

The Gorillas of the Kayonsa Region, Western Kigezi, S.W. Uganda, Charles Pitman, Chief Game Warden

Draft unfinished undated (c. 1934) article¹

The occurrence of gorillas in the Kayonsa region of Uganda has been known for many years, but until recently opportunities and facilities for investigation this interesting locality have been lacking.

The opening of the road to Ruchuru (Belgian Congo) from Kabale (Uganda), however has made it accessible and the extension of prospecting activities into the forest itself, rendered a visit imperative to ascertain, from a conservation point of view, the extent of the disturbance to which the forest is being subjected, and what effect this is having on the gorillas.

These notes are based on knowledge acquired during two brief visits, each of a few days' duration only, made respectively in November 1933 and February/March 1934.

The long-haired mountain gorilla – *Gorilla gorilla beringei* – of East Central Africa has in recent years had an excellent press, and around the question of the adequacy of the measures taken for its protection and perpetuation much controversy has raged.

It is unnecessary to refer in detail to the generally accepted description of habits and attributes of the mountain race, which will be discussed where relevant in connection with the Kayonsa representatives.

It must be realized before proceeding further that this is not an endeavour to create a new race of gorilla, though on account of its markedly diverse habitat, food and habits, the Kayonsa species may well have developed structural characteristics differing from those of its relatives in the more elevated volcanic region.

A little more than an decade ago it was suggested that different races of gorillas probably occurred on each of seven – a startling total – adjacent, extinct volcanoes of the Mufumbiro (or Birunga) mountains – an extravagant and preposterous claim.

Sir Frank Colyer, K.B.E. of the Royal College of Surgeons and an eminent dental surgeon, who has for years been studying the dental diseases and dentition of wild and domestic animals in relation to those of the human race, has made an extensive examination of a very large number of gorilla skulls which reveal that those from localities in which the bamboo is absent from the gorilla's habitat are readily recognizable owing to the freedom from appreciable spacing between the teeth.

This spacing is a result, in infancy, of food packing, tough fibrous pieces of the bamboo shoots become wedged between the teeth and gradually pushing them apart. In due course this has developed the spacing as a constant, and possibly now inherited, feature.

This difference, slight though appreciable, is scarcely basis for satisfactory separation, but it does indicate that the mountain gorillas respectively in the widely different, florally and climatically, regions (a) west

¹ Natural History Museum, UK, Pitman Papers, C82

of Lake Kivu, (b) south west (or westerly) of Lake Edward, (c) the Birunga mountains, and (d) the Kayonsa, may to a certain extent differ from each other.

The representatives from west of Lake Edward have been separated from *beringei* under the attractive and descriptive title of *rex-pygmacorom*, though the material on which the separation is claimed, is lamentably scanty.

With adequate comparative material it might be possible to separate racially the typical mountain gorilla of the excessively humid bamboo and hagenia-covered mountain slopes of the elevated Birunga mountains from those of the drier localities from which bamboo is absent. If such is the case, then the Kayonsa representatives will possibly be found to be an extreme form of the latter as a result to a certain degree of environment, but particularly owing to a general absence of the juicy vegetable food of which the gorilla is so fond.

There unfortunately being no material available for scientific study, with the exception of an old skull, from this region, and little likelihood of any being procured at any rate in the near future, the status of what may prove to be a specialized race has to be based mainly on assumption.

Ecological facts which are definitely known and which show great divergence from the Birunga zone are:

1. There is in Kayonsa a complete absence of bamboo, wild celery, dock and similar juicy-stemmed plants such as abound in the humid, high altitudes, forcing the gorilla to confine its diet to a mixture of leaves, berries, ferns, the tender fronds of tree-ferns, parts of the wild banana stems and leaves, and fibrous bark peeled off a variety of shrubs in the undergrowth. Examples of some of these botanical specimens submitted to the British Museum (Natural History) for expert determination which have been identified include the fern *Asplenium sandersonii*; *Piper capense*; representatives of the tribe *Helianthoidae* of *compositae*' and a species of *Acalypha* (*Euphorbiaceae*).
2. Owing to a lack of what apparently are normal food constituents the gorilla has become more enterprising in search of food, and in consequence climbs trees freely to a known height of at least thirty feet. Further reference is made to this later.
3. The 'beds' of the Kayonsa gorilla are large platforms built in the trees and often at a considerable height above the ground. The subject of these 'beds' will be dealt with more fully in due course.

Finally, in connection with divergences is the question of habitat which is really the crux of the situation, for nowhere does it exceed eight thousand feet in height, the altitude varying between 6000 and 7900 feet.

