

THE
SPORTSMAN'S GUIDE

Price **1/-**

... TO ...

NORTH-WESTERN RHODESIA

... THE ...

BIG GAME COUNTRY.

WITH
ILLUSTRATIONS.

By **FERDINAND AITKENS**

District Commissioner B.S.A. Company, LEALUI.

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CHAPTER II.

THE HUNTING GROUNDS OF NORTH-WESTERN RHODESIA.

ALTHOUGH big game abounds throughout North-Western Rhodesia, it exists in greater quantities in some parts than in others. Again, on certain rivers, rare antelope, such as the Puku (*Cobus vardoni*), the Lechwe (*Cobus leche*), and Situtunga (*Tragelaphus spekei*) are to be found, I shall, therefore, make special mention of those parts of the country which I consider likely to give the hunter the best sport. The reader will find a sketch map at the end of this pamphlet, which he should consult.

Before describing the hunting grounds, I think it better to give a list of the game any sportsman may expect to meet with whilst hunting in North-Western Rhodesia:—

Buffalo,	Grysbuck,	Koodoo,	Sable Antelope,
Bushbuck,	Hartebeeste (Lichtenstein),	Lechwe,	Situtunga,
Bushpig,	Hippopotamus,	Leopard,	Stembuck,
Cheetah,	Hunting Dog,	Lion,	Tsessebe,
Crocodile,	Hyena,	Oribi,	Wart Hog,
Duiker (two species),	Impala,	Puku,	Waterbuck,
Eland,	Jackal,	Rhinoceros,	Wildebeeste,
Elephant, Giraffe,	Klipspringer,	Roan Antelope,	Zebra (Burchell's).

At the commencement of my description of each hunting ground, I give a list of the game the sportsman is likely to find. He will doubtless note that he has collected all the antelope mentioned as abounding in such-and-such a locality, so need not waste his time there, but he is sure to find some individuals in one or other of the described hunting grounds which he especially desires to shoot.

We will first describe the hunting grounds accessible from Livingstone.

I.—SIMARAH.

Game obtainable are:—Hippopotamus, Lichtenstein Hartebeeste, Roan Antelope, Wildebeeste (Brindled Gnu), Lechwe, Puku, Burchell's Zebra, Oribi, and Reedbuck.

The Simaraha flats form, in my opinion, by far the most fascinating ground I have even hunted over. They are situated between Kazungula and Sesheke, on the Zambesi river, or, to be more precise, I should say between the rivers Umgwezi and Machili (see map at end of pamphlet), where these two rivers empty themselves into the Zambesi.

The best time of the year for visiting this hunting ground is during the months of September and October. It is, in fact, of little use going to Simaraha much before the middle of September, as the very long grass is still unburnt. When the grass is burnt off, it would appear that all the game which frequents the Umgwezi, Kasaia and Machili rivers during the other months of the year, congregates on these vast flats and drink night and morning from the Zambezi itself.

Here the sportsman will, at the right time of the year, see big game in hundreds. Here only have I seen anything to approach the number of game usually shown in the frontispiece of the old hunter's books. I well remember taking a friend to see this truly remarkable sight, who, with the aid of his glasses, counted no less than 87 Roan Antelope in one herd. Lichtenstein Hartebeeste, Burchell's Zebra, and Wildebeeste were there in larger herds, whilst, dotted about in small clumps, we saw Lechwe and Puku, and here and there some Oribi and a few Reedbuck.

But—there is, of course, a "but"—the mirage renders successful shooting very difficult. During the early morning and the evening the light is normal, but when the sun is hot, it is almost impossible to judge distances. The Antelope are there, but how far off, or how near, only experience can teach; moreover, the ground is of such a nature that the hunter can seldom learn where his bullet falls, for little or no dust is thrown up by it.

Still, as I said before, the Simaraha flats are by far the most fascinating hunting ground I know.

To reach it, the sportsman hires canoes from Letia (Lewanika's son), who lives at Sesheke, a journey up the Zambezi from Kazungula occupying one day and a-half. From Livingstone to Kazungula is 45 miles, but the Zambezi is not navigable between these two points.

