

28 THE GAME OF THE NORTH KAVIRONDO

The quartzite of Nos. 13 and 15 doubtless comes from the quartzite of the Kisii Highlands, probably from pebbles brought down by the Kuja river. In No. 15 this is certainly the case, for the reverse side shows the natural rounded surface of the pebble with only secondary chipping round the edge.

No. 14 is a quartz-porphry, rather similar to the quartz-porphry of Najanja at the south-east angle of Homa Bay.

Nos. 11 and 12 were found at Nira ; all the remainder come from Kachuku.

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THE GAME OF THE NORTH KAVIRONDO DISTRICT, NYANZA PROVINCE

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The North Kavirondo district is not noted for the abundance of game it contains, but many interesting mammals inhabit it.

The boundaries of the district are, roughly, the Yala River to the Lake ; the Lake shore to the mouth of the Sio River ; thence for about twenty miles up the Sio River, and from there to the Malaba River which it follows to Elgon ; about half of Elgon ; and the Nandi Escarpment down to the Yala River.

This large area differs considerably in the character of the country, and from a zoological point of view may be conveniently divided into three divisions.

Division 1.—The greater portion of the district consists of rolling grass-clad downs, with scattered bushes and small trees. Here and there are outcrops of rock and occasional copses, or woods of thorn bush and timber trees.

Nearly every valley is swampy during the rains. The grass, which mainly consists of spear-grass and red top, grows to a length of about five feet. This land is fairly thickly populated and does not hold much game, an occasional duiker or reedbuck (Ward's *Bohor*) being seen. Game birds are

fairly plentiful, such as snipe, quail, guinea-fowl, pigeon and an occasional francolin.

Division 2.—The swamps surrounding the Lake and the mouths of the various rivers such as the Yala and Nzoia, including the larger rivers themselves—these hold a variety of animals, such as hippopotami, *situtunga*, otter, crocodile, and such birds as egret, duck and geese.

Division 3.—The hills along the Nandi Escarpment, the valley of the Lusumu between these hills, the Nandi Escarpment, and the country from the Nandi Plateau to Elgon, all along the eastern boundary of the North Kavirondo district. Included in this division is Mount Elgon and its slopes. There are two large forests partly in this division, the fauna of which is fairly distinctive, viz. Kakamega and Elgon. The hills are all covered with small trees, and the grass is three to four feet long. The greater majority of the game inhabit this third division of the district towards Mount Elgon and north of the Nzoia; on the eastern side it becomes plentiful. The head of game is doubtless maintained by migration and stragglers from the uninhabited country to the north-east of the Nyanza Province and north of the Uasin Gishu.

The natives inhabiting the northern and eastern portion of the North Kavirondo district consist of the Nyarusi and cave-dwellers—Kitosh people (Bantu who circumcise), Tatzoni, and Uasin Gishu, Masai, who appear to have a good many Nandi living with them.

All these tribes possess and use bows and arrows and spears for hunting game, and are often assisted by their pariah dogs. They dig an extensive and elaborate system of pit-falls, often extending for over a mile in a curve, with a pit every few feet. For some reason these pits are now falling into disuse, but formerly they must have accounted for many beasts. They are very cunningly situated in the exact place where an animal would turn aside to avoid a bush—in fact so well situated are they even now, when the covering has disappeared, that on riding across country without following a native path the traveller's mule or one of his boys will suddenly vanish, and, in the case of an animal, be extricated only with difficulty.

The Bantu natives, inhabiting the first division of these

notes, are very skilful in trapping birds such as quail, snipe, and even guinea-fowl. In the case of quail, a most familiar sight on the country side are the poles on which are hung the decoy quails (in baskets) to attract their kindred to the snares. The quail and snipe are migratory. They are said to arrive when the *wimbi* is harvested. A few residents stay throughout the year. The flocks of guinea-fowl break up and pair about the beginning of April, and nest during that and the following months. Poults have been observed at the beginning of June and end of May. They are trapped by the natives with running nooses of string (sinew) set above or among grain placed to attract the birds. The noose is supported on a grass blade some inches from the ground, and attached to a piece of a small branch or pegged into the ground.

