

AFRICANA

Incorporating The East African Wild Life Society's Review

VOLUME 2

No. 2

DECEMBER, 1964

Shs. 3/-

50 U.S. Cents

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Special
Supplement

ROAD
TO THE
KENYA
LAKES



Tony Irwin asks:

WANT TO ADOPT A RHINO?

IT ALL STARTED when David Shepherd, the animal artist, dropped in at my house for tea and, over a slice of fruit cake, said that he had had so much fun out of painting East African animal portraits that he would like to do something in return.

The "something" became a magnificent picture in oils of "Elephant at Samburu", which he gave to the Society and which Mr. Bill Stremmel, of Reno, Nevada, bought for £850. He also gave us the right to use another of his elephant pictures for one of this year's Christmas cards and, at the time of going to press, we have sold over 35,000 copies of that card.

Shepherd went even further. He gave us 20 signed prints of some of his wildlife pictures—and we added another £400 to the kitty.

A quick estimate of what that tea party was worth to the Society brings a figure not far short of £2,000 . . . just about the most generous personal gift that has come our way for a very long time. And there was only one string attached to the whole business: "The money," Shepherd insisted, "must go to some worthwhile project."

The next fortuitous meeting came when Peter Achard—now senior Game Warden of Mwanza and the Lake District of Tanganyika and an old war-time colleague of mine from Burma days—dropped into the office with a plea for help with his Rubondo Rhino Rescue Scheme.

This scheme, started back in 1963, planned to catch black rhino in areas of Northern Tanganyika (where they came into contact with galloping human interests) and transfer them by lorry and pontoon to the 55,000-acre island of Rubondo, off the south-west coast of Lake Victoria.

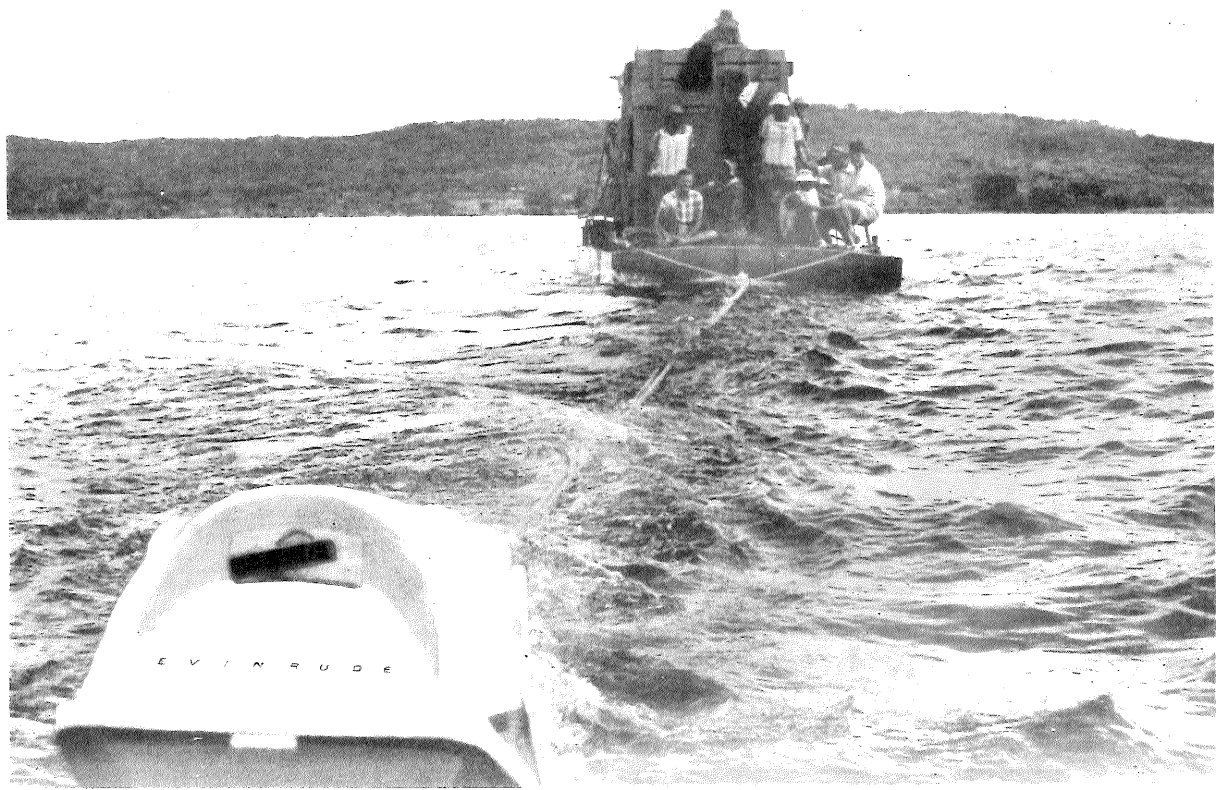
Fully assisted by the well-known game trapper, Carr Hartley, the Tanganyika Game Department team under Achard's direction had already caught and transported four adult rhino to the island by the beginning of 1964. One of these is known to have calved down and increased the population to five; a second is due to calve any moment now.