Little is known of the greater part of the area marked on the map 'Impenetrable Forest' as there is no population and no means of access.

On the hill and ridge tops, once attained, progress is fairly simple along the numerous paths made by the gorillas and bush-pigs, but abrupt climbs up the hill slopes sometimes for 1000 feet and over, and passage through the dank valleys choked with dense undergrowth is only possible if a file of the local populace armed with home-made bill-hooks, and indispensable of their every day equipment, lead the way.

There are some stands of fine trees, particularly noticeable being a species of *Podocarpus*, at the higher elevations, but on the whole except for here and there a forest giant of outstanding size, the timber is

disappointing and, in the portion (the southern) of the forest visited, suggestive of comparative recent origin.

The various photographs of the forest give an accurate idea of its grandeur, density and beauty. To obtain these pictures it was necessary to fell several trees and clear away large patches of secondary growth on the opposite hill slope.

The densely tangled undergrowth securely bound and interwoven with brambles and a variety of tough creepers, for man is absolutely impenetrable, but through it six feet gorilla weighing 400 lbs. creeps with ease and without making a sound. One of the photos reveals a scarcely perceptible hole in the tangled vegetation below the tree ferns through which not long before a full-sized male gorilla had emerged silently and unexpectedly upon two European prospectors: both parties equally surprised!

The great feature of this forest region is the abundance of graceful tree-ferns; many are fully twenty feet in height while a few reach the amazing height of thirty.

As this region constitutes neither tropical nor rain forest, but can be described as typical montane forest, the tree-ferns are to be found in their luxuriant abundance principally in the humid valleys, on the lower and more sheltered hill-slopes, and in fact in any sheltered locality either on the tops or at the sides of the ridges.

Tree-fern thickets, with hundreds of fallen, thorny stems lying in all directions which cannot be removed, but have to be surmounted, provide some of the most difficult going under general conditions which are notoriously difficult. An hour or two amongst the tree-ferns in a valley bottom will tax one's patience to the utmost, and prove arduous to even the fittest and strongest, though the bare-footed pygmy guides negotiate these nightmare places with the agility of monkeys.

On the main forest outskirts, and on the hill-slopes and hill-tops on which advancing settlement and cultivation have systematically destroyed the trees, there is an abundance of bracken. A picture portrays a steep hill, in shape like an inverted pudding bowl, a few hundred feet high densely covered with bracken. These bracken-covered slopes provide wonderful refuges for the little red (forest) duiker *Cephalophus rubidusa* creature of about 20 to 40 lbs. in weight, which is rarely seen. Specimens are only likely to be acquired with the aid of the local inhabitants who occasionally destroy a few when hunting the destructive bush-pig whose downfall is encompassed with well-trained dogs and nets. Other pictures show strikingly the sequence of events from the initial de-forestation to cultivation.

The situation is carefully examined in this connection to ascertain whether undue de-forestation was taking place, and whether there was a likelihood of the gorillas thereby being adversely affected.

As far as could be gauged in the limited time available for investigation the destruction of forest is not on an extensive scale and actually is taking place away from and not towards the gorilla haunts.

The forest regions to the east of the Kashasha river, is a gazetted forest reserve and in consequence not open for human settlement. There is little likelihood in the immediate future of serious conflict between man and gorilla in the dense, uninhabitable valleys to the west of this river and in the vicinity of the Belgian Congo border, where the two encounters shortly described took place.

At the time of the respective visits, based on information received from the local Wambutte, and from a prospector who knew the area intimately after operations lasting eighteen months, it was estimated that this eastern area harboured forty to fifty gorillas. Many of these, if not all, at certain seasons of the year, are believed to cross to the elevated forest reserve to the east of the Kishasha river, so that even if the lapse of time did see undue encroachment on the part of the human population in the western habitat, the gorillas would still have unlimited sanctuary in the east to which they could satisfactorily migrate.

The abundance or scarcity of gorillas in the vast eastern, impenetrable region is at present unknown, though it is quite definite that on the hills of Mpororo and Niguru at the southern extremity there were several gorilla troops, believed in total about two dozen individuals, at the same time that the western estimate was made.

Also, in the un-visited northerly region astride the Kishasha (or Irwi) river, where the rainfall is greatest, a reliable informant records numerous gorillas; and therefore the claim that there possibly exist at least eighty of these magnificent anthropoids in the kaionsa (Kayonsa?) and impenetrable forest region does not appear extravagant.

