

# AFRICAN GAME TRAILS—by THEODORE ROOSEVELT

AN ACCOUNT OF THE AFRICAN WANDERINGS  
OF AN AMERICAN HUNTER-NATURALIST

## Camping Alone on the Guaso Nyero, a River of the Equatorial Desert

In the tenth of the fourteen great articles of African big game hunting and adventure, Colonel Roosevelt tells of the adventures that befell him when he went off alone into the wilderness and hunted the big game without the guidance of a professional—How Kermit and his companion ran into eleven lions and killed all grown ones—Hunting along the Guaso Nyero

With Illustrations From Photographs by Kermit Roosevelt and Other Members of the Expedition.



This is the tenth of the fourteen great articles of African big game hunting and adventure by Theodore Roosevelt that are appearing exclusively every Sunday in the Capital News. These articles, from Colonel Roosevelt's own account of his African expedition, "African Game Trails"—one of the greatest books of big game hunting and adventure ever written—the Capital News has secured for exclusive publication in the territory it serves through special arrangements with Charles Scribner's Sons.

Last week Colonel Roosevelt described his first and second elephant hunts on Mount Kenia. A portion of the period that elapsed between these two hunts he spent hunting alone on an uninhabited plain. What befell him there he tells in today's story; and he also describes the hunting along the Guaso Nyero that followed when the last elephant hunting was over.

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WHEN I reached Neri, after coming down from killing my first elephant on Kenia, I was kept waiting two or three days before I could gather enough Kikuyu porters. As I could not speak a word of their language, I got a couple of young Scotch settlers, very good fellows, to take charge of the safari out to where I intended to hunt. \* \* \*

At last 50 Kikuyus assembled—they are not able to carry the loads of regular Swahili porters—and I started that moment, though it was too late in the afternoon to travel more than three or four miles. The Kikuyus were real savages, naked save for a dingy blanket, usually carried around the neck. They formed a picturesque safari; but it was difficult to make the grasshopper-like creatures take even as much thought for the future as the ordinary happy-go-lucky porters take.

At night if it rained they covered under the bushes in drenched and shivering discomfort; and yet they had to be driven to make bough shelters for themselves. Once these shelters were up, and a little fire kindled at the entrance of each, the moping, spiritless wretches would speedily become transformed into beings who had lost all resemblance of ever having been wet or cold. After their posho (food) had been distributed and eaten they would sit, huddled and cheerful, in their shelters, and sing steadily for a couple of hours.

Our first afternoon's march was unevent-



An Oryx Shot by Kermit Roosevelt. (From a Photograph by Kermit Roosevelt.)



The Ordinary Giraffe Shot by Colonel Roosevelt. (Photo by Kermit Roosevelt.)

ful; but I was amused at one of our porters and the "safari" ants. These safari ants are so called by the natives because they go on foraging expeditions in immense numbers. The big-headed warriors are able to inflict a really painful bite.

In open spaces, as where crossing a path, the column makes a little sunken way through which it streams uninterruptedly. Whenever we came to such a safari ant column, in its sunken way, crossing our path, the porter in question laid two twigs on the ground as a peace offering to the ants. He said that they were on safari, just as we were, and that it was wise to propitiate them.

That evening we camped in a glade in the forest. Next day we came out on the plains, where there was no cultivation, and instead of the straggling thatch and wattle, unfenced villages of the soil-tilling Kikuyus, we found ourselves again among the purely pastoral Masai, whose temporary villages are arranged in a ring or oval, the cattle being each night herded in the middle, and the mud-daubed cow-dung-plastered houses so placed that their backs form a nearly continuous circular wall, the spaces between being choked with thorn bushes.

### Alone on the African Plains.

The day after we were out on plains untenanted by human beings, and early in the afternoon struck water by which to pitch our tents. There was not much game, and it was shy; but I thought that I could kill enough to keep the camp in meat, so I sent back the two Scotchmen and their Kikuyus, after having them build a thorn boma, or fence, round the camp. One of the reasons why the Masai had driven their herds and flocks off this plain was because a couple of lions had turned man-eaters, and had killed a number of men and women. We saw no sign of lions, and believed they had followed the Masai; but there was no use in taking needless chances.

