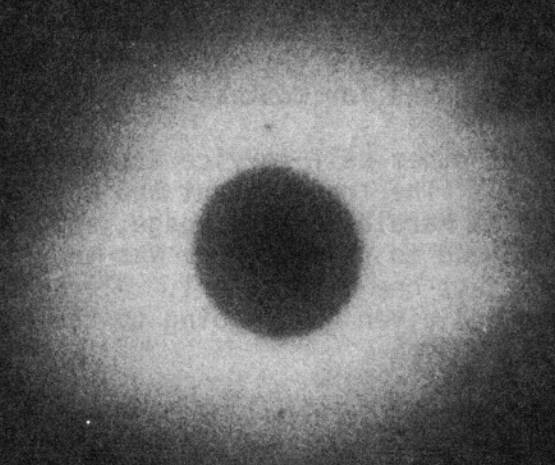


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INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

RFS - 6 FULL CIRCLE AND HALF A CIRCUIT



INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

RFS-6 Full Circle and Half a Circuit

P.O. Box 14246,
Nairobi
Kenya
July, 1973

Mr. Richard Nolte,
Institute of Current World Affairs,
535 Fifth Avenue,
New York,
NEW YORK 10017,
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Nolte,

We really hadn't planned to go to Northern Kenya to see the eclipse. We made a half-hearted attempt in early June to get reservations at the self-service bandas at Buffalo Springs. Buffalo Springs is a game reserve adjacent to Samburu National Park, known for its concentration of the northern animals; particularly reticulated giraffe and grevey's zebra. As one might expect, the bandas had been fully booked for months.

On June 25, I tried to get other self-service accommodation south of Buffalo Springs, again to no avail. The travel agent who books the bandas told me that some were available at Maralal Safari Lodge, about 30 miles south of the path of totality. We decided to go since Irv was very interested in seeing the eclipse and I wanted just one more safari. Alicia Patterson Fellow Boyce Rensensberger, who had given up on going to the eclipse, wanted to join us.

We also asked our ayah, Rebecca, to come.

The four of us (the Rensbergers proceeded to Maralal on their own) left Nairobi soon after lunch. The first 155 miles are on tarmac roads. At Thomson's Falls (named after Joseph Thomson - see RFS-4), the road becomes murrum. Thomson's Falls is on the Equator at an altitude of 7,747 feet. The Falls themselves are very impressive.

We left the White Highlands at Thomson's Falls and entered the old Northern Frontier District. The remaining 95 miles to the lodge were through dry, ranching country. The ranches are still European owned.

Maralal is in the Samburu District of Eastern Province. Jomo Kenyatta was imprisoned there by the British and was, in fact, released by them at Maralal Safari Lodge. The Lodge is set in a beautiful mountain forest. It has a small waterhole where zebra and impala gather during the day, and buffalo frequent it at night.

After spending the morning in Maralal, we set off on our expedition. Our goal was to go beyond Baragoi, about 60 miles north of the Lodge. The road was listed as satisfactory by the East African Automobile Association. I would hate to drive on one they listed as unsatisfactory. The road more often resembled a donkey trail. In fact, the Rensbergers' car broke down, so our viewing spot became a point in Northern Kenya somewhere between Maralal and Baragoi.

We ate our picnic lunch in an area not unlike the high desert of Southern California, except chaparral was replaced by thorn trees. Shortly after three, Boyce looked at the sun with his two layers of fully exposed and developed black and white film. The total eclipse of the sun on June 30, 1973 had already started.

I was reluctant to look at the sun because of all the scare reports in the local newspapers. We had been assured, however, that our layers of black and white film would definitely protect our eyes. Rebecca seemed especially fascinated with the phenomenon that was unfolding. I noticed her repeatedly looking up at the sky. Her manner was very cautious. She would look up very quickly, look down, and then look up again. The ominous warnings had obviously made an impression on her. She later told us that her mother had feared the eclipse meant the end of the world and had warned Rebecca about it.

