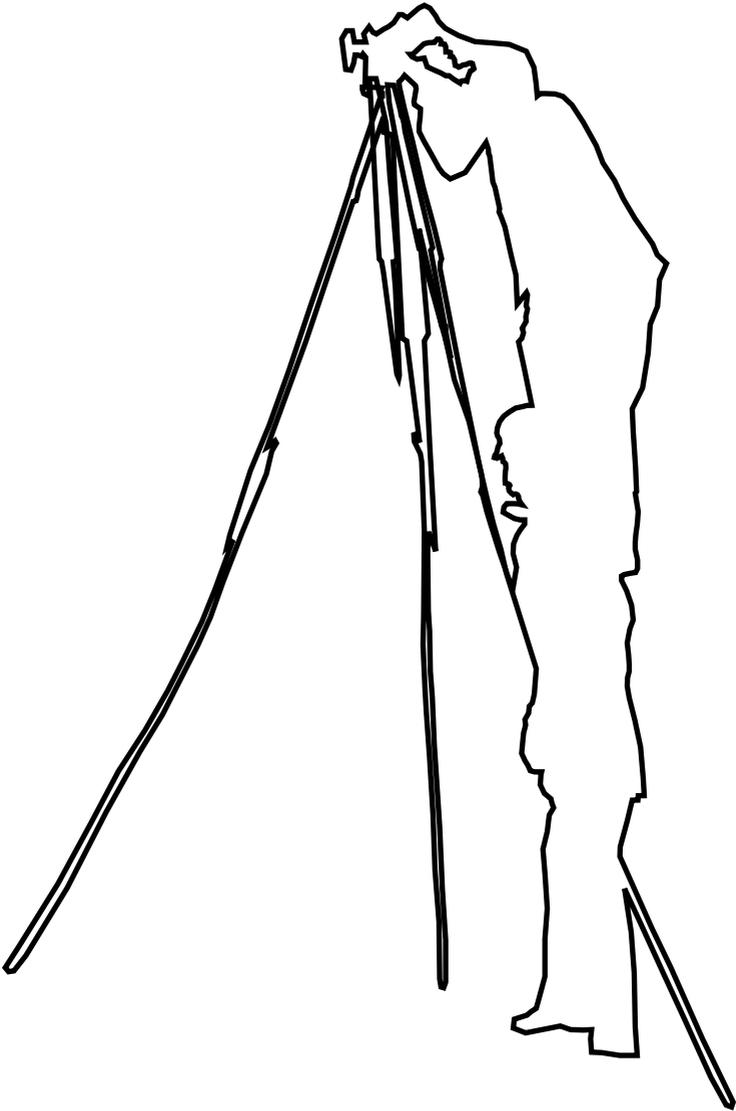


WITH NATURE AND A CAMERA

Cherry Kearton and the
Birth of Wildlife Documentary



With Nature and a Camera: Cherry Kearton and the Birth of Wildlife Photography celebrates the illustrious career of wildlife photographer, conservationist, and naturalist Cherry Kearton. The show presents 36 images by Kearton that were uncovered in a desk by his descendants. These important images give a never seen before insight into Kearton's intrepid practice whilst highlighting the disturbing effect humans have had on wildlife and their habitats. Whilst celebrating Kearton's career aims to raise funds for Fauna & Flora International, the world's oldest wildlife conservation organisation, continuing the legacy of Cherry Kearton and striving to save the future of our planet's biodiversity.

Exhibition Created by Evie Bulmer
Curated by Fergus Wiltshire



We live in a world where often the beauty of the planet passes us by, where so much of our surroundings and the splendour that encompasses them is taken for granted. In our current climate these images, which were once snapshots back in time hold in them a new meaning. Through further research and a deeper understanding of the fate of our planet, these images represent more than the beauty they display. They capture a rich biodiversity that we have endangered. The victims of our burning of fossil fuels, mass consumption and disregard for the natural world. Cherry took no species for granted, however big or small. His amazement in all living organisms is something we should all take heed of, while we still can.

Cherry had a desire to document and protect these creatures that I felt needed to be shared. And so, the idea of exhibiting these works was born. In the midst of the global climate crisis, there is no better time to share Cherry's images and his attitude toward our world and its species. Like the animals Cherry captured with his camera, we too are animals living in a world that we are slowly destroying and will soon endanger our being.

Not only do I feel Cherry's legacy needs to be recognised and shared, but by selling prints of Cherry's work in aid of Fauna and Flora International, I hope to help to protect the world to which he was so committed. This international conservation charity helps to protect the planet's threatened wildlife and habitats, taking a well-rounded approach to conservation efforts, and putting money where it is critically needed.

To share Cherry's work is to enjoy, to inspire and to inform.

- Evie Bulmer, Creator of *With Nature and a Camera*

PRESS RELEASE

With Nature and a Camera: Cherry Kearton and the Birth of Wildlife Documentary is presented in the Royal Geographical Society's Pavilion. The exhibition features 36 photographs and footage by the pioneering wildlife photographer Cherry Kearton. The exhibition has been conceived to celebrate the career of an ecological and photographic change maker and to raise funds for the charity Fauna & Flora International (FFI). FFI is the world's oldest international wildlife conservation organization, working to preserve this planet's wildlife since 1903. They aim to save our ecosystem from extinction by raising awareness of the planet's imminent threat and safeguarding the world's biodiversity. With an understanding of the charity's inspiring and historic work, this exhibition hopes to raise funds in support, conserving our plant and cementing Cherry's legacy and devotion to the natural world.

