

THE OBAMA AMBUSH AND OTHER TALES FROM EAST AFRICA WITH A PINCH OF THE MIDDLE EAST THROWN IN FOR GOOD MEASURE

BY

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Could it really have been 19 years since my last trip to Africa? Well, 1994 to 2013 does compute to 19. My previous trips were to Southern Africa, but this one would be to the great safari countries of East Africa and include two of everybody's top Natural Wonders of the World – the Ngorongoro Crater and the Great Serengeti Migration, both in Tanzania. The trip would conclude with what travel magazines are calling the greatest wildlife experience in the world, a trek to visit the last of the mountain gorillas, this in Uganda

The trip did not get off to a rousing start, as our State Department decided to close our embassies throughout the Middle East and North Africa effective August 4, 2013. The greatest threat of terrorism from al Qaeda, they implied, would be in the Arabian Peninsula. Of course, my first stop on August 4th was in none other than Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in (you guessed it) the Arabian Peninsula.

As in past trip reports I will highlight aspects of the trip using brief comments I jotted down each day as paragraph headings. So, in addition to the aforementioned Obama ambush, you will read about- The trouble with those XL gators; to cross or not to cross; camel racing; Lawrence of Arabia; Shoebill heaven; Masai meets Versailles, chimps in the rain; the extinct black rhino; illegal border crosser; define impenetrable; bowling for gorillas;. KONG.

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

There are three ways to get to East Africa from Dallas- through London; through Amsterdam; and most recently through Dubai. I chose the Dubai route and the number one rated airline in the world, Emirates. Just as I watched Shanghai in 2007 tell the world, "China has arrived," I can now say with some certainty that Dubai has arrived. They are bidding for the 2020 World Expo * and their airport will soon be the busiest in the world, surpassing London Heathrow for the title.* Wow! Not only the tallest building in the world- the highest structure EVER built on earth- The Burj Kalifa (which I rode to the top on the world's fastest elevator), but the most iconic hotel, and the most conspicuous consumption with building design I have ever witnessed. Ah, to be an architect in Dubai. (*Dubai has now been awarded the World Expo 2020, and as of January 2015 their airport is the world leader in international departures)

With my planned layover, I couldn't wait to do a desert safari, a camel ride (he was a one-humped dromedary camel with two names- Cayenne Mustafa- does that mean that two-humped Bactrian camels have four names) and a sumptuous feast in the desert. But first I had to be dressed for the occasion- a red and white turban was wrapped around my head – the proper term is a kaffiyeh- and we were off into the desert. My guide suggested I climb the highest sand dune we could see - it was a great idea and a lot of fun. My guide also suggested that I throw some sand in the air so he could take a picture- it was NOT such a good idea, as a gust of wind deposited most of the thrown sand back in my moU, moUT, moUTH!

CAMEL RACING

Surprisingly the number one spectator sport in Dubai is cricket. Most of the growth in Dubai has come from immigrants emigrating from India and Pakistan. With the British influence still palpable, Cricket is the thing. However, we did stop at a racetrack used exclusively for camels. The camels used to have jockeys, but a protest about immigrant child labor has now led to miniaturized robots actually riding the camels. We stopped at the factory that makes the robots. How strange. (The Sunday New York Times of December 28, 2014, did a multi-page article about this phenomenon. The factory we visited is mentioned in the article)

THE OBAMA AMBUSH

I do not know your politics. In fact, I do not want to know your politics. Can we for the moment, at least, postulate that our current president has a mother who was born in the United States and a father who was born in Kenya. This tale becomes more believable if we can accept that premise.

So, I was at the Ziwa Wildlife Preserve in central Uganda. Rhino poaching throughout East and Southern Africa has reached epidemic proportions. Even a country such as South Africa which has built a substantial tourist industry has lost over 700 rhinos just in the first 8 months of 2013. If the slaughter does not stop, the only rhinos left will be in zoos and fenced enclosures with heavily armed guards. The number of rhinos left in the wild, once over 100,000 is now less than 18,000, if that .

Ziwa is Uganda's attempt to reintroduce rhinos back into the country's national game reserves. They are breeding white rhinos and hope to start the reintroduction program in three years. Ziwa allows a very special treat. Guests, with armed guards, are allowed to go on foot in search of the white rhinos. Once, we humans step out of our vehicles, we have entered the world of the 6,000 pound rhino. Our comfort zone is gone. All of our senses are raised as we approach these other-worldly horned beasts.

