



NYASA CROCODILES

Harry Hamilton — original line drawing

Nyasa Crocodiles (*Crocodylus niloticus*). Original line drawing by Harry Hamilton Johnston (12 June 1858–31 July 1927) appearing on page 357 of his 1897 book *British Central Africa. An Attempt to Give Some Account of a Portion of the Territories under British Influence North of the Zambezi River* (Methuen & Co., London). Sir Harry Johnston was a prolific writer and explorer, and a very important figure in Britain's colonial expansion in Africa during the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. He studied painting at the Royal Academy, having early shown an interest in drawing and painting birds. He frequented the Zoological Gardens in London and the British Museum (Natural History), and he independently studied zoology at Regent's Park and anatomy at the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. After several exploring expeditions in Africa from 1879–1884, he entered the British Foreign Office in 1885 and was posted to Cameroon and the Niger River (1886, as Vice Consul, later Consul), Mozambique (1889, as Consul), Nyasaland (= Malawi) (1891, as British Commissioner for South Central Africa), Tunisia (1897, as Consul General), and Uganda (1899, as Special Commissioner). Johnston was a prolific writer, with more than 600 articles and books to his credit, including extensive accounts

of African societies, peoples, languages, history, geography, and natural history, particularly in Liberia, Uganda, and Central and East Africa. He used his artistic talents to illustrate his books, and his natural history illustrations are of particularly high quality.

Nyasa Crocodiles is the only herpetological illustration in *British Central Africa*. Johnston traveled widely around Lake Nyasa and noted the abundance of crocodiles there. He was the first explorer to observe that Nile Crocodiles used their legs to rise-up and run awkwardly into the lake rather than slither as was commonly misperceived at the time. *British Central Africa* contains a short narrative of the reptiles, but not amphibians, recorded from the region (pp. 355–359) and an appendix of all species (pp. 361–362; 1 crocodile, 9 chelonians, 18 lizards, 21 snakes, 10 frogs). The narratives include personal observations of Johnston's encounters with reptiles, as well as native stories and anecdotes. More extensive herpetological observations and illustrations were included in Johnston's 1906 book *Liberia* (see Dodd 2014. *Bibliotheca Herpetologica* 10:33–43).

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Art in Herpetology

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- Accompanying text should provide information about technique, media, or other information likely to be of interest, especially to other artists. Other details of interest include the source of illustration subject (e.g., scientific name, geographic origin, etc.) or the work (e.g., book publication, etc.) for which the illustration was produced.
- Artists are welcome to include contact information (e.g., email address, website location), as well as indicating whether original art or prints are available for sale or if the artist is available for commissioned work.

Material may be submitted for review to Jackson Shedd, Herpetological Art and Illustration Coordinator at jackson_shedd@sbcglobal.net.
