

THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE SPOOR AND DUNG OF
EAST AFRICAN MAMMALS.

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PART I. THE ANTELOPES

INTRODUCTION

As the primary function of these articles is to illustrate the tracks and droppings of the more common mammals found in East Africa, only the briefest of notes on the animals will be given. They are designed to indicate the type of country in which to expect the tracks shown and whenever possible definite localities have been named. Neither the spoor nor the dung of every East African mammal has yet been encountered by the author and so the series of articles is by no means comprehensive.

It must be remembered that although the spoor as illustrated shows the complete imprint of the foot, in practice a perfect track is seldom found. Moreover, the following points should be borne in mind when attempting to identify spoor :—

- i. The hooves of antelope tend to splay out when the animal is running. In these cases the marks of the hoof tips will be much deeper than usual and the rounded, back portion may not show at all.
- ii. The young animals of a large species often make tracks similar to those of mature animals of a smaller species. If such is the case however, the similar, but larger footprints of the adult female will almost certainly be found at the same time.
- iii. In many cases the imprint of the hind foot is slightly different to that of the forefoot.

The dung of antelopes is frequently found not as separate pellets but as a compressed mass. Normally however, the characteristic shape of the pellets can still be seen. When young animals are present their smaller dung can cause the same confusion as their smaller spoor, until one comes across the larger droppings of the adult.

Dikdik *Rhynchotragus kirkii* (Kiswahili: dikidiki, suguya)

There are four races of dikdik found in East Africa generally distributed in bush and dry country. As they have a habit of returning to the same place to deposit their droppings, the dung is found as heaps of small, black pellets. The spoor can easily be confused with that of the Blue Duiker.

Steinbok *Raphicerus campestris* (Kiswahili: paa, dondoro)

These are of general distribution and are found in grassland or bush where they occur singly or in pairs. The dung is similar in appearance to that of a dikdik but rather smaller.

Klipspringer *Oreotragus oreotragus* (Kiswahili: mbuzi mawe, ngurunguru)

This antelope is found in mountainous and rocky country and consequently the spoor is but rarely seen, particularly as normally only the tips of the hooves touch the ground. It differs from that of the other small antelope by having broad, rounded tips. The klipspringer has been recorded from the Ngong Hills, Kedong Hills, the Naivasha area, Kilimanjaro, the Pare Hills, Moshi, Arusha, Tabora, Dodoma, Mbeya, Kigoma, Iringa, Mwanza and Musoma.

Common Duiker *Cephalophus grimmia* (Kiswahili: paa, nsya)

Generally distributed and found singly or in pairs, this duiker inhabits tall grassland, thin forest and bushland. Like the dikdik it returns to the same place to deposit its droppings which are very like those of the dikdik although without the pronounced "pear-shape" of the latter.

Blue Duiker *Cephalophus monticola* (Kiswahili: paa)

The Blue Duiker is found singly or in pairs in forest and thick bush. Once again the droppings are found in localised heaps.

Red Duiker *Cephalophus harveyi* (Kiswahili: funo)

This duiker is found in the bushland and forests of high localities such as the Aberdares, Usambaras and Kilimanjaro. Its spoor is much larger than that of the preceding duikers although of the same shape. Its dung similarly is much larger.

Yellow-backed Duiker *Cephalophus sylvicultor* (Kiswahili: paa)

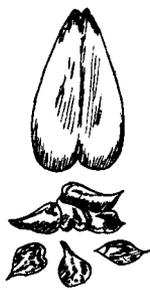
This is the largest of the duikers and is found singly or in pairs in forest. It occurs in the Mau Forest. Its footprint compares both in size and shape with that of a bushbuck. No sample of its dung has yet been found.

Oribi *Ourebia ourebi* (Kiswahili: taya)

Usually found in couples or small parties in thin bush. Sometimes it is found in mountainous country such as the Mau district. Its dung is similar to that of the common duiker but is longer and thinner. Its spoor is similar to but much smaller than that of a hartebeest and apart from the type of country might be mistaken for that of a Thomson's gazelle.

