GREAT AFRICAN CALIBERS
GREAT AFRICAN CALIBERS

by

Tony Sanchez-Ariño

Safari Press
To Isabel,
who has spent her life hearing me talk about firearms, calibers, and ammunition without protest,
with all my love,
Tony
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Foreword

Finally Tony Sanchez-Ariño has written the book that will solve most of the questions that puzzle even the most experienced hunters when they have to face the big wild species:

What kind of rifle is best?
Which caliber is the most suitable?
What kind of ammunition should they use?
The choices are vast, and often confusing. . . .

For example, many who have hunted deer or wild boar may trust the rifle they selected as well as the ammunition to use, but few of them would be familiar with the exotic and dangerous species that live in wild and remote places. Should they decide to go after those species, good advice is necessary to make wise decisions. Should the experts’ opinions be contradictory, however, the hunter’s decisions could lead to trouble.

These days, more than ever, the hunter has a bewildering variety of calibers and ammunition from which to choose. The selection of the firearm may be the easiest part—if it is determined by price and the frequency with which it would likely be used. Decisions about the caliber and ammunition, however, are certainly not easy ones. Reading the array of available books, articles, and manufacturer catalogs can make anyone feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of opinions and information. It is at this point when something simple is imperative.

You have such a solution in your hands right now. Who could provide simple answers better than a person who has a vast storehouse of experience and knowledge in the field of hunting large game animals? In these pages Tony Sanchez-Ariño presents clear and precise ideas, explained simply.

Not long ago, believe it or not, Tony turned eighty years old (he was born in February 1930). He has fifty-nine years of experience as a professional hunter in Africa. And he is still hunting elephants! Such facts make his opinions and advice highly valuable in the hunting world, especially as they involve firearms to use against large creatures.

His experience as an individual hunter and as a safari guide give him an ideal perspective as well as cool judgment in confrontational situations. Every one of the thousands of specimens hunted in his prolific career has contributed to his knowledge, and he is more than willing to share it in this book.

Tony doesn’t complicate things with difficult-to-understand formulas, comparative ballistics, and trajectory tables, etc., which in the end don’t really
clarify anything. Instead, he has simplified everything, treating the classic big-game calibers one by one, always citing what each can and cannot do but also insisting that it is the projectile that will knock the animal over, not the theories. And he insists that the responsibility for causing the projectile to hit the animal in the right place is in the hands of the hunter and his rifle.

One of the greatest attractions of wild-animal hunting is that the unexpected can always happen. We all have read and enjoyed exciting hunting stories, but these comments from a seasoned expert on the performance of the different calibers and ammunition are simply without price—far more valuable than any ballistic theory ever put forth. This is why dangerous-game hunters must thank Tony Sanchez-Ariño for generously sharing his unequalled experience.

Good hunting,

Russell Wilkin
Holland & Holland Ltd.
London, 2010
Introduction

My intention in writing this book is to use my fifty-nine years of experience as a professional hunter in Africa—mainly hunting the Big Five (elephant, buffalo, lion, leopard, and black rhino)—to help the beginning hunter in hunting the large, dangerous animals of Africa.

There is a vast literature about this subject, from the classic *African Rifles and Cartridges* by John “Pondoro” Taylor—who was the delight of generations of hunters, including me—to an avalanche of modern authors who seem seldom to provide clear answers to hunters who ask pertinent questions.

I’m afraid the reason is simple: A majority of these authors base 20 percent of their advice on practical experience and an overwhelming 80 percent on theory. It is not my intention to hurt anybody’s feelings, but I have to confess that after talking with some of these gentlemen, many internationally famous, I’m surprised and disappointed to discover that there is little solid background to back up their words. They try to impress their readers with difficult-to-understand ballistic tables and speed and energy formulas that essentially create a smokescreen that simply confuses the reader. I have read many such books and enjoyed some of them, but must state that they are not very useful.

During my nearly sixty years under the African sun, I’ve had the opportunity to use and experiment with almost all the big African calibers. This was possible not only because of the wide variety of guns I’ve owned but also because other people loaned me their guns, wanting to know my opinion about them, and a good number of gun and ammunition makers asked me to test many different calibers and projectiles before they were launched on the market. Consequently, I have had firsthand experience with each of the calibers I will talk about in this book, and my evaluations are based 98 percent on hands-on testing and 2 percent on theory.

I would like it known that I am a modest enthusiast and not one of the ballistic maniacs who are crazy about muzzle speeds and energy, math formulas to calculate the killing power of a caliber, loads and reloads, and the like. For me, that approach feels like an illness that continues to worsen.

I was lucky to arrive in Africa when the herds of wild animals were at their peak. The Big Five were everywhere. I had the opportunity to hunt and experiment with almost all of the big-game calibers in commercial production. If truth be told, from the beginning I was never overly interested in hunting antelopes and all the rest of the harmless species, except for the uncommon trophies like the bongo and Derby eland. Rather, I was dedicated to the high-risk animals, especially the elephant.
Practice makes masters, as they say, but I don’t pretend to be one of them. I simply wanted to hunt, hunt, and hunt all over the African geography and in the most diverse terrain, from open meadows to forests to low-bush country, and from the awful Nile swamps to the equatorial jungles. This restlessness let me probe the performance of the different calibers in almost every conceivable kind of habitat. And it was very revealing.

John “Pondoro” Taylor proposed the following division of calibers in his famous book *African Rifles and Cartridges*:

- **A) Small calibers:** between .240 and .280
- **B) Medium calibers:** between .300 and .375
- **C) Big medium calibers:** between .400 and .440
- **D) Big calibers:** between .450 and .600 (the .700 calibers didn’t exist then).

This order has essentially been followed in most of the books published since that time. I will not use these categories in my book, mostly because I cover only the calibers suitable for high-risk hunting. For its purposes, “big African calibers” include those between .400 and .700. But I want to clarify right up front that none of them could kill by simply “shocking” an elephant, buffalo, or rhino—no matter how much energy the bullet could exert on the body of the prey. DEATH IS ACHIEVED ONLY WHEN A VITAL ORGAN IS DESTROYED. The projectile’s energy only helps to push it through bones and muscles so that it can reach the vital points. Life for all mammals depends on a constant flow of oxygen to the brain through the bloodstream—made possible because the heart first pumps the blood through the lungs, where it takes on oxygen. Then it is sent to the brain via the carotid artery in the neck. Thereafter, the blood returns via the jugular and the process starts all over again. If this flow is interrupted, the animal will die in a few seconds—for any of these reasons:

- **A) The heart stops functioning because a foreign body, like a projectile, has affected it.**
- **B) The lungs are damaged by a shot, stopping oxygenation of the blood; air in the lung cavity mixes with blood.**
- **C) One of the major arteries is damaged, causing a drop in blood pressure.**
- **D) The spine is fractured, stopping all movement and breathing.**
- **E) The brain is directly hit, stopping all bodily functions.**
The most important factor in hunting the dangerous species is using a caliber that provides the deepest penetration possible. This allows the projectile to reach the different vital areas from almost any angle, and provides strong stopping power, which minimizes a possible attack by a large animal. These conditions are produced only by guns with a minimum caliber of .400, shooting a projectile not lighter than 400 grains, with a muzzle energy of at least 4,000 foot-pounds.

