

Rangers' Tales

A regular feature in which authentic game stories are culled from Game Rangers' monthly reports and other sources.

LEOPARDS KILLED BUT BABOONS IGNORED

ALTHOUGH the work was not officially part of their duties, four game guards in Bunyoro were recently issued with .300 rifles in order to shoot baboons. This was necessary, because the local people were not prepared to give any worthwhile help in controlling the baboons in the District, despite the fact that they do so much damage to crops.

"If the people of Bunyoro were to help the game guards" says Uganda's Game Warden, Major B. G. Kinloch, "with organised drives, they would succeed in killing large numbers, while the game guards could kill any which took refuge in trees. However, nothing is done except to complain that the game guards do not shoot more."

Major Kinloch said baboon poisoners, trained by the Game Department, were extremely successful in other parts of the Protectorate but in Bunyoro they got neither success nor encouragement. The poisoners were African local government employees, but the African local government was not keen on increasing their numbers as they claimed the existing ones were a useless expense. "Although the Game Department is prepared to help" said Major Kinloch, "control of baboons is an African local government responsibility."

A similar attitude towards baboons existed in Kigezi and Masaka. Despite the fact that these animals did considerable damage in agricultural areas, the local people had shown a remarkable lack of enterprise in hunting them. "Presumably" says Major Kinloch, "because their meat is considered inedible."

In other Districts, the farmers were much more ready to retaliate when baboons attacked their crops. Even in Karamoja, the people there took great trouble to guard their crops from baboons.

- *One of the most annoying features about the baboon problem is that many Africans are often only too willing to hunt leopards, even though these beautiful animals do much to protect crops by keeping down the number of baboon and pig in an area—Editor.*

ELEPHANTS CHANGE THEIR HABITS

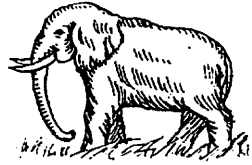
CHANGES in the migratory habits of some of Uganda's elephants were described by Dr. H. K. Buechner, Associate Professor of Zoology at the State College of Washington, when he addressed members of the Uganda Society in Kampala.

Dr. Buechner, who is studying game, mainly in the region of the Murchison Falls Park, told the Society that three aerial surveys he had carried out over 1,500 square miles of land, south of the Victoria Nile, seemed to indicate that elephants may no longer migrate south across the Masindi-Atura road into Buganda each year, as used to happen years ago. Twenty of thirty might have crossed the road this year, but this was nothing like the hundreds which used to migrate south at one time.

Dr. Buechner believed that control operations by the Game and Fisheries Department had caused the elephants to change their habits. Those elephants with the greatest urge to migrate would have been the first to have been killed off, and in any case the control operations would always have acted as a deterrent to any others.

Another interesting aspect of the problem which Dr. Buechner had discovered during his ten months' study in Uganda was the changing vegetation in the Park area. Many of the trees had been killed by elephants eating the bark, and he thought the day might come when the elephants would be forced to exist mostly on an all-grass diet.

Dr. Buechner also described another piece of research on elephants which he was carrying out—that of determining the age of all elephants shot on control. He hoped to do this by examining the teeth of all the elephants and he hoped that in time these statistics would enable him to calculate the average age and mortality rate of elephants in the area, and consequently the rate at which their numbers could be killed on control without any decline in the overall population. "In this way" he said, "the elephant population would be healthier, for there would be fewer dying from disease and from the complications of old age."



Dr. Buechner told the Society that he was also studying problems connected with Uganda kob. The kob in and around the Murchison Falls Park appeared to be extremely healthy. There was plenty of grazing, they bred early, and their numbers were controlled by lion which prevented any risk of overgrazing.

But the principal home range of the lion was outside the Park in an area which might shortly be opened to settlement. Unless the Park were extended to include this relatively-small area, Dr. Buechner believed the lion would be killed off by the people in defence of their livestock and this would lead to an over-population of kob, followed by over-grazing and disease.

ACTING THE GOAT

THE game guard in Busongora County at the foot of the Ruwenzoris has found a female goat living with a troop of baboons at Bugoye. From the behaviour of the troop it was obvious that the goat had been with the baboons for a long time. When the game guard chased the baboons, some of the troop were leading the goat while others gave her a push from behind to speed her up.