Normally the troops vary in size from five to eight or nine, and consist of one full-grown male, the father of the flock, and according to the size of the band, two or three females, the remainder being juveniles of varying sizes.

In the western region there is apparently one huge troop permanently of the abnormal dimensions of nearly two dozen. As I had unsolicited information about this large, and I imagine truly terrifying, troop from no less three reliable and independent sources covering a period of two years, there is no reason to doubt its existence.

It would be most interesting to discover the exact constitution of so large a troop, and whether it is limited to one adult male only. Actually I missed the opportunity of having a glimpse of this horde by a few hours. The indispensable Wambutte spying out the land for me prior to His Excellency the Governor of Uganda being introduced to his humblest subjects encountered far away and unexpectedly this super-troop, and too late for me to have a hope of making contact before darkness fell, came back gibbering with excitement to tell me of their great adventure.

Before further casual allusion to Wambutte is made, it will be best to record the reason for the presence of any Wambutte, true pygmies, in Uganda, when this name is usually associated with the Ituri forest to the west of the mighty Ruwenzori range and the elevated mountain ridges on the Belgian Congo side of Lake Edward.

The half-pygmy Batwa of the Mufumbiro volcanoes, those domiciled in the Belgian zone of the Parc National Albert being regarded as part of the natural fauna, have long been familiar to me

But, on my first acquaintance with the little men of Kishasha valley, I was extremely puzzled by the unvarying reference of the local Bachiga to Wambutte, instead of Batwa.

These little folk on being interrogated hotly denied any relationship with the Batwa of the volcanoes, and emphatically affirmed that they were the true Wambutte. On being further questioned to account for the isolation of their little group— in addition to the aged and infirm the tally of adult males is about nine – as

far away from the Wambutte of the Ituri, they proudly assured me that this was the original home of the tribe, and that when all the others migrated west, their forbears remained behind.

It is a fascinating problem which can never be satisfactorily elucidated, but it is possible, and not improbable, that the current isolation of these Wambutte and this gorilla habitat is a direct result of the terrific upheaval, evidently a cataclysm on an unprecedented scale, in the now-devastated region between the Niwashenyi ridge and Mufumbiro, which once must have been extraordinarily fertile and humid. Then the all-conquering lava-flow, amongst the numerous catastrophes caused, dammed the deep valley now represented by Lake Mutanda.

But, whatever the correct solution there the little folk are in splendid isolation, constituting an interesting anthropological puzzle. A previous allusion to the Wambutte is qualified with the adjective 'indispensible', no distortion of fact, for without their whole-hearted co-operation and assistance never a glimpse of a gorilla, except by sheer accident, is one likely to get.

It is true that by frequent wandering along some of the well-defined tracks, which are easily followed, on the fringe of the gorilla haunts one may both hear and locate a troop, but it is a very different matter, quite hopeless, to try and get to close quarters un-assisted and un-guided through the maze of dense undergrowth covering what probably proves to be a succession of exceptionally abrupt ascents and declivities before there is a chance of attaining ones goal.

The Wambutte who have every respect for, though are not frightened of, these great apes are therefore their best guardians, for if instructed to refuse aid to any stranger without the express permission of their chief as directed by higher authority, it will not be possible, or at least highly improbable, for the unauthorised to interfere with the reasonably peaceful Kayonsa gorilla.

The Wambutte know full well the absolute protection conferred on this species and the penalties attached to any breach thereof, and are not anxious to become involved in an unfortunate incident.

Far less are they prepared to infringe the instructions forbidding them to render assistance to unauthorised strangers, and, it must be remembered that if these pygmies don't want to do a thing they won't - coercion is quite out of the question.

After my first visit in November 1933, when absolutely satisfied that the gorilla enjoyed fully the immunity from molestation which the law conferred, though somewhat disturbed by the further penetration of prospecting parties into their haunts, instructions were left with the local chief to ensure freedom from unauthorised disturbance,

There was no doubt of the faithfulness with which these instructions were carried out for when in January 1934, Mr R Akroyd, who constituted a British Museum expedition for the purpose of collecting botanical material for the gorilla group to be erected in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington, turned up at my old camp, he was regarded with open distrust by the local inhabitants, and was never aware of the existence of our Wambutte, although their location was almost in sight of his tent!

He did see a small gorilla band on an elevated hill-slope, opposite to and high above his camp. Laboriously he struggled to the point where it had been observed, but all he found were a few lumps of chewed fibre which had been spat out by the feeding apes.

