some gasping behind. I crouched down and looked around at Secondari. He was very pale and was sweating profusely, although the sun was not visible yet. He seemed to be trying to say something. Putting a finger across my lips and shaking my head, I indicated that he must not speak. Creeping back to him, I made him sit down to recover. There were vultures orbiting low above us, but none were dropping to the ground, which was a positive sign. After five minutes Secondari seemed to be in better shape, so we moved slowly up to the screen of grass. I could hear something chewing and assumed it was a lion. Rising very slowly until I could just see through the tops of grass, I saw the lion with the tawny mane. He was lying on his belly quartering on to us, chewing at the end section of the elephant's trunk. I now signaled Secondari to rise, bringing the .416 to my shoulder at the same time. As he came up level with me I straightened up to my full height, already lined up on the lion's head. As the lion came fully into view he was still chewing at the elephant's trunk, about thirty feet from us, his eyes partially closed. They suddenly became two yellow orbs staring straight at us, and in that instant Secondari fired, and I did the same a split second after him. The lion died on the spot with dust swirling about his face. There was no sign of the dark-maned lion, and I assumed he had left before we arrived.

It took Secondari over thirty minutes before he felt sufficiently relaxed to inspect his trophy. He had been so hyped up that he did not realize I had fired at the lion at almost the same second he did. When we found two bullet wounds, one in the head and the other in the shoulder, I told him I had followed him up with my shot just to be sure we had no difficulty

with the lion at such close range. He was pleased with that and thanked me for the insurance. After skinning out the lion and taking the badly damaged skull and the two floating bones as mementos, we returned to camp.

A day or two later we moved to Tundu Hills in the game reserve. Time was getting short for the ABC party, so we spent minimal time looking for Secondari's trophy elephant. On the second day he shot a bull with both tusks weighing between seventy and eighty pounds. Having completed the safari, he and Toluzzi left for Dar es Salaam, but Secondari said he wanted a filmed talk with Johnny Hornstead and me, each of us separately. He planned to visit me at Morogoro in about two weeks to do this, and I agreed to be there with Hornstead. It turned into a farce. We had to go some miles out of Morogoro to do it with a real bush background. Hornstead was all dressed up in tattered bush clothes, sandals, a beard, and a game scout beret with a brass buffalo badge. They filmed me first, sitting in a camp chair. Then Hornstead took my place, puffing at a pipe. After some general questions and answers the interviewer said, "Mr. Hornstead, you lead a very lonely life in the bush, so what do you do with your spare time?"

Not being a particularly articulate type, he replied, "Well, I kind of mess about."

"Apart from messing about, Mr. Hornstead, could you be more specific?"

"Well, you see, I just bugger about."

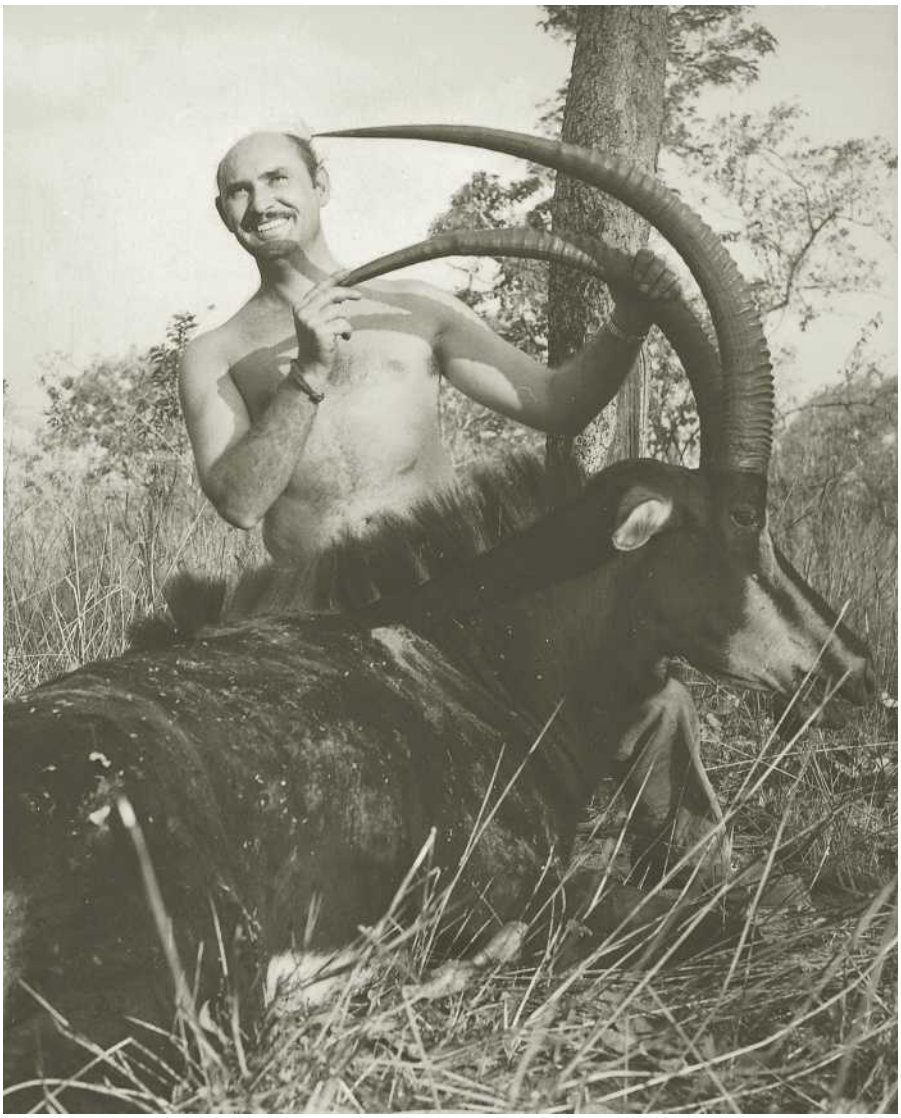
So ended the interview and my time with ABC.

*Big ivory. Mikalambiro area.*

*Brian Nicholson with Bert Klineburger's hundred-pounder. (Photo: Courtesy of Bert Klineburger)*

A year later, in 1963, I was required to take three agents on safari. They represented the national safari company, Tanganyika Wildlife Safaris Ltd. (TWS), and were promoting it in Europe and North America. The leading personality of the three was Bert Klineburger, who had helped Bruce Kinloch set up a similar organization in Uganda when he was chief game warden there. The other two agents were Ernest Juar and Manolo Soto from Europe. The TWS, as the national company, was supposed to have priority over areas in newly available hunting grounds like the Selous Game Reserve. The objective of this safari was to give the promoters personal experience of hunting there as an aid to promotion. I had about fourteen days to get them a selection of trophies, the best of which were to be taken by Bert Klineburger.

The dry-season road system, though still very rough because we had no graders then, had been greatly expanded from the year before. I could now travel by vehicle directly from the Lungonyo/Kingupira area to Madaba via Lukuliro and Kitope. The TWS agents all wanted reasonable-sized ivory tusks, along with whatever else came our way. To collect three good elephant in the time available, I decided we would hunt the Lungonyo flats and the Kitope/Madaba area near Nandanga Mountain. I knew there were quite a number of big bulls in these places, probably many more than I had actually seen. More than once near Shuguli Falls I had seen a bull that I estimated had tusks weighing 120 pounds each. He always seemed to be in the vicinity of a water pan about three or four miles southeast of the falls. He usually had two but sometimes only one smaller bull with him. Even if I did not see him, his tracks were always there, and he seemed to be permanently resident in a restricted locale. I now had a passable vehicle track to Shuguli from Madaba, but the big bull had become a personal treasure to me, and I was reluctant to search for him on this safari.



*Bert Klineburger and sable antelope. (Photo: Courtesy of Bert Klineburger)*

Our first camp in the Selous Game Reserve was near the Kingupira Forest and springs. We arrived there at about noon, and Klineburger and I went out for a reconnaissance in my Land Rover that afternoon. It was open Terminalia woodland with very short grass and smooth hardpan ground. In a vehicle one could cover a lot of country in two or three hours which on foot would take a few days, without too much shaking about. It was much easier to view game and assess their numbers here, because they had seldom seen a motor vehicle and were curious instead of shy of such strange apparitions. We were nearing the end of the Terminalia-dominated habitat toward the Tundu Hills when Goa drew our attention to a bull elephant wandering some way off. We watched him through the binoculars. He seemed to have fair-sized ivory, so, leaving the vehicle, Klineburger, myself, and Goa went for a closer look on foot.

