Tanzania’s Selous Game Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Africa’s oldest and largest protected area, is one of the continent’s greatest undisturbed ecosystems. Teeming with life, including one of the largest elephant populations and more lions...
than any other place on the African continent, large packs of wild dogs, and vast herds of buffalo, the Selous is a crown jewel of biodiversity and wilderness preservation.

Robert J. Ross’ new book, *The Selous in Africa: A Long Way From Anywhere*, features nearly 400 photographs of this extraordinary place. The images showcase not only the large mega-fauna typically seen in a photographic book on African wildlife, but also the fantastic and often overlooked smaller creatures, birds, insects, and dramatic landscapes.

It took time, and there were good days and bad days, but in the end Ross spent just over a year’s worth of days between 2009 and 2013 getting to know the Selous Game Reserve. From Kinyanguru Hill in the north to the upper reaches of the Mbarangandu River in the south, and from the Mbarkia Mountains in the west to the Kingupira research station on the eastern border of the game reserve, he left no stretch uncovered.

A selection of Ross’ images, as well as excerpts taken from various contributors to the book, are featured in the following gallery – offering an intimate glimpse into the diverse landscapes, flora, and fauna to be found in this cherished reserve.

Read more about this week’s author, and find out details on how to get your hands on this fantastic book, on the last page of this gallery.

And if you’d love to spend some time in this game reserve, book your stay through Adventure Camps of Tanzania or organise a custom-built safari through Matembezi. Alternatively, contact Africa Geographic Travel for a safari crafted to meet your wildest expectations.
Selous: A Long Way From Anywhere

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ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

THE SELOUS IN AFRICA
A LONG WAY FROM ANYWHERE

ROBERT J. ROSS
Robert J. Ross has spent the past decade capturing colourful moments in Africa and elsewhere around the world. Rob’s work has been published in National Geographic Adventure, National Geographic Traveler, Condé Nast Traveler, Getaway Magazine, Africa Geographic, Islands, Travel Africa, and many other leading travel and environmental journals. Rob has also undertaken photographic assignments for The Wildlife Conservation Society, the World Wide Fund for Nature, and the Global Fund for Children.

Rob now divides his time between bases in the mountains of Colorado and at the southern tip of his beloved Africa in Cape Town.

Robert J. Ross’ *The Selous in Africa: A Long Way From Anywhere* can be purchased via Amazon.com and UK Amazon, or can be ordered directly on Robert’s website. Deluxe limited edition copies as well as signed copies of the book can also exclusively be ordered on the website.
The Selous Game Reserve was once home to more than 100,000 elephants. Man’s lust for ivory has diminished that number to fewer than 15,000.

“The Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania is one of the last remaining...
great wilderness areas in Africa. With its 50,000 square kilometres it is larger than Switzerland and is one of the largest terrestrial protected areas in the world. The entire reserve is free of human habitation, making it one of the last wild places on the planet.

"Unfortunately, today the Selous is under threat. Soaring demand for ivory and rhino horn from South East Asia have led to a steep increase in illegal trafficking of these products. An aerial survey in 2013 showed that the elephant population in the Selous had crashed to a mere 13,000 elephants from more than 100,000 several decades ago, and it is unknown how many black rhino remain in the game reserve but it is likely less than 20 of these once plentiful animals.

"The government of Tanzania has recognised this new crisis. In an effort to engage the support of the international community to address it, the World Heritage Committee, with support from Tanzania, inscribed the Selous Game Reserve on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2014, calling on all States Parties of the Convention to support Tanzania in its effort. There is not only a need for technical and financial support to address the poaching, all countries need to work together to stamp out the illegal wildlife trafficking. We hope that recent efforts will be able to stem the elephant slaughter in the Selous and rebuild its population and make it again one of the best managed protected areas in East Africa.

"The Selous World Heritage Site is our common heritage. We cannot let the Selous die, it is our common responsibility to save it. Together, we can make it happen." – Kishore Rao, Director, UNESCO/World Heritage Centre
Selous: A Long Way From Anywhere

Stately Borassus palms rise from the swamps between the Rufiji River and the northern lakes.

