In memory of Ian Robert Grimwood and David Leslie William Sheldrick and in salute to all those who accompanied Fraser Darling in his African travels

Fraser Darling in Africa

A Rhino in the Whistling Thorn

edited and presented by
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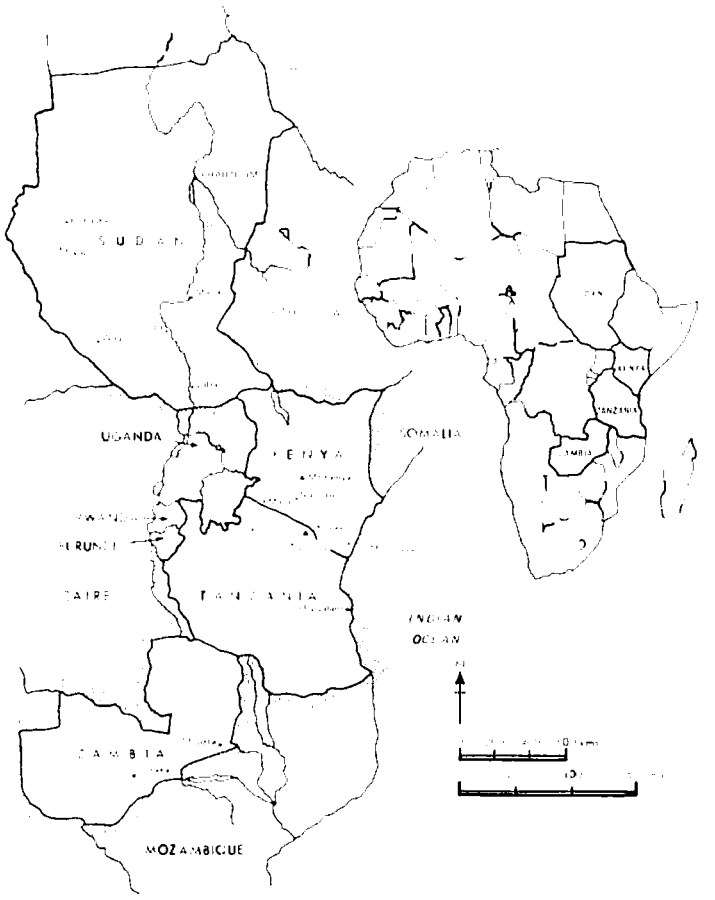


Map 1: Zambia (Northern Rhodesia), Tanzania (Tanganyika), Kenya (Kenya Colony) and Sudan: the African countries visited by Fraser Darling between 1956 and 1961

Contents

their heads are really a help in keeping them low on the bottom. They go further upstream and come across diagonally and have a rather better crossing than we have had. One of them dances over like a ballet dancer and I marvel at him. Eustace says if you can do it it is the best way. Watching him follow it looked so easy. Once the carriers are over they are so delighted they begin to play like little boys, going into the water again and swimming and fooling, playing ducks and drakes with pebbles from the shingle. They are happy and apart from casualties in much better condition than when we left Mpika. Eustace told his majordomo this morning to recruit another carrier from the last village we passed, as the old boy with the swollen foot would be unable to carry. I was so relieved at this decision. When the ivory comes over the river the carrier recruited to carry one of the tusks for the next stage starts complaining that he doesn't want to go. The corvee and the pressgang is not allowed; the carrier is still complaining tonight and crying, but Eustace tells him through his majordomo interpreter that he will carry to Mpika or get no wages for the day he has already put in. I think the gentlemen will probably run away in the night. One of the carriers bought a young bitch from one of the villages on the Muntamadzi and had it tied to a stick with bark string. (Many of the loads are tied with this, the carriers making it themselves.) The young bitch is one of these tan coloured, smooth coated dogs of Africa, rather attractive and intelligent. Well, the more this young bitch looked at the river and saw the others crossing, the less she liked it and managed to escape, string and stick and all. Carriers on both sides had a good laugh over the 60 yards of river, and you could hear the fellow dashing through the long grass after his dog. He caught her because the stick snagged on something, and she was brought across, struggling at first, then quiet and observant, and finally of course she was in the water and she swam hard alongside the carrier. She seemed as pleased with herself as everybody else once she was on dry land. This is our final crossing and much to Eustace's surprise and relief, we have lost no gear.

Eustace, the young Chief [Sandiford], a Game Guard trainee [Diamon] (the one who dived into a tree when we met the rhinoceros, but who is a good willing boy) and I now left the *ideudo* to go ahead to Chimbwe stream near Kapatamoyo's village and make camp, and went back into the hills over a stretch of flat forest. We got into the Luchenene drainage; this river is fast and noisy and comes down the Muchinga Escarpment in a fine white cataract, then through a fine wide glen and ultimately across a plain into the Munyamadzi. We walked for almost six hours over these pebbly hills and through the thickets of long grass. The pebbles are water worn quartzite varying in size from an egg to one's head. Travel over them at fair speed is hard going. Today we had torrential rain for a couple of hours and the hills ran water. The complete wetting through with such thunder rain is a little chilling, but when it stops most of the discomfort is at an end.

(We came to a high scarp overlooking the Luchenene whose swollen, turgid stream swept towards us round the broad bend. The view was lovely. Beyond the river the landscape is broken by a mass of tree-covered hills, which increased in height as the valley tilted towards the steep slopes of the Escarpment. The range, roughly lying

south-south-west-by-west, through fragments of steamy cloud often rolled by rain [illegible] ahead of us were the spectacular [illegible] of the Muchinga Escarpment. Here and there rock face high up the face of the Escarpment. This is the Luchenene tumbling into the valley from the plateau. Curtains of rain were falling close to the face but as we watched, the rain, partly obscuring the cascade, stopped. At the same time a rent in the clouds allowed a shaft of sunlight to illuminate the tumbling torrent.

We followed a new elephant spoor and eventually came up with it. Eustace and I went to within 20 yards and the old boy never knew we were there, the wind being right. Oh, how beautiful their movement is in this environment! We saw two more big tuskers down in a grass flat on the Luchenene but on the wrong side of the river. In any case, the grass there would have been too long and dense to stalk elephants in safety. We got on to an elephant path for 200 yards or so – a much better going – but suddenly the young Chief stopped. A rhinoceros was walking along the path towards us. He kept on walking and we deferred by walking into the bush again. We came on another rhinoceros which had just finished its bath in a wallow of creamy mud. It was a big beast, now flapping his ears about and rubbing his great long face against a sapling. I had a nice long look at 50 yards range. He had a double wallow, side by side, each rectangular – one in use today and the other not. Eustace would like another buffalo for the *ideudo* and we spoored one for a mile till we reckoned we were only two hundred yards from him. Then the rain came plump and destroyed the spoor very quickly, so the rain saved that old solitary bull buffalo. We got back to camp at 2.30 p.m., the *ideudo* having come six miles and set up camp again while we were doing our long trek. No sun at all this afternoon and everything is dripping wet, so Eustace and I are calling it a day. The sick parade came early and did not take us very long. The old boy's foot is bigger than ever and it is obvious now there is an abscess. We have made a magnesium sulphate compress and hope it will draw it.

Forgot to say we saw a herd of 12 or 13 Lichtenstein's hartebeeste at close quarters today. They crossed an elephant path in front of us and we had managed to stop and crouch down before they saw us. They are rangey angular antelope with high withers, chestnut in colour like so many others here. (It is unusual to see even as many as eleven of the animals together in the low-veld country where it is unlikely they have ever been plentiful. . . .)

19 March 1950

It rained torrentially all night and still going hard when we rose at 6 a.m. We took our early morning tea at some leisure and as it did not seem that it would let up, Eustace went to get the boys moving. Half an hour later they were still under their tarpaulin shelters. Dabster, the majordomo, said he couldn't get them out from under the tents. 'What' roared Eustace, 'then pull the tents off them and then they will be out.' This had the desired effect and once they were on their feet the carriers were quite all right. The tents weighed terribly heavy being so wet. But we got under way in the heavy rain by 8.45 o'clock. We waded knee deep mile after mile, and had a few streams in spate to cross. These took us up to our middle and the strong current was rolling

making land. They are getting the poachers coming on the run that some of the worst of them are coming in and surrendering to David. He then takes them on as trackers and intelligence men and has found them very useful. David keeps a careful dossier of everyone caught and makes up family trees and relationships as far as possible, so that he has good notions where trouble comes from when he finds it. David has two young white men as assistants – lieutenants so to speak – as hard as nails. One of them has won the Military Cross during the Mau-Mau fighting. David and the Fighting Force were able to go straight into action in the Mau-Mau emergency and have been much appreciated. I suspect that the excellent service of the Force has stayed any questioning of the legality of the private army of Mervyn's. Mervyn is most concerned with breaking the trade in illicit ivory and rhino horn, and will deal with constitutional quibbles when he has to. Anyway, they are brave men, because the poachers fight and sometimes with the poisoned arrows. You will not be surprised to hear that David's wife has left him – nothing to do down there and David so much in the bush – but Mervyn says she was always a bonehead and not fit for a man of David's calibre.