To this .400 or bigger rule there is only one exception: The .375 magnum, even though it does not comply with the minimum requirements, can be included in this group because of its excellent ballistic characteristics and its practical performance. Of course, some precautions must be taken because of its smaller caliber of .375 and the fact that the 300-grain bullet is the heaviest weight loaded by most ammunition manufacturers. These elements will be discussed later.

And speaking of exceptions, the leopard is the exception to the rule for the Big Five: An adult male weighs only 130 to 180 pounds at maximum, and its nervous system is very sensitive to hydrostatic shock, meaning the cat can be out of combat even if the shot is not perfectly placed. Therefore, any rifle between 7mm (.275) and 8mm (.323), shooting expanding bullets weighing between 180 grains and 220 grains, is perfect to hunt a leopard.

For the big and shock-resistant animals, small and medium calibers, flying at high speeds, must be ruled out because they will only hurt the animal if the bullet disintegrates or the bullet will fail to penetrate to the “kill zone.” Even when a hunter’s aim is perfect, such factors as an insufficient caliber, long distance, or the animal’s position in relation to the shooter can prevent the bullet from reaching a vital area.

The superb bullets developed and introduced in the last three decades have provided a huge advantage to big-game hunters these days. They are broadly available from a wide range of international sources and produce impressive results. Back in 1950 and part of the 1960s, the only big-game ammunition was made by the Kynoch Company and available only from England. Everyone used Kynoch ammunition then—with good or bad results. Solid bullets gave us problems because of their lack of resistance when they impacted the big bones and muscle masses of the elephants, rhinos, and hippos—they would end up squashed like a half-used tube of toothpaste. Yes, they could be deadly, but sometimes more than one shot was necessary to achieve the desired result. I still have, as a curiosity, many of these jacketed bullets, and all of them are deformed in the same way.

As for the expanding bullets of those times, almost all of them were made with a big nucleus of lead exposed. They were easily deformed inside the
magazines of repeating rifles, and the bullets often partially broke apart on the first shot. But amazingly, the practical results were pretty good, if no mention is made of the bullet’s notorious weight loss once it impacted the target.

Today’s bullets provide—as the English might say—“terrific terminal performance.” The solid bullets resist the collision against the biggest bones of an elephant, for example, without any fracture or deformation, and the expanding bullets generally retain almost 97 percent of their original weight after impact. Outstanding among them are those produced by Nosler, Barnes, Norma, Swift, Trophy Bonded, and Woodleigh. My favorites have been from the moment they became available on the market the solid bullet made by Woodleigh in Australia and the American expanding bullet named Swift A-Frame. I have also had excellent results using the expanding Woodleigh Weldcore with its welded lead nucleus; these are excellent for buffalo and lion. These three are widely used by such well-known ammunition makers as Norma, Federal, Kynoch, Wolf, and Romey.

These projectiles, solid or expanding, can be expected to cause maximum damage to the vital organs of large animals, but it must be remembered that the larger the bullet’s diameter and weight, the greater the damage will be. This takes us to the original point: The bigger calibers will inevitably kill the most animals.

With all due respect to the memory of my old friend John “Pondoro” Taylor and his famous “K. O.” formula, categorizing the potency of various calibers, and to Julian Hatcher’s theory of relative stopping power: When it comes down to the nitty-gritty, when we face the furious charge of an elephant or a buffalo, those theories won’t be helpful, and if we don’t place the bullet in the correct place, we can have a really bad time!

The aptly named professional hunter John Hunter, a mythic figure in East African hunting circles, who honored me with his friendship, told me many times that all the ideas about ballistic formulas and so on were the toys of the theorists. As he put it, these gentlemen needed to spend more time hunting and less time lucubrating. I totally agree.

If you want to spend the better part of a century hunting dangerous animals, here are some simple rules that might help:

A) Learn as much as possible about the anatomy of the creatures you intend to hunt, locating all the vital points and viewing them from all angles.

B) Carefully select the correct weapon and ammunition for every occasion.
C) Realize that the first shot is the most important of all and must be accurate.

D) Never fire if you are not sure you can send the bullet to the correct place.

The bottom line: There is no trophy in the world more valuable than your own life.

**Some Notes on Repeating Rifles**

The repeating firearms are operated by the bolt-action system, of which there are numerous variants. All of them were more or less inspired by the superb action created in 1898 by the great gunsmith Paul Mauser after many years of study and experiment. Known around the world as the M98, it remains unbeaten after 112 years and is still used in quality sporting firearms. Other systems are used in repeating rifles made by Winchester, Sako, Remington, Weatherby, Husqvarna, Ruger, Champlin, BSA, etc., in addition to the Belgian F. N., which is similar to the German M98.

The Mauser-Werke Aktiengesellschaft factory, located in Oberndorf am Neckar, Germany, produced two standard-length models that were different in the shape of the bolt: The military version has a straight bolt; the bolt on the hunting version was bent downward and was made of special materials to resist the pressure generated by the big hunting ammunition.

The original Mauser 98 action had enormous international success from the moment it appeared. It was adopted in many countries for military use, and millions of them were sold. Under the commercial name Mauser-Werke, thousands went to gunmakers around the world, and they were used in the most expensive rifles because, in addition to extraordinary strength, their simple mechanism could be stripped down in seconds without tools.

The Mauser-Werke firm produced three lengths in the M98 action: the short one used in the 6.5x54 caliber, the military standard for ammunition no larger than the 8x57, and the Mauser Magnum for big hunting cartridges like the .375 H&H Magnum, .416 Rigby, and, years later, the .500 Jeffery and the .505 Gibbs.