The pygmies are an essential concomitant to successful gorilla observation, and without their assistance to the stranger the great anthropoids can enjoy to the full the protection they thoroughly deserve.

Protection, pygmies and the local Bachiga suggest a few remarks on the subject of ferocity.

First, in order that I may not be accused of undue bias from the point of view of the protection of ne of Uganda's rarest and most interesting mammals I will quote the unsolicited testimonials of a prospector who regarded the gorillas as quite harmless. He says:

"I have been prospecting in the impenetrable forest (Kayonsa –Kigezi) and I thought you might find the following experiences with the gorilla with some interest.

My work has at times taken me into places they were in residence. I have found them very peaceful and it is possible to get within 20 feet of them,

I have only been nearly attacked once, by an old male, but he was not a savage brute. He was first attacked by my dog and his sole aim was to catch the dog, otherwise it could have easily caught and killed my boy.

The gorilla 'beds' are built from 5 ft. to 20 ft. high in the tress, each bed from approximately 10 ft. to 10 yards apart. The 'beds' consist of bent over branches with a superficial extent 3 ft. by 2 ½ ft. approximately.

As far as I know they travel about in bands of about six to eight. They do not make much noise, but just grunt. I maintain that unless provoked they are docile.

I have seen about eighty during a long period while prospecting in the impenetrable forest. The gorillas sometimes raid the near-by shambas, but I have never heard of them attacking the natives, and the natives leave them alone except to chase them away from their property."

This frank statement exposes definitely the fallacy of exceptional ferocity, a state of affairs it was believed existed and which was based on second-hand information. In my imagination the Kayonsa gorilla was un-approachable brute, wickedly tempered from constant conflict with the local natives whose crops it habitually raided, a creature whose company was better avoided than sought.

No one of reasonable intelligence could claim that according to circumstances the gorilla is not exceedingly dangerous and ferocious.

But, around the male gorilla on account of its enormous size and strength, coupled in recent years with frequent lapses from grace provoked by unnecessary and undue interferences, there has been woven and unfortunately published a fantasy of inaccuracy and exaggeration, so much so that the very homely old male is visualised as an object of dread. The male gorilla as the family head is most solicitous for the welfare of his wives and children – a very human trait, and on the threat of danger unheeding of his own safety accepts full responsibility for the well-being of his charges. Can he be blamed?

If the danger is real the females and young are sent off while father waits to take on all comers until satisfied that the remainder of the band are out of harm's way. Sometimes when the danger is sudden and overwhelming the youngsters are sent up trees to hide till the trouble is over.

It is strangely reminiscent of the records of some of the early African explorers relative to tribal customs. When the womenfolk were to be seen busily engaged in their usual vocation in the precincts of a village or kraal all was well and no hostility contemplated on the part of the local inhabitants.

But an absence of women and children was interpreted as unfavourable signifying that they had been removed to a safe place in order to enable the warriors to fight unhampered. And so it is with the old male gorilla, for as soon as he bids his family seek safety, he is out for mischief, though without direct provocation is unlikely to attack.

There are black sheep in each fold, and exceptions to every rule, and solitary examples, both male and female, which have probably been outlawed for a very good reason, have been known to be extraordinarily aggressive.

The father of a band is liable to be the most demonstrative when it contains very small juveniles. The demonstration must be truly fearsome and nerve-wracking, and I am thankful I have not yet experienced it. Eye-witnesses who have had the strength of mind and temerity to stand firm to a so-called 'charge' and refrain from shooting have described to me how the gorilla suddenly pulls up to stand upright and seemingly towers above the intruder. A pause – he turns and shuffles away. Graphic and thrilling accounts of these demonstrations, some faithfully perpetuated in picture, will be found in du Chaillu's *Equatorial Africa*, descriptive of many journeys of exploration in West Africa between 1856-1859.

I never tire of reading these fascinating narratives, but what has filled me with an unbounded admiration is the fearlessness and pluck of this well-known explorer-naturalist who, armed with a single-barrelled muzzle-loader, habitually refrained from firing at the demonstrating male, allowing him time and again to arrive almost within grasping distance!

Compare this with the present day and the investigator backed by a high-power modern double-barrelled rifle, capable with a soft-nosed bullet of dealing a shattering blow – practically infallible.

Then read the awful tales of super-ferocity served up for world-wide consumption by the very people so well armed that they can interfere and disturb as freely as they like in absolute safety.