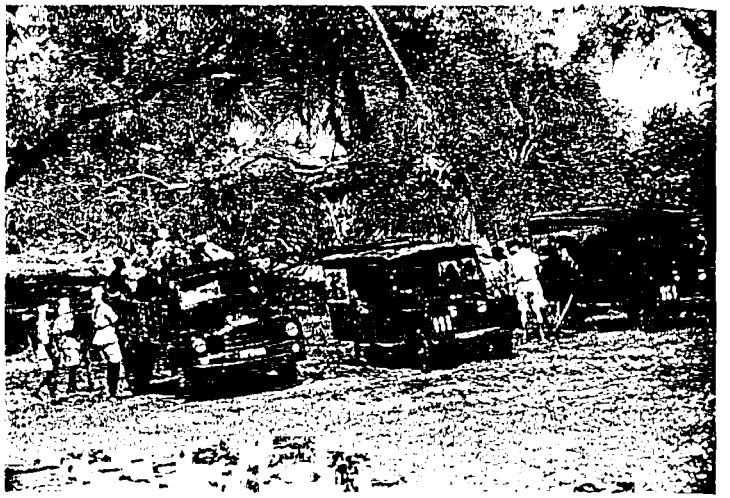
21 August 1950

We set off this morning for a remote part of the Tsavo Park. All this southern end is arid, and is in effect bushed desert. The last rains missed it altogether. Waterholes are very scarce indeed. We were heading for Tundani Rock on the Tiva River. We passed through the Gullana area and crossed the Athie River at the Lugard Falls. The water was running here, and there were Egyptian geese and goslings, and waders – all very refreshing after the desert. We then crossed the Yalta escarpment, a volcanic ridge, and continued through waterless country of low bush, much knocked about by the elephants. We saw a good many elephants from time to time, and rhinos as well. Once a mother rhino with a calf charged the Land Rover and I hope I got a photo, but David was stepping on the accelerator. We passed several giraffes in the course of the 100 mile journey through the bush, as well as kongoni (hartebeeste) and impala. I was particularly interested to see the gerenuk several times, a small, extremely slim and lissom antelope with a very long neck. It is able to balance on its back legs and nibble from the upper branches of bushes.

The Tiva River was dry and just a sand bed and as we came to it I saw a lion, a young male, lying under the bank in the shade. He got up in a hurry and climbed up the bank into some low palmetto. We also crossed the river in the Land Rover and found a way up the bank and into the palmetto, which was just below the Tundani Rock. 'Do you think that lion would stop here or keep going?' I asked David. 'I think he is far away by now,' he said, though my own guess was that he would have stopped just in the palmetto, not being used to our kind of disturbance. Anyway, I got out of the Land Rover, and my question had nothing to do with leaving the car. But as I stepped down the lion stepped up about five yards from me and this time he took to his heels in earnest. We saw no more of him, nor did we hear of him in the night. The Tundani Rock is a sugar-loaf of metamorphosed gneiss about fifty feet high and the

Elephants wallowing amid the woodland they have helped to devastate at Buffalo wallows in the Tsavo (East) National Park in 1950. Visited by Fraser Darling on 21 August 1950. (Photo: J.M. Boyd)

river bed bends in to the foot of the rock. The rock and river bed structure are such that when the river is dry, water is to be found about four feet below the sand at the foot of the rock. The whole area is so arid that this point becomes the waterhole for large numbers of elephants and rhinoceroses. The elephants dig in the sand, first with their feet and then more carefully with their trunk. When you examine these holes afterwards, you see a smaller hole either side of the funnel, made by the tusks. The rhinoceros takes an elephant hole and pushes his great nose into it, scooping the upper part of the funnel away. He leaves the hole in an untidy state and you can see the central groove in the sand which his horn occupies as he drinks. It obviously takes a long time for elephant and rhinoceros to water at such small areas of seepage, no bigger than their mouths or the tip of the trunk. We slept on top of the rock, but before we had gone to bed at 10 o'clock, a rhinoceros and her calf (toto) were drinking at one hole. David woke us at 1.30 a.m. to say things were in full going order. Apparently the place is used much more at full moon, which it was tonight, perhaps because the animals can see better whether there are any prowlers. A good deal of grunting and crying was going on as we crept down the rock to the edge of the river bank where we were able to sit down and watch and listen to everything at close quarters. There were ten rhinoceroses in all and about fifty elephants. The noise all came from the rhinoceroses, and all because they were quarrelling about the waterhole. One would be in with his behind in the air, another would come along and want to



The Tiva River party having a lunch break at Lugard's Falls on 21 August 1950. David Sheldrick (right) in discussion with staff.

On 21 August 1950 – I was particularly interested to see the gerenuk ... a small extremely slim and lissom antelope with a very long neck. (Photo: J.M. Boyd)

... and the one in would be ahead. Best he should be caught at a drinking intake. Then there would be a ... fighting match. At one point there were four ... at the hole and there was ... ng for fear of being buffeted. Those with calves were ... particularly bothered. Snorts, blasts, cries and roars came up all the time. Mervyn had brought his tape recorder and got a wonderful record. The elephants were quiet and orderly, carefully making their holes and then going to them in order. We saw no attempts to grab waterholes or push in before someone else. One of the elephants was just a little tiny toto and I heard it making little squeaks sometimes. It suckled its mother with its little trunk. We gave up about 5.30 a.m. and went back to bed. We woke at 6 o'clock to find all the animals moving away in rather a hurry. With the coming of the light the wind had done a bit of a change and our scent had carried to the animals. The little toto elephant was still in the river bed, standing alone and seemingly unconcerned. The herd of elephants was now 200 yards away, when one broke away; it was the mother of the toto, terribly upset. Back she came all that possibly dangerous way at the trot and her ears fanned out. The tiny elephant ran towards her as he saw her and she put her trunk round him in a flurry of concern and consternation. Then away to the herd, the little one going as fast as his little legs would carry him. What a state she must have been in when she discovered toto wasn't with the herd! By now the birds had begun calling and as the last of the rhinos went away the birds came over to the waterholes made by the elephants. Flocks of the little doves flew down, the guinea fowls and the francolins scampered over, and all was a new activity. How important the elephant is in this country! He makes it possible for all these birds to drink. When we went down to the river bed to see the holes and read the signs on the sand we saw the doves coming out of the funnels. The action of the elephant in breaking down the thorn bush also keeps open the whole countryside for a variety of grazing and browsing game. Without the elephant this area would just become impenetrable thorn scrub with no grass. I am never tired of watching these great beasts; even when they are doing nothing the movements of ears and trunk are delightful to watch. The elephants here are red in colour as a result of dusting in the bright red earth.

We made our way back in a leisurely sort of way, going by roundabout routes. Always the aridity and the elephants hitting the scrub hard. The two small rivers in the area were used by all the game and the country alongside the rivers ... away from the actual riverine vegetation, was utterly beaten up. The game trails were only a few yards apart. We saw lots more elephants, rhinos, kongoni, impala, and some gerenuk, and I saw my first oryx.

I forgot to say that David Sheldrick found two tiny baby elephants in the bush two years ago. By some accident they were abandoned and were in starving condition. He brought them back in his Land Rover (a few weeks between each incident) and set to to rear them. In this he has succeeded and they are now two years old, a male and a female. A lion nearly got the female last year and again David dressed the wounds assiduously, getting penicillin and sulphonamide injections for her. The male tended

rear them before they realised we were there. The Land Rover moved slowly; today I chose a rather windy spot for a safe in a glade of riverine forest. Very nice with an outlook westward to the Sirua Escarpment 30 miles away.

1 October 1958

A great day. We set forth early to the east in the direction of the highest hill surrounding the saucer of the Mara, called Kuka. This meant going up through bush country almost all the time and sometimes we had to pass through areas of dense *mathi-hi* bush on the quartzite or mica schist all the time. We stopped at a salt lick of considerable size, with water in the bottom. David says it is one particularly liked by buffalo. I took a soil sample which I hope may be analysed at Maguga. We were seeing zebra all the time, a few kongoni, an occasional topi, and frequent impala. A herd of a dozen eland were near the buffalo wallow, and a little way off we found three buffalo at the edge of dense bush. We also saw occasional single giraffes, and the little dik-dik antelopes which are scarcely larger than a hare. Their habitat is in general the close bush and one rarely sees them more than a few yards from the edge of it. Water holes appeared here and there, and if we had not come upon them the presence of a few waterbuck would have told us water was not far away. The waterbuck here are browner than in Northern Rhodesia. David is very clever with the Land Rover, which he got to the foot of the hill we were going to climb. We had had a little difficulty finding a place to cross the deep channel of the Sand River. It was indeed just a bed of sand now. But we had four askaris aboard who dug a path down and going along the sandy bed for a while we found a bank the Land Rover could climb. David's veteran askaris were armed and so was David, because the last Mau-Mau gang in Kenya have taken refuge in this country and on this hill in particular. Three months ago the gangleader released a prisoner and told him to go to the District Commissioner in Tanganyika and say that he, the gangleader, was on Kuka, and if the D.C. wanted him he could come and try to find him. The prisoner's wrists were tied with wire and had been for a long time, for the wire had cut into the flesh, which had actually grown round the wire.

