

**A Safari Report
Kenya and Tanzania
May 2002
Excerpts from the Safari
Diary of Fern Trout
(pictured with the Masaai kids)**



"Our first safari outing - a visit to the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust Orphanage. Daphne Sheldrick has rescued and rehabilitated orphaned animals (other than the big cats) most of her married life but elephants have been her greatest challenge and greatest success . . . we arrived at about 11am to observe the morning feeding. They are orphans usually because their mothers were killed by poachers (for their ivory) or they lost their family in a stampede or got caught in a trap and the family could not rescue them. They are always severely traumatized if not physically emotionally, & grieve for the loss of their family for weeks." "Later on in the morning we paid a visit to another of Carols projects - a girls school. This is where the cartons of clothes and cash donations and the school supplies we all brought were to be delivered. There are 600 girls in the school but it happened to be a holiday month so only the boarders were there. The buildings were utterly utilitarian, the plumbing antiquated and the grounds unkempt. We visited two classrooms - the children (all dressed in green dresses) sit on benches and write on higher benches. Then we went to the chapel (a building) where they put on a concert for us... it was a delightful interlude." "Evening was approaching and as we drove toward our destination, the snowy crown of Mount Kilimanjaro was sparkling in the late afternoon sun as it sat on an ermine collar of white fluffy clouds resting on the blue velvet cushion of the horizon. We arrived at Amboseli Serena Lodge just at dusk and as we drove up the driveway we saw a spotted hyena slinking off and a saucy black - faced Vervet monkey greeted us from the middle of the road. As soon as we got out of our vehicles we were handed a glass of orange juice and rushed out on to the patio to see the elephant and water buck just departing from their evening drink at the water hole below us."

" . . . Amboseli is a small park but has a high population of elephants and we saw many of these magnificent animals. On the way back we came across a group of hyena cubs playing outside their dens - with no parents in sight. A big old warthog had a den practically in the middle of them and when he arrived he made a great fuss digging dirt out of his burrow and kicking it to one side. . . "

"The Ngorongoro Lodge is perched on the rim of the crater - my room was along a long, dark corridor, parts of which were open to the outside. All of the lodges where we stayed were different and interesting. This one had a shower that could have accommodated about 6 people - should one be inclined to have a shower with six people. The following day we spent in the crater which at that time of the year was a carpet of yellow flowers. We saw many animals, grazers mainly on the grass lands, but also bull elephants, reed buck, water buck, rhino, hippos and the like on the swamplands. Predators are numerous in the crater also - including the beautiful black maned lion, jackals and hyena. Both Kenya and Tanzania are a birders paradise. The crater hosts hundreds - both migratory and seasonal. Many waterfowl seek refuge here and there were hundreds of pink flamingos, pelicans, avocets, herons, hornbills, bustards and many others.

"The Serengeti Serena Lodge was a beautiful lodge - the rooms are built on the traditional African village plan with

separate rondavel huts - only ours were luxurious inside. Mine looked over a sweeping vista and had a small balcony for better viewing. This was our last stop and we were all hoping to see a leopard and a cheetah, which had so far eluded us. We told the boys it was their last chance. Godie was the driver of our Land Rover that day - it was an all-day drive - and we left about 8am. About 3/4 of an hour later Godie was talking to someone - presumably Paul - on his CB. The drivers always talk in Swahili when they communicate. Then he announced the lunches had been forgotten and we had to go back to pick them up. We all groaned - an hour lost on this crucial day. Someone suggested the lodge deliver them but Godie said there was no one there to deliver - they were all out. He turned around and drove at break-neck speed back the way we had come - and then suddenly pulled up beside a number of other safari vans, gleefully pointed to a tree and said there's your lunch. It was a leopard lying stretched out on a tree branch, tail hanging down. The boys love to laugh and this was a great joke on us. The leopard was not that close so doubtless one of the sharp-eyed drivers must have spotted it - but we all had a look through our binoculars. Later on that day we saw two cheetahs lying waiting for a herd of impala to come a little closer. However, it was a long wait so we didn't see the cheetah in action."

"I had dreamed of going to Africa for many years and my only regret was that I waited so long.

Carol was a consummate tour leader- no detail was overlooked. My travelling companions were equally helpful and wherever we stayed the staff were there at a moments notice to lend a hand if I needed one. They



must have all thought I was an old lady or something."

"My overall impression of Africa is that it is a vast and beautiful land. I realize I was in a preferred and artificial setting and therefore may have a biased opinion but the trappings of civilization are not what impressed me. I also know my window of experience is very narrow. I was there in an area when it was the rainy season and everything was lush and green. I was not there when it is the dry season when the heat is intense and the dust storms blow; nor did I visit the vast deserts or the craggy mountains that can be hit by fierce storms or even blizzards at certain times of the year. I saw poverty but not the extreme poverty in which so many Africans live nor did I see that segment of the population ravaged by Aids and other wasting diseases. Mainly what I wanted to see and experience for my introduction to Africa was the wilderness and its inhabitants. What I saw was only a fraction of what Africa has to offer - but it was enough to make me realize what a treasure of riches Africa is. The Ngorongoro Conservation Area alone with its craters, gorges, lakes, forests, savannas, and swamps is only a microcosm. Much has been done there in the way of exploration and archeological studies in the last seventy years and yet there is so much more to be seen and learned. Learning the secrets of Africa will take generations. Africa needs and deserves help especially in the areas of health, disease control, sanitation and education. Let us hope that the modern world in its efforts to focus on Africa and render assistance do not despoil it.