

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

DEPARTMENT OF GAME

of the

DIVISION OF MINES, LANDS
AND SURVEYS

for the year ended
31st December, 1957

Presented to the Legislative Assembly

1959

Signed A. D. FRASER, July 10, August 1958

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has still to be done to encourage and assist the application of simple wild life conservation measures on private land.

Additions were made to the proposed film library during the year. Considerable difficulty, however, is being experienced in procuring good photographs (black and white) suitable for reproduction in Annual Reports. Hunting Associations, Angling Societies and other bodies and persons interested are invited to submit photographs for publication.

2. GAME SITUATION: SOUTHERN LOWVELD

During the last 30 years and even longer, very little has been written on the wild animal populations of Southern Rhodesia. This is not very surprising when one remembers that until comparatively recently no Game Department was in existence. It is proposed, therefore, in this and subsequent reports to deal briefly with the game situation existing in various parts of the Colony, and where possible, to give some of the background. This report is on the game situation of the southern lowveld.

Prior to World War II, little development had taken place in the southern and south-eastern lowveld, and large tracts of land were unoccupied. Occupied land, for the most part, consisted of extensive holdings of which Nuanetsi Ranch and Liebigs Ranch, the former rather more than 2,000,000 acres and the latter of about 1,650,000 acres were prime examples.

The African population was comparatively small and scattered. Communications, apart from "main" roads were bad or non-existent and the four-wheel drive vehicle had not yet made its appearance.

Vast areas were out of reach except to the more intrepid hunters, and in these parts wild animals found sanctuary, harrassed only occasionally by hunting parties. Negotiations were in progress between the Governments of the Union of South Africa, Bechuanaland and Southern Rhodesia for the establishment of the "Dongola" Game Reserve which was to embrace the Tuli Area, and to this end, the Southern Rhodesia Government purchased land between the Shashi and Umzingwane Rivers.

The Sabi Valley was noted for big game concentrations, while stories of vast herds on the Mkwasini and Lundi Rivers were legend. As early as 1934, land was set aside in the lower Ndanga and Nuanetsi Districts for the Gono-re-Zhou Game Reserve.

From the point of view of wild life conservation, it is a pity that the "Dongola" reserve never came to be established.

During the war years young men were away with the forces and shortages of petrol and ammunition kept would be hunters at home. Although no records are available, there is no doubt that the wild fauna increased substantially in numbers during this period.

The post war years in Southern Rhodesia have seen remarkable progress and development. The large increase in population, both black and white, has imposed such a burden on production of essential protein foods that new country has been opened up. Ranching land in the lowveld is being developed to maximum carrying capacity for stock, and sound farming practices are the order of the day. Land which was once free for wild animals to roam over at will is now fenced, and still more fencing will be erected.

In addition to ranching, irrigation projects have been established on the fertile alluvial soils bordering lowveld rivers and many hundreds of acres on the Limpopo. Sabi and other rivers are now under crops vital to the economy of the Colony. Still further large scale irrigation projects are planned or contemplated on the Sabi and Lundi Rivers and their tributaries, which when completed, will put thousands of acres under an intensive form of agriculture and close settlement.

The increased development of the lowveld has enhanced land values and some of the larger ranches have been subdivided. Unfortunately, in many cases the smaller land units have been regarded as hunting boxes, and some new owners have taken advantage of an abundance of wild life to indulge in indiscriminate killing. It was partly to combat these activities that legislation amending the Game and Fish Preservation Act was introduced and passed by Parliament in June, 1957.

The implementation of the Land Apportionment Act and the re-settlement of Africans, in certain areas, has had the effect of pushing the wild animals out. The search for minerals has been intensified and prospectors are scouring the country. A new railway has been completed through the south-eastern lowveld providing a direct link with Lourenço Marques. Areas which at one time were remote and almost inaccessible are now within easy reach of modern four-wheel drive vehicles.

To summarise, then, fences, boring machines, motor vehicles, increased populations, intensive forms of agriculture, mining activities and so on, have had a tremendous impact on the wild fauna and have led to its general disturbance and reduction in numbers in the southern and south-eastern lowveld.

