

The Nilgiri Shikar
by W.E. Kidner

Foreword

Brig. W.E. Kidner C.I.E., M.C. (1884-1969) and Lt. Col. T.P. Bassett D.S.O. (1882-1977), old friends from their days at R.M.A. Woolwich, spent eight weeks in 1912 in the Nilgiri Hills on a shooting trip – a shikar. Both were then Lieutenants in the Royal Engineers. WEK was attached to the 33rd Divisional Signals Company Sappers and Miners at Ahmednagar.

The abandon with which the two shot the local game rather stuns the modern reader, and my working title for this document was *The Nilgiri Hills Massacre*. Different days, different views; and I wonder if the care they took to locate a wounded animal would be practised today. Most of the area, recognised recently as a biodiversity hotspot, is now protected. The pressure on tigers is well-known; the Nilgiri Tahr, or Ibex, and the Asian Elephant are also ranked as 'endangered'.

Simon Kidner
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Indication of area of map on front cover, which is extracted from the Coimbatore sheet. NC 43, Series 1301. U.S. Army Map Service, Corps of Engineers, 1965 original scale 1:1,000,000 and held by the Perry Castaneda Map Collection at the University of Texas <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/india.html>

Shikar, 17th February to 12th April, 1912

On Saturday evening, 17th February, Bassett and I with Puniakote and Muthusami left Bangalore by the 11.15pm train; we had breakfast in very negligée costume at Mysore station, on Sunday morning, and reached Nanjangud¹ about 8am.

The Tehsildar had been warned by wire to have three carts ready to meet the train; these were waiting for us and we watched our servants begin the leisurely process of loading up; then walked on towards Begur dak bungalow, about 12 miles on.

It was a very fine day and the road quite pretty; soon after leaving Nanjangud the faint blue line of the Nilgherries², full of promise of good days to come, came in sight straight in front of us. We walked slowly with frequent rests by the wayside; an old woman selling green cocoanuts provided us with drink, and large crowds of monkeys with amusement.

At this time the greater part of the traffic on the road consisted of large logs of timber lashed under country carts and drawn by two bails³ on the way to the railway at Nanjangud.

Our carts eventually fetched up at Begur about 4.15pm, the cartmen as usual had several ceremonies to perform before they could tear themselves away from their homes.

We had dinner in the bungalow compound and many insects turned up to assist. After dinner our stalwart cook Bob, who had been one of the Signal Company Mess cooks at the Durbar camp in Delhi, was sent on to Gundlepet to get breakfast ready for us on arrival the next morning.

After some good sleep we started off at 6.30am, just as it was getting light, to Gundlepet, some 11 miles away, where we had breakfast and afterwards shot snipe, getting 12 couple in about an hour. Bandipur, where we halted for the night, is about 11 miles on again and we got there feeling quite weary, but soon revived with the help of tea. The bungalow matey told us that there was a herd of bison close in the Mysore forest, which at this time was bund. Before leaving Bandipur we tried our rifles against an ant-hill behind the bungalow.

As we left the bungalow a wild-dog biffing incident by Conran in the middle of the road was recalled, and again a little further on the Bassett-Puniakote bear incident, to the great amusement of the latter. Not far from Bandipur at a bend of the road you come on a splendid view of the Ditch along the north of the hills, not seen at its best until rather later in the year when all the jungle is green. In the middle of the day we reached Tippikadu where we looked at the government elephant kraals, and then went down to the Moyar river. We sat on the bank, took off our boots, waded, had tiffin and bukked until after 4 o'clock; we got to Masinigudi at 5.30pm feeling that life was worth living after all.



¹ Nanjangud is 23 km south of Mysore

² literally, the 'Blue Mountains'

³ a bail is a bullock

Probably when going to Masinigudi or Mudamalai from Bangalore it would be good bundobust⁴ to send kit on to Gundlepet the day before you get there.

At Masinigudi we shot from the 21st to the 29th February. Cheetal⁵ were very plentiful, but many were in velvet, and for this reason it would probably be better for cheetal rather later, say April. There were some Sambhur, among them at least two over 35", of which we shot one and another was shot later. One probably stands a better chance of getting a good Sambhur here than up in the hills. The whole place was overrun by wild-dogs which did not disturb the game as much as might have been expected. The tracks of at least one tiger were seen, but the local people say that they generally come there later in the year, when the rain comes. Blackbuck, with very diminutive heads, pig, peacock, elephants etc. were all very plentiful.

We did not go further east than the Segur valley, but probably there are good cheetal some 8 or 10 miles further to the east. The jungle was very dry when we were there, which made stalking difficult. We also got news of two tigers.

We again shot at Masinigudi from the 5th to the 9th of April, when we found the jungle quite perfect. The whole of the Masinigudi forests had been burnt, and there had been a fair amount of rain; consequently there was no undergrowth and the ground was covered with a carpet of young green grass. Cheetal which had before been in velvet were now shootable, stalking was easy, and it was not so difficult to get a good look at a head.