After several hundred yards we had lost sight of the bull and were not sure whether he had gone directly away from us or across our front to the left. We were approaching a large baobab tree with some ragged bushes and scrub around it when he appeared from behind the massive gray trunk, plucking at leaves in the lower-level vegetation. I saw at once that he had fine big tusks, which I estimated at nearly one hundred pounds each. I said as much to Klineburger, and since he already had experience of ivory hunting, I left it to him to decide whether he wanted to take it. By now the bull was in the clear with both tusks in full view, and without further hesitation Klineburger started moving in on him. The bull was about one hundred yards away, so, using the surrounding scattered trees as cover, we approached to within forty yards. By now it was an easy, clear shot, and although I was leaving the line of the approach to Klineburger, I suggested that he take him now, with a side brain shot.

He was a fine bull, and the tusks weighed over one hundred pounds each when registered at the ivory room in Dar es Salaam. The following morning we left camp early to go and extract the tusks. It was one of those rare occasions when one is in luck all along the line. Shortly after leaving camp we had a good view of a leopard as we drove slowly along the edge of the long grass bordering the runoff drainage ditch from the Kingupira springs. Out in the Terminalia woodland a second leopard trotted across our front, and a third leopard was at the elephant carcass when we arrived there. When traveling on foot it is rare to see these astute animals, for they move out of sight long before one is close enough to see them. Being curious, they did not immediately depart into cover.

Ernest Jua and Manolo Soto both collected their elephants—all four tusks weighing between eighty and ninety pounds each—in the Kitope and Madaba areas. They also collected other trophies, such as sable antelope and greater kudu. Exercising some patience, Klineburger also shot a large-bodied lion with a moderately good mane for that area. We were cruising slowly through open woodland one morning when I saw the lion lying on his side resting about two hundred yards away. Without stopping, we continued for another half-mile and then left the vehicle, and in company with Goa, whose eyesight was superb, we made our way carefully to where we had seen the lion. We finally saw him lying in the sun some way off, unaware of our presence. He was lying beside a tall clump of dense bush, and we moved around to use this as cover between us and the lion for the final stalk. We were less than one hundred yards from him, and there was no further cover to approach closer.

*Bert Klineburger with his lion. (Photo: Courtesy of Bert Klinebuger)*

It was now after 9 A.M. with the heat building, and I figured the lion would soon move into deep shade on our side of the bush. I indicated to Klineburger to sit still with his rifle ready and to be patient. It took another twenty minutes before the lion started to feel uncomfortable in the sunshine, and he rose and calmly walked around to our side of the bush and flopped down in the shade. After a

*Leopard in vertical descent. Northeast Selous. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

while he stood up again and urinated and, after scratching the ground with his rear paws, moved farther into the shaded area. He was about to lie down again when Klineburger fired, flooring him on the spot.

The three agents were well satisfied with their safari, short as it was. I returned with them to Dar es Salaam, where they held further consultations with Bruce Kinloch and a man called Hill, the newly appointed general manager of Tanganyika Wildlife Safaris. All three of them, but in particular Klineburger and Soto, produced a succession of hunting safaris for a number of years and greatly contributed to making the Selous Game Reserve economically viable and a valuable earner of hard currency for Tanganyika. The revenues and overall foreign exchange earnings from hunting safaris are undoubtedly the main reason why today, over three decades later, the reserve boundaries remain intact and the Selous is still at the top of the list of hunting areas to visit. The damage to the black rhino and elephant populations from 1979 to 1987 was nearly irreparable, but they are slowly recovering, and all the other game species are plentiful. It will take another fifteen years for the elephant average age factor to reach what it was in 1973, when I left the game department. In my opinion it is doubtful the black rhino population will ever fully recover. Their numbers have become so thin in most parts, and breeding animals are so widely dispersed, that they have little chance of meeting up to mate.

The extension of the tracks for vehicles continued through 1963. When I returned from the promotion safari, a track to the Luwegu/Mbarangandu junction at Mkangira had become passable. In previous years, walking the length of the Mbarangandu, I believed that with its firm, damp sand it would be motorable in a four-wheel-drive vehicle. I was now set on going to Mkangira and driving upriver in my Land Rover along the riverbed as far as I could go. Melva, concerned about my health, came with me on this safari. I had put up with chronic gut ache since late 1959 and was losing a lot of weight, and she felt I was in no condition to disappear into the bush for weeks at a time on my own. It not only gave me immense pleasure to have her along, but I wanted her to see my favourite area in the game reserve. It was just as well she was there, because I got so run down by the end of the safari that on some days I could not drive the vehicle. In 1964 she took matters into her own hands and persuaded Bruce Kinloch to send me on long leave to Britain, where I spent four months being sorted out in the Hospital for Tropical Diseases.

We arrived at Makangira in late September 1963 to put my theory into practice. On our first trial run up the riverbed we did a round trip of one hundred miles without any difficulty,

*These three photos illustrate the paragraph on genetic effects on lion manes in the Selous. Manes generally grow bigger as lions go west.*

*Nearly maneless large lion. Eastern Selous.*

*Slightly improved maned lion. Eastern Selous.*

*Lion and lioness on the Mbarangandu Sands, western Selous. Note the improved mane quality.*

seldom having to engage the front wheels for traction. What a treat it was to be able to see so much of this fantastic area and show it to Melva at the same time. On that first drive up the river we saw one bull elephant with tusks of well over one hundred pounds each, several black rhino, nineteen lions, sable antelope, and greater kudu in the riverbed, as well as several hundred buffalo and numerous other game species. We were virtually never out of sight of elephant the whole way. Over the next week we moved camp twice, each time upriver, until we reached the Kilowero junction. While selecting sites for airstrips, I saw little sign of illegal entry apart from the odd fishing camps at lagoons full of hippo, away from the main riverbed, which had long since been deserted. At the Humbalilo junction there was a huge mahogany tree *(Khaya nyasica)* with branches that started near the top at sixty or more feet above the ground. As we approached along the riverbed a leopard suddenly appeared. It descended rapidly and then, turning, dropped the last twenty feet to the ground. It stood watching us as we approached and slunk away into cover when we were about thirty yards from it. By the time we returned to Morogoro from this safari I had completed the survey of where future tracks would be put in, linking the Mbarangandu to Lulira on the Njenje, the Luhanyandu, and the Luwegu, and to the upper Matandu via the Ndegere, which had the highest population of greater kudu in the game reserve.

Before going on compulsory leave in 1964 I beefed up operations against poaching in the northeastern section of the game reserve. I also went on foot with porters through a

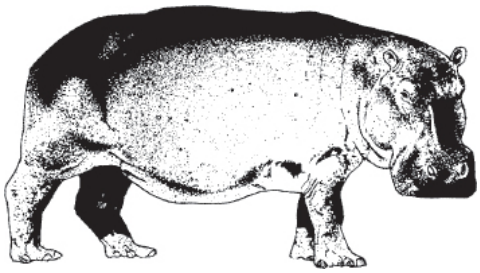
*Buffalo herd. Mbarangandu River.*

long stretch of country lying between the Rufiji River and the Lukuliro to the south. All the information I could get on this area was that it was waterless. Taking this at face value, I did the safari after the first rains in January. I doubt any game department staff had ever been there, and, rather than admit their ignorance, they claimed there was no water in the hope I would not go there. What I found was lovely game country with large semipermanent water pans along the lower reaches of the Lihuni River, which also had water under the sand. To the east of this same river was a permanent freshwater spring called Mawa, after the mahogany trees growing in a patch of groundwater forest there. Farther east still were two large pans close together, which we named Bwawa Mbili. Beyond that was a spring with running water for over a mile in length and crowded with game, especially Nyasa wildebeest; this we named Nanyumbu. There were other permanent springs along what appeared to be a fault line in the terrain. This was a valuable game area that was to become a much sought-after hunting block after I put dry-season access roads through it. So much for the waterless desert!

After sorting out a few problems concerning the Mikumi Controlled Area, which Terry Irwin had brought to a more manageable level, and arranging with Allen Rees to keep an eye on things, I departed on leave. We were set up to handle and assist the safaris that were to use our hunting block system later that same year.

# A Writer's Ordeal

*Chapter 31*



By the time I returned to Tanganyika from Britain in 1964, I had spent four months in and out of the London Hospital for Tropical Diseases. I was a wreck when I started there. My weight was down to a little over one hundred pounds, and food of any sort gave me gut ache. It took two months for the specialists to discover what the debilitating problem was. One morning they came into the ward to tell me what my illness was. It was some form of fungal infestation in the bowels never before recorded from East Africa but found occasionally in the countries along the Persian Gulf. I was apparently medical history to be written up in the British journal *The Lancet*. They told me they only had an experimental drug to treat it and were not certain it would work. I was advised to agree to become a sort of guinea pig because I would not survive another six months otherwise. I was left with little choice and was put on the drip feed intravenous treatment for two months. I made a full recovery.

