Contents

Acknowledgments	**xi**
Foreword	**xv**
Introduction	**xix**
Part One	**xxxi**
Chapter One Tragelaphus Derbianus	1
Chapter Two How to Hunt Derby Eland	17
Chapter Three Lord Derby's Eland	45
Part Two	**103**
Chapter Four Tragelaphus Oryx Livingstonii	105
Chapter Five Livingstone's Eland	127

Contents

Chapter Six
Patterson's or East African Eland 159

Chapter Seven
Cape Eland 205

Part Three **255**

Chapter Eight
Clothing and Equipment 257

Chapter Nine
Rifles, Calibres, Cartridges and Bullets 269

Chapter Ten
The Bushman's Eland 281

Chapter Eleven
Field Preparation 293

Conclusion **299**

Acknowledgments

Peter Flack

Looking back over the year it has taken me to write and edit this book, I have had so much help from so many people but let me begin by thanking the 19 expert contributors of new and original articles to this book, all of whom have supplied photographs to illustrate their own stories.

Then there were the 15 extremely talented photographers – Dirk de Bod, Eben Espach, Richard and Eileen Flack (who supplied most of the bird photographs), Francois Guillet (a talented and experienced French professional hunter), Adrian and Nicole Kretzschmar, Sven Ouzman of the Iziko South African Museum (who supplied most of the photographs of Bushmen paintings and engravings) and last but by far not least, Beryl Wilson (who provided most of the photos used to illustrate Paul Phelan's work). Six of them are exceptionally talented professional photographers and the quality of their photographs speaks for itself. They are Jofie Lamprecht (who supplied the photos for his own article and many other Cape eland photos besides), Erna Muller (leaping Cape eland and Cape cobra), Malcom Pearse (Drakensberg and Bushmen), Theo Pretorius (Drakensberg, Shane Mahoney and many of the black and white photographs) and Cath Robertson (who supplied almost all the photographs to illustrate her husband Kevin's article). The sixth member of this gifted team was prohibited by his contract from having his name included but some of the exceptional Patterson's eland photos are his work. Finally, not to forget the photographs of two researchers, Thierry Aebischer and Raffael Hickisch, who set up dozens of remote trail cameras throughout Erik Mararv's CAWA safaris' concessions in CAR over many months. They generously allowed me access to literally thousands of photographs, which included rare ones of yellow-backed duikers, for example, as well as giant eland, bongo, leopard and bushbuck, to name but a few. Thank you and Erik (who is also a contributor), once again.

Young Cape eland bull

Before starting on this book I thought I knew quite a bit about eland and eland hunting, especially as I had spent so much time watching, photographing, hunting and ranching them over many years. I was wrong and the contributors have not only showed me how little I knew but have taught me so much. It has been a great and humbling experience for me and I want to thank each one of you, most sincerely, for all that they you done to make this book what it has become.

➢ *Sunset over the South African Lowveld.*

Two warthog boars settling a dispute.

In fact, ever since starting this project I have been amazed at how willing people from all walks of life have been to share their knowledge, time and property with me. It seems as if the spiral horns weave a web of kindness and consideration around those who have a special place in their hearts for these beautiful and awe inspiring animals. In this regard, I would like to make special mention of Alex Bingham, Jaco van Deventer and Peter Lloyd of Cape Nature, Martin Schofield of Natal Parks Board, the Todd family and Professor Bettine Jansen van Vuuren. Thank you so much for all your many kindnesses and help.

To Jane Halse and her team at Rowland Ward, including Tammy and Agnieszka, as well as Lionel McMurray (for his outstanding work on the literally hundreds of photographs he has had to deal with), also my sincere thanks. There is no doubt in my mind that the product you deliver is far superior to any on the market today. I admire what you do, how you do it and for going that extra kilometre that makes all the difference to a book like this.

To my friends who have allowed me to bore them to tears with my incessant, 'eland, eland, eland' chatter and who only remind me ever so gently every so often

An East African or Patterson's eland bull excavating a seep at a dry waterhole in the Selous Game Reserve.

that there is more to life than these gentle and beautiful giants, thank you so much for your care and consideration. I will try and improve especially as I move on to bushbuck now and with sitatunga and then, finally, the two nyalas and bongos to come.

