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CAMPUS REVOLUTIONARIES DECLARE ALL-OUT WAR

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OCT./70

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MEXICO'S C.O.D. MARIJUANA RACKET \* ASTROLOGERS WARN NIXON  
"THE SUNDANCE KID" ON WHEELS \* HUNT FOR THE LOCH MONSTERS  
HITLER'S ACE OF ACES LIVES \* MONTEZUMA'S BURIED MILLIONS  
CLOSE-UP ON THE SEX STARLETS \* KAYAKING THE GULF OF HELL



STALKING THE  
MAN-EATER  
OF BASTAR



The damn tiger was smart. He'd been hunted before, maybe even wounded, and now his natural cunning plus his "knowledge" of man's ways—he was a man-eater with two kills in three days to his credit—made him more dangerous than ever. We tried a machan in a tree over a staked-out buffalo carcass, but the shrewd cat saw through the cover and spooked. That's when my guide convinced me that we should use my camouflaged jeep in a bamboo thicket as a blind. Hours after we settled down for the long wait, with the jungle deathly still, the thought hit me: What if he slips up from behind us?

• After the agony of 18 hours of almost total immobility, my shoulders felt as if they were on fire, and my legs were so cramped I wasn't sure I could even stand up. No matter how hard I tried I couldn't help shivering violently. Once the sun came up the temperature would rapidly soar into the 90s, but now, in the predawn chill, the near freezing cold was passing through my sodden clothing and penetrating my weary body.

Suddenly, I became motionless with every sense straining against the black night. I heard a faint sound, the echo of a stealthy footfall. My head throbbed. I blinked the tears from my burning eyes as I stared into the darkness trying through sheer will power to detect some sign of movement. Then it came again! This time clearer and closer. I sighed, and relaxed my grip on the .375 Magnum cradled across my knees. The sound had come from nothing more ominous than a saucer-shaped leaf that had gradually filled with condensing dew and then spilled its contents on the forest floor.

I was totally exhausted, physically and emotionally. I hurt all over. "Damn that cat." I thought as I gritted my teeth and tried to forget my aching body.

Next to my wife, Rosemary, who I take along on most of my trips, big game hunting is the consuming passion of my life. Years of hunting have taken me all over the world, and I have been fortunate enough to have had some extremely successful hunts. Last year in Africa, for example, I managed to make a clean sweep of the "Big Five" (rhino, elephant, lion, Cape buffalo and leopard) in seven days (SAGA, April 1969). Some hunters have devoted years to bagging the big five and have still never made it.

This time Rosemary and I had come to the remote mountain forests of India, hoping for a tiger. But now I had something on my hands I hadn't bargained for—a man-eater. So thoughts of that first week's events drifted through my tired mind—sitting there in the machan, cramped, cold, and miserable, and waiting for the sun to rise—they all seemed to become unreal. Had it really only been a few days since Rosemary and I visited the Taj Mahal? Or spent a relaxed

# STRIPED MARAUDER OF BASTAR

By Sam Pancotto  
as told to  
Patrick K. Snook

afternoon sight-seeing in Delhi and Agra?

We had flown to Nagpur and had met S. S. Takar, our Indian shikari. From Nagpur, we drove 400 miles by jeep over some of the most unbelievable roads I have ever seen. Our destination was a section of forest deep in the mountains of the Bastar region of Madhya Pradesh, an area so primitive that it is rarely penetrated by outsiders, and then usually only by hunters.

Most tiger hunts in India are conducted from government houses that offer the sportsmen plush accommodations. But there were no permanent facilities in the remote region where we were headed, and we had been warned that we would be hunting out of a bush camp. Both my wife and I had plenty of first hand experience with primitive living, so there were no qualms. It's all part of the game.

Nevertheless, Takar had a surprise up his sleeve, and we were both

speechless when we saw the camp. We would be living in tents, yes, but also in luxury. Our personal lodgings turned out to be a canvas five-room bungalow, complete with a living room, reading room, shower and bath, and bedroom with king size beds. Two cooks overwhelmed us with superb Western-style food as well as exotic native dishes. A visiting maharaja couldn't have fared better.

But Takar's news of the marauding man-eater cast a pall over that first evening in camp. The tiger had killed twice in the last few days, and both times the victims had been small children on their way to the river to draw water.

We visited the scene of the tragedies the next morning. The grisly evidence of the attacks told its own grim story. As I stood there, I promised myself that if it was within my powers that tiger would never take another human life.

Takar had been leading shikars for more than 16 years, and is acknowledged to be one of the top professional guides in India today. He said the best plan would be to set out live



*Sam Pancotto and his wife, Rosemary, have many trophies from their hunts in their home, including the Big Five (rhino, elephant, lion, Cape buffalo and leopard) which he bagged in seven days on a hunt in Africa. Mrs. Pancotto goes on most of the hunts.*

**The forest floor was carpeted with dry leaves and we heard the rustle of the tiger's stealthy approach. Suddenly, there he was. He seemed to just materialize out of the shadows and glide toward the dead buffalo. Then, just short of the bait he stopped, and for the next 15 minutes he stood there examining his surroundings for danger. He fixed his gaze on our blind, and I felt sure those menacing, yellow eyes were burning straight into mine. As I slowly raised my rifle up to my shoulder he vanished!**

baits at a number of spots in the area. Since cows are considered a sacred animal in India, we would have to use the small local buffalo for bait. And this, Takar pointed out, was going to present a problem. We would need our jeep to set out the baits, and the village was 12 miles from the nearest road.