The action of the Mauser Magnum has a bolt length of 6.77 inches versus the 6.37 of the standard. This 0.4-inch difference allows it to use the bigger cartridges, and it was created exclusively for hunting weapons. It performed well under the hard conditions of the tropical countries and withstood super-powerful ammunition. A square bridge and a very large extractor held the case tight, assuring its extraction.
The Mauser firm suffered during World War II but reemerged later when it started fabricating rifles with new actions very different from the famous M98, though they were not very popular. Time passed, and little by little the firm’s fortunes recovered as it again began to build magnificent rifles with the M98 and Mauser Magnum systems.

Around 1950, during the days of large actions for the big calibers, a French gunsmith named Polonsky began producing actions called Brevex that were similar to the old German Mauser Magnum. He offered two models: the M-400 for calibers bigger than the .375 magnum and the M-300 for those from .300 H&H Magnum to .375 magnum, the difference being in the front lock and the extractor. For a number of years the Brevex actions were used by all the gunmakers, including the most elitist, and the firm attained international success—until the day when Polonsky passed away and the production ended too. I used two .416 Rigby rifles with this action and had magnificent results.

Meanwhile, other private gunmakers started producing actions with the same dimensions as the original German Mauser Magnum. Two of those in Europe stand out, the ones fabricated by the Belgian gunsmith Dumoulin and the German Johannsen. F. N. actions made by Fabrique Nationale in Belgium are magnificent and are universally used in the standard-length model M98.

Besides two .416 Rigbys with the Brevex action, I have also had two other rifles of this caliber carrying the original Mauser Magnum German bolt, one fabricated in the 1920s and the other in 1917. I still have that last one after almost fifty years. It was made specially for General R. B. Fell, a resident of South Africa; it holds the serial number 4,169 and the number on the bolt is 3,484. Later it belonged to the famous “Samaki” Salmon, who was in charge of elephant control in Uganda. This original .416 rifle remains impeccable in all ways, including the fine smoothness in the bolt’s operation.

Actually it is not difficult to get the long-action Mauser Magnums today, because different people, in addition to Johannsen and Dumoulin, manually fabricate them in the United States and also in South Africa. The old Czech action Brno ZKK-602 was also perfect for the big calibers because of its length, but when production stopped, it was replaced by the new CZ-550, with measurements ideal for bigger cartridges like the .505 Gibbs.

Except for the CZ-550, actions similar to the classic German Mauser Magnum are very expensive because its construction is very elaborate. When occasionally an old and original German Mauser-Werke Aktiengesellschaft
The magnificent actions and rifles made by the German gunmaker Johannsen.
Magnum action appears, one that was recovered from an old weapon and renewed to look like new, it inevitably brings a really high price because the demand exceeds the supply.

Different kinds of safeties are used in the repeating weapons. The Mauser M98 always used the flag or fin safety, with three positions from left to right: fire when the fin is at the far left, firing pin locked when it is in the center, bolt and firing pin locked when the fin is at far right. Some years ago, Winchester started to use a copy of this safety in its pre-'64 Model 70 sporting rifles. The Model 70 safety uses the same principle as that of the M98 but is placed to the right of the bolt shroud and works from front to back: First position is fire, second position locks the firing pin, and the third position is full safe. This system has two advantages: First, the safety is practically touching the thumb, and thus the weapon can be fired with only a little movement of the hand. Second, since you don't have to lift a fin from left to right, telescopic sights can be placed very low. This has been the only improvement made to the M98 action in more than one hundred years.

I believe that the safety has to be part of the weapon’s action so there won’t be functional problems. The systems in which the safety is located independently on the right side of the weapon and which functions with a tilting movement like those on some shotguns should be used only in small and medium calibers with moderate recoil. I have seen such safeties surprise and confuse shooters at the most uncertain moments.

During my life as a professional hunter in Africa, I have shot and experimented with all kinds of actions, and I do not hesitate to say over and over that nothing is better than the traditional Mauser 98 action. It is the essence of strength, simplicity, and security.

My comments here about repeating rifles are very general. For anyone interested in more information about this subject, I can recommend the following books: *Bolt Action Rifles* by Frank de Haas and Wayne van Zwoll; and *Mauser Original Oberndorf Sporting Rifles*, a monograph about the Mauser weapons, the magnificent work of three authors—Jon Speed, Walter Schmid, and Reiner Herrmann.

**Some Notes on Different Issues**

I want to address here some often-discussed issues related to the big African calibers. They include the eternal conversation swirling around the most recommendable weapon for big-game animals, two-barrel (express) rifles versus repeating rifles, whether two-barrel weapons must have automatic
ejectors or not, and finally, whether there is a single caliber that can be used against all the dangerous species.

Actually, the answers to these questions are pretty simple. However, I want to avoid being dogmatic and to minimize imposing my personal opinions. I am just trying to expose the facts as they are, in the most impartial way. Let us start with the never-answered question about the most recommendable gun system: double-barrel versus repeating rifles.

Double-barrel rifles have a “moral” superiority over repeating ones for two reasons: the romantic history they carry from their creation in England around 1830 and their incredible hunting performance in Africa and Asia during the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries. These weapons were primarily designed as sporting rifles, as opposed to the repeating rifles, which were a derivation from their original application as a military weapon.

Before continuing, it would be well to consider that what is good for one person is not necessarily good for everyone. Each of us, in thinking about double-barrel or repeating rifles, must follow our own field experiences with each of the two systems, believe in our own convictions, and try hard to avoid being influenced by the statements or memories of other hunters. Weapons are

A very fine .416 Rigby rifle made by “Armeria de Madrid,” in Spain, using the long Mauser action manufactured by the German company Johannsen. The author has taken elephants, buffaloes, and lions with a .416 rifle.
inanimate objects, and their performance inevitably depends on the hands and mind of the person using them.

Until 1905, only two-barreled rifles were available for dangerous-game hunting. But in that year the first big, effective caliber appeared in the repeating system, the .404 Jeffery. It was soon followed by the 11.2x72 Schüler in 1906, .425 Westley Richards in 1909, .416 Rigby in 1912, and the .375 H&H Magnum in 1912, just to mention the ones considered “classics.” All were marketed before the First World War in 1914.

Of course, all of this totally changed the scene. Two groups of hunters appeared, partisans of the traditional two-barrel rifles and those enchanted by the new system with its Mauser action. Remember that up to those times, repeaters were available only in calibers and with ammunition inadequate for the hunting of the big, dangerous species, and they had minimal stopping power.