Lastly, and as always, to my family, both small and big. Without you I would not have done half the things necessary to produce a book like this. Thank you for your unconditional love, support and encouragement. I love each one of you.

Foreword

Peter Flack

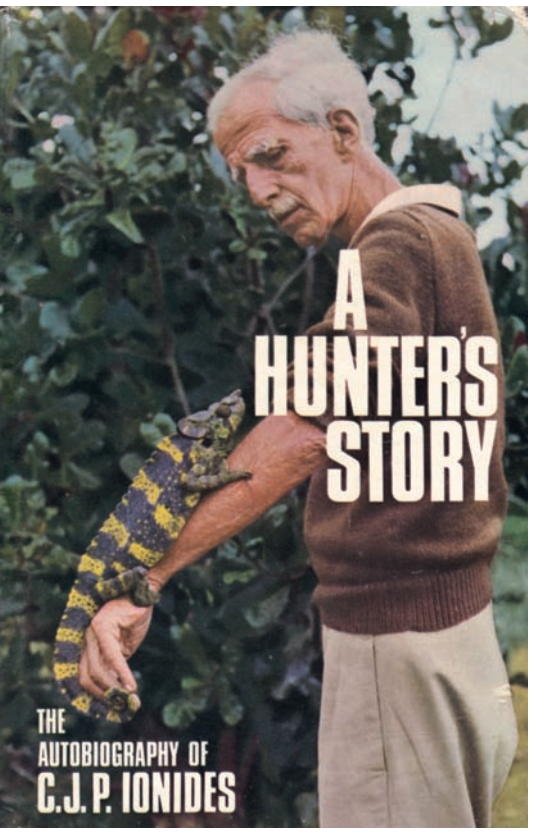
It is usual practice for a person other than the author or editor to write the Foreword to a book and so James Mellon wrote the Foreword to the first book in this series, *Hunting the Spiral Horns – Kudu – The Top African Antelope*, in his erudite and inimitable style. Originally, I wanted to try and find someone of similar stature to write the Foreword to this the second book in the five book series on all the spiral horns but, before I could complete this difficult task – given James's iconic stature – Robin Hurt suggested I read C.J.P. Ionides wonderful book, *A Hunter's Story*, for the second time and that completely changed my mind. If he were alive today, I would have gone down on bended knee and begged him to do so. But he is not and so, with much assistance from him, I have decided to tackle the task. As you read on, I hope you will understand and excuse my forwardness – both the deed and the pun.

Ionides's book was published in 1965. Writing about himself, he said:

> "For years it had been my one ambition in life to make a collection of the rare mammals of Africa. It had begun even before I became a professional hunter, when I acquired a book in the Lonsdale Library series entitled *Big Game Hunting in Africa* edited by H.C. Maydon, my bible on the subject.
>
> In the book all the rarities were enumerated – there was an article by a different contributor on each animal, and I became greatly attracted to the idea of trying to find out more about these creatures by collecting specimens and studying them. Even before I went to the Congo I decided to use every opportunity that arose to collect one or two of the rarities: I never thought I could manage anymore, as it was a hobby only a man of independent means could afford because of the expense and the time involved. So from the moment I got into the Game Department I began saving both my leave and money with this one object in mind. I lived very cheaply in the bush, and by 1956 I had the requisite amount of accumulated money and time off to undertake a long trip. I had done plenty of thinking on the subject and decided to make my primary objective the desert rarities of the Sahara ...
>
> I decided also that if I still had time after the desert trip I would go into the Southern Sudan and try for what is usually considered the blue riband of Africa, the giant eland ...
>
> Before going any further I should explain that when I speak of an animal as being a rarity I mean a rarity in collections. Some are indeed extremely rare, for example the Abyssinian ibex which is now confined to one almost

Python

A big bodied East African eland bull drinking at a seep he has created by digging with his horns at a dry waterhole in the Selous Game Reserve.