Back on duty in Tanganyika in August 1964, I found that my draft financial estimates for developing the Selous Game Reserve had been accepted. The heavy equipment such as graders and light bulldozers would not be available until the following year. However, tractors with power-driven bush slashers were already clearing the track system.

Only one safari from TWS came in that year, with professional hunter Bill Jenvey and an assistant named Miller. I joined this trip in October to advise them how and where to go, since none of the hunters had ever been into this country before. The clients were two nieces of General Franco of Spain. It was not an easy safari, because the rains started early and we just made it out in time. Despite this they each collected a fine bull elephant, along with sable, kudu, buffalo, and other game animals. The publicity certainly helped to get other safari companies interested, and from 1965 onward an annually increasing number of visiting hunters arrived.

I had received a request from Allen Rees at Mahenge for experienced and reliable game scouts, and I needed an additional man of similar calibre at Morogoro. To meet this demand I transferred three men, on promotion from Kilwa, Liwale, and Tunduru in my

old Southern Range. They were Hussein Salehe, Saidi Kibanda, and Msusa Kanduru, respectively. All three of these men contributed a great deal to opening up the game reserve, eliminating poaching, and training new scouts on elephant control and other work. By the time I left the game department in late 1973, only Msusa remained. Kibanda was killed by an elephant in 1969, and Hussein took his own life in 1972 over marital problems. Their deaths were a great loss to the game department and to wildlife conservation.

In December a writer whom I had met in Britain came out to join me on safari to obtain background information and to get the feel of elephant control operation. His original intention was to write a biography of me, but this never came about. I took him to the Magombero Forest. We were still trying to eradicate the elephant population there due to ever-encroaching peasant cultivation. The elephants posed a threat to a nearby large sugar cane plantation with a factory. On the first day out in the forest the writer dressed in shorts, a shirt, and gym shoes, like me. When I suggested he wear slacks to protect his bare legs when walking, he was scornful and said that if I could do it, so could he. It did not seem to register that I was younger and had adjusted since childhood to walking through the bush. I shot two elephant in thick forest that day, but he failed to get action photographs because the vegetation was too thick to see anything. When we got back to camp his legs were a mess, all scratched and bloody. He was unable to walk the next day because the cuts were inflamed, and he had a fever by afternoon. I took him to the Ifakara Mission Hospital, where he remained on antibiotics for three days. When he was released I had already packed up the camp and moved to a more open area so that he could get some photographs. I only intended to stay there one day, and in this regard made a remark to him that he was to remember and fling back at me before he flew back to Britain. I told him that in overnight camps I did not build toilets but went into the bush a little way from camp and used a *jembe* (hoe) to cover everything when I was finished, for hygienic reasons. I suggested he take matches also and burn any used paper, with an off-the-cuff remark that it also burnt the flies.

He got several photographs of elephant, including one of a charging cow. I had Goa and Kibanda with me on this hunt, and since I had not hunted with Kibanda for some years, I wanted to see if his skills were still top grade. We found the group of elephant with a boody in relatively open woodland not far from Kidatu village. I told the writer to stick close to me and photograph as he saw fit. My plan was to close in on the elephant and provoke the boody at close range by mimicking an elephant's screeches of anger and rustling leafy tree branches. Kibanda would have to deal with it if it came for us, and hopefully our guest would photograph the action. Moving with the wind in our favour, we arrived at a range of twenty yards. Goa made the screeching noises through cupped hands and I vigourously rustled a Combretum bush. The group of elephant all swung around in our direction and then started to move off. I thought our untested gimmick had failed when a normal cow, instead of a boody, swung around again in our direction and with lowered head, ears a quarter forward, came on at a run. With my rifle ready I waited for Kibanda to deal with it. At fifteen yards' range he brought it down with a frontal shot through the brain with his .404 rifle. It was a good clean kill, and our guest took several exposures with his 35mm camera.

We now moved into the western part of the Selous Game Reserve so that I could visit some work programs. My future biographer had now got all the photos he needed and out of

*Cow elephant in full charge shot by Kibauda.*

the blue said he wanted to return to London on the next British Airways flight out of Dar es Salaam. I reminded him that our agreement was to guarantee his return by Christmas, and that there were still two weeks to go. I told him I simply could not do a three-hundred-mile trip and abandon my safari schedule on a whim. He seemed to think I could do as I pleased at any time, which was true up to a point, but I was not prepared to just squander funds,

which were always in short supply. That evening he brought up the subject again and, to my amazement, told me that he was a practicing Catholic who had certain conjugal duties at home and that the next couple of weeks were the only time he could fulfill them, as his faith forbade the use of contraceptives. I could not help laughing at this ludicrous reasoning and flatly rejected his request. He was a very unhappy and no doubt frustrated guy for the next few days until we returned to Morogoro.

The next morning we left for Dar es Salaam at 4 A.M. to put him on his flight to London. On the way there I asked him, in a jocular way, if he would take Melva and me to breakfast at the airport. It should be noted that he had had all his food, accommodation, and transport costs at our expense for over two weeks. The response was silence for a minute; then came the most extraordinary, unexpected reply: "You are the meanest fellow I have ever met; you even resent the flies eating your shit." I was completely taken aback by this, and poor Melva had no idea what he was on about, when I remembered my remarks to him about burning his toilet paper. I nearly ran the car off the road in a fit of uncontrollable laughing. We arrived at the airport and checked him in, and I paid for breakfast.

# Background to Hunting the Selous

*Chapter 32*

From 1965 to 1973 there were many changes in the game division, as it was now called. New staff were appointed to fit in with development requirements, and the government's policy of Africanization to replace non-indigenous executive officials became increasingly evident. The free enterprise, multiparty democratic system proclaimed at independence was transformed into a socialistic one-party state that nationalized all the key areas of industry. This led to the collapse of the country's economy and, due to poverty and greed, a level of corruption that none of us who had lived there for many years could have believed possible.

At the start of this period there was strong support for the development of tourism, and this in turn attracted financial investment from the Ministry of Finance and considerable financial assistance and short-term staff from foreign governments and private institutions. Most of this aid dried up as poor administration and misguided socioeconomic theories were imposed on the country. Tourism benefited enormously in the early stages, with increased funding, staff, and approval of projects. The opening up and progress of Selous Game Reserve was one of the projects to receive funding. This enabled me to install the entire infrastructure for controlled hunting, thereby creating a recognized economic asset to the country. Early in this period Tanganyika united with the island of Zanzibar, and the name of the country was changed to Tanzania.

Having acquired heavy equipment to upgrade the quality of the dry-season access tracks connecting every one of the forty-seven hunting blocks in the reserve, the problem of maintenance reared its ugly head. Field repairs were initially made by flying mechanics into the nearest airstrip to sort out a broken-down machine. Our own aircraft and pilot normally did this, but it was costly and time was always against us. Often it took several days to get a mechanic from the ministry dealing with government transport, so the work program in which the faulty equipment was engaged simply came to a halt. This had a ripple effect. Safari operators and their clients could not reach

their hunting blocks because the roads had not been reopened, which in turn affected our revenue and field work. The problem was eventually solved when I arranged to take in expatriate staff from foreign-funded agencies such as U.S. AID and the British VSO. We even managed to bring in four men from a Japanese aid program. Unfortunately, one of these Japanese was badly injured in 1971 when a tree fell across his tent one night during a storm. I flew into Mlahi airstrip the next morning in a Cessna 182 to fly him to hospital with a broken back.

Most of these foreign aid personnel stayed with us for a year or two and then returned to their home countries. Two of them, an American called Gordon Matzky and a Briton named Ian Evans, stayed for four years. Both of these men were largely responsible for completing the road system in the Selous, reopening it at the start of each dry season, maintaining all equipment, and constructing three workshop facilities at Matambwe, Kingupira, and Mlahi. Two permanent bridges, one across the Luhombero River and the other over the Beho Beho River, were part of their handiwork. The road-reopening program each year had to be planned with care and completed in each block in time for the first hunting safari scheduled to go there. The blocks in the northern and eastern sectors were opened first, as the rainfall averaged under 30 inches per annum, as compared to the areas west of the Mbarangandu/Luwegu/Ulanga river system, where it was generally up to 70 inches in places. As far as possible, Allen Rees and I aligned all the tracks along watersheds for earlier and easier access after the rains. I well remember a road put in by Gordon Matzky along the last boundary line adjustment to the Selous in 1971. Much of the road did not run along a watershed, and when I went there after the rain started in 1972 it was a muddy torrent of water. The road became known as the River Matzky.

