

On Safari – with Africa's German-speaking Hunters, from *Alvensleben* to *Zwilling*

Reviewed by Rolf D. Baldus

The libraries of international hunters abound with books written in English, recounting the years when it was still possible to hunt Africa's big game on one's own, or tales from their multiple safaris. As Great Britain was the leading colonial power, English, Scottish and Irish adventurers, explorers, officers, farmers, game rangers, and professional hunters authored exciting books about their hunting ventures, including Frederick Courteney Selous, John Millais, "Karamojo" Bell, John Patterson, John Hunter, Ionides, and Brian Nicholson.

The Americans entered the scene at the beginning of the 20th century when former President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt and his son Kermit went on a full-year safari in 1909, shooting enough game to fill the voluminous book, *African Game Trails* – an instant bestseller that was translated into several languages. Ernest Hemingway only went on two safaris, but his stories like *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* or *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* coined the very image of the white hunter that still endures. Robert Ruark's *Horn of the Hunter* measures up to Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa*, and no hunter doesn't like Ruark's *Use Enough Gun*. Osa Johnson, one of the first women to hunt big game, published *I Married Adventure* and was the host of TV's first wildlife series, *Osa Johnson's The Big Game Hunt*.

Now, finally the voices of German, Austrian and Swiss hunters can be heard with the 2014 publication, in German, of the 352-page, *Auf Safari – Legendäre Afrikajäger von Alvensleben bis Zwilling* (*On Safari – Legendary Hunters of Africa, from Alvensleben to Zwilling*), edited by myself and Werner Schmitz with 160 fascinating black and white photos with contributions from a dozen authors, including Fiona Capstick and AHG editor Brooke ChilversLubin.



COLLECTING HUNTING BOOKS ON AFRICA

Since I was a boy, I collected books about hunting in Africa. They were difficult to locate, and they were mostly not cheap. Most I found in Germany, in German of course, of editions that were printed in great numbers. There weren't many different titles and they were almost always written by the same names.

The most obvious reason why German hunters published so few books is that Germany's colonial adventure in Africa lasted only a few years after it started with the 1894 Congo-Conference in Berlin during the "Scramble for Africa." Chancellor Bismarck was not much interested in colonies, but finally the German "Reich" grabbed a few stretches of the continent that hadn't been occupied by the other colonial powers,

mainly British, French, and Portuguese. Today's Tanzania, Namibia, Cameroon and Togo were once German colonies, and the latter three were lost during the early days of World War I. Only General von Lettow-Vorbeck in German East Africa continued to lead his bush war, right up until he heard about the Armistice in Europe – a week late – and then he gave up.

During the colonial years, there was much hunting, as the colonies were true game paradises. However, the time allotted to that generation of hunters was not sufficient to contribute much writing to Africa's hunting history.

RESEARCHING A BOOK ON GERMAN HUNTERS

I combed through old bookstores and flea markets, and my collection grew slowly. Everything changed with the Internet. Suddenly, within seconds, one could locate and price a long sought-after book. This new transparency in the book market created a steep, downward trend in prices for old books. Although my collection continued to grow, once the more common names were covered, the search for rarer editions became increasingly difficult.

Then I decided it was time to address the task systematically myself and produce a compilation of all the different kinds of Africa's German-speaking hunters. After five years collecting information, we've researched and identified over 200 hunting figures from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, who have written books about their experiences, or have been written about by other authors.

Together with my co-editor Werner Schmitz, a professional journalist and translator of Ruark's books, and our 12 co-authors from five different countries, including Fiona Capstick and Brooke

After independence of most of Africa's colonies, the type of hunters changed. One of the few PHs we portray is **Anno Hecker** (born 1928), an excellent hunter who trained Tanzania's game wardens at the Mweka College of African Wildlife Management. Other PHs include **Count Meran** (born 1924), and the flamboyant playboy **Count "Alfie" Auersperg**, both from Austria; **Robert von Reitnauer** (born 1933) a descendant of German immigrants and author of the book *Kwaheri!*, and several Namibians of German descent.

We also include the "paying guest" hunters from central Europe: industrial tycoon **Karl Friedrich Flick** (1927–2006), who shot a buffalo with a 54-inch spread with PH Robin Hurt in the Kenyan Masailand. And politician-hunter, Bavarian strongman, and long-serving conservative state-premier, **Franz Josef Strauß** (1915–1988), who experienced a remarkable, private hunting safari for Cape buffalo in Tanzania during the days of socialist President Julius Nyerere.

CHIMP MEETS WILD BOAR

The political elite of the former German Democratic Republic (1949–1990) – the second-largest German-speaking country, whose communist leaders used their hunting privileges at home to their utmost – was never drawn to African safaris,

although there were certainly opportunities in their African socialist brother-states, like Tanzania, Mozambique or Angola.

