

Game Notes From Yei and Moru Districts

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Having spent a considerable time during 1950-51 walking through the Yei and Moru Districts, I thought that it might be of interest to readers to make a summary of the game which can be found. Needless to say, anyone wishing to see most of the game will have to walk as one will observe little, if any, by driving along the main roads. This is because the native population living alongside the roads disturbs the game which tend to seek quieter pastures, mainly near the more inaccessible rivers. During the long grass season (April-November) the game is spread out over a wide area as water is generally plentiful. At that time of the year the grass is almost impenetrable and reaches to a height of four metres, and only the most foolhardy would hunt buffalo under these conditions; the smaller game remains hidden from view. The best time for visiting any of the areas is from December to March when most of the grass has been burnt. The game is then concentrated along the rivers where both grass and water remain fairly plentiful throughout the year.

The main varieties of game to be found and their favourite concentration areas are shewn on the map. As will be seen, the majority of the buffalo and elephant, as well as the white rhino, are concentrated in Yei District, while the smaller varieties are to be found in Moru District. This distribution appears to be related to the ecology of the areas, thus while the elephant and rhino are concentrated in the wetter areas, the smaller game is found where it is drier. Buffalo are found in considerable numbers in both districts, and their presence or absence is governed by water and grazing.

Elephant (Loxodonta africana)

Arabic :—

Fil

Moru :—

Liwa

Kakwa :—

Tome

Avakaya :—

Njiju

The elephants are largely confined to Yei District except for a herd near Jebel Luli, and some near Maridi. They are generally found in large breeding herds, most of the ivory being small; there are however, a few bulls carrying big tusks, these are usually found in the vicinity of the breeding herds but seldom in them, and are very elusive. The long grassed and thickly forested, uninhabited areas in southern Yei district provide elephants with an ideal habitat as there is adequate food and shelter. There is a sizable herd in the Nimule Game Reserve and there are reputed to be quite a number in the hills along the Nile near Kajo Kaji. I have seen two pairs of tusks weighing about 65 rotls each which were killed by the chief in this area, but large tuskers are rarely met with. West of Kajo Kaji the main elephant area is in the valley of the K. Kijo and near the foot of J. Maia. There are numerous elephant migratory tracks in this area, and the herds frequently pass to and fro between the Sudan and the Moyo area of Uganda. They seldom go further North than J. Maia, though they have been reported between the Juba road and the Kajo Kaji road. Their tracks are to be found all along the watershed between K. Kijo and the Bala Hills. When I passed through in September, 1950, there had been a mass exodus of elephant to Uganda; the numerous signs of elephant were about two weeks old, all pointing to the south. Just south of the Bala hills, on the K. Kinda there are elephant, consisting largely of breeding herds I believe, but the area was impenetrable in October, and I had no opportunity to hunt them. In the Bala hills there are some deep, heavily forested and secluded valleys, and as hardly anyone ever hunts there (according to local information,) there may be some big tuskers. West of Bala hills, on the Aloma plateau there are elephant, but as far as I can ascertain they are mainly small forest elephant which ply between the Congo and the Sudan. I am told that just west of Yei-Aba road, among some small hills (one of which is known as J. Ambi) there are some elephant carrying large ivory, but I cannot vouchsafe for this as I have never visited this particular area. Between sixteen and twenty miles north west of Yei, there is a very large breeding herd which probably wanders between the Yei and Tori rivers.

I have never trekked anywhere near the Yei—Maridi Road, but Lt. Col. A. Forbes, in notes on his southern tour (Game Dept. News Letter, September, 1948, p.10) says that the Mundu area was frequented by an enormous herd - it literally stretched for miles..... There were far too many to count." North of Yei on the east bank, near J. Dimo (a delightful place to stay, with a magnificent view, but beastly hunting in October) is another large breeding herd. I looked over this herd, but they were all young breeding bulls accompanied by many cows with calves at foot. They visit the J. Dimo on alternate days, and then return to the Yei river. I am told by a number of people that there are many elephant between J. Gumbiri and the R. Bibi. I was never fortunate enough to visit this area, but Mr.