Cherry Kearton and his brother Richard are understood to be the pioneers of wildlife photography. Taking some of the first ever photographs of animals in their natural habitats and documenting the lives of countless living organisms – the brothers saw things others had not seen or even noticed before. On his travels to Africa in the early 1900s Cherry was unique in shooting animals with a camera and not a gun, aiming to preserve and document wildlife rather than cull it for memorabilia.

From the beginning of his photographic career in 1890 until his death in 1940, Cherry devoted his life to documenting and conserving wildlife. The product of his extensive career is ever reaching not only within photography but ecology globally.

With Nature and a Camera explores a series of photographs by Kearton found by his family and a documentary film from the BFI archives. Included in the images is the first ever photo of a Rhino taken with a flash-light, the only ever photo of a Maasai tribe hunt, as well as many extraordinary images documenting nature and his processes.

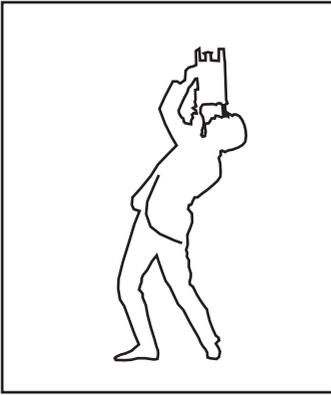
It is no exaggeration to associate Cherry Kearton with the birth of wildlife documentary. Sir David Attenborough wrote “the brothers virtually invented natural history photography, Cherry’s cinema film about penguins on Dassen Island captivated me when I saw it as a boy back in the 1930s”.

Alongside Kearton’s influential works are the images by collaborative duo Olly & Suzi, whose didactic works responds to nature at its most primitive and wild, sighting the influence of Kearton’s legacy today and exhibiting the powerful marriage of conservation and photography.

“It is as a naturalist that I view the wanton slaughter of game with such abhorrence. I have travelled across the world to secure photographic records of wild animals at home, and my work has been a labour of love. That men and women of this and future generations may share the pleasures I have enjoyed I raise my voice with all its force against the wicked and wanton destruction of Big Game, and if through my books, still pictures, and films the public can gain a wider knowledge of the animal creation, and consequently a deeper sympathy, I shall be satisfied.”

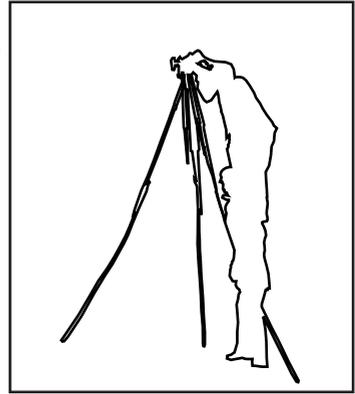
- Cherry Kearton

1.



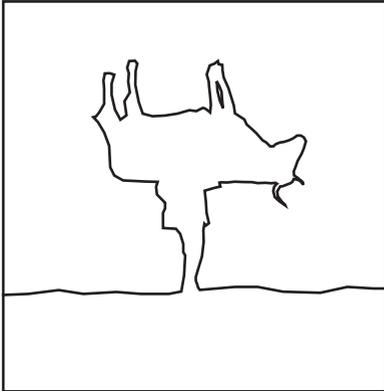
Photographing a flying bird
with a gun camera
1903

2.



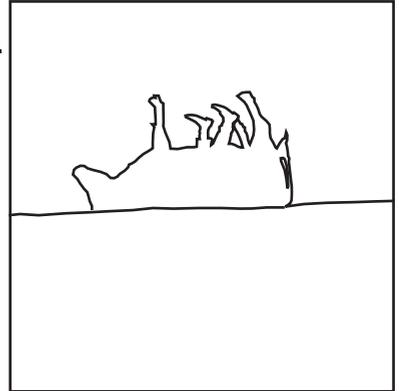
Cherry and Richard
photographing birds nests in
high hedges
1896

3.



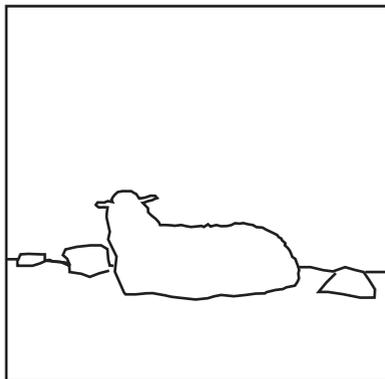
Cherry and taxidermy ox
1900

4.



Cherry and taxidermy ox upside
down
1900

5.



Taxidermy sheep
1900

METHODS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

YORKSHIRE DALES

Photographing a flying bird with a gun camera, 1903

Cherry used a collection of cameras to photograph and document wildlife such as, 35mm hand cranked motion picture camera. Later in his career he started making films using a Kinemascope and later switching to the more advanced Aeroscope which was better suited to wildlife cinematography.

Cherry and taxidermy ox, 1900

Cherry would hunch for hours in his ox hide camouflage in order to get closer to birds and their nests. "Admission to the interior is gained through a long horizontal slit in the skin of the underparts, and the camera fixed upon a platform in the brisket. The lens peeps out of a hole in the skin of the breast"
- Cherry Kearton

Cherry and Richard photographing birds nests in high hedges, 1896

As well as using the newest camera equipment of the time, like the Dallmeyer half-plate camera or the first Kodak celluloid film camera, Cherry and Richard always made characteristically ingenious adaptations.