On my first trek into the Ziwa wilderness we spotted three rhinos grazing. They are herbivores. Walking in single file and obeying the whispered commands of our guard, we got very, very, very close. THEN our guard said, " OH CRAP!" (or something similar). I looked to my right and saw an unexpected site. Another rhino had come from

the bush and blocked our path of escape. We were surrounded by 24,000 pounds of rhinos! The guide motioned that we should get down on all fours and slowly back out of the area. Because I am writing this missive, you know that we survived.

Several years ago, Ziwa received a female rhino from Busch Gardens in Tampa, Florida for breeding. She was bred with a male rhino from Kenya. Their offspring, a male, was called----- OBAMA. The fourth rhino that joined our little party in the bush was none other than the now fully grown OBAMA. I bought my wife and I tee-shirts that have the likeness of a rhino with the name OBAMA.

THE EXTINCT BLACK RHINO

Having referenced the white rhino, above, now let me talk about my real nemesis, the black rhino. The actual colors of each breed of rhino are exactly the same- gray. The nomenclature of black and white is really based on the shape of the rhino's lip, one being wide (the white rhino) and one being pointed or hooked (the black rhino). I have never seen a black rhino in the wild. I expected that this would be the perfect trip for my first sighting. Indeed, I did see many new species including the klipspringer (small mountain antelope), the Uganda Kob (guess in which country I spotted this species), the topi (beautifully colored red and brown antelope), the dik-dik, the rock hyrax, the hartebeest and amazingly nine new species of primates.

The Ngorongoro Crater is one of the top tourist attractions in the world. It is the largest unbroken caldera extant and is the home to over 30,000 large animals in an area of under 100 square miles (about the same size as GISD). Several ecosystems make up this confined area, including forest, savanna, riverine, swamp and salt marsh. There are those who say it is the actual site of the biblical Garden of Eden. Indeed, just down the road is the world renowned Olduvai Gorge, where paleoanthropologists suggest man's first existence occurred. Among those 30,000 animals are over 45 Black Rhinos. Everybody who goes to Ngorongoro spots a black rhino. EXCEPT ME. Myself and a mother and daughter visiting from Hong Kong, had arranged for a vehicle to drive us into the Crater and stay all day. We would eat lunch in the Crater. So, over 10 hours in this wildlife aficionado's paradise. Could all of these massive rhinos somehow hide from not only our vehicle, but over 40 other vehicles, all in this confined area. They did. I don't know how. They did.

MASAI MEETS VERSAILLES

It is rare for me to comment on food or lodgings on these trips, since I do not consider myself an expert in either area. Because the side trip to Ngorongoro was arranged late, the choice of accommodations was limited. I could stay about 90 minutes from the Crater and miss many hours inside the Crater or as I finally decided, stay on the rim of the Crater for an exorbitant price. The Crater Lodge is listed as one of the great hotels in the world and is often voted the top hotel in all of Africa. The paragraph heading is actually used to describe this property as the rooms resemble what a guest staying at the Palace of Versailles outside of Paris, might experience. Masai warriors, each carrying a

poison-dipped spear and dressed in customary garb, escort the guests to and from the main dining hall. Over the top- well maybe, until you learn that leopards often visit the area.

My room, and each of the rooms, contained at least two chandeliers, and the working fireplace was already lit by my personal butler when I returned from dinner. After that 10 hour crater visit described just above, I returned to a fully prepared bath, specially imported chocolates from Belgium and Sherry. Yes, the Crater Lodge is worthy as an unforgettable experience.

TO CROSS OR NOT TO CROSS

The Serengeti is perhaps the most famous region in all of sub-Saharan Africa. If you have only watched one wildlife documentary in your life, it probably took place in the Serengeti and involved the famous crossing of the Mara River. Yes, that crossing, with Wildebeest, Zebras, and hungry crocs. Every photographer, every Africa enthusiast, every world traveler dreams of viewing the celebrated 2,000,000 animal plus migration that circulates from Tanzania into Kenya and back into Tanzania. August appeared to be a perfect time to view the crossings. All of the maps, now of course digitized and animated, said that the animals would be passing right by my campsite in Tanzania.

