

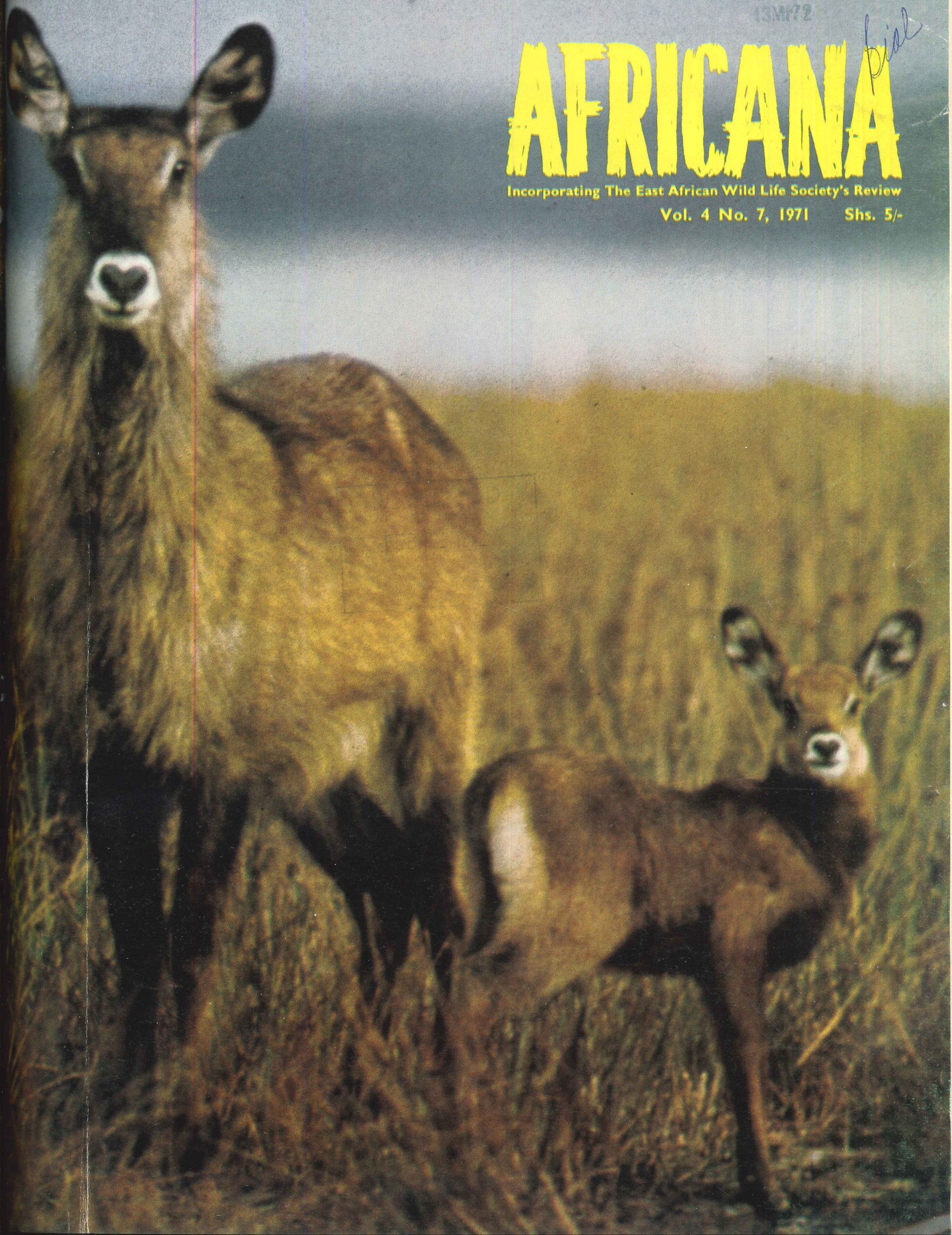
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Pictures by PETER JENKINS

WANTED: A HERD OF WHITE RHINO...



FOR SOME years there has been a good deal of quietly dedicated work going on in Meru National Park. This 320 square miles of perhaps the most scenically diverse of Kenya's parkland has been painstakingly developed by Warden Peter Jenkins and his staff, until now there is a fine network of all-weather circuit roads and an encouraging regeneration of the game. This out-of-the-way sanctuary, north-east of Mt. Kenya, has still to be discovered by the mainstream of tourists, but those who do battle the difficult access roads tend to promote Meru as the most attractive of all the Parks. The roads are now being improved rapidly, and a lodge is under construction. Among a number of component success stories is that of Meru's white rhino—the only representatives of the species in Kenya. Three bulls and three cows were translocated from Nkolosi Park, Natal, in 1963. They were hand nursed for a couple of years, during which they built up a total immunity to Tsetse—which was the anticipated main hazard of the exercise. At one stage the bulls became fractious, with the biggest savaging a bull badly and killing one of the cows. After that they were separated and drifted off, and one pregnant cow, "Matanza", caused anxiety by disappearing for months. But she turned up a few weeks ago and is now back in the Park. The pride of the herd is the youngster pictured here—born in April, she's so full of bounce and mischief that the staff have named her "Matata", which is Swahili for "trouble". The rhino experiment has obviously worked; they have shown that they adapt well to the Meru conditions and can thrive on their own. There is a strong feeling now that if a further 18 animals were imported, there would be a basis for substantial regeneration of the species where it was once common. Apparently, there is an overpopulation of white rhino in Nkolosi, and a second herd might be available to Meru. Perhaps someone, official or private, might examine the prospect of endowing Meru with what could be a premier wildlife attraction.