R. Smith, (recently in the M.T.D.) tells me that there are some good tuskers here. Further west, nearer the Yei river I only came across one seldom used migratory track, but without any signs of fresh tracks in the vicinity. North of the R. Bibi the best place for elephant is in the western foothills of the J. Luli (Juba District). This is a delightful place to visit, and is situated close to the Yei—Amadi road). The hills are difficult to cross with porters, but there is a small pass near the northern end which provides an easy entrance. In other parts of Moru district I understand that there are some large tuskers. They are few and far between, and obviously come up from the Nile about November. To sum up I should say that anyone wishing to hunt elephant in any of the above areas would best try the valley of the K. Kijo between September and January; north of J. Gumbiri may be hunted throughout the year.

Buffalo (Syncerus caffer)

Arabic :—	Gamoos	Moru :—	Udra
Kakwa :—	Mekorr	Avakaya :—	Duru

The buffaloes in Yei and Moru districts are very widespread and there are a great number of them. Although isolated bulls are often found raiding crops, the buffalo are more likely to be found in large herds. During the rainy season they are normally found on higher ground, usually on laterite ridges which have a canopy of *Isoberlinia* overhead, and comparatively short grass underneath.

These provide sheltered and dry lying up places which are nevertheless in close proximity to ample water and grazing. In the dry season they frequent valleys and rivers. In Yei district they are to be found in almost identical areas to those of the elephant, but they may be frequently found living near habitations. There are buffalo in the valleys of the Aloma plateau, and what information I can gather, suggests they seem to be of the red forest variety, but I have never seen them, since they live in the dense thickets and forest in the valleys and are very difficult to hunt. In Moru district buffalo are far more numerous than elephant and are to be found in all parts where there is water, especially just west of Amadi and in the vicinity of Mvolo. The Mvolo buffaloes are comparatively tame and are exceptionally easy to hunt. Between Mvolo and Ngwadi buffaloes are, for some reason, very scarce, and it is not until the thicker bush is reached near the Amadi-Meridi road that one again meets with considerable numbers, but here the long grass and thick bush makes difficult hunting, even in the dry season. In the *Isoberlinia* areas, the buffaloes frequent the *Isoberlinia* glades where hunting is made very easy as the grass is invariably short and the large red termitaries provide excellent stalking cover. It was observed that the tsetse fly, *Glossina morsitans* was always found in great numbers where buffalo were in the habit of remaining for long periods.

White Rhinoceros (Rhinoceros simus).

Arabic :—	<i>Abu Garn</i>	Moru :—	<i>Kingile</i>
Kakwa :—	<i>Igig</i>	Avakaya :—	<i>Kingile</i>

Except for one set of tracks near J. Luli I know of no other place in Moru District where these may be found. Their distribution in Yei district is more widespread : they are found in the Nimule Game Reserve, and in the Nile Corridor ; though I have never actually seen rhino in the Kijo valley, there are numerous visible traces of their existence ; they have also been reported from the Aloma plateau, (and are also to be found on both sides of the Yei-Meridi road particularly north of Lantito). They are usually to be found in ones and twos, and with the exception of a few individuals in the Kijo valley-which are reputed to have lost their docile nature, are quite safe to approach. In my opinion there are not more than 4-500, all told, in Yei district. They frequent the small drainage lines on the ridges, and the larger valleys where there is usually tall *Pennesetum* grass growing.