The double or express rifle remained the rifle of choice for many professional hunters, but this didn’t tip the balance, because many others preferred the repeating rifles. No PHs died because of mechanical failures with the new system. The partisans of the double rifles cite a list of possible problems with repeating rifles; at the same time, fans of the bolt rifles propose a list of potential problems with the express guns. The truth is, theoretically both of them are right, and even bitter enemies on the subject must agree that no weapon or any system is perfect, because they have all been built by human beings, and, therefore, all are prone to fail sooner or later.

This controversy, incidentally, is only about high-quality weapons. The cheap ones generally can be seen as having serious shortcomings, especially those with two barrels, and you have to be careful with some express rifles offered at reduced prices—their performance may leave a lot to be desired, especially in the big calibers.

The double rifle remained the traditional system for hunting dangerous animals: It is best for use in wooded areas with poor visibility, and for chasing a wounded animal capable of fighting back because it allows two consecutive shots without having to reload the gun. Theoretically, it is the perfect weapon for the professional. But history shows clearly that many of the big-name hunters absolutely thrived using repeating weapons in all circumstances—confirming once again that the most important factor here is to be firsthand familiar with the weapon you choose to use, whichever system you select.

We must also consider that at this writing, in 2010, African hunting has changed considerably. Those high risks portrayed so eloquently in the old books are largely out of date now, except for some extraordinary bad-luck cases. Besides, these days even the most dedicated and capable hunter may not chase dangerous
The magnificent rifles made by Westley Richards, in Mauser action and double barrel.
animals without being accompanied by a professional and credentialed hunter. Those
times when you could arrive in your favorite African country, organize the expedition,
and start hunting on your own are history. Today everything is highly regulated in
Africa and the amateur has to make his safari with a professional hunter by his side.

I have seen many amateur hunters who, influenced by the old tales and the
romance behind the express rifles, bought one to take on a safari without having had
any previous experience with them. The resulting failures and frustrations would never
have happened if they had stuck with the repeating rifles they were accustomed to.

It is supremely difficult to change a hunter’s mind about his weapons; this is
why I am hoping in this book to avoid imposing my ideas. But I can say that in
general, the double rifles are more “professional,” but their uses are more limited,
while repeating rifles can be used by everyone in a wider range of conditions.

Many times I have heard the question: Which of the two systems allows the
shooter to make the first two shots quicker? Obviously, some people can quickly
shoot both barrels of a double—and others can attain equal speed with a repeater.
So here we are back to square one: It all depends on the individual’s experience
with each system—there is no universal rule on this. The “best” weapon will
be the one in which you have the most confidence, the one you can trust—it is
that simple. Don’t be influenced by others’ opinions, and forget those “classroom
experts” with their baseless theories.

Should Double-Barrel Rifles Have Automatic Ejectors?

The answer is a categorical YES, but allow me to explain: The only enemy of
automatic ejectors that I know in this world was my late friend John “Pondoro”
Taylor who put forth a series of rather strange ideas to defend his theory. Here
is an example, in three of his paragraphs from African Rifles and Cartridges:

Elephant-hunting usually implies picking up the spoor shortly after
daybreak and following it until you come to where they have halted for their
midday siesta. You will generally find, if it’s a herd you’ve been following, that
they’ve spread out and are in a rough horse-shoe formation resting and dozing
in whatever shade they can find. If you drop the leader with a clean brain shot,
you will usually find that the remainder of the herd just stand around, ears up
and trunks up, unable to place the danger zone and waiting for the Master bull
to give them the line of retreat—they not knowing that he’s dead. Because in
dense brush or heavy forest it’s often extremely difficult to say just where a shot
has been fired if you haven’t been expecting it. The unavoidable clatter as the
bolt of a magazine is drawn back and then pushed forward again will inevitably
disclose your position to the herd and lose you a second shot.
Even the sharp “click” of the ejectors in an ejector double rifle is enough to start the stampede if the elephant are close. Because in very thick cover you must never fire your left barrel until after you have reloaded your right: it must be kept in reserve in case of a sudden and unexpected attack from right beside you on the heels of the shot that you may have fired at some other member of the herd. But with a non-ejector there need not be a sound of any sort whilst you reload the barrel you’ve just fired; there is no sound as you open the breech and remove the fired shell, slip it into a pocket or down the front of your shirt or anywhere at all where it won’t make a noise, or scorch hell out of your bare hide; slip another cartridge into the chamber; and then, holding the top lever over with your thumb, quietly close the breech and let the lever come back into position. Then with both barrels once more fully loaded, you can move quietly around until you spot another good tusker. You drop him, and still have your left barrel in immediate reserve in case some brute of a tuskless bull or a peevish cow takes a notion to drive you out of it or kill you.

With every ejector double rifle I have ever owned in the past, I have had to remove the ejector springs when tackling elephant in very thick cover, because of this “click” as the breech is broken. Further, if the springs are very powerful, and they always are, the empty shell will frequently “ring” as it is thrown clear of the breech; besides there is always the possibility of it striking your chest or shoulder and falling down with a clatter against the breech or butt of the rifle; and even if that doesn’t happen, then it’s almost certain to fall on the only stone within a radius of a hundred square miles. But easily worst of all is the loud “clang” as the breech is closed; and you can’t avoid it, because the closing of the breech has to compress the ejector springs so as to “re-cock” the ejectors. Any metallic sound of any sort is, quite naturally, entirely foreign to the bush and therefore spells danger to the herd. I very much prefer non-ejectors for this sort of work; though admittedly there are occasions when ejectors might be an asset. Still, in my experience, such occasions are mighty few and far between and are far more than offset by the number of occasions when they are an infernal nuisance. Accordingly, being a very poor man, I have my doubles built as non-ejectors, as I cannot see the fun in paying forty or fifty dollars for ejectors which I should not be using.

In view of Taylor’s opinions, let us make a little “counterattack” to clarify some points for those who are thinking about getting a double rifle to face dangerous African game:
1) From the many conversations we had, I know that Taylor’s golden years of hunting elephants were 1933 to 1939. Even back then, elephants had been hunted and hounded and were distrustful. And they were not deaf—when they heard the first shot they would flee wildly, leaving behind the lifeless elephant, who was always “real dead” as Taylor explained. The portrait of elephants staying at the site after the first shot and giving the hunter time to fully and “silently” reload is a precious fantasy that simply doesn’t happen. I have hunted all over Africa for a very long time, and I have never experienced such elephant behavior.