Only a peculiar hunter from East Germany, **Heinz Meynhardt** (1935–1989), who'd made contact with a pack of wild pigs and had been accepted by them as a member of the family, made a safari to the Selous Game Reserve. He was a well-known personality in both East and West Germany, due to his self-shot movies showing his life with his foster-family of wild boars. As he earned foreign exchange, he was allowed to travel abroad, a rare privilege for a GDR-citizen.

HUNTING AND CONSERVATION

Africa has seen more than its share of wanton killing of wildlife during its history. Many hunters from Germany, Austria and Switzerland acted as if this were normal at that time. And indeed it was. The fauna was clearly divided into useful and harmful. And the use of the resource was subjected to few restrictions.

However, the more sensible and farsighted hunters realized that wildlife would become extinct if the usual exploitative practices continued. They called for sustainability in use, for conservation, and for proper game laws. It was these responsible hunters who became the mentors of modern conservation in the German colonies.

Dr. Rolf D. Baldus has developed and managed African conservation areas for many years. The author of numerous books and articles about hunting and conservation, today he advises wildlife authorities in Africa and Central Asia.

The handsome hardcover, with 352 pages and 200 black & white photos, edited by Rolf D. Baldus and Werner Schmitz, *Auf Safari – Legendäre Afrikajäger von Alvensleben bis Zwilling (On Safari – Legendary Africa Hunters from Alvensleben to Zwilling)*, is published by KOSMOS Publishers, Stuttgart 2014.

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The cost: 34.99 € (Euros), plus shipping.
To order, contact: rolfbaldus@t-online.de

A BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Christoph Schulz and his wife: Both were successful professional and game catchers in German East Africa before WWI. Several of their descendants are still in the exotic animal business in the USA today.



The famous German wildlife painter, Wilhelm Kuhnert, pictured here on safari, his Mauser rifle hanging over his shoulder. The artist got the nickname "Lion Kuhnert" due to the many excellent, large lion paintings he created, some of which hang today in the Fort Worth zoo.

NOT TO FORGET THE HUNTRESSES
German women also played a part in hunting history. The most famous is **Margarete Trappe** (1884–1957), a strong and tough settler woman who became an excellent professional hunter. General von

Lettow-Vorbeck said she had "courage for three men," and was the best huntress he knew. Nevertheless, women didn't have a chance then to join the East African Professional Hunters' Association.

Vivienne de Watteville (1900–1957) was a Swiss aristocrat who accompanied her father on his 1,200-mile-long African foot-safari as both companion and skinner. As they collected specimens for the museum in Bern, her father became increasingly addicted to lion hunting. His 19th lion killed him, but instead of aborting the safari, de Watteville fills her father's hunting license, even killing a white rhino on her own.

OR THE PHS

Of course, there were the professional hunters, too. Some were businessmen who as early as pre-WWI saw the financial potential of the safari hunting industry, and they set up offices in Mombasa and Nairobi to outfit and guide hunting safaris.

One PH was **Paul Huebner**, who'd been Nairobi's Municipal Commissioner around 1901. He was also one of the three hunters who'd waited inside a Uganda Railway wagon near Tsavo to shoot the man-eating lion that grabbed the English police officer Charles Ryall from the wagon and made off with him. Interested sportsmen could

book a safari with Huebner from Berlin, London or New York.

The Austrian **Ernst Alexander Zwilling** (1904–1990) became a well-known PH, starting his career in Cameroon then moving to Kenya and Uganda.

Werner von Alvensleben (1913–1998) is more familiar to English-speaking hunters due to Brian Marsh's book, *Baron in Africa*. Alvensleben supposedly fled Hitler's Germany in 1935 and was interned in Rhodesia at the outbreak of World War II. He escaped to Mozambique and later started the hunting company Safarilandia, which went on to become the largest and most famous hunting outfit in the Portuguese colony.

Marsh's book is vague when it comes to the baron's youth and flight from Germany, and the little it does expose is incorrect, as we learned. Alvensleben himself used to put a written note into every copy of the book, which he sold himself, telling readers to ignore completely what was written about Hitler and their supposed meeting. Instead, our research led us to Alvensleben's membership in the SS and a political assassination attempt in Austria in 1933. Alvensleben's activities during the war, while living in Lourenço Marques, Mozambique, can be studied in Washington, D.C., in the OSS files, the secret service that preceded the CIA. Alvensleben was a spy for the United States!

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General von Lettow-Vorbeck with three askaris and his largest Cape buffalo trophy, during World War I's East African campaign.



The studio photo shows Adolf Friedrich Duke of Mecklenburg upon return from his Africa expedition 1907-1908.



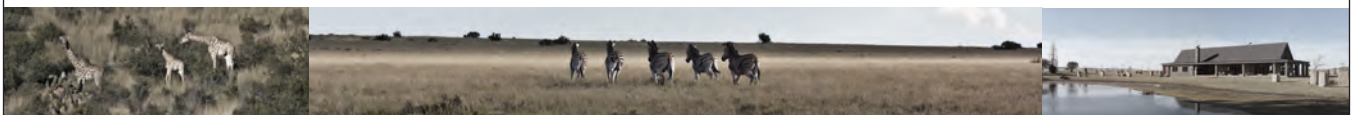
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ChilversLubin, we tell the full-length stories of 23 hunting personalities and provide the biographies and bibliographies of all 203 hunters and huntresses we identified. Such collections are never complete, but we're confident that our list is both the first of its kind and comprehensive.