We climbed steeply through dense bush in what was more or less a gully, then to more open bush with grass and trees and finally to the ridge which was savannah as a result of constant burning. There were fires going even as we were there. What a wonderful country was before our gaze! To the south and east there seemed an endless array of hills and wide valleys, savannah and forest. Here on the ridge in the immediate foreground were Nandi flame trees in their brilliant scarlet blossom against a very blue sky. There was also a shrub in pinky white blossom that smelled as rich as a gardenia. We walked along the ridge for a mile or two to the highest point, 7,148 feet, from where the hill fell away steeply. The Trigonometrical Survey had set a concrete stake at the summit and on one side of it was pencilled K M Mgundi 18 9 58. David thinks this is a bit of bravado by the gang leader, who was evidently around a fortnight ago. However, we saw nothing of him or his men, and if they saw us they would be only too anxious to keep out of the way.

On the way to and from the summit, where we saw several zebra, we saw 3 and 2 Chandler's or mountain reedbuck and one oribi. From the actual summit we saw a pair of klipspringer on some rocks 200 yards away.

Kuka is actually in Tanganyika but the boundary is a silly one anyway. Coming off the hill we made northwestwards more or less along the border. We were now into excellent bush and the grass looked greener. The ground would still be called hilly rather than plains, and there were no great expanses of grass. Yet here were lots of wildebeeste in country we would not find them 25 miles north and east. We think they are slowly migrating in a southwesterly direction. We have seen the wildebeeste grow fewer on the plains even in the week we have been here. A little later we came upon the main herd of buffalo that live in the Mara; it was quite wonderful to see one of these great black creatures moving across a thinly bushed area. There were lots of small calves among them. The whole bush was dense with game of all the kinds here except elephant. The Mara elephants are all down near the Mara River, in the residual riverine forest I have mentioned. Coming out of this heavily game-populated bush and working northeastwards we were soon conscious of diminution of numbers. Then we struck back east and southeast again, east of Kuka into pretty heavy bush where we saw only kongoni and one bushbuck. We also saw one male rhinoceros who seemed intensely surprised and a little worried at seeing us. It was just on dark when we reached home after having reached the Sand River again. (90 miles.)

2 October 1958

Out for a round on the plains this morning and to look at the north-east. Soon after leaving camp we came on a pack of wild dogs, eight in all. They were remarkably tame and ultimately allowed us to 25 yards in the Land Rover. I hope I have good photographs. They live on gazelles and impala by hunting as a pack. We crossed the Telek and made for a hill in the middle of the plains called Oldongo Lorup. It is not very high but as I had judged it to be bush-covered I wanted to see how it compared with the hills surrounding the saucer. I found the hill to be volcanic lava, dry and devoid of game. Bush was thin except on the cone and there fire at some time had removed all vegetation. The meaning of the Masai name is 'Hill of shade'. The cone was evidently the wet season retreat of a rhino; midden, lying place, little corridors and all complete. Bird song here was noticeable. Northwards again then over laval plains of great extent. These empty dry plains seem to be a bar to the tsetse, and after a few miles we came on great herds of Masai cattle. We spoke with a group of Masai men sitting under a tree; the Headman rose and spoke through one of David's Samburu Scouts, the others curled up on the ground and drew their blankets over their heads. The Headman had beautiful ear ornaments of bead and brass, also a number of rings on his fingers, spear in hand, knife at belt, and plenty of red ochre. He spoke forthrightly and with dignity, but it was also apparent that he was suspicious, giving away no details of fly boundaries and saying that now the Masai cattle go anywhere in Masai country. The fact that they don't made no difference to him. The suspicion

attraction for them there is nothing to spend it on. The coming of the white man has brought relative peace, though they still make cattle raids on other tribes so their warrior class is now merely ornamental, and the Veterinary Department inoculates against one thing or another so that the cattle do not die in the numbers they did. Obviously the British statement of policy should be: No selling of cattle, no inoculations. But the Administration is too timid and silly.

We saw 31 lions today – 15, 12, 3 and 1. The big price of lionesses and young ones was really hardsome.

13 October 1958

Over the horse plains to Eglilok, as far as the Telek River again, counting all the wildebeeste. Heavy thunderstorm last night but as our camp is inside the bit of riverine forest the soil is highly absorbent and we are in no trouble. The black cotton soil of the plains gets gummy and greasy with the rain and our river crossings are getting a bit more difficult. We had a long day at the counting and over the same ground as October 7 and found 2,500 so they are definitely coming in. Rather more zebra also than on October 7. At one minute before noon we came on a Thompson's female gazelle giving birth. The kid was fully born at noon; it struggled to a sitting posture at 15 minutes and appeared to reach successfully for a suck of milk. It stood on all four legs shakily at 17 minutes but fell over again. Several more stands and attempts at walking, movement almost uncoordinated, and at 25 minutes stood and sucked a good meal. The two walked away at 12.30 p.m. Not bad going. The jackals were much in evidence today, looking hither and thither about the plains. They were on the look out for anything that might be going, but in particular these Tommie gazelle kids being born. Two of them come; the mother gazelle chases one and the other snaffles the kid. The gazelle mothers do the same as the red deer hinds, i.e., leave the kid while it is very young curled up in a bit of a hollow in the ground. We passed one such kid and I took a photograph of it. We saw a cheetah chasing a flock of Tommies, but as it saw us it desisted and stalked off across the plain. Showers all around us today but we came home dry. There was a lion and lioness over a zebra kill near camp, with four attendant jackals optimistically and deferentially waiting for any crumbs from the rich man's table. The topis are more numerous than earlier and they are in full flood of calving. The calf is kongoni coloured, i.e., sandy golden, not chocolate like the topi.

14 October 1958

Temple Boreham and I out early this morning for two and a half hours and back to breakfast at 9.30 o'clock. We counted a plain to the south of us which should have been included in our earlier count of 7 October. We picked up 705 wildebeeste in two large herds. Absolutely glorious country and these strings of animals over it in the morning sunlight are an exhilarating sight. Have taken a few photographs but despair of getting the full sense of wide country and many animals. We also went into a shallow valley and plain where T.B. said a rhino lived. The rhino was on view out on

the plain. Lots of bat-eared foxes about and one or two jackals of striped mongooses. The dove-urfowes are on the plains now, reminding me more than ever of the Downs. There are many crowned coursers, blacksmith and crown plovers. And larks. Saw a brilliant flame-crested hoopoe yesterday. Waiting most of the day because David is going to Nairobi tomorrow, 7 hours' journey, to fix up about maps, airplane and so on.

Temple Boreham. David and I out again late afternoon, going westwards more or less where we went this morning, through lightly bushed country with clumps much over-burnt but now green and lovely. We met an old lion who hadn't much to say to us. Then half a mile farther on there was a young wildebeeste alone and going round in circles. It allowed us close to it and was obviously ill. T.B. shot it and almost immediately there were vultures overhead, and while we did a postmortem they came down. Then we saw the lion walking up, and as we finished and stepped back into the Land Rover he sank gratefully to his free meal. Once more he had kept an eye on the vultures who had given him his cue. Two miles farther on we were going to climb a bushed hill scarred by burning, but we saw two lionesses farther up. T.B. said he thought this was Sally, so he called her and the two lionesses came down to us and sat only five yards away. In fact Sally came so near that T.B. could have touched her. The story of Sally is this. She is now between 11 and 12 years old. When she was two T.B. found her very ill with a hole in her side and apparently dying. He brought her water in a tin basin and then fresh meat on which he sprinkled sulphamilamide, camped beside her for a week or two and did what he could. She recovered, and every week or so during her convalescence T.B. came down to see her and give her some leonine dainty. The lioness came to know him so well that she would come whenever he called, if he was in her neighbourhood. She bred six months afterwards and produced cubs and still remained tame. She has now had four litters of cubs and all of them have learned to accept T.B.'s presence. The large family of twenty or so keeps very much together and Sally is the matriarch who looks after grandchildren with as much care as her own cubs. This lioness has a rupture in the region of the navel, to do with the bad wound she had, so is easily recognized from afar. I had the impression of complete trust of T.B. by this lioness. Some time ago T.B. was in camp when it was raining hard. Sally appeared and lay under the fly sheet at the entrance to his tent. The rest of the family were around but would not come so near. It is really one of the nicest animal stories I have heard, in that Sally has not forgotten her friend, though he may now go two or three months without seeing her.