Hartebeeste (Alcelaphus lelwel) :—

Arabic :—	<i>Tetal</i>	Moru :—	<i>Loba</i>
Kakwa :—	<i>Wari</i>	Avakaya :—	<i>Loba</i>

The hartebeeste are almost, if not completely, independent of water, and include leaves in their diet. They are found in areas far from the usual haunts of buffalo in the dry season. They are seldom seen in the wetter parts of Yei District except in the *Isoberlinia* glades—where I have seen them eating the young leaves. Their tracks, if present, are almost certainly to be found around the termite mounds. Further north, in Moru district, they are very common, especially in the laterite areas which have a good stand of young *Combretum*. They are usually found in parties consisting of one or two bulls and several cows accompanied by young. I think most of the young are dropped towards the end of the rains, and one should exercise particular care in selecting a bull at this time. Between Amadi and Mvolo, I have, on no less than seven occasions, seen a herd from the truck. They are exceptionally common between Mvolo and Ngwadi.

Giant Eland (Taurotragus derbianus gigas).

Arabic :—	<i>Buga</i>	Moru :—	<i>Bwagba</i>
Kakwa :—	<i>Bolo</i>	Avakaya :—	<i>Bwagba</i>

This magnificent animal is to be found in similar areas to the hartebeeste, but, unfortunately, is much scarcer. They are mainly browsers ; I do not know if they are independent of water, but one can assume from their distribution that they do not have to rely on it to a great deal. They are usually to be found in those areas where *Combretum* predominates. From the tracks I have seen, and from all the information I could gather, it is apparent that in Moru district they usually wander about alone or in pairs, but T. R. H. Owen, (S.W.L.S. Dec. 1950, p.24), records seeing twenty or more in a herd. Is this because they are being killed off by the Moru ? Mr. Owen also records that they seem particularly fond of the wild *Gardenia*, these together with other shrubs, and leaves from the bigger trees must form a large part of their diet, and is probably the reason why some of the young eland collected and brought in to the Khartoum Zoo die as they are unable to get the right kind of diet which is essential to their well being.

In Yei District they have been recorded from south of the Bala Hills by Mr. T. Dow of the Forest Department, who also reports seeing them near the confluence of the R. Bibi and the River Yei. They have been recorded from J. Malwala (Juba District). In Moru District a few are reported from a point about twenty-five miles North East of Amadi. I was fortunate enough to see one cross the Amadi-Mvolo Road, 22 miles from Mundiri. Since they are reported from similar areas further West it is probable that they are sparse but fairly widespread throughout this region.

NOTE : Lt. Col. Molloy suggests small parties of 5/10 are more common and that they are always to be found nearer the remoter water holes in a dry summer so are probably dependent on water.

Waterbuck (Kobus defassa).

Arabic :—	Katambur	Moru :—	Le'bi
Kakwa :—	Bwaboot	Avakaya :—	Le'bi

These are always found near water, and especially favour areas where there is one of the *Acacias*. They are common in both areas, but are difficult to find when the grass is long. I have never failed to see them near Mvolo, and between Mvolo and Ngwadi they are especially common. They are to be found in small family parties of up to about 12 animals, although occasionally one sees stag parties of six or seven young bulls. They are tame, and generally inquisitive, and one can easily approach them.

Bush-buck (Tragelaphus scriptus).

Arabic :—	Abu Nabah	Moru :—	Lela
Kakwa :—	Kabor	Avakaya :—	Lela

Common throughout Yei and Moru districts along the main rivers, they are usually found in pairs, or one or two with half grown young. These beautiful animals are nearly always found in the thicker bushed parts along the rivers but further inland provided there is sufficient cover. Their sudden loud bark and scurry in long grass can be disconcerting particularly as it usually comes unheralded from very close quarters. They are essentially thicket and forest loving animals and browse rather than graze.

*Kob (Adenota kob).*¹

Two lone males were seen on the R. Naam, about twenty-five miles south of Mvolo ; since they are a plain frequenting species which are found in large number of the "toiches" of Rumbek and Yirol, it is probable that they are limited to "toich grazing." They are also found just north of Amadi in the "toiches" of the Yei river and in the government garden at Kajo Kaji.

Giraffe (Giraffa camelopardalis).