Being a builder by profession my reply was what to me seemed the obvious solution . . . "We'll build a road."

And build a road we did. With the help of about 50 local natives we completed 12 miles of driveable access road in two days, at a cost of only six American dollars.

We brought in 20 baits and staked out 10 each in the areas my wife and I would hunt. Rosemary's "block" was near the spot where the tiger had attacked the children, while mine was on the other side of a small river, the direction in which the tiger had dragged one of its victims.

Once the baits had been set it became a matter of waiting until the tiger made a kill. Two days passed, and then the news came. An excited native told us that the tiger had made a kill on the buffalo nearest the road. We forded the river on foot and soon found the bloody remains of the bait. The tiger had eaten about half the buffalo, and the soft ground near the carcass was covered with pug marks. After careful examination, Takar informed us that the tracks were those of a very large male, almost certainly the same one that had killed the children.

After scouting the area carefully, Takar announced that our best chance would be to build a machan (a blind) in a nearby tree and wait there in the hopes that the tiger would return to feed again that night. He also reminded me that if we did go into the

machan it would be for a long stay, unless, of course, we got lucky and made an early kill. We would have to be in position in the machan by no later than three in the afternoon. Our jeep was on the other side of the river, and once darkness fell there would be no walking out until daylight.

In my eagerness and excitement for a try at the tiger I hardly gave Takar's words of caution a second thought. At that point I would have gladly agreed to almost anything.

Now, after almost 18 agonizing hours in the machan, I began to question the wisdom of my eager decision. To cap it all off it was becoming increasingly certain that the tiger wasn't going to show, and the night's ordeal had been for naught.

When the natives arrived at daylight, I was convinced that I was going to be a cripple for life; however, the hike back to the jeep worked some of the stiffness out, and the pure pleasure of being able to stretch brightened my disposition tremendously. On the way back to camp we discussed our strategy. Takar was convinced that the particular tiger we were after was an exceptionally clever and cautious animal. Quite likely one that had been hunted before and possibly shrewd enough to detect and avoid a machan. It was most unusual, Takar informed me, for a tiger to make a kill and abandon it after eating only once. But that was what our quarry had done, and we both agreed that it would probably be a waste of time to try hunting this spot again. The disappointment I felt that morning was matched only by my increased determination to bring the killer to bay.

Again, it became a matter of waiting and we passed the time hunting some of the other game species in the area. It was a full week before the natives brought word that the tiger

had killed another of our baits. As before, the bloodied remains of the buffalo were surrounded with huge pug marks. Takar quickly verified them as those of the tiger we were after.

"Sam," Takar said to me, "this is truly a most unusual tiger. As I have said before, he has been hunted, and he is very smart. But we are smarter. This time we will not build a machan. I am almost certain that is what has been keeping him away. He knows what they are and will not come near one."

"Fine," I replied. "But how are we going to take him then?"

Takar grinned and pointed at a nearby bamboo thicket. "Even the most clever tiger can be taken. We must merely be more clever than he. We will put the jeep in that bamboo and very carefully camouflage it. Tonight the back of the jeep will be our machan."

Somehow the idea of being down on the ground with a hungry man-eater prowling around in the dark didn't appeal to me. "What if he slips up from behind us?" I asked.

"No," Takar said, shaking his head for emphasis. "The village is that way, and he won't go toward it. He will come down one of those three trails in front of us."

I was still frowning as I looked at Takar and asked, "Are you sure you know what you're doing?"

"Sam," Takar replied coldly, looking me straight in the eye. "do I tell you how to put up apartment buildings?"

He was right. This was his ballpark, and he was the pro. And one of the best in the business to boot. This was no time for me to be one of those idiots who hire the best guide they can find and then spend the whole hunt refusing to (Continued on page 81)

## STRIPED MARAUDER

*(Continued from page 17)*

listen to his advice. "O.K., I'm game," I replied finally. "As long as you're with me I guess I don't have much to worry about."

By the middle of the afternoon we had cleared away a section of the bamboo and hidden the camouflaged jeep in it. We climbed in and began our long wait. It seemed like a lifetime. And, then, just at dusk, we heard the jungle noises . . . deer barking, monkeys chattering, and birds twittering excitedly . . . sounds that told us the tiger was on the move and not far away.

The forest floor was carpeted with dry leaves and a few minutes later we heard the rustle of the tiger's stealthy approach. I could feel my heart pounding and my palms were damp on the stock of my gun. This was the moment we waited so long for. Then, suddenly, there he was. He seemed to just materialize out of the shadows and glide slowly toward the bait. Then, just short of the bait, he stopped. His whiskers twitched as he slowly moved his head, carefully examining his surroundings for a sign of danger. He seemed to stare into the trees as if looking for a machan. He fixed his gaze on our blind, and I felt sure those menacing, yellow eyes were burning straight into my own. I held my breath. For a good 15 minutes he stood there. Apparently satisfied, he turned his attention back to the bait. But still the eyes were constantly moving, searching for the slightest danger. I was ready now. All I needed was for him to glance the other way for a second so I could bring my rifle up to my shoulder without his seeing the movement and spooking. But just as I started to raise my rifle he vanished.