ARMCHAIR HUNTERS ON DECLINE

ALTHOUGH armchair hunters of game are still in existence in Toro, this practice is gradually decreasing and it is hoped that it will be completely stamped out before long.

These armchair hunters are tempted by the vision of easy money but are either too cowardly or too lazy to hunt elephant or buffalo themselves. Instead, they pay other people to do the hunting for them, current rates being Shs. 30/- for a buffalo and Shs. 100/- for a licensed elephant.

Increases in Game Department staff over the past few years have enabled a very much closer check to be carried out on the activities of licence holders. As a result, a number of convictions have been obtained, and heavy punishments have been awarded, involving a combination of substantial fines, confiscation of ivory, loss of game licences, and the revocation of arms licences.

NOBODY WOOS A RHINO

CAPTAIN Frank Poppleton, Warden of the Queen Elizabeth National Park, had the rare fortune when in Uganda's other national park—the Murchison Falls—to see a pair of rhino mating. According to the latest annual report of the Parks, he was driving along the Park track about three miles north of Paraa and stopped to watch a herd of elephant. He then saw a single rhinoceros, standing in the open below one of the eroded cliff faces which are a feature of the area: it was a thousand yards from the car but could be seen quite clearly through glasses. Almost immediately a second rhino emerged from a depression in the erosion and joined the first, the two animals standing facing one another at a distance of five or six yards. After a short interval the larger of the two animals, the male, moved round alongside the other and, without any preliminary sparring or hesitation, mounted her. He rose easily on his hind legs, placed the soles of his feet on the female's back, holding his head and back stretched forward: the bodies of the two animals, however, remained well apart. No union took place and after five or six minutes the bull dismounted, resuming his position alongside his mate and staying there for some little while.

As Captain Poppleton continued to watch, the male once again mounted the female, in exactly the same manner as before. On this occasion, however, union was completed, the bull bringing his forelegs right down by the cow's flanks, well behind her shoulders; the bodies being held close together with the two heads beside one another. The rhino stayed in this position for thirty-six minutes, moving forward very slowly and covering, during this time, a complete circle and a half. Finally the bull dismounted and the female moved round to face him: thus they remained motionless for a few more minutes watching each other. This was the conclusion of the mating.

Students of animal courtship will find two points of interest; the great length of time occupied by the actual mating and the absence of any display or show of interest. This is of course in marked contrast to the great display of affection which courting elephants show to one another for, amongst them, young couples are often seen flirting, fondling and saluting one another in most touching and affectionate manner. It is, however, difficult to imagine a crusty old black rhino showing much affection or acting as a gallant courtier to his lady.

HE OBVIOUSLY LIKES KIGEZI

AN American businessman who doesn't have to be told about the attractions of Uganda is Mr. John Markham, a Washington timber merchant. He is so keen on the idea of spending his holidays in Uganda that he has taken part in three hunting safaris in Kigezi in three years. And for each of the three years, he has stayed with Mr. E. A. Fangoudis, a professional hunter who lives at Buffalo Lodge, 62 miles north-west of Kabale.

Buffalo Lodge is situated in an area which is considered by many to rank with Northern Karamoja as the finest and most prolific piece of game country in Uganda—not even excepting the National Parks. Elephant are nearly always to be seen and buffalo are probably more numerous here than anywhere else in the country. There are so many topi in the vicinity of Buffalo Lodge that one visitor counted over a thousand—and then gave up.

When Mr. Markham was here last year, he shot two elephant and two buffalo and returned home to America so excited about his holiday that he immediately sat down to write a leaflet and had copies printed at his own expense, extolling the virtues of Kigezi—and of his friend Mr. Fangoudis.

TAKE WITH A PINCH OF SALT

FOR the final African shots of "The Naked Earth"—a full-length film starring Richard Todd and Juliette Greco—a group of Africans dressed only in barkcloth danced around a dead animal near the Nakiwogo Ferry, Entebbe. According to the script, the animal should have been a hippo but all efforts to shoot one had failed. Instead, the Director of the film, Mr. Vincent Sherman, bought the biggest bullock he could find—an 800 lb. Ankole—and hoped that in the flickering light of a bonfire nobody would notice the difference.