“The Selous is characterised by an amazing diversity of habitats. Miombo woodlands dominate the reserve. The woodlands are interspersed by spectacular dry sand rivers, which become raging torrents during the rains. The reserve is drained by the mighty
Rufiji River. Downstream of the Stiegler’s Gorge, the Rufiji creates important seasonal floodplains with lakes and swamps. The diverse habitats harbour an impressive fauna of large mammals, including globally significant populations of African elephants, black rhinos, lions and wild hunting dogs.” - Kishore Rao, Director, UNESCO/World Heritage Centre

“Soaring in a microlight above the lakes of the Selous at dawn is probably as close as I will ever come to seeing heaven. What truly makes the Selous special is that so little has changed from what the sights and sounds would have been one hundred or one thousand years earlier. While that may sound wonderful, one of my great fears is that the same sentence may not be able to be written even five or 10 years from now, and that would be a tragedy. Sadly it takes more good fortune than I had to see a rhinoceros in the Selous today, and there are far fewer elephants than there were a generation ago. But with any luck and with some hard work by dedicated management, that can change for the better within a decade or two, a tiny blip in the life of the Selous. If this book and my efforts over the past six years do nothing else, I hope that they will help in some small way to ensure that what is in the Selous today will be there for many future generations of Tanzanians and for the rest of humanity to experience.” - Robert J. Ross
Selous: A Long Way From Anywhere

Impalas are found in large numbers throughout the Selous.

“In the Selous, there is considerable variation in land form as well as habitat and also an abundance of good water; even toward the end of the seven-month drought there is no point more than six miles from permanent water. As a result - or so I had read, so I
had heard - the fauna of the Selous is probably more diverse and more abundant than in any comparable area of Africa.” – Peter Matthiessen, naturalist and writer of *Sand Rivers*

“They the time that I first set foot in the Selous Game Reserve in 2009 I had seen a lot of Africa but nothing prepared me for what I found there. The valleys are stunningly beautiful, hippos and large crocodiles everywhere in the river, a continual parade of other animals coming down to drink, birds and insects of every imaginable size, shape and colour offering a symphonic cacophony. In less than a day we encountered wild dogs, elephants, kudus, countless waterbucks and impalas, and not a single other human being. The southern Selous really is an extraordinary wilderness.” - Robert J. Ross
A blue-sided sprite, one of a myriad of damselflies found in the Selous, rests on the tip of a fern leaf.

“The Selous remains one of the most important and awe-inspiring protected wildernesses in the world. The vegetation and habitat types are numerous and varied, still supporting a high density and
diversity of species. The survival of these incredible creatures and the place in which they live is worth fighting for.” – Benson O. Kibonde, chief warden Selous Game Reserve, 1994-2008 and 2012-2015.

“A recent survey conducted at Beho Beho revealed 103 different species of butterflies recorded in a time span of only 10 days, and it is estimated that the number could increase to 200 during the rest of the seasons. Flowers bloom at different times of the year, in a myriad of colours. The Selous is also home to a plethora of beetles, reptiles, frogs, and other smaller animals and insects.” - Walter R. Jubber, head guide, Beho Beho, Selous
The Selous is home to more than 70,000 of these grazers - the largest Cape buffalo population in Africa.

“The Selous supports vast herds of elephants, buffaloes, giraffes, hippopotami, various ungulates, crocodiles, lions, leopards, wild dogs and other species, and was one of the last strongholds of the
black rhino until the predation of the poaching debacle in the 1980s.” – Rolf D. Baldus, Manager of Selous Conservation Program 1987 - 1993 and editor of *Wild Heart of Africa*

“The area around Beho Beho is magical and diverse: the dense forest where little suni deer live is bisected by winding rivers with hippos crowded in pools in the dry season. Large herds of buffalo clatter as they slip and slide down the steep bank to drink twice a day in the dry season. A huge, sentinel baobab dominates the nearest plain, as it has for a thousand years, looking over the battlefield where the Germans fought the British. How difficult it is to imagine the noise of battle as the soft winds blow over Beho Beho.” - Sarah Bailey, long time Selous stakeholder
Selous: A Long Way From Anywhere

Eternal enemies, lions and hyenas fight over a zebra kill.

“It is estimated that there are approximately 3,000 lions in the Selous, making the game reserve a stronghold for these apex predators. The lion prides of the Selous predate on species like wildebeest, zebra, buffalo, giraffe and even hippo. Lion prides in
the Selous typically number between five and 12 individuals.

“A curious feature of the Selous lions is that many of the males are almost mane-less. One theory is that due to the Selous temperatures not fluctuating greatly between the day and night, dry and wet season, remaining hot year-round, the male lions do not need the warmth of a big mane. The other hypothesis is genetic: the impact of man killing full-maned males as hunting trophies has resulted in a gene pool of almost mane-less lions being the dominant gene for survival.

