

# Oryx

The International Journal of Conservation

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The Society was founded in 1903 as the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, and subsequently named the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society. Fauna & Flora International is conserving the planet's threatened species and ecosystems – with the people and communities who depend on them.

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.

The [Rhino Resource Center](#) posted this PDF in June 2009. We are grateful for the permission.

## THE WHITE RHINOCEROS

By CUTHBERT CHRISTY

THE case of the white rhino, as most people seem to realise, is a pretty hopeless one. He obviously belongs to another world, and his extinction in this is fairly certain in the near future. In the British Sudan very few individuals remain. Those along the west bank of the Nile can, I should fancy, not exceed half-a-dozen pairs.

A little farther westward, along the Nile-Congo Divide, from about Yei in Western Mongala to a point some distance north-west of Tembura in the Bahr-el-Ghazal, they are more numerous, especially in that section of the divide between Meridi and Yambio. In that district in 1916 I came upon them many times in my rambles and the fact that I saw at least two animals with what seemed to me horns of extraordinary length is some evidence that in that particular locality they were not disturbed.

In 1916 on the Congo side of the Divide, especially in the district opposite the Meridi-Yambio section, I found the species individually was much more common than anywhere on the British side. On the morning of my arrival at Aba on the motor road, early in that year, the natives had speared two rhinos within sight of the station. The animals were both young males, and in the neighbourhood I saw quite a number of rhino skulls bleaching in the sun, conspicuous objects in the recently burnt-off bush. In a Greek store at Aba, on the same occasion, I was shown a pile of at least a hundred rhino horns, worth from £1 to £3 apiece, I think the trader told me, but which he could not sell owing to the restrictions put upon their sale in, or transit through, the Sudan.

Westward of Aba, and more or less throughout the Haut Nile district north of the Nile river, I came upon the

animals themselves, or their extraordinary private middens, almost daily. Near or along the divide, when roaming about the bush, we sometimes walked into single individuals or family parties twice or three times a day, but never once did I see a horn of any length. In the burnt and blackened bush the animals were often unnoticed until within a few feet of them, and frequently the warning croak of the white paddy-bird was the first indication that the great walking gargoyle was near. Sometimes I had to back away with my finger on the trigger, but near though I often was, I can only remember two occasions upon which the great beasts instituted proceedings, or seemed to take much notice of my intrusion beyond an up-and-down motion of the head, as if to be sure that the tossing muscles were in working order.

On one of the occasions referred to, we were along the water parting of the divide marching through the uninhabited and trackless country north of Tembura. I was leading the way, with compass and notebook, with two askaris behind me, and we all three passed so close by Mr Rhino without seeing him that when he got started the first porter behind us was knocked down or tumbled, and on looking round, as I seized my rifle, I saw the beast careering down the line and my forty porters diving into the bushes. It was ludicrous to see how instantaneously those little Niamniams dissociated themselves from their loads, but it was no laughing matter for me afterwards with the knowledge of serious breakages.

Compared with the common rhino this species, in my experience, might almost be described as harmless, and nothing could be easier for the native, I should think, than to spear him; hence I fear that his extinction is within sight. The only question now is, How can his existence best be prolonged? In the British Sudan he can be and should be protected, and if his name has been allowed to again appear upon the "Game List," I hope every endeavour will be made to induce the Sudan Government to reverse their decision, and place it again upon the "protected list." Success in this direction, however, is not sufficient to have much real effect in prolonging the life of the species. It is

with the Congo Authorities in Brussels that action should be taken. The small region in the Congo in which the animal is commonest is almost uninhabited, and it would not be difficult for the Congo Administration to enforce upon Chief Bwendi, and one or two other small chiefs of the region, a prohibition in favour of this interesting species, forbidding at the same time the sale of rhino horn throughout the Congo. The Authorities of the Nbangi Shari district of French Equatorial Africa should also be asked to participate, in order to make the Congo prohibition effective.