

Chippy's Ordeal

by Malcolm N. Smith

(*CHIPPY (as good a name as another?) is a new addition to the rescue operation at Lake Kariba. She was drugged, trussed up and transported from an island to the mainland by Fauna Conservation Officers of the Southern Rhodesia Game Department.*

The plan was simple: Senior Ranger Rupert Fothergill was to shoot her with a special dart and then, assisted by his fellow rangers, he was to tie her up.

The first dart did not function, and so a second attempt became necessary.

This time the rangers decided to drive her across a narrow stretch of water, past a tree where Mr. Fothergill was waiting with his re-loaded dart-gun and then under the trees where a host of cameramen and other observers were safely perched (see photograph).

Chippy put up a splendid perform-

ance. She came across the water exactly as hoped, passed Mr. Fothergill who fired at her from a range of four feet from behind his tree, splashed her way through the water and dashed off into the bush.

A few minutes later four blasts of a whistle directed us to the spot where Chippy had fallen, and where rangers Fothergill and van Rooyen were tying her legs and ranger S. Klaasen was injecting her with a tranquilizer.

The next quarter of an hour was hectic. Chippy protested vigorously, her little red eyes gleaming wickedly,



and several times she almost got to her feet. Eventually she was securely trussed, turned over on to a sledge and dragged to a raft in the nearby water.

The journey to the mainland was uneventful and then the process was reversed. The sledge was dragged off the raft to the land.

There the rangers gently untied her, his hat and smacked her half a dozen times across the face—and that's the truth.

Spontaneously the 30 or so African game assistants began clapping in recognition of Mr. Fothergill's stand. Chippy gave up and ambled off into the bush.

She remained passive, so, with everybody else well out of the way—or so I thought—she was doused with buckets of water by Mr. Fothergill.

Struggling to her feet, Chippy

swayed for a moment, turned round and saw the boat in which about a dozen of us were standing. She charged and smacked into the boat.

I retreated with all the dignity I could muster.

Three times Chippy butted the boat and three times she made substantial holes. Then she turned her attention to Mr. Fothergill, who was standing on the raft about 30 feet away.

The ranger stood his ground as you can see in the picture. Chippy tried to get at him so he removed

For myself, I am full of admiration for the rangers. All I could get from Mr. Fothergill was: "I was waving her goodbye."

As for me, I was so nervous after Chippy holed our boat that all I could get was one picture of Mr. Fothergill wagging an admonishing finger at Chippy, just before he waved her goodbye.

BLACK LECHWE

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