I talked about this apparent contradiction with such masters as John Hunter, George Rushby, Robert Foran, Bill Pridham, Harry Manners, Eric Rundgren, and Bert Schultz, all of whom have read African Rifles and Cartridges, the book where Taylor explains his theories. All of them agree that these declarations are ridiculous. All of us have hunted elephants that were in a group; sometimes they were tranquil, other times they were ready for a violent confrontation. We never found elephants so well behaved they would stay quiet while we shot them. None of us buys the idea that the only thing that scared them was the “click” of automatic ejectors—not even the roar of a rifle shot!

2) Another untenable theory is the idea that the fired cases could hit the shooter’s chest or shoulder when they are automatically ejected, or make a noise when they hit the butt of the rifle. It can happen only if you deliberately try to do it, and even then it is very complicated. When you open the rifle after shooting, you need to hold it sideways and the ammunition will jump over the arm without hitting anything, including the rifle butt. You can try this using a simple shotgun with automatic ejectors, which would work the same as an express rifle, and you will see that Taylor’s theory is impossible.

3) When the ejected cases touch the ground, they are unlikely to make any sound because the naturally sandy terrain or grass or dead leaves will cushion the sound (there are few stony areas in Africa).

4) Actually, in dangerous-game hunting automatic ejectors are a big help because they allow you to reload the rifle without taking your eyes off the animal; the ejectors will take out the case, or cases, in one second, and you can reload without looking at the weapon. On the contrary, there are only two ways to reload the same weapon with no automatic ejector: The first is to open the rifle and position the barrels vertically to allow inertia to move the
old ammunition out. Of course, if the empties get stuck in the chamber—as sometimes happens when they become overheated by long exposure to the sun—you will need to reposition the barrels, work the empties out, and put in fresh cartridges. The other way to reload is to open the weapon, use your fingers to remove the fired cases one by one, and then insert the new ones. In both situations you will need to take your eyes off the prey—during which time he can run away or attack you. If the animal runs away, it’s a bad thing because then you face a long and dangerous recovery. But it is even worse when the animal attacks and you are not ready to shoot again because you didn’t have time to reload. On the other hand, if you have the automatic ejectors that Taylor hated so much, the reloading process can be done in seconds and you retain control of the situation because you won’t need to take your eyes from your prey.

All the dangerous-game advantages of the two-barrel rifle with automatic ejectors will disappear if the rifle doesn’t have them. As my old friend John Hunter put it, “A double-barrel rifle without automatic ejectors is [just] a piece of iron. . . .” From a commercial point of view, if you have a good rifle with automatic ejectors and you decide to sell it, that chore will be easy. If the rifle lacks ejectors, you almost certainly will have to sell it off cheaply—unless you can find another hunter brainwashed by the picturesque theories of John Taylor!

**Is There a Caliber That Can Be Used against All the Dangerous Species?**

Any of the calibers mentioned in this book can be used on dangerous game, but some have limitations. In expert hands, the .375 magnum is most efficient as an “all-purpose weapon.” But it leaves something to be desired if you are chasing a wounded buffalo in undergrowth or an elephant in tall and dense grass with almost no visibility. The .375’s typical projectile weighs only 300 grains and thus lacks stopping power. On the other hand, a .577 Nitro Express is a perfect weapon for these situations because they require shots at short distances and big-time stopping power, which the .577 provides in its bullet of 750 grains. This same weapon, however, won’t serve in situations where medium- to long-range shots are needed.

If a person wants to use only one weapon in the risky business of hunting dangerous species, it has to be versatile enough to give him a good margin of security in all circumstances and allow him to make shots from short, medium, and semilong distances. Among the calibers that cover all those possibilities are the .416 Rigby and .416 Remington. Both allow the shooter to stop the charge of a buffalo from ten yards or knock him over at 100 yards when he is trying to
run away. They can do this thanks to the combination of relatively flat trajectory, weight of the projectile, high initial speed, and high energy and stopping force.

The versatility of these two calibers, when they are used as the only weapon, makes them stand out above all the others. As proof, I have been using the .416 Rigby since 1952; many seasons it was my only weapon. I used it to back up my clients on safari as well as to hunt elephants for ivory in widely different terrain ranging from equatorial jungles to the Nile swamps and the forests in eastern and southern Africa.

As mentioned in another part of this book, “Samaki” Salmon, Bill Pridham, Eric Rundgren, and myself have taken a total of 7,300 elephants using our .416 Rigbys. To cite one example of that caliber’s efficiency, during a control operation in Uganda, Samaki killed twelve elephants using his .416 Rigby in less than two minutes. On other occasions he killed forty in one day and seventy in three days, and I’m sure that his rifle made a hell of a lot of noise! Such anecdotes make it doubly difficult to comprehend Taylor’s insistence on silence while hunting dangerous creatures because after the first shot, the element of surprise is lost.

The .416 Rigby and .416 Remington, fitted with a good telescopic sight, are both ideal for buffalo hunting when good specimens are mixed in with a large herd because they can make perfect shots out to 150 yards thanks to their relatively flat trajectories. My own records of hunting elephants with the .416 Rigby, and shooting them at both short and long distances, include the following:

A) While looking for good ivory, I killed an elephant that charged me in the large equatorial jungle in what was then Spanish Guinea. I knocked him over with a frontal shot at a distance of three yards. It was an impressive bull.

B) My maximum distance for killing an elephant is 170 yards. It happened on a prairie in the Sudan; the animal was running away because a customer had wounded him. I leaned over a big branch and fired at his “elbow” on the left side. I was thinking I had missed when the animal seemed to trip over something and fell to the ground in a big cloud of dust.

As this is written in 2010, I have used the .416 Rigby to take hundreds of dangerous-game animals, and I have never got even the smallest scratch.
Simplifying Ballistics Data

The U.S. is the only industrialized nation that does not mainly use the metric system in its commercial and standards activities—including the science of firearms ballistics. To minimize confusion between the two systems, the information below will make it easy for readers to convert the figures shown for each caliber from one system to the other.

For all practical purposes, only four measurements and their equivalents are necessary. They are:

1. One yard = 91 centimeters
2. One foot = 30.5 centimeters
3. 15.5 grains = 1 gram
4. 0.74 foot-pounds = 1 joule

Here is a conversion example, using the .416 Rigby as a model:

**Muzzle speed:**
Multiply 2,371 (feet per second) by 30.5 centimeters (one foot). That totals 72,315 centimeters. Divide that by 100 to determine speed in meters: 723.