As the eclipse progressed, the darkness that descended quite gradually had an eeriness to it that is indescribable. The best way to attempt to explain it is to say that one could fully understand why early man thought that the death of the world was at hand. Just before totality we observed the shadow bands that gave the earth the appearance of a mammoth zebra. Then Boyce announced that it was safe to look.

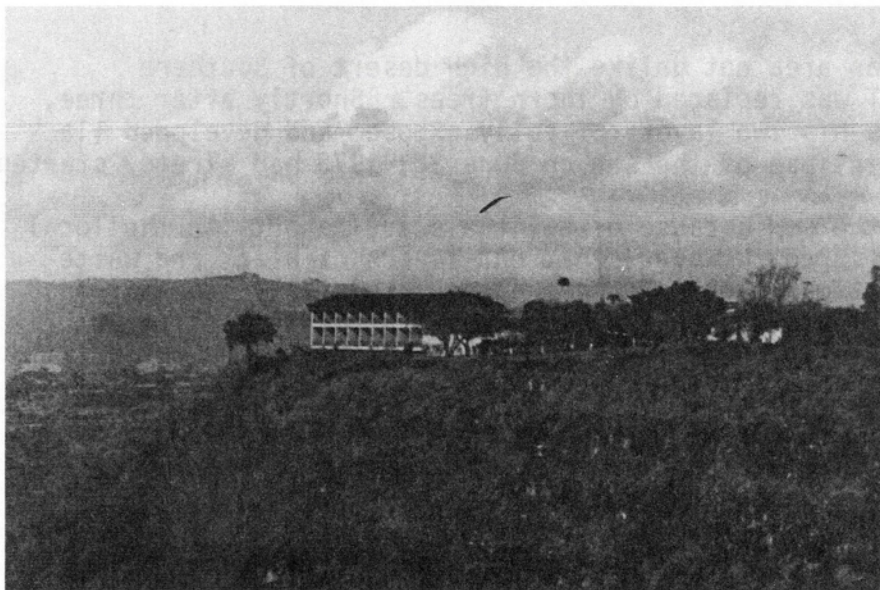
The sky was dark, yet not black. Above us was a perfect black circle surrounded by white-yellow light. Time had no meaning. It was the most beautiful natural phenomenon I had ever witnessed. It must have lasted two and a half minutes. When it was over, my reaction was to ask for a video tape replay. Somehow, you wanted to see it again and again. Naturally, nature didn't comply with my request, for the eclipse had to move on towards the Indian Ocean and its death.

After we all got safely back to Nairobi, I began again to become restless. I wanted just one more safari before we left East Africa. Since reading such books as SERENGETI SHALL NOT DIE and Alan Moorehead's NO ROOM IN THE ARK, my wish has been to make the "circuit". The circuit, as defined by the tour operators, is a trip south from Nairobi to Tanzania. In Tanzania you proceed to Lake Manyara, Ngorongoro Crater, the Serengeti. You then re-enter Kenya and proceed through the Masai Mara Game Reserve and back to Nairobi. The trip normally takes a week, too long a time to be away when a move back to the States is imminent, which was the case with us.

I had tried in vain to get on tours in early July, but they were either prohibitively expensive or too long. On Monday, July 16, Andy Weil, Institute Fellow, arrived in Nairobi from Addis. He had been the medical doctor on an anthropological expedition to view the reactions of the Borana people to the eclipse. Andy said the one thing he must see in East Africa was Ngorongoro Crater. On Tuesday he had booked a tour that would leave on Wednesday, returning to Nairobi on Saturday. After much discussion we decided that if I, too, could get a place on the tour, I should go.

Our tour was to stop at Amboseli in Kenya and Lake Manyara and Ngorongoro in Tanzania and then return to Nairobi. Although it represented only half of the circuit, I felt compelled to go. I could not leave Africa without seeing the fabled Ngorongoro Crater.