*Left to right: Brian Nicholson, Goa Mwakangalu, and Allan Rees. Brian and Allan were the two senior game wardens who conceived, planned, and opened up the Selous Game Reserve in the early 1960s. Goa was Brian's longtime orderly and tracker. October 1998. (Photo: Courtesy of Margaret Rees)*

It was also during this period that the Chinese government made a strong bid to influence the Tanzanian political and economic scene. Chairman Mao's "little red book" was distributed in the tens of thousands throughout the country. The Chinese took on the construction of what became known as the Tazara Railway from Dar es Salaam to Zambia, in theory to enable that country to be less dependent on Rhodesia during the civil war there. A section of this railroad passed through the northern part of the Selous Game Reserve. I fell foul of the government at the time, because I did my best to have the railroad realigned to the north and so that it ran incidentally into well-populated country instead of cutting across the game reserve. It was of no relevance to the politicians that the railroad led to totally uninhabited bush with no economic value to the large population to the north. I received veiled threats of dismissal if I continued to oppose construction of the line through the game reserve. In fact, the Chinese construction gangs were a tightly disciplined force; possibly they were army labour battalions. They only once misbehaved in the reserve, and that was out of ignorance. They killed a hippo near the Ruaha River one day, and I found them preparing a hippo chop suey. I saw the commissar in charge and we had no further trouble from them. The possibility of settlement along the line, which I feared, never came about, and it remains as it was to this day.

National parks authorities approached me on two occasions about the prospect of their taking over the northeastern part of the reserve. For both practical and sentimental reasons I did not want this to happen, and I diverted their interests in the direction of the Mikumi Controlled Area. There were no people living there any more; it was a fine game area, with a new blacktop road running right through it. This was the Dar es Salaam/Iringa/Mbeya Road. To me it was a thorn in the flesh, because there were sisal estates and subsistence cultivation right on the boundaries on three sides, with chronic poaching by people in vehicles and on foot. With the backing of the director of game (as the head of the department was now called), the national parks people took up this matter. The Mikumi Controlled Area became Mikumi National Park in the latter half of the 1960s. Its park warden and rangers were stationed not far from Kikaboga, where I had stationed Terry Irwin some time before.

One other important development that took place from 1965 to 1973 was the establishment of a *miombo* research center at Kingupira in the eastern Selous Reserve. Allen Rodgers set up this center and developed it. He had degrees in biology from Nairobi and Aberdeen, if I remember correctly, and this was his first field assignment. He was told to report to me at Morogoro, but beyond that he had been given no indication of what he was to research, and he had little field experience when he arrived. I knew what needed to be studied in depth and where to do it, but before proceeding I needed to know if he was actually able to live alone in the bush without going nuts. To his surprise I sent him straight off on a few weeks' foot safari with porters, accompanied by game scout Mohammed Athmani. I told him he was to learn how to go on safari and to do as Mohammed told him. We would discuss future plans when he returned. Having grown up in Kenya, he thought he knew all there was to know about safari. I think he was a little resentful about this arrangement and thought I was being patronizing. Years later, after he had made a reputation for himself and was well on the way to getting his doctorate in ecology, he admitted to me that that first safari was one of the best things that ever happened to him. I was pleased to hear this. Allen became a personal friend, and he developed into one of the few really top-class ecologists in his field, in particular where the *miombo* habitat was dominant. He trained an excellent field staff at Kingupira, some of whom are still involved with wildlife today.

The Serengeti Research Project had approached me about sending one or more research personnel to work in the Selous Game Reserve. Over the years I had heard, read, and discussed their projects, most of them on grants from foundations or quasi-government organizations. Enlightening and informative results had come from people like Schaller on lion and Kruk on hyena. The majority, however, seemed to have their own ideas and produced doctoral theses of little value to the control and management of game areas. I viewed many of these researchers as arrogant know-it-alls who had little experience of the bush. Their work was done in considerable comfort, surrounded by modern amenities—it was all social climbing, a shortcut to fame. My response was that I would accept such staff, but they would be told what species of animals to research in depth, and they would be required to do this year round, traveling on foot safari if necessary. I never heard any more from them. Basically, to aid in our assessments related to quotas I needed more detailed information on prime trophy species: longevity, food preferences, gestation, annual mortality, and the like. The long-term goal was to be able to maximize offtake and therefore revenues without damaging the game population in any block, and to maintain the annual population increase of the block to the limit of the area's carrying capacity. This required a level of dedication that seemed to be lacking in many of the young guys looking for doctorates. Allen Rodgers was the only one I ever met who stuck with it. His profound knowledge of *miombo* ecology is a product of those long years of research.

During these years Bruce Kinloch left Tanzania, as did all the other expatriate wardens. The forced retirement of Allen Rees was a severe setback for the western Selous. He had guided one of the first graduates of the College of African Wildlife Management, named Mosha, in managing efficient operations. In Liwale a game assistant named Damien Madogo looked after my old Southern Range, with the main emphasis on work in the game reserve. He had been a sergeant in the Kings African Rifles in the Second World War and

*Jon Speed with airboat donated by Game Coin on anti-poaching operation. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

*Big ivory on the Luwegu. A fitting farewell to Jon Speed. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

had served throughout the Burma campaign against the Japanese. He had little knowledge of wildlife but had great energy and was a strong disciplinarian. I tried repeatedly to get him promoted to game warden, but the bureaucracy would not have it because of his level of education. When I camped with him at Mporoto on the Mbarangandu River one night, he was really nervous and stayed sitting by a fire, which he repeatedly stoked until dawn. There was an Mgindu legend about a huge snake that lived here, and it came out at night to seize and swallow any unsuspecting man it could find. Madogo was simply making sure he would not be swallowed!

Hemedi Mahinda took Bruce Kinloch's place. Mahinda had once been an office messenger and had taught himself English and worked himself into the unofficial position of head of the publicity section of the game division. He gave frequent talks on local radio and became well known nationally. This, with his length of service and maturity, qualified him to become director of game in the Africanization program. He was a calm and pleasant fellow but was out of his depth there. He was one of the old school and did not really care for all the new changes. I was given the title principal game warden during my last three years of service, and as Mahinda's adviser I sometimes had to visit him in his office. We were about the same age, but I had longer service than he. I would walk into his office, after respectfully knocking and being told to enter, and he would leap to his feet and stand to attention behind his desk, greeting me "Sir." I told him it should be the other way around, that I should stand and address him as "Sir." He would not have it, saying he had always done this with me and other "bwanas" and he was not going to change at his age. Rubbing the top of his bald head, he added, "I lost my hair carrying buckets full of sand for Bwana Anstey when building the Dindira dam. How can I change all that and be like these young ones, who respect nobody?"

Before leaving the government at the end of 1973, I managed to get the final adjustments to the northern and southeastern boundaries of the Selous Game Reserve. This involved some small, ecologically important areas on the Mgeta Rufiji and Matandu

Rivers. These adjustments also included relinquishing Malundwe Mountain in the northwest and the territory south to the Tazara Railway; these areas would be added to Mikumi National Park.

Non-hunting, lodge-based tourism increased in Tanzania from 1963 onward. In 1966 there was much talk about a southern circuit, and I was asked by Mahinda what we could do about it. I started off by closing the two hunting blocks bordering the north side of the Rufiji River. This included the site of the grave of F. C. Selous at Zogoware. The reserve is named after him. The grave had disintegrated when I first saw it in 1962, and I had it repaired and the inscription repainted.

I invited Clary Palmer-Wilson to set up a fixed camp on one of the lakes. He chose Siwandu but was not successful in getting the required turnover of visitors. I selected a campsite overlooking Zogoware and the Msine Valley and invited Ker & Downey Safaris Ltd. of Nairobi to take it on. They did so, but they sold out after two years to an Englishman named Bailey, who owned the Oyster Bay Hotel in Dar es Salaam. In the meantime Palmer-Wilson pulled out, making way for Karl Jahn to develop another fixed camp on the Mroka Channel. He was quite successful and was still there when I left in 1973. Since then, other companies have come in. There are now five places, I believe, that offer accommodation. The best and most sophisticated of these is Sand Rivers Lodge, owned by Nomad Ltd., near Kipambawe on the main river. If the pristine beauty of this area is to be preserved, it is essential to limit lodges, the number of vehicles game viewing, and also powered boats on the lakes, channels, and main river. Fortunately, things have not yet reached that point.

*Jon Speed, rounding up poachers with canoes on Rufiji River near Mpanga in Selous Game Reserve. Two muzzleloader guns, two elephant tusks, crocdile skins, dried fish, and fish traps were also taken. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

Poaching and illegal entry throughout the reserve was almost nonexistent except for riverborne traffic on the Rufiji River and its channels and lakes. Most of this consisted of fishermen who occasionally killed an animal to eat. Around 1969 I was asked if I could make use of a young fellow from the United States for anti-poaching work. I had no funds to pay for such a man but was told he did not want pay, only fuel for his vehicle and a game scout for law enforcement. I agreed to have him. His name was John Speed. An airboat had been donated to us by Game Conservation International (Game Coin) of San Antonio, Texas. It could hydroplane at nearly 70 mph, and this was the solution to the illegal fishermen. Speed took over the airboat and lived up to his name by getting rid of all the fishermen in a short time. He based himself at Karl Jahn's camp at Mroka and later became a guide there.