It astonishes how many hunters felt compelled to press their experiences between two book covers. Their desire to share their stories combined with the demand of the armchair public to experience their exotic adventures. Of course, most hunters are better raconteurs than writers, and are more skilled with a Mauser rifle than a pencil. Many a manuscript has been lost in the bush or eaten by termites.

The result is that the number of German-language authors and books remains small compared to the number of people who, for whatever motif, actually hunted.

203 NAMES

The picture we developed over our years of research is a colorful mixture of motives, necessities, desires, passions, imperatives, or just coincidences for why people took up rifles and shotguns to hunt in Africa. The early 19th century explorers and researchers hunted to feed their large caravans of porters. Others hunted to collect specimens for research and natural history museums; some selected their research topics to have an excuse to travel to Africa and to hunt.

At some stage, it became chic for the rich and the nobility to go on safari to Africa. Aristocrats from Germany and Austria chartered Nile steamers and traveled towards the Sudan, hunting along the way, sometimes firing directly from the boat, with more or less success.

That was more comfortable than the laborious foot safari with porters starting at the coast. Later, Kenya's Uganda Railway ("The Lunatic Express") and the Usambara Railway in German East Africa opened an easy entry into the interior of Africa to every would-be sportsman.

There was also the usual lot of settlers, ivory hunters, sportsmen, colonial administrators, or officers of the *Schutztruppe*, who hunted. Occasionally, officers were so involved in hunting that the Imperial Government in Berlin wrote notes stating that the *Herren* officers should attend more to their duties and less to hunting! Germany ultimately produced its share of Africa's professional hunters, outfitters and game wardens.

"It is good that now a book is available which narrates the story of the German-speaking hunters." – *Gerald Bigurube, former General Director of Tanzania National Parks*



Alfred Brehm in his travel suit, his hunting rifle in hand, before setting out on his journey to Abyssinia.

A WIDE RANGE OF MOTIVES, LIFESTYLES AND PASSIONS

Some hunters became famous people, but that they were hunters was forgotten. One such example was **Alfred Brehm** (1829–1884), author of the multi-volume, much re-issued and re-published, *Brehm's Life of Animals*, which became an early natural history reference book and bestseller. It was Brehm's lust for hunting – inherited from his father, a pastor and self-taught ornithologist – that initially drew him to Africa. His first African species was the falcon he shot as a teenager in Cairo, from the top of the Great Pyramid of Giza, a.k.a., the Pyramid of Cheops. Brehm collected birds and other wildlife on his travels along the Nile and into the Sudan. The majority of his vast collection is in New York's American Museum of Natural History.

Some called **Hermann von Wissmann** (1853–1905) "Germany's greatest Afrikaner." This officer and keen hunter

was the first to cross Africa from West to East on foot. In 1889, he put down a rebellion on the East African coast by Arab slave-traders, and became Governor of the young German East Africa colony a few years later.

With his vast, first-hand hunting experience, he understood the dangers wildlife faced from economic development. And in 1896, he initiated comprehensive hunting legislation and created the first modern, protected areas in Africa; one of them became the Selous Game Reserve. Ironically, while sitting in a blind in Germany waiting for a roebuck to appear, a hunting accident ended his life.

A co-conservationist in spirit was **Carl Georg Schillings** (1865–1921). Living the life of a country gentleman, estate owner, and dandy in Germany's Rhineland, hunting was his main occupation, when not racing horses.

Schillings's African exposure came when he joined a friend on a safari to German East Africa. His large collection of African game inspired him to become a passionate naturalist. Kitting out his own first safari, his baggage in 1899 included a lot of bulky camera equipment. Already an experienced hunter, he also became good at photographing wild animals. Using flashlight powder at night turned out to be more difficult and dangerous than bagging game with his rifle.

Schillings's book, *With Flashlight and Rifle*, became a bestseller in Imperial Germany and was quickly translated into English. Roosevelt referred to it in preparation for his own safari, naming it one of the three most valuable books of its kind in its time, alongside books by Selous and Millais.

Schillings deplored the widespread destruction of wildlife in Africa by the expansion of agriculture, and by the irresponsible killers of game who called themselves "sportsmen," for many a hunter regarded the game as being endless and practiced widespread slaughter.

Schillings called for "sustainable use," and saw it as the task of true hunters to engage in the survival of game. He proposed conservation legislation of astonishingly modern content, and even called for the investment of hunting revenues into conservation, mainly for entertaining game scouts. He did not believe in the complete preservation of wildlife, but rather in the principle of "use it or lose it." Sustainable hunting would develop as a form of land use, and revenues could contribute to economic development.