15 October 1958

Temple Boreham and I out for the day, working our way gently down to the Sand River where it joins the Mara, passing through slightly hilly, lightly bushed country which should have been dense bush but it had obviously a long history of burning. We found a young cow rhinoceros that had just taken her bath in black mud. Later in the day we saw a mother and calf. How ridiculously small and far forward is the eye of the rhinoceros. And later in the afternoon we encountered a bull rhino who saw

us of at a distant place. Thirsts are more tenacious than I thought. The Sand River is now running, and we walked down to its junction with the Mara, over rocks of mica schist very fine in texture. There was a score of hippos in the pool and one or two carpish trees. The water of the Mara River is coffee coloured and opaque. T.B. and I had lunch by the Mara, enjoying its tropicality. We had two Game Scouts with us, one being a Ndorobo, an almost gipsy tribe who live by hunting. This man had been a poacher but T.B. made him a Game Scout and he is delighted. The Wa Ndorobo are very poor and primitive and therefore know all there is to know about the bush. They are splendid trackers, very keen in the nose, and they are confirmed and expert honey hunters, following the bird known as honey guides. Well, when we had finished our lunch our pair had disappeared but we heard knocking half a mile down river. Eventually they returned with several pounds of honey comb. They devoured the comb containing the grubs themselves, and gave us the honey. I am having it at breakfast.

We were among game including lions and a cheetah all the time and when around 5 o'clock in the evening sun we sat on top of a little hill Temple Boreham calls Roan Hill and looked over a valley to the Sand River and another wooded hill and lightly bushed areas, we had a view long to remember. Down near the line of riverine vegetation was a herd of 50 elephants playing about, a herd of 25 buffalo slowly crossed a plain to the water, eight roan antelope were just below us, there were two or three giraffe and eland in the landscape, a herd of impala, several knots of zebra, one or two old bull wildebeeste, several small groups of kongoni, a few topi and some Thompson's gazelles; warthogs here and there; two reedbuck and one lion a good way off. Where else could you see as much as this at one time? It was almost dark as we came over the plains and the wildebeeste in their hundreds were in silhouette, so deeply moving. It has been a great day, one of the days in the life of a naturalist. Dinner with T.B. at his camp and very nice too. Yesterday we picked up the long leg bones of a giraffe which had come to grief some time ago. This bone gives a good thickness of material of beautiful texture which can be worked. One of the askaris has made a rod 14 inches long, three-quarters of an inch thick at one end and half inch at the other, to serve as a handle for a wildebeeste tail as a fly switch, but I like the rod itself and its feel so much that I shall keep it as it is, as something to twiddle in conversation, like the amber beads on a short string twiddled by the men in Athens when talking in the cafes. The bone looks like ivory.

16 October 1958

A long day out with Temple-Boreham to the Bardamit Plains, going by way of the foot of the Sianna Hills and the point called Barkitabu. Only a few wildebeeste till we reached the plains we counted on October 8, and now we counted 4,650 and did not do the part from Aitong Spring to the Mara and Jagartek. T.B. thought there would be very few down there, but we couldn't have managed it today and we came home in the dark as it was. In the acacia at the top of the Bardamit Plains we saw a single

Temple Boreham's camp at Oljoro Loroman in 1005, where the party dined 15 October 1058 (Photo: J.M. Boyd)

bull elephant – no great ivory, but he was enormous. The wildebeeste seemed to have moved westwards between one and two miles and they were in pretty big lots up to 600–700. Counting through field glasses and with the heat haze is very tiring, and both T.B. and I had had enough by the end of the day, our eyes watering if we squeezed them.

17 October 1958

Temple Boreham and I out along the little hills towards the Sand River and the Mara. We walked up the Sand River for a mile or two in bare feet and then struck across the hills. Very little doing, but we saw a cheetah and two or three lions taking their ease. An old buffalo bull was lying quiet and we passed him at 120 yards, he not seeing us at all. But we had to cross his wind to get back to the Land Rover at 200 yards range. He rose suddenly and was off from his position facing away from us and he never so much as looked back to see who we were. Men, and that was enough. We found a Thompson's gazelle newly dead and unmarked, so we postmortemed it and reckoned it was poisoning, because the whole gut was inflamed and the spleen engorged. And coming back over the plains we found a late wildebeeste calf alone and scarcely able to walk. T.B. shot it, but we could find nothing wrong. It was in very poor condition, and as the calves are still suckling, we think possibly its mother had been taken by a lion. Our Ndorobo showed us a plant which is poisonous – a tree which I must now get identified. We noticed at one place that two plants of a

geophyte which I have called but brachiomit. A better name I have dug up by an animal I guessed to be a porcupine, and our Ndorobo when asked, and it was he who had arrows in lead – he said that was good enough. This plant appears to have a deep-seated swollen root the size of a melon, which Mr Porcupine had been digging down to and eating, but spitting out the fibrous structure. Our Ndorobo told us his tribe also dig these and chew them for the moisture contained. The texture of the root is that of a coarse old turnip. I B away in the afternoon 30 or 40 miles northward. Our blower this morning had a message for him saying there was a lion attacking Masai cattle. As he says he will go and show the flag and leave a couple of Scouts, and he should be back tomorrow evening or on Sunday. The slim bones of the Thompson's gazelle have been saved for me. They are exquisite in fineness and cleanness.

18 October 1958

A good walk westwards in the morning to the valley where we saw so much from Roan Hill three days ago. There was a cow rhinoceros and her calf there today. A honey guide led us to a bees' nest in a dead acacia in an ant heap, distance 350 yards, in about 4 hops and almost direct. We met three Masai going to Narok [blank in MS] miles, with one sheep, to sell it. One asked to look at the rhino through David's binoculars and they all giggled like schoolgirls. I have noticed this tendency to giggle before. Out in Land Rover late in the afternoon back along the way to Uaso Nyire, and found 200 wildebeeste where there was but a handful two days ago. Explored a pleasant valley leading into the Sianna and saw one rhino bull. We found a place among some bushes where a couple of Masai had had a fire and cooked a sheep some time today, for the fire was still alight. The bones were picked clean. David says that occasionally Masai will have an orgy of meat eating. Two or three men will brew an infusion of a particular species of acacia which gives them a tremendous appetite for meat. They will gorge themselves and then sleep and wake up with a further craving for meat which they indulge again and so on, till the bullock or sheep is finished. They say that after such an orgy they are left with a wonderful sense of wellbeing.

19 October 1958 (Sunday)

A quiet day spent reading the Game Policy Committee's Report, the Serengeti Report and so on. Am gradually getting myself tuned in to this new set of politics in Kenya. Just as involved and unpleasant as in Northern Rhodesia, but at least the Governor here, Sir Evelyn Baring, is a straight and fine man who feels for the game. On my early morning walk I found the 500–700 Egilok River plain group of wildebeeste closely massed and running southwards, something must have frightened them though I could not discover what. In the evening they were well spread out and feeding quietly in the bottom plain. David and I went a run northwards in the late evening. Our downs were practically empty of game and we found them on the lower plains nearer the Talek River. We have now had a week of fine weather and the grass on the plains has lost its freshness. The lower plains are in slightly better shape obviously, than the higher downland tops. Tom de Boreham went away on Friday afternoon and has not yet returned. The weather's warmer and [illegible] such delight.

20 October 1958

The airplane arrived at noon with Pilot Supt. Bearcroft of the Kenya Police and Verdcourt the botanist of the British East African Commission who works at the Corydon Museum, Nairobi. Temple-Boreham also came back at nine o'clock this morning. We had a merry lunch, the five of us, for Bearcroft, nicknamed Punch, is a humorous ex-RAF type with a turn for descriptive though often improper language. David and T.B. flew with Punch till sundown, doing the Sand River and Bologonja, the wedge between the new Serengeti Park and the Mara Reserve, which is full of game and ought to be put in the Serengeti Park because it is heavily poached; then to the Bardamit plains where there was a heavy concentration of 6,000 wildebeeste now, once having gone over from the plains this side of the Telek. Verdcourt and I were out botanizing, and he has been a tremendous help to me in identifying the grasses, herbs and shrubs of the different habitat types. I noticed how the rain we had has brought the small fine grasses into flower, such as *Sporobolus*, *Digitaria*, *Aristida* and *Microchloa*, but the taller heavier grasses have only sprouted vegetatively. This is rather a nice bit of evolutionary behaviour, in that if these finer grasses were to flower in the big rains as the coarser grasses do, they would be overwhelmed, whereas by flowering now they have plenty of room for pollination and growth. We did the low plain, riverine forest, and area of inundation.

21 October 1958

Away early, going with Verdcourt over the higher plains, the lion-bush complex and to Oldonja Lo-up to see if the change to volcanic rock made much difference. We did find a few more species. Punch was flying; David and T.B. all day.

Seeing the tiny little grasses coming to fruition in the little rains and the taller grasses producing only vegetatively, set me thinking on the whole matter of conversion of living grass into decaying organic matter which is lived in and by, by other and tiny organisms. If the game population here, large as it is, was once as large again, then twice as much grass was converted into manure for reintegration with the soil and that much less remained as dried dead grass to be burned to ash. A full conversion cycle means the optimum population of animals. Less than the optimum means a bottle-neck and annual fire has to take the place of more complete grazing, which got more organic matter into the soil.