**Bullet weight:**
Divide weight in grains (400) by 15.5 to determine its equivalent in grams: 25.80.

**Bullet energy:**
Divide 5,100 (foot-pounds) by 0.74 to determine the number of joules: 6,892.

*To convert metric data to the U.S. equivalent, simply reverse the above instructions.*
Chapter 1

Among all the big African calibers, the .375 magnum can be considered the “Benjamin of the family” because, according to the established standards for this designation, its caliber doesn’t reach the required minimum of .400 and its 300-grain projectile does not reach 400 grains in weight. Despite all this, the .375 magnum is considered a member of this category thanks to its extraordinary ballistic characteristics and excellent practical performance.

Without a doubt this caliber is the most popular in the world of big-game hunting in Africa and North America. And back during the glory days in Southeast Asia and India, the .375 magnum was widely used on countless tigers, leopards, bears, and buffaloes. For example, between 1933 and 1940 Maharaja Joodha from Nepal took a total of 433 tigers—an average of 54 per year—using, in almost all cases, a .375 magnum with a Mauser action fabricated specially for him by John Rigby & Co. of London. This accomplishment sounds almost unreal today. . . .

During my own African hunting I have long noticed the use—by professional hunters as well as visitors, locals, game department officials, and others—of .375 magnum rifles from Khartoum to Johannesburg and from Dakar to Mombasa. Personally, I have heard only good comments about it.

The .375 is a veteran with 100 years in existence. It was designed during 1909 and 1910 to improve the cartridge created in 1905 by Holland & Holland in the caliber .400/375 Nitro Express, which had poor results. Finally, in 1912, after the necessary tests, adjustments, and corrections, the famous London gunmaker Holland & Holland launched the .375 on the market. It is truly an injustice that as the years passed, the name of the specialist who conceived this cartridge was totally lost—a fact I was able to confirm during my continuing visits to Holland & Holland. (I’m an old customer and friend.)

Whoever this person was, he was a visionary who created something totally different from the calibers used back then, which were dominated by the 400s
Great African Calibers

and 500s. He selected a medium-size projectile of .375 (9.5mm) and gave it a long case, and he reinforced it with a belt in the rear sector to prevent problems with excessive headspace. Thus was born the .375, considered by most to be almost the ideal caliber for all uses—the all-round rifle.

Yes, it has just a few limitations: It lacks the necessary trajectory to hunt rams in the mountains with shots out to 300 yards and more, and it lacks the stopping power when confronting buffaloes and injured elephants in dense forests with limited visibility. In those cases you would need a projectile heavier than 300 grains in case of an unexpected attack. Beyond these limited shortcomings, the .375 is the most versatile caliber you can use and actually covers 80 percent of the situations that a hunter might face perfectly—provided he knows the weapon intimately. After all, not everything can be left to the rifle: The user’s common sense and practical experience are of great importance.

Originally, the .375 was created to be used in rifles with a repeating Mauser system. A little later a new version (“flanged”) was created to be used with double-barrel rifles, and it became very popular among those who preferred this kind of weapon. Today, more than 100 years later, it remains a timeless cartridge of modern design and the king of the so-called “all-rounds.” Other calibers used
.375 Holland & Holland Magnum

through the years—like the .350 Rigby Magnum, the .338 Winchester, the .358 Norma, and the German 9.3x64 Brenneke (.366)—haven’t been able to supersede it. The old and unfailing .375 magnum has resisted all kinds of competition without a problem. I have been using this caliber as my “work tool” for more than fifty years—complementary to my .416 Rigby, .465 Nitro Express, .475 No. 2 Nitro Express, .500 Jeffery, and .577 Nitro Express—and it has always given me the best results.

The .375 magnum was created to serve as a “for everything” caliber. This is why, from the beginning, its ammunition came in three different weights capable of covering the complete range of big-game species; at reasonable distances, all three bullet weights can be shot using the same sight picture. This achievement added greatly to its success. The ammunition weights are as follows:

A) A 235-grain bullet created to allow long shots at small and medium-size animals with soft skin. This projectile had a muzzle speed of 2,800 feet per second (fps) and muzzle energy of 4,100 foot-pounds, with a drop in its trajectory of 2.5 inches at 200 yards. For many years the British continued the regular production of cartridges loaded with the 235-grain bullet, until improvements introduced by American ammunition producers, especially Winchester, caused this projectile to essentially disappear and be replaced by the 270-grain bullet. If I’m not wrong, the 235-grain ammunition has not been seen since 1945. It remains forgotten except by reloaders and experimenters.

B) The 270-grain projectile was intended for medium to long-range shots at large, soft-skinned animals (all kinds of antelopes, for example). Muzzle velocity was 2,740 feet per second, muzzle energy was 4,500 foot-pounds, and bullet drop was 3 inches at 200 yards. Though this bullet weighs only 35 grains more than the earlier 235-grainer, it has a muzzle speed of only 60 feet less, and the drop in trajectory adds only 0.5 inches, making the 270-grain projectile enormously versatile. It duplicates all you can do with the 235 and adds a lot more.

C) Finally, the 300-grain bullet was designed for short to medium-distance shots at dangerous animals. In its solid version it was ideal on elephants, buffaloes, hippos, and rhinos; in its expanding form it was right for lions, big bears, etc. Its muzzle speed was 2,550 feet per second and muzzle energy 4,330 foot-pounds, with a bullet drop of 3.2 inches at 200 yards.

The .375 magnum is not an ideal caliber for all situations, but considering its limitations, it offers excellent results: There is not an animal in Africa, America, or Asia that can’t be knocked over by it using an adequate weight and type of projectile. The .375’s deadly power is incredible, and in its solid form it has one
Great African Calibers

of the deepest penetrations. Actually, you can hunt elephants perfectly well with it in open and medium-dense forest areas with good visibility because the solid bullet will, without a problem, reach the vital areas of the animal from any angle.

Since the British firm Kynoch stopped producing all metallic cartridges in 1976, many ammunition makers in the United States and Europe have been commercially producing them. All of these are excellent and can be found almost everywhere, which is important. After all these years of using a .375 magnum, I still use the same weight—300 grains—in both the solid and expanding bullets. My favorites are the Australian Woodleighs; their magnificent reinforced steel jackets allow them to retain their trajectory with no deformation when they hit major bones or hard, compact muscles.

Of course, the solid bullets produced by other firms are also excellent. Many years ago, when the German firm Rheinish-Westfalische Sprengstoff (RWS) absorbed Deutsche Waffen und Munitionsfabriken Aktien-Gesellschaft (DWM) and launched a new solid bullet, a gunsmith I knew asked me to experiment with it and tell him what my results were. At that time I had an “order” from the territorial administrator of the Ango Zone in the north of the Belgian Congo to eliminate some of the marauding elephants that were giving the native population a really hard time. I saw the order as an excellent opportunity to test the ammunition and at the same time set those poor people free from their elephant curse.