But the natural gain of two was cancelled out by the loss of two other animals, which had been held for too long in the holding pens back on the mainland catching-area—for want of transport facilities and cash to move them "overseas". They had succumbed to pneumonia.

Following Achard's call for help, the Society's executive committee at once agreed to make over £350 of its limited resources for the purchase of an efficient pontoon to carry the rhino across the 15 hours' "sea voyage" to the island, and also to provide funds to build another and lasting crate in which to transport the animals . . . and this cannot be done for under £125.

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SANCTUARY on Rubondo Island for one rhino and (below) a mate makes the water journey to join him



Rhino Sanctuary

(Continued from page 13)

Frank Minot, the Society's Executive Officer, and myself, then flew down to Mwanza, picked up Achard, made an hour-long aerial survey of the island, then landed back in the bush alongside the catching camp. There we found the Hartley Team, occupied in the normal manner of rhino catchers, changing heavy duty tyres ripped to shreds by stumps, stone and angry rhinos' horns and generally trying to keep their battered catching trucks serviceable for the next morning's run.

No car has yet been made that can stand up to the bashing that these vehicles get when, at 30 mph, over toughest Africa, they set out in search of their two-ton prey and all too much of every trapper's life—and a great deal of his money—goes on keeping his fantastic machines in motion.

We found something else at the camp, too. Four rhino, including two fine cows in calf, waiting for shipment, three to Rubondo and one back to Nairobi and thence on to a European zoo.

Unseasonal rain had brought with it mud and the very certain risk of pneumonia and we were left in no doubt as to Achard's need for funds to build crates, buy petrol, hire lorries and shift the rhino across to Rubondo at the earliest moment; and this, in the name of the Society, we undertook to do.

As for Rubondo itself, our survey—brief though it was—had shown a thickly-forested island with steep, thorn-covered hillside slopes and grass-covered summits. Thanks to the vision of the Tanganyika Government, the island had been set aside as a game and forest sanctuary and denied to any form of human exploitation.

On it, there live a fair number of bush buck, sitatunga and vervets, as well as herds of wild cattle, the descendants of domestic animals held there as "meat on the hoof" for soldiers during the 1914-1918 war.

Ideally suited for a rhino sanctuary, its lush rain forests could well support up to 100 head, though the Society's target is limited to moving 40, and the absence of any of the cats will ensure complete safety for all its inhabitants.

Much has already been done to protect the black rhino of Africa from complete destruction and, with other species now facing extinction, world effort must of necessity be channelled elsewhere—to such groups as the Asiatic rhino and, possibly, the cheetah.

Thus, if we are to assist in moving the endangered rhino in Northern Tanganyika to the Rubondo sanctuary, we must do so through our own fund-raising efforts. It is towards this end that the East African Wild Life Society's Rubondo Island Rhino Sanctuary Fund has been started.

Thanks, once again, to David Shepherd, we have sufficient funds for our immediate needs and, with almost £1,000 in the Rubondo Project's kitty, we can hope to supply Achard with the money to move all the animals that he and Carr Hartley can catch over the coming six months. But this is only the start of the project and, unless we can keep it moving, every past effort will have proved worthless.

Help came to us from another quarter when the well-known tyre manufacturers, Goodyear (East Africa) Ltd. donated six heavy-duty tyres and a £50 cheque towards the scheme and,

in return, "adopted" a Rubondo rhino.