The fliers came home with good results, which David has converted into little dots of red (wildebeeste), green (zebra) and black (buffalo) on to our sketch maps. It all looks most impressive. We had a splendid evening of good companionship round the big fire.

condition – tummy unsick. The old lady made little protest to whom I had moved immediately and it belonged to his companion who brought with expectation from the thick little man with the bow and arrows. These two were coming back to fetch the women to carry loads of meat from some hide-out in the bush. We moved farther down into the wedge and came to du Pre's lorry boy's bough in the *kiongozi*. It certainly wasn't there for viewing game from, but I noticed it was beautifully placed for signalling to the top of the escarpment several miles away. This man is probably feeding his mine labour on game meat which he either poaches himself or gets the Wa-Tende to poach for him, and he, having got himself into the position of honorary Game Warden, effectively precludes anyone else being; that in that place, but as T.B., as a senior Game Warden in Kenya is also an honorary Game Warden in Tanganyika he can come around anywhere with powers of arrest. du Pre and the Wa Tende are probably scratching each other's backs. Well, coming to a *donga* and thick bush within a mile of du Pre's tree, we poked into it and found a hide-out of the poachers. It was a horrible sight in that within the shade of the bush there were the remains of over thirty zebra, wildebeeste and topi. A grass hut and drying poles half filled the area but the remains were all over the place. A hyaena had crashed away as we reached the place, and it was the bones pulled outside by the hyaenas which had first attracted us to look inside. This place must have been left two or three weeks ago. We poked about for another mile or two and one of our prisoners took us to another old hide out, still within a mile of du Pre's tree, where we found remains of another dozen animals. Off again, and the man in the red hat directed us to a point between two little hills of dense bush and a quarter of a mile above a water hole. There we found a quarter-mile bush fence with stranded wire nooses all set. T.B. got quite excited and said their hide would be in thick bush near the water. We deployed our forces and crept up on the bush but there was neither hide-out nor poachers. So we came back to the little wooded hills and came smack into a hide full of fresh meat, but the poachers had flown. Examining the meat surfaces of the dead animals we could see the cuts were two or three hours old, and we deduced that we had been spotted earlier in the day when we had come under the hill on the other side. T.B. put a guard on the hide, lifted all the wire nooses and prepared for an ambush on the path up the escarpment. During the night one man came back near the hide but would not come in. The askaris were restrained from shooting him because it would have taken a bit of explaining why Kenya askaris were raiding in Tanganyika where control is very lax.

The sight of that hide with the guts and opened bellies lying around, the grinning zebra heads and sad looking wildebeeste heads, the legs all a tumble to the sky, and the stench, was unforgettable. Looking around I was struck by the complete lack of system in the butchering, meat and filth and the men's lying places all together. Examining the portions of carcasses still carrying hide we found the deep cuts of the wire nooses as the beasts had struggled. Later in the plain we found a dead zebra which had been caught by the hind foot in a noose. The wire had cut through to the bone. This hide was within half a mile of the Kenya border and Mara Reserve. There was

no chance we could do this same but now and then the rest of November we are going to make another sortie and get a couple of hides out. It will be done by land on foot.

24 October 1958

Went to the hide again and dragged out the carcasses for the vultures to clear up. Then making for the Mara River on the Kenya–Tanganyika boundary, through small hills of quartzite covered with gall acacia. I don't much like country of perpetual gall acacia or whistling thorn. It is faunally poor and you have to weave this way and that to get through. The spines are appallingly sharp and strong, well over an inch long. A day or two ago, watching a rhinoceros closely as it was eating, I noticed it was going for young gall acacias perhaps 6 inches high with a spread of a foot. He would so mouth the thing as to get hold of the stem at ground level and pull up the whole plant. An adequate population of these animals might well keep these bushes within bounds. When grown they go up to ten feet with a long straight stem and a bush at the top, looking rather like young standard apple trees.

We started this sortie with plenty of meat, for Lynn Temple Boreham found a topi bull with a broken foreleg, which he put out of its misery. Then near the Mara we scared four lions off a bull buffalo they had killed. The men cut themselves large hunks of meat from the leg, rump and along the spine, and skinned part of the ribs to use the skin as wrapping for the meat which was going to be carried in our Land Rover. There was still plenty left for the lions, for the buffalo weighs over a ton. The men are in high fettle anyway having had lots of meat, and the poaching arrests have set them on their toes. The jailer for our prisoners is a Ndorobo who was an inveterate poacher and who, on his last release asked Lynn T.B. (the man who had caught him) for a job. So he took him on, gave him the dignity of a Game Scout's uniform, drilled him and has made him into a loyal retainer who is quite happy catching other poachers. These people rarely bear malice. Our men are really so little different from the poachers, being quite savage but nevertheless well drilled and disciplined. They have also been allowed as much of the poached meat as they wished and they have done themselves well.

We came back to our base camp at Ol Doro Lomon and Temple Boreham went up the escarpment to a meeting with the District Commissioner tomorrow. I took a photo of our two disconsolate prisoners and felt a little sorry for them because I have a feeling for all prisoners and captives. When someone is utterly in your power you feel the need for restraint in behaviour. While they are on the run one could happily shoot them; I don't think I should have felt restraint to Japanese or to Mau Mau terrorists. Both T.B. and David had a lot of experience of both.

Back home in the almost dark the wildebeeste being back on our plains in large numbers. Seeing their silhouettes against the darkening sky, I felt these poor things were at rest and had successfully run the gauntlet of those dreadful wire nooses in the Wa Tende wedge. We must try hard to get that area into the Serengeti Park.

straight ahead a herd and after a short hurry to overhaul a mile from where we had come on the hippos. Tropical riverine vegetation lined the sides of the canal and almost met overhead. There were places where the hippos or elephants slide down to the water and these were unshaded hot and still. Otherwise beautiful especially when the diminutive malachite kingfishers alight on a stone or the rapids down the river and the carmine and cinnamon bee-eaters settle on the branches over the water. By the end of the day we could not be said to have found our crossings for a quick journey down the Mara, for we got mixed up in a complicated *donga* system, but it was all most enjoyable. There was a lot of game everywhere but precious little for them to eat. We met one bull rhinoceros who chased us properly, but he had been in trouble, having lost one eye and with a wound in a hind leg. These animals do fight so senselessly. He had the usual sweat sore at the base of his throat. What and why are they? Nearer the Mara River we have found five dead buffalo 6–8 months old calves being consumed by vultures. We are afraid rinderpest has struck the herd, for we found the young wildebeeste with it over the Tanganyika border a few weeks ago. Temple-Boreham said he had heard it was moving north. Long years ago (1805–6) rinderpest came to Africa from Europe and was extremely serious among African cattle and the game, especially buffalo and wildebeeste. Now they have acquired some immunity and comparatively few die. We also found a big bull giraffe that must have come in from Tanganyika. He had had a noose on his off fore leg and it had made a terrible wound. The leg was swollen from shoulder to foot but he had at least got rid of the wire and the wound looked clean. He was in quite good order, so we let him be.

4 November 1958

Another day of exploration of the country bordering the left bank of the Mara River. We put in three hours' work on the Talek crossing, having got five askaris in the back of the Land Rover. We also had to do some landscape gardening to one or two other *dongas* before we could get across. We lunched late by the Mara River, David giving the askaris some tea and sugar to give themselves a hot sweet brew. They had brought half-dried pieces of buffalo meat for themselves (from the lion kill) so they were very happy and full of fun. They amused themselves teasing the foolish and inquisitive baboons on the other side of the river by making sudden movements this way and that. The baboons get into a state of half fearful, half-thrilling excitement. I, going down to the river to rinse a cup, pretended to throw it at one and it nearly fell out of the tree; the askaris laughed so much that the baboons got cross. They can't laugh and when they see a man laughing and showing his teeth by so doing, they think he is showing anger of some kind. The country on the over-side of the Talek was unburnt this year and was empty of game of all kinds. These undulating low hills, sometimes basalt and sometimes quartzite, carrying gall acacia and *Acacia hockii* do not seem to have much attraction. One of the askaris saw a young acacia which seemed to him just right for the bark to be used for an infusion for drinking with his buffalo meat, so hacked it off with his simi. He was a Turkana but evidently several of these tribes other than the Masai have this trick of increasing their capacity to eat meat. We did not reach the sand River and it was well into the dark before we got back to camp very thirsty. All the way back our askaris, two Samburu and two Turkanas, sang wild Turkana songs which were really rather pleasant. One would sing a story and the rest would sing a monotonous accompanying chorus. The solo singer was in harmony but not in unison and the chorus was full bold rhythmic and in unison. If you get yourself a bunch of wild savage Africans like we have with us, discipline them to a state of pride in being what they are, they are quite magnificent fellows and a joy to have as a gang for work, tracking and so on. Their singing tonight took away all tiredness and tedium of the cross-country journey.

