

land and a man and his wife had little food. The wife cooked this food and first gave it to the children as they sat outside, but when the husband saw this he went crying, 'Give the children,' 'Give the children.' His wife replied, 'Sir, come and have your food,' but he refused, and was turned into a bird along with his wife, which birds were thereafter called 'Mpabaana.'

The second is of the nature of a proverb, and runs thus: 'Does he who eats something nice finish it all at once?' The glossy ibis lives in the swamp, as it is a fisher bird, not because he cannot leave his food.

Its food consists of the various worms and grubs to be found in the swamp and by the lake, also small crabs and mussels. Small fish possibly form part of its diet, though I have never been able to identify their remains during the course of several stomach dissections. After probing about the swamp it is fond of standing motionless on the top branch of a convenient dead tree, where its sheeny plumage and white eye at once attract one's attention.

It nests by the lake and swamp, choosing usually a position low down on the tree for building its large, untidy nest, made of dead twigs and unlined. A full clutch apparently contains three eggs only, about three inches long, with a rough shell coated with curious reddish brown markings which have the appearance of stains merely.

The young are born almost nude and jet black in colour. Growth takes place rapidly, and in about a fortnight the young leave the nest.

SOME NOTES ON THE HAUNTS AND HABITS OF THE ELEPHANT ON THE GUAS NGISHU PLATEAU

By A. C. HOEY.

One of the best districts for game in this Protectorate, and more especially for elephant, is that part of the Guas Ngishu Plateau situated south-east of Victoria Nyanza, bounded on the east by the Elgeyo escarpment, on the north by the Turkwell River, and west by Mount Elgon. At least three

50 HAUNTS AND HABITS OF THE ELEPHANT

herds of elephant roam about here, the largest one numbering as many as 300.

These herds present a very fine sight as they travel across from Mount Elgon to the Elgeyo Forest, which they do as soon as the heavy rains start—generally in April and May—spending a week or so browsing along the Nzioa River, and more especially in the swamps above this river. The bulls are very much in the minority and are not of any great size. Bigger bulls, however, are often met wandering about the country by themselves, or more often following up a herd of cows.

There is one herd of ten 'outcast' bulls in this region, very old and very cunning, who, having been chased out of the various herds by the younger bulls, live quite by themselves and never leave the forest. They have regular haunts which they visit at certain seasons of the year for different kinds of vegetation, which at that time happen to be more than usually succulent. For instance, these elephants always visit a certain part of the Elgeyo Forest in the middle of the dry season to feed on a particular kind of fibre plant of which they are very fond.

One of the favourite foods of the elephant is the thorn tree (especially when in bloom), which they break down and strip of its bark. The peculiar smell emitted from this stripped bark is one of the indications as to how recently a herd has passed; though, of course, the spoor is the great guide. One cannot but admire the directness of purpose of the elephant, which is demonstrated by the straight line in which the herds always travel. Whether it be to a salt pan or particular patch of thorn bush days away, there is no winding track towards it, but one direct line.

The average pace of an elephant trekking is about five to six miles an hour, but if chased he very soon tires and a pony can easily outrun him. Some people are rather apt to think that he can gallop, but this is hardly correct. It is curious to note how little noise the elephant makes when moving through the thickest forest. One would expect to hear a crashing and breaking of trees, but as a matter of fact he goes very carefully.

There is a strange difference between the acuteness of an elephant's hearing in the forest and in the open. The snapping of a twig in the forest will put him at once on the alert, while, when standing in a swamp in the open, he does not appear to hear anyone splashing in about three or four feet of water quite close to him.

Yet it cannot be said that his instinct is altogether faulty, for on one occasion, when following up the spoor of a big bull, I noticed that it suddenly left the old track just before it came to a narrow opening between the edge of the forest and a large bush. Asking myself why he should so suddenly branch off without any apparent reason, I realised only just in time that I was on the brink of an artfully concealed game pit, which the wily tusker either suspected or was fully aware of, for he rejoined the old track some twenty yards further on.

One other good feature that I have personally noticed about elephants is their solicitude for a wounded comrade. I happened one day to wound a bull which fell and immediately got up again. It was at once surrounded by about ten cows, who proceeded to help the wounded animal along. They hurried it into the centre of the herd, and rendered such effective assistance that, though followed up for ten miles, it eventually got away.

One peculiar fact which enables a hunter to tell if any bulls accompany a herd is their habit of taking a parallel course a little to the right or left of the main spoor, and then crossing and travelling on the other side. This single spoor is an unfailing guide. The bull can as a rule be easily distinguished by being so much broader and more massive than the female.

The height of the bulls I have met with in the district described varies from eleven feet two inches to eleven feet ten inches at the shoulder.

These details may not possibly agree with the impressions of more experienced students of the elephant, but I submit them for what they are worth, and as having been gleaned from my own experience and observation.