We have a lot more rhino to move and they are travelling with the blessing of a farsighted Tanganyika Government department. Any oil company who wants its own rhino on Rubondo can have it for, say, 500 gallons of its petrol; and, if there's a motor car company anywhere in the world that would like to donate a catching truck, we'll name five rhino after it!

THE RUBONDO PROJECT is just one of the Society's three main projects for 1964/65. The other two are equally—if not more—important, and cover the field of education on a long term basis, during which we hope to encourage the people of East Africa towards the realisation of both the economic and the aesthetic value of their unique wildlife. The second is a five-year project which aims at enquiring into the reasons for the apparent decline in the cheetah population of East Africa, suggesting and implementing means putting a halt thereto.

This project must of necessity be a slow starter, for the initial step is a collation and analysis of existing information. This cannot be obtained in under six months and, such has been

the paucity of collated material in the past, that this first step must be both lengthy and expensive.

Already, the Society has set aside £1,000 for this initial phase of the operation and placed a contract with a team of expert game surveyors to produce the required information in collated and tabulated form, by April 1965.

Once this report has been received, then only can we attempt an assessment of the problem of cheetah survival. Thus it is that the Society has used its own funds to support this first phase of the five-phase project.

Where then does this all lead us? Perhaps the answer is that the East African Wild Life Society has come of age and, instead of being just a small parochial organisation proud of its bank balance, has become a definite and important factor in the world scheme of practical conservation.

If, as we believe, this is the correct answer, then, as citizens of the world, we seek your support—however great or small—and, with confidence, call on you to assist us by sending donations to the East African Wild Life Society Projects 1964-65—stipulating, if you so wish, which of the three schemes you would wish to give your support.

Latest developments

PETER Achard himself then takes up the story. In a letter to Frank Minot, the Society's Executive Officer, the Senior Game Warden said:

AS YOU KNOW, I asked for help towards rhino crates and a pontoon and was very generously allocated Shs. 7,000/- by your Society. I am afraid negotiations for purchase of the pontoon broke down. The owner, who had indicated that he would accept £250, suddenly decided to charge £500. Of course this was too much and I told him that we were no longer interested.

In actual fact, this has proved a blessing in disguise as the Ministry of Works Regional Engineer, at Mwanza, has come to the rescue and has kindly offered the use of a large car-ferry, capable of carrying four crated rhinos at a time.

The hire and cost of this ferry will be fairly nominal, I think, and I have hopes that it will not amount to much more than the cost of the diesel used and the crew salaries. On the strength of the offer of the car ferry, I have decided to concentrate on crates and have ordered two at approximately £150 each. With these two new crates and the two which I already have, I can now proceed to ship our rhinos to Rubondo, in groups of four at a time.

YOU WILL RECALL inspecting two cows at Kirawira camp. The arrow wound in the young cow's neck became progressively worse; so we finally decided to rope her again and let Mr. McCulloch, the Veterinary Research Officer, Mwanza, operate on her. He found that the arrow head had penetrated to a depth of about four inches in a downward direction, where it had broken off and had set up a large pocket of infection, which could not drain.

This necessitated a long incision downwards and although the wound looks pretty formidable now, at least it is clean and will heal. I will not be able to release this cow until the wound has healed, so have constructed a cement-floored stable in Mwanza where she will be kept for the next three or four months until she is completely fit.

I intended bringing the other large, pregnant cow into Mwanza within the next week and she, too, will be kept in a boma until I have a consignment of four rhinos for Rubondo.

At the beginning of October, catching operations were moved to Tarime district. The sorry decline in rhino numbers there over the past few years is appalling and would sound a complete sob story if seen in print. But I assure you it is perfectly true. I have never seen such frightened rhino, as those at Tarime. They have only to hear a vehicle or scent a man in order to rush madly for the nearest cover. One cow—which we have attempted to catch, without success, to date—carries a wound in her shoulder into which you could push a clenched fist and which, I am convinced, must have been caused by either an arrow or spear.

To date, at Tarime, we have managed to capture six animals and intend to continue until the rains break. The holding bomas are sited on a hillside and so will remain firm and dry. Evacuation and translocation to Rubondo will commence just as soon as our next crate is ready. ☉