Bushbuck *Tragelaphus scriptus* (Kiswahili: pongo, mbwala)

Found singly or in pairs the bushbuck is generally distributed in forest and bush. It is abundant near Lamu, the Mau district



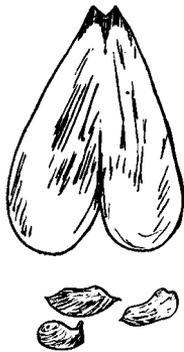
DIK-DIK



STEINKOK



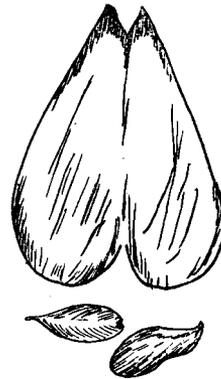
KLIPSPRINGER



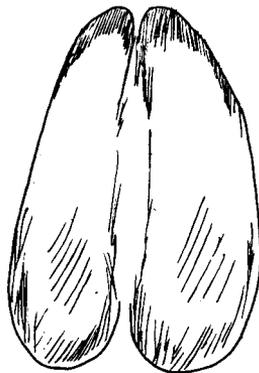
COMMON DUIKER



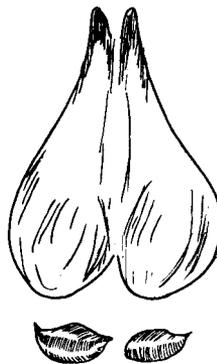
BLUE DUIKER



RED DUIKER



YELLOW BACKED DUIKER



ORIBI



BUSHBUCK

PLATE 1. "Spoor and dung of E. African Antelopes." (natural size).

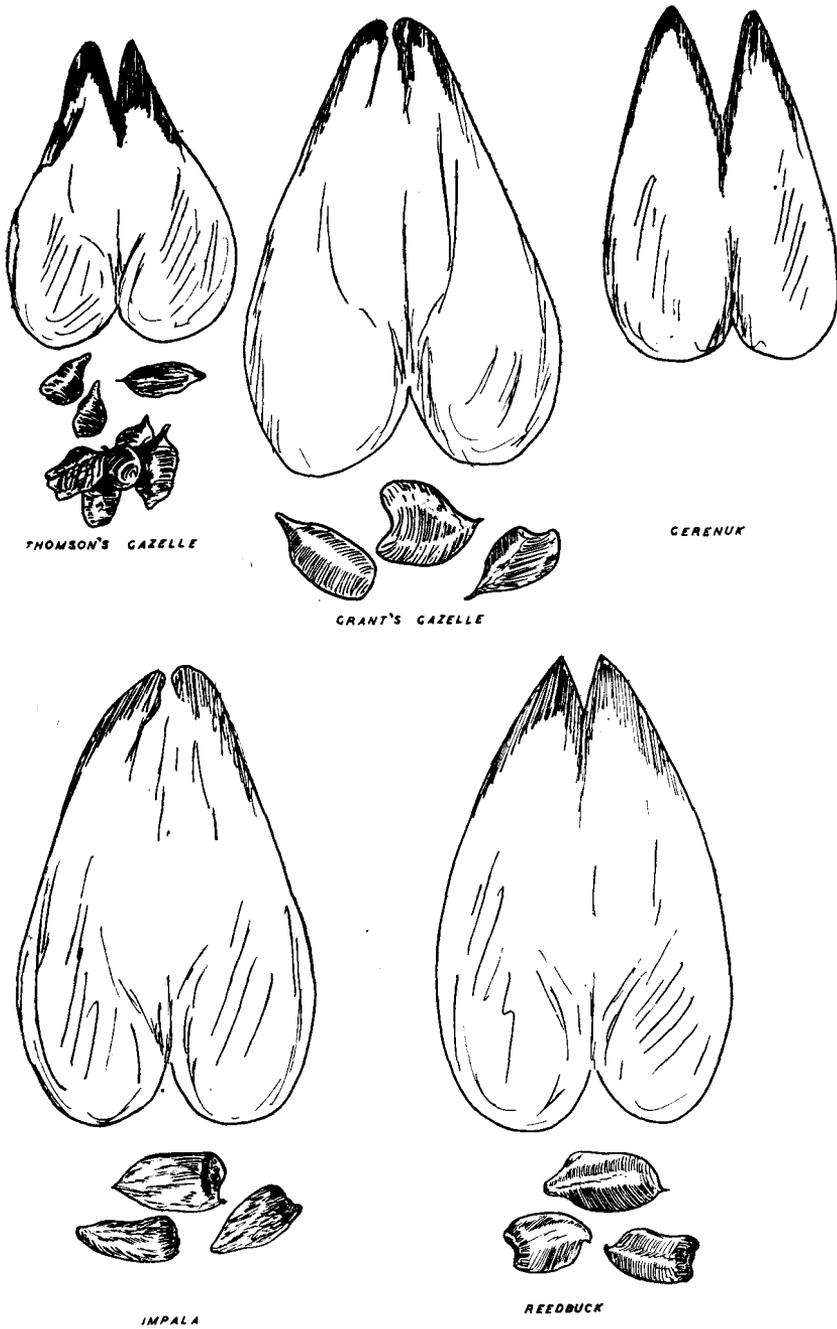
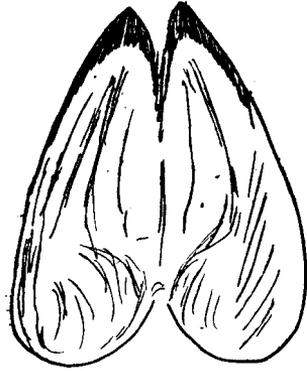
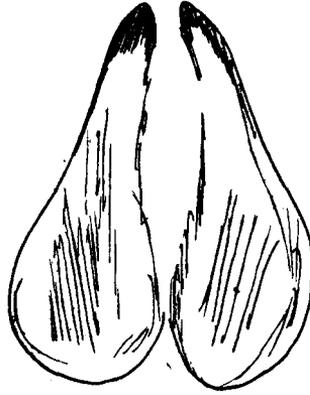


