

The HIPPO That CHARGED

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #41 —



This is a large hippo, but they get even bigger.

“Do you want to shoot a hippo?” The safari car had stopped, without apparent reason, and this question was put to me by the PH. “Where?” “There, sleeping in the water.” “What would we do with him?” “Use him for lion bait!” “Ok, but I’m not going to shoot him, asleep in the water.” **“No problem, we can make him charge!”**

The plan was simple; the PH and I would walk quietly to within about ten steps of the edge of the water; a tracker would proceed forward and throw some sticks. When the hippo woke up he would charge, whereupon the tracker would run back between the two of us. The last instruction

from the PH was “don’t shoot until all four feet clear the water.”

I was armed with an old double rifle in 500 Nitro Express and my PH also had a big double; so there was no concern about being run over by a charging hippo. We got set up, the tracker threw the sticks, the hippo charged, the tracker ran and then it was just the two of us and four rounds of ammo. But the hippo didn’t

understand the plan. As his front feet cleared the water (about 10 steps distance), he turned 90 degrees and ran away. I never fired!

It was very dry and there wasn’t another waterhole, so after a couple of hundred yards, the hippo ran into a small pocket of thick brush. We approached the brush and repeated the earlier process. On the third stick, the hippo charged.

“...the hippo didn't understand the plan.”

Now was the moment of truth, but frankly I wasn’t prepared;

as I had given no thought to my aiming point. I put a 570 grain Woodleigh solid right in the middle of his head (six inches below the brain) at about eight steps. He turned to his left and I put the other solid in the middle of the side of his head – still far from his brain. He ran back into the brush and died a few minutes later, from the full-length penetration of the first shot. The lesson I learned from this was critically important -- always have a plan for your aiming point on a charging hippo, buffalo or elephant, or you may not live to tell a story like this.



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Luwele Camp
Selous Game Reserve
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They say that hippos kill more natives than any other animal in Africa. These teeth are one of the reasons why. Brenda was with me on this hunt.



Sunsets in Africa are often spectacular!