The camp was beside a cold, rapid stream, one of the head waters of the Guaso Nyero. It was heavily fringed with thorn timber. To the east the crags and snow fields of Kenia rose from the slow swell of the mountain's base.

### Bagging a Bull Eland.

I hunted along the edges of a big swamp. We saw waterbuck, but were unable to get within shot. However, near the farther end of the swamp, in an open swale, we found four eland feeding. The eland is the king of antelope; and not only did I desire meat for camp, but I wished the head of a good bull as a trophy for myself, the eland I had hitherto shot being for the national museum. The little band included a big bull, a small

bull, and two cows; at a distance the bull looked a slaty blue. The great, sleek, handsome creatures were feeding in the long grass just like cattle, switching their long tails at the flies. The country looked like a park, with clumps of thorn trees scattered over the grassy sward.

Carefully I crept on all fours from tree clump to tree clump, trying always to move when the eland's heads were down grazing. At last I was within 300 yards, when one of the cows caught a glimpse of me and alarmed the others. They were startled, but puzzled, and after trotting a few rods turned to stare at the half-seen object of their alarm.

Rising to my knee I shot the big bull in the throat as with head erect he gazed in my direction. Off he went with a rush, the others bounding and leaping as they accompanied him, and we followed on the blood spoor. Bakhari and Gouvimali trotted fast on the trail, and in order to be fresh for the shot I mounted Tranquillity.

Suddenly out bounced the wounded bull from behind some bushes close by, and the horse nearly had a fit; I could hardly get off in time to empty my magazine at long range—fortunately with effect. It was a magnificent bull of the variety called Paterson's eland, with a fine head. Few prize oxen would be as heavy, and in spite of its great size, its finely moulded limbs and beautiful coat gave it a thoroughly game look.

### Stalking the Oryx.

Oryx were now what I especially wished, and we devoted all of the following day to their pursuit. We saw three bands, two of them accompanying herds of zebra, after the manner of kongoni. Both species were found indifferently on the bare, short-grass flats and among the thin, stunted thorn trees which covered much of the plains.

After a careful stalk, the latter part on all fours, I got within about 300 yards of a mixed herd, and put a bullet into one oryx as it faced me, and hit another as it ran. The first, from its position, I thought I would surely kill if I hit it at all, and both of the wounded beasts were well behind the herd when it halted a mile away on the other side of the plain. But as we approached they all went off together, and I can only hope the two I hit recovered; at any rate, after we had followed them for miles, the tough beasts were still running as strongly as ever.

All the morning I maneuvered and tramped hard, in vain. At noon I tried a stalk on a little band of six, who were standing still, idly switching their tails, out on a big flat. They saw me, and at 400 yards I

missed the shot. By this time I felt desperate, and decided for once to abandon legitimate proceedings and act on the Ciceronian theory, that he who throws the javelin all day must hit the mark some time. Accordingly I emptied the magazines of both my rifles at the oryx as they ran across my front, and broke the neck of a fine cow, at 450 yards.

Six or seven hundred yards off the survivors stopped, and the biggest bull, evidently much put out, uttered loud bawling grunts and drove the others round with his horns. Meanwhile I was admiring the handsome dun gray coat of my prize, its long tail and long, sharp, slender horns, and the bold black and white markings on its face. Hardly had we skinned the carcass before the vultures lit on it; and with them were two marabou storks, one of which I shot with a hard bullet from the Springfield.

The oryx, like the roan and sable, and in striking contrast to the eland, is a bold and hard fighter, and when cornered will charge a man or endeavor to stab a lion. If wounded it must be approached with a certain amount of caution. The eland, on the other hand, in spite of its huge size, is singularly mild and inoffensive, an old bull being as inferior to an oryx in the will and power to fight as it is in speed and endurance.

### The Amazing "Shenzis."

I had kept four Kikuyu with me to accompany me on my hunts and carry in the skins and meat. They were with me on this occasion; and it was amusing to see how my four regular attendants, Bakhari and Gouvimali the gun-bearers, Simba the sais and Kiboko the Skinner, looked down on their wild and totally uncivilized brethren. They would not associate with the "shenzis" as they called them; that is, savages or bush people. But the "shenzis" always amused and interested me; and this was especially true on the afternoon in question.