The game animals observed in this district are as follows :

MONKEYS

Colobus.—The ordinary *Colobus* monkey of East Africa is common in the Kakamega and Elgon forests. In the latter, the Dorobo and forest-dwelling Nyarusi state that it is migratory. It is said to come in large numbers, when the bamboo shoots are growing, to feed on them.

The *Grey Monkey* (*Cercopithecus grisœoviridis* (?)) occurs in the forests and along the rivers, and is also found in the small copses.

Blue Monkey (*Cercopithecus sykesi* var. (?))—There are two or three varieties of the blue monkey in the district. They are all confined to the Kakamega and Elgon forests. The three varieties are :—

1. The *blue monkey*, showing a dirty white patch on the side of the face and on the side of the buttocks. A more or less reddish triangular patch, apex upwards, on the loins. The fur of this variety is rather short. Habitat, Kakamega forest.

2. The *blue monkey* from the lower slopes of Elgon. Both sexes have dark blue fur. No reddish patch. The face and 'whiskers' black.

3. The *blue monkey* from the higher slopes of Elgon, with long

blue fur, slightly yellowish in the male, face black, whiskers dark blue; found up to about 11,000 feet. This animal grows to a considerable size. Kaross, sewn of the skins of this animal, appear to form part of the insignia of a headman. Many sub-chiefs and headmen may be seen wearing these robes, both Masai and Kavirondo. They do not appear to be worn by inferiors, but this may be due to the price requested by the seller, viz. an ox is given by the purchaser to the Nyarusi or Dorobo who sell the skin. A goat is stated to be returned by the vendor by way of change. At least two species of *Hyrax* are found on Elgon: the ordinary 'Rock Rabbit' and a tree *Hyrax* farther up the mountain. The fur of this *Hyrax* is not so full or thick as the specimens found on the Mau. It is not very common.

UNGULATES

Rhinoceros.—A single rhinoceros is stated to be living in Ngonga's country (Yala River). Originally there were two, but one was destroyed. They are stated to have strayed there. The natives state that a very occasional rhinoceros is seen in Division 3, obviously stragglers who have lost their way or are following some forgotten migratory route. Rhinoceros horn *runigus* are not uncommon among the Masai and Nyarusi, but are stated to have been brought from a distance.

Hippopotamus is common in the larger rivers and ascends up them to near the Nandi Escarpment. They ascend the rivers during the rains, in flood water. Many stay during the dry season in the pools—in fact, nearly every large reach contains one or two hippo. They do an enormous amount of damage to the crops of the natives, who constantly cultivate a strip along the rivers. Except where they have been molested, they show little fear of man and may occasionally be seen feeding as late as 10 A.M. This may be due to the fact that many of them appear to be blind either in one or both eyes. In undisturbed pools (except for the odd poisoned arrow of the hunter), they will rise and sink in the water all day or lie up in the reedbeds. If, however, they are driven out of these they usually show great curiosity as to what has disturbed them.

This curiosity appears to be a well-marked trait ; if an animal which is known to inhabit a pool is not visible, a succession of whistles will usually make it 'show up.' This fact may be tested any day in the Nzoia, in undisturbed places. On the other hand, where the hippo has been fired at, or molested in any way, the beast will show marvellous ingenuity in concealing itself from dawn till about 5.30 P.M. Breathing is performed under cover of an overhanging branch, an overlapping shelf of bank, or in the cover of the reeds ; and were it not for the occasional slight sound of an expiration, the observer would state that the pool was entirely uninhabited by animal life. The native name (Iffufo) is imitative of this sound. In the lake and at the mouths of the rivers, hippopotami are very numerous, living in large schools.

