

17. On the Mountain Nyala, *Tragelaphus buxtoni*.\*

By R. LYDEKKER.

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(Plate XVI.† and Text-figure 103.)

About the 10th of September I received a communication from Mr. Rowland Ward to the effect that the skin, skull, and horns of an apparently new Kudu-like Antelope had been received at his establishment in Piccadilly from Mr. Ivor Buxton, by whom the animal had been shot in Abyssinia. An inspection of the specimen a few days later fully convinced me of the correctness of Mr. Ward's diagnosis; and I accordingly wrote a letter to the 'Times,' which duly appeared in that journal on September 23rd, 1910, under the heading of "A New African Antelope." In that letter it was stated that the specimen had been killed on the Arusi plateau of Gallaland, in Southern Abyssinia, at an estimated height of about 9000 feet above sea-level, and that it apparently indicated a new species of Antelope in some degree intermediate between the Nyala (*Tragelaphus angasi*) and the Kudu (*Strepsiceros capensis*), but rather nearer to the latter than to the former. In conclusion, it was urged that the specimen ought to find a permanent home in the British Museum. It was also suggested that the species might be known as the Spotted Kudu.

Shortly after the appearance of this letter, Mr. Buxton wrote to say that he would be pleased to present the specimen to the Museum, and likewise giving full and more precise information with regard to the locality where it was obtained. The matter having thus become public, I decided that the time had come to give the animal a scientific name; and *Strepsiceros buxtoni* was accordingly proposed by myself in 'Nature,' vol. 84, p. 397, 1910. It was, however, added that it might be deemed advisable to merge the genus *Strepsiceros* in *Tragelaphus*, in which event the title of the new species would be *Tragelaphus buxtoni*. As to locality, Mr. Buxton, after reference to his note-book, informed me that the type specimen of the new Antelope was obtained during the summer of 1910, to the west of the Arusi plateau of Gallaland, in the Sahatu Mountains, at an estimated elevation of 9000 feet; these mountains being situated some distance to the south-east of Lake Zwi (Zuay). The ground on which the animal was killed—as I gather from a photograph taken by Mr. M. C. Allbright, who accompanied Mr. Buxton on his trip—is of an open and stony nature, with scattered dwarf bushes and tussocks of grass.

Soon after the publication of the aforesaid notice in 'Nature' I learned that Mr. Buxton had brought home the head-skin

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† For explanation of the Plate see p. 353.





H. Goodchild, del et lith.

A. S. Huth, imp.

THE MOUNTAIN NYALA.  
TRAGELAPHUS BUXTONI.







and skull of a second male of the same species, and also the skulls and horns of two other, and apparently younger, individuals of this sex—all being members of the herd from which the type specimen was obtained. Nor is this all the available material; for Mr. Allbright had likewise shot a fine old buck out of the same herd, of which the skull and skin were brought home, the head being mounted and the body-skin preserved flat. All these specimens, thanks to the courtesy of their respective owners, I have had full opportunities of examining. It should be added that, according to Mr. Buxton, the females of the new species are coloured like the males and are devoid of horns.

The second head brought home by Mr. Buxton and the complete skin belonging to his companion represent darker-coloured and apparently older bucks than the type; and after seeing these specimens I came to the conclusion that the Sahatu Antelope is nearer to the Nyala than to the Kudu. This opinion is recorded in the 'Field' of October 22nd, 1910 (vol. 116, p. 798), where I definitely stated that the species ought to be known as *Tragelaphus buxtoni*. Finally, in the recently published sixth edition of Mr. Rowland Ward's 'Records of Great Game' I have suggested the name Mountain Nyala as the popular designation of the species.

That the type specimen, which is a male, and stands, as mounted, 4 feet 4½ inches at the withers, represents an Antelope belonging to the Kudu and Bushbuck group is self-evident, and further words on this subject are therefore superfluous. Kudus and Bushbucks are admittedly near relatives; and the main distinction between the two is to be found in the characters of the horns. In adult bucks of both species of Kudu the hind surface of the basal portion of the horns is rounded and devoid of an external ascending keel, although there is a well-marked front or inner keel. The horns of Bushbucks, on the other hand, have a pronounced keel at the back of the basal portion, in addition to which is a distinct front keel; and, in consequence, the surface between these two keels is flat, instead of round. This flattened intercarinal surface is, in fact, continued nearly to the summit of the horn, forming a spiral round the axis. In adult Kudus a second keel is developed higher up on the horns, and such a flattened surface consequently exists only near the tip. In the horns of a young Kudu, on the other hand, there is a second keel; and it follows that the horns of the adult may be compared to Nyala horns with an additional basal portion devoid of a second keel. This shows that the distinction between *Strepsiceros* and *Tragelaphus* is very slight indeed.

Kudu-horns are, however, distinguished from those of the Bushbuck group by their open, corkscrew-like spiral of three complete turns, those of Bushbucks never having more than a couple of such turns.

In Kudus the males and females are alike in colour, or nearly so, the coloration on the body consisting of vertical white stripes,



with a tendency to spotting on the hind part of the flanks of the smaller species. Both species have a mane and dorsal crest, at least in the males; but while the larger kind has none, the Lesser Kudu carries one white gorget on the throat and another on the chest. The tail is of moderate length and not very bushy.

In the Bushbuck group the females are frequently—although by no means invariably—brighter coloured and more profusely striped and spotted than the males; the markings on the body, when fully developed, comprising both stripes and spots. The males, at any rate, have a dorsal crest; and there are often two gorgets on the throat and chest, although these are reduced to one in the Nyala. The tail is in most cases relatively long and more bushy than in Kudus.

The conformation of the horns affiliates Mr. Buxton's Antelope to the Bushbuck group (*Tragelaphus* \*), from all the other members of which it is distinguished by its superior size. From the Nyala, which makes the nearest approach in this respect, *Tragelaphus buxtoni* differs in the (reported) identity of the colour in the two sexes, in the shorter coat and less bushy tail of the male, the presence of two white gorgets on the throat and chest, the absence of any marked difference in the general colour of the lower part of the legs from that of the body, and also in the more open spiral formed by the more massive horns.

In the type specimen (Pl. XVI.), which, as already mentioned, is an approximately full-grown but young buck, the horns form about one complete turn, and have the general characters of those of the Nyala, although relatively heavier, and diverging much more outwardly, with a very open spiral. They are obliquely ridged at the base, and the long smooth terminal portion is worn yellow at the tip. The length along the outer curve is 37 inches, the basal girth  $9\frac{1}{4}$  inches, and the tip-to-tip interval 21 inches.

The coat is rather long and coarse, its general colour being speckled brown-fawn, passing into dull tan on the sides of the face, and becoming darker on the front surface of the muzzle, and chocolate-brown on the forehead above the white chevron, which is not very conspicuous. The under-parts are lighter, but on the front of the fore-legs and the lower part of the hind pair the tuft becomes considerably darker. There is a short dark brown mane on the neck, continued backwards as a mingled brown and white dorsal crest. The bushy tail is white beneath. The ears, which are much of the same type as those of the Nyala, are of moderate width, bluntly pointed at the tip, and tubular for a considerable distance at the base; most of the long hairs on the inner edges being white, as is also much of the inner surface of the outer margin.

The white markings include a not very distinct chevron between the eyes, the usual patches on the sides of the muzzle and chin, a pair of spots on each side of the face below the eye, and a smaller

\* *Limnotragus* I regard as a subgenus.



Text-fig. 103.



Head of an old Buck of the Mountain Nyala belonging to Mr. Allbright, from a photograph supplied by Mr. Rowland Ward.





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