Shortly before John left to work for Karl Jahn, he expressed an interest in seeing other areas in the game reserve. I was not in a situation where I could station him elsewhere but offered to have him accompany me, as a passenger, on a survey flight in the Cessna 182 to the Luwegu River, along that part lying between its junction with the Lukula, upstream to the Luhanyandu. As we cruised at slow speed, 300 feet above ground level, I saw what appeared to be a large tusker, grazing on the flats along the east bank. Telling John to be prepared to photograph it, we descended to 100 feet and approached. The elephant did indeed have big tusks, but each time we drew near he presented his stern to the approaching noise of the aircraft. After several attempts with steep turns, John managed to get some photos. He had never seen such tusks before, and I am happy to say that his photos came out reasonably well. Ivory viewed from an aircraft can be deceptive, but this one was a magnificent bull, and a fitting farewell to John.

# Some Trophy Hunts and a Bad Lion

*Chapter 33*

Hunting safaris in the Selous Game Reserve really got under way in 1965 when our road and airstrip system was well advanced. The results of the early hunts generated a demand that grew every year, until by 1972 every block was taken and used. Many of the professional hunters did not know this country at all and were unfamiliar with the type of habitat and terrain. I felt it incumbent on me to provide advice and even assistance to safaris in the interest of promoting the game reserve as a quality hunting area. The wide-open plains and acacia woodlands of northern Tanzania and Kenya were very different from the *miombo*/Combretum hunting grounds we had to offer in the Selous Reserve.

Most hunters adjusted their techniques to suit the reserve, but a few never could handle the country and complained about the lack of game. My colleague, Allen Rees, paying a courtesy visit to a newly arrived safari camp, was confronted by such a complaint. The guide should never have held a professional hunter's license, and had no idea how to operate in this sort of country. Allen inquired into his hunting methods and quickly understood that the guy was a sort of con man with little experience, out to make a quick dollar. For two days he had been around the block boundary tracks in a clockwise direction and had seen little game. Allen's dry response was that he should try traveling in a counterclockwise direction! The party left the block with the game quota nearly intact. Hannes Pretorius arrived with his clients a week later, and they collected the full range of prime trophies in ten days.

Maned lion were nearly always a priority trophy for hunters, and the reserve certainly provided a good number of these. I was anxious that the lion quotas be taken to balance out and make up for the herbivorous game animals collected as trophies or bait. Most safaris collected at least one maned lion if it was required, and those that did not collect a lion would see a maned lion or have the opportunity to get one at some stage of their visit. They usually chose to bait for lion by hanging a bait—one of the common herbivores—from a tree branch with a rope. The bait is too high off the ground for hyena but low enough for a lion to have a snack (not a full meal) by rearing up on its hind legs. Eventually the lions throughout

*Bull elephant, with 120-pound tusks, in Kilombero Delta above Shuguli Falls eating aquatic plants. (Photo: Courtesy of Melva Nicholson)*

the reserve got used to and went for baits hung from trees. For a year or two, however, the strange apparition of a zebra or wildebeest hanging from a tree did not attract them. Many times it was found that a lion had passed within a few feet and ignored the bait. There was never any reluctance to feed on a bait lying on the ground.

A well-known American, Alice Landreth, made one of the earlier hunts into the Selous Game Reserve. She was guided by Don Rundgren, the son of my old friend Eric. She had been, I believe, the first woman to collect the "grand slam" of North American sheep, and she was now after a "hundred-pounder" elephant. I knew she and Don were camped at Mkangira, and I intended to visit them to see how the hunt was going. Melva, our young son, and I arrived at Madaba some fifty miles to the north and went on to Shuguli Falls. An amazing sight greeted us as we made our way over the rock formations to the main fall. Across the river, on the northern edge of the Kilombero delta, was a huge tusker standing on rocks, right in the middle of some secondary falls ten or twelve feet high and two hundred yards across. He was stretching his trunk down over the rock face of the falls, plucking off aquatic vegetation like lichens and moss and eating it. Moving between rock outcrops through foam and water seven or eight feet deep, he would emerge onto the next rocks clear of the water and feed again. Melva filmed this bull with her 8mm cine camera. I judged his tusks to be about 120 pounds each.

After this spectacular episode we went off to the water pan a few miles to the southeast to see if my old friend the big tusker was still frequenting the place. We found his fresh tracks there, in company with one other bull. From Shuguli we returned to Madaba, and the next day I sent Melva ahead with the vehicle to await me at Mkangira. In company with Goa and one scout and porter from the Madaba patrol post, I traveled on foot to check out the Nankongo, Likuyu, and Mliwasi areas, arriving at Mkangira ten days later. Melva told me Don Rundgren and Alice Landreth were camped nearby and were anxious to see me. I sent a game scout to invite them to visit. They arrived that evening, and we discussed their hunt. Alice had taken some good trophies, which included lion, leopard, sable, and kudu. But the hundred-pounder had eluded her. Don said they had seen some nice ivory but nothing that was certain to go better than one hundred pounds in each tusk.

I had a couple of days' work to do in the area and suggested he visit me again the next day. I knew that the big tusker was near Shuguli but was not sure whether the one we saw on the rocks was the same animal. I knew the old bull was watering at his usual water pan, but there was no way we could cross the Kilombero if he was the same one seen on the rocks. The only way to find out was to go there and check it out. I reconciled myself to the thought of killing the Shuguli bull by reasoning he was now very old. It would be better to collect his great tusks than to have them lost forever if he died of natural causes at some unknown spot in the bush. I also believed it important that Alice Landreth, a prominent huntress from the United States, should get an outstanding trophy record in the Selous Reserve to enhance its reputation.

It was arranged for Don to go ahead to Shuguli and set up his camp. Alice would stay with Melva and me overnight and would travel with us to the new camp the following day. We left for Shuguli after breakfast and were between Mliwasi and Mihangalaya when Goa drew my attention to a group of five bull elephants walking through open *miombo* woodland. Leaving Melva at the vehicle, Alice and I walked after them and inspected the ivory. Two were small bulls, and two had tusks in the seventy- to eighty-pound range. The fifth bull was a lot bigger, and I estimated his

tusks at about one hundred pounds each. Alice and I watched these bulls for a while, but I could not guarantee her that both tusks of the big fellow would be over one hundred pounds. Neither could I guarantee that we would see the big Shuguli bull. She decided to take her chance on the Shuguli bull, so we returned to the vehicle and went on to Shuguli Falls.

Don had set up the camp, and after a short break we all went to the water pan where the bulls usually drank. The freshest spoor was about 48 hours old, but they were drinking there regularly. I thought they would probably drink there during the approaching night, so we returned to camp without contaminating the surroundings any more with our scent. Everyone, except me, went to bed that night excited and optimistic about the hunt next morning. I felt somewhat low about the prospects of killing this grand old bull and irrationally hoped he would not show up. By morning I had got over this, and with Don, Alice, Goa, and a couple of other men went to the water pan. The big bull with one askari had drunk there only an hour or so before. Without wasting any time we started the follow-up, with Goa in the lead, followed by me, Alice, and Don, in that order.

Apart from the fact that the bulls had been at the water just before dawn, I did not think they would be too far away because apparently they were permanently resident in this locality. They were feeding as they went in the direction of the Nankongo River, a tributary that joined the Ulanga not far below Shuguli Falls. As we approached the downslope in newly sprouting

*Alice Landreth's elephant with tusks of 142 and 96 pounds.*

*Reeling in* mjongwa, *with author's son Philip, below Shuguli.*

Mjongwa *fish—below Shuguli Falls.*

*mtomoni (Diplorhyncus condylocarpon)* bush, I saw the bull about one hundred yards ahead. The other one was beyond it, heading for the Nankongo Valley bottom. The air was still, so, telling Alice to keep with me, I ran after the bull to view his tusks. I knew he was the big fellow as soon as I saw his head. The nearest one on the left side had over six feet protruding from the socket. I could see part of the other one disappearing into bush. We were now about fifty yards away from it, and when it seemed slightly alarmed and started to move to our left, we ran. At twenty yards it was still moving across our front to the left, and I stopped and told Alice to shoot it in the shoulder area for the heart. She whispered for me to shoot also, as she was panting with exertion, and the bull was moving at increased speed through bush. She fired, and I immediately followed this up as the elephant broke into a run. It went straight down to my shot, and I hurried over to it. The bull died there without any attempt to rise. My .470 solid bullet had badly stunned it, but it died from the heart shot placed by Alice before it had recovered from its

shocked state. It was not until then that I realized the right tusk had been broken since I last saw this animal, which was a disappointment, but it was too late to do anything about it. Despite this setback, Alice was thrilled with her trophies, which weighed out at 142 and 96 pounds, respectively.