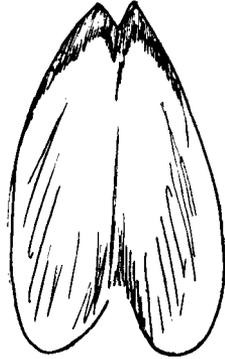
PLATE 2. "Spoor and dung of E. African Antelopes." (natural size).



WATERBUCK



HARTBEEST



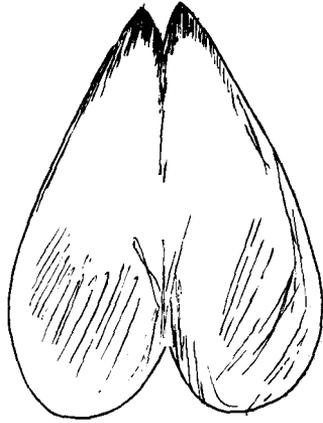
GREATER KUDU



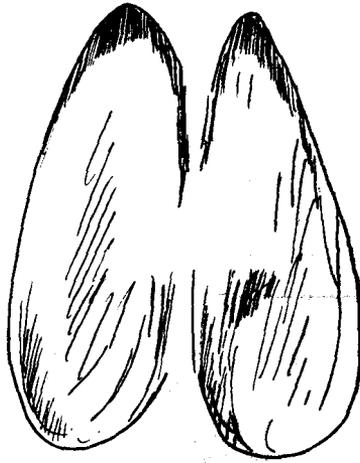
LESSER KUDU

PLATE 3. "Spoor and dung of E. African Antelopes."

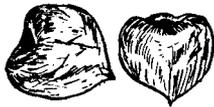
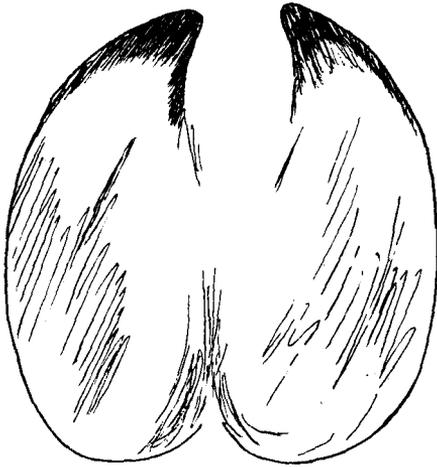
(half natural size).



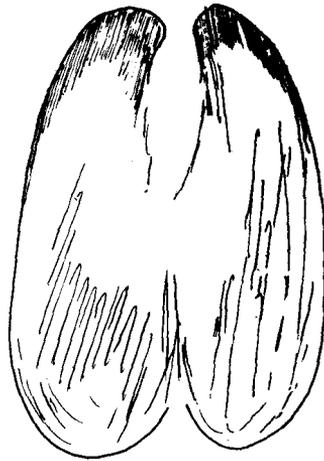
SABLE ANTELOPE



ROAN ANTELOPE



ELAND



WILDEBEEST

PLATE 4. "Spoor and dung of E. African Antelopes." (half natural size).

Aberdares, Kikuyu, Ithanga Hills, Bukoba, Mwanza, Musoma and Kondo. The droppings consist of small pellets which are usually found stuck together in an irregular mass.