Cherry and taxidermy ox upside down, 1900

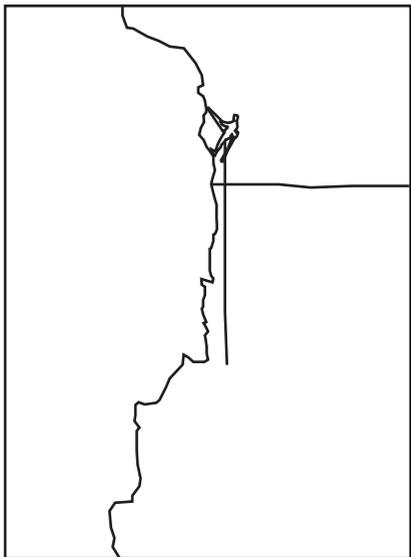
Once Cherry lost balance while hunched in the ox, causing them to capsize. Richard returned an hour later and characteristically stopped to take a photograph of his brother's predicament before helping him.

Taxidermy sheep, 1900

Another animal hide camouflage tool that the Keartons had made in order to get closer to the wildlife on the moorland of Cumbria

The Keartons took great care in not disturbing their subjects. This was an aspect of the moral responsibility in their attitude towards photographing wildlife. So the brothers were faced with a conundrum: how to position the tripod and plate camera, and its alarming human operator, within a few feet of the subject, while remaining invisible. Cherry realised the use of camouflage to transform the photographer into scenery could help in this deception. Having explored wigwams and wooden hides the Keartons set their minds to something with a more versatile application for the ground-feeding and nesting birds of pasture land. They acquired an ox from a butcher (not the hunt) and took it to the taxidermist to be made into a hide. This camouflage was immediately successful so they later decided to create another one, this time a sheep to be used to blend in on the moorland of Cumbria. The innovation that the Keartons displayed shows their unwavering passion and determination to photograph animals undisturbed in their natural habitats.

6.



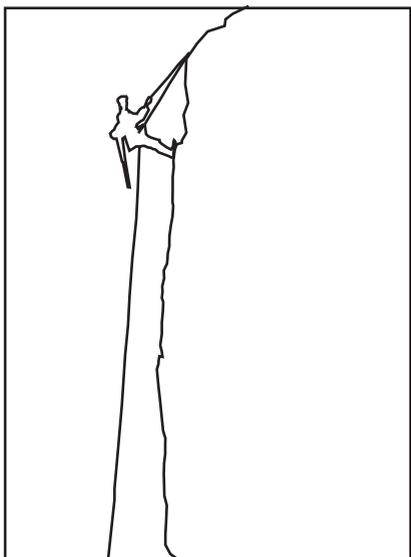
Cherry dangling precariously
from a rock face
1897

7.



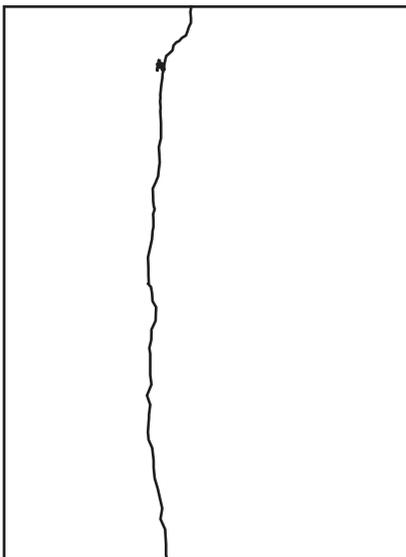
Blackbird at home
1896

8.



Method of descending a cliff
1897

9.



Descending a big cliff from a
distance
1897

PHOTOGRAPHY ON CLIFFS

OUTER HEBRIDES

Cherry dangling precariously from a rock face, 1897

"My brother went out one afternoon along with one of the men in order to photograph a Fulmar's nest and egg, and descended such an awkward cliff that the St. Kildan never expected to see him come up alive again." - Richard Kearton

Blackbird at home, 1896

Cherry and Richard began their career in wildlife photography taking pictures of birds. They published the first ever wildlife photography book documenting birds native to the British Isles on their nests.

Method of descending a cliff, 1897

Cherry would go to great efforts to get the perfect photo, including abseiling down a cliff face. Forget bungee ropes, harnesses and helmets. Their ropes were made of Manilla hemp, which was sturdier than horse hair which was used prior to this.

Descending a big cliff from a distance, 1897

This image shows the descent but from a distance that gives an idea of the scale of the cliff and the sheer bravery deployed to undergo this descent.

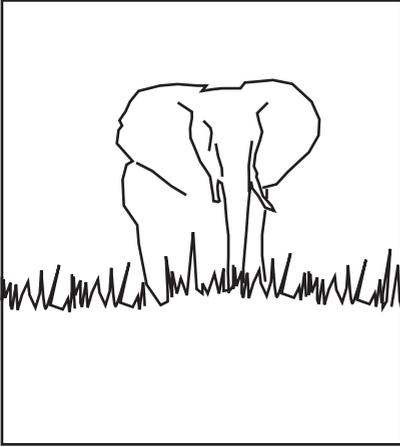
Cherry was responsible for getting the camera into some almost impossible positions. He underwent training in swimming, long-distance running, wrestling, boxing and gymnastics to make sure he could manage his missions. He learned ropework in Ireland and was shortly descending sea cliffs hundreds of feet in height in pursuit of the nests and eggs of a variety of birds.