The Elephant occurs in the Elgon forests to the east of the mountain, and they migrate to and from the country north of the Uasin Gishu. Formerly they had a much greater range of country. A single elephant is resident in Ngonga's country near the Samia Hills. He has been seen by Europeans, and is stated to be the survivor of three who crossed the lake at the mouth of the Kavirondo gulf. This is, of course, a straggler.

Buffalo (Bos caffer) occur on the lower slopes of Elgon. As rinderpest has broken out in villages in the vicinity of which they graze, a mortality among these animals may be expected.

Hartebeest (Bubalis Jacksonii) occur over the whole of Division No. 3, in herds of five or six. North of and near the Nzoia they are common in this division. Their colouring appears to be of a deeper red and they appear to show more black on the skin at the fetlock than specimens in the Rift Valley and Mau slopes.

Waterbuck (Kobus defassa) are fairly common in the same neighbourhood. Some of the males carry very large horns. They appear to be very tame.

Thomas' Kob (Kobus Thomasi) occur in the same division from near the Kakamega forest to the foot of Elgon, usually in herds of ten or twelve does and a buck. Solitary bucks are often encountered. In the parts stated above, it is common.

According to native report, a similar animal, only darker and with white ears, occurs on the western boundary of the district. This may be *Kobus Leucotis*, but the natives may mean in Uganda.

Oribi are common in division No. 3. They may be observed with young at foot in May.

Duiker (*Cephalophus grimmii* (?)) occur throughout the whole district, even near villages whose inhabitants will consume any form of meat (excepting crocodiles and marabout). This buck will probably be the last survivor among wild African ungulates, centuries hence.

The *blue duiker* (*Cephalophus* (?)), or Uganda blue buck, occurs in large numbers in the Kakamega forest where it is regularly hunted by the natives (with bows and arrows) for its meat. No use appears to be made of its skin. It is rare to see clothes made of it.

The *reedbuck* (*Cervicapra redunca wardii*) occurs throughout the whole district in limited numbers. Its habits here are shy and retiring. It appears not to move before dark and to return before the dawn.

The *bushbuck* (*Tragelaphus scriptus* var. (?)) occurs in the Kakamega and Elgon forests. It does not appear to be very common. A tendency to increase the white markings on the head and body appears to be shown. This may possibly be a transitional stage towards the West Coast type.

The *situtungu* (*Tragelaphus spekii*) probably occurs over a large area in scattered bands. It is well known to the natives living near the Vala swamps. It occurs (on the evidence of its spoor¹) in the Nzoia Valley (North Kavirondo district), and there it is said by the natives to have been more plentiful formerly.

Many of the larger papyrus swamps, if they could be properly driven, might give evidence of its presence. The *pig* family are represented by the *giant pig* (*Hochoerus*) and the *bush pig* (*Potamochoerus*). An occasional *wart-hog* (*Phacochoerus*) may stray over the eastern boundary, but is very rare, although the tusks of this animal are greatly prized as ornaments by the Kavirondo.

¹ The spoor was well known to a native hunter (Dorobo).

The *giant pig* occurs in considerable numbers in the Elgon forests. The skins are valued for shields, but both this and the bush pig are treated with considerable respect by the inhabitants.

The *bush pig* occurs both in Kakamega and Elgon forests.

Carnivores include among their representatives otter, lion, leopard, serval cat, gennet and hyæna (*crocuta* and *striata*).

Otter are common on the rivers and in the lake. Their spoor is frequently seen, but the animal itself but rarely. The skins are valued by the Kavirondo who capture them in their fish traps. Its diet appears to include the fresh-water crabs common in all streams, but the claws are usually left intact and rejected.

The *lion* is scarce but occurs along the eastern boundary and in division No. 3 of the district. They are much feared by the Kavirondo.

The *leopard* is scantily distributed over the whole district, occurring occasionally in very unexpected places. Probably these occurrences are due to a travelling animal.

In the Elgon forest the leopard appear to be common, those on the higher slopes developing magnificent fur. They have practically finished the goats of the forest-dwelling Nyarusi. They may be heard any night when the traveller is camped in the vicinity of the mountain.

