

# Oryx

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Oryx - The International Journal of Conservation, is now published quarterly by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Fauna & Flora International. It is a leading scientific journal of biodiversity conservation, conservation policy and sustainable use, with a particular interest in material that has the potential to improve conservation management and practice.

The website, <http://www.oryxthejournal.org/>, plays a vital role in the journal's capacity-building work. Amongst the site's many attributes is a compendium of sources of free software for researchers and details of how to access Oryx at reduced rates or for free in developing countries. The website also includes extracts from Oryx issues 10, 25 and 50 years ago, and a gallery of research photographs that provide a fascinating insight into the places, species and people described in the journal.

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## THE ZULULAND GAME RESERVES. A SUMMARY OF THE POSITION AND SOME SUGGESTIONS, BY C. W. HOBLEY. C.M.G.

The future of these game reserves is affording anxiety to nature lovers both in England and South Africa.

The areas are as follows :—

(1) Mfolozi Reserve .. ..	133,454 acres.
(2) Hluhluwe Reserve .. ..	40,025 „
(3) Mkuzi Reserve .. ..	62,222 „
(4) Nduma Reserve .. ..	24,320 „
(5) Giants' Castle Reserve .. ..	50,000 <small>(This reserve is not actually in Zululand)</small>

As far as can be ascertained the first three blocks were, a few years ago, de-proclaimed as game reserves, but shooting was prohibited in them and they are patrolled by a small staff.

It should be widely realised that the perpetuation of these areas is somewhat doubtful for during the last few years they have locally become a bone of contention.

In the first place they are most of them (if not all) tsetse fly infected. An ill-advised game drive in this region some years ago, by scattering fugitive animals over farms in the neighbourhood, undoubtedly led to the infection of the cattle of colonists by nagana and it is alleged that about 1,000 head died. Whether this was the sole cause of the migration of the tsetse flies is not certain.

At any rate there is a strong local agitation for the final abolition of the first three reserves and their conversion into farms, it being alleged that they are saleable as potential cotton growing areas. We thus have the land hunger of the speculator trading on the danger of the tsetse fly, with the biltong vendor and hide merchant in the offing, and all tending to the annihilation of the game.

For some time past an entomologist of the Union Government has been studying the habits of the species of tsetse which infests the reserves and it is hoped that his researches may result in some scheme of control which is feasible, no information is, however, as yet available regarding his investigations.

The Union Government is not indifferent to the question of game preservation as is evidenced by the splendid way in which it has carried through the bill forming the wonderful National Park on the Sabi River, and a great tribute is due to the pertinacity of the Hon. P. Grobler, the present Minister of Lands who in face of very considerable difficulties, steered the Bill through the House and who is responsible for it becoming law.

In the democratic dominions, the passage of such measures is fraught with difficulty, the long view does not always prevail, and the material outlook of men who hope to benefit financially often outweighs other considerations. The cry of hindering development, although it may not have a very sound basis, is one which local governments sometimes find it difficult to combat.

In the Mfolozi reserve (which is the largest) there are still to be found about twenty specimens of the famous White Rhinoceros, the sole survivors in the southern half of the continent of Africa of the thousands which once roamed over its vast expanses. The rarity of this creature has excited a considerable amount of interest in the fate of this particular reserve and there is little doubt that this has tended to postpone any drastic measures.

The opponents of these reserves, it is believed, realise this, and periodically we hear of surreptitious incursions into the area to slaughter one or two of these rare creatures. The carcasses are said to be left where they fall, the object being to gradually annihilate the species, for when it is extinct they feel that the main obstacle to obtaining the land occupied by the reserve will have disappeared.

The land occupied by the reserves is said to be of indifferent quality and the area is often afflicted by severe drought and consequent shortness of water. There is in addition no pressure of population needing extra land for the production of food.

Land, however, in South Africa is often looked upon as a species of currency and an unalienated block is inevitably the object of desire of a class of men who will take it up, not to develop, but to pass it on from hand to hand with a profit accruing to each holder.

In many ways these reserves would have been politically in a better strategic position if they had been all together in one block, but, each being designed to preserve certain species, they are not.

Whether public opinion in Natal is strong enough to insist on the retention of one or more remains to be seen. At present however, it appears likely that the Mfolozi reserve will be alienated to private owners, in fact, the question as to whether the few remaining white rhinoceros can be transported alive to another reserve is under consideration. A final decision in this matter rests with the people of South Africa and all we can do is to state the case and suggest that the matter should receive the fullest consideration before an irrevocable step is taken. Once the game is destroyed nothing can replace it and future generations are certain to deplore its loss.

It may be of some interest to give some idea of the game population in each of the Zululand reserves as far as it can be ascertained.

#### MFOLOZI RESERVE.

##### *Existing species :—*

White rhinoceros ( <i>R. simus typicus</i> ) ..	20
Prehensile lipped rhino ( <i>R. bicornis</i> ) ..	2 or 3
Buffalo .. .. .	100
Kudu .. .. .	50
Brindled gnu .. .. .	400 to 500
Burchell's Zebra .. .. .	400
Reedbuck .. .. .	30
Mountain reedbuck ( <i>Carvicapra fulvorufula</i> )	100
Duiker .. .. .	A few
Waterbuck .. .. .	100
Wart Hog .. .. .	200

This reserve was, it is believed, mainly constituted to preserve the sole surviving White Rhino, Kudu and Waterbuck.