I started my double duty using my .375 Holland & Holland Magnum rifle, an exceptional firearm. But I have to confess that since I was not so sure about the quality of the new ammunition, I also took along, just in case, my .416 Rigby. Since I would be all by myself, I could do things my way—by that I mean taking my time, looking for different shooting angles, and really experimenting and learning the effects of various shots. I was surprised and satisfied to be able to kill each of the six “sentenced” elephants with only one shot to the head. Truth to tell, the only thing I did not like about the new ammunition is that sometimes it took a lot of effort to open the bolt to extract the fired shell. This happened more frequently than I liked, maybe because the manufacturer did not calculate perfectly the expansion coefficient of the brass (this problem happens frequently, too, with 8x68 ammunition from the same manufacturer).

Because they are easy to load and extract, I now use Woodleigh solid bullets and expanding Swift A-Frame bullets, both from the American firm Federal, which uses nickel-plated cases that resist the corrosive effects caused by humidity, acids, and so on. The Swift A-Frame expanding bullets are welded
with a partition between two equal lead nuclei, a construction that assures excellent weight retention and exceptional penetration.

Over the years, I have owned a variety of .375 magnum rifles, from an aristocratic original Holland & Holland with Mauser Magnum action to a modest Brno, but my favorite was always a rifle made in Belgium by the firm Ancienne Maison H. Mahillon according to the specific design that I gave them. It was ready in 1960 after a year of fabrication. It stayed with me through many hunts, its Mauser action and barrel looking just like new after all the use. Able to hold up to five cartridges in the magazine, it was an exceptional weapon.

The .375 magnum rifles are made by most of the world’s gunsmiths, including the prestigious firms of Holland & Holland, Purdey, Rigby, Jeffery, Westley Richards, and the Belgian firms of Francotte and Dumoulin, but this doesn’t mean that others with less “blue blood” can’t be used with good results. The old Belgian F. N. Mausers were economical and magnificent, as were the Remingtons, Winchesters with pre-’64 actions, the Sakos, and so on.

Many famous professional hunters have used the .375 magnum with excellent results, a classic example being Pete Pearson, a noted elephant hunter in Uganda. In 1914 he combined a .375 magnum with his old and heavy .577 Nitro Express, using them widely in his job of controlling and reducing that country’s elephant population. Pearson killed hundreds of elephants with his .375 magnum that had a Mauser action with open sights; his gun was made especially for him by John Rigby & Co. of London. Another .375 patron was my old friend George Rushby, an experienced ivory hunter in the Belgian Congo and the Ubangi-Shari, who participated in elephant control for the government of Tanganyika until 1956, when he retired.

In Mozambique this caliber was so popular among hunters that it could be considered almost universal. My dearest friend Harry Manners, one of the most outstanding professional elephant hunters in Africa, killed around one thousand pachyderms—all in Mozambique—over the years when these big animals had little protection and sport hunting little regulation. Harry always used the relatively low-cost Model 70 .375 Winchester Magnum, and it gave him fine results. He used four of them during his life, part of which was spent as a professional safari guide. He once killed two elephants with one shot! The bullet that killed the first one passed through it with so much energy that it was able to knock over one behind it. Harry used to tell me that during his time as a professional he was charged by thirty-six elephants! He had no serious problems stopping these elephants, but it must be remembered
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Kynoch manufactured ammo for traditional British big calibers for well over a hundred years; the company is now owned by the firm Kynamco, which continues the tradition of producing top-quality ammunition.

that he was a superb shot who knew the anatomy of these animals like he knew the backs of his own hands.

Also in Mozambique, two professionals—an Italian by the name of Francesco Salzone and a Portuguese who was nicknamed “One-Shot Araujo”—were in charge of supplying buffalo meat to the Senna Sugar Company in the Alto Zambezi, a company that employed thousands of people in the sowing and harvesting of sugar cane. That pair is said to have killed around 4,000 buffaloes each using only the .375 magnum.
.375 Holland & Holland Magnum

Many other professionals, too, used the .375 magnum, among them Wally Johnson in Mozambique, Peter Hankin in Zambia, and Bruce Austen and John Osborne in Zimbabwe. Another friend, the famous Kenya hunter Syd Downey, always recommended that his customers bring the following on a safari: a .300 rifle (the best, he said, was the classic .300 Holland & Holland Magnum) or a .30-06 for the antelopes, and a .375 magnum with a telescopic sight with a detachable mount for dangerous game. I heard Downey say this many times when we were together in Nairobi, and his great practical experience made him more qualified than anyone there.

John “Pondoro” Taylor felt a special liking for the .375 magnum. He told me that he had shot some five thousand cartridges during his hunting adventures in Mozambique, Nyasaland (Malawi), and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). It was funny to talk with him about the .375 magnum. He was so enthusiastic about it that sometimes he exaggerated more than a little bit—like when he “killed seven elands using only one shot since all of them were lined up one right behind the other”! At the end of such a story he would say, “Well, it could be this way,” and I had to agree with him.

Most of the two-barrel or express rifles fabricated today don’t use rimmed or “flanged” ammunition since modern rifles have special extractors that allow them to use rimless .375 cartridges. I have experimented with some British, Austrian, Belgian, and Spanish Express guns with this extractor system, and all of them worked perfectly—none gave me a problem with loading or unloading.

In conclusion, I will say that after 100 years the .375 magnum is still generally the most popular caliber in the world of big-game hunting. Generation after generation of hunters from novices to masters have used it with the best practical results. It is not optimum when shooting at very long distances or when following wounded, dangerous game in thick bush with bad visibility; otherwise, the .375 Holland & Holland Magnum was, still is, and will continue to be the undisputed king of the “all-purpose” calibers. This cartridge “wrote” many of the best pages in the history of African hunting.
Roy Weatherby created this caliber in 1953 when super bullet speed and energy were all the rage. It gained some popularity in those times, but mysteriously, this caliber lost favor among hunters and today is not commonly used in Africa. The .378 Weatherby was loaded using two bullet weights:

1) 270 grains produced a muzzle speed of 3,180 feet per second and muzzle energy of 6,051 foot-pounds.
2) 300 grains produced a speed of 2,925 feet per second and muzzle energy of 5,700 foot-pounds.