5 November 1958

At midnight I woke to feel myself being crawled over by myriad feet. And so I was. A train of siafu had, most unusually, climbed up between the mosquito net and my mattress and got into the bed in thousands. Until I moved they did not bite and sting but once I had put a light on they were well into me. Mr. hair was full and one of the soldier caste of them bit between my big and second toe. I went out to the fire and slept in two chairs till 3 o'clock, by which time the ants had left my tent and I was able to settle down again.

A six mile walk in the forest along the river this morning, quite hard work for all one's body twisting, ducking and stretching through the honeycomb paths made by the elephants and over fallen boughs. There is no thick field layer, but an ample shrub layer and of young trees, so that one cannot see farther than a few yards ahead. The big trees, such as *Warburgia* and *Ficus*, are so very magnificent; the fig trees have enormous round branches that spread a long way horizontally and almost each one is a joy of sound because the bulbuls are there, eating of the large fruit clusters which are like great bunches of grapes. Sometimes there is a flash of cerise and blue as a bird called a trogon flashes among the lower branches of the trees. The brilliant louries run and hop in the high branches like squirrels more than like birds. Pied and malachite kingfishers are over the river. We saw one very large crocodile this morning and got to 25-yards range. We still don't know what we did that made him suddenly take to the water. We came to a small lawn of a few acres with one or two acacias on the side of the river, a heavenly place for a camp if one could have carried in one's gear. The river bank in one place here was low enough for the hippos to lie out and for the elephants to come down and disport themselves. We crept close to the ten hippos lying there and watched smallish birds pecking at their wounds – all adult hippos seem to have wounds or scores of some sort. We did notice that the two young hippopotamus had no wounds. Eventually a flurry of wind took our scent to them and they got up hurriedly and made for the water, except one old bull who took his time and looked as if he was saying, 'These women do make such a fuss.' We got the impression that the elephants were not harming the forest proper. Their damage is on the edges and outside by ring barking, stripping, and knocking trees down. The forest proper must be used mainly as cover. Occasionally we hear them trumpeting and squealing, but they are very shy here and we seldom see them.

The askaris borrow some long grass in front of the camp today. Finding a rotten log, they heave it to the sandy river bank and heave it over. A wonderful and much appreciated splash. David interprets for me: they found it so heavy they are sure it will sink, but no, it floats. Ah, how strong the water is to hold up that log. Then one asks the others if they remember when one of their fellows, a Somali called Saladin, walked into the lioness who had just had cubs. The others remember so well they have to stop work for a good laugh. Then one imitates the proud Somali walking backwards praying to Allah: 'Allalalalala inshallah' and so on. It takes the men a few minutes to overcome their laughter. And so life goes on in this camp. Another thing delighting them is the fishing. They go down with fish hooks baited with buffalo meat on string and little rods cut from the forest. They catch catfish to 4 lbs. Barbels and barbets to 1 and 2 lbs. Each catch is a moment of excitement for all. Kilonzi before dinner is all smiles, showing us his catch, and the askaris' toto emerges from his dormat existence and shares in the triumph of catching a large fish.

The special fun today among the askaris was getting a bees' nest from the top of a high tree on the edge of the forest. You never heard such excitement and fun. The tree itself was hard to get up but they made hooked sticks and climbed those hungover branches. Dried elephant droppings set smouldering on the end of a stick were used for subduing the bees. By darkness they had reached the honey, and in dropping the large combs out of the tree one dropped plump on to one askari's head. You never saw such a mess, but everybody was wildly happy, even the man with honey in the hair. They returned to camp with a bucketful of honey and said there was still more in the tree.

6 November 1958

Heard by wireless this morning that Noel Simon would be coming down by air from Nairobi. We went up to the Tsetse Ranch airfield at Aitong, Mara in cloudy weather with some rain. It would appear the short rains have started rather suddenly. When the little Cessner came down we found it piloted by a thin slip of a girl called June Wright. She is one of the crack bush pilots of Kenya. She also has the name of being mischievous, as on the occasion of a yacht race on Lake Naivasha, when she dived her little airplane just behind the leading yachts and took the wind out of their sails. Noel was accompanied by Sid Downey, Donald Ker's partner. He was such a nice quiet man who, like his partner, has given up shooting altogether. Noel and I were busy talking over affairs of the future of the Game Department in Kenya with David. Took the party back to the Cessner 182 and they took off at 5 p.m. We reached home at dark. Got some mail.

7 November 1958

Lovely clear morning. We got ready for our stab down the left bank of the Mara River into Tanganyika, packing a tent fly and a few days' rations, and taking four askaris and Kilonzi as cook. The route across the drainage to the Mara River which we have been pioneering in the last few days now stood us in good stead for the first half of the journey. We had one more crossing of a *donga* to shape up before reaching the Sand River, which took us best part of a couple of hours hacking. After that we went through a good deal of unburnt grass and undulating bush country having some expanses of close bush to circumvent and several more *dongas* to cross. The askaris had had enough. I think by the time we reached the Bologonja River, here at its lower reaches a deep *donga* of fairly stagnant pools so different from that lovely limpid spring and stream I mentioned on our stab to the Serengeti. We had eventually to come almost to the junction of the Bologonja with the Mara before we could cross, but having done so we came on to part of the Mara which is all rapids and quite delightful. So we called it a day – 45 miles of hard going and great heat. We were dusty and dirty and hot because after the last *donga* before the Bologonja we had got into newly burnt grass that had not had a shower on it yet. The flying ash went straight for my throat, as always my weakest part. Now, camping by the rapids of the Mara River we were able to have a proper bath and hair wash, sitting in the river on submerged granite rocks, untroubled by crocodiles, hippopotamuses or mud. It was absolutely glorious to feel so clean and relaxed. At lunch time we had also stopped by the Mara River a little above where a granite outcrop almost spanned the river. A hippo cow was there half out of the water, and her very young calf, possibly two days, was in a tiny pool on the granite outcrop. The two were quite delightful to watch, the mother so attentive and the calf so playful. A playful little hippo is quite something. As darkness fell at camp, we could see a rhino and her young calf not far away, and late

Sheldrick's uniformed askaris making a passage for the Land Rover through a *donga* on the way to the crossing of the Sand River on 7 November 1958

the rhino calf.

8 November 1958

Lovely morning, and David and I away for one and a half hours walk before breakfast, leaving before 7 o'clock. We went a couple of miles or more down the Mara River and found it continuing as a lovely river of rapids and rocks lined by Phoenix palms, a few *Podocarpus* trees, *Syzygium* trees, and a little bush. We found signs of poachers having camped by the river, some of their light noose rods being propped against a tree. Going into a dense patch of bush which might have been used as a poachers hide, I nearly trod on a 6 or 7 foot mamba, one of the most dangerous of snakes. I recoiled in utter revulsion and fright, for I am not familiar with snakes, nor do I like them really, but on this occasion instead of rearing up it slid away between David and me and quickly disappeared. After breakfast we set off in the Land Rover to go where we could get. Dense bush was a bit of a trial but we got through one mile of it on an elephant track with the askaris using their pangas and simis to cut the overhanging fronds of bush. Again two or three *donga*s to cross without much trouble, but we got to one deep one with dense surrounding bush and we had to turn up into the higher ground among a lot of granite boulders and outcrops of that rock. Everywhere had been burnt and it wasn't very pleasant in the fierce heat. Eventually we reached the top of a hill where the herbage had been too short to burn and we settled under a *Lauma* tree for lunch. The country is practically empty of game – 3 oribi, 1 reedbuck, 4 topi, a few kongoni and a herd of zebra – all we saw all day. Three miles east of us was a granite kopje called Nesheshaw, 6,515 feet. David and I walked over to it with one askari. The walk was not really enjoyable because it was all through black newly burnt ground, with dead trees still smouldering. When these are lying down and gradually smoulder away, they leave a white ash picture of their branched shape on the ground. There were springs, rather sluggish, here and there at the foot of the kopje, but before the era of such dreadful burning this must have been a well watered place. There were a few buffalo around in the wet wallows in dense patches of bush. We found portions of a giraffe's skeleton near the kopje, and as there were three shin bones, there must have been two giraffe, and you would not get two giraffe dying together unless they had been killed. A gang of poachers must have come on a herd and shot two with poisoned arrows. Back to camp then as black and dusty as sweeps and with a beautiful thirst. Another ineffably glorious bath in the river and a relaxed dinner beautifully turned out by the good Kilonzi. This rapid and rocky section of the river attracts the common sandpiper, a bird so familiar to me in the Highlands and so well loved. A pair of Egyptian geese near camp also. Elephants trumpeting in the night but we do not see them – extraordinarily shy. The rhino and her calf came to 15 paces from the tent last night. Lovely to lie and hear the running water.