Our first morning I was walking through low jungle looking for cheetal, when behind me at right angles to my tracks at a range of about 150 yards ran a pack of wild-dogs. There were more than a dozen of them, led by a large and almost black dog, running mute in a long and very extended line; there was so much grass and undergrowth that I could only see a dog or a bit of his back now and then.

I ran towards them and got a quick kneeling shot at one, which was a miss; then the pack stopped and most of them ran back in the direction they had come from; one bitch, however, waited too long and I saw her looking at me over the grass, and getting a steady shot knocked her over. On my going up to finish her off with a stick, she got up and made off. I seized my rifle again and sent a useless shot after her as she disappeared. There was at first a lot of blood, but after half a mile it ceased altogether; then followed an hour or so of looking for tracks, and I had almost given it up when Bassett with his little shikari⁶ Jaura turned up. Jaura at once began to work up a nallah which was close by and had a little water in it; he soon found where she had come down into the nallah⁷ and a little later saw her in the jungle on the other side. He said she was badly wounded; Bassett and I then walked parallel to the nallah some hundred yards apart, and before long she was found lying under a tree and finished off. The first shot had hit her behind the shoulder and high up, just missing the spine.

⁴ good bundobust = good discipline or good practice

⁵ Another name for cheetal is spotted deer

⁶ shikari = guide or tracker

⁷ nallah = steep-sided gully, watercourse; also nullah

After this the pack seemed to break up as we saw them frequently but never more than two or three together.

On the 23rd Bassett shot a dog and another on the 27th.



On the evening of the 22nd I went out at about 4.30 with Muthusami and Jherria; we were slowly strolling along to the N.E. on the north side of the main nullah, when not 50 yards away a Sambhur appeared. He was picking leaves off the bushes and making his way slowly in our direction. At first I made up my mind that he was a small one – it being the first Sambhur I had ever seen in the jungle, and also we had no idea that there were any shootable Sambhur in these parts – but as we lay quite still in the long grass, he came nearer and nearer until within 15 yards of us. By this time I had made up my mind that he was a good head; he looked at us with curiosity once or twice, but as we did not move, was not at all worried. He did not actually fall until the fourth shot. He measured 35½" right horn and 34¾" left, with a spread of 34¼".

His head proved a good load for Muthusami and the shikari; the next morning people from the village came out and skinned him and carried back the meat; his skin made excellent boots. On the following morning, under very similar circumstances, we saw another Sambhur which I thought was quite a good one; he was feeding in a marshy patch of grass under a big tree. We sat down in the long grass to watch him, and as we took no great trouble to hide ourselves he soon spotted that there was some strange thing that he did not understand in our direction. He at once with much stamping of his fore feet set out to investigate; his advance was delayed by frequent halts, during which he seemed to be exercising his senses of smell, sight and hearing to the utmost. His nose and mouth were dripping with moisture. At last he got very close, made quite certain that there really was some funny thing beyond his comprehension in the grass, when he suddenly let out an enormous bel, indeed most startling, as it was unexpected. This he did several times, every now and then making up his mind to fly, but each time his curiosity getting the better of him. The incident was closed by our getting up when he fled precipitately. The little shikari was much pained because the sahib had not shot the burra janwer.



On the early morning of the 24th we saw on the site of an old village, some two miles N.E. of Masinigudi, now entirely overgrown with jungle, a herd of cheetal in which was a big stag which we thought was a good one. We had a most exciting stalk and got right up to him; he was in velvet and like every beast which one does not shoot, he seemed to be very big.

We went on to the N.E. and came to a small rocky hill, from which there was a good view of the surrounding jungle; from here we saw three or four cheetal, some Sambhur does, and some blackbuck. One of the cheetal I decided was good enough to shoot and leaving Muthusami to watch from the hill, went off with the shikari to stalk him; he moved off into thickish jungle and, as we followed him, a cheetal which I thought was the one we were after moved across our front from left to right. I took a quick shot off the shikari's shoulder and hit

him, but low and broke his right shoulder; he turned to fly and I hit him behind, killing him. I cannot tell if he was the one which I was after, he turned out to be a fair head and measured 30³/₄".

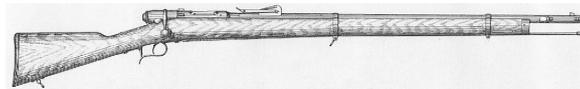
The cheetal shooting at this time was difficult, the jungle being so dry there was a very good chance of an animal seeing you before you spotted him, and when you did see him very probably there was not time or the jungle was too thick for you to get a good look at him.

A regrettable incident occurred a day or two later which resulted in the death of a small cheetal. Seeing two feeding under a tree, I thought one of them was a good one, and had a shot at him. He ran out into the open and I hit him again broadside on. He went away through long dry grass leaving only a few drops of blood; he did not go far, about a hundred yards on he was found dead. He was barely shootable, but it is quite certain that if I had missed him, I should always have thought him a big head. He was in fact only 26" – the limit in the Nilgherrie district.

On the 27th I shot an interesting cheetal; he had eight long points and two offers.

The wild man Jerria who was with me was very keen that I should shoot a *pani* for him, for there were many in the jungle and one evening as we were coming home we met two. I took a shot at one of them, which immediately dashed off apparently unhit. However we soon found blood and, to the little man's great delight, a little further on a young boar dead.

