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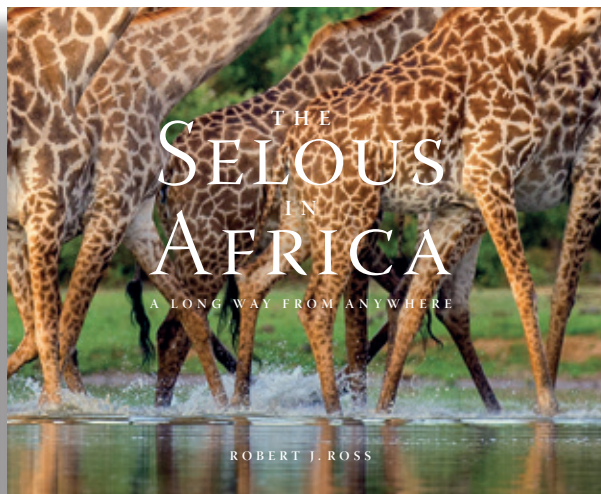
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## THE SELOUS IN AFRICA

### A Long Way from Anywhere

Fotografie di Robert J. Ross



276 pp. con 6 aperture ad anta, cartonato con sovraccoperta  
25,4 x 31,8 cm, illustrato a colori  
55,00 €

isbn: 978-88-97737-64-3  
LINGUA INGLESE



Il Selous Game Reserve, situato nella Tanzania meridionale, fu la prima area protetta dell'Africa (1896) ed è anche la più grande, con un'estensione superiore a quella della Svizzera. Nonostante la feroce guerra che vide le forze inglesi e tedesche scontrarsi durante la Prima guerra mondiale e il bracconaggio degli anni Settanta e Ottanta, il Selous rimane uno dei più grandi e indisturbati ecosistemi dell'Africa, con una fauna ricchissima: una delle due più grandi popolazioni di elefanti del continente africano, probabilmente quasi la metà dei licaoni dell'Africa, vasti branchi di bufali, ippopotami e più leoni che in qualsiasi altra area protetta del continente (*National Geographic*, agosto 2013). Notevole spazio è riservato anche agli uccelli e alla flora. Designato come sito del patrimonio mondiale dell'umanità dall'UNESCO, il Selous esercita un ruolo vitale man mano che la pressione antropica su elefanti e altre specie cresce.

Rob Ross, fotografo newyorchese che oggi abita nelle Rockies del Colorado, ha passato quasi quattro anni in questa riserva – dall'ambiente difficile e severo – e collezionato quasi centomila scatti. La selezione delle immagini più spettacolari, che include foto aeree e notturne ma anche ritratti estremamente ravvicinati

di predatori, rende questo libro l'ideale *pendant* fotografico agli scritti del grande naturalista Peter Matthiessen, che al Selous dedicò trent'anni fa un libro ormai ritenuto un classico, *Sand Rivers*. Di grande formato e stampato con particolare attenzione alla qualità delle riproduzioni, il libro è arricchito da sei tavole con apertura ad anta.

I testi includono la storia del Selous di Rolf Baldus, un saggio di Walter Jubber sugli aspetti naturalistico-zoologici della riserva e uno scritto di Bryan Christy, direttore investigativo del National Geographic, sulle tragiche conseguenze del commercio illegale di avorio. Numerose citazioni tratte da *Sand Rivers* accompagnano le immagini.





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The marshy Serengeti Nile (Serengeti wetland) can provide a habitat for various other birds and mammals throughout the habitat. The birds are able to move across and through the marsh as an aid to finding water and nesting sites. The large Serengeti river is the Serengeti's main water source.

Through the pre-dawn darkness comes a deep, throbbing, hooting sound. There are other sounds but it is this persistent, rhythmic booming that infuses the waking bush with an expectation of the rising sun. This is the ritual calling of the ground hornbill, an essential sound of Africa, which insists that, for all the spectacle and excitement provided by the large mammals, Serengeti is also a place for birds.

There are few places in the vast Serengeti ecosystem where one cannot hear the ground hornbills wake-up duet. A black turkey-eared bird with scarlet neck wattles, the ground hornbill lives in family groups. These groups walk methodically through the woodlands and grasslands, preying on any small animals they encounter. The powerful curved beak is as useful to smash the head of a snake, as it is to pick up a small beetle. Each group consists of a breeding pair and its offspring that help in the rearing of the latest brood. These groups may contain up to eight birds. The spectacle of a flock of ground hornbills flying through the Serengeti woodlands, their white primary feathers contrasting startlingly with their black bodies and scarlet neck wattles, is not easily forgotten.

The ground hornbill is only one of more than 440 species of birds known to occur in the Serengeti ecosystem. This diversity of bird species is a reflection of the range of Serengeti habitats, which include grassland, woodland, forest and a range of wetlands. Of all animal groups, birds most conspicuously illustrate the subtle variations in vegetation and landscape.

— Neil Storch, 2009

Sitting on a termite mound with Miskari and Mbaya Selemani one afternoon, we were watching a bull elephant, with tusks weighing about eighty pounds each, grazing on fresh-sprouting grass along a seepage area. He was one hundred yards from us, and beyond was a wide-open, extensive slambo with small herds of game scattered about it. In these conditions elephants will stay grazing within an area of a few hundred square yards for several days, eating nothing but fresh new grass. They scuff it out of the ground with one of the front feet, pick it up with the trunk, knock the soil off on the ground against a leg or tusk, and pass it into the mouth. They stand looking straight down all one can see of the eyes is the top eyelids. They seem to become oblivious to anything around them and are easy to approach within a few yards without any cover at all. The only thing to be careful about is noise and, most important, to remain motionless if the eyes open. There was no reason to go closer to this fine bull, so we just watched him for half an hour or more. The wind must have shifted, for he quite suddenly raised his trunk, sniffed the air, and rushed across the slambo, the other game moving out of his way as he came to them. I expected him to disappear into the bush at the far side. To my surprise, on reaching there he turned to follow along the edge of the open plain, till at full run. He continued in this manner, making a great arc around the slambo and finally heading directly back toward us. We remained as before on the termite mound and watched him approach. He had covered nearly two miles at speed and showed no signs of tiring up. He ended up right where he had been grazing before and stopped immediately upon reaching this point, and then started grazing again as if nothing had ever disturbed him. It was an amazing performance, and one cannot analyse what mental processes prompted such clownish activity.

— Brian Nicholson, *The Last of Old Africa*, 2001

The African elephant has the largest head of any land mammal on earth. It is also one of the few mammals that can see in both eyes at the same time.



The kingfisher (Alcedo atthis) is a very colorful and small bird species. Kingfishers are aggressive towards other birds in their territories and those of both sex compete for mates and other birds such as doves and sparrows. They have also been recorded to have attacked cats and wild snakes.

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