The sportsman, on arrival at Livingstone, can put up at one of the hotels—he will find one on either bank of the Zambezi—or he can, if he has come properly equipped, camp on the Livingstone township reserve on the north bank of the river; this is cheaper. He should call on the Civil Commissioner at Livingstone, and inform



A Zambesi Canoe.

him where he wishes to shoot. The Civil Commissioner will issue the necessary licence (see appendix "A"), and will communicate with Letia, with a view to getting the necessary canoes sent to Kazungula.

The sportsman can make arrangements with Mr. F. J. Clarke, or one of the other Livingstone merchants or transport riders, to have himself and his outfit conveyed to Kazungula.



Warthog.

Practically this is the same hunting ground as the Simaraha, but the sportsman can visit it a little earlier, say, September.

When hunting on Simaraha, one would pitch one's camp on the river bank, but, in the case of the ground I am now describing, it would be advisable to make headquarters in the "Mopani" Forest, or on the banks of the

Until he hears that his canoes are at Kazungula, he can spend his time most enjoyably in exploring the river and the Victoria Falls or he may, if he be a fisherman, obtain most excellent sport with the "tiger" fish (see Chapter IV.)

It is as well to take a shot gun to Simaraha, and, in fact, to any other hunting ground, as game birds or wild fowl can always be obtained.

So much, then, for Simaraha, and I feel sure that if the sportsman pays that hunting ground a visit, he will not be disappointed, provided he times his visit as advised, viz., during the months of September and October.

II.—SESHEKE RIVERS HUNTING GROUND.

Obtainable:—Eland, Roan Antelope, Lion, Wildebeeste, Zebra (Burchell's), Wart Hog, Palla, Duiker, Stembuck, Oribi.

This hunting ground is best reached from Sesheke. The sportsman may find that he is able to hire horses at Sesheke, but the rough nature of the ground restricts their use to the road and native paths.

Machili or Kasaia rivers. It would, in fact, be more comfortable. When hunting the Simaraha, the sportsman must carry wood for his fire a long distance, here he will find both wood and water plentiful.

He would hunt in the "Mopani" Forest for Palla, Wart Hog, Lion, and Roan Antelope, on the edge of the forest nearest the Zambesi river for Lichtenstein Hartebeeste, Zebra (Burchell's), Wildebeeste, and Duiker, and a short distance into the flats for Oribi and Stembuck.

It would be well for the sportsman to know that the Kasaia river contains more crocodiles than any other river in North-Western Rhodesia. They are most voracious, and very bold, due, no doubt, to overcrowding.

When describing Simaraha, I told the sportsman how to reach Sesheke by canoe. On arrival he should visit the District Commissioner, and obtain the necessary information to enable him to engage a guide, carriers, etc. These will be supplied by Letia (Lewanika's son), or by the hotel proprietor at Sesheke.

The goodwill of the Chief is always worth having. He smokes; is a keen photographer, fisherman and hunter; he owns a few horses, and likes everything the white man makes use of. These hints may help the sportsman, if he wishes, to select a little present for the Chief.

III.—THE BANKS OF THE ZAMBESI RIVER AS A HUNTING GROUND.

Game obtainable:—Buffalo, Bushbuck, Crocodile, Duiker, Eland, Elephant, Giraffe, Grysbuck, Hartebeeste (Lichtenstein's), Hippopotamus, Hyena, Impala, Koodoo, Lechwe, Lion, Oribi, Puku, Reedbuck, Rhinoceros, Roan Antelope, Sable Antelope, Situtunga, Stembuck, Tsessebe, Wart Hog, Waterbuck, Wildebeeste, Zebra (Burchell's).

The above list of game obtainable on the banks of the Zambesi is a long one. A glance at the map, however, will show the sportsman that the country over which he must search for this game is very extensive.

Game abounds on both banks of the river, from a few miles above Sesheke to Sinanga, situated at the foot of the Barotse Valley (see map).

Buffalo may be found on the Njoko river in small herds. I have also met with them on the Lui river. Bushbuck are found on the wooded banks of the rivers running into the Zambesi. Large numbers of crocodiles are seen on the sand banks, and wherever the water is sluggish.

The Duiker is, of course, met with everywhere.