On the 28th Bassett and I went to the Segur valley, having sent out tiffin. It is a very pretty valley down which flows the water from the Segur Ghat. Coming back in the evening Bassett came on a herd of elephants, who as usual were making weird noises. One of them was hitting the ground with his trunk and making a noise rather like thunder, which they are said to do when there is a tiger about. I came on a young cheetal in velvet which had been killed that morning probably by a panther, though I could not make certain as the jacks had been feeding on the kill. I settled down in some rocks and waited till it got dark; the only animals that appeared were a jack who, full of caution, darted backwards and forwards round the kill but did not touch it, and a hind cheetal who fed quite unconcernedly close to the body.



The next morning large numbers of vultures were seen flying straight for the nallah just east of the village; on getting there I found another small cheetal killed, but there was nothing but skin and bones left of him.

Our last evening at Masinigudi we went out to try and shoot a peacock for the Ranger, who had a lame relative, and was quite sure that nothing would cure him but 'peacock oil'. We did not get a shot at one unfortunately, our bag consisting of a jungle-cock, a hare and a quail. The Forest Ranger at Masinigudi told us that at this time of the year, most of the bison would be west of Mudamalai towards Benne. So we decided to go to Mudamalai forest bungalow and make further enquiries there. We left Masinigudi on March 1st.



Above: Will Kidner on an earlier expedition, in 1909

In the coral at Tippikadu there was a newly captured cow elephant; a large solitary bull had recently been captured; he had killed himself in the coral and they were just going to burn him.

The bungalow at Mudamalai is 11 miles from Masinigudi. It is a pretty little wooden bungalow built on piles, and surrounded by silver oaks. There is a very nice little Chetty, from the Chetty village about half a mile away, in charge of the bungalow, who brought us a present of milk and eggs. The Mudamalai ranger proved rather useless, but in the evening the deputy ranger, M. Ambu, who was in charge of the elephant camp at Peepiguda, turned up. He told us that there were lots of bison a little further on towards Benne and that we had better go to his camp, 6 miles on; he also promised to lend us some of his Jain Kurumbahs as shikaris.

We arrived at the elephant camp at Peepiguda at 11 o'clock the next morning. While having tiffin near the Kurumbah huts, a Malabar squirrel escaped from captivity. He dashed out of one of the huts up a tree then, finding he had reached a *cul de sac*, jumped some 50 feet falling with a thud, and by the skin of his teeth escaped up another tree, where if he had had the sense to know it, he was safe. But he was not satisfied and made a futile attempt to jump across to another tree; he nearly made it, but just missed, falling to the ground at least 70 feet. He did not seem much the worse for his fall and we were pleased to see him this time get away into the jungle.

There were 40 elephants in the camp, ranging in size from a full-grown elephant to a baby; they were all under instruction and not yet fully trained. Near our tents was the hospital in which was a large bull with boils on his feet; these had to be syringed and during the operation he used to make the most prodigious and awe-inspiring noises. The baby elephant, an invalid, also lived here; he was a ripping little beast, generally on the lookout for ghur.



On the morning of March 3rd, I went up the road to the east towards Angattibathbeta. Early in the morning we saw two small Sambhur and a pack of wild dogs running; I did not have a shot at them as I thought it would disturb the jungle. A little later we put up a herd of bison, but saw little of them except a cow with a calf. We went on to the east and south, halting during the middle of the day. In the evening we turned to the west and went towards Vallyaguggalu. There were lots of Sambhur about and we watched several. About 6 o'clock we saw a stag with two hinds which I thought was a good deal bigger than the others; I sat down and took a shot at him at about 80 yards. I had only a .450 rifle out. The shot hit him between the eyes, he was standing broadside on and just as I fired he turned to look in my direction with his head in front of his shoulder. The result was he fell like a log his head being very badly smashed. The two hinds did not appear to know what had happened and stood quite still until we got close up to them. The Sambhur was an old one; his horns were $30\frac{5}{8}$ " and it seems probable that the Sambhur in this area do not grow much bigger than this.

After this we were walking on down a fire line when, not half a mile from where we had shot the Sambhur, the Kurumbah who was in front sat down and pointed excitedly down the fire line. I just caught sight of something moving towards us; owing to the lie of the ground it was only a glimpse and I could not make out what it was. There was a second or two to wait and

then, from behind a small hillock, came a tiger's head. Instead of waiting, I made the mistake of standing up at once to get a better view. As soon as I did this the tiger spotted us and came in our direction in three big bounds. I pushed the Kurumbah to one side, intending to shoot when the tiger got quite close; at 15 yards he stopped dead, and pulling the Kurumbah back, I rested the rifle on his shoulder to get a steady shot. This delay was fatal, the tiger pausing only momentarily and, as my rifle went off, he bounded into the jungle to the right and the bullet missed him behind. Feeling very angry at the mess I had made of this chance, I proceeded to look round for blood and made certain that I had missed him altogether; by this time it was getting dark and we set out for home.