Arabic :—	<i>Zaraf</i>	Moru :—	<i>Kirre</i>
Kakwa :—	<i>Kure</i>	Avakaya :—	<i>Ma nyara</i>

There is a small herd on the Yei-Juba border and perhaps a few others. They are not very common in Moru District although I have heard of them being reported from near Jambo's, and in the area just North of Amadi and have seen fresh tracks near Ngwadi. Since giraffe normally prefer the more open type of bush with Acacia it is apparent that the few specimens which are occasionally reported are visitors from the Lakes District, or the Nile valley.

Wild Pig (Potamochoerus porcus) Bush Pig

Arabic :—	<i>Haloof</i>	Moru :—	<i>Raballe</i>
Kakwa :—	<i>Wiri</i>	Avakaya :—	<i>Gizi</i>

Very few of these have been seen, but their tracks are numerous especially on the R. Naam. They are found in close vicinity of forest thicket and water. They live mainly on roots, and wreck havoc with the sweet potato and cassava crops. They are usually to be found in sounders of up to about twelve or fifteen animals including young.

Wart-Hog (Phacochoerus africanus)

Never found in forest but lies up occasionally in thicket. It frequents open glades and lives on roots and green grass. Its droppings can sometimes be mistaken by the uninitiated for donkeys or zebras.

Giant Forest Hog (Hylochoerus sp. meinertz hageni).

This has not so far been recorded from either district though may easily be present in the gallery forests of the Nile Congo divide, south of Meridi. This animal is a forest loving species and the Aloma plateau provides ideal conditions. In Uganda the tsetse fly, *Glossina fuscipennis* has always been found in association with the Giant Forest Hog. *G. fuscipennis* was collected from the Aloma plateau in 1939 by N. Weber, and recorded by Dr. J. G. Myers. If the relationship between *G. fuscipennis* and the Giant Forest Hog is a specific one, then we have good chance of finding it on the Aloma plateau.

Hippopotamus (Hippopotamus amphibius).

Arabic :—	Girinti	Moru :—	Arua
Kakwa :—	Yaro	Avakaya :—	Galooba

Found only in the Yei river. There are a few at a point fourteen miles North of Amadi, several between Amadi and Mundiri, and a few other scattered specimens. Towards the Tori River, the local inhabitants tell me that the hippo concentrate in the dry season near a point known as the Duluga Rapids. If this is so, it would be wise to protect them as there are very few hippo on the Yei river, and they are being rapidly killed off by the Moru, one hunter boasting of having thirty six to his credit. None are found more than 15 miles north of Amadi on the Yei River until Lake Nyibor is reached.

Chimpanzees (Pan troglodytes scheveinfurthii).

There is at least one colony on the Aloma plateau, and these animals can occasionally be seen from Mr. Haggard's residence at Iwatoka. So far I have not been lucky enough to see them.

Colobus Monkeys (Kolobus)

Common in the forests of the Aloma plateau, and doubtless in those of Bala Hills. I have recorded them from J. Lanyi, and Mr. Dow records them from Tindalo (Juba District).² This latter record must be one from near their northern limit. When present in these drier areas they tend to live in the Jebels.

Baboons (Papio anubis)

Arabic :—	Tigil	Moru :—	—
Kakwa :—	—	Avakaya :—	—

Common throughout the area, but specially so in the hilly regions. They cause havoc to crops by marauding (See SWLS No. 2.1. P. 31 for a method of extermination).

Rock Hyrax (Procavia sp).

These are especially common on the great stone jebels J. Luli and J. Lanyi.

Leopards (Felis pardus).

Arabic :—	Nimr	Moru :—	Wado
Kakwa :—	Koka	Avakaya :—	Alija

Usually to be found in the hill regions where they prey on the baboons, wild pig, wart hog and rock hyrax. They are a most useful animal and should be protected even though they do kill an odd goat or sheep. There is a particularly beautiful melanistic variety near J. Kala on the Kajo-Kaji road, but I have only seen the skin. They are caught by the natives in "fall traps."

Lion (Felis leo).

