

The CROC that Wasn't DEAD

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #61 —

The dirt track ran generally along the side of the riverbed, through intermittent brush, and occasionally provided a great view of whatever pools were still holding water during the dry season. As the safari car came upon one of the view points, the trackers spotted a big crocodile sunning on a sandbar several hundred yards down and on the other side of the river. Although Russell wasn't hunting croc, this was a big one and it was a quick decision, between he and the Professional Hunter (PH), to go for it.

"Be very quiet and keep low; crocs can see and hear very well"; this is the typical advice from a PH when trying to get a client close enough take a shot – and I mean close. When a croc is near the water, you always shoot for the brain, which is pretty small -- perhaps the size of a walnut.



Russell and his PH pretending to wrestle with the 'presumed dead' croc. The safari car is in the background, across the river.

You must get close enough to hit the walnut from whatever makeshift rest you can set up, or the croc runs to the water and is gone in seconds.

As elephant hunting was Russell's primary interest, he had removed the scope from his rifle several days earlier, after sighting in. Not a problem, the Leupold quick-detachable rings and bases are very precise; he slipped the ring studs back into the bases, tightened the levers, and off they went.

At 75 yards, they ran out of cover; Russell stretched out prone, peeking over the river bank through the scope



Russell is a little over six feet tall, so this a pretty big croc.

and took the shot. It was well-placed and the croc hardly moved.

Now, the nervous system on an ancient, cold-blooded reptile like this croc is a bit complicated – or perhaps it's very simple. I remember cutting the heads off of snapping turtles when I was a kid but the turtles continued to move around

"The trackers went absolutely crazy..."

for several hours, even without a head and a brain. This croc was definitely dead, with a 400 grain bullet through his brain; and the guys took pictures for fifteen or twenty minutes. The picture taking was completed and everyone was just standing around waiting to load the croc into the safari car; but all of a sudden this reptile stood up on all four legs and urinated in the sand. The trackers went absolutely crazy; and along with Russell and the PH, they scattered everywhere. So this is the story of the croc that wasn't dead – and yes, additional shots were fired!

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The 416 Remington Magnum is a relatively modern African big game cartridge. Russell's rifle is a custom-stocked Winchester Model 70.