

MAMBAS & PUFF ADDERS

Two Killer Snakes of Africa

— LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #23 —

He came out of the forest on the right side of the track and raced quickly across the dusty road to the far side; but then he made the last mistake of his life – he stopped. Our safari car was cruising along a narrow dirt track at about 30 kilometers per hour, with thick bush on both sides. There was only one view -- straight ahead. The trackers started yelling “nyoka”, “nyoka”, “nyoka”; which for me translated into “hey, there’s a big snake crossing the road in front of us.” I grabbed my rifle, stood up and tried to figure out what all the commotion was about – all at the same time.



This is a puff adder, another killer snake. Yes; of course he is dead.

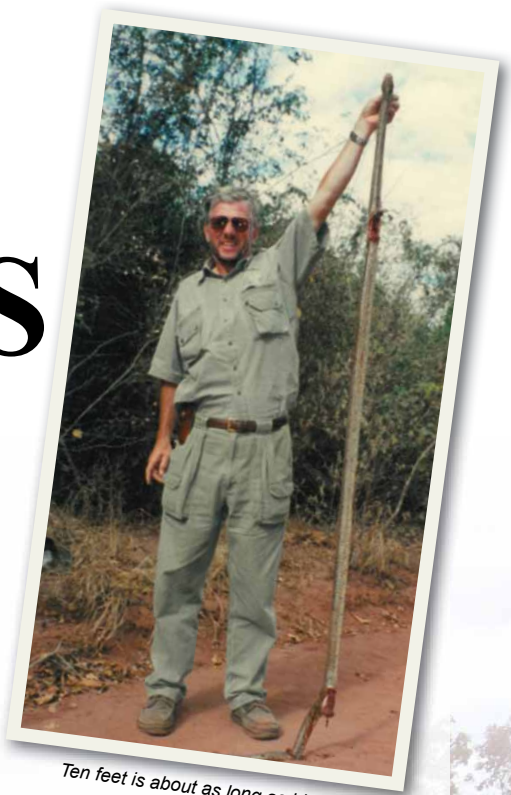
We came to a complete stop about 20 yards from this huge black mamba, as I bolted a round into the chamber. He was now coiled up and trying to hide in light grass on the left side of the road, but still very visible to us. Likely my bullet never actually touched the snake; a 400 grain projectile, coming from a 416 Remington Magnum, works like a small mortar when it hits the sandy soil – close is good enough, and the results were fatal.

Now, from my perspective as a safari hunter, the concern about dangerous snakes in Africa is a bit overrated. Yes, there are poisonous snakes there; and yes, many natives get bit and die each year; but in my experience, on safari you will be lucky to see a snake.

There are two reasons for this; first, snakes apparently have the sense that they are at the bottom of the food chain; hyenas and leopard eat them and elephant step

on them. It should be no wonder that when they hear the leaves or grass rustle – or the ground vibrate, most of them will get out of the way very quickly. Second, the trackers and the professional hunter are almost always in front of you when you’re on track in the bush.

I feel fortunate to have seen several mambas in Africa and they have almost always been on the move --going the other way. Puff adders, on the other hand, have never been on the move, but rather have been laying on an elephant trail, catching some sun. This is when I take comfort in the fact that there are trackers and a PH in front of me.



Ten feet is about as long as black mambas get and this one is pretty close.

“...the results were fatal.”



Larry Potterfield

Luwele Camp
Selous Game Reserve
Tanzania, Africa
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We ran over this puff adder with the safari car. He is still very much alive.