This tiger was evidently in the habit of prowling up this forest-line in the evening and we found the place where he frequently crossed the nallah a little farther on. When he first saw us I think that he mistook us for Sambhur grazing, and certainly was very surprised when he saw what we really were.

Two evenings after, Bassett and I again went to this place to see if we could make any bundobust to get him; we heard him saying "Wouf, Wouf" in the next nallah. I suppose he was hunting, and we decided that the only thing to do was to tie up for him, so told the Ranger to get us some bails.

We got one little bail and sent the Kurumbahs out to tie him up, but when we got out in the evening they had it up in quite the wrong place. However after much talk and noise we eventually got the bail tied up in the right place. We sent everyone away and waited behind ourselves; before the Kurumbahs were out of hearing down came the tiger with a rush from a hill about 200 yards away. We hastily got into position, Bassett in the fork of a tree and myself behind some long grass. The tiger came close to the edge of the fire-line and for what seemed at least five minutes he waited in the long grass. The bail was getting more and more agitated until he made a violent snort; this so frightened the tiger that he ran away, shouting "Wouf, Wouf, Wouf", and was not seen by us again. The bail was left out that night, but the tiger did not come back. We never knew what frightened him away—it may have been the bail's efforts to escape or the fact of the bail's being tied up scared him, but my idea is that he must have seen us.



On March 4th I went up to the Angattibathbeta-Lenborribetta ridge seeing a barking-deer and many bison tracks. As we were moving along to the west near 3084, we came on what with too little consideration I thought was a bull; the Kurumbahs urged me to shoot, which I did. She was hit from straight in front in the neck and fell dead. I ran up and it was not for some time that I found out that I had shot an old cow. It seems almost impossible that these Kurumbahs did not know that it was a cow, they were probably out for meat. This was a most unpleasant incident but it shows what care is necessary when after bison for the first time.

On 5th Bassett found a herd of bison in thick bamboo jungle about a mile N.E. of camp. On the 6th, after seeing two other bulls, he shot one on the north side of Angattibathbeta. It was a solitary bull whose horns had a span of 35¼”.

On the morning of the 7th we shot 5½ couple of snipe in the valley ½ mile west of camp, and on the 9th we got 4½ couple in the same place.



Peepiguda is near the point 3018 on the Mudamalai-Benne road where the Narattibetta-Vallyaguggalu forest-line crosses the road.

March 10th

On March 10th we set out for Gudalur; our carts arrived from Masinigudi late and when they arrived would not start until the evening, and consequently instead of leaving at 9am they left at 9pm.

We did not wait for them but started at 1.15pm along the fire-line over Vallyaguggalu, through Kurubarbeta Estate, Porakal, and Devarshola Estate, on to the Gudular-Wynaad road. This is an extremely pretty walk, at first through coffee plantations shaded by silver oaks with pepper plants climbing up the trunks, nearer the road through tea plantations. All along here the plantations are rapidly encroaching on the jungle, and at this time the hills near the tea were all smoking with the burning debris of cleared jungle. On joining the main road we left Rockwood Estate with its Needle Peak on our right. Although from our camp to Gudalur it was only about 8½ miles as the crow flies, it was some 14 miles to walk. We had lunch at Porakul, and got to the bungalow at about 8pm. The matey, who had been previously warned, gave us dinner and we passed none too comfortable a night in long chairs. We were very pleased to get a dak and lots of papers the next morning, and the kit rolled up at 3 pm. At 10.15 that night after dinner we pushed off again with fresh carts up the hill to Pykara. The night was passed on the top of the kit, and we turned out just before the sun rose and walked the last 7 miles to Pykara. It was a splendid fresh morning with a nip in the air and a very different country from what we had left the night before. The shikaris, Thai and Antony, with baggage ponies were waiting for us and we decided to go onto to Nilgiri Peak the next morning. The rest of the day we spent in making up arrears of sleep with a stroll in the evening.

13th March

We set off at 10 am for Nilgiri Peak with our kit loaded on 10 ponies, small and thin but wiry. They never get anything to eat except the grass which they can pick for themselves. For pony transport, kit should be easily divisible into 50 or possibly 60 lb. loads, though the pony men seem to be capable of loading up almost anything if necessary. From Pykara to our camp was about 12 miles along the slopes of the hills on the right bank of the Pykara River. The grass was all very brown and burnt up, everything was in need of rain. We halted in the middle of the day in a valley, down which ran a stream with tree-lined banks. The kit got into camp just before us. After tea I went out with Thai along a valley to the north, and looked

over the ghat down on the plantations and jungle below. In one place where the grass had been burnt early and the young grass was showing, we saw several hinds and small Sambhur feeding, and late in the day one fairly respectable stag came out of the shoal. We got close up to him and then crawled away again, leaving him undisturbed. At one time as we were sitting on some soft grass admiring the view and watching for animals, two hinds came within about 20 yards of us from behind before we saw them. We were in the open and in no way concealed; we watched them for some time and though they were very puzzled and tried hard to make out what we were, they did not run away until we made them do so. While investigating us they stamped their feet and belled at intervals. They had big grey ruffs and had more hair than the Sambhur down below.

