



Old One-Eye

Shooting the world's largest tiger

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HIS home was in the dense jungle northwest of the Nilgiri Hills in southern India, and he was a one-eyed monster, according to the Punyas, low-caste Hindus who lived in the jungle. For years they had frightened their children into being good with the dire threat that unless they were, Old One-Eye, as they called him, would surely catch them and eat them up. The young men had been brought up on tales of his cunning and his mighty deeds.

This country is one of the most fever-ridden sections in all India, and few sportsmen care to stay for any length of time. Those who do remain must dope themselves with quinine. Massamudie is the nearest native village, and here, according to the last census, there are fifteen deaths to one birth. With India's surplus population, however, there are always many ready to fill the gaps. Government officials receive extra pay for service here.

The fear of malaria was, no doubt, one reason that Old One-Eye had escaped so long. Furthermore, it is but four miles to the Mysore Game Reserve Jungle, where no one is allowed to shoot except by special permission from his Highness the Maharaja. This reserve is a paradise for game of all kinds; and since there is no shortage of food, it was a simple matter for the big tiger to live here in comfort. Like all members of the cat tribe, he did not like to get his feet wet and preferred the trails, most of which led to Mysore, the happy hunting ground, only a few miles away.

A tiger usually drags his kill into thick jungle, where he has his meal. Then he hides the remainder, gets a drink of water, and leaves for some secluded spot where he will sleep. Or he may return to see that the kill is safe before taking his sleep, after which he will keep returning at about sundown until the carcass is consumed.

Not so, however, with Old One-Eye, the crafty. He killed, dragged the carcass into the thick jungle, took one feed and left the rest to the vultures, crows and hyenas. If water were handy, he might remain near the carcass. But if

disturbed, he never came back. An ordinary tiger will return to a buffalo that he has killed. One-Eye might carry the buffalo away—but he had never been known to come back. He was cunning and suspicious, and he took no chances.

When he came across a buffalo, he walked around it. If everything looked safe and the buffalo was young and tender, he might take it, have one feed, and then go back to his deer and sambar. He sized up the situation and knew when to kill and when not to kill. If a new sportsman arrived with strange buffaloes, he might pick out a nice one, have one feed, and let the sportsman do what he wished with the remainder. But he never killed again while that sportsman was there. All this I learned from the natives and from my own subsequent experience.

On and off, over a period of four months, I hunted One-Eye. Soon after my arrival in September, 1931, I was rewarded by having him kill the buffalo I had tied out. He broke the rope, which was made of four one-inch ropes braided together. Then he carried the carcass into a thick jungle of grass and trees where it was very difficult to follow and where he was perfectly safe, as he could hear me coming for some distance.

I followed the track for about a quarter of a mile. When I had reached a point about fifty yards from him, I heard a growl, and as I proceeded he moved away growling. The three men who were with me came up, and we moved in the direction he had taken for about five hundred yards in order to drive him away from the kill so that he would not hear us while we prepared a machan (shooting platform) to await his possible return in the evening. At that time no one had told me that if disturbed he never came back.

THE machan we built that time had every possible fault. It was too low. It sloped the wrong way. It was so short that my feet stuck out and so narrow that I was in constant fear of rolling off. It was not properly screened and was about as comfortable as the top of a woodpile. I climbed in, and the sun beat down upon me. From its faults, however, I learned much that was of future use.

Toward evening a troop of monkeys came to feed by my tree; but I remained perfectly still, and they paid no attention to me as they swung from tree to tree. The forest went to sleep, and

some birds chose my tree for a roost. When the fireflies first came out, they appeared so like the eyes of animals that I instinctively drew my feet up. They kept me interested for a time and once caused me to switch on my light to make sure what they were.

A most uncomfortable night dragged. Since my feet were only twelve feet from the ground, I had the constant feeling that something might reach up out of the dark and grab them. Dawn, with the chirping of birds, was very welcome after sixteen hours up a tree. And all for nothing.

When I told the forest ranger in charge of that section about my night's vigil, he laughed and said, "No use sitting up for that baby. He never comes back. No one but the natives have seen anything of him except his pug marks. They are nine inches in diameter, and there is no mistaking them!" He then annoyed me by adding, "I appreciate your feeding my tigers. They like a little change from venison."