Soon after we had started campwards with the skin and meat of the oryx, we encountered a succession of thunder storms. The rain came down in a deluge, so that the water stood ankle deep on the flats, the lightning flashed continuously on every side and the terrific peals of thunder made one continuous roll. At first it maddened my horse; but the uninterrupted blaze and roar, just because uninterrupted, ended by making him feel that there was nothing to be done, and he plodded stolidly forward through the driving storm.

My regular attendants accepted it with an entire philosophy, which was finally copied by the Kikuyus, who at first felt frightened. One of them had an old umbrella which he shared with a crony. He himself was carrying the marabou stork; his crony had long strips of raw oryx meat wound in a swollen girdle about his waist; neither had a stitch on save the blankets which were wrapped round their throats; and they clasped each other in a tight embrace as they walked along under the battered old umbrella.

### The Majesty of the African Storms.

In this desolate and lonely land the majesty of the storms impressed on the beholder a sense of awe and solemn exaltation. Tossing their crests, and riven by lightning, they gathered in their wrath from every quarter of the heavens, and darkness was before and under them; then, in the lull of a moment, they might break apart, while the sun turned the rain to silver and the rainbows were set in the sky; but always they gathered again, menacing and mighty—for the promise of the bow was never kept, and ever the clouds returned after the rain.

Once as I rode facing Kenia the clouds tore asunder, to right and left, and the mountain towered between, while across its

base was flung a radiant arch. But almost at once the many-colored glory was dimmed; for in splendor and terror the storm strode in front, and shrouded all things from sight in thunder-shattered sheets of rain.

These days alone in the wilderness went by very pleasantly, and, as it was for not too long, I thoroughly enjoyed being entirely by myself, so far as white men were concerned. By this time I had become really attached to my native followers, who looked after my interest and comfort in every way; and in return I kept them supplied with plenty of food and saw that they were well clothed, and forced them to keep their tents dry and warm at night—for cold, rainy weather is always hard upon them.

In the daytime vultures, kites and white-necked ravens came round camp, and after nightfall jackals wailed and hyenas uttered their weird cries as they prowled outside the thorn walls. Twice, at midnight, we heard the ominous sighing and moaning of a hungry lion, and I looked to my rifle, which always stood, loaded, at the head of my bed. But on neither occasion did he come near us. Every night a fire was kept burning in the entrance to the boma, and the three askaris watched in turn, with instructions to call me if there was any need.

### Running Into Eleven Lions.

Late in the afternoon of September 3, Cuninghame and Heller, with the main safari, joined me, and I greeted them joyfully; while my men were equally pleased to see their fellows, each shaking hands with his especial friends. Next morning we started toward Meru, heading northeast, toward the foothills of Kenia (for the second elephant hunt, described last week) \* \* \*

Here we met Kermit and Tarlton, and heard all about their hunt. They had been away from us for three weeks and a half, along the Guaso Nyero, and had enjoyed first-rate luck. Kermit had been particularly interested in a caravan they had met, consisting of wild spear-bearing Borani, people like Somalis, who were bringing down scores of camels and hundreds of small horses to sell at Nairobi. They had come from the north, near the outlying Abyssinian lands, and the caravan was commanded by an Arab of stately and courteous manners.

This caravan had been followed by lions; and a day or two afterward Kermit and Tarlton ran into what were probably these very lions. There were eleven of them: a male with a heavy mane, three lionesses and seven cubs, some of them about half grown.

As Kermit and Tarlton galloped after them, the lion took the lead, the cubs coming in the middle, while the three lionesses loped along in the rear, guarding their young. The lion cared little for his wives and offspring, and gradually drew ahead of them, while the two horsemen, riding at full speed, made a wide detour round the others in order to reach him; so that at last they got between him and the ten lionesses and cubs, the big lion coming first, the horsemen next and then the lesser lions, all headed the same way.

### Bagging the Four Grown Lions.

As the horsehooves thundered closer the lion turned to bay. Kermit—whose horse had once fallen with him in the chase—and



Bringing in the Skull of My Second Bull Elephant. (From a Photograph by Theodore Roosevelt.)