That evening and every evening after we had a big log fire in camp.

14th March

With Muthusami and Thai I started out from camp at 6am. We went due west to the ground overlooking the valley south of Nilgiri Peak. Here the view in the early morning struck me as very fine, a deep valley full of thick jungle, shut in by precipitous sides four thousand feet below us, Nilgiri Peak on the right and Mukatti Peak on the left, the sun rising behind us sending long streaks of light down into the mist below. Thai expected to find ibex on this ground but we saw only one brown-buck. We went along the top of the valley to the south and then sat down to watch. Soon a big stag with two hinds came out of some trees below us; Thai said he was 32" or 33". After watching them for a time we went back the way we had come to the north and round the edge of the hills to the east. About 11 o'clock we saw a herd of about 50 ibex, with two large brown-bucks among them but no saddle-back. We got back to camp by midday.

In the evening we went out again and saw a few females. It was very cold and windy so that the animals were keeping warm in the sholas⁸. Wherever we went we saw signs of the havoc that wild-dogs had been committing, but they had all left recently.

March 15th

In the evening I saw a stag with two two-year old stags come out of a shola and go to a pool of water up a valley. The old man was very sedate, but the young ones dashed into the water and ran around kicking their heels in the air and splashing one another. We went down and watched them from quite close until it was time to go back to camp.



The best time of the day in my opinion when out shooting is just before and just after sunrise; at no other time does the country look so fine or does the air seem quite so good as when it is just getting light. Also this is the time for Shikar when the Sambhur are out of the sholas and other beasts on the prowl.

On the evening of the 16th, I was sitting with Thai and Muthasami watching the sholas on the

⁸ a shola is a thicket, or more expansive stretch, of high-altitude stunted evergreen forest

top of the ghat about 3 miles N.E. of Nilgiri Peak; a long way off and far below we saw a Sambhur stalk out of the jungle. We thought he was a big one and set off down the hill to have a look at him. Thai made all bundobust for this stalk, and it was very good. On the way we came on what I think was the biggest Sambhur I have yet seen – he had a magnificent head but in velvet. He stood on the edge of a narrow arm of a shola looking at us over the tops of the trees. When we got up to the stag which we had originally started after, we found he also was in velvet and not very big. We were looking at him from some 40 yards away over a small rise on the top of a bare spur; when he spotted something in our direction. He immediately began to advance warily upon us; we lay very still and not till he was within 15 yards of us did he stop, and there he stood staring and sniffing at us until I got tired of him. I then looked him straight in the eye to see what would happen: he gave a loud bel and moved with a stately tread on an arc of a circle of about 15 yards radius round us. When he had gone about 45 degrees to our left he again halted and stared at us, now and then stamping with his fore-feet. Again I stared at him with the same result. A third time he was starting his stately circumambulation when our wind suddenly hit him, and he gave a terrific bel – a terrified shriek – and fled. It was just as if something had hit him on the side of the head.

After this we saw two more stags standing on the skyline as the sun was setting. Heads always look big on the sky, and we went after them, and they were ordinary. Then followed a longish trek home in the dark. When we got back to camp, Bassett had not returned; he arrived later with a good saddle-back, which was a great addition to the bag. He had wounded him first, and then had considerable difficulty in getting him. The wounded ibex had sought refuge in a wooded nallah and stayed there running up and down until he was shot. He had a good saddle and his horns measured 14½". There had been another with not so good a saddle, and Muthasami, Thai and I set out to look for him the next day.

March 17th

We were out all day along the spur running west from Mukatti Peak. We saw several females and young ones but no saddle-back. In the afternoon we were going along the south of this spur looking across the valley towards Bet Mand when we frightened a herd of 20 ibex. They saw us before we saw them and made off down an enormous khud, taking cover in a clump of bushes growing on a shelf in the rock some hundreds of feet below us. They were all crowded together and refused to move although we threw some stones at them. This valley to the S.W. of Mukatti is I think even finer than the one to the north and the sides are splendid khuds – you can imagine markhor living there. That evening all the valleys filled with clouds and we went back to camp early.

March 18th

Next morning we went out towards Nilgiri Peak and round to the north and east. We saw some female ibex and some Sambhur feeding on the col running out to Nilgiri Peak. Here I saw a black monkey⁹ for the first time – later on of course we saw many. He was sitting on a rock and with his shiny black coat and brown head of hair he looked very like an aboriginal man must have looked; he went off down a steep grassy slope with big bounds landing on his hind feet, a weird looking action. Soon we heard a sambhur calling in a shola below us. Feeling sure that there was a tiger on the move we took up a strategical position near the head of the shola and waited. A big sambhur shortly came out of the shola and lay down

⁹ probably a Nilgiri langur *Semnopithecus johnii*

under a tree in the open; Thai said he was about 33". We were sitting on the open hillside and he was about 150 yards away. We watched him for some time and I was tempted to have a shot at him. However I refrained and afterwards rather regretted it as we did not see another as good again, though now I think it was a good thing I didn't shoot him. I have since found out that when there is a tiger on the move in a shola, the big stags very often do come out into the open, even in the heat of the day. We saw nothing of the tiger if there was one there. With our heads towards home we were struck by a bad smell coming out of a shola, and on investigation we found a small sambhur killed a few days before by a tiger. Later, at 12.30pm, we came on the large herd of ibex we had seen some days before, right down in the valley by a pool of water.