When I was picked up from the Serengeti airport my guide indicated we would head right out to the Mara River. Gerard explained that he was the first guide to open up this area of Northern Tanzania to tourism. As the Mara River came into view, Gerard motioned to the top of the hill beyond the river. There, with my powerful binoculars, was the sight of masses of wildebeest and zebras returning from Kenya heading toward the river. We were immediately off to what Gerard said was crossing #7. He and the other guides had numbered each possible river crossing area so as to easily communicate to other vehicles where a crossing was occurring. There, at number 7, were several hundred Wildebeest at the rivers' edge. But, they did not cross. Gerard indicated that many times the wildebeest and/or zebras would get to the waters edge and decide not to cross the river. No one, not biologists or zoologists, had yet determined why a crossing would or would not occur. I met several tourists who were extremely disappointed at missing the iconic river crossings, especially when they had waited at a possible crossing point for hours without any luck.

With a sense that came from his 37 years in the bush, Gerard suggested we move to the JUNCTION to see if there was any action. The JUNCTION was an unnumbered crossing point, but one that Gerard imagined might be just right. It was. That phalanx of wildebeest and zebras descended on the JUNCTION just as we arrived. For the next 2 ½ hours we observed a crossing. Gerard, the most experienced guide in all of Northern Tanzania, indicated it was the longest crossing he had ever witnessed. It was mesmerizing. I could not take my eyes away. The sounds, the smells, the cacophony of perhaps 50,000 animals crossing the Mara River was something that was indeed unforgettable. Perhaps 50,000; perhaps 100,000. Gerard tried to guess, but said either number or even higher was possible.

I was extremely fortunate to view 4 different crossings on my 3 days in the Serengeti. Even more fortunate was the fact that each of these crossings had the animals coming toward me, not away from me. On my plane home was a family from Dallas. The patriarch is the owner of a huge system of automobile dealerships. They had stayed in the Masai Mara, the Kenyan extension of the Serengeti. They had witnessed a crossing, but it was away from their position and they indicated a sense of missing the true excitement they had expected.

Remember, the black rhino. There are several resident in the area I stayed. On the third



day, I asked Gerard if we could just spend our time looking for rhinos. He and his spotter, Henry, agreed. Remember my results in the Crater. Ditto, for the Serengeti. At dinner on my last night in the Serengeti, the famous camp director Alex Walker, sent over a gift for me. It was actually currency from South Africa. A 10 Rand note with a picture of Nelson Mandela on the front side. On the reverse side it had a picture of a rhino. Alex cavalierly exclaimed to the 20 guests present, that that was probably the closest I would come to a rhino on this trip. Ha, Ha. Ha.

But just as I would not see my black rhino, another possibility was presented. Early that third morning Gerard had received a message that a leopard had been spotted in the rocky outcroppings many miles from where we were looking for the rhinos. At the end of the day, we decided to look for the leopard. I had never seen a leopard in the daytime, only at night in Zambia. They are solitary, only hunt at night, and are normally hidden in a tree or the mountains during the daylight hours. I have met several multi-time visitors to Africa who had yet to see a leopard, day or night. And, yes, we spotted the leopard just as the sun was setting. With my 500mm lens and my 1.4 extender (making the lens the equivalent of 700mm), I shot over 100 pictures. What an experience. It even made me forget about my black rhino failures for a few hours.

ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSER

The Serengeti area of Tanzania borders Kenya. On my first day with Gerard, he pointed to the mountains in the distance. "That's Kenya," he indicated. "How would you like to have breakfast tomorrow morning in Kenya." So, the next morning, without a Visa and without a stamped passport we crossed illegally into Kenya. There were concrete monument signs with a "TZ/ K" spread about ½ mile apart defining the imaginary boundary line. Breakfast in Kenya, although making me subject to harsh times in a

Nairobi prison, was excellent. I was less worried when a hot air balloon from Kenya was blown across the border into Tanzania while we were eating breakfast. In the worst case scenario there could have been an exchange of prisoners- me, Gerard and Henry, for the shocked balloon fliers who crossed illegally in the opposite direction. Doesn't that sound like a great story for a movie. Maybe we could call it "Crime and Punishment- Africa Style or The Count of Monte Glicko ". Now the lead role, the protagonist, portraying the heroic, valiant, daring, audacious, fearless, intrepid, Edmond Dantes-ish, international explorer - me- will be played by _____.

SHOEBILL HEAVEN

I am unabashedly a birder. Not a birdwatcher, since that is an antediluvian term. On this trip I crossed the 2500 plateau on my life list (the current number is almost 3100). Not a bad number, and one that earns me an entry into the nameless club. As an analogy, think of a home run hitter who reaches 400 homeruns. He has reached a magic pinnacle, but is a long ways from the 762 of Barry Bonds. Also, birding does not require the use of PED's (performance enhancing drugs).

