



Harry Kirkman

Walter Henry (Harry) Kirkman was born in the Steytlerville District of the Eastern Cape on 31st March 1899. He illegitimately joined up with the armed forces at the age of 15 and served in the East African campaign. After the war he took over the management of the T.C.L. cattle Ranch on the Sabie River (now the Sabi-Sand Game Reserve). He took over duties in 1927 from his friend Bert Tomlinson who left this position to become a Ranger in the Kruger National Park. Many of the duties of this position such as predator control, fire management and anti-poaching, were similar to those of a Ranger and in 1933 he followed his friend Bert Tomlinson into service with National Parks.

Initially Col. James Stevenson-Hamilton in a clerical position, which was not much to his liking, employed him but he accepted the job as it gave him a foot in National Parks. In 1935 he was appointed to a Ranger's position and was given the Sabi Section of the Park. Given his new status, he promptly married Ruby Cass.

During this time, Harry followed up on reports of Black Rhino in the Gommondwane area of the KNP and found tracks, but could not get to see this animal. He was thus the last person to record this species in KNP as thereafter Black rhinos were not recorded again as they had become extinct.

In 1938 Harry was moved to a new Ranger's Section. This became known as Shangoni and he was instrumental in its development. Once while patrolling on horseback, his horse was attacked by a lion. He was thrown from the saddle, but still had his rifle in his hands. He fired a shot at the lion, but only wounded it but it was enough to deter the lion, which made off. After retrieving his badly wounded horse, he later followed up the spoor of the wounded lion and destroyed it. He was very lucky not to have suffered a similar fate as Harry Wolhuter, who was badly mauled in such an incident.

Once elephants became more common, Harry and Harold Trollope were detail to drive marauding elephants back into the Park, which resulted in many close shaves.

In 1942 Harry again joined the armed forces and served in the Western Desert, but he returned to Kruger to resume his duties in 1946. He 1947 he was again transferred back to Skukuza where among other things; he was also placed in charge of the Roads Section.

addo elephant

agulhas

augrabies falls

bontebok

golden gate highlands

karoo

kgalagadi transfrontier

knysna lake area

kruger

mapungubwe

marakele

mountain zebra

namaqua

table mountain

tankwa-karoo

tsitsikamma

|ai-|ais/richtersveld

vaalbos

west coast

wilderness



Harry Kirkman retired from service with National Parks at the end of 1958, and was appointed Warden of the Sabi-Sand Game Reserve. Harry's career moved from the Sabi-Sand to the KNP and back to Sabi-Sand – the movements also shown by the elephant bull "Mulilwane" which has been named after him. While following up a wounded lion in the reeds of the Sand River in 1964 the lion charged him from short range. His rifle belt hooked on the vegetation preventing him from bringing the rifle to bear on the enraged lion. It managed to jump onto and severely maul Harry's left arm. Wounded again by one of Harry's companions, it ran off into the reeds, and in spite of his wounds, Harry followed it up and shot it, using only his right arm. This at the age of 65!

Harry recovered completely from his wounds and eventually retired from service in the Sabi-Sand in July 1969. He passed away on 12th June 1989 in an old age home in Eshowe, Zululand aged 90.

addo elephant

agulhas

augrabies falls

bontebok

golden gate highlands

karoo

kgalagadi transfrontier

knysna lake area

kruger

mapungubwe

marakele

mountain zebra

namaqua

table mountain

tankwa-karoo

tsitsikamma

|ai-|ais/richtersveld

vaalbos

west coast

wilderness