To add to these difficulties, tsetse-fly pressure from Portuguese East Africa is growing apace. Tsetse flies have become established on the west bank of the Sabi River and constitute an immediate danger to domestic stock in the Bikita, Ndanga and Chipinga Native Districts. Strenuous efforts are being made by the Department of Tsetse Control and Reclamation to counter these tsetse-fly movements. A barrier clearing has been made along part of the Portuguese border, fences to control cattle and game have been erected and hunting areas have been fenced. It is the tsetse menace which means the end of the Gono-re-Zhou Reserve as originally contemplated.

Foot and Mouth disease and various tick borne diseases to which domestic stock are susceptible, are prevalent, and have cost the country huge sums to control. The transmission of some of these diseases to domestic stock is attributed, by the Veterinary authorities, to wild animals and their movements.

What then is the present situation? Working eastwards from the Tuli Circle in the Gwanda and Beit Bridge Native Districts, through the Nuanetsi, Victoria, Ndanga and Bikita Native Districts, the following general statement can be made.

The Tuli Circle and adjoining Special Native Areas have a fairly good game population consisting of impala, zebra, waterbuck, wildebeest, kudu, elephant and lesser species. Up until the re-establishment of the Tuli Police Post, poaching was rife. The rainfall is seasonally erratic, and in periods of drought, animals concentrate on the Tuli, Shashi and Limpopo Rivers, and are then most vulnerable to poaching.

The three Limpopo River Ranches, which lie roughly between the Pahzi and Umzingwane Rivers did contain good game populations, but large irrigation projects

and their development for ranching purposes will necessitate a reduction in numbers of some species and the probable elimination of elephant, zebra and wildebeest.

Liebigs Ranch, which takes in the huge stretch of country from west of the Umzingwane River to the Nuanetsi River is being developed rapidly. Zebra and wildebeest are being shot under permit to make way for increasing numbers of domestic stock. The management of Liebigs Ranch, however, has adopted a very reasonable attitude to game problems and works in close co-operation with the Game Department, and it is probable that most species present will receive reasonable protection for some years to come.

South of Liebigs Ranch and eastwards through the European farms and Special Native Areas, the country, apart from the Tongwe Area, is not well known. Ranchers bordering the Buby River have trouble with elephants causing damage and some have had to be shot on control. The land lying between the Buby and Limpopo Rivers is reputed to have a good game population, including nyala. Elephant from the Kruger National Park are reported to move in from time to time.

Since 1954, the Game Department has been engaged in a campaign against elephants moving from the Bechuanaland border into the Gwanda and Beit Bridge Native Districts. One estimate put the number involved in this movement as high as 1,000 head, but confirmation of this figure is impossible. About 180 elephants have been shot by Game Rangers and a large number still have to be dealt with.

Just where these elephant originated is a matter of conjecture. At one time it was thought that they may have migrated from the Wankie Game Reserve but this theory cannot be proved. There is no evidence to show that they came from Portuguese Territory to the east.

The land south of Nuanetsi Ranch, taking in the Matekteke Hills and Nuanetsi Special Native Area "A" has still to be surveyed by Game Rangers. Across the Nuanetsi River and into the Gonakudzingwa Native Purchase Area, that once formed part of the Gono-re-Zhou Reserve, game populations are better known, but not sufficiently well. As water supplies dry up during the latter part of the year, large numbers of animals including elephant, buffalo, impala, kudu and others drink on the Nuanetsi River. The Lourenço Marques railway line has interfered with migrations of elephant and zebra moving to the Nuanetsi River.

European land in the Nuanetsi Native District, a few years ago, did contain a good game population, but following the subdivision and occupation of the land a considerable reduction in numbers has occurred. Elephant are still resident on the Lundi River and on the farms. There is some conflict between certain species of game and ranching interests in the Nuanetsi Native District.

Parts of the unalienated Crown land, European Area, in the Ndanga Native District lying to the south and west of the "game fence" have good game concentrations. That part south of the "Lone Star Ranch" taking in the Chipinda Pools contains elephant, buffalo, zebra, kudu, Lichtenstein's hartebeest, nyala, impala, bushbuck, lions, leopards, sable, roan and other species sufficient to provide a capital stock for a game reserve. Animals to the east of the "game fence" are to be eradicated in anti-tsetse operations.