9 November 1958 (Sunday)

Yesterday David has penetrated into the lower Boteregumpa Mara country or as I suppose it should be called the Ingrumi. It is now so good that we got back to camp in three hours. No game, and I've got real into the inside of the Sand River and its precious little. The plains are parched and the wildebeeste have none of that prodigal sparkle of movement they had when the grass was green. Excitement back at camp told to us in dramatic style by Frederick the cook and the corporal of askaris was that a pack of wild dogs had rushed through camp this morning early and that a lion and lioness had come into camp at the same time. Dogs and lioness looked at each other hard but nothing happened. Why should the wild dogs dash across the plain towards camp and the lions come into camp? Animals do things we can't explain. The men have done a lot of work at the new airstrip. Some anthills to be planed off now. Busy writing the rest of the day.

10 November 1958

Drive to Narok this morning to fetch petrol, so we got a mail away. Another brilliant morning, when out early I looked at the upper branches of a species of fig tree that had fallen while the tree was in full leaf. This happened on Saturday, so everything was very fresh. The delicate grey of the smooth bark was patterned with circles of lichen growth, making a wonderful mixture of greys and greens. These circles of lichen on acacia branches as well as on other trees must have had something to do with the development of a leopard's spots. When he is lying along an acacia branch with the sun dappling everything, he is almost invisible. Coming back to camp I saw three elephants on the other side of the river, perhaps 80 yards away, feeding on the *Panicum* and *Pennisetum* grass. Writing all day except for going out on the great lawn in the evening to see two pairs of lions. I imagine both lionesses were in season, and when they come to have their cubs they will doubtless join up and keep house together for the benefit of the cubs. Sid Downey opened my eyes to an interesting train of thought the other day. He said when numbers of lions got so low that two lionesses could not cub together they were in grave danger of extinction in that place. If the mother has to go off and hunt and leave the cubs alone they are prey to hyaenas, vultures and even jackals. Many carnivores have their young below ground, but when you get the size of a lion it is a different matter altogether making a hole in this tough soil. Sociality is evidently very important in the survival of lions.

11 November 1958

David and I set off for the country on top of the Isura Escarpment. It was not what I expected. Instead of being bare it was well clumped with bush, mostly on anthills and small patches of thick woodland. The grassland in between did not look much overgrazed. Of course there was too much burning. After the flat and waterless top of this volcanic escarpment we came into an immense landscape of hills and valleys of parkland. Acacias were few and the trees and patches of woodland were nearly all broad leaved and very green. The country up here was not as parched as down in the

and he asked me about the creation of the Mau Forest but I could not give him any information. Then we had a long discussion about the proposed Game Ordinance and the difficulties there were in the way of getting it through. Finally we had a long discussion about the need for some sort of control over the use of land in Kenya. Then we had a long discussion about the need for some sort of control over the use of land in Kenya. Then we had a long discussion about the need for some sort of control over the use of land in Kenya.

28 January 1961

A terrible day of interviews and trying to catch up, which I never quite did. Some of my personal shopping had to go also going along to Wild Life Society for my home mail, so shall go a long time before I hear anything from home. Eventually had to leave the Talbots point blank. The Glovers took me to the airport and I dined them there. Am leaving Kenya in good state as far as our organizations are concerned, and I think I have done a very necessary piece of work. Joined the BOAC Comet at 10 p.m. and arrived Khartoum 2 hours 35 minutes later, 1,220 miles away.

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Co incidental with the Arusha conference in 1961, the situation in the Tsavo (East) National Park had become critical. A severe drought had forced the elephant to move in search of water. Many rhinos, which depend on elephant holes in dry river beds for dry-season water (see p 150), were dying, and the tree cover of the Park was being devastated by the displaced elephants. Frank had seen some of this for himself when he visited the Tiva River with Mervyn Cowie and David Sheldrick in 1950.

Cowie had already sought the advice of Julian Huxley about what should be done in Tsavo, and had been told that 10,000 elephants should be killed to relieve the pressure and stabilise the habitat. This would have been a gigantic and violent exercise, which would be widely misunderstood and deplored, as well as being of doubtful benefit in the long term. Huxley was a theoretician not a practical man, and, with the support of Phil Glover, Cowie invited Fraser Darling to advise the trustees on what course of action to

follow. Both regarded Frank as a pragmatist capable of matching the theoretical and practical elements of the situation.

Frank's advice was non committal yet sensible – no action should be taken to kill elephants until research was done into the structure and distribution of the herds and their likely long term effect on the habitat. This suited Cowie. It bought time and allowed the crisis of 1961 to pass without slaughter. It also cleared the way for a substantial programme of research in Tsavo. Cowie's appeal for funds for scientific research was disappointing, blunted by Huxley's summary pronouncements on the need for immediate heavy culling. However, the Ford Foundation paid for two biologists on a programme drawn up by James Glover of the East African Agricultural and Forestry Research Organisation to provide the basis for a management plan for Tsavo. In the late 1960s, Richard Laws, formerly Director of the Nuffield Unit of Tropical Animal Ecology in Uganda, Murray Watson, formerly of the Serengeti Research Institute in Tanzania, and Ian Parker started a new programme of elephant research which sadly was never finished.

Passengers of the ferry boat at Juba on 15 February 1961. 'All was activity ... every man wore shorts and there wasn't a bare bosom on the boat.'

to cross the Nile by ferry boat. All was activity and so active have been the Catholics and the Presbyterians and the God knows whats, that every man wore shorts and there wasn't a bare bosom on the boat. Yet so thin is the veneer that when the women rearranged their saris before putting the loads on their heads, they still did so without shame and it was apparent that beneath the cotton saris they still kept to their beautifully decorated little leather aprons fore and aft. Looking into the baskets from the bridge of the boat I saw little bundles of tamarind pods, husked, and quantities of durra, which is like giant millet. Juba is now quite a modern little town, the administrative centre of Equatoria, and with a very nice hotel in which we were to be housed for three nights while Mahmoud gets his office work done and I my writing. Received mail here and had quite a lot to do. We have also bathed well and got ourselves cleaned up. Out at night to a dinner party, buffet style, at the house of the Deputy Governor of the Sudan. Fully a score of people, including Sudanese, an Italian eye surgeon from Asmara, and Baron Krupp von Bohlen, the present head of the German arms firm and steel empire and his friend, who are on safari. Krupp is a pleasant quiet fellow, absolutely devoid of ostentation or Germanness. I have followed this man's career with some interest. He could not be convicted of any war crimes for merely producing and selling arms, he has kept well out of politics, and from having lost everything he has now got pretty well everything back and is very rich and very clever. I had a long talk with him and liked him and we met again on

15 February

at Mahmoud's house where we had another party.

16 February 1961

Writing all day and got a hair cut in the town in an open booth. Four weeks out now and tomorrow four weeks to go. Am lasting pretty well and have lost quite a bit of weight. All to the good.

17 February 1961

Supposed to leave Juba by 9 a.m. but in fact it was later. I went with Mahmoud to his house to see his little pet square lipped rhinoceros. Its mother wandered into a cattle camp somewhere soon after it was born. The boys created a commotion and drove the mother rhinoceros away. The newly born baby lay down with the cattle and was thus orphaned in effect. The men let Mahmoud know and he fetched it. The little rhino was then pink-fleshed and not very rhinoesque. One has never been reared artificially before but Mahmoud persevered with cow's milk, sugar and maize meal. The little rhino is now seven weeks old and drinks a gallon of milk a day from the bottle. The poor little thing seems happy enough in a scrupulously clean pen complete with mud bath. It skips about very playfully and is of course completely tame. It has a fringe of absolutely black hair along the edges of the ears and along the eyelids. What a pet it would be in a children's zoo! I suppose it is now past the danger point, though it has not yet begun grazing or eating grass. Just as we were leaving again, an African girl brought in a baby white colobus monkey which had been found with its fingers damaged. One or two fingers had gone and one or two more would have to be amputated. Its face was distorted with pain and the creature was crying piteously. Mahmoud sent it over to the veterinary department for treatment but he is not optimistic about rearing it, for this species is delicate.

First we had to cross the Nile ferry. We went on the bridge again and were introduced to the merry eyed old Arab skipper sitting cross legged on a board across the rails on the port side of the bridge. This seems to be the traditional perch of Nile skippers.

On then for 110 miles to Nimule, which is a small National Park on the banks of the Nile on the Uganda border. We passed through a lot of undulating poorish to middling bush, all grossly overburnt and much of it pollarded as it would be in Northern Rhodesia for *chitemene* gardening, i.e., shifting cultivation. Indeed we are now on red soil and gravel roads. The people in the villages along this road seem a poorish tribe in ragged European clothes. They are Roman Catholic and are now growing American short-staple cotton in small plots of a quarter acre or so. One village was having a weekly market of this stuff.