Elephants are not plentiful anywhere in North-Western Rhodesia, so the hunter must trust entirely to his luck. They have been seen in small herds on the Njoko, Lumbi, and Lui rivers, and sometimes on the western bank of the Zambesi itself, near Sinanga.

The Giraffe is only found on the western side of the Zambesi, and usually some distance from the river.

A day can hardly pass without the sportsman meeting with many Hippopotami, either basking in the shallows, or rising and sinking in mid-stream.

The best time to shoot them is in the early morning, when they may often be observed close to the bank. When the moon is full, the sportsman may enjoy night shooting on land.

Whenever there is meat in camp, nocturnal visits from the Hyena may be expected.

The Impala Antelope is to be found almost anywhere on either bank. The Koodoo is scarce, but exists in places where the bush is more than usually thick. I have met with them on the Kakengi river, near Sioma (see map), and hear that a few are still to be found in the vicinity of the numerous rapids between Katima Molilo and Sioma (see map).

Lechwe and Puku run in large herds on the western bank of the Zambesi, wherever the ground is open and swampy. Both may also be found some little distance up the Njoko river.

A Lion may be met with anywhere, but are especially plentiful in the Mopani forests on the Njoko river.

Wherever the ground is open, but dry, the sportsman may expect to bag Oribi and Stembuck.

The Rhinoceros is now rare, but it has been seen in the rocky country between the Njoko and Lui rivers.

Roan Antelope are found in the open country a mile or two from the river bank. Sable are not uncommon on the eastern bank of the river. The hunter should not expect to meet with Situtunga unless he can arrange for a native drive. This Antelope lives in the extensive reed swamps, from which the natives drive it by setting fire to the reed beds.

Stembuck are found on the same ground as the Oribi. Tsessebe are only to be shot on the western bank of the Zambesi. Warthog are most plentiful in the Mopani forests, on both banks of the Zambesi, and up the Njoko river.

Waterbuck are very numerous, and are seldom found more than half a mile from water. They frequent the



banks of the Zambesi and its tributaries, preferring rocky ground. Wildebeeste and Zebra are very common, and usually found in company with Tsessebe or Hartbeeste.

To explore this hunting ground successfully and comfortably the sportsman should hire three or four native dug-out canoes. These he may obtain at Sesheke, from Letia. He should be very careful to arrange a price before leaving Sesheke, so as to avoid possible disputes when the time comes for paying-off his paddlers. I strongly advise him to negotiate through the District Commissioner.

I can give no definite idea of where the sportsman is certain to find game, but during my many journeys up and down the Zambesi, between the two points mentioned, I have landed, haphazard, whenever I required meat, and do not remember a blank day.

If the hunter is also fond of wild fowl shooting and fishing, he may reasonably expect to have a truly delightful time. The sand banks teem with wild fowl of every description, whilst the river contains unlimited numbers of hungry tiger-fish.

The Zambesi, in many places much resembles the Thames above Boulter's Lock, on a very large scale, of course. There are many rapids and falls, for a description of which, see page 29.



Hyena.

IV.—THE ZAMBESI'S NORTHERN TRIBUTARIES.

Before leaving the subject of the Zambesi Hunting Ground, it might be as well to inform the sportsman that good shooting exists a little to the north of Lealui.

Under an agreement with Lewanika, shooting over the best ground is prohibited by law. (See Game Law, sections 30 and 31, Appendix A).

If the sportsman wishes to hunt over this ground—and he will get Lechwe, Puku, and, possibly, Situtunga, there—he must first obtain permission from the Administrator, and from Lewanika, through him.

There is excellent shooting to be had on both banks of the Kabompo river (see map page 41).



The Kabompo River.

Elephants are plentiful, and, it is said, so are Rhinoceri. In fact, the Kabompo river has been so little hunted, that its banks afford probably the best shooting in North-Western Rhodesia. It should, however, be borne in mind that a long time must be spent in getting there, and anyone wishing to test its possibilities, should leave the Falls not later than the end of May, travelling *via* Kazungula, Sesheke, and Lealui.

It is not necessary to obtain special permission to shoot on the Kabompo river, unless, of course, it is desired to kill game mentioned in Schedule 3 of the Game Law (see Appendix A).



Source of the Kabompo River.