And if the gorilla suspicious and resentful of constant interference and undue disturbance is no longer content with demonstration, but is prone to carry home his 'charge', who is to blame? The gorilla or the persistent disturber? With little practical experience one cannot dogmatise, but if that limited experience is backed by the knowledge acquired by reliable eye-witnesses, as it is most emphatically than it can be unhesitatingly claimed that like most wild creature the gorilla normally is peaceably disposed and not aggressive.

More than most possibly is that the case with the Kayonsa representatives, for, owing to constant close contact with human settlement and the wandering charcoal-burners who operate in the heart of its western haunts, it can be regarded as almost semi-domestic, while I am reliably informed that at times the old males are absurdly contemptuous of the local populace, It is a striking example of the familiarity which breeds contempt.

As far as could be ascertained, and in spite of what has been previously asserted to the contrary, the Kayonsan gorilla is not guilty of frequent crop-raiding, at least so the local natives assured me. It is true

that the gorilla often feed in the vicinity of cultivation, but the attraction is mainly the occurrence of various species of nourishing weeds which grew to exceptional size on abandoned plots.

The local Bachiga, who can blame them, very naturally object to the proximity of these awe-inspiring beasts, and usually try and drive them away. It is then that the males are most contemptuous of human effort, and the females and young having been sent off, the gentleman move only when it suits them to do so.

The Wambutte are extremely tolerant of the gorillas, but not so the other local natives, who readily endeavour to exterminate the lot, were it not for the fact, of which they are well aware, that these splendid animals are absolutely protected. It can be realised then that the principal human enemy of the gorilla is the camera-man and pseudo-investigator who disturb flagrantly and un-necessarily, then irritate, and finally have to take life in 'self-defence'.

In the minds of many who should know better the gorilla is classed as a dangerous, ferocious beast, for "if molested it endeavours to defend itself".

The general proximity of this gorilla habitat to human settlement has resulted in the presence of human beings having little disturbing effect of the gorillas. In consequence, the prospecting, which incidentally has penetrated only the extreme southerly portion of the forest, cannot be said to have caused much disturbance. Prospecting on a systematic scale has taken place in the forest, particularly in the valleys, in the vicinity of the high hills, Niwashenya, Nigura and Kasatora, but when I was in the neighbourhood at the beginning of November, there were frequent complaints that the gorillas were too close to be pleasant. Even a lot of blasting seemed to have little other effect than to scare them away temporarily.

The previous brief reference to gorilla 'beds' can be simplified considerably. Several were measured and found to vary in size from 3ft. by 2½ ft. to 4 ft. by 3 ft., the latter presumably the sleeping quarters of the big male. The thickness of the 'bed' platforms ranged from eight to fifteen inches. Three groups of 'beds' – many more were seen – were critically examined. The lowest 'bed' was six feet above the ground, the majority ten feet or over, and four (two in one group and one in each of the others) between twenty and twenty-five feet. In one group of four, the 'beds' sited in a rough circle around a forested hollow at the top of an elevated valley were respectively at intervals of ten, fifteen, thirty and fifty paces in the circle, and all plainly visible to each other. Groups of 'beds' seen in trees on the forested slopes of valleys were also sited so as to be clearly visible from each other. As in the case of the volcanoes' representatives these 'beds' are singularly filthy and the edges often festooned with excrement.

In the Kayonsa tree-climbing is customary, and 'beds' normally constructed well above the ground. It is probable that the same platforms are used on several consecutive nights.

The highest 'bed' seen was fifty feet above the ground and evidently constructed the previous night, but unfortunately the picture taken by His Excellency the Governor of Uganda does not do justice to the subject. It would have been more effective had a Wambutte been perched on the edge of the platform! Its foundation consisted of sturdy, upright tree tops up to 2½ inches in diameter which had been snapped like matchsticks.

As the description of this novel method of 'bed' construction is certain to provoke criticism and unlikely to pass unchallenged, it is fortunate that His Excellency and two of his staff should have been present when the 'fifty-feet' bed was observed as their corroborative evidence is irrefutable.

On this occasion a troop of eight had been at least thirty-six hours in the particular valley visited, and but for the mildly disturbing effect of our party might have remained there for a couple of days. Undisturbed there was no apparent intention of the leaving the locality and during a period of several hours the troop was feeding in an extremely tiny area.

But, in this instance there had been a striking deviation from what is imagined to be the normal sleeping procedures, for with the exception of the lofty bed previously mentioned, all the animals slept on the ground.

The sleeping quarters were at the base of a large tree surrounded by a dense tangle of undergrowth. For about two-thirds of the way around the tree-base a broad, shallow trench a few inches in depth had been scooped out of the dry soil, which constituted a wonderfully cosy bed and refuge, effectively screened and protected by the almost solid canopy of interwoven stems and matted foliage.