The tour group was predictably varied. There was a middle-aged couple from New Zealand who were on their way home on one of their round-the-world trips. There was a young Swede who, perhaps because he spoke little English, was



LAKE MANYARA HOTEL



MANYARA VILLAGE FAMILY



HYENA IN NGORONGORO

extremely hard to get to know. The most interesting person on the tour (ICWA people excluded) was a young woman from Switzerland. She had been a travel agent specialising in wildlife tours for nine years. She seemed to have been everywhere, even Topeka, Kansas. Yet, she lacked the one-up-manship attitude found in some people.

The first day of the tour we arrived at Amboseli in time for lunch. In mid-afternoon we started out on our game drive. I am not particularly fond of Amboseli. Its animal concentrations are not as great as advertised; it is extremely dirty. Yet, Amboseli proved to be the most interesting part of the trip. We saw all the animals one usually sees there - rhino, elephant, cheetah, lion, buffalo. We saw many lions, including a huge pride of ten, plus a mother and daughter hunting. The most interesting sight for me was a family of elephants we came across as we were leaving Amboseli on Thursday morning. When we first approached there were two bulls fighting. They stopped after a few minutes and went off with the herd, but kept a respectable distance. One little elephant was very hungry and was continually trying to catch up with its mother so it could nurse. He was a cute little fellow with an obviously insatiable appetite.

When we were going through passport control on the Kenya/Tanzania border, I felt a wonderful surge of excitement and anticipation. At last I would be in Tanzania. My wish to see Ngorongoro would be fulfilled.

Our first stop in Tanzania was the Lake Manyara Hotel, about thirty miles southeast of the Crater. Lake Manyara National Park was declared a reserve in 1957 and a National Park in 1960. The Park is small, only 123 square miles, and consists of the northern and western shores of the lake, the escarpment and the flat land between the lake and the escarpment. It is famous for its tree climbing lions who, for reasons unknown, seek refuge in the trees of Manyara during the day.

Although we were not fortunate enough to observe any lions in trees, we did see an abundance of wildlife. As you enter the park from its only gate, you proceed through a thick forested area where baboons can be observed. A large herd of buffalo can also be seen on the periphery of the forest. Because of many springs in the area, Manyara appears extremely lush.

There is one spot in Manyara that possesses an aura of tranquility. One comes upon it through thick forest. It is a large open area with springs and rich vegetation. When we were there, there were elephants, baboons, birds, lizards, even a dwarf mongoose. They were all eating and drinking together in perfect harmony.

Lake Manyara is a typically alkaline Rift Valley Lake, shallow and varying in area according to the amount of rainfall. Due to the alkaline nature of the lake, Manyara attracts many flamingoes. But our view of them was not particularly good as the shoreline was low on our visit.

On Friday we left for Ngorongoro, the reason we had all made the trip. The drive from Manyara to Ngorongoro takes about an hour. You go through rich farmlands where most of Tanzania's wheat is grown. You then start climbing up into lush forests. There is a barrier about 45 minutes from Manyara at the boundary of the Ngorongoro Conservation Unit. The barrier exists to ensure that no game trophies are removed from the Unit and to prevent people from driving into the Unit at night when elephant, buffalo or leopard may be encountered on the

road. From the barrier you ascend into a beautiful, thick forest.

The first view of the Crater itself can be inspiring. Through the early morning fog we glimpsed a view of the large cauldron below basking in sunshine. The crater rim is unbroken. The crater floor is 10 miles across, 2,500 feet deep and over 100 square miles in area. There is abundant water and grazing all year around and therefore the animal population is virtually permanent. There is a soda lake, Lake Magadi, which supports a large flamingo population at certain times during the year. We were able to get very close to the flamingoes; they are very attractive birds and are more deeply coloured here than in captivity.

The crater floor supports a large animal population as well as 150 Masai and their cattle. The entire Conservation Unit was originally part of the Serengeti National Park. It was separated from the Park in 1959 in order to provide grazing for the Masai cattle.

