

# Scout Wildlife Safari, Botswana 1976

27th June to 11th July

The 15 day Safari which started and ended in Johannesburg was led by Colin Ingles, a stalwart of Scouting in South Africa.

Upon entering Botswana they visited the huge 4000 sq. mile (1 million Hectares) Makgadikgadi Salt Pans with its dancing mirages and herds of plains game. They then went on to Maun and the Okavango Delta which is a vast network of clear waterways, streams and lagoons. A camping trip into the Delta enabled the party to observe the myriad of birdlife.



Two days were spent camping and game watching in the remote African bush of the Moremi Game Reserve. The Safari then drove over remote tracks to the Savuti Channel, described as one of the most rugged and natural game sanctuaries in the world. Then it was tiger fishing on the Chobe River before leaving Botswana and traveling to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) to see the majestic Victoria Falls and lastly Bulawayo and the Matopos.

The participants chosen from Western Cape were, Mark Mason (3rd Pinelands), Paul Cornwall (1st Paarl) and Richard Gaertner (12th G&SP).

The report in the Cape Western Scouter at the time was as follows:-

In the velvety darkness of the African night, the spreading thorn trees reflect the flickering flames of the campfire. A jackal calls mournfully away in the bush. A chorus of frogs croak in the nearby river. This is Moremi on the edge of the Okavango Delta.

Now and again figures cooking supper at the fire are silhouetted against the flames. Greg Melly strolls to his tent a few yards away and on his return to the fire idly shines his flashlight towards the track - there, standing 20 paces away, watching him intently, is a lioness! Wow! Using the powerful spotlight attached to the truck battery we discover a pride of five lions just beyond our tents - and a leopard retreating back across the river.



Silently sliding through the water in a dugout canoe poled by an African boatman on the Okavango Delta

At our camp at the water edge on an island deep in the Okavango Delta, the Sun sinks below the bush-fringed horizon in a blaze of glory, changing from molten gold to brilliant crimson which turns the reflecting lagoon into a sea of blood. Around the campfire, we drift off to sleep to the roars of lions and wake at dawn to the scream of fish eagles. Pied kingfishers hover over the water and drop like rockets on some unsuspecting fish as we wend our way through the network of crystal-clear interconnecting waterways.

Whilst selecting a campsite at dusk in the bush at Savuti, we observe elephant tracks in the dust of the trail. A few paces further we turn a bend and find the originator of the tracks towering over us - not 10 paces away. Later in the evening on his return to camp from the primitive shower 50 yards away, Boy Radebe unexpectedly bumps into the elephant in the dark. .

Startled, the elephant trumpets and charges. Boy suddenly remembers that there is a less direct route to reach camp and promptly decides that it is more attractive! Lions, hyenas and jackals serenade us throughout the night.

Who will forget the calm tranquillity of the great Chobe River as the little fleet of boats chug their way through the deepening twilight back to the Safari Lodge; The thrill of hooking and landing a tiger fish, 39 of which were boated during the day; or the sight of Rag Pather standing in his boat battling with the bream that provided delicious grilled steaks in the evening?



The calm tranquillity of the great Chobe River

Incidents and memories jostle each other in one's mind - the two Landrovers running out of petrol on the journey across the Kalahari from Francistown to Maun - the skidding and sliding of the Landover as it churned its way through the salt crust on the Makarikari Pans - the five cheetah by the roadside near the Pans - dust, grit and bush - herds of elephant, buffalo and zebra; countless giraffe and impala; rhino, kudu, tsessebe; wildebeest - the belly grunts of dozens of hippo lazing with their snouts above water or sunning on the banks - the thrill of observing at close quarters in daylight a pack of wild dogs on the hunt; spotted hyena; and bat-eared foxes scurrying to their burrows with the coming of dawn - the raucous mating call of an amorous vervet monkey chasing females in a tree in the river camp at Chobe.

Silently sliding through the water in a dugout canoe poled by an African boatman - the luxury of a shower after a long, hot drive in the back of a truck - the sharp cold at night and the warmth of the campfire - drinking home-brewed millet beer in a hut at a Tswana village on the Chobe - flying over 400 metre-high spray from the thundering Victoria Falls in flood - the weird gyrations of the Mazimbi dancers in their grotesque painted masks prancing around the wood fires in a village in the bush near Victoria Falls - the African who picked up a 200 lb (90Kg) length of railway line with his teeth - Boy Radebe and Rodney Nqidi joining the Shangaans in their earth-shaking dance - the throbbing drums that beat all night near Crocodile Camp on the Okavango Delta.



Flying over the thundering Victoria Falls

One remembers, too, the fascinating Khami Ruins near Bulawayo, little fortresses built of dry stone near, beautifully dressed, on koppies. The site having been occupied for 40,000 years by Stone-age, Iron-age men and the builders of the fortresses with the wild grandeur of the Matopos with Rhodes Grave and the memorial to the Shangani Patrol inscribed simply "To Brave Men" - and not least the well-armed Rhodesian soldiers escorting our convoy to the South African border. These are some of the adventures and impressions gained by the members of the National Scout Okavango Wildlife Safari to Botswana and Rhodesia during their recent Safari.

The 16 members of the Safari were drawn from all parts of South Africa and South West Africa from all Scout Associations. They enjoyed an experience of a lifetime and no doubt many will be the stories recounted over dinner tables in the days to come.

[Colin Inglis](#)  
Safari Leader