In the evening Bassett and I went out for a stroll round camp, unfortunately for an old grey jack who lived in a shola nearby. We saw him scratching on the hillside across a small valley, and because he was said to destroy game and because man has an instinctive lust for blood we decided to have a shot at him. So Muthusami was sent back to camp to fetch a rifle. I took the shot and the jack rolled over dead, hit through the neck; we paced the range, which was 250 yards.

March 19th

On March 19th we moved camp to Poratti Mand to the south. Here all the grass had been burnt early in the year and the hillsides were covered with fresh green grass. It looked as if we should get excellent shikar here. We went out that evening and saw some females and small stags. The next day I was out all day on a hill to the S.W. known by Thai as the 'Ibex Hill'. There were three herds here, and we saw over 60 ibex, among them two small bucks with small saddles but not shootable. In the evening I was watching a hill near Emerald Valley through the telescope and saw sitting on top of the hill against the sky a panther. From 5.30 to 6.15 he sat there like a sphinx, occasionally turning his head to the right or left. I was at first for running over there but Thai quite rightly said it was useless; it was three miles away as the crow flies and we could not have got there before dark.

The same evening Bassett went out to the north slopes of the hill to the north of camp, and hit a good sambhur; but he got away and they could not get up to him before dark. The search continued for two days, and they found two spots where he had laid down on the night he was hit. The hillside was dry and hard and there was no blood after the first few hundred yards, so the search had to be given up at the end of the second day.

March 22nd

While we were out the camp was shifted about a mile and a half to the south, and we came back to the new camp in the evening.

March 23rd

We went for a long journey in the direction of Bet Mand, where we found all the grass dry and brown and saw no sign of anything except the tracks of a large tiger some days old. In the evening we passed the 'ibex hill' again and saw the same lot of ibex.

The next day was Sunday and we passed a peaceful and pleasant day in camp, the only

incident of importance being a deputation from the neighbouring Toda mand.

At this time most of the large bucks of the ibex were living apart from the rest of the herd, and generally there from two to five who kept together.

March 25th

We had all our kit shifted to Avalanche bungalow. I started out early; as we were going round the head of Emerald Valley we saw quite a good sambhur and as we were sitting on a rock above him trying to get a good look at him, suddenly from the hill behind dashed a small stag in a great hurry. Of course he frightened everything into the shola; that didn't matter because at the time my mind was running on wild-dogs. However, near where I expected them to come from, I saw a solah topi appear with great caution. The local planter – the first white man we had seen since we left the railway – had also seen this sambhur from across the valley, and was after him but had run into the small stag on the way. He said that he knew this stag well and considered him about 33"; he also told me that all the big stags at this time of the year went back into the sholas very early in the day and did not come out again until it was dark.

We then went on past an enormous herd of buffaloes to Avalanche valley. While crossing the main valley we saw on the south side a herd of 37 ibex with one large buck which through the telescope looked as if he might have a saddle. After quite a good climb we got up to them and found that he was a very big buck with a saddle just beginning to develop. As we sat and watched this herd Thai told me how he had once seen lying on a rock near here what looked like a skeleton, and how, after watching it with the glasses for some time the skeleton moved its tail; the man he was out with a little later missed a big tiger at 50 yards.

We had tiffin in a pretty, grassy hollow on the top of the hill. Here we met Antony who was out looking for a saddle-back for me. After tiffin we were watching two bucks lying some way down the hillside below us when Antony, full of excitement, came up with the glad news that with them on the other side of the spur was a saddle-back. After sliding down a steep grassy slope we saw him lying under a tree about 200 yards away. We watched him for two hours and then could not make out for certain how big his saddle was owing to the shade he was lying in. Then with much sweat and belly crawling we got within 60 yards of him; he was standing up and had a fair saddle. We decided to shoot him. It was an easy shot, but I made a disgraceful shot and missed him low, though I did not believe it at the time. They went away and we ran to a rock from which to get a good view of the surrounding ground. Two of the bucks, but the saddle-back not with them, were seen going away far down in the valley. Thai then went down to look at the place where the ibex had been when I had fired, and suddenly out dashed the saddle-back from under the rock on which I was standing. He went straight away from me down the hill, and I took a shot at him. I then put up the 300 yard sight and had a second, which Thai said hit him behind. It did not stop him perceptibly and we went down to the point where we saw him disappear. There was a little thin blood and we tracked him on some way until on a steep grass slope all tracks disappeared. There was a thick shola below and the rest of the day was spent until dark in looking for tracks, and climbing through the shola. We saw the other two bucks again, but no sign of the saddle-back. Then we went back to the bungalow, with me feeling sad and annoyed at my bad shot. Next morning With Thai and Antony I went out to the place again, and just when we got to the place from where I had fired the first shot and was looking around to find any sign that it had

hit him, Antony shouted up from below that he had found him. I ran down and there he was lying on his back on a clump of bamboo, dead. He had fallen down the khud dead from the place where we had lost the tracks the night before. I was indeed thankful at finding him. The first shot had missed him, the second grazed his ribs, and the third hit him behind and went right inside him, killing him. He had a quite respectable saddle, his horns measured 13¼" with a girth of 8¼". The skinning process over, leaving the body covered with branches to hide it from the kites, we returned and sent out coolies to bring in the meat.