Thomson's Gazelle *Gazella thomsonii* (Kiswahili: lala, kinokera, swala tomi)

These are widely distributed but found mainly in herds on the plains of Masailand. Their dung consists of surprisingly small pellets and is rather variable in shape as shown in the illustration.

Grant's Gazelle *Gazella granti* (Kiswahili: swala granti)

This gazelle is also widely distributed, usually found in herds on open plains but sometimes in *Acacia* bushland. Its spoor is similar in shape to that of the Thomson's gazelle but is twice as large.

Gerenuk *Litocranius walleri* (Kiswahili: swala twiga)

These long-necked gazelle are found in small parties in *Acacia* bushland. They occur in the Magadi-Natron-Manyara part of the Rift Valley, the Tana River area, from Tsavo to Kilimanjaro, the Pare Mts., Kikore and the Uмба steppe. No sample of their dung has yet been encountered.

Impala *Aepyceros melampus* (Kiswahili: swala mwekundu, swala pala)

These are found in herds all over East Africa except near the coast or in forests. The spoor approximates in size and shape to that of a Grant's gazelle but its dung is thinner and without the "pear-shape" of the latter.

Reedbuck *Redunca arundinum* (Kiswahili: tohe)

Reedbuck are found in couples or small groups in reedy valleys, open grassland and thin forest. They are known to occur on the Athi Plains, along the Tana River, the Ithanga Hills and Buiko. The footprint is normally sharply pointed at the tip which helps to distinguish it from that of the Impala which often occurs in the same district.

Waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus* & *K. defassa* (Kiswahili: kulo, ndogoro)

These antelope are found in herds, small groups or as a solitary bull in bush, forest and reeds. The two races become mixed in the Aberdares and Ngong district. Their droppings vary with the seasons, being hard and as illustrated in the dry season but soft and cattle-like during the wet season.

Hartebeest *Alcelaphus buselaphus* (Kiswahili: kongoni)

These are found in herds on the plains and in open bush; they are very common on the Athi Plains. The spoor is about the same size as that of the waterbuck but is much narrower at the tip. The dung is similar in shape to that of an eland but is considerably smaller.

Greater Kudu *Strepsiceros strepsiceros* (Kiswahili: tandala)

Found singly or in pairs in bush and scrub country, the Kudu has been recorded from Marsabit, Mt. Rulat, Baringo, the country north of Elgon, along the Tana River, Kigoma, Tabora, Dodoma, Iringa, Mbeya, Mpwapu, Kondoa, Bagamoyo and Songea. In spite of its weight the kudu makes only a very slight track, its footprints being more narrow than those of the other large antelope. Its dung tends to be barrel-shaped.

Lesser Kudu *Strepsiceros imberbis* (Kiswahili: tandala mdogo)

The Lesser Kudu is found singly, in pairs or in small parties in thick bush and dry, stony country. It occurs in the Shimba Hills, at Lamu and at Nyeri. Its spoor is only half the size of that of the Greater Kudu and could be mistaken for the track of a Thomson's gazelle. No sample of its dung has yet been found.

Sable Antelope *Hippotragus niger* (Kiswahili: palahala)

Found as a solitary bull or in herds in thin forest and bush, this antelope occurs in the coastal region of Kenya as far inland as Voi, at Lake Jipe, Kilosa, Geita, Songea, Tunduru and Kilumbi. The spoor is similar to that of a waterbuck but much larger and the dung resembles that of the hartebeest but with straight sides coming sharply to a point rather than gradually rounding off.

Roan Antelope *Hippotragus equinus* (Kiswahili: korongo)

This antelope is found as a solitary bull or in small parties in thorn bush and open forest. It has been recorded from the Mau district, the Uasin-Gishu Plateau, Tabora, Kigoma, Mbeya, Kondoa and Ufipa. Being heavy and hard treading, these animals usually leave well marked tracks which although about the same size as those of the Sable, are more broad and curved at the tips. The dung is similar in shape but nearly twice as big as that of the Sable.

Eland *Taurotragus oryx* (Kiswahili: pofu)

The Eland is found in herds in bush or open grassland. It is fairly common on the Athi Plains, Ithanga Hills, Guas Ngishu, Nyeri and Baringo. The spoor of this heavy antelope is deep and well defined except on hard ground. Being almost semi-circular at the tip, the footprint can be confused with that of a small buffalo.

Blue Wildebeest *Connochaetes taurinus* (Kiswahili: nyumbu)

Wildebeest are found in large herds on open plains. The spoor is usually well defined as the animal treads heavily. The dung consists of surprisingly small pellets which are however, normally found as fairly large, compressed masses.