Cecil Beaton was perhaps more prescient than he knew when he described the photographic work of the Keartons as "monuments of extraordinary patience and tenacity"

20% of Africa's elephant population is estimated to have been lost over the last ten years.

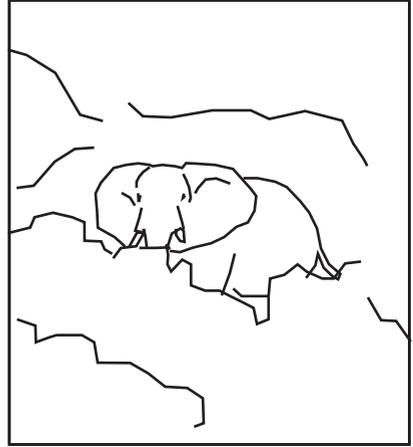
It's estimated that every 15 minutes, an elephant is killed.

10.



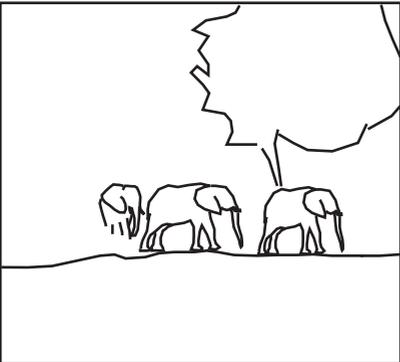
Elephant contemplating charge
1909-12

11.



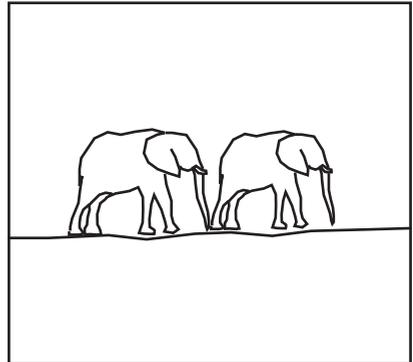
Elephant in the bushes
1909-12

12.



Elephants on their way to the
watering hole
1909-12

13.



Elephants at the watering hole
1909-12

THE ELEPHANT

AFRICA

Elephant contemplating charge, 1909-12

"...The elephant has passed through a long struggle for existence which still continues and which has fixed, in the place of his natural quietness, a self-protective aggressiveness" - Cherry Kearton

Elephant in the bushes, 1909-12

"I think that by nature the elephant is a mild-mannered creature desiring to be left alone and in peace. But that ambition, if he had it, has not been fulfilled, largely because of the commercial value of ivory" - Cherry

Elephants on their way to the watering hole, 1909-12

Cherry found elephants easiest to photograph at watering holes, although in some areas where hunting was rife elephants would only go to the water-hole in the darkness.

Elephants at the watering hole, 1909-12

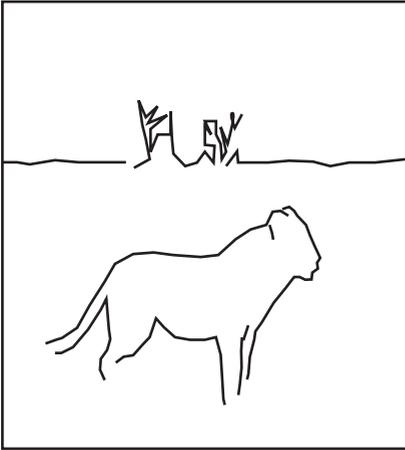
"...They came to drink only by night and although I watched for a month I did not see them at the water-hole by day. Not until later did I discover that reason: a photographic expedition had come to the water-hole in the day and shot one of the elephants as it drank." - Cherry Kearton

The poaching epidemic has taken a heavy toll, driven by a soaring demand for ivory amongst a growing circle of buyers. The threat is enormous, with truly devastating consequences for the world's largest land animal. And as the demand increases, the trafficking networks are becoming more sophisticated and dangerous.

Niassa Special Reserve, Mozambique, is one such place that has been under severe threat from ivory poaching. The elephant population has taken a substantial loss over the last few years – between 2013 to 2018 there was an estimated population decline of 60%. In the time it takes you to eat lunch or read a chapter of a book, these compassionate creatures are being slaughtered one by one. We must protect the remaining elephants before it is too late.

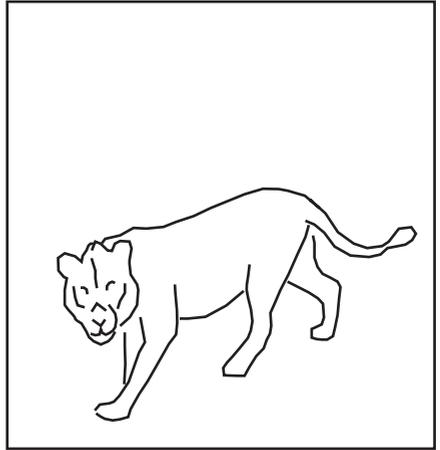
FFI has recently acquired management rights for a new piece of land that sits adjacent to the immensely effective Chuilexi conservancy, and could help protect whole herds of African elephants. This will be fantastic in the long run, but right now, there's no protection in place at all. Poachers will be poised to take advantage of this, so it is critical we get protection in place right now.

14.



Lion searching for prey
1909-12

15.