Besides the flamingoes, Ngorongoro provides an extraordinary opportunity to see hyena. In the crater the hyena do not appear to be nocturnal and can be seen lazying in the sun. We saw several lying near the lake.

I was finally able to enjoy more than a nostril view of a hippo. Two hippos were clearly visible in a spring. The whole upper part of the body was visible. They are not beautiful, but at least I could now leave East Africa knowing what hippos really look like.

We, of course, saw a large quantity of plains game, particularly wildebeest and zebra. We saw many lions although no black-maned ones for which Ngorongoro, with the Serengeti and Masai Mara, is known. One lioness was particularly interesting. She had only three legs, one leg had been eaten off by a hyena while she was still a cub. The pride obviously took good care of her. She seemed healthy and well-fed, although more nervous than other lions I have encountered in the game parks I have visited. She obviously was well aware of her own vulnerability. This view of lions' behaviour convinced me that they may possess more 'humanity' than some humans.

Another interesting scene we observed was the rare opportunity of seeing a female rhino with her baby. The baby rhino was rather small. Its mother obviously didn't appreciate her offspring being surrounded by Land Rovers and attempted a charge. We managed to escape by merely stopping the car.

Although we were able to see many interesting things on the floor of Ngorongoro Crater, I think all of us were disappointed in it. Perhaps we had expected more than was possible. I left the crater happy with what I had seen, but sad that, for me, the crater was not the experience it had been for Alan Moorehead. Perhaps I had just come too late.

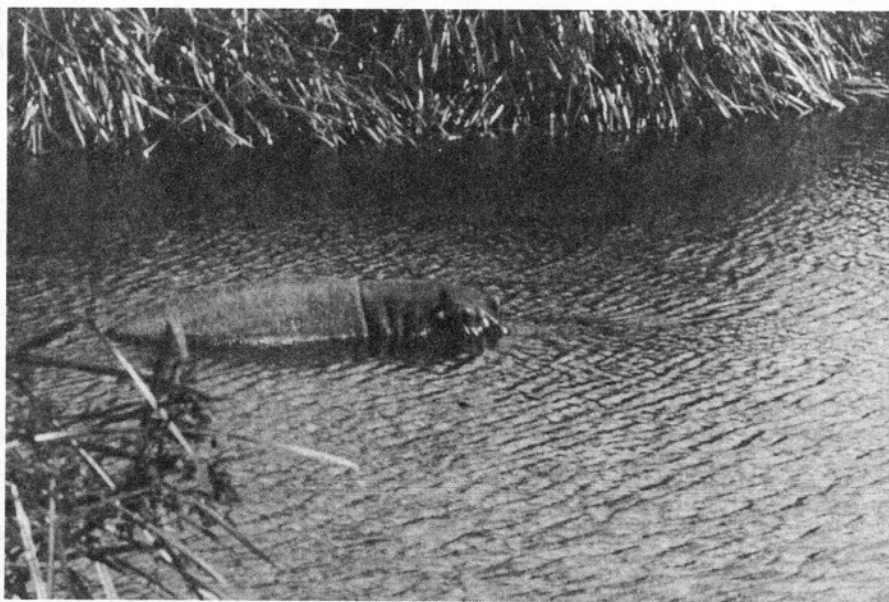
On leaving Ngorongoro the next morning, we stopped at the memorial to Michael Grzimek who conducted, with his father, the research and filming of SERENGETI SHALL NOT DIE. He was killed when a vulture struck his light craft, causing it to crash. The epitaph is simple, moving and beautiful: "He gave all he possessed for the wild animals of Africa, including his life".

