

WILD HEART OF AFRICA

A U T H O R S

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The original Selous Game Reserve was established in 1896, named after the world famous hunter Frederick Courtney Selous in the 1920s, subsequently expanded and today measures some 5 million hectares (11 million acres). It is both the oldest and largest reserve in Africa and, at last, someone has written a comprehensive book about this fabulous place. And not just anyone but a group of 20 passionate people who together served the Selous in different capacities for a combined total of over 100 years.

For anyone who has been to the Selous, who wants to go there or is simply interested in Africa, its wild, untamed areas and game, this is an important book. The book is scientifically based but offers entertaining reading. It is equally suited for the tourist and armchair traveller as well as for the serious student of the Selous and of conservation. Rolf Baldus, the editor, was the German manager of the Selous Conservation Programme from 1987 to 1993 and served amongst others the Selous again from 1998 to 2005. He has assembled a team of expert contributors who not only know the Selous intimately but also have a good idea of what the future holds for this iconic Reserve at a time when, unfortunately, in Africa today, many similar such protected areas are in stormy waters. The Selous too has gone through periods of deep crisis when its existence was at stake and the book describes in open words these years, the causes, remedies taken and the necessary conservation policies of the future. Possible future scenarios are spelt out in a thought provoking way.

The book is divided into six major sections – Africa's First Game Reserve, The World's Largest Game Reserve Develops, Nature and People, The

Last Eden – One of Africa’s Finest Game Reserves, Hunting the Selous and Which Future for the Selous? As these titles imply, amongst other things, the book contains many fascinating chapters dealing with the history, hunting, poaching, the surrounding communities and the people who played a role in the Reserve’s development as well as the wildlife and the ecology.

For example, Brian Nicholson, who took over from the Snake Man, “Iodine” Ionides, as head of the Reserve in 1954, has written the chapter, From 1922 to Independence. Rolf Baldus, the Editor, wrote Simba Watu – Man-eating Lions; Ireneus Ngwatura wrote From Poachers to Wardens while Ludwig Siege wrote on Poaching and Hunting and Rudolf Hahn on Community Conservation. Gerald Bigurube, Erasmus Tarimo, Mike Shand and Benson Kibonde have contributed on different aspects of conservation and history. The Foreword is by the late head of the Selous family, Commander G.M.B.Selous.

There are also informative, entertaining and well written chapters on the birds and trees of the Selous as well as specific chapters devoted to

animals such as elephant, Roosevelt's sable and the African hunting dog by Neil Stronach, Christian Pitra and Alan Rodgers. With its current population of some 70 000 elephants, 120 000 buffaloes, over half a million antelopes and several thousand large carnivores which roam freely over the plains, forests, rivers and mountains of this massive area, which is devoid of human habitation, both hunting, photographic and walking safaris are conducted and there are chapters on these activities by Richard Bonham and Rolf Rohwer.

All this is complemented by 400 excellent colour photographs and 50 superb paintings by Bodo Meier and Wilhelm Kuhnert. But this is no coffee table book. It is a complete account of the Selous, its past, present and future and the people and wildlife that have made it what it is today.