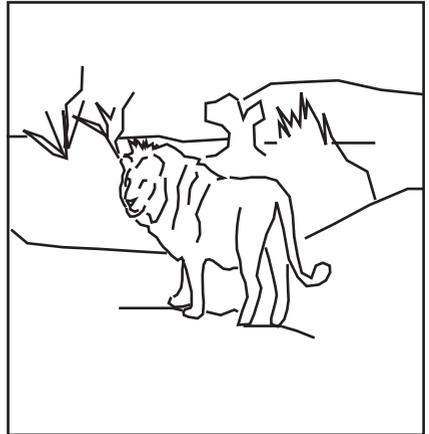
Flash-light photograph of a
maneless African lion
1909-12

16.



Lion drinking
1909-12

17.



The Lion
1909-12

Three-quarters of
African lion populations
are in decline

They are now
officially classified as
'vulnerable'.

THE LION

AFRICA

Lion searching for prey, 1909-12

"...And I, searching with field-glasses, suddenly detected a movement and discovered what the animals below me knew already. In the grass under the tree that crowned the little hill crouched a lion." - Cherry Kearton

Flash-light photograph of a maneless African lion, 1909-12

"I ultimately succeeded in obtaining a flash-light photograph of a maneless lion, after waiting for six nights in a 'hide-up' built in a tree close to a water-hole. The lion, however, sprang at my camera after I fired the flash-lamp, and carried off a leather legging which, thinking it was going to rain, I had placed over it. The legging was afterwards found some forty yards away with a large piece bitten out of it" - Cherry Kearton

Lion drinking, 1909-12

This is an extremely close up photo of a lion for this period, Cherry noted he thought this was the closest a wildlife photographer had photographed a lion at the time.

The Lion, 1909-12

"For the lion, more than all other animals, has individuality. He may be good-tempered or bad-temper, brave or nervous. He may act on impulse, and no one can say what that impulse is going to be." - Cherry Kearton

Lions are extinct in 26 African countries and have vanished from over 95% of their historic range. Powerful and majestic, the king of the beasts has no natural predators. But unthinkable, African lion numbers have plummeted by over 40% in the last three generations due to loss of living space and conflict with people.

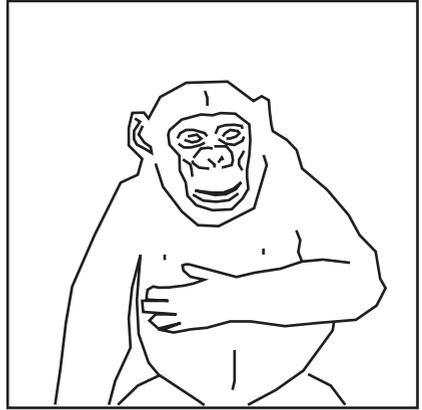
Three-quarters of African lion populations are in decline. With only around 20,000 in the wild, they're now officially classified as 'vulnerable'.

18.



Portrait of an inquisitive
chimpanzee
1909-12

19.



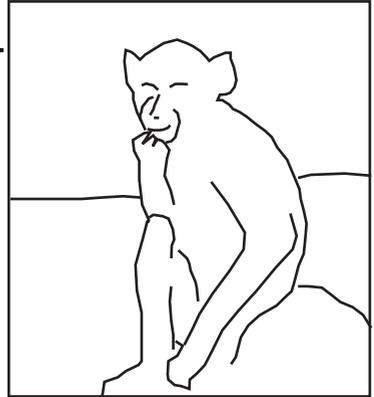
Portrait of a Chimpanzee
1909-12

20.



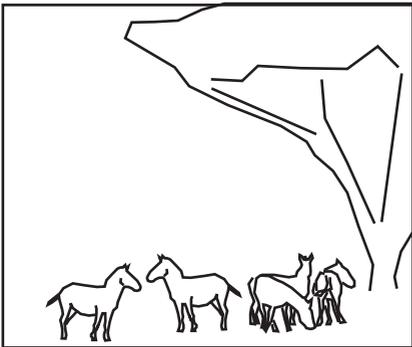
Man and chimpanzee
1909-12

21.



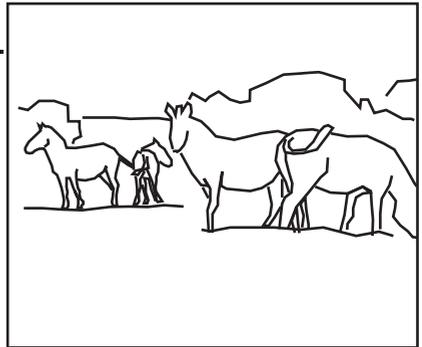
Monkey
1909-12

22.



Zebras on the Plain
1909-12

23.



Getting close to Zebras on the
Plain
1909-12

THE MONKEY & APE

AFRICA

Portrait of a Chimpanzee, 1909-12
Cherry became particularly fond of Chimpanzee's, taking many photos and creating documentary films about them and through these you can grasp his amazement with the similarity of chimpanzees and humans

Monkey, 1909-12

Before the time of drones, of electric camera contraptions, monkeys were particularly difficult to photograph as they often spent most time high up in trees. So Cherry captured them when they were on the ground, often looking at a local community or animals on the

Portrait of an inquisitive chimpanzee, 1909-12

"...You will see that the chimpanzee is the most intelligent by far of all the animals. You will see his marvellous powers of imitation, his friendliness, his wonderful capacity for play." - Cherry Kearton

Man and chimpanzee, 1909-12

Man and chimpanzee share 98% of the same DNA and Cherry was particularly fascinated with the inquisitiveness of these creatures and how they interacted in a space much like a human would. Of course, as you can tell by this image, they are also a very confident and friendly creature.