The unoccupied Crown land north and south of the Mkwasini River is the habitat of large numbers of wild animals, while most ranches in the Ndanga and Bikita

Native Districts have fair populations. Some animals, in particular buffalo, zebra and elephant are unwelcome on the ranches and steps will have to be taken to control them.

Elephant have increased in numbers along the Sabi River and extend into the Maranke Native Reserve in the Umtali Native District. Control measures will have to be imposed to induce them to move south.

Verminous animals are causing serious stock losses in the Chipinga Native District and assistance will have to be given to farmers, over an extended period, to eliminate the vermin menace.

In conclusion it can be stated that the reduction in the number of game animals in the southern lowveld in the last five or six years has been inevitable in the face of an expanding agricultural economy. Nevertheless, every encouragement will be given to ranchers to conserve their game, but at the same time, assistance will have to be given to them in the control of big game, in particular those species, such as elephant, buffalo, zebra and wildebeest, which when present in large numbers, conflict with ranching activities.

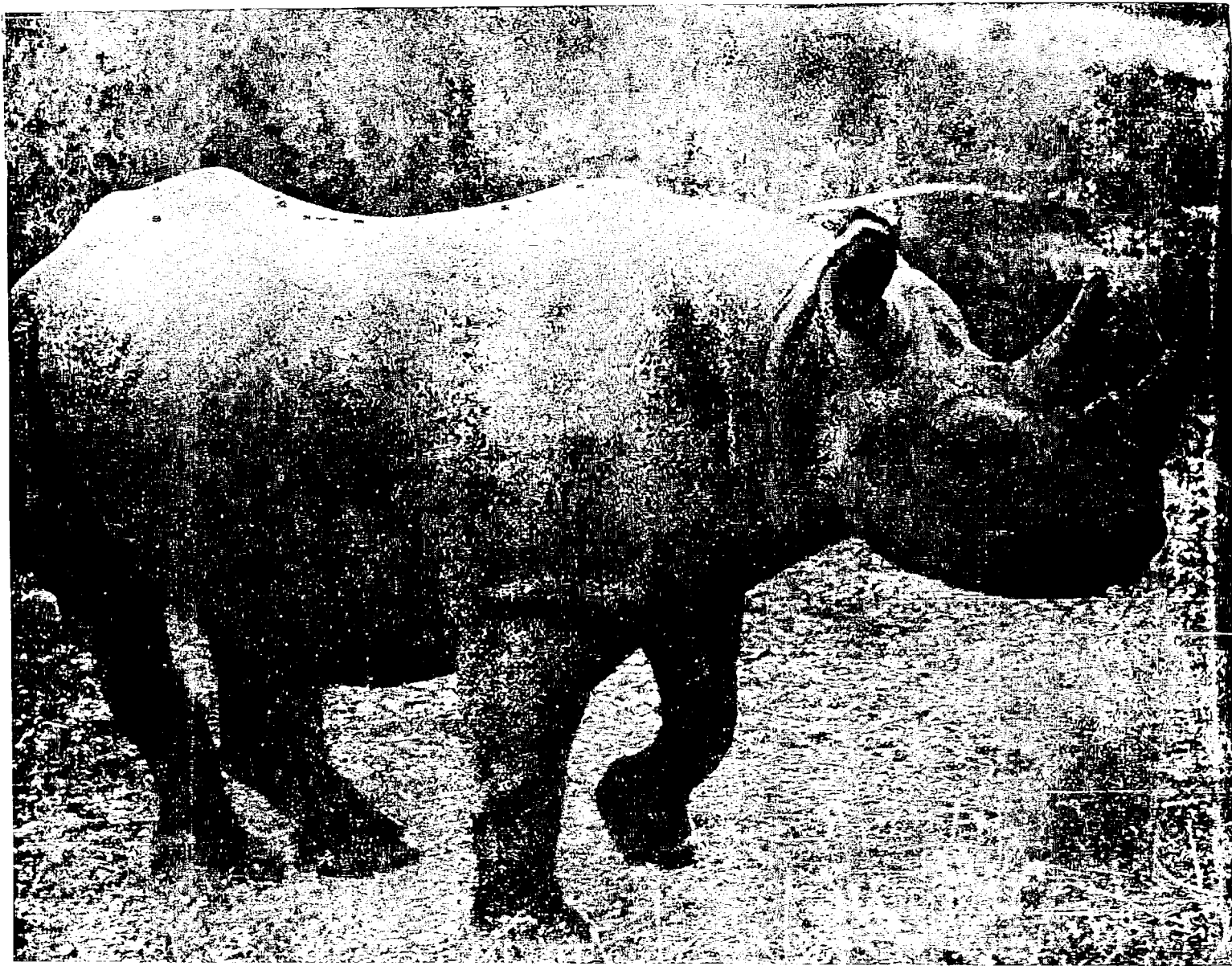
3. THE MKWASINI EPISODE

During September, considerable publicity was given by the Press to the death of "thousands" of wild animals along the game fence in the Ndanga and Bikita Native Districts. As a result both this Department and the Department of Tsetse Control and Reclamation were severely criticised. The following is a record of events which led up to the Mkwasi tragedy, and of the efforts made by the Department to relieve the animals in distress.

The sequence of events which culminated in the erection of the game fence are generally well known and will not be recapitulated, in detail, in this Report. It should perhaps be stated, that in the late 1930s, tsetse-fly movements were noted in Portuguese East Africa and along the south-eastern border of the Colony, and that in 1940, a game destruction campaign was commenced in the southern part of the Chipinga Native District to combat the tsetse-fly pressure and the spread of disease to domestic stock in the Chipinga, Bikita, Ndanga and Nuanetsi Native Districts.