The *serval cat* appears at intervals whenever there is sufficient bush for cover. It draws a great part of its food from the hens of the natives. It is easily killed with the aid of dogs, as it will ascend a tree on being attacked.

The *common gennet* (*Genetta vivena*) likewise is widely distributed.

The most plentiful carnivore is undoubtedly the spotted hyæna (*H. crocuta*), who is ubiquitous. They do not confine their attentions solely to carrion, but will attack and destroy a lost calf or sheep. Recently, while cattle have been dying of rinderpest, their call is very much in evidence near infected villages. They are greatly disliked by the natives.

In the Tatzoni country, near the Nzoia, the *striped hyæna* (*Hycæna striata*) occurs.

The peculiar cry has been heard and the animal seen, though by moonlight. The Tatsoni themselves have a special name for it, viz. Sirgoin, the common hyæna being called Iffisi. They state the animal comes down from the Nandi hills.

The *crocodile* is common in all large rivers and in the lake. Those in the Lusumu river bear a specially bad reputation, probably as more accidents have occurred there. Individual crocodiles appear to favour certain rocks, which are known to the natives, for the purpose of sunning themselves. The traveller is constantly being told of certain crocodiles who have been known for long periods to frequent the same pool or reach of the river. The natives' stories seem to have some foundation.

The district contains many game birds as stated above, such as guinea fowls, quail, snipe, francolin, pigeon and parrot.

The *pigeon* comprise : (1) The large blue pigeon, common in forests in East Africa, with a yellow bill and cere, and white 'chequers' on the scapulars; (2) the large blue pigeon (*Columba guinea*) with red cere and wattles; red scapular with white 'chequers.' These occur near the Elgon and Kakamega forests; and the green pigeon, Kakamega.

The African *turtle-doves* are distributed over the whole province. The rosy breasted turtle and the laughing turtle (?) both occur.

Parrots are represented by the grey parrot (*Psittacus erythicus*) and a small green *Pococephalus*, similar, but smaller, to the Jardine parrot of the West Coast.

Marabout storks occur in twos or threes near any carrion and are widely distributed.

The *lesser egret* is fairly common.

The Nzoia, Yala, and Lusumu rivers contain a most sporting *cyprinoid fish* who will freely rise to the natural fly (and probably to an imitation dressed to suit the local conditions). The first rushes of this fish, on being hooked, are within comparing distance of a trout.

A list of the Kavirondo and Tatzoni names of animals is appended.

English Name	Bantu Kavirondo Name	Tatsoni Name
Colobus monkey	Ndivisi	Ndivisi
Blue monkey	Eshima (monkey (?))	Esobolé
Hyrax	—	Kenewa kel goynyi. Translation (?): The runner into rocks on Elgon
Rhino	Kiveo	Kiveo
Hippo	Iffufu (monkey (?))	Iffufu (said explo- sively)
Elephant	Nsofu	Nsofu
„ tusks	Luika	Msanga
Buffalo	Mbogo	Mbogo
Hartebeest	Esuma	Konguna
Kobus Thomasi	Esululumé	Esunu
Waterbuck	Eholu	Eholu
Oribi	Hatsusu	Ehissi
Duiker	Eweh	Eweh
Reedbuck	Eporé	Injia
Situtunga	Mbongo	Mbongo
Bushbuck	Sembereri	Sembereri
Pig (wart-hog)	Mbitzi	Mbitz
Giant Pig	Injiri	—
Bush Pig	Mbiri	—
Otter	Endoholu	—
Marabout Stork	Ololoi	Chemonoi
Lion	Talaing	Talaing
Leopard	Ingwe	Ingwe
Serval Cat	Imbwe	Imbwe
Ferret	Disimba	Disimba
(Mongoose (?))		
Hyæna, spotted	Iffiss	Iffisi
„ striped	—	Sirgoin
Crocodile	Ekwena	Ekwena