I WENT after the old fellow in earnest. I put out three buffaloes and remained in a tree the next four nights over a buffalo that was tied where game trails crossed. I got soaked with rain—and saw nothing. The next morning his pug marks were found around the buffaloes. True to his usual habit, he had given them the once-over—and passed them up.

I roamed the jungle for days in hopes that I might stumble on to Old One-Eye. There was other game in plenty—spotted deer, bison, sambar and bear—but I had to fire at them would have disturbed the forest. Without doubt the tiger saw me many times, but he never exposed himself.

There was still another way—to try to catch the big cat roaming the trails at night. My rifle has an electric torch which clamps to the barrel. By holding the connection in my teeth I could close the circuit and flash the torch, while at the same time my hands would be free to handle the rifle. I spent four nights trying to shine a tiger's eyes along the trails. I saw elephant, bison, deer, jackal and leopard cat—but no tiger. Becoming rather discouraged, I shot a bison and two deer and left the country for the west coast.

After my departure the Maharaja of Bhavanagar arrived with a large party. Old One-Eye evidently recognized the new buffaloes, for he killed one for a meal. The Maharaja, with hopes running high, had a machan built and spent

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two nights up a tree. Results, nil. He remained ten days, but no more buffaloes were touched.

Meanwhile I had gone to Malaba on the west coast and shot tiger, panther, bear, bison and boar. While I was there the forest ranger wrote me, saying: "Better come over and feed my tiger again. No one has been here for some time, and he would like a little buffalo for a change. You can't get him, but I know that you enjoy feeding him!"

Who would not have accepted that challenge?

I RETURNED to the range, but remained only a few days. The crafty one would not touch the local buffaloes that were put out, as he evidently recognized them. I went away for a week to give him a rest, returning with three new buffaloes that came from Anakatti, twenty miles away. On my return the natives informed me that another sportsman had been there and that Old One-Eye had taken one of his buffaloes and then left him alone.

Having decided that this show was going to be my own and that no one was going to give me any suggestions or advice, I dispensed with the guide and secured three jungle men to act as trackers, build machans, and do all necessary work around camp. The three buffaloes were tied out where trails forked, where water was near, and where they could easily be seen. While a tiger's eyes and ears are of the best, his nose is not much better than ours. You must tie an animal so that he will see it.

My plan was to try to catch the tiger on a kill during the night. With my eyes

closed I paced the distances from the buffaloes to certain places that could be recognized in the dark. Walking in my stocking feet, it was possible to sneak up, without making any noise, and switch the light exactly on the buffalo.

The buffaloes were visited twice during the night, the last time toward dawn, but the only return for four nights' work was a lot of leeches which caused sores on my legs. I would sneak up, counting the paces, until I was opposite the place where the buffalo was tied and point my rifle, ready to fire when the light was switched on. As the center of the circle of light made by the torch is where the bullet will strike, there is no excuse for missing a shot at night. Everything is in your favor. However, sneaking up in the jungle, alone at night, in the most likely place for tiger, keeps one awake. One is disappointed when he sees nothing but the buffalo, but he breathes a sigh of relief nevertheless.

No luck for four nights. On the morning of the fifth day the pug marks were seen on a trail leading to one of the buffaloes. But within twenty yards of the buffalo Old One-Eye had left the trail and taken to the jungle. It did not take me long to figure the reason why.

THE buffalo had been tied where two trails crossed and where he had killed a buffalo three months before. There was an old machan opposite, which he had seen so many times that I thought it would not cause suspicion. But Old One-Eye took no chances. Evidently he had been moving along the trail looking for a meal. He heard the buffalo, but could not see it. Then he

looked up and saw the old machan, and this was enough to make him cautious.

I decided on one last try, and searched the trails for a mile and a half trying to pick out a place that would tempt the beast. I wanted one which the jungle men used, for I thought that if he heard us building a machan his suspicions might be allayed with the idea that it was the natives going by as usual. The place decided upon was very open and he could see the buffalo for a hundred yards before he got to it, regardless of which way he came. It was not in a likely place for an ordinary tiger to kill, but Old One-Eye was more apt to take the bait in a place where he had never seen one tied before.

THE buffalo was tied just above his hoof with a rope made of six braided one-inch ropes, and I fastened him by the left leg for luck. An animal tied by its horns is practically safe from a tiger, but a panther is not so particular. To tempt a tiger you try to make it appear as if the animal just happened to be there. Grass or brush generally hides the rope attached to the leg.