After coming back to breakfast the next morning, Antony came in and said that there was a tiger in the shola near the 'Long grass' and that Bassett was having breakfast out there and was going to wait there all day. I went out there and we sat on opposite sides of the valley till the evening but saw nothing of the tiger.

March 28th

We started out soon after 5 am, and went across the valley to the north and up the hill on the other side. While it was getting light and we were sitting down on a spur, we heard a sambhur belling just above us. Thai thought that there was a tiger up there and with all speed we ran up the hillside, and when we had gone about 300 yards Thai stopped and pointed. I saw a tigress walking delicately along the hillside above us; we were on a small spur and she was crossing a small valley which ran down just to our left. Muthusami was carrying the rifle and, for this I shall always be thankful to him, when I put out my hand for the rifle there he was close behind me. I rested the rifle on a rock and fired. She immediately dashed straight down the hill, and a picture remains in my mind of flying fore-legs and tail; I went up the spur a little and re-loaded; just as she came opposite me she slewed round, tail towards me, and I hit her again behind and she died. We waited a bit before going up to her until quite sure that she was dead. The first shot had killed her; it was rather high in the shoulder through both lungs, the bullet making a big hole. I picked up the nickel envelope lying on the ground. The second shot had done no good as she must have been practically dead before; the bullet was found in the flesh of her hind leg. I paced the range for the first shot and found it was 70 yards. We laid her out on the ground and drove in three pegs – one at her nose, one at the base of her tail, and one at the tip of her tail. She measured 8' 4". of which her tail was 2' 8¾"; her girth was 3' 6" and her height at the shoulder 3' 7¼". She was an old beast with her teeth much broken. Her death occurred at the hour of 6.15 in the morning just before it was quite light.

Muthusami ran back and fetched my camera and some other people, who helped to skin her. They took away most of the meat and were especially keen about the fat – they said it was to make a medicine which made children strong.

On March 29th we moved camp to Pyr Mand. We started out early up the Cispara road and along the high ground to the south about 11 miles from Avalanche. The ponies arrived about 2 pm. Here the country is higher than where we had been before and the valleys not so deep, all grassy downs and sholas. We stayed here two days and saw lots of females and small stags but nothing shootable. On the 31st we went back to Avalanche, as we had heard that tracks of a tigress and two cubs had been seen there. We saw several more sambhur there and the herd of Ibex.

On the afternoon of April 2nd a sambhur began belling in the shola above our camp. We went

out and took up positions to watch for him. Before long I saw him through the glasses rolling in the high grass up the hill. Thai and I ran up as fast as we could but when we got there he had gone down into the shola again and we heard the sambhur belling in the valley below. He must have come out into the valley again late in the evening as after our dinner the sambhur began belling up the valley.

April 3rd

We walked to Ooty¹⁰, about 15 miles. We went to Van Ingen's and saw some very fine heads there, a Tibetan Shou 50", two big sambhur both 36" shot in the Nilgiri District this year, and a magnificent bison 41" span shot near Mattapalliam. We saw Col. and Mrs. Evans and had tea and dinner with them, walking on to camp just outside Ooty after dinner.



Next day we went down the Segur Ghat to Masinigudi. Owing to trouble in getting carts at Ooty our kit did not get there until 10am. We had intended to stop at Mavanhalla but found a doctor Murphy there. He gave us a drink and said he had had no luck with cheetal there and had wounded a wild-dog. He was going to Anikatti for bison and cheetal which Van Ingen had told us was a good place.

In the evening and night the jungle at Masinigudi is full of pleasant noises: the cheetal keep on calling—the best of all jungle noises—and there are lots of funny night birds. Near the village every night we heard some which made a noise that reminded you of the ramchikor, and occasionally a sambhur belled.

We went to bed late and very tired. We put our beds outside at the west end of the bungalow and had a most splendid night, getting up late in the morning feeling entirely fit.