#### HLUHLUWE RESERVE.

*Existing Species :—*

Black Rhinoceros ( <i>R. bicornis</i> )	150
Buffalo .. .. .	200
Kudu .. .. .	100
Waterbuck .. .. .	60
Brindled gnu .. .. .	400
Zebra .. .. .	200
Reed Buck .. .. .	200
Mountain Reedbuck .. .. .	300
Duiker .. .. .	Numerous
Blue bush duiker ( <i>C. monticola</i> )	Fairly common
Klipspringer .. .. .	Fairly common
Bush pig .. .. .	Numerous
Wart hog .. .. .	Scarce

This reserve was constituted to preserve the black rhino, buffalo, kudu, waterbuck, reedbuck and klipspringer.

#### MKUZI RESERVE.

*Existing Species :—*

Black rhinoceros .. .. .	30—50
Inyala ( <i>Tragelaphus angasi</i> ).. .. .	200—300
Kudu .. .. .	60
Waterbuck .. .. .	30
Mpala .. .. .	150—200
Brindled gnu .. .. .	600—800
Zebra .. .. .	300
Reedbuck .. .. .	100
Duiker .. .. .	Common
Blue bush duiker .. .. .	Numerous
Red bush duiker ( <i>C. natalensis</i> ) .. .. .	Numerous

<sup>1</sup> The latest information received is that this reserve has been denuded of game and divided among settlers who have unsuccessfully endeavoured to found farms therein.

Bush buck	..	..	..	Numerous
Steenbuck	..	..	..	Fairly common
Sharpe's steenbuck	..	..	..	Fairly common
Zululand Suni	..	..	..	Numerous

This reserve is important as preserving the rare Inyala, also rhinoceros, impala, the two species of steinbuck, the rare Suni (*Nosotragus livingstonianus zuluensis*) and the bush duiker.

#### NDUMA RESERVE. Ingwavuma District.

Comparatively little precise information is available regarding the game population of this reserve, but it is said to contain Inyala and Impala, also Hippopotamus. The area being mostly covered with dense bush the stock of game is difficult to estimate.

#### THE GIANT'S CASTLE RESERVE (In the Drakensberg Mountains on the Basuto border.

##### *Existing Species* :—

Eland	..	..	..	500—600
Oribi	..	..	..	Fairly common
Mountain reed buck	..	..	..	Fairly common
Vaal reed buck ( <i>Pelea capreolus</i> )	..	..	..	Fairly common
Klipspringer	..	..	..	Fairly common

This reserve was partly constituted to protect eland and further to preserve a well-known beauty spot. It is unlikely to be abolished.

In estimates such as are above given, it must be remembered that it is impossible to enumerate the smaller antelopes with any degree of accuracy for they hide away in the bush and are not in herds. No mention has been made of the large carnivora. There are, however, lions in the Mkuzi reserve and leopards and cheetah in some of the others.

These reserves beyond a doubt carry a valuable assemblage of species and it will be a tragedy if they are swept out of existence.

One of the difficulties regarding the perpetuation of the first three of these reserves is the seasonal shortage of water and

grazing. The result of this being that in periods of drought numbers of the bigger antelopes stray over the boundaries in search of water and grass. Coming as they do from tsetse infested tracts they incur odium owing to the belief that they bring with them tsetse flies and thus cause losses among domestic stock on adjacent farms.

The solution of this difficulty is to improve the water supplies in the reserve and more important still to keep the population density down to suit the grazing supply. This opens the way to a suggestion which is made in the hope that it may receive local consideration as a reasonable *modus vivendi*.

There are men in South Africa who are keen on legitimate sport and who are willing to incur a reasonable expenditure to get it. It is suggested that the first three reserves should be declared public areas for big game shooting. The shooting therein to be by licence and on a schedule to be varied from time to time. The number of licences issued in each season would have to be notified beforehand and some method of equitable allocation devised.

The scheme would then work out as follows :—If in a particular reserve there were say 600 zebra and that reserve could only comfortably carry 300, then licences allowing of the shooting of 300 could be issued, *e.g.*, 150 licences, each being allowed to shoot two, so on with other species. The slaughter of very rare animals would be forbidden. The licence fees would probably cover the cost of warding the reserve, in fact, the licence fee could be so graduated that the revenue balanced expenditure.

It is believed that some such scheme would be greatly appreciated by true sportsmen in the country and their interest would result in the shooting grounds being as carefully managed as a Scotch deer forest. As far as can be seen there is only one danger and that is that the shooting in the reserve might tend to scatter the game and cause it to stray outside the boundaries more than it does at present. Any odd animals, however, which strayed on to the farm lands would be shot. Licensed shooting in the preserve would only be allowed at certain seasons and if the water supplies in the area were im-

proved and made permanent, the innate conservatism of game would also tend to keep it to its usual habitat.

It is submitted that the proposal is well worth trying, for the natural increase of game in a succession of good years, particularly the increase of the large herbivores, is bound to lead to serious problems when a year of limited rainfall occurs. Under this scheme the big game sportsmen of South Africa would all take an interest in its success and there is no greater supporter of game preservation than a good sportsman.