Among those watching the filming were Mr. M. Amin Mughal, a Kampala professional hunter, and his business partner, Mr. M. A. Naseer, who had travelled 700 miles in an unsuccessful search for hippo. At Bukakata, Masaka, Mr. Mughal actually did kill one at dusk but when he returned the next morning to collect the animal, he discovered that the news of the hippo's death had travelled so quickly that the local Africans had cut up most of it for meat.

"We would have had more luck if we could have gone to the Western Lakes" he said afterwards, "but then we could never have got the hippo back to Entebbe while still fresh."

Altogether, Mr. Mughal and his partner travelled 2,500 miles looking for animals for the film unit. At Butiaba, he killed a Uganda kob and a bushbuck which were then rushed to Entebbe and kept in the refrigerator of the Lake Victoria Hotel until they were needed in the film.

Biggest job of all was collecting two crocodiles for the film. Mr. Mughal tried both Lakes Victoria and Kioga unsuccessfully and had eventually to go to the Semliki



where, even there, it took him nine days' search before he was able to get two suitable specimens. These were preserved with salt and brought to Entebbe where they were filmed with their jaws propped open!

The script of the film calls for a close-up shot of plovers picking the teeth of one of the crocodiles and the fact that these shy birds could not be persuaded to alight near a camera crew did not deter Mr. Sherman. He bought some White Leghorn chicks, clipped their wings, dyed their feathers, and used them instead—enticing them into the dead creature's mouth with poultry mash!

HE FAILED THE REAL TEST

AN African who succeeded in obtaining a game licence without the knowledge of the Game Ranger for the Lake Albert Range, and thereby avoided the necessary proficiency test, has been killed by a buffalo. He wounded the animal, followed it for some distance and was killed when it charged as he turned for home. A companion was severely injured. A short while before the man had organised a petition to the Governor complaining that the test was too difficult and in any case unnecessary.

The Game Department's proficiency test was introduced two or three years ago and consists of a simple shooting test and an oral test on the applicant's knowledge of the game laws and the various vital spots on game animals. They are designed to prevent cruel unnecessary wounding of animals by incompetent persons and breaches of the Game Ordinance through genuine ignorance of the law.

But, although the shooting test is a comparatively simple one, some of the applicants who have failed it in the past have shot incredibly badly. Many applicants have been able to put only one or two out of five shots on the target while some miss it altogether. One man knelt down to shoot and his first round knocked him flat on his back, even though he had held a licence for years.

COURT FOUND ELEPHANT GUILTY

AN unusual incident in which an elephant met its end as the result of a judicial process carried out in the presence of the District Magistrate and some hundreds of witnesses is described in the latest annual report of the Uganda National Parks. It occurred when the Director and Warden were holding a meeting with the District Commissioner of Kigezi, the local Council and people of Rwensama, the fishing village on the shores of Lake Edward. During the course of a discussion on matters of mutual concern, someone complained of a dangerous elephant said to be haunting the neighbourhood, attacking people and damaging bicycles. It could be identified, it was said, by a stump tail, but had not been seen for a week, so there the matter was left.

On the following morning, however, breakfast in the open by the Lake shore was disturbed by the arrival of a villager who said that the elephant in question was browsing just behind the village. It was examined and identified, its stump tail indicating that at some time in the past it had been shot with a clumsily placed brain shot and merely stunned, its tail having been cut off before it recovered to depart, no doubt, at high speed. The elephant was a big bull, carrying sixty pound tusks, clearly liable to be dangerous, and dangerous as a result of man's importunity: it might well have to be destroyed. The elephant was peacefully feeding, in full view, about two hundred yards from the Miruka Chief's house, behind which all the inhabitants of the village, with the European Officers, were congregated.

An enquiry in detail was then conducted and this elephant, now identified beyond question, was found to have committed a series of crimes of violence against person and property. It had broken up four bicycles and had attacked, in shallow water near the foreshore, a fishing canoe going about its lawful business, seriously injuring one of the fishermen as he was trying to escape. No other decision was possible and, a result of this judicial process, carried out in public in the presence of the accused, his destruction was ordered, the Warden being instructed to carry out the execution. As soon as the convicted criminal realised that he was being approached, he charged without warning and in most practised manner: the execution however, proceeded.