

AMBOSELI NATIONAL RESERVE.

By MERRELL DALTON

Amboseli lake, an area of some ninety square miles, still fills in the rains, a time when the National Park lodge is closed to visitors, the game scatters, and the Masai tribesmen are able to move out to other grazing grounds. In the dry months an enormous quantity of Masai stock as well as thousands of head of game are dependent upon the water in the swamp around Ol Tukai where the lodge and Gethin's well known 'Rhino Camp' are situated.

It is truly an amazing sight as the living frieze of animals starts moving across the dry white lake beds to the green of the swamp: a veritable 'sundowner parade' of wildbeeste, zebra, giraffe and gazelle, interspersed here and there with well regulated flocks of sheep and goats and black, white, red and piebald cattle.

The ground in the vicinity of the swamp is literally pulverised, and a fine dust rises in clouds like white steam, often completely enveloping the entire landscape. On a clear day, however, or before the wind or trampling hoofs disturbs it, the scenery, with its pale lake beds, forests of green-gold acacias, (fever trees), belts of palm and emerald swamps with the background of Kilimanjaro, its majestic dome sprinkled by snow, forms an unforgettable and magnificent spectacle.

Some safari firms now include a tour of the main swamp at Ol Tukai as part of their game-viewing programme when at Amboseli, and, although seasonal, many different species of waterfowl as well as storks, egrets, plover, and the sacred ibis can usually be seen foregathered along the open margin. Colonel Gethin, (Namanga river hotel) who knows this area so well, tells me that large flocks of duck come in with the rains, and are occasionally joined by knob-nosed geese; lily trotters have been noted there, whilst pelicans frequent a small pan, north east of the camp, where water lies out for some time after the smaller soaks have turned to sun-baked mud.

During sundry patrols around this swamp we continually saw white egrets, sacred ibis, Egyptian geese, stilts, the Saddle-billed stork, (a solitary specimen), many small waders which I took to be sand plover, three or four wood ibis, great white herons, grey herons, bittern, and the usual noisy parties of blacksmith plover. Both greese and the sacred ibis were extremely tame and obviously used to visitors!

At the southern end of this swamp there is a tiny spring, hidden among rushes and ferns, where ice cold water bubbles straight from Kilimanjaro's snows. This spring and its overflow feeds the swamp area, and it is quite usual to see elephant, buffalo and sometimes a Bohor's reedbuck feeding along the edge of the reeds and the feathery papyrus. Hippo are in residence at Ol Tukai, but are seldom seen outside in the dry weather



Wildebeeste at Amboseli—Typical Landscape.



Egret and Sacred Ibis—Ol Tukai Swamp.

though their tracks are evident, showing the progress of their nocturnal wanderings. A drive round this vicinity usually produces a "mixed bag" gazelle, dikdik, possibly oryx, (*Callotis*), lesser kudu, rhino, lion, kongoni, cheetah bat-eared fox, baboon in large troops, giraffe, and of course the ubiquitous gnu and zebra.

Visitors will not fail to see Greater bustard which are present throughout the whole of the Amboseli Reserve in enormous numbers, there are plenty of lesser bustard, yellow-necked francolin, Grant's francolin, guinea fowl and plover; ground honrbill are often seen, and those solemn scavengers Marabou storks stand ghoulishly in groups around the water.

One evening no less than four great Bateleur eagles had come there to drink, and a glorious sight they made with their scarlet ceres, beaks and feet, and black, busby-like crests, against the brilliant green of the rushes and grass! Inside, however, the stand of papyrus is so high and dense that the only indication of feeding buffalo, rhino, or even elephant, is the flutter of the white cattle egrets as they hover up and down deticking their huge charges.

SHORT NOTES

A SPECIES OF DOOR SNAIL IN UGANDA

Very few members of Door Snails (Family Clausiliidae) have been recorded from Africa south of Abyssinia.

Austrobalea africana (M. & P.) occurs in South Africa. Two species referred to the genus *Clausilia* (but certainly not belonging to that genus *sensu stricto*) have been found in Tropical East Africa but are so rare and their habitats unknown that no further material has become available for anatomical investigation.

During October 1952 I discovered a single specimen of a snail belonging to either *Balea* or *Austrobalea*. It was on the bark of *Acacia albida* Del. together with numbers of *Succinea* sp. (there are several terrestrial species of this genus in E. Africa) at Moroto, Karamoja District, Eastern Uganda. Despite several hours searching on every available tree no further specimens could be found. Undoubtedly further specimens will be found in East Africa but the record of a single *Clausiliidae* from Uganda is of interest though the species is not known and even the genus uncertain.

Door Snails may be recognised by their elongated, spiral form and brown colour, but see illustration (figure 6) in my Snails and Slugs paper in the present Journal.

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A MEAT-EATING DUIKER

It would be interesting to hear whether any readers of the Journal have known of a duiker eating meat?