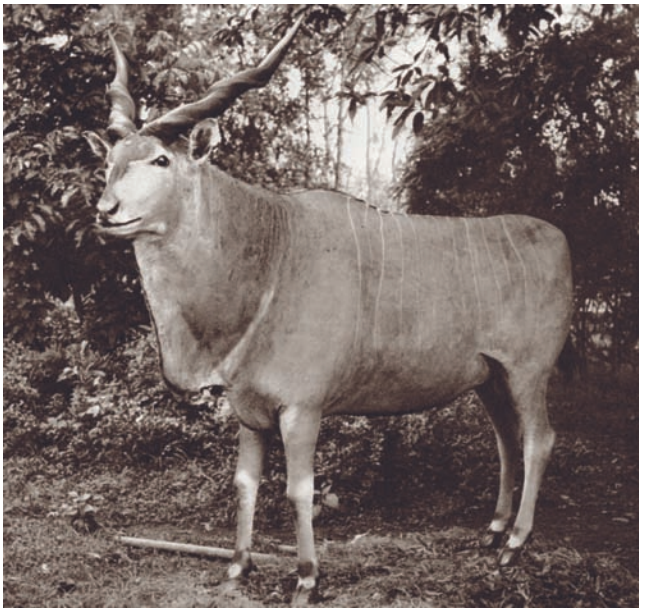


inaccessible habitat in the Semian mountains of Ethiopia where very few remain. But the other species are on the rarity list purely because they are not easy to collect. The animal may be extremely local to a particular area which is beyond the usual orbit of safaris, like the Hunter's antelope which is to be joined in one small strip of country sixty miles by forty miles between that Tana river in Kenya and the Italian Somaliland border ...

There is the third class, those which are both local and extremely difficult, and in this I would certainly put the elusive bongo of the higher level bamboo forests of the Aberdare range and Mount Kenya, which took me four frustrating months.

For me the fascination of collecting rarities was, I think, first in the animals themselves. Many were very beautiful: it was a wonderful, almost heart stopping moment setting eyes for the first time on some quarry one had thought about for months, even years. They were difficult for various reasons so the reward you got in collecting them was great.

With some animals the entire system of hunting had to be worked out from the study of their habits, and there were times when one's original ideas had drastically to be reversed because some new unaccountable factor in the animal's behaviour had been discovered. All of which was a challenge, as the game had to be played according to one's standards: anybody for instance could get an addax by driving over the desert in a Land-Rover, and I'm sorry to say that this has in fact been done by certain sportsman, though to me a hunt of that nature is uninteresting and the trophy holy undesirable ...



The full mount of the Central African giant eland shot by Ionides and donated to the Coryndon Museum in Nairobi.

Each of us sets his sights on something, and for me, once I had begun, this was nothing less than the acquisition of every rare mammal in Africa. My quest, before I was forced to stop, yielded altogether 23 specimens over a span of eighteen years, during which it occupied practically all my leave, taken in eight irregular periods, and cost me the bulk of my savings and more besides.

Was it worth this sacrifice – these heads and skins, some mounted in habitat groups, others merely horns gathering dust on a wall shield? Would I want to repeat the experience if the clock could be turned back and I had the choice again? A friend of mine wanted to know. Apart from insects and vermin, he said he had never killed an animal he could not eat, and he wanted to understand my obsession, as he called it. I would not answer such an imponderable, nor will I attempt to here; I prefer to stick to what is far more interesting and that is my romance with these rare and delightful creatures. It was the great love affair of my life."

Unlike Ionides, my bible was James Mellon's magnum opus, *African Hunter*, which I have read at least five times. It was only later, after I had met James, that he

Walia ibex – the Abyssinian ibex referred to by Ionides.

pointed me towards Hubert Conway Maydon who had been, as was the case for Ionides, the source of much of James's inspiration and knowledge. In addition, I began reading other books – lots of them – by the early explorers, naturalists and hunters and, apart from wanting to collect the rarities Ionides mentioned, I also wanted to go where these authors had been, to see what they had described and to hunt the animals they had stalked.