”Besides the high density of lion, wild dog and leopard, the Selous is also host to a large population of spotted hyena.” - Walter R. Jubber, head guide, Beho Beho, Selous

“Walking in, driving in and flying over the Selous, I had experiences that will be with me for the rest of my life. On several occasions while walking we inadvertently came upon a pride of lions. Hearing that resonating growl as they rush off through the tall grass, adrenalin pumping in the cats and in us, is not something that one can ever grow accustomed to or tire of.” - Robert J. Ross
The northern carmine bee-eater is a seasonal visitor to the Selous, often found roosting in great numbers on trees and bushes in and around lakes and rivers.

“Selous birds come in all shapes, sizes and colours. More than 460 species of birds have been recorded in the Selous. Some of the most spectacular are the bee-eaters, which themselves come in a
wide array of colours, patterns, shapes and sizes. The carmine is a crimson-coloured bird with a bright aquamarine head. These graceful fliers start appearing in November, and by January have formed large flocks of dozens of individuals, which follow vehicles like a school of fish, feasting in flight on grasshoppers and any other insects that may have been disturbed.” - Walter R. Jubber, head guide, Beho Beho, Selous

“The photographic opportunities were endless. Riding in an open Land Rover, dusty and hot, with more than a hundred crimson red carmine bee-eaters gracefully flying around us and feeding on the insects stirred up by the vehicle, is an experience that would put a smile on anyone, other than someone hopelessly trying to capture the essence of that magical scene in a single still frame. Eventually I just set down my cameras and enjoyed the spectacle.” – Robert J. Ross
An African fish eagle, one of the great raptors of the Selous, flies off with a young Nile crocodile securely held in its powerful talons.

“Impressive birds of prey also inhabit the Selous. From the smallest - the pearl-spotted owlet with its dotted crown and two very prominent false eyes on the back of its head, making it appear
all-seeing - to the large and majestic crowned and martial eagles.

"Waders and water birds proliferate in the lakes and rivers of the Selous. The Selous Game Reserve is a gem, filled with a multitude of widely diverse geomorphology, fauna and flora. This makes it a very important and magnificent game reserve worth protecting to safeguard the natural heritage of Africa.” - Walter R. Jubber, head guide, Beho Beho, Selous
Hippos in the Selous often spend their entire day semi-submerged in pans where the water hyacinth helps to protect their thick, but sensitive, skin from the sun.

“Approximately 40,000 hippopotami live in the various waterways of the Selous. The Nile crocodile also thrives there, particularly in Lake Tagalala, one of the small northern lakes with possibly one of
the largest densities of crocodiles per volume of water on the entire African continent.” - Walter R. Jubber, head guide, Beho Beho, Selous

“...I was startled by the explosion of a hippo from a small side channel near the bank, not 20 yards away. At this range, one is very much aware that excepting the elephant, the hippo is the largest land animal on earth, and since I was between it and the main channel, I was damned glad that this one knew there was no deep water left in the Mbarangandu; it made for the thickets, where its huge shining hindquarters soon disappeared.” - Peter Matthiessen, naturalist and writer of Sand Rivers
Interesting angles and refreshing perspectives abound in this week's gallery of entries to the Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016 competition, brought to you by Canon and Cape Union Mart.

Just click on the 'Next' button above each image to enjoy lunch on the Chobe River and to get a sneak glimpse into the hidden depths of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest.

And if you think you have that winning photo in your archives, click here to stand a chance to become the Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year in 2016.
Week 9: Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016

It's lunchtime on the Chobe River, Botswana ©Simon Beevers
Week 9: Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016

A young male lion stares powerfully into the camera at Djuma Private Game Reserve, South Africa ©Michael Dippenaar
Week 9: Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016

Elephants at Mashatu Game Reserve, Botswana ©Leo van Vuuren
Week 9: Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016

Maasai women at Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania ©Alessandro Tramonti
Week 9: Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016

Picture 11 of 13

Cheetah cubs perfect their hunting skills in the Maasai Mara, Kenya ©Sam Stogdale
Week 9: Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016

Under the jetty in Swakopmund, Namibia ©Anna Mart-Kruger
Week 9: Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016

A glimpse of a gorilla in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Uganda ©Jo Currie
Week 9: Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016

An elephant family crosses the dry Amboseli lake bed in Kitirua Conservancy, Kenya ©Sam Stogdale
A juvenile bateleur has a bad hair day in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park ©Anthony Woodhouse
Week 9: Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016

An interesting view of Hole in the Wall, South Africa ©Lourens de Villiers
Week 9: Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016

Forest elephants in Dzanga Bai, Central African Republic ©Barbara Ruda
Week 9: Africa Geographic Photographer of the Year 2016

Lion brothers-in-arms at the Molose Waterhole in the Khutse Game Reserve, Botswana ©Leon Emanuel