The 270-grain projectile was perfect for hunting on the African plains because, thanks to its speed and flat trajectory, it could be used at ranges up to 300 yards. Things were not that positive for the 300-grain bullet, which tended to deform or break up when it hit the big bones and muscle masses of elephants, for example.

The advertising claims for the .378 said that Roy Weatherby had killed an elephant in East Africa using only one shot. This means very little. During a period of experimenting, I hunted elephants and buffaloes with the modest veteran 7x57 Mauser without pretending that it was the perfect caliber for this kind of hunting. Under favorable conditions, almost any caliber will kill any animal, but when a difficult situation arises, you had better be armed with a rifle that shoots a heavy projectile at a moderate speed.

In all my years as an African PH, I have known only two men who used the .378 Weatherby and both were friends of mine—one in Tanzania and the other in Benin. They always carried other weapons—just in case.

I, too, had a .378 Weatherby. It was a gift from a customer who had experienced some problems with it and didn’t want it. I was the lucky one to get it. The poor man, who had bought the rifle new, found nothing but trouble when he used it against buffalo: His solid bullets went through the animals as
The .378 Weatherby

if they were made of butter, and the expanding ones would disintegrate. We resolved his problems with my .416 Rigby.

To test my new .378, I used it on a couple of safaris, dropping two elephants with heart shots. I also took three buffaloes, again with heart shots, using solid bullets. I have to say that it worked well.

I also have to say that the .378 Weatherby is a little peculiar. It easily fails by “excess or deficit,” and while most other rifle calibers have their “perfect place,” that doesn’t seem to be the case for this one. Perhaps this is the reason it cannot easily be found anywhere today. Recognizing that fault, I eventually sold my .378 Weatherby.

There is no doubt that the .378 can kill, but there are many rifles that do it better. For that reason and because it is generally out of use, it remains a minority caliber that I cannot recommend.
The .400 Holland & Holland Rimless

Chapter 3

This is one of the few calibers with which I have no personal experience. However, after picking the brains of several persons who have used the .400 H&H rimless during their safaris in Africa, I believe I can provide a practical evaluation of its performance to anyone who may have an interest in using this caliber on large, dangerous game.

This fairly new cartridge, and the .465 H&H rimless, were created in 2003 by my old friend Russell Wilkin, technical director of Holland & Holland Ltd., in collaboration with the German ammunition maker Wolfgang Romey. As I explain in the chapter about the .465 H&H rimless, I had the honor of testing this caliber in 2004 for H&H. In the process, I was able to take six elephants with a total of seven shots. I will say that all of them had been previously wounded and adrenaline was raging in their blood, so they were not easy to knock down.

The .400 H&H rimless was created to be an all-round caliber for large and dangerous species, more powerful than the popular .375 magnum. It was hoped the .400 rimless would handle sticky situations better than the .375. For example, let’s say you are chasing a wounded elephant or buffalo in a place with poor visibility. The 300-grain bullet produces a muzzle energy of 4,330 foot-pounds, whereas the 400-grain bullet of the .400 H&H rimless increases the energy to 5,011 foot-pounds, thus keeping the hunter a bit safer.

In addition, both the .400 and the .465 H&H rimless have the same trajectory as H&H’s .375 Magnum with a 300-grain projectile at 150 yards. This is a big advantage when you are using a telescopic sight because you do not need to adjust for anything and can shoot to the same point with any of the three calibers, whatever the bullet weight.

Both the .375 H&H Magnum and the new .400 and .465 rimless use the same “belted rimless case,” created and patented by Holland & Holland in 1904. This design really reinforces the cartridges. And both the .400
The .400 Holland & Holland Rimless can be ordered in both bolt action and double rifles.

The double Spanish rifles made by Pedro Arrizabalaga are world famous, and for years they manufactured 9.3x74 rifles for the Rigby Company in England under the name “Rigby-Arrizabalaga.” This photo shows a .470 Nitro Express specially reinforced to withstand the highest pressures. It is an extremely fine weapon. (Photo courtesy of Pedro Arrizabalaga)
Great African Calibers

and .465 rimless use the standard Mauser M98 action, which, after 112 years of existence, is still unbeaten for use in sporting weapons.

Among the users of the .400 H&H rimless is a German hunter who gave me the following comments:

I have hunted in Africa three or four times every year since 2001 using different calibers like the .416 Rigby, .500 Jeffery, .400 H&H rimless, .458 Lott, and .450 Assegay. Mostly, I have used the .416 Rigby, but a few years ago I started using the .400 H&H rimless. Hunting with it in Ethiopia, Zambia, Tanzania, and the Central African Republic, I have taken seven buffaloes, two lions, one elephant, two hippos, one crocodile, and a variety of antelopes, including a sable and Derby eland. I had the distinct impression that I killed the buffalo faster, thanks to the evident shock effect. When the bullet struck the animal close to a vital point, it looked as though he was paralyzed, which allowed me to shoot a second and third time.

The trajectory of the projectile is obviously flatter than the .416 Rigby; I tested this on both targets and animals. For example, with the .416 I never wanted to risk shots at more than 200 yards, but I did not hesitate to do the same with the .400 H&H rimless—at 150 yards I held the cross hairs one or two inches above the target. This caliber is extremely precise, a fact I could verify when I shot a crocodile at 120 yards, needing to hit a target measuring only 2x2 inches. The action is very easy to use, and the weapon is perfectly balanced. The mount for the telescopic sight is perfect in all senses.

Another sport hunter had this to say about hunting buffalo with the .400 H&H rimless:

As much as I tried, it was impossible for me to be at a normal distance for a shot because of the abnormally high bushes in the area. Close to the end of the safari, and very frustrated because I had not been able to test the ballistic properties of the new .400 H&H rimless, I tried a long-distance shot to test the famous potential of the weapon. I located a buffalo at 180 yards in the bed of a dried-up river; it was quiet and lying on its side. The solid bullet went cleanly through the animal, but a second expanding one produced a big wound and got stuck in the skin of the far side, where I later found it. The buffalo collapsed and was dead when I arrived at its side. Other animals taken with the .400 H&H included a leopard as well as different antelopes, all of them posing no problems at all.
The .400 Holland & Holland Rimless

I don’t know why, but few people seem to want to cooperate when you ask them their opinions of caliber performance based on their field experiences. Perhaps they might be trying to hide something. In any case, the information I received about the .400 H&H rimless allows me to conclude that it fulfills very well the dangerous-game purpose for which it was created. Giving it additional support are the enormous prestige of the firm Holland & Holland and the knowledge of its technical director, Russell Wilkin.