At each end of the trunk and along its outer perimeter was banked up the scooped earth and a pile of rubbish such as dead leaves and twigs. It was impossible to conjecture in what attitude the gorillas had slept, but the containing bank may have served both for protection and comfort.

This communal 'bed' was so filthy as usual, and from the freshness of the excreta had not been used for more than one night. One of the droppings was so immense that my gun-bearer naively remarked that it looked more like an elephant's. This dormitory was in the centre of the small area in which the troop was feeding. The tree-top 'bed' some fifty yards higher up the hill-side most certainly overlooked the ground shelter, though of its occupants presumably nothing could have been seen.

This terrestrial sleeping-place conclusively upset any theories previously held as to the whys and wherefores of the tree-building habit, to account for which no satisfactory explanation can at present be advanced. A spell of dry weather may have induced ground sleeping, or an expectant mother unable to climb satisfactorily may have required protection; but if so was it the old male up a tree and why? If a birth was imminent his women-folk may have made him keep his own company, though he would still act as their guardian by the day. It is all very intriguing.

Tree-climbing for food is readily understandable but tree-climbing to go to bed is another matter and requires explanation,

'Beds' in trees are suggestive of protection, not comfort, but there is no apparent reason why such security is necessary. It cannot be for fear of leopards, for there are as many, and possibly a great deal more, on Mufumbiro. Locally, no tales were heard of exceptional abundance, and the leopard theory is untenable.

In the past there may have been frequent incursions of lions from the Lake Edward plains or elsewhere, a phenomena which might have driven the gorillas to seek safety in the trees, One day by chance one may happen upon the correct solution.

Climatic conditions are unlikely to be the controlling factor for the ground however damp does provide a measure of warmth and shelter, while the elevated 'perches' in the trees are often exposed and must be exceedingly cold. What then?

There is one other factor which merits consideration. Can the destructive bush-pig be responsible for this extra solicitude for protection? The nocturnal bush-pig, with which this region swarms, when foraging in truculent droves is no mean antagonist, and is quite capable of routing a gorilla troop by sheer force of numbers. Is this the answer to the riddle? Time alone can tell.

In order to convey an idea of the exacting conditions under which gorilla investigations are made, a graph is shown of the route followed – the altitudes being recorded by pocket aneroid – in terms of ascents and descents to the approximate time factor. And, as previously explained the going nowhere is straightforward. When, one does happen to travel along the side of a hill or round a re-entrant and expects a little relief, the so-called path is almost invariably on a slant of 45 degrees and hedged in closely with tall grass and scrub.

The most profitable and comfortable way of observing the Kayonsa gorillas is to let the pygmies, who are experts, go out first and locate them.

As normally a troop does not move far in twenty-four hours, often remaining three to five days in a small valley, and sometimes being found on three consecutive days practically in the same spot, once located if it is too late to make contact that day, it is unlikely to be far away the next.

In order to experience the difficulties in progression one has to expect, as well as to exercise gradually ones hill-climbing muscles, it is quite sound to go out previously on reconnaissance. But to join the pygmies in the initial efforts to locate a troop is not advised, as one is merely a hindrance to these agile little people.

A good walker can satisfactorily take on the Wambutte on the level, and so he ought with his big stride, but it will take an exceptionally active and seasoned white man all his time to keep in sight of his little guides as they make prolonged ascents at their normal pace.

And what pitying scornful glances they cast at the perspiring *muzungu* (European) painfully toiling upwards and lagging far below. The altitude, 6000 ft. to 7000 ft. naturally also adds to the difficulties of strenuous climbs, and it takes several days, if then, to acquire what one hopes is goat-like ability, and to ascend abrupt hill-sides without the lungs trying to burst their way through ones chest.

The first *rencontre* with the gorillas took place on the afternoon of a day when I had indulged in the fatuous task of gorilla locating, toiling wearily up hill and down dale for several exhausting hours – in the wrong direction!

Having reached the furthest point we were likely to get that day, news was shouted down the valley from a village many hundreds of feet above us that the gorillas had been located at no great distance from the other side of the camp! So, before the quest could really be taken up there was first the exacting march back to headquarters; but see the graph – most descriptive – of the day's wanderings! There is no need to describe the ups and downs, nor the type of country traversed, but what is noteworthy is the fact that the

troop of five which I was fortunate enough to be able to study at close quarters, was feeding in a forested valley less than a mile away from, and overlooked by, a small mountain settlement.