Chimpanzees are threatened throughout their range, and their numbers are decreasing rapidly as a result of various forms of human encroachment on their traditional habitat. Poaching, forest destruction and disease pose the greatest threats to their survival.

THE ZEBRA

AFRICA

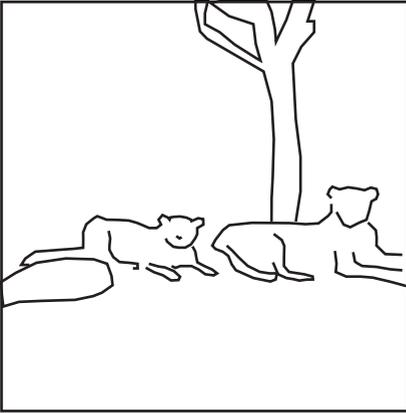
Getting close to Zebras on the Plain, 1909-12
"On any open landscape in Central Africa you will see the Common, or Grant's Zebra, probably in large numbers. Because of his broad and bright stripes, he is singularly picturesque, and certainly his presence is desirable from the pictorial standpoint." - Cherry Kearton

Zebras on the Plain, 1909-12

"The zebra is regarded as the settler's worst enemy, and in my opinion, it is only a matter of time before this beautiful animal which now appears common will become practically extinct" - Cherry Kearton

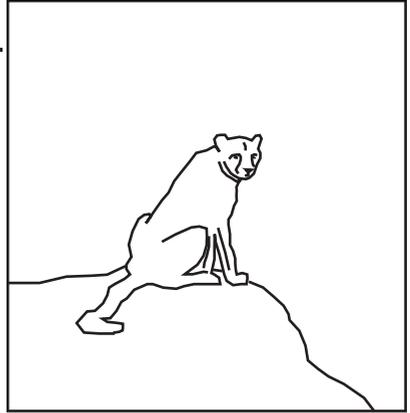
They usually live in treeless grasslands and savannah woodlands; however, their habitat is shrinking, and they are now extinct in Burundi and Lesotho. Over the past 30 years, there has been a population reduction of 54% from an estimated population of 5,800 in the 1980s, according to the African Wildlife Foundation.

24.



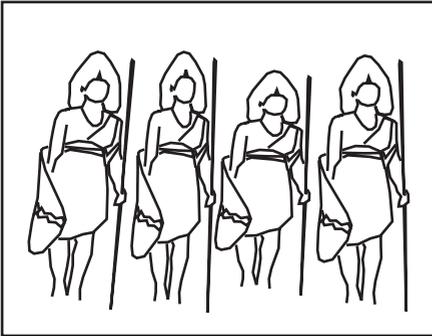
Streaks of spotted yellow
1911

25.



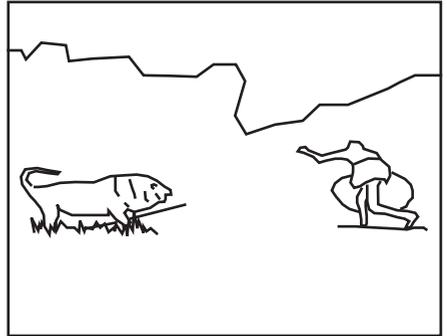
A Cheetah
1911

26.



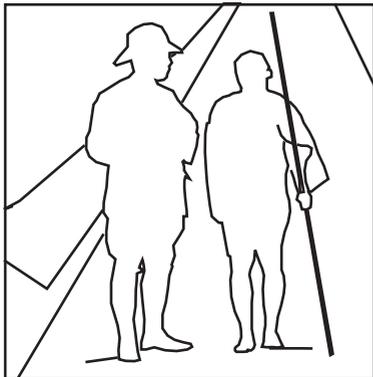
Maasai tribe members
1909-12

27.



Maasai tribe lion hunt
1911

28.



Cherry with maasai tribe
member
1909-12

Cheetahs have
vanished from
approximately
90% of their
historic range in
Africa.

THE CHEETAH

AFRICA

Streaks of spotted yellow, 1911

"...I have stayed in admiration to watch this beautiful animal, with his coat bright in the sunlight, bounding in magnificent leaps across my path [...] no one who cares for animal life could possibly wish him harm." - Cherry Kearton

A Cheetah, 1911

"Unfortunately, the cheetah's skill and speed in hunting will eventually be its undoing: for considerable numbers are now caught and exported to India where they are trained to round up game. It seems likely that he will one day become extinct - an eventuality which I, for one, should greatly deplore." - Cherry Kearton

Cheetahs have vanished from approximately 90% of their historic range in Africa and are extinct in Asia except for a single, isolated population of perhaps 50 individuals in Iran. As human populations grow and expand, agriculture, roads, and settlements destroy the open grasslands that this big cat calls home.

THE MAASAI TRIBE

AFRICA

Maasai tribe members, 1909-12

The Maasai are a Nilotic ethnic group inhabiting northern, central and southern Kenya and northern Tanzania. They are among the best known local populations internationally due to their residence near the many game parks of the African Great Lakes and their distinctive customs and dress.