I know that it was important to the Grzimeks to preserve the wildlife for all mankind. Yet I feel that their work may be for a very small percentage of mankind. The National Parks of Tanzania are very rapidly becoming open only to

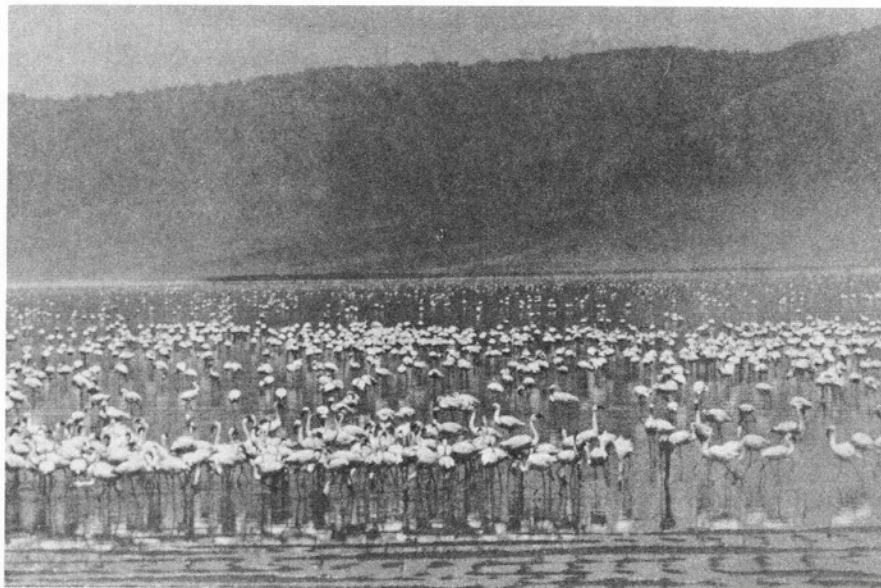


SCENES AT
NGORONGORO:

HIS MAJESTY AT REST



HIPPO IN THE SPRING



FLAMINGOES IN LAKE
MAGADI

the very rich of Europe, America and the Far East. Hotel accommodations are within the luxury class. Except at Ngorongoro where accommodation is reserved for Tanzanian school children, only luxury hotel accommodation is available; this can cost as much as \$50 or more a night. Contrast this with the self-service bandas available at almost all of Kenya's National Parks and Reserves. The Minister of Tourism and Wildlife of Tanzania has said in the United States that he means to restrict the number of vehicles entering the National Parks. He is going to do this by raising park entrance fees and limiting the accommodation in the parks. One must wonder who will benefit from this practice - the animals, the rich, but certainly not any African who surely deserves to see the beauty of wildlife as much as a rich German, Japanese or American.

I cannot adequately describe how revolted one is by such hotels as Lake Manyara and Ngorongoro Wildlife Lodge. They seem so out of place amongst the wattle and mud huts. No effort was made in their construction to achieve a harmony with their environment. Lake Manyara resembles an overbuilt Holiday Inn without the quality of service or food of such an establishment. Ngorongoro Wildlife Lodge made one feel he had just entered the newest, most garrish addition to the motels on the Las Vegas strip. I sincerely hope that Tanzania will do more for Michael Grzimek than placing a moving epitaph on the rim of Ngorongoro Crater. The best memorial to him would be to cause his dream for the wildlife and people of East Africa and the world to become a reality.

I, although not a scientist, do not see the harm for the animals in being observed by people in cars. I have been to many national parks and game reserves in East Africa - Nairobi National Park, Tsavo East and Tsavo West, Amboseli, Lake Manyara and Ngorongoro. Yes, the animals do become used to cars, but they continue to live their lives according to nature. They are not in captivity. I have heard some people say that Nairobi National Park is zoo-like, particularly the behaviour of the lions. They say that wild lions do not like cars, that is why you don't observe lions in Tsavo, for there they are truly wild animals. The people who say such things have little first hand knowledge of most of the parks and reserves of East Africa. I have personally observed no difference in behaviour between animals in Nairobi and all the wildlife sanctuaries I have visited. It is attitudes like those I have described that may destroy all our opportunities for observing wildlife in the future. Or at the best, restrict the opportunities which do exist to the benefit of the very rich. The people of Africa and the rest of the world deserve more.

Sincerely,

Bobbi Spitzberg

Bobbi Spitzberg.

Received in New York,
6th August, 1973