Arabic :—	Asad Dud	Moru :—	Ebi
Kakwa :—	Kamiroo	Avakaya :—	Kemi

Lion are found in numbers proportionate to the density of game in an area, with an additional preference for the drier areas. They cause some mild consternation amongst the Moru tribe. I have heard them in several places in both districts, but they have seldom been very common. One night near Ngwadi—where there are supposed to be a great many—a buffalo was killed within a short distance of our camp ; I was trekking with horses at the time and the poor things were terrified by the continual grunting which lasted till about four a.m.

Crocodile (Crocodilus Sp).

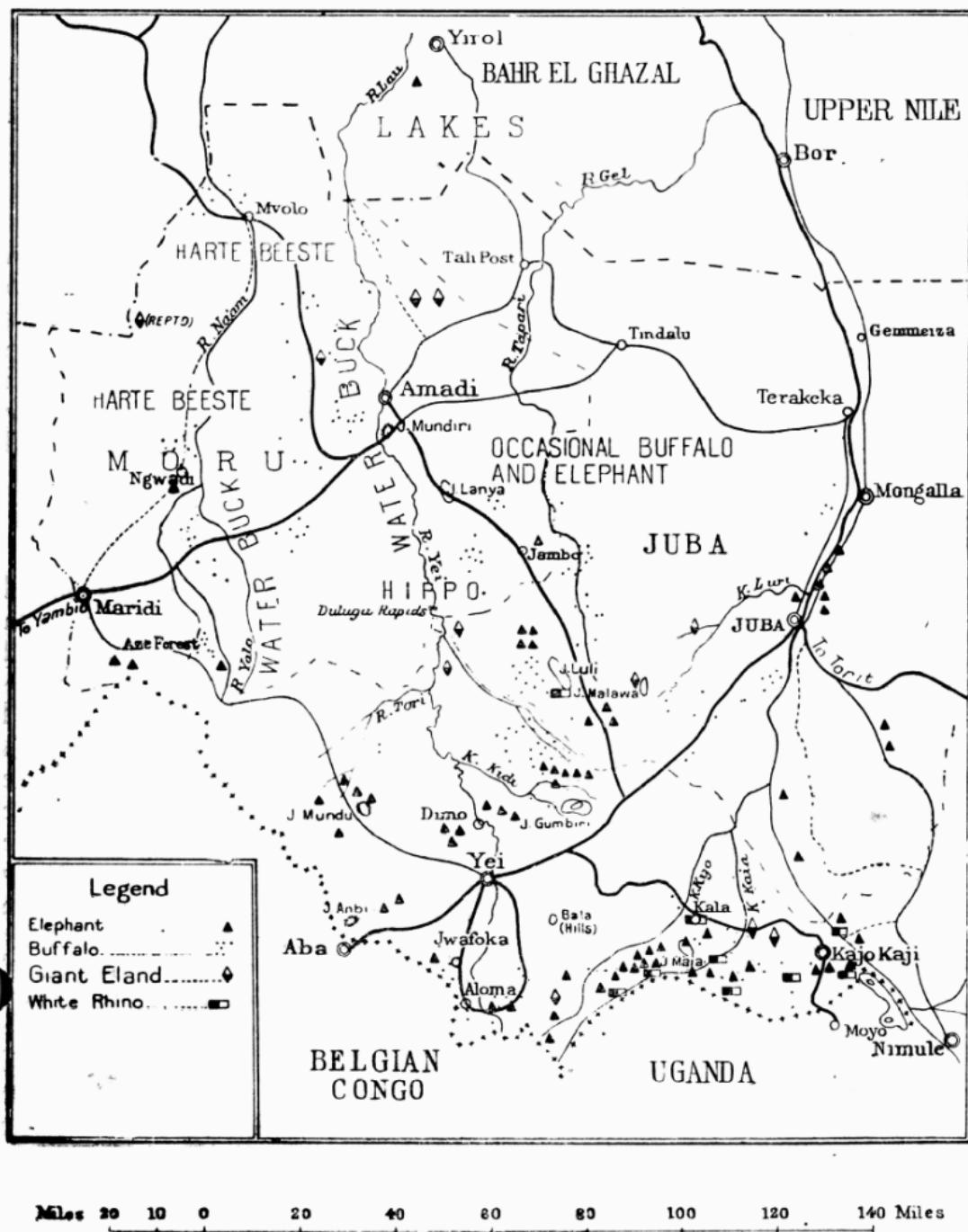
Arabic :—	Timsah	Moru :—	—
Kakwa :—	—	Avakaya :—	—