That set my feet on a path that has taken me 21 years to complete – the quest for all 26 species and subspecies of spiral horns recognized by both the Rowland Ward and SCI record books that were available on licence – only the Western giant eland (*Tragelaphus derbianus derbianus*), the Eastern bongo (*Tragelaphus euryceros isaaci*), the Shoan bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus powelli*) and the Somalian bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus fasciatus*) are not. This quest has permeated my life and I identify so strongly with the words and sentiments of this eccentric, unmarried British man. The quest has dictated the books I have read, my daily fitness regime, the use of almost all my discretionary time, the friends and acquaintances I have made and the places I have been (to mention but a few factors). But, unlike Ionides, it has been the secondary love affair of my life. My great love affair has been my beautiful wife of 40 years, Jane, my small family – Lisa, Troydon, Richard and Eileen – and my larger family now scattered all around the world due largely to the effects of the corrupt and incompetent governments our poor country has had to endure over so many years.

Introduction

Peter Flack

As a teenager during my student days in the 1970s, I worked for a company called Grosvenor Car Hire and Touring based in Cape Town and which, as the name implies, drove tourists around points of interest in the Cape and along the Garden Route. One of our day trips involved a tour of Cape Point Nature Reserve, a provincial park at the tip of the Cape Peninsula. On my first trip there as a learner guide and driver, mine was one of six cars from the company, and, as we drove through the park, my passengers and I saw a number of antelopes which I was soon to learn were blesbok. At the time, I did not have a clue what they were and, in answer to the inevitable question, blurted out the first name that sprang to mind. "They are eland," I answered although I had never seen an eland either.

Blesbok

As luck would have it, when everybody disembarked at Cape Point itself, there were some more blesbok nearby. The head guide pointed them out and described them correctly. When my passengers returned, they naturally asked me why I had called the animals eland, whereas the head guide had described them as blesbok. On the spur of a foolish moment, and thinking I was being quite smart, I compounded my earlier error and replied, "Aah, you see, eland is the Afrikaans name for blesbok." Fortunately, the trip ended before my passengers tumbled to the truth of my stupid and deceitful reply. To this day, I still feel embarrassed about my response and readers may also wonder how it was that, being born in the Cape, I had never seen a Cape eland.

The reason was quite simple, Cape eland had ceased to exist in the Western Cape Province (where Cape Town is situated) in the 1830s and, speaking to Peter Lloyd, the recently retired senior scientist at Cape Nature, the re-introduction of these animals really only started in the late 1950s. Looking back over his records, he seemed to think that a number of the re-introduced animals initially came from the Kalahari but later records showed that, in 1964, 16 female and ten male calves were delivered from Luteni in the Drakensberg. 1970 saw an end to the re-introductions, by which time no more than a hundred or so had been brought back and spread around the province. With so few on the ground, I suppose I could be excused for not having seen any.

A big, mature Cape eland bull on a game ranch in the Cape Province. These eland were regionally extinct by the 1830s and remained so until a successful re-introduction program was launched by Cape Nature in the 1950s.

***Above** – James Stevenson-Hamilton, first warden of the Kruger National Park, with two of the many lions shot by him.*

***Top** – Captain (later Sir) William Cornwallis Harris*

I had also not laid eyes on the book of the first recreational hunter to visit the Cape in 1834, William (later Sir) Cornwallis Harris, who not only painted the Cape eland which appeared in the book but also described it in his unique and elegant prose as follows:

> "Obesity forming one of the exclusive prerogatives of African royalty, it is not surprising that the eland – more lusty, fat and well looking than any other wild quadruped – should assume unto himself an air of princely consequence. 'Lord of an hundred does,' amongst which he moves with all the pomp and self importance of a nabob in his harem, the stately bull is at once the most corpulent, one of the most ponderous, and certainly the most magnificent of all the ruminants. In shape and general aspect, he resembles a well conditioned Guzaret ox, not infrequently attaining the height of nineteen hands at the withers, and absolutely weighing from fifteen hundred to two thousand pounds! But notwithstanding this enormous bulk of carcase, which is literally enveloped in goodly collops of quaking fat, the head is strictly that of the antelope – light, graceful and bony. It is armed with a pair of elegantly diverging horns, which rising from a mask of bright rufous feathers, incline at below the plane of the face and forming two sides of an isoceles triangle, are encircled by a ponderous spiral ring, the internal nucleus, or bony core of which is nearly of the consistency and weight of ivory. A deep pendulous dewlap fringed with coarse hair, dangles at his knees; and added to a fatty eminence, which approaches to a slight hump, on the withers, together with sundry rolls of brawn about the collar, produces an extraordinary depth of chest and forehand. The colour varies considerably with the age, being in some specimens dun – in others, ashy-blue with a tinge of ochre – and in many, sandy grey approaching to white. The female – infinitely less voluminous, and more lady-like in her figure – exhibits all those separating characters which distinguish the sexes of domestic horned cattle. She resembles in general conformation, a red Guernsey cow, and is provided with longer and more attenuated horns than her very apoplectic-looking lord."

The main reasons behind the eland's virtual extinction, not only in the Western Cape Province but also throughout most of South Africa were, firstly, the fact that its meat was highly prized as was its hide for reins and wagon traces. Secondly, because early hunters, including Cornwallis Harris – who may have been the first visiting recreational hunter to use this killing method (because it could not be called hunting) – learned that these big beasts could be ridden to a standstill in a mile or two and then driven back to camp or a convenient slaughtering spot where they could be killed with little or no effort while, for the most part, presenting almost no danger to the hunter or his horse.

There was also a commonly held view at the time that, instead of slaughtering these animals, they would be better served if they were domesticated and a number of attempts were made to do this but without any long term success.

These three factors – the manner in which they were killed, the numbers slaughtered and the fact that it was felt that eland could be better used – combined to make the hunting of eland a controversial matter for some time. Exacerbating this was the sadness expressed by many hunters at the death of these huge but seemingly harmless animals.

The predominant views of enlightened hunters at the time were summed up by Stevenson-Hamilton, the first warden of Kruger National Park, in his book, *Wild Life in South Africa*. He wrote:

> "The largest and most of docile of all the antelope tribe, the eland has deserved a better fate than the extermination which has overtaken it in most of its favourite homes. The ease however with which it could be destroyed, especially by mounted hunters, and the quality of the meat which it provided, has, however, in the past, too often proved its death warrant. Thus an animal not only beautiful, gentle, and harmless, but one which might have proved a useful servant to Man, had fate ordained that it should live amid enlightened and intelligent human surroundings, is in danger of disappearance from off the face of the earth at no very distant date."

James Stevenson-Hamilton, in his uniform as a major in the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons.

Frederick Courteney Selous, an early commercial hunter admired by all, added to the controversy by writing in *African Nature Notes and Reminiscences*, that:

> "There is such a wealth of splendid-looking antelopes to be found on the great African continent that it is hard, nay, impossible to say which amongst them is the grandest prize of all that can fall to a hunter's rifle. In bulk nothing approaches the eland, and an old bull of this species, with his massive form, low-hanging dewlap, and great neck surmounted by a striking and beautifully proportioned head, is in truth a noble animal, but at the same time one that looks fitter in every way to adorn a park than to be hunted to the death. The eland is, in fact, one of those beasts that could have been trained to the service of man, and would have been in all probability had it existed in Asia instead of in Africa. Such an animal few can slay without a certain feeling of regret, for even when desperately wounded, nothing but reproach can be read in its mild dark eyes.
>
> How different is the quiet resignation shown by the dying eland to the fierce defiance of every look and gesture of a roan or sable antelope brought to bay and fighting desperately to the very last."

It was almost as if early hunters felt there was something ignoble about killing an eland. And they were right. There was. There was nothing resembling a hunt in the way they went about slaughtering eland to the brink of extinction. Whatever this killing might have been, it was not hunting or certainly not hunting as we know it today.

And do not think that it was only recreational hunters like Cornwallis Harris or commercial hunters like Selous who engaged in what is to us such reprehensible conduct today. As Bryden pointed out in *Nature and Sport in South Africa* in 1897:

> "Directly the rains fall, hunters from among the Bakwena, Bangwaketse, and Bamangwato tribes, well-mounted, and armed with breech-loading