Despite all the efforts made to combat the spread of tsetse, the position worsened and animal trypanosomiasis was found in cattle, initially on the east bank, and later on the west bank of the Sabi River, in the Sangwe and Ndanga East Native Reserves. When, in 1955, the presence of tsetse-fly on the west bank of the Sabi River south of the Ndanga East Native Reserve was finally established and an increase occurred in the number of cases of disease in cattle in the Reserves, it was clear that very positive steps had to be taken to contain the fly.

In view of the menacing situation the Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Control Committee recommended that a game fence approximately 80 miles in length be erected from a point on the Sabi River, about five miles north of the Sangwe Native Reserve, running in a south-westerly and southerly direction to below the Lundi River. The object of the fence was to mark the western boundary of a game-free, cattle-free belt five miles in breadth at its narrowest width, so that contact between infected game and cattle on the east and non-infected game and cattle on the west, so far as possible, could be prevented. This was in conformity with the policy that shooting operations



Black rhinoceros—Urungwe Non-hunting Reserve.

Photograph: J. S. Shattock.

APPENDIX 3—*continued*

ANALYSIS OF ROYAL GAME LICENCES ISSUED

No. Issued	Area	Purpose
3	Nyamandhlovu Native District	Elephant Control
2	Gwanda Native District	Elephant Control
3	Lomagundi Native District	Elephant Control
48	Private Land and Land leased by Hunters' Association	Sport
56		

APPENDIX 4

PERMITS ISSUED, 1957

1. EXPORT OF GAME PRODUCTS

(i) IVORY

<i>No. Issued</i>	<i>No. of Tusks</i>	<i>Weight, lb.</i>	<i>Importing Country</i>
11	112	3,074	United Kingdom
9	229	4,166	Zanzibar
1	4	101	Bechuanaland Protectorate
1	64	1,055	United States of America
1	2	26	Union of South Africa
<u>23</u>	<u>411</u>	<u>8,422</u>	

Average Weight per Tusk, 20 lb.

NOTE.—The quantity of ivory in the hands of merchants and private persons, available for export, has been reduced considerably now that permits are no longer available for hunting these animals in Tsetse-fly Control Areas.

(ii) RHINOCEROS HORN

<i>No. Issued</i>	<i>No. of Horns</i>	<i>Weight, lb.</i>	<i>Importing Country</i>
2	4	17	Zanzibar

NOTE.—Rhinoceros horn is in short supply now that permits for the destruction of these animals are not granted.