We found the jungle perfect now, all the old grass and undergrowth had been burnt and the ground was covered with young green grass. We were out early on the morning of the 6th, and saw lots of animals but nothing big. When we got back to the village we heard that a tiger had killed two buffaloes a mile away; after breakfast we set out to try and track him up with a view to having a beat. We followed him up for a mile to the east and then lost his tracks completely after he had gone through some bamboo jungle. He was probably lying up in one of the nullahs up the hillside. We then decided to sit up for him. On going back to the kill we found that one of the buffaloes had been almost entirely eaten by the tiger and by the birds; the other had the marks of the tiger's four large teeth showing how the tiger had seized him by the throat and sucked his blood; the only other marks on him were the deep claw marks of the tiger's right foot on the top of the withers, and a scratch on the buffalo's off shoulder made by the tiger's left foot. There were no signs of any struggle, the tiger had just seized him by the throat with his right foot on top of the withers and pulled him down and sucked his blood. The buffalo had fallen on his left side and the jungly men told us a funny

¹⁰ Ooty also known as Udhagamandalam is the "Queen of hill stations" and the capital of Nilgiris district. It is one of the most popular tourist resorts in India. The Nilgiris, or 'Blue Mountains' is a land of picturesque picnic spots. Used to be popular summer and weekend getaway for the Britishers during the colonial days. It is situated at an altitude of 2,240 meters above sea level. source: www.ooty.com

superstition that if the kill fell on his right side the tiger would come back but that if he fell on his left side, it was quite certain that the tiger would not come back.

The men with us made a very comfortable machan, and Bassett sat up until it got dark and then came back to the bungalow; the moon rose about 11 o'clock, and I went out so as to be in the machan before it rose. This was of course the worst possible bundobust as it was very likely that the tiger would be watching near the kill hours before going to it. The tiger did not turn up. Lots of jacks scratched away at the kill and quarrelled all night. In the morning Bassett turned up at 6.30am and we wandered through the jungle looking at cheetal. After breakfast I had a most pleasant sleep 'till the evening when I went out to try an old blackbuck, who lived in petta land across the road, for meat. However on this occasion he was too wise to let me get near him at all, though on the next morning he was not so circumspect, with the result that he was added to our larder.

That morning we saw a cheetal with two hinds in petta land, and got close to them. We lay still right in the open and they walked close by us looking at us in the most unconcerned way. A little later we witnessed a very fierce battle between two old blackbuck. Also we saw a large herd of cheetal with two big heads in velvet.

In the evening we went out to the Moyar valley, where we saw many cheetal, sambhur, blackbuck, monkeys, etc. There was one cheetal which I thought was a good one and I wanted to shoot, but every time I got near him the village man I had with me did something stupid and frightened him, so I did not get a shot at him. I did not take this man out again, he was a bad and excitable person.

April 9th

This was our last day's shikar and an unfortunate one for the cheetal. I went out with Muthusami and a new man called Bopali; he seemed to be an excellent man, a relation of Jaura's and I think the name of his caste is Soligam, or something like that. Early in the morning we saw what I thought was a good cheetal moving away from us through the jungle. We made a chukka round him and got in front of him.. He came along slowly feeding through the jungle and I shot him, hitting him in the neck at 70 yards; he fell dead. He had a pretty shaped head and thick but only just 30". A little later as we were coming home I heard a shot by Bassett.

He had shot two cheetal – one very fine head, 35 $\frac{3}{4}$ " with a spread of 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ " tip to tip, and the other a good head of 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". This was a most satisfactory ending to our shoot.

In the evening we wandered round petta land looking for a peacock for the ranger; no peacock, but we shot two black-naped hares.

During the whole of this shoot we were in easy reach of Ooty and so sent all masks and skins straight to Van Ingo's to be cured, which saved a lot of trouble. We were always able to get stores and soda water from Spencer's within 48 hours.

Bag

Tigress	1	8' 4" long
Bison	1	35¼" span
Sambhur	2	35½" and 30 ⁵ / ₈ "
Cheetal	5	35 ¾", 33½", 30¾, 30", 29½"
Saddle-backs	2	
Wild-dogs	3	

Also killed:	Cow bison	1
	Pig	2
	Cheetal	2
	Blackbuck	1
	Jack	1
	Hares	3
	Jungle Cock	1
	Snipe	28 ½ couple

Wounded:	Sambhur	1
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April 10th

We left Masinigudi early and got to Tippikadu at 7am. There were 6 or 7 newly captured elephants in the coral, mostly not fully grown ones. An elephant had fallen into a pit that night and we stopped to see them get him out. While I was looking for the pit into which he had fallen, I only just escaped being caught myself, by walking on to the edge of one without seeing it.

A pit is about 15' deep. The captured elephant was making every effort to get out but his case was entirely hopeless. After several attempts, very cleverly foiled by the elephant, they got a slip-knot round his neck and then one round one of his hind legs. Having fastened him by these ropes to trees, they began to drop in logs and brushwood at one corner of the pit to make a ramp up to ground level. As soon as he possibly could, the elephant climbed up the ramp to ground level, and he was taken over by one or two other elephants to the coral,

We had breakfast in the middle of the day at Bandipur, and got into Gundlepet in the evening after a 24 mile walk.

Next morning we went to the tank to shoot duck. There were lots there but we did not get any as we were short of cartridges, and expended what we had in blasting off from the bund at birds high in the air; if we had waded across into the reeds at first we should have got a lot of duck. Afterwards we shot 6 ½ couple of snipe.

The trek to Nanjangud was done in a bullock cart, the journey being broken by a halt at Begur for breakfast. We had dinner at Mysore and got to Bangalore the next morning, April 12th, at 5.45am. Two days after I started back to Ahmednagar, the idea of work struck me as most unpleasant at the time.

15.9.12