*Author's serval cat, Israeli.*

About a year later game scouts on patrol in this same area found the broken lower half of a tusk that weighed a little under fifty pounds. I cannot be sure, but I believe this was the missing part of the right tusk. The shape, thickness, and general appearance seemed to match what I remembered of the broken tusk after extraction. After the successful conclusion to this hunt, Alice and Don Rundgren returned to Mkangira, and Melva, my son Philip, and I stayed on for a day of fishing below the falls. We had some fun with Mjongwa before continuing to other parts of the reserve. We never saw any more of the big tusker we had seen on the rocks; however, some three years later I was flying in the game division aircraft over the lower Mbapo River thirty miles northeast of the falls when I saw a solitary bull below with what looked like big ivory. At the time, that hunting block was being used by Ker & Downey Safaris Ltd. of Nairobi. One of the professional hunters guiding this safari was an old acquaintance from primary school days named Harry Muller. In line with my policy of assisting hunters in new and unfamiliar country, I landed at Madaba airstrip after buzzing the camp, and they sent a vehicle to collect me. I gave them directions to get to the area where I had seen the bull and left the rest to them. Harry and a client found a bull, probably the one I had seen, in that area, close to another river called the Namatete. The tusks from this animal, I was told, weighed out at about 130 pounds each. One can only speculate whether this was the bull Melva had filmed on the rocks at Shuguli Falls.

*Melva and Israeli on the Mbarangandu River.*

It was about this time that I received a report by radio that a cheetah, mistaken for a leopard, had been shot on a hunting safari in the Lungonyo area. I had long suspected that the species occurred in suitable areas in the Selous Reserve, but it had never been recorded up to that time. I had seen tracks in the past near Kingupira that I thought were cheetah, but I never saw one. I went to the safari camp and saw the skin that was handed over to me, so we had the first positive record of cheetah there. The professional hunter's mistake should never have occurred, but apart from reprimanding him for careless identification of a "leopard" I took no further action. In fact, the collection of this specimen was a valuable record for us and was the prelude to

*The Morogoro lion.*

a few more sightings of cheetah in the Lungonyo area and also near Kinyanguru in the far north of the reserve, where I saw a total of six over a period of several years.

The cheetah is as diurnal as nocturnal in its habits and it is therefore surprising that, even traveling on foot with porters in the past, neither Iodine, myself, nor any of the game scouts or local Africans had ever seen one. When the scouts and local people saw the skin, they believed it was a leopard with freak markings. I never saw cheetah in the reserve other than when I was traveling in a vehicle. There are very few of them spread over a huge area, and even there I think their distribution is in limited localities. Cars certainly have their advantage in places where game animals are not afraid of them.

In 1967 Melva and I were about to leave Morogoro on safari one morning when one of my office staff came to the house to say that some people had brought a leopard in an iron box trap to the office. I drove up to my office, where I found a large crowd of Africans standing around a large iron box. I went up to it and looked through a grid in the top and saw a tiny little serval cat kitten. I opened the trap door and lifted the pathetic little creature out, cupping it in my two hands. As soon as I opened the door the mob fled in panic, no doubt thinking a "leopard" would come out and claw them up. I took the kitten back to my house, Melva took it over, and we left on safari. She reared the kitten initially with diluted canned milk in an eyedropper and weaned it onto meat until it eventually took birds, mainly doves, which I shot for it. It grew to adulthood and was devoted to Melva and perfectly happy with me and our three children. Strangely, it hated anything black, so the servants could not handle it, and it would start growling and hissing at my kids if they wore black gum boots. It disappeared one day and we never saw it again. There were serval cats about in the bush surrounding Morogoro, and I suspect she went off with a male. I think this is what happened, because someone saw a serval with a collar around its neck on a road one night in the lights of a car. She was a delightful pet and always came with us on safari. On that first safari the Israelis and Arabs were at war, and we named her Israeli, to which she always responded.

*Buffalo bulls. Njenje River.*

Later in the year I was camped near Mporoto on the Mbarangandu River, tidying up the Kibaoni airstrip, among other things. George Angelides was camped downstream with a client. He had a license restricting him to hunting nondangerous game only with visiting hunters. Unaware that I was in the area, he was waiting for Frank Miller to fly in to take full charge of the hunt. One day I watched George and his guest, without their knowledge, hunt and collect a mature buffalo bull. Watching with field glasses, I recognized that here was a young fellow who was skilled and knew what he was doing. He had hunted the Selous Reserve before as an assistant to other professionals, and I had good reports on him from them and from game scouts attached to those safaris.

A day later I visited the camp. Frank Miller was due in that afternoon with another client on the same safari. I wanted to check the trophies in camp before he arrived, and I also wanted to check Angelides' license. On arrival at the camp I was invited to join them for lunch, after which the client went to his tent for a siesta. I then asked George if I could inspect any trophies, but before doing that I discussed the hunting activities with the game scout attached to the safari. He told me the client had shot two buffalo and lion, plus a couple of other game animals classified as nondangerous. He confirmed what I had already heard, that George was *hodari sana* (very skilled) and a much better man than some of the hunters he had been with on other safaris. All the trophies were of good quality and properly preserved. I then asked George if I could see his professional hunter's license. He fetched it from his tent and with some trepidation handed it to me. The restriction to nondangerous game was clearly endorsed across it. I handed it back to him and left, saying I would be in contact later. He had exceeded the authority and terms of the license.

I knew George was competent, and I had no wish to damage the career of such a promising young hunter. I decided that the best way to deal with the situation, and impress on him the necessity of observing the game laws, was to make him sweat it out for a while. Before he left for Dar es Salaam, I handed him a sealed envelope to personally deliver to the

*Big ivory. Nandanga Mountain. (Photo by Melva Nicholson)*

director, with no comments about its contents. George thought he was in big trouble and I am sure lost plenty of sleep worrying about his future. He handed my letter to Mahinda in his office and waited for his reaction to its contents. Having read the letter, which recommended George Angelides for a fully unrestricted professional hunter's license, the director stood up and congratulated him. George, as he told me later, was totally confused until Mahinda said, "The senior game warden recommends you for a full license, and it will be issued now." Today he is one of the best-known and most successful professional hunters in Tanzania.

In 1969 and again in 1971 I represented the Tanzania government at the Game Conservation International (Game Coin) biennial conference in San Antonio, Texas. With the aid of Game Coin founder and current president Harry Tennison, $30,000 was raised for work in the Selous Reserve. Quite a number of people were willing to donate but wanted their sons to be involved in what they saw as the more glamorous anti-poaching work instead of machine maintenance and roadwork. The poaching problem was almost nonexistent, but maintaining the machinery to do the access tracks was becoming difficult. Apart from meeting some limited costs of existing expatriate personnel engaged on this work, the entire donation went toward spare parts, equipment for the workshops, and the like, and the funds played a large part in the continuation of hunting safaris into all areas in the reserve.

I also met Dan Maddox for the first time in 1969 at San Antonio. He was a very senior member and onetime president of the Shikar Safari Club, an exclusive body of influential

*Nervous elephant herd. Mbarangandu River.*

and wealthy conservationists with a limited membership. In 1969 and again in 1971, Dan and Alice Landreth's husband George assisted me in the costs of obtaining my private and commercial pilot licenses. By this time, as principal game warden, I was head of all wildlife projects outside the national parks throughout Tanzania, and the only way I could cover the country was by air. These projects included the opening up of the Moyowosi/Malagarasi areas in western Tanzania and the Rungwa Game Reserve in central Tanzania. The assistance received from Game Coin, Dan Maddox, and George Landreth was of direct benefit to Tanzania by way of revenue and earnings in convertible currency.

In 1970 I invited Harry Tennison to come on safari with me to see and understand the value of Game Coin support. We did a long safari, by vehicle, all the way to the Kilowero River. He was getting on in years but was still a keen hunter, and he asked for permission to get one reasonable-sized elephant. This was granted on condition that it be taken only in an unreserved hunting block. We saw a great assortment of game, and one day I asked Harry to kill an old bull buffalo for meat for one of the road crews. This he did with no problem. Later the same day we came across a bull elephant carrying an estimated seventy pounds per tusk. I asked Harry if he wanted it, and after some hesitation he decided to go for it. He had in the past already collected elephant tusks of this size, but all the hunting blocks elsewhere were booked or the quotas on elephant used up. It was some way off in open woodland, so, keeping a close check on the wind, he, myself, and Goa followed it for a mile or more. It would be good experience for him

*The author is presented with the Biennial International Award 1971 by Harry Tennison, President of Game Coin.*

to go right up close, so I told him, "Not yet," and urged him onward. As we approached ever closer, he was beginning to wonder what this was all about, and this showed in his facial expression. At thirty yards, the bull was showing the first signs of unease. It was broadside on, so I told Harry to collect it. The elephant dropped dead in his tracks to a side brain shot.