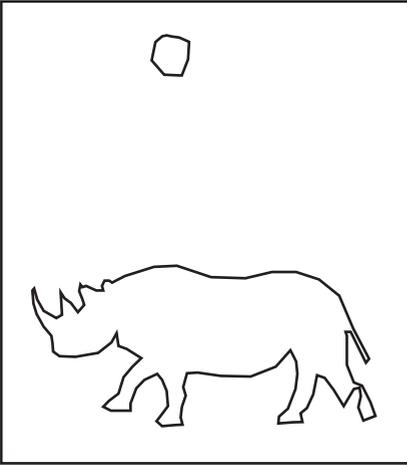
Maasai tribe lion hunt, 1911

This image is the first and possibly the only photo ever taken of a Maasai lion hunt. Although lion hunting was an activity of the past, lions are occasionally hunted when they attack Maasai livestock. Cattle are central to Maasai livelihood.

Cherry with Maasai tribe member, 1909-12

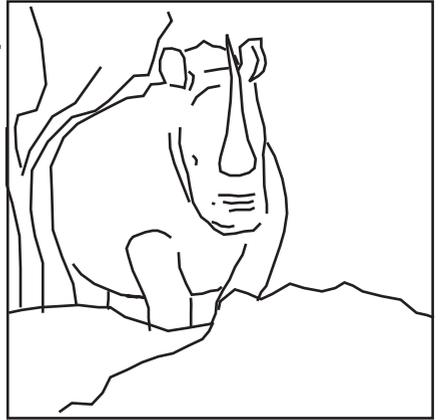
Cherry appreciated that he could learn a lot from the local communities as he travelled around Africa. He captured local tribes in photographs and film with his 1929 film Tembi being one of the earliest films to feature no white people.

29.



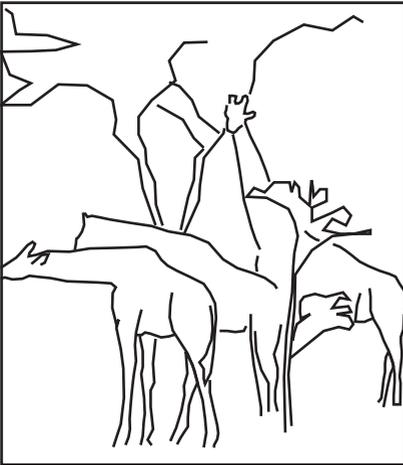
Rhino taken with flash-light
1909-12

30.



The white rhinoceros alert and
suspicious
1909-12

31.



Giraffes grazing
1909-12

All Rhino species in
Africa are critically
endangered

The giraffe
population has
declined by 40% in 30
years, and there are
now approximately
68,000 left in the wild

THE RHINO

AFRICA

Rhino taken with flashlight,
1909-12

“Once I was photographing at night, when the flash just behind the camera so much startled the rhino that he charged it immediately. Fortunately, I was up a small tree; but the camera was on the ground - and when I climbed down, the lens was all that I could find intact.” - Cherry Kearton

The white rhinoceros alert and suspicious, 1909-12

“ But these pictures of the rhino when he is disturbed do not tell the whole story [...] He doesn't want either to hunt or to be hunted; the daily promenade up and down his well-worn path is good enough for him.” - Cherry Kearton

There are now just two northern white rhinoceros remaining in the world. Najin and Fatu (both female) live under constant protection from poachers in Kenya's Ol Pejeta Conservancy. Sudan (the last remaining male) died on March 19th 2018, effectively rendering the entire subspecies extinct. The northern white rhino was once abundant across Central Africa but staggering rates of illegal hunting for its horn have already led to its (almost certain) extinction in the wild.

THE GIRAFFE

AFRICA

Giraffes grazing
1909-12

“The giraffe is a peaceful and harmless animal [...] in some districts he is killed by the poisoned arrows of natives, and sometimes he is shot by sportsmen. But in spite of this there is good evidence, I am glad to say, that his numbers in central Africa are increasing [...] the giraffe at any rate is likely to be left to adore the African bush” - Cherry Kearton

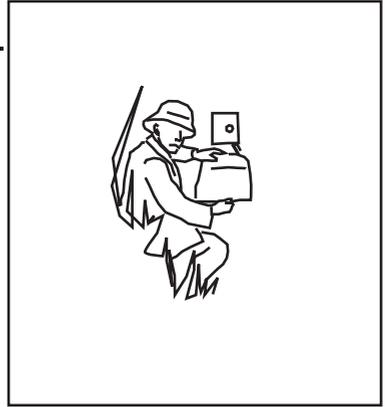
Sadly Cherry's optimism and estimations do not add up in regards to today's giraffe populations. It is estimated the giraffe population has dropped by 40% in 30 years. All giraffe species are now categorised as vulnerable

32.



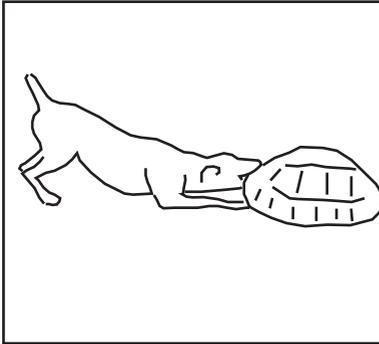
Cherry at work
1909-12

33.



Cherry with nature and a
camera
1909-12

34.



An English dog finding a play
thing
1909-12

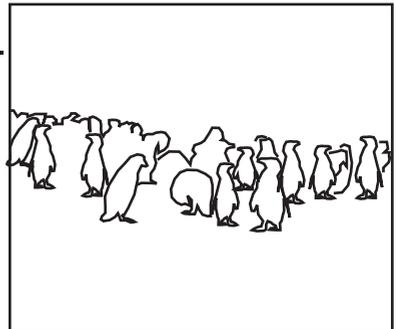
“Being something of
an optimist, I let myself
hope that the day will
come when all men
will realise that animal
life is not theirs to take.”
- Cherry Kearton

35.