APPENDIX 4—*continued*

(iv) HIDES AND SKINS, ETC.

(For Commercial Use)

<i>No. Issued</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Importing Country</i>
2	20	Baboon	} Union of South Africa
	6	Elephant ears	
	6	Elephant Trunks	
	150	Wildebeest tails . . .	
	2	Zebra skulls . . .	
	450	Zebra skins . . .	
	500 lb.	Zebra fat . . .	} France
2	1,393	Crocodile skins . . .	
1	11	Leopard skins . . .	United States of America
<u>5</u>			

NOTE.—The zebra skins and other products were legally obtained from animals shot under permit on Liebigs Ranch, West Nicholson. The crocodile skins were obtained from hunters operating in Northern Rhodesia and Bechuanaland.

4. SALE OF GAME PRODUCTS

(i) IVORY

<i>No. Issued</i>	<i>No. of Tusks</i>	<i>Weight, lb.</i>
15	124	2,136

(ii) RHINOCEROS HORN

<i>No. Issued</i>	<i>No. of Horns</i>	<i>Weight, lb.</i>
2	4	17

(iii) BILTONG

<i>No. Issued</i>	<i>Weight, lb.</i>	<i>Animals</i>
35	83,642	Zebra Wildebeest

NOTE.—Biltong sold by Liebigs Ranch, West Nicholson, and by "Lazy Y" Ranch, Beitbridge, was legally obtained from zebra and wildebeeste shot under permit.

(iv) HIDES AND SKINS

<i>No. Issued</i>	<i>To Whom Issued</i>	<i>Type</i>
3	Liebigs Ranch . . .	1,729 Zebra 306 Wildebeeste
	I. de la Rue . . .	— Zebra

NOTE.—Zebra and wildebeeste were legally destroyed under permit.

APPENDIX 6 "B"

ANALYSIS OF ANIMALS DESTROYED IN TSETSE-FLY CONTROL AREAS
UP TO 1957

Species	Total up to 1954	1955	1956	1957	Total
Elephant	255	90	121	93	559
Rhinoceros	362	8	4	—	374
Buffalo	5,297	460	426	118	6,301
Hippopotamus	6	—	—	—	6
Giraffe	3	—	—	—	3
Zebra	8,213	338	304	133	8,988
Eland	9,490	305	266	82	10,143
Koodoo	74,799	4,639	4,247	1,816	85,501
Roan	4,943	189	179	55	5,366
Sable	33,722	1,539	1,168	430	36,859
Waterbuck	13,205	295	343	81	13,924
Hartebeest	1,030	71	28	7	1,136
Wildebeeste	52	—	2	1	55
Tsessebe	2,463	78	238	4	2,783
Gemsbok	1	—	—	—	1
Impala	30,608	2,302	1,903	440	35,253
Reedbuck	17,102	728	615	164	18,609
Bushbuck	32,085	2,056	2,252	1,172	37,565
Duiker	150,747	13,660	9,239	6,310	179,956
Sharpe's Steinbuck	30,651	1,945	548	2	33,146
Klipspringer	12,563	1,385	316	1	14,265
Oribi	2,831	137	7	42	3,017
Livingstone Suni	146	—	1	—	147
Warthog	57,070	4,751	4,704	3,091	69,616
Baboon	36,766	5,015	5,414	2,619	49,814
Bushpig	15,196	1,365	1,721	1,288	19,570
Lion	122	2	1	—	125
Leopard	423	20	23	11	477
Cheetah	36	2	2	1	41
Hyena	214	43	36	25	318
Wild Dog	388	78	39	16	521
Wild Cat	1,567	—	—	—	1,567
Jackal	805	—	—	—	805
Lynx	19	—	—	—	19
Monkey	2,272	—	—	—	2,272
Antbear	31	—	—	—	31
Steinbuck	4,493	384	60	1	4,938
Nyala	6	1	—	—	7
Unclassified	615	—	—	—	615
TOTAL	550,597	41,886	34,207	18,003	644,693