We then moved to the Madaba area, taking two days en route. The hunting block was already in use by Terry Irwin, who was now a professional hunter, and I told Harry that we were in one of the best areas for big ivory but that he could not hunt here. Perhaps this was a mistake, because he seemed to be a bit down after that. Melva and I went walking on Nandanga Mountain, but Harry stayed in camp. We saw a bull with tusks that I thought would go better than one hundred pounds each. Harry was content and was now far better informed on what the Selous Reserve had to offer. He had other people to meet in East Africa, so I ordered a charter aircraft by radio that evening and he flew out the next day.

*Margaret Maddox with her leopard. (Photo: Courtesy of Dan Maddox)*

In 1971 I addressed the biennial Game Coin conference, along with Mahinda representing the Tanzania government. Much to my surprise, I was nominated for the biennial International Game Conservation award and was presented with a plaque to this effect. After all the effort, hard work, and frustration along the way, it was an honor, and I very much appreciated receiving such recognition.

I spent some time as a guest of the Maddox family at Nashville on this visit to the United States. Dan Maddox was a great international hunter and had been on safari in East Africa over twenty times since 1948. Once again, here was a man who, despite his frequent safaris, was still looking for the magic hundred-pounder. His best tusker was in the nineties. When asked if I had any suggestions or whether I could recommend any guide to help achieve this, I offered to have him and his wife Margaret as my guests upon one condition, which he accepted. That was to come on safari when I told him to, not when it was necessarily convenient to him. He, Margaret, and their friend George Landreth arrived in January 1972.

Long before all this happened, a solitary lion had been creating near-hysteria in the residential areas of Morogoro town. I do not know where this animal came from, and initially it did an excellent job of cleaning out all the roaming dogs that yapped all night every night. It also led to a complete cessation of house burglaries and other nefarious night activities by the town criminals and thugs. Its appearances were intermittent to start with. After taking a dog or two it would disappear for a week or more. I did not have the time to just sit around waiting for it and spent much of this period on safari. By cleaning

*Margaret Maddox with her Nyasa wildebeest. Note white bar across the face. (Photo: Courtesy of Dan Maddox)*

out the dogs, cats, and a few goats, it was, judging by my previous experience, working up to start eating people. This was further impressed upon me when I returned from a safari and Melva told me she had been driving to a friend's place a few nights earlier and was coming up on an African on a bicycle illumined in the car lights when a lion, with a ruff of a mane, suddenly came out of the lantana bush alongside the road, and the man and his bicycle went flying across the road. The approaching car frightened it off back to the bush. The African was yelling hysterically, and Melva stopped, opened the off-side door, and told him to get in. He was a domestic servant, and she took him to the house where he worked. This piece of news spread like wildfire, and by the time I returned, the story of witchcraft had started to surface among the Africans.

I had sacked an office messenger some time before, and the story now being put about by the indigenous population was that he had consulted various *wachawi* (magicians) who had sent the lion as revenge. While I was still away, senior government officials got hold of a recruit game scout based at Morogoro, bought a goat, and tied it up as a bait to attract the lion in an area of thicket near my house. Melva had to give them the keys to the armoury at my office, and they got out an old Greener 12-gauge shotgun and some dust shot shells, as they did not know any better. They then built a platform on poles high above the wretched goat, put the new recruit up there to await the lion, and went their way. The lion came and tried to take the goat that first night; the game scout blasted it with dust shot, and it ran away. Melva heard the shot during the night and went to see what had happened. The game scout was still on his platform. He told her the lion had run away, and then he came down and went back to the staff lines for the day. This is the story Melva gave me when I got in from safari.

I went to examine where the lion had been. There was no sign of blood, and, having already learned about the dust shot the scout had used, I was sure the animal had only had a fright. It had also tried to grab a large dog off the front veranda of a residential house occupied by an Asian government medical officer. I went there to suggest he keep his dog locked up, because I was sure the lion would revisit the place. There were not many dogs

*(Left to right) Allen Rees and Dan Maddox with hundred-pounder. (Photo: Courtesy of Dan Maddox)*

left to eat by now. The doctor was scared out of his wits and accused me of refusing to kill the lion because I was a racist!

On my way back to Morogoro that day I had dealt with a group of four elephant, holed up on top of a small hill covered in dense bush, surrounded by villages for miles. I now sent my truck driver and porters to collect as much elephant meat as possible to use as bait. While they were doing that, Goa and I searched the bush along the river, which flowed along a deep valley between my house and my office, with residences along both sides. We found a sort of trail made by shrews and a few bushpig in dense thicket in the valley bottom. Along this there were lion pugmarks, old and fresh, indicating the lion used this route regularly, diverting at various points to look for dogs around the houses. I decided to put a pile of elephant meat there.

The truck did not get back until the following morning. It had taken them all night to remove the rear leg from an elephant, drag it to the road, and then load it whole into the back of the truck. With every available man we took it to a point on the nearest road, immediately above the place in the valley bottom which Goa and I had selected. After a great deal of effort with ropes and poles and a bit of bush clearing, we positioned the elephant leg, which was now beginning to smell bad, in a small open space close to the

*Left to right: George Landreth, Margaret Maddox, and Dan Maddox with ivory weighing over 100 pounds each.*

stream and across the trail. The construction of the rudimentary platform up a giant fig tree did not take long, and we were all clear of the area by 4 P.M. I figured the lion, having had one bad experience with bait, would be cautious about approaching another. There was no chance that he could drag this great mound of meat away, so I decided to let the lion find it and gain confidence by feeding without interruption, before ambushing it from the platform. The next morning, in company with Goa, I cautiously crept up on the bait. The lion had been there and had eaten a moderate amount, drunk water in the stream, and then gone off up the valley, presumably to lie up. It was doing just as I hoped, and I was sure it would be back for another feed that night.

That afternoon at about 3 P.M. I positioned myself with Goa on our platform in the fig tree. I had a five-cell torch and my Jeffery's .470 with softnose shells. I did not expect the lion, in the middle of settled countryside, to move until after dark and was reconciled to a long and tedious wait. At about 5 P.M. I heard a sound, ever so faint, and then, as if coming out of thin air, the lion appeared in the space around the elephant leg. He did not look up but slowly swung his head to look left and right, then fixed his gaze on the meat. With minimal movement I had the rifle at my shoulder, and, aiming deliberately at the center line on top of his neck just ahead of the shoulders, I fired. The lion sank to the ground with a loud

sigh. I fired the left barrel for insurance, and reloaded. After a few minutes there was no movement; the lion was dead. I stayed with the dead lion and sent Goa off to fetch my driver Martin Mirwatu with truck and helpers. When they all arrived, the lion was carried up the slope to the road and dumped into the rear of the truck. He was an old male suffering from malnutrition, and I am sure he would have taken to man-eating in the very near future.

Back at my house with the dead lion in the open back of the truck, Melva came out to have a look at it with a feeling of great relief. We had a nondescript black cat at the time, so unthinkingly I took it and tossed it onto the dead lion, telling Melva it might like to meet a cousin. The cat had no sooner landed on the lion than it took off with a loud *yeeow*, the hair all over its back standing up, its tail like a bottlebrush, and streaked across the front lawn, to disappear for nearly three days. I then sent Mirwatu and Goa with the truck and lion to tour the township so that as many of the people as possible could actually see it lying dead. The message Goa gave them was that I had stronger *uchawi* than my sacked messenger. It was the last lion I personally hunted.

In January 1972, Dan Maddox, his wife Margaret, and George Landreth arrived. The rains had started and then eased off for a while. They brought some lightweight camp equipment with some nearly weightless dehydrated food supplies. I knew where Dan could get his hundred-pounder, and Mahinda authorized him to take two as a special favor in recognition of his assistance over the past years. Because I was very much tied up with work in widespread areas all over Tanzania, I arranged with Allen Rees to help Dan get his elephants and generally take care of the safari. I flew everyone into the camp on the Mikalambiro, where the airstrip was still serviceable. Allen then took over, and in ten days Dan collected two fine bull elephants, the heaviest of four tusks weighing out at 119 pounds and the lightest at 109 pounds. That was a fair reward for the stubborn persistence of one of America's greatest trophy hunters ever. This was Margaret's first African safari, and she loved it. With the assistance of George Landreth and Allen Rees, she managed to collect a leopard, a sable antelope, and a Nyasa wildebeest, and of course she accompanied Dan on his elephant hunts. My wife Melva took care of all the catering and camp affairs and contributed greatly to a memorable experience.