The Shoebill is considered the number one bird in Africa. It is also in the top 10 worldwide for most birders. The Shoebill stands 5 ½ feet tall, and has the largest bill of any bird on the planet. Did I mention that the Shoebill stands around 66 inches, and has the largest bill of any bird on the planet. It is mostly found in the swamps of Uganda. Featured on the cover of a book called "Extreme Birds" is none other than the Shoebill. A famous birder, Arnold Small, who once held the world record for birds observed at 6923, chose the Shoebill for the name on his California license plate.

Now Idi Amin has been gone from Ugandan politics for a long time (he was forced from office in 1979 and died in 2003 while in exile) but Uganda's reputation was sullied for decades. It is now open to tourism and National Geographic picked the country as a top destination for 2012. The Shoebill managed to avoid tourists for many decades. Most of the swamps are difficult to reach. I scheduled two visits to search for the Shoebill, the first in the Lugogo Swamp adjacent to Ziwa (see above) and the second in the Mabamba Swamp near Kampala, the Ugandan capital. A swamp should have a foreboding name- I think Lugogo and Mabamba fit the bill (no pun intended).

The night before I was to go canoeing in the Lugogo Swamp, Ziwa's owner Angie, found boots for me that were a little taller than the hiking boots I brought. In the morning we canoed far into the swamp; the water in the canoe was only about 3 or 4 inches high, so I thought Angie was being a little over-protective. As we came to the end of the swamp, I imagined we would simply turn around and head back without unfortunately seeing a Shoebill. The guide then said, "Let's go," and proceeded to jump out of the canoe into the swamp. Remember, the FOREBODING swamp! Unflinchingly, I also jumped into the swamp not thinking about what could either eat me, or bite me or sting me, or all of the above.

Walking in the swamp was breathtaking. We approached birds very closely and finally did spot a Shoebill about 200 yards away. Wow! A dream come true. I took some pictures, but the bird was a little too far away, and finally flew into a distant tree.

After my trip to Tanzania it was off to the Mabamba Swamp. The guide service had discouraged me from booking this trip since the Shoebills were mainly seen in the early morning hours; almost never in mid-afternoon when I would be present. The swamp was truly beautiful with gorgeous plant life and birds of every variety. About 45 minutes into the ride, my guide simply pointed a finger far off in the distance. Yes, a Shoebill, and very close to the swamp's edge. We paddled within 15 yards of the Shoebill. It didn't move. Can you hear the sound of my heart beating? Listen closely, you will.

It is a strange feeling being this close to a bird that tens of millions of birders throughout the world have thought about, and dreamed of seeing. After about 25 minutes with the Shoebill we floated down the swamp in search of more birds. Then on our return we noticed the Shoebill still in the same location. My guide suggested that the Shoebill looked ready to catch its prime meal, a lungfish (resembles an eel). The Shoebill lunged for the lungfish (say that fast 10 times), and caught it. However, as the guide exclaimed, it was too big. The Shoebill tried mightily to swallow the lungfish while I shot numerous pictures.

I am now in discussions with National Geographic about a cover picture showing the Shoebill catching its main meal! As an avid wildlife photographer it doesn't get much better.

CHIMPS IN THE RAIN

Uganda's population of safari animals is recovering from the indiscriminate slaughter during the Amin years. What has continued to flourish, however, is the population of primates that is unmatched in the Old World. While the Amazon Delta is home to most of the New World primates (my daughter and I saw 4 species last summer) and Borneo is home to the Orangutan, Uganda supports a vibrant population of all other species of primate.

Our main goal on the way to visit the mountain gorillas, was the Chimps of Kibale Forest. The forest is home to 12 different species of primate and has the highest concentration of chimpanzees in the world. From my research, most visitors to Kibale saw the chimps. However, the chimps were high in the trees and this being a rainforest, it rained. We had scheduled two visits to the chimps, one on our first afternoon in Kibale, the second on the next morning. The second visit went as I expected. We all got drenched. I had a plastic garbage bag over my long lens for protection and took exactly zero pictures of the chimps who were predictably high in the trees. It does help to do research.