Most troops are easily located, as the guttural grunts which at times the members appear to maintain a regular conversation can be heard at a considerable distance, and in consequence the pygmy locators by following the tops of ridges are likely at once to be aware of any that are about.

In this case shortly after the native huts had been left behind and the valley entered the gorillas were heard on the far side. It did not take long to reach the forest and scrub-covered slope where they were feeding.

It was then that I had a real surprise. Creeping forward as silently as possible, in the wake of my noiseless nimble guides until the grunts sounded alarmingly close and agitated bushes and vegetation could be observed just below us, the leader of the file with a beaming face pointed cautiously, not at the cover below, but up into a tree almost above our party. And there was the old male, silver-backed and magnificent, thirty feet up a tree growing on the steeply sloping hill-side, the other four, females and juveniles, all fairly large, were in the bushes below.

The Wambutte guides fearlessly crept to within ten paces of the trees – our approach of course was screened from view – and the old male at once noticed us and scrutinised us keenly, but went on feeding. He turned to look at us again, had a few mouthfuls of leaves, and then descending about six feet, sat down in a huge upright fork where the trunk divided, legs dangling, the excessively long arms grasping nearby branches, and interested, though kindly expression on his face, the enormous head framed in a thick fringe of long, shaggy hair.

It is impossible to describe adequately what one felt at that suspense moment. There before one was something entirely unrecorded and new in connection with the world's largest and most interesting anthropoid, and what a giant he looked spread-eagled on a slanting branch to reach a particularly desirable mouthful. He was so large that at first I could not believe it was one animal, and thought it must be two!

Having looked our fill at each other, the Wambutte suggested that if we had seen enough we had better withdraw and we parted amicably. There had been no undue disturbance, and unconcernedly the gorillas continued to feed where they had been found, and even after we had emerged from the forest on the opposite hill-side, their contented grunts could still be heard below. This guttural conversation, carried on so it appears by a succession of grunts differing in length and varying in key, can be heard at a distance, and as previously mentioned, renders the location of a troop a comparatively simple matter.

When I set out to view this troop which had been located by a villager from a near-by settlement, I was accompanied by six Wambutte, two villagers and some members of my own staff. After I had seen all I wanted and was about to retreat my steps I found at least fifty unauthorised spearmen hanging in the rear hoping for the opportunity of attacking the gorillas.

In fact I was warned that if I did not personally see this crowd out of the locality, the moment my back was turned they intended going in to spear the male before he could get away from the tree, after which the slaughter of the other four would have been simple.

Knowing full well that un-authorized they dare not attempt aggression, they were quite ready to take advantage of a European, afterwards making a misunderstanding their excuse. It shows how easily an unfortunate episode may develop unless all participants in gorilla investigation are authorized and absolutely under control.

The second meeting was more carefully planned (in March 1934) and the Wambutte who had been instructed to locate gorillas and then keep in touch with them were successful on the first day in finding a troop many miles to the north and for the next nine days were in contact with this and other bands so that when the Governor arrived, it was possible the following morning to take him to a troop of eight within 1½ hours march of the camp.

Nearly 2½ hours were spent in the proximity of this lot but owing to the excessive density and height of the undergrowth, in spite of the general conditions being exceptionally favourable, practically no opportunity was offered of taking a photograph. This was not due to the gorillas having been disturbed, as, until the last half hour they were unaware of our presence, but just on account of the nature of the vegetation.

Although while under observation they did not move out of an area of a few hundred yards square, one always seemed to be five minutes behind them. Vantage points used overlooked clearly patches of flattened undergrowth which would have provided marvellous photographic subjects if only the gorilla depredator would have been caught in the act.

But, there is another side to the story when one is lamenting what 'might have been'. When there are eight unsuspecting gorillas feeding contentedly extremely near at hand, and when the precise location of never more than four or five is known at one and the same time, it behoves one to move forward very cannily, for if perchance one surprised a lagging female, her cry of alarm would in all probability provoke the male to more than wrath.

On this occasion it was lucky that it was possible always to keep above the feeding troop, which obviated considerably the possibility of serious danger. At one place the party stood on a broad platform overlooking the main valley and immediately below a small feeder. It was the perfect setting for a picture – the vegetation choked valley, a magnificent bank of tree-ferns growing on the abrupt opposite side, havoc just below the platform where the gorillas had fed a few minutes previously – if only they would come out again!, and, about sixty paces distant, violently agitated bushes and cover, with an occasional glimpse of a black, shaggy body, or a long, hairy arm. Once there was a good view of a female as she swung down from a small tree beside a large bush.

