

COWABUNGA

SAFARI RULES

Africa un... now



The *JUST NOW* News - A now-and-then Newsletter for alumni and friends of COWABUNGA SAFARIS published whenever we have enough news and time to put it together.

SECOND EDITION

The
**JUST
NOW**
News

2002

Lions in Trees?? Herds of Rhinos??

Nancy Cherry

"You said we'd be lucky to see a single rhino in the Ngorongoro Crater and we've seen 13 rhinos in two days and none of them were repeats. How come?"

"I've read that Grant's gazelle are not found in large groups. Why are several hundred Grant's standing together over there?"

"I thought you guys told me you hardly ever see lions in trees - how come we've seen five lions in one tree?"

The questioner was Jack Warner from Littleton, Colorado who, with his wife Mary, was on his first Safari to Africa. They both are great outdoors people and very familiar with wilderness areas throughout the western U.S.A. This was their *first* time for an experience like Africa.

The "guys" were Dr. Clayton Freiheit, Director of the Denver Zoo, who started going to Africa in the 1960's; Susan Engfer, Director of the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo and Architect/Naturalist Gary Lee, both of whom are old Africa hands. Leading the group was Gary Clarke, and it was his 112th Safari.

Jack knew that all these sightings were unusual by the reaction of the old-timers and the amount of film and digital chips being used. This was reinforced when the various episodes were rehashed around the campfire each night.

Jack and I became acquainted during the months preceding the Safari when he would call with questions about packing, etc. He'd tell me about the books he had read, and I told him about some of my favorites. One day on the phone about two weeks before our departure, he said, "I'm going to quit reading about Tanzania because I'm getting too excited!"

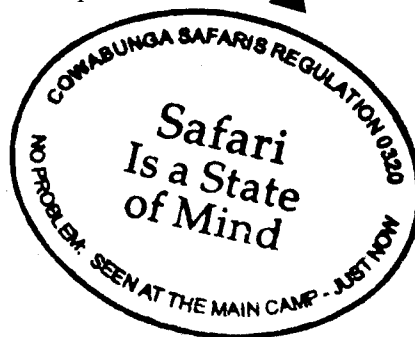
While on Safari Jack's questions weren't always easy to explain. For instance, there was the day we saw two cheetah taunting a lioness who was sitting up watching them intently as they approached nearer and nearer. It looked like an easy confrontation for her (someone even said the cheetah must have a death wish). Most of us anticipated that she would chase the cheetahs, but eventually the lioness turned her attention towards a group of gazelle. Why didn't she go after the cheetahs? No one had an explanation for Jack — only conjectures.

After a short visit at Olduvai Gorge we drove through lush, green grass towards the Serengeti. Before we even reached the gate we started seeing the migration. Black dots on the horizon

completely surrounded us and as we got nearer we realized the black dots had four legs and were wildebeest — hundreds of thousands of them. This is what we had come for, as well as some zebras. But the *thousands* of zebra accompanying them were much more than we had anticipated. In addition we saw huge flocks of Abdim's storks and European white storks searching in the grass for locusts, grasshoppers, etc. We were lucky as the European storks are irregular in their migration patterns.

Our Safari wound down with a trip to Rubondo Island in Lake Victoria, about an hours' flight from the mainland. Here we planned to take it easy, finish our Journals, and do a little bird watching. Not to be. There was the swimming elephant, birding in a hide or on a special deck out over the Lake, a boat trip to the rookery on Bird Island, and the genet each night before dinner. Perhaps the most fabulous of all — spot-necked otter swimming past the camp and the shy seldom-seen sitatunga antelope.

Sally Veitch, a Board Member of the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, was particularly impressed with the otter and sitatunga sightings (weren't we all!). But Jack, now taking it all in stride simply said: "Oh, I see those species on every Safari." Obviously he has learned to expect the unexpected in Africa.



*"I have found Paradise...
and hippos graze on the lawn at
night."*

— *Gabriele Schneider*
Rubondo Island Camp

..... **The View From The Loo**

Hippos On The Lawn

Reflections of Rubondo Island Camp

Gary K. Clarke

By mid afternoon Africa's Lake Victoria extends gray to the horizon and melds with the overcast sky. Strong winds create giant rolling swells with white capped waves crashing against rugged rocks by camp. Shy sitatunga peer from the surrounding tropical forest. Leaves of the palm trees rustle high above the tents.

After nightfall the sky clears and brilliant stars peek through the forest canopy from a black sky. Bats flutter in silhouette like imitation butterflies as a genet makes a timid appearance. The moon, yellow and full, rises through streaked horizontal clouds and casts a rippled reflection on the lake.

At midnight the wind stills and the only sound is the rhythmic lapping of water on the beach. Large dark blobs slowly slide like blimps across the lawn in front of Camp — hippos grazing.

All is quiet until a gentle rain descends on the tents, eventually fading to the sounds of slowly dripping vegetation in the darkness.

With an almost imperceptible tinge of first light the pure cry of the fish eagle echoes from the forest across the lake, announcing a new day on the island. Dawn ascends with the chorus of bird calls: African grey parrot, hadada ibis, red-chested cuckoo, laughing doves ...

As the sun rises the lake glows pink and gold. Cormorants and kingfishers dive for food. Giant crocodiles slide into the water. Open billed storks soar high overhead. A bull elephant pauses along the shore to drink. A stately Goliath heron freezes on a low branch. Vervet monkeys scamper up the palm trees. Spot-necked otters playfully swim past camp. Tiny red billed firefinches and large black and white casqued hornbills venture near the tents.