Anyone wishing to organise a shoot north of Lealui, should make a point of arranging all such details as rate of wages of guides, paddlers, etc., through the District Commissioner—his house is at Mongu, seven miles from Lealui—for natives have a happy knack of forgetting the precise terms of a verbal contract.

The railway construction is already beyond Kalomo, which the reader will remember as the headquarters of the Administration.

There is very fair shooting to be had within reasonable distance of this place. If the sportsman is not afraid of walking, I would strongly advise him to hunt along the main road towards Lealui. I mention walking, because almost everywhere else on the Batoka Plateau, horses may be used. Some 35 miles west of Kalomo, on the road



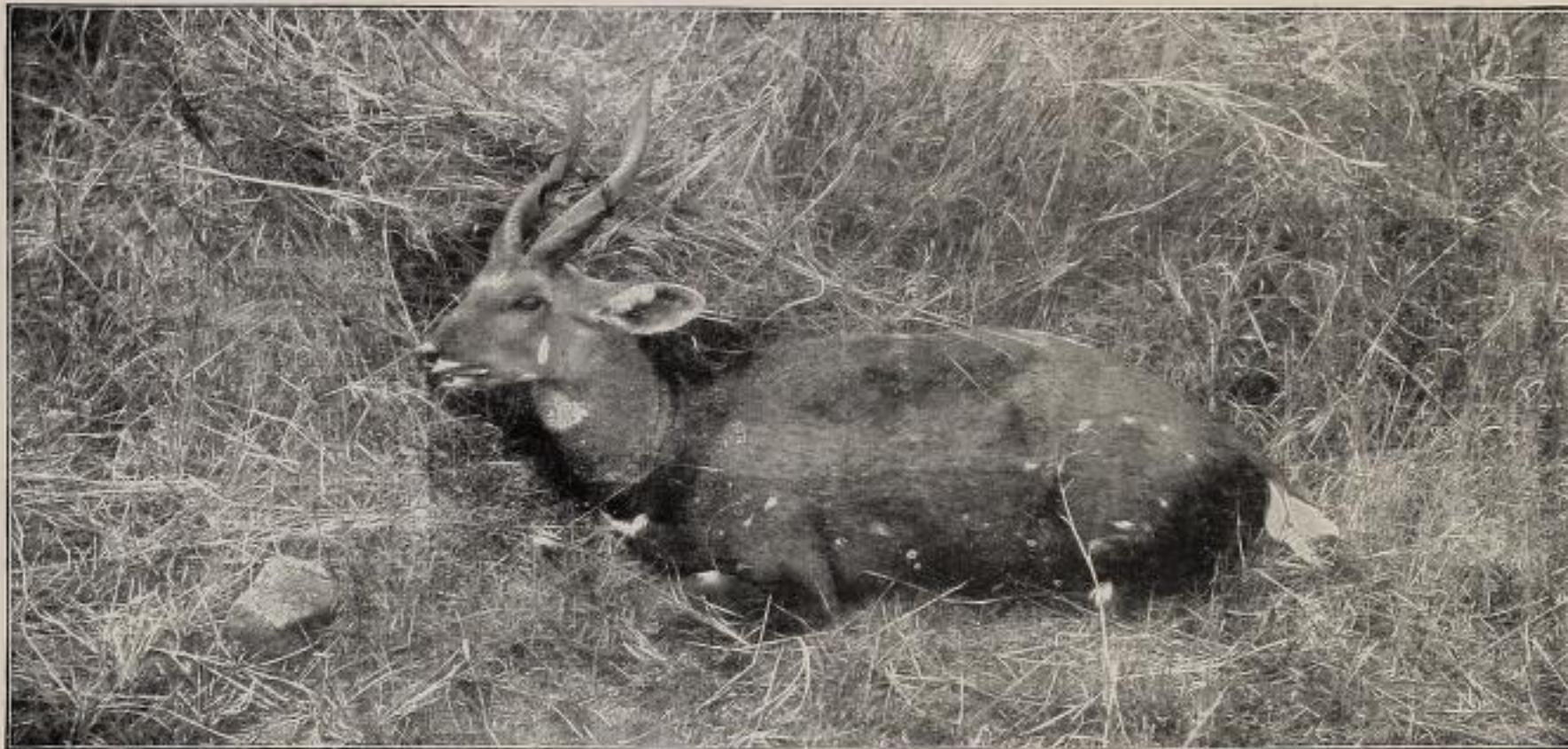
Buffalo.