It was the first visit that shocked me and proved to be the most unexpected portion of my adventure in Western Uganda. First it didn't rain. Second, and most importantly, the

chimps were on the ground right next to us. I couldn't believe my eyes and my 70-200mm lens got some incredible pictures. It is said that chimps have 98.2% of our DNA. This is not a polemic about Darwin, "On The Origin of Species" or His Theory of Evolution and Natural Selection. But looking directly into the eyes of a chimp (and as you will soon read, a monstrous silverback gorilla) seems to confirm that 98.2 number. The chimps who are habituated to humans certainly behaved as if they were among relatives (no jokes here, please). They walked amongst us, sat next to us, and never showed any fear or threat to us. If this sounds kind of cool, I promise you the reality was even more stupendous. I get goose bumps just thinking about this part of the adventure.

BOWLING FOR GORILLAS

What a finale. Two treks into the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest to find the last of only 850 remaining mountain gorillas. The gorillas seen at most zoos are low-land gorillas as mountain gorillas have never done well in captivity. The Forest is at an elevation of about 7000-9000 feet. It is at 10,000 feet that altitude sickness can take place. So no necessity for pills or coca tea like my climbs in the South American Andes.

The 850 gorillas are actually divided in the same area by the boundaries of three contiguous countries- Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The latter two have had fairly recent and well-documented political/military problems. The Congo has not recovered and Rwanda, to this very day, is still in dispute with the government of the Congo. On my flight out of Entebbe (Uganda) airport I encountered United Nations troops returning home from service in the Eastern Congo. The future of the gorillas is murky.

Uganda, especially, protects the gorillas as a well-managed source of foreign currency. On each of our treks into the mountainous forest, we had two armed soldiers carrying AK-47s. As they told me- we will protect you from rogue gorillas, elephants, cape buffalo. We will also shoot- to- kill any poachers who mess with the gorillas. This was said this with a very straight face.

The Uganda Wildlife Authority conducts a briefing for each of the lucky few tourists who are allowed to visit the gorillas on any one day. As we entered the briefing area I noticed a statue of a gorilla with an alley, similar to a bowling alley, although not as wide, extended away from the gorilla. I thought it was a game to see who could role a ball and strike the statue. NO. During the briefing we learned that the distance from the beginning of the alley to the gorilla (about 23 feet) was the distance that we humans were to maintain from the gorillas when we encountered them in the wild.

THE TROUBLE WITH THOSE XL GATORS

You probably think this section is about alligators. Not exactly. In preparing for the arduous climb to visit the gorillas I had read about the different items to take or not take. One item repeatedly mentioned was gators. I had no idea what a gator was. The staff at REI in Dallas did. They directed me to a rack that had gators, best described as

coverings to go over boots and pant legs. The purpose of the gators was to prevent biting ants from biting and to stop stinging vines from stinging.

So now, in preparation for trek #1, I tried to put on the gators. To no avail. Luckily, no one was filming this episode or it would have gone viral on YouTube- How not to put on a gator or something to that effect. Finally, after about ½ hour of futility I gave up and asked one of the other guests (former military) exactly how these items worked. Later, after his explanation that made me feel like a true idiot, I was ready to go. Then to my surprise some of the other guests came to me to ask how to put on gators. Now the gator expert, I showed them my mastery of the subject.

DEFINE IMPENETRABLE

Remember that my gorilla treks would take place in the Bwindi IMPENETRABLE Forest. Does impenetrable mean that after you have climbed almost straight uphill for four hours you are too exhausted to climb down?. Does impenetrable mean that the final portion uphill is at an excruciatingly insane 70% grade? Does impenetrable mean that the use of machetes to clear your path makes the job less taxing? Does impenetrable mean that several climbers from the first day declined to try on day two? The answers in order are- Almost; it is; they don't; several stayed at the hotel We had one gentleman who did the day one climb, said he would do the second day climb, but proceeded to stay in his room through dinner and the rest of the next day and took any and every pill that was available to ease his full-body pain. Your intrepid author made it both days. Had I been offered a sizeable amount of money to redo the climb to the "H" group, I would have most ungraciously declined.

I had read that the climb to visit the Habinyanja Gorilla Group, known as "H", was the most strenuous activity that most individuals would undertake in their lifetime. This mantra was repeated in the literature and seconded by seasoned travelers who were runners and climbers. I third it!

But my first visit was to the "R" group (Rushegura), considered a rather easy trek to reach. Between the "R and H" groups, I would be viewing just over 5% of the mountain gorillas remaining in this world. Let that number sink in for a few moments!