Rich golden sunlight filters into the vivid green forest. This is the paradise called Rubondo Island Camp. ◀

*Eat Dessert First...
Life is so Uncertain*

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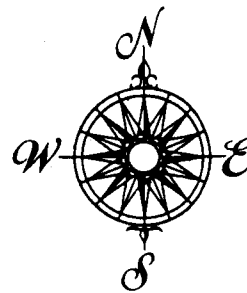
Convergence

Brian Hesse

I recently accepted a position as an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Northwest Missouri State University. This has a number of benefits. In contrast to the past year or so where I've been piecing together work over and beyond my Cowabunga duties to support myself, I now have a steady salary and will be doing something I love: teaching in a traditional classroom on a regular basis, often about Africa. More important, because of my teaching contract, I know exactly when I'll be leading Safaris. It just so happens these times correspond with some of the best months to be in the African bush (June, July and August, and during the December-January period).

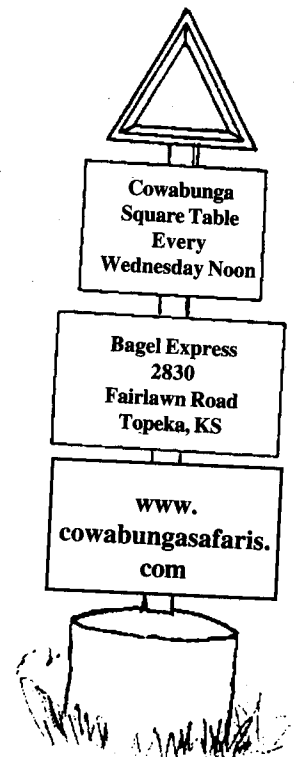
In July, I am to lead a Zimbabwe Safari. Zimbabwe had elections in March and is presently going through political and economic turmoil. My philosophy has always been that while it is important for groups to get a sense of where an elephant "fits" in an ecosystem in relation to a dung beetle, for example, it is equally important to understand the political and economic forces that can compel individuals either to protect or harm these animals and their habitats. Zimbabwe today typifies the struggle in Africa to balance conservation with the meeting of human needs. Hence, for a very intrepid few of us, our July Zimbabwe Safari promises to be one of the most educational ever.

My academic and Safari careers, my personal and professional philosophy, Cowabunga's way of catering to our Safarists — all are converging in exciting ways. "Safari, so good!" is what I say. ◀



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Please let us know your new address as we mail your *Just Now News* by bulk rate and it cannot be forwarded. If you have friends who would enjoy reading our newsletter, send us their addresses. Also, if you would like your name removed from our list, just advise us.



I'd Rather Be On Safari by Gary K. Clarke

First Edition, Hardbound, Four Color Dust Jacket, Maps, Illustrations, & Glossary, 216 pages

\$26.95

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The Reviews Are In!

Nancy Cherry

Gary's new book, I'd Rather Be On Safari, has prompted all kinds of mail and telephone calls from old friends, Safari alumni, arm chair travelers, perfect strangers, and his grandchildren (those who can read). The fan mail has been so exciting and so much fun for us to read that I wanted to share some of it with you.

"We loved reading each chapter. It was as if you were over in the next jeep on a game drive making sure we understood what we were seeing or telling great stories over sundowners."

Elaine & Pel Adams, Lake Toxaway, NC.

"Your book is like a long lost friend — I plan on reading it over and over again to bring me back — if just for a few minutes."

Donna Kammers, Grand Haven, MI.

"Your book received and I'm enjoying it VERY much. You capture the feel of Africa in your descriptions and phrases ...it makes me harken back!"

Gay Kuester, Chicago, IL.

"You don't know me, but I wanted to write and tell you how much I loved your book (my personally autographed copy, that is!). ...ripped through it in three nights. ...So, thank you — and hurry up and write another book."

Jerry Rayburn, Ooltewah, TN.

"Congratulations, Gary — Now we are going to know what you have been writing in all those journals. I am honored to have shared some of the adventures with you."

Helen Bondurant, Oklahoma City, OK.

"I've been reading the book you wrote a lot. I've been enjoying it so much that I can't get away from it."

Blake Scott, age 11, Topeka, KS.

"I just finished your most enlightening book ... it's all Gary Clarke for sure. I enjoyed every word and also had a few laughs. It sure stirred up my memories of our Kenya safari, too."

John P. Roth, Banner Elk, NC.

"I laughed (and cried a few times) all the way through. It evoked such special and wonderful memories of my own adventures in Africa... To be on Safari is the ultimate adventure!"

Judy Tuttle, Waldport, OR

"Grandpa, your book is cool!" From some very special critics.

As they say, these quotes are "just the tip of the iceberg". There are many more just as interesting from all over the US, Canada and even Africa. It is so gratifying, after all the hard work and time spent (about 1 1/2 years) writing, to have this kind of response. No one appreciates your kind words more than Gary. And, the general consensus from letters and people who have talked to him has been, "When are you writing your next book?" Don't worry — just last week he put several pages from his yellow lined working pad on my desk and asked what I thought of it. The beginning of a new book... ! ▲



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“I’d rather be on Safari”

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Nancy Cherry (Mama Makora)
Administrative Officer
Brian Hesse (Mzungu Mrefu), Ph.D.
Safari Leader

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