Koodoo.

to Lealui, the deadly Tsetse fly is so numerous as to be a real danger to dogs and horses. Still, very good shooting is to be had beyond the "fly belt" through which this road runs, to the distance of about 23 miles. The sportsman must cover this distance during the night, for when it is dark the "fly" is inactive. The fly is very much more prevalent in this "belt" during some months of the year, but it is never safe to halt with horses and dogs anywhere where it might be encountered.

It is not worth while shooting beyond the Machili river in this direction. In the Machili river valley Puku are numerous on the right-hand side of the road, whilst Lechwe run in large herds to the left.



Bushbuck.

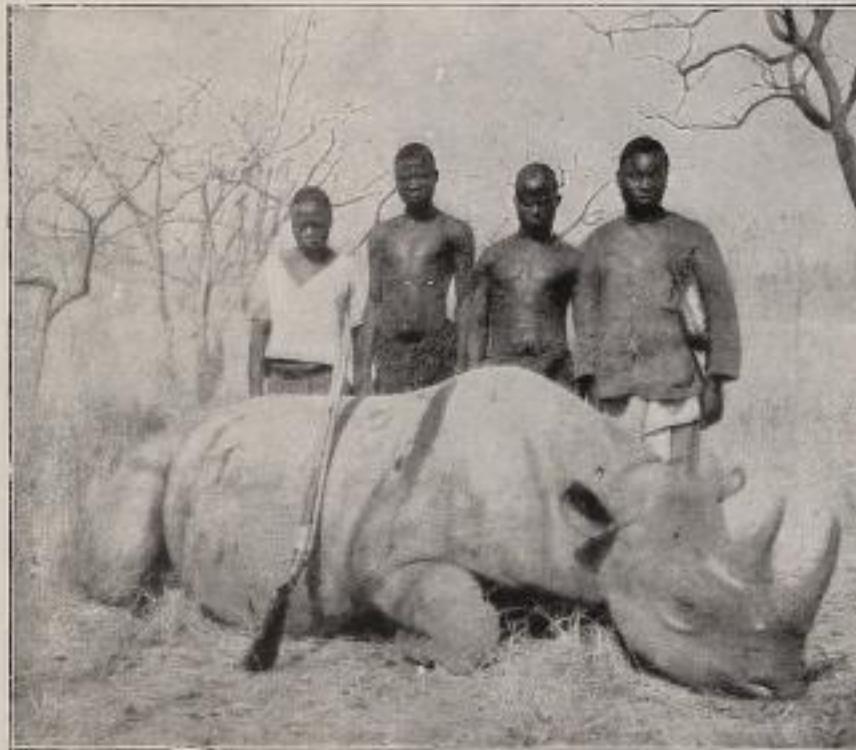
It will be found best to engage the natives of the kraals in the neighbourhood to drive the Lechwe up wind, past a hiding place previously selected.

From the Machili, travelling in a north-easterly direction towards the Kafue river (see map), very good game

country is passed through; but, as the Tsetse fly extends almost up to Nkala, horses cannot be used. Elephants, Rhinoceri, Buffalo, and Koodoo are said to exist in this "fly-belt."

There is a large herd of Buffalo not far from Nkala (see map page 41).

Starting again from Kalomo, the sportsman might travel in a north-easterly direction towards the Kafue



Rhinoceros.

river valley, on the edge of which he should meet with Eland, Sable Antelope, Palla, Bush Pig, and Wart Hog. Nearer the river itself he should find Roan Antelope, Wildebeeste, Hartebeeste (Lichtenstein), Zebra (Burchell's), Lechwe, Pookoo, Reedbuck, and Oribi.

Again, starting from Kalomo, and travelling along what is known as the Monze road, to Siacheduntula's kraal, a thick forest country is reached. In this forest are a few Rhinoceri, Buffalo, Sable Antelope, and Bushbuck,

whilst Elephants are known to pass through it occasionally. Should the sportsman extend his journeys in a north-easterly direction, towards the Kafue river, he would meet with very good shooting.