Dropping lightly to the ground, she offered a perfect facing view one long arm momentarily upright grasping a stout branch. Others were seen at various times high up the smaller trees, in this respect my very limited experience suggests that the big male is more enterprising than his wives and children.

After the troop had become aware of our presence and when it seemed quite hopeless to expect a chance to secure a photograph, the party retraced its steps up the hill, making a slight detour to follow a shoulder instead of forcing its way through a tangled re-entrant. To our amazement the gorilla females and youngsters were observed a little below and parallel to our line of direction inquisitively creeping up the

re-entrant, and having a good stare at us by parting the undergrowth and peeping through as opportunity offered!

This boldness revived the idea of a photograph, but it was no good, the gorillas knew all about us and had no intention of exposing themselves unduly, and as soon as we began to descend again they vanished like a party of ghosts and were heard and seen no more, The most satisfactory feature of the whole episode is the fact that the gorillas were not unduly disturbed, and just faded away quietly. The preference for feeding in the vicinity of the valley bottoms is explained by the occurrence of more luxuriant vegetation induced by additional humidity.

The wrathful roar, sometimes aptly described as a hellish challenge, of the angered male is evidently a rarity in the Kayonsa region. In eighteen months my prospector informant had never heard it, and the local natives – usually loquacious on such matters – did not appear to be impressed by any outstanding yell.

There are many gorilla noises, the most frequently described by writes being the peculiar drumming of the chest. It is most certainly done as a challenge, and not necessarily to frighten, and is by no means confined to demonstrating males as it is often claimed.

It is a sound which carried a long distance, especially across a valley. The young males practice it at an early age, and Mok directly after his arrival at Regent's Park used to jump up suddenly from whatever he was going and rush wildly round his cage bellowing and frantically beating his chest.

The particular cupped hands, and the way in which they are held and strike the chest, are responsible for the penetrating nature of this sound.

The second meeting provided an entirely new noise – as far as I am aware there is no published description – a curiously metallic, babbling note. It was much too even and fast for any breast-beating, and rippled forth as if made by rapidly closing and parting the lips. It must have been a signal, presumably uttered by the big male, probably a warning as at the time the gorillas may have got wind of our party. But beyond that sudden, clear-cut ripple there was nothing to suggest that the gorillas were particularly on the *quivive*, except possibly the care they took to be well hidden, until more than half-an-hour later when one member of our party lit a cigarette, and a wisp of blue smoke drifted towards the concealed troop. Within a few moments there was a raucous bark from the male, and there was menace in its tone.

After that at ten minute intervals until we decided to withdraw this bark was uttered. The situation was none too happy for the writer who was noting as the protective unit – for a Game Warden it was an unenviable position. On the one hand the sacred person of the Governor, on the other the almost sacred, and strictly protected gorilla. If the old male got really crusty how close dare he be allowed to come, to make certain that he was only demonstrating.

A radius of ten paces was visualised, so near and no nearer, and just to cheer matters up the Private Secretary from time to time with a garrotting clutch at my throat hissed in my ear – “You must not shoot until the hand is out to grasp!” It was an awkward tense period waiting for the unknown to happen. And if it did uncertain how to tackle it!

As matters were I don't suppose there was the least danger but while patiently waiting there was plenty of time to think.

The Wambutte and Bachiga have a rich fund of strange tales in regard to gorilla behaviour with which they regale one from time to time. Amongst the most entertaining is the idea that a gorilla will play 'possum' sometimes when it realises it has been observed by an intruding human.

It pretends to run away, staggers about, then falls down and covers itself with dead eaves and any handy rubbish, and lies quite still. The intruder puzzled goes forward to investigate thinking it dead, when it leaps up the cunning beast and kills him.

Another pretty fable concerns the way in which an interested gorilla can be duped with a display of spear throwing. The local folk wishing to destroy a gorilla with little risk of danger to themselves get into touch with a gorilla troop without disturbing it. If they find the old male is interested in them they indulge in a game of throwing spears at each other, but before a spear is thrown some grass is very openly wrapped around the blade. The one who returns the spear equally conspicuously does likewise.

A spear with the blade partially wrapped is then hurled

(End of manuscript; it appears Pitman stopped typing at this point half way down the page. Whether a complete version is saved in his archive is yet to be investigated. As far as I am aware, this was never published. In this file there are no graphs, maps or photos as referred to in the text)