There are a considerable number on the Yei river. The largest I have seen are eight or nine feet in length and generally they are small ones. Small ones have been seen in the R. Naam, but I never saw any.

Hyenas and Jackals

Arabic :—	Morfain, Bashom	Moru :—	—
Kakwa :—	—	Avakaya	—

DISTRIBUTION OF GAME YEI AND MORU DISTRICTS



I have heard them in most places in both districts, but they are like the lion,—and because of the lion most prevalent in the northern parts of Moru District

Wild Dog (Lycoon pictus.)

I have never seen any of these destructive creatures in Yei or Moru Districts, although we did see some between Tonj and Wau in April.

GENERAL.

As may have been noted, if one wants to hunt small game, then the most suitable place is in Moru District, especially between Mvolo and Ngwadi. For buffalo it matters little, provided one is willing to walk a few hot miles, but for elephant it is essential to confine oneself to Yei district, particularly to the area between Kajo Kaji and the Bala Hills. The latter would be well worth while a visit by anyone with a few days to spare. The area between J. Gumbiri and the Bibi, with any luck should yield a good elephant.

NATIVE HUNTING.

Game is hunted in all districts but some tribes are more addicted to hunting than others. Thus, whilst the Kakwa are mainly pastoral and seldom bother to hunt, the Moru hunt throughout the year and some of them make it their livelihood. Hunting is done mainly with the spear and the bow, but they resort to trapping, using several types of traps. The most important of which include the well known Pit Trap, used against hippo, buffalo, and anything else unfortunate enough to fall into it; and the "Wheel" and "Bow" Traps (The former is mentioned by Lt. Col. Molloy s.w.l.s. July 1951 P.31. The latter was described by J. F. E. Bloss, s.n.r. 1939 as being used by the Dinka). The latter two traps, though dissimilar in design both have the same object in view: that is, that a noose, attached to a heavy pole should be fastened round an animal's leg. In the case of Whee¹ Trap this is done by attaching the noose to a hoop of withy, large enough to admit the foot of the animal, and having pointed spikes pointing inwards, this is placed over a hole into which the animal steps. The spikes together with the noose become attached to the animal's leg and the noose is pulled tight. The spikes do very little hurt to the animal as they are very soon broken off. The Bow Trap is designed so that a stick inserted between thick twisted buffalos hide, stretched between the ends of a heavy bow, should pull the noose tight on its release. In both cases the noose is placed over a hole, and the size and placing of the hole help determine the animal which is to be caught. Both Dr. Bloss, and Col. Molloy mention that the

animal's leg is broken when the noose is tightened or when the animal struggles with the noose round its leg; in my opinion it would be extremely unlikely that this would happen unless a trap set for a buffalo should happen to catch an animal the size of a duiker: the whole principle of the trap is that the heavy pole which is attached to the leg of the animal should so tire the animal out, and leave such a distinct trail, that the animal becomes easy prey for the hunter.

The Vernacular names given for some of the animals are generally understood, though occasionally some tribes have a specific local name. Usually, however, it will be found that the southern Arabic word is most widely understood. Any further information and corrections of the above would be most useful.

1. Probably *A. kob aleurae* or possibly *A. k. thomasi*.
2. Colobus are common in the forests among the hills of the Ethiopian border up to Blue Nile Province. *Ed.*