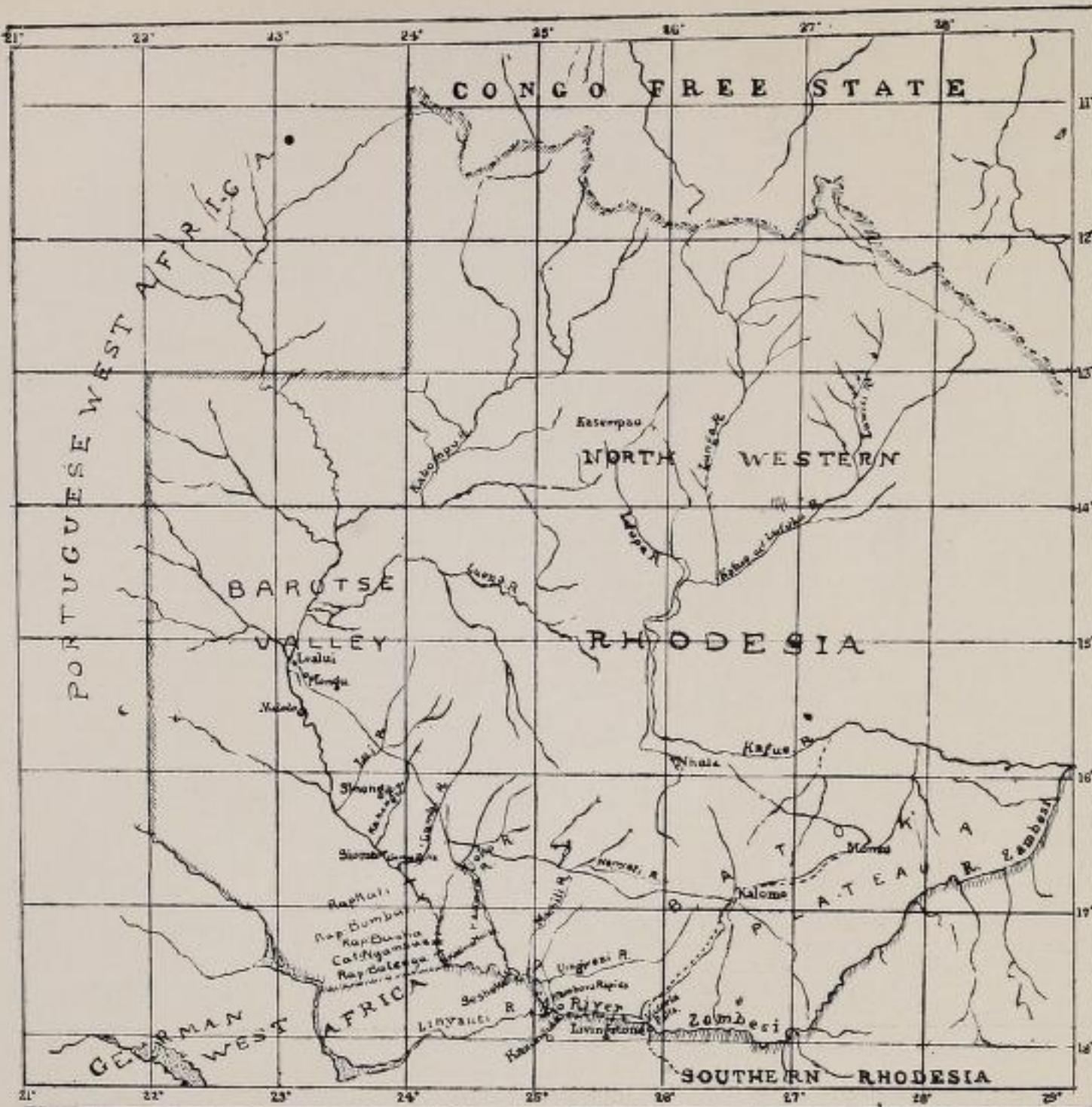
Of the equally good game country beyond the Kafue river I will not speak, for I think I have said quite



Waterbuck.

enough to show the reader that the country is well worth visiting, and I have no wish to run the risk of wearying him.

Should the sportsman wish to go beyond the Kafue, he will be able to obtain the necessary information locally.



SKETCH MAP.