The clouds off Dassen Island
1921

36.



Nature's comedians :Penguins
on Dassen Island
1921

AT WORK

Cherry at work, 1909-12

Cherry travelled far and wide to document the world's creatures, however big or small. "I have made many expeditions into this country [Africa], and always my object has been, not to kill animals, but to study and to photograph them." - Cherry Kearton

Cherry with nature and a camera 1909-12

Cherry spent a lot of his time, and probably his life, crouched down, still and silent ready to photograph whatever came his way.

An English dog finding a play thing, 1909-12

Cherry sometimes even brought his dog on his adventures too! The English dog is pictured here playing in the African landscape.

DASSEN ISLAND

The clouds off Dassen Island, 1921

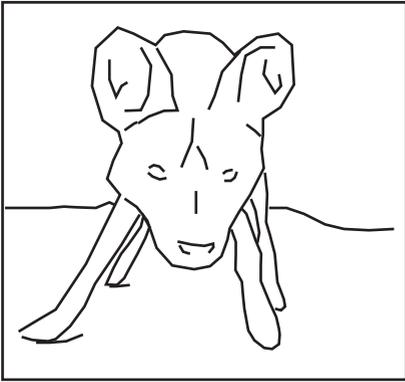
Cherry estimated there were 5 million penguins on this island and the penguins would spawn a book, lecture tour and feature film.

Nature comedians :Penguins on Dassen Island, 1921

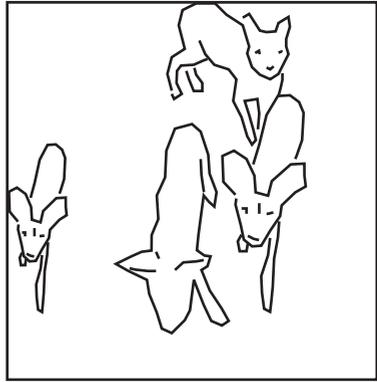
It was the film featuring Dassen Island that Sir David Attenborough saw when he was a boy in the 1930s and was "captivated".

Today, the African penguin colony remains, but their numbers have significantly decreased since Cherry's visit, in large part due to the increased proximity of oil tanker routes, over-fishing of key food sources, and the commercial exploitation of the species' eggs.

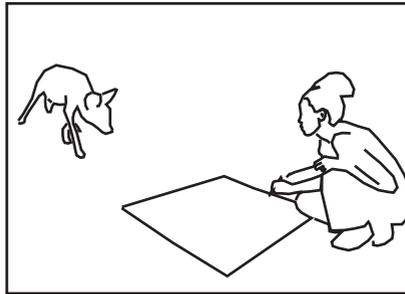
OLLY & SUZI



You looking at me (Mkomazi, 2007)



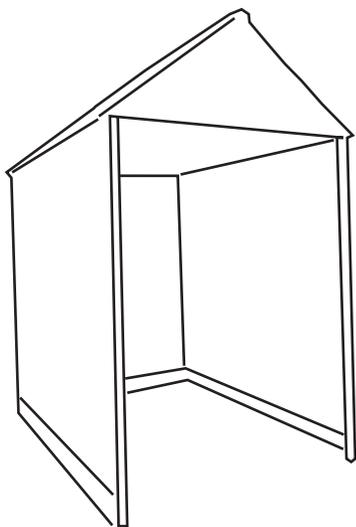
Wilddog pups (Mkomazi, 1995)



Suzi and Mkomazi wild dog
(Mkomazi, 2003)

When we think of contemporary wildlife documentation we perhaps imagine a jeep in the middle of a safari with a wide-angle zoom, waiting for a subject to appear. Much like Cherry, Olly & Suzi's work takes a more submersive approach, they adapt their lifestyles to their subject, be it wild dogs in Africa or polar bears in the Arctic. Alongside photography their subjects are also painted and drawn right in front of their eyes. Both are dedicated to documenting the natural world with as much proximity as possible to the native habitat of their subjects. The decision to include their work in the exhibition came in part from a personal admiration but also because Olly&Suzi occupy the space between art and wildlife documentary that Cherry himself pioneered. By situating their work alongside his it demonstrates the evolution of the documentary practice as well as the concerning depletion of natural landscapes since Cherry's era.

THE SHED



Showing:

*African Ambassador: Memoirs of
Lady Arabella Ape, 1949*

Produced by Montana Film

From the BFI Archives



In this structure, we present a 30-minute film, '*African Ambassador: Memoirs of Lady Arabella Ape*', provided by the British Film Institute, in which Kearton documents and narrates the wildlife and native traditions he encounters. The film is a fascinating window into the naturalist's practice presenting alternative perspectives to his subjects and highlighting Kearton's sometimes comedic tone.

The structure in which the film is presented has been built out of recycled corrugated iron sheeting. Corrugated iron, invented in 1829, quickly became one of the most revolutionary building materials and is still today one of the most popular forms of cladding and roofing in Eastern Africa. Furthermore, the pitched roof seeks to emulate bird watching huts of the period and the wooden frame mimics the frames created inside the brothers' taxidermy hides. This viewing space is deliberately redolent of the sort of makeshift structures that Cherry and Richard spent much time in throughout their careers.

Exhibited at the Royal Geographical Society



Sponsored by:

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