There was a log three feet from the tree to which the animal was tied; and the rope was left a scant three feet, so that the buffalo if killed could be dragged behind the log and eaten where the killer would have some cover. Great hopes were placed in his not being able to break the rope. Wire rope would have been preferred, but none was available.

Everything possible had been done to try to put it over on Old One-Eye. But I was so sure that he would not come around that I (Continued on page 60)

Colonel Waugh and the huge tiger which measured 11 feet from tip of tail to end of nose



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broke camp the next morning and with the other two buffaloes was on my way out, intending to pick up the tied buffalo as we passed. When I reached the opening, no buffalo was in sight. On nearing the tree his leg could be seen sticking over the log—and we all breathed a little faster.

Things had gone as planned so far. The rope had held. The tiger had only had a light lunch, consuming about thirty pounds, as he had killed in the early morning. He would still be hungry, and this would be in our favor. We knew that he was not fed up, but would he break his rule and come back? My answer was "No!" But I decided to do everything possible to encourage him.

A teak tree about fifty yards back, which was well screened by other trees, was selected as the best place to build the machan. We put it nearly in the top—about thirty-five feet up. All poles, grass and brush used to build the machan were cut half a mile away, so as not to disturb our friend if he happened to be near. The white ends of the poles were covered with mud, so that they would not be conspicuous.

We approached the tree from the jungle side, leaving the trail about two hundred yards back. No talking, smoking or noise was allowed, the four of us working by signs. A bamboo pole with the branches cut off about three inches from the pole was used as a ladder. The machan was built with great care, so that it would be as comfortable as possible. The poles were covered with six inches of grass, and a blanket was spread over this. It was screened underneath as well as all the way around except for a small hole through which I could put my rifle.

The job was a good one, and a person could not be seen even if sitting up. We made a circuit of the tree, and could see only a few white lashings that held the framework of the machan in place. My bearer brought me mud to cover up these lashings.

The machan was built in four hours, and everything was removed that did not belong there. Leaves were scattered around the foot of the tree to cover all traces of our activities. After I went up the pole into the machan, the men left, taking the pole with them. The arrangements were most satisfactory, and we were sure that the cat would not notice the machan unless attracted to it by a noise. My watch was left in camp, as some say that a tiger can hear a watch tick. My main hope lay in the fact that he had eaten but thirty pounds and might still be hungry and take a chance.

Not really expecting a visitor, I was lying on my back reading to pass the time away, as it was still three hours till dark. At about five-thirty there was a noise in the direction of the kill. Wondering what it was, I carefully sat up and peered through the hole.

Old One-Eye had the buffalo in his mouth, shaking it as a cat would shake a rat, trying to break the rope. I gasped.

Probably no one else has ever seen such a tiger, and I surely never expected to. The thought that went through my head was, "Shoot before you get scared!"

Shooting tiger and panther on foot while alone had never given me the start that I experienced when I saw this magnificent beast which stood four feet at the shoulder. He was standing broadside to me, and as I poked my rifle through the hole he became suspicious and on the alert, tense. I passed up the customary shoulder shot for my favorite one, in the neck. He never uttered a sound, but stretched out his hind legs and lay quiet. I plunked him again for luck, tied a rope to my rifle, lowered it to the ground, climbed down and approached him cautiously. He was safely dead.

Besides being an exceptional tiger and of unusual size, he died an unusual death in that he made no sound or struggle. This was in keeping with his life's habit of always doing the unexpected thing.

One hears that there is no such thing as an eleven-foot tiger. Old One-Eye broke the rule. All sportsmen in India carry a tape as part of their equipment. When measured, he taped exactly eleven feet.

On hearing the shots my men came up. When they saw him, they stood mute for some time and looked from him to me. They did not smile. Finally one said, "It is Old One-Eye. We thought that he had a charmed life."

On account of his enormous size it was impossible to get him to camp that night, so I sent the men to camp and remained with him. I was taking no chances of losing him. In the morning an official of the Indian Forest Department measured him. The following are the measurements that he recorded: length, tip of tail to end of nose, 11 feet; length of tail, 43 inches; end of claws to top of back, 54 inches; height at shoulder, 48 inches; girth (he had an abnormally large belly besides being very fat), 66 inches; weight assumed from measurements, 700 pounds.

A Mohammedan friend said: "That tiger's life belonged to you. It was so fated." So I thank fate for the world's largest tiger.