From up the road came the sounds of a local native driving his two cows. The sound had frightened off my tiger. "Damn it, I think he's gone," I whispered to Takar.

"I do not think he has gone far," replied Takar. "But in any event, all we can do is wait."

By the time the sounds of the native and his livestock had drifted into the distance it was full dusk.

Moments later the tiger reappeared. His approach was as stealthy as the first time, but the cautious hesitation was gone. Darkness was shrouding the jungle, and he was no longer afraid. He glided straight to the bait and began noisily tearing huge chunks of meat from the bloody buffalo carcass. I eased my rifle to my shoulder, but it was so dark that I couldn't pick out the huge cat with my scope; however, a powerful flashlight is not only legal in India but a basic piece of tiger hunting gear.

Takar signalled me to get ready with a gentle squeeze on the leg. Once again I shouldered my rifle. I felt Takar squeeze my leg twice, the signal that he was going to switch on the light. A split second later the glare of the powerful light cut through the darkness. The tiger instantly dropped a huge chunk of meat and swung his massive head toward us. The yellow eyes glared as he rumbled a low growl. At the same moment I found his shoulder with

the cross hairs and squeezed.

The roar of the .375 Magnum echoed through the silent jungle, and the tiger dropped in his tracks. I was ecstatic. A perfect shot, and I had my tiger.

Takar was even more excited than I. "Sam, we got a beauty, maybe a record," he shouted, throwing his arms around me and planting a joyful kiss on my cheek.

Finally we stopped congratulating each other long enough to turn the light back on for another look at our tiger. As Takar swept the area with the light, our jaws dropped in stunned disbelief. *The tiger was gone!* He had obviously taken a very solid hit; the bamboo near the bait was splattered with blood.

"Don't worry," Takar assured me. "He's too hard hit to have gone far." Just then we heard a crash not far back in the jungle.

"I told you," Takar said with a grin. "That was the tiger going down. He's

dead."

"I should have put a second shot into him," I said. I was still worried, crash or no.

"No, Sam, you hit him solidly. There was no need for another shot."

"Well, what do we do now?" I asked. It was totally dark by this time.

"First, we take down the blind. Then, we go find your tiger."

"Collect the tiger? At night? My God! What if he's lying out there wounded?" I stammered.

"He's not wounded," replied Takar calmly. "He's dead. With the amount of blood that's on the bamboo, he simply has to be dead. We'll take the jeep. I'll follow the blood trail on foot. You ride with the driver. And keep your rifle ready, just in case."

Takar insisted that he had done this night tracking routine many times before and that it was not at all dangerous. I

wasn't convinced, but there was no choice but to go along.

An hour and a half later we had covered less than 100 yards and still no sign of the tiger. Takar was bewildered.

"I just don't understand it, Sam," he whispered, shaking his head. "He was hit very hard, and I'm convinced that by now he's dead. But, he's gone, and I can't imagine where he could have gotten to. Well, it's late and too far to go back to camp now. How do you feel about spending the rest of the night here? Then we can continue our search first thing in the morning."

The idea of spending the night on the ground with a badly wounded tiger in the vicinity gave me the cold chills, but I agreed anyway. We returned to the blind, built a roaring fire, and curled up in the seats of the jeep. It seemed like the long-

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est night of my life. Neither of us could sleep and at least a dozen times we thought we heard the tiger prowling nearby. We'd switch on the light and sweep the area carefully, but saw no sign of the cat.

It was cold and misty when morning finally broke, but as the sun became brighter it slowly cleared. Takar and I walked to the end of the blood trail and found where the tiger had lain down. A thorough search of the area didn't produce a thing, not even a sign of blood. Finally, we returned to the spot where the tiger had rested. Ahead of us was a small hill and

while neither Takar nor I had ever heard of a wounded animal going uphill, it was the only area we hadn't searched. We decided we might as well give it a try.

We had climbed only a few yards up the side of the hill when Takar stopped, froze in his tracks. Instinctively I whipped my rifle to my shoulder, thinking he had found the tiger, wounded and ready to spring. Then, almost in a whisper, he said, "My God, what a beast."

I ran up to him, and there was the tiger, lying under a clump of bamboo. Apparently when he went to the ground the first time the hide had pulled down, covering the wound and stopping the external

bleeding. After resting, he had managed to crawl to the clump of bamboo where he died.

I didn't really realize just how big the tiger was until we dragged him out and measured him. From nose to the tip of his tail he was 10 1/2 feet long. It took 10 natives to load him on the jeep.

There was a monumental celebration in our camp that night. As I sipped my scotch, I felt a deep glow of satisfaction, not only because I had taken a superb trophy, but even more because the man-eater of Bastar would never kill again.

★ THE END