After a leisurely (yeah, right) climb we were alerted by the trackers that the "R" group was just ahead. Out came the machetes and we trudged through the undergrowth and overgrowth to find our kinfolk. If the Chimp is at 98.2 on the DNA scale, the gorilla is at 97 to 97.5. As I stepped through the oblong hole made in the bushes by the guide, there right in front of me was a gorilla. This gorilla must have been absent from school on the day that measurements were taught- *and certainly needed remedial training from a great GISD teacher.* He was not 23 feet away from me, but 4 feet. Startling. And as we learned that day and the next, the gorillas decide how close to get and when to do so. On one instance on day 2, I was standing next to a couple from Paris, France. A large gorilla (I know, there are no small gorillas), said to be the second in charge of this group, decided to walk between myself and the Parisian couple. The space between us was at

most 18 inches as he lumbered through. Had we been allowed to touch the gorillas, I could have easily scratched his back as he passed by. The smile on our faces after this close encounter of the gorilla kind, did not leave us for the full hour we spent with our new friends. Magical.

KONG

We have all heard the term “Silverback.” It is used to describe the leader of a gorilla group. In some of the groups there could be more than one silverback, but eventually only one is left in charge. On our visit, day one, to see the “R” group, the silverback was visible, but only through heavy brush. Day 2, was very different.

Day 2 had plenty of babies present, alluding to the protective steps Uganda has instituted. And then, from some serious undergrowth emerged an 800 pound + silverback. He sat down about 15 feet in front of my kneeled position. And just sat. And we observed each other. Although, gorillas, in general are not considered aggressive or violent, it was easy to understand the stories told about these alleged monsters. I remember as a boy watching the movie, “King Kong” (yes, it was in black and white). Well, confronted with a huge silverback looking directly in my eyes and probably able to reach me in 1 or 2 seconds, the old movie became very real. Luckily, there was no Empire State Building nearby. You have probably heard the joke about what can the 800 pound gorilla in the room do. Yes, whatever he wants and I am testimony to that fact.

POSTSCRIPT- LUCK

I have described several instances where pure luck allowed me to see The Shoebill twice, a leopard in the daytime, possibly the longest Mara River crossing ever witnessed, and the ability to interact with chimps in close proximity. Why did these events happen and why did I fail to see a black rhino when all criteria suggested I should.

There was a lady in Alex Walker’s Camp (remember the currency with the rhino) who had preceded me by a day in both the Crater and the Serengeti. She saw a black rhino in each location. She left the Serengeti without seeing even one river crossing, and I saw four.

One evening in Tanzania I had just fallen asleep when a weird sound echoed through my tent. Lions- No; hippos- No; elephants- NO. . My tent, as I cautiously opened the flaps, was surrounded by hundreds of zebras casually munching on the grass. I watched for a while and finally said goodnight to my new friends. Yes, only in Africa.

On my trip to Zambia in 1994, my guide suggested we climb into the escarpment fronting the Zambezi River to look for the elusive Klipspringer. After 2 hours and facing the possibility of spraining an ankle, or worse, on the wet boulders we returned without a sighting. One fall could have ruined the remainder of that 18 day trip. As I mentioned in this report, I did see a Klipspringer in the Serengeti. In fact, on day one Gerard had indicated that the mountains near the Mara River held many species including the

Klipspringer. “Could we see one,” I asked. We drove to the mountains and in less than five minutes saw not one, but a family on five Klipspringers. Luck. Serendipity. Who knows.

My only suggestion is to go to Africa sooner than later. Just this week I have read about a plan of the Ugandan government to build a six lane road across the Serengeti. This idea had been floated four years ago and been castigated by the world community. It was dead. Now it is alive again thanks to oil found in Uganda and the mineral wealth of the Congo. The easiest route to the Indian Ocean ports would be across the path of the greatest migration we have on this planet. Conservationists have decried the recent plans and the world community is now alerted. The animals migrate to find new grasses. Without a path to the North most would eventually perish. (In mid-2014 the East African Court of Justice barred the paving. That ruling is now under appeal. The Glick family has contributed to the defense fund fighting the appeal)

The rhino is under pressure; the lion is under pressure; the elephant is again being hunted extensively; hippos are being killed for their tusks; I have spoken about the gorillas of Rwanda and the Congo; the list goes on. I will not make any promises on what type of adventure you will have. I will, however, make one promise-

YOU
WILL
SEE
A
BLACK
RHINO

