

The FPS East African Tour

FIFTY members of the FPS took part last February in the first East African safari organised by the Society. It proved an outstandingly successful venture. "A memorable, unforgettable experience", "the holiday of a lifetime", "I enjoyed it more than I would have thought possible", were a few of the comments; others urged the laying-on of more tours (this is being done), and some even booked for the next tour before the end of the first one.

The party started in Nairobi, and after the first day, and an appetite-whetting visit to the Nairobi National Park, divided into two, one half led by the Hon. Secretary, Richard Fitter with John Wightman, and the other by our vice-president Captain Pitman, accompanied by R. J. Mulcahy. The two parties covered almost exactly the same ground, but travelling in roughly opposite directions.

The quantities of wildlife were staggering to those who had never visited these splendid parks and reserves before. Lake Naivasha with its innumerable water birds and waders, fish eagles, pelicans, storks, and Lake Nakuru, with vast phalanxes of flamingos stretching as far as the eye could see—some estimates said half a million, but nobody tried to count; the Mara plains with giraffes, lions, topi, baboons, elephants, gazelles, and immense herds of migrating zebra, and the Serengeti with vast columns of migrating wildebeest plodding purposefully eastwards—each day's viewing seemed more wonderful than the last. In the spectacular Ngorongoro Crater, 10 miles across, 2000 ft. deep and abounding with game, were rhinos and herds of eland; in the Serengeti cheetah and leopards—one sitting as though posed for a photograph on top of one of the rocky kopjes, and another sprawled up a tree. Lions were numerous and permitted quite incredibly close-up photography. In Lake Manyara National Park the graceful impala were abundant, and both parties seem to have been halted by the same family group of elephants astride the track. In the Tsavo were lesser kudu, fringe-eared oryx, gerenuk and klipspringer, while Treetops, with a background of snow-capped Mount Kenya, provided wonderful close-up viewing of elephants, buffalo, the giant forest hog, bushbuck, and a rare visitor which excited the Treetops guide himself, a Harvey's red duiker.

Pink Elephants in the Tsavo

The great joy of Treetops, of course, was to be able to watch the animals undisturbed and behaving naturally, and this too was an enjoyable feature of several of the lodges, particularly at Lake Manyara, where one could look down from the hotel on the cliff top and see elephants, buffalo and giraffe; at Ngorongoro, where one could see right across the Crater, and especially at Kilaguni in the Tsavo, where the only waterholes for several miles were in front of the lodge and attracted kongoni, warthogs, elephants, impala and waterbuck among others. Here we watched elephants puffing red dust all over themselves after a wash (and now know where pink elephants

come from), while a couple of warthog parents with four delightful small young caused great amusement with their persistent efforts to drive away another family of warthogs.

Fascinating incidents like these abounded: the young elephant at Treetops making daring attacks on some buffalo, but never getting too close and always returning to mum; the yellow-billed egret which snapped at and caught a small bird on a reed stem and spent several hours trying to eat it—and failing; a large boomslang, a tree-snake, seizing a chameleon and dragging it across the road; the lions that mated unconcernedly in front of whirring ciné cameras; the zebra foal that wanted to play with the mini-bus to the annoyance of its mother; the lion dangling 60 ft. up in an acacia, and a leopard engaged in a stalk. “Photographers,” as one member remarked, “were given a feast such as they could never have expected in their wildest dreams.”

For those who went on the optional extra tour to Uganda the highlights were the launch trips on the Nile and the Kazinga Channel, among crocodiles and hippos and masses of birds. Indeed, for the bird watcher the whole tour was an *embarras de richesses*, from the large secretary birds and bustards stalking on the ground, the numerous eagles, harriers, hawks and vultures, to the wonderfully beautiful bee-eaters, kingfishers and sunbirds. Well over 400 species were identified.

Visits to the Olduvai gorge, scene of the Leakeys' discoveries, and to the East African College of Wildlife Management at Mweka, where Dr. Hugh Lamprey, the principal, explained their work and showed us round, provided interesting variety.

To all those in East Africa, in the parks and reserves, who helped to make the tour so successful the Society is immensely grateful, and also to John Sizer of Messrs Kendall Ltd., and Gilbert Adam of African Tours and Hotels Ltd., who organised it so efficiently—and with such comfort. East Africa cannot be held responsible for its wonderful climate—day after day of warm sunshine in February is a marvellous experience for the British—but it can take credit for the very high standard of comfort and service in its hotels and lodges. This was remarked on by all and greatly appreciated.

News from East Africa

The Karamoja District Council in Uganda has decided to extend the Kidepo National Park to include the Narus River basin, an adjacent area of 50 square miles on the south-west side which is vital to the park, for, in the dry season especially, this permanent water attracts animals out of the park.

Six square-lipped (white) rhinos have been brought to Kenya from Natal to be released in the Meru Game Reserve after a preliminary period of acclimatisation at Nyeri. One of the square-lipped rhinos brought in 1961 from Natal to the Queen Elizabeth National Park in Uganda has given birth to a calf.