We are staying in a new rest house at Nimule, one rushed up to take the President and Abd el Nasser when the latter came to see the little National Park of 80 square miles. The Nile is a swift running river of perhaps 5 knots and the depth here is 60 feet. The scenery is quite lovely with hills in the background, green bush and wild

[illegible] contour. The range of Nimule struck me immediately as being bit pretty hard. Even the grass is getting thin and the *combretum* is getting fragmentary. Eight square miles is nothing for a National Park and this one is carrying a good stock of elephants, a spectacular number of square lipped white rhinoceros and several good herds of buffalo. There is a growing population of Uganda cob. The cob bucks seem to be in breeding condition and have definitely swollen necks, rather like the entasis of a Greek pillar. We soon found four rhinoceros and walked to about 120 yards, possibly less. But they weren't in a good position. A little later, however, we saw a group of five or six and in a position to be stalked close. Imagine the thrill when we found ten together and another was in sight. We were in a tumble of rocks and the animals actually grazed towards us. I took photos of several with just my normal 5 cm. lens. We had little luck with elephant, seeing only three on the other side of a swamp.

18 February 1961

Off to Uganda 9.45 this morning with Mahmoud who was going the 25 miles for mince meat for his white rhinoceros calf. The two customs blocks let us through without trouble and we went to an Indian duker for the meal. The Indian entertained us to sweet spiced tea and chapatties and I got talking to him about conditions. He said he would stay as long as ever he was able, but if he had to get out he would then go to England not India. Mahmoud and I called at the Traveller's Tree near Nimule, on the way back. It is an old tamarind and there is now a marker – an Italian explorer 1857, Samuel Baker 1865, Emain Pasha 1875, Winston Churchill 1907. Back to breakfast 8.15 and George had had a lovely time in the park watching elephants at close quarters. Away again 9.50 to Torit 60 odd miles, passing through a lot of burnt-to death bush and coppiced stuff. Such people as we saw we did not think much of – scruffy villages, scrappy agriculture and no cattle – typical missionaries' Africans. Most of these were wearing a cross round their necks. It suddenly struck me that it is the lowliest and least good tribes that are set upon by the missionaries, the warrior tribes and more powerful and proud sorts are left pagan. Having reached Torit, a typical administrative boma of the British sort taken over complete by the Sudanese, I was introduced to the District Commissioner, a polished and charming Arab, dark, and dressed in exactly the same clothes the British DC would have been – starched shaki drill bush jacket and shorts and cotton stockings and well polished brown shoes. President Abood's photo was hung in his office instead of the Queen's. That is the only difference. The Sudanese have taken over the British way almost in entirety. The same in the Forest Veterinary Services. Mahmoud was staying overnight in Torit to sort and despatch ivory. George and I came on with two lorries a further 30 miles to Katire in the Imatong Mountains. This is a Forestry Station and Shawki in Khartoum had been most anxious that we should see the forest. These hills are spectacular, lots of bare rocky peaks in the style the old gneiss makes whether here or in Scotland. There is also a very coarse diorite which has not been pressed hard enough to be

granite. It is so coarse as to be rather crumbly. The highest mountain of the Imatong, Mount Kinyeti, [illegible] feet. The rainfall is [illegible] or rather less, about 60 inches. Bamboo [illegible] such upper zone as there is not anything like as extensive as on the high ground of Kenya, possibly the rainfall is not high enough. I was disappointed coming into these mountains to see such dreadful evidence of fire. The slopes have been bared and the ridges are crowned with a silly fringe of *Acacia abyssinica*. Katire is at about 5,000 feet and very pleasant. One of my old students called Khamal met me. He is now assistant conservator of this Reserve. We also met the Oxford trained mill manager and a highly intelligent forester called Jatar. We were to be settled for the night in the wooden rest house, a nice rambling panelled place. We then went to see the sawmill, where a good deal of African mahogany is sawn. Water powers the turbine and creates electricity for all the machinery and lighting. Most of the labour for all this forest comes from the neighbouring Lotuka tribe, among whom the mutiny broke out 6 years ago, when 485 northern Sudanese were massacred – men, women and children.

19 February 1961

Away by 6.30 to walk into Lotanga Forest where there is almost pristine montane high forest. Quite lovely – mahogany, *Mlysopsis Cedrela* and other fine species of 120 foot trees. Some particular trees are being used as seed trees and the bush is cleared beneath them for ease in gathering the seeds. You could see everything here, from burnt out *Terminalia* and *Erythrina* bush, through broken canopy and heavy herbaceous layer (when fire has been through once) to unbroken forest with a floor clear of herbs or grass. There are 10,000 acres of this forest here and several more good patches higher up. We saw the black and white colobus monkeys dashing about in the high trees, making some spectacular leaps. We also looked at nurseries of teak and some of the forest species. The teak does well, better than in India, and comes into production at 60 years. We saw several 20 year old plantations of dead straight poles going to 40 feet. Back to breakfast at the mill manager's. Most hospitable, but rather trying in a way because Ramadan started two days ago and a Muslim must not break his fast till 6 p.m. each day for the coming month. Although the Prophet expressly stated that those travelling need not be strict in fasting, all our drivers insist on doing so, and they are already half dead by lunch time. Just hope they don't fall asleep from exhaustion while driving. After breakfast we climbed up the hill to Gilo, another rest house and sub station at 7,000 feet. Quite lovely in every way. Where fire has burned the ground, cypresses and various exotic conifers have been planted. Even the African *Juniperus procera* has been planted, though it takes 120 years as against the 40 for *Cupressus*. We stopped at an exceptionally carefully tended nursery for all these exotic conifers. Three years and the nursery must move on to new ground. *Pinus radiata* seems a favourite. We climbed to a 7,500-foot hill after lunch to look over the hill country, observe the fire pattern and the planting pattern and the sanctuary areas of indigenous forest. Elephants come into this high ground from Uganda, and there are

21 February 1961

Enjoyed the clean-up: away by 11 o'clock ahead of Mahmoud to Terrekake, 57 miles, on the west bank of the Nile, through *Balanites* savannah and *Acacia* scrub. Waiting here for Mahmoud, in the shade of a huge fig tree, enjoying the wide view of the Nile and the sudd. Beautiful green-headed, scarlet-breasted sunbirds in the frangipani trees now in blossom. One must enjoy the moments and endure much else. Mahmoud reached us by 4 o'clock, after I had climbed into the fig tree and had a sleep stretched on one of the great boughs which are almost horizontal. We drove westwards through a country of much better bush than heretofore till we reached a considerable lake 21 miles from Terrekake. The lake was beautiful, palm-fringed and fairly densely bushed. There was even a small sandy beach where we were able to have a bath, keeping an eye open for crocodiles. The moon is on the rise now, so this was a particularly lovely camp.

22 February 1961

Away by 5 o'clock this morning driving through this good bush. Not that we saw much game except a few Tiang, which are here very dark. But there was plenty of sign of elephants. We came into the open river, sudd and *toich* country from time to time where the Dinkas have their cattle camps, and along the road we would meet these ash-coloured people, like grey naked ghosts in the half light. We stopped at one camp to see the large herd of almost white cattle with enormous horns. The creatures have quiet eyes and beautiful faces and are evidently at one with the Dinkas. One beast was basically black but with patching and marbling of white over the head and body. My old friend, Joe Broadhurst, was one of the earliest white men among the Dinkas, back in 1925-30; he gave me a photograph of one of these cattle and told me its special name. It has taken me a good while to get here, but the Dinkas are not much changed. They have a self sufficiency with their cattle and few outside desires, but unlike the Masai they live in the great river-strewn area of Bahr-el-Ghazal, where the seasonally inundated grassland seems limitless and is self-sustaining, not susceptible and sensitive to erosion like Masailand. The Dinka cattle are so much better than those of the Masai. The Dinka eat some durra (millet) and mainly subsist on milk and some butter. Whereas the Masai bleed their cattle to mix blood with the milk, the Dinka mix cattle [illegible] of our not doing so. We are losing

Dinka herdsmen in the early morning of 22 February dusted with ash against mosquitoes, west of Terrekake, Equatoria.

astonished to see George and me, for she had seen no white people before. Mahmoud can understand some of their language fortunately. I gave them some snuff, which they put in their lower lip, and the older woman remarked that we were likely to have many visitors. The Dinka are essentially sociable people and the women do not seem to be depressed, for they are as much to the fore in the incessant conversation as are the men. No Masai woman would speak or smile to a white man, but here among the Dinkas the women are completely easy and poised and with charming manners in their open and child-like way. But all Dinkas spit a great deal and I wish they didn't. Many Dinka huts are set up four feet above the ground, with a platform outside the door. The place beneath is one of shade in the daytime and a pleasant spot for sleep and social intercourse. If we stop to talk we must shake hands with everyone, the Dinkas coming forward with high, formal smile, the hand raised almost to the shoulder and the fingers given in a soft, formal touch, rather than the heavy bear hug of the United States. The visitor is then asked to join the family in the shade under the hut. Mahmoud decided this place was not propitious and we continued another mile to a fishing camp for which he was in part responsible. There must be two acres or more of cleared ground at the edge of a lagoon of a larger river. Fishing with a mile long seine net is one of the things the Dinkas have been taught, though the poorer members of the tribe have long been fishermen. Lots of split and salted fish hang from strings