# Epilogue

*Chapter 34*

I voluntarily retired from the Tanzania Game Division in August 1973 and returned to Kenya. The nationalization of banks, industry, private farms, hotels, lodges, and houses had shattered the faith of business entrepreneurs, investors, foreign economic donors, and well-wishers in general. The country, as a result, was on a steep slippery slope heading for bankruptcy. Funding for projects and maintenance of equipment became ever scarcer. In addition, socialist ideology permeated government thinking, bringing in its wake new rules and regulations aimed at protecting the workers from what was termed exploitation, even though the largest employer in the country was the government itself. The game division, whose field staff of several thousand men were an armed paramilitary force spread over the whole country, was affected by this: The executive officers no long had disciplinary powers. They were not permitted even to reprimand an offending or incompetent game scout or porter, unless approved first by a workers' committee, nor could they fine or dismiss him. The workers' committees were generally made up of the most vociferous and useless junior staff, who thought their function was to make absolutely sure that no one was ever punished for any offense. This led to a massive drop in morale, pride, and competence all around, and to the resignation of many of our best men. By 1973 I could no longer do what I was employed to do and was depressed and frustrated to an extent I could never have believed possible. I submitted my resignation. I was the last white game warden in the country, but this had no relevance to my decision. The director, Mahinda, and the minister of wildlife and natural resources tried to persuade me to withdraw my letter, but they could not foresee any improvement in the near future, so I left in August. My service formally terminated at the end of accumulated leave in December 1973.

A month after my departure, all hunting by visitors or residents was banned throughout the country by decree. No notice was given, and many hunting safaris in the field at the time were ordered to leave the country. The government offered no compensation or refunds. The ban remained in force until 1982. No genuine explanation has ever been given for these

decisions. I left the game division only a month before this happened, and neither director Mahinda nor myself as his adviser had any notification that this ban on hunting was coming. Over the next few years the Tanzanian government, whose policies and actions were directly controlled by the elite of the Tanu party, showed a growing hostility to tourism in general and in particular to that part of the trade originating in Kenya, which made up over 90 percent of the total. Jealousy of their relatively affluent northern neighbour and their free market philosophy finally led to the closure of the border in the latter half of the 1970s. The hostility to hunting safaris and later tourism in general was influenced first by the fact that the bulk of the tour and safari companies were Kenya-based. As such, most of the earnings went there, leaving Tanzania with the crumbs, even though it had the best game areas to attract visitors. Nationalization prevented any investment possibilities from even starting. The second reason, I believe, was linked to ideology. Tanzania had by then adopted a form of socialism based on the Red Chinese variety. Their repeated claims to "one-party democracy" under Tanu was a hollow propaganda ploy to confuse their own peasantry and Western democracies. They feared that a large tourist industry, largely foreign-owned but inevitably employing many Tanzanians and bringing in thousands of visitors from free enterprise countries, would harm the ideology of their people. The net result of all this was that Tanzania's blossoming tourist industry shrank to almost nothing, and the infrastructure of hotels, lodges, and access roads deteriorated to an unacceptable level as unemployment increased.

In 1982 an attempt was made to rehabilitate the tourist industry in Tanzania, and safari hunting was reopened under the auspices of the national company. Low turnover and badly run operations compelled the company to approach private operators, who in order to qualify had to register and invest as Tanzanian companies. They still had to pay a percentage of their revenues to the national company to keep it afloat. This was followed by a renovation of lodges, hotels, and some access roads and airstrips to allow the non-hunting tour companies to reestablish their operations. This continues to the present day. The old socialistic policies have gone out the window, and Tanzania is now a free-enterprise, multiparty country.

From the lean years of 1974 to the early 1990s the Selous Game Reserve hunting block infrastructure received no maintenance and reverted to bush. The field staff were reduced to a lazy, undisciplined bunch of individuals, wide-open to bribery and dressed in rags because the biannual uniform issues had ceased. In spite of this, the reserve boundaries remain intact as I left them in 1973, which in itself is an achievement. A West German government organization, known as GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaff fur Technische Zusammearbeit), headed by Rolph Baldus, arrived in the late 1980s and funded the rehabilitation of staff, work programs, and game assessments. They initiated long-term policies in the settled areas peripheral to the Selous Reserve, aimed to benefit the local inhabitants and thereby to gain their acceptance and support for wildlife management schemes. They continue in this work today, having rescued this great game area from neglect, chaos, and eventual destruction. The Selous is a functioning, nearly self-supporting game reserve once again and will, hopefully, continue to recover. In the northeastern section there are now several privately owned tourist camps and one lodge called Sand Rivers, built in local stone and other materials. It is named after the book *Sand Rivers* written by Peter Matthiessen as a travelogue on his safari with me, by car and on foot, in the Selous Game Reserve in 1979. Richard Bonham, who set up and operates the lodge, provided the tentage and vehicles for that safari. It was his first experience in the Selous Game Reserve, and he fell in love with this great wilderness. Richard's father, the

late Jack Bonham, was a game warden in Kenya for many years and an elephant control man in his time. I had met him when he visited my camp on the Tana River in 1949, when I was there with clients after trophy ivory. Richard was brought up in the bush on safari and is a skilled and experienced hunter and conservationist. He has been for some years a well-informed helper to GTZ and the game division. He is probably the most dedicated conservationist operating in the game reserve today, with knowledge to match.

The prestigious East African Professional Hunters Association closed down when Kenya banned all hunting in 1977. In a good working relationship with the relevant game departments, it was largely responsible for maintaining a high standard of hunting ethics and behaviour and conservation practices among its members. It recommended the suitability of individuals to receive licenses, based on the individual's track record and experience. Up to 1973 some of the very best of East Africa's professional hunters came to hunt the Selous Game Reserve, had good results, and caused no problems. Because the association was formed in Kenya and remained based there until its closure, after independence Tanzania started to issue hunter's licenses without reference to them. It was not long before some third-rate individuals started to appear on the scene. When hunting reopened there in 1982, some of the older hunters were still around, but a growing number of people who were not qualified for licenses began to appear. Corruption had raised its ugly head, leading to the issue of licenses, continuous abuse of the game laws, and bribery of game department staff. There are some top-class professional hunters still operating

*End of the day. Borassus palms on the flood plains. 1973. (Photo: Courtesy of Jon Speed)*

in Tanzania, but the corrupt ones, who shoot at night, chase animals in, and shoot from vehicles, keep the game scouts sweet with cash and are dragging the profession into the mud. Unless they are removed, such individuals will inevitably bring about public pressure to close down hunting again.

The closure of hunting in Kenya in 1977 paradoxically led to the greatest slaughter of rhino and elephant ever seen. In time it spread to Tanzania and inevitably into the Selous Game Reserve. Between 1980 and 1992 the illegal and wholesale slaughter there wiped out nearly 100,000 elephants and several thousand black rhino. The incentive was money, a percentage of which was under-the-table payments to officials in the government. On my safari with Matthiessen in 1979, we came across a small, abandoned poaching camp on the Luwegu River below the Lukula junction. I mentioned to him then that it was probably a reconnaissance group, checking out the elephant and black rhino in the area. About twelve years later I visited the Lukula, Luwegu, and Luhanyandu Rivers again with Richard Bonham and his clients. We walked with porters for nearly three weeks. In this area in previous years one expected to see rhino on most days and anything from fifty to two or three hundred elephant every day when walking between camps. On this safari we did not see the tracks of even one rhino. We saw a total of fifty-three elephant, all of them immatures. This dreadful slaughter has now been stopped—partly by the Tanzanian authorities, who woke up to the depletion countrywide of their greatest tourist attraction; partly by the reports and activities of GTZ and Richard Bonham; and partly because some of the professional hunters are again operating in these remote areas and have a vested interest in eliminating poaching.

Despite the rough road for the Selous Game Reserve during the 1980s, it is now back on track and recovering. To my mind the greatest achievement is the fact that this 20,000 square miles of wild game country is still there, with the boundaries unchanged since I left in 1973.

Some unfortunate and regrettable things have happened in the Selous Game Reserve, but with the new attitude of the Tanzanian government I have hope that it will come right in time. To me it has been a large part of my life, and has brought me in one way or another enormous pleasure, contentment, and wonder. The only sadness follows on the death of so many of the great men whom I knew and who were my friends—Ionides, Nassoro Mbukuri, Mbaya Selemani, Mfaume Alli Kawawa, Mungumbele Miregu, and Saidi Kibanda. Goa Mwakangalu is still with me after nearly forty years. Allen Rees is retired and lives in Portugal. The Selous Game Reserve would never have become what it did, and would not have survived to the present day, without their loyalty, dedication, and knowledge. It is now listed as a "World Heritage" site, and that should ensure its future.