

# 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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## GAME AND GAME RESERVES IN THE TRANSVAAL.

By Sir ALFRED E. PEASE, Bart.

Major J. S. Hamilton, the Game Warden of the Transvaal Sabi Game Reserve, contributed in Vol. II. of this Journal a very full and most interesting account of the present condition and prospects of the wild fauna within the Government Reserve. Since Major Hamilton wrote his article further evidence is forthcoming of the success that has attended his efforts. If the present policy could be guaranteed permanency, it is certain that this Reserve would be the means of not only increasing the head of game throughout the Eastern Transvaal, but of restoring the eland, the giraffe, and the elephant. When I left the Transvaal last year (1905) there were no eland left within the Reserve, and probably none outside in the Transvaal. Some five or seven giraffes still lived in the Reserve, and one small herd of elephants had entered it from Portuguese territory.

The question of the immediate future is what will be the attitude of the new responsible Government towards the Reserve, and it is important to secure a healthy public opinion on the subject of the preservation of the fauna of the Colony.

The present boundaries and condition of this Game Reserve would be difficult to maintain under any Government, owing to the number of highly mineralised farms owned by private individuals and companies within its borders, to the existence of mineral resources on farms and lands belonging to the Crown, and to the prospect of a railway being completed through a portion of the Reserve. The position may become more precarious when a representative Government is in control. I believe, however, that a great deal may be done to secure the results of the efforts of the past three years, even if a large area of the existing Reserve has ultimately to be abandoned. This paper is therefore supplementary to Major Hamilton's, and is written with a view of pointing out what is the general position immediately outside the Reserve on the eve of a new form of Government, and to press the necessity of an endeavour being made to educate public opinion and enlist its protection for all species of wild animal life which are harmless to the public interest.

Those who honestly fear the risk of increasing pests such as the tsetse-fly, and those who, out of simple cussedness, oppose restrictions on the slaughter of wild animals, are the people who are likely to be the most difficult to deal with.

It is a fact that in the Barberton district outside the Reserve the tsetse-fly has disappeared with the extermination of the buffalo, but it is by no means certain that it has gone *because* of their practical extinction; for there are still buffalo in the Reserve and no tsetse. There are plenty of zebra and other big game within and without the Reserve and no tsetse. My own idea is that the kind of forest country has quite as much to do with tsetse as the presence of buffalo, and that tsetse come and go in such places as present conditions more or less favourable to their propagation. If it is found that tsetse reappear in the Reserve with the increase of buffalo, the latter must be sacrificed; but I believe it may prove that buffalo can exist there without bringing tsetse.

A great deal has been done *outside* the Reserve in three years to save species of antelope from extinction and to increase largely the stock of others (such as roan, kudu, waterbuck, &c.), which was getting terribly low. The Game Preservation Ordinance has done great good and been well supported by the public, though subjected to a large amount of criticism, but on the whole sensible criticism. No doubt improvements can be made in the law which, while not impairing its objects, would secure even a larger amount of approval. The law requires adjusting to the needs of each particular district. Some species of antelope are very numerous in one district, or on some farms, and are extinct, or on the verge of extinction, in others. In the Barberton district you may have (or more correctly there are) large farms or estates on which a fine head, say, of reedbuck, or rooi rhebok, had been for years carefully maintained; and because the species was exterminated, or nearly so, on all surrounding lands, the proprietor is prevented by the Ordinance from enjoying any of the results of his care and trouble.

Now each district (generally the magisterial) has its own branch of the Transvaal Game Protection Society, and each district appoints its own committee to watch its interests, and sends delegates to the Central Council. The constitution is perfectly democratic, and through this machinery the general and local needs are brought before the notice of the Government and the final recommendations made by the Society regarded as authoritative. Thus the Lieutenant-Governor or Colonial Secretary under the powers vested in these officials under the Ordinance can prohibit, restrict, or permit the killing of particular species. Ultimately the survival or extinction of the more interesting and rarer fauna will depend on the public voice. During the two years I acted as Resident Magistrate in the Barberton district (over 5,000 square miles in extent) we preserved most strictly all the rarer animals, and I think the following notes give a pretty accurate account of how things stood in April 1905 outside the Reserve:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have placed \* against those entirely protected, and † against those temporarily protected for a term of years or by withholding from season to season the issue of licences.

LION (*Felis leo*).—A few of these were reported from time to time. Seven were seen and one killed near Mallelane in 1904, several near Hector Spruit, and three seen near Mananga in April 1905. There were a few in the Lebombo bush and Lomati flats, but not seen by white men to my knowledge.

LEOPARD (*Felis pardus*).—Fairly common throughout the district, but seldom seen.

CHEETAH (*Cynaelurus jubatus*).—The hunting leopard is occasionally seen. I knew of a pair near Louw's Creek in 1904.

THE AARD WOLF (*Proteles cristatus*).—Not common, but occasionally seen even in the Kaap Valley.

THE SPOTTED HYÆNA (*Hyæna crocuta*).—A few in certain localities bordering on the Reserve, in the wilder mountains, and in the Lomati Flats. Traps and poison are gradually exterminating all carnivora.

THE BLACK-BACKED JACKAL (*Canis mesomelas*) is becoming rarer every year. I never saw one during two years' residence.

THE HUNTING WILD-DOG (*Lycæon pictus*).—Frequently reported; hunts in packs in and out of the Reserve, and travels quickly over great stretches of country.

OTTER (*Lutra capensis*).—Fairly common. Probably more numerous than generally suspected.

BLUE WILDEBEESTE (*Connochætes taurinus*).—Some nice herds of these still exist in the Lomati Flats, and there are a few near Hector Spruit.

†BLACK WILDEBEESTE (*Connochætes gnu*).—The last of these were seen at Louw's Creek in 1885.

THE BLUE DUIKER (*Cephalophus monticola*).—Ubiquitous and very numerous.

THE RED DUIKER (*Cephalophus natalensis*) is very common in the district; haunts bracken and bramble thickets and low bush in the mountain kloofs.

KLIPSPRINGER (*Oreotragus saltator*).—Common on most mountain ranges.

†ORIBI (*Ourebia scoparia*).—Becoming very scarce. I only knew of a few small herds in 1905—one lot of eight on Inyoko, one of eight in the Kaap Valley, and a few more near Kaapshe Hoop.

STENBOK (*Raphicerus campestris*).—Very common throughout the bush veld.

GRYSBOK (*Raphicerus melanotis*).—Two seen on the Lebombo Range in 1904; very scarce.

WATERBUCK (*Cobus ellipsiprimnus*).—Fairly common in suitable localities. Some near the lower reaches of the Kaap River and along the Komati and Lomati Rivers.

REEDBUCK (*Cerricapra arundinum*).—Common in certain localities, scarce in the Kaap Valley, numerous in the south-east.

ROOI RHEBOK (*Cerricapra fulvorufula*).—Common on moun-

tain-sides in most of the ranges. Numerous in the Kaap Valley hills, on the Lebombo, and in the wilder borderlands of Swaziland.

VAAL RHEBOK (*Pelea Capreolus*).—Common on the high mountains between Steynsdorp and Barberton. A few can be seen at times close to Barberton. They are numerous in the mountains towards Carolina.

IMPALA (*Aephyceros melampus*).—A nice herd near Louw's Creek; more between Malelane and Hector Spruit, and numerous on the Lomati Flats.

\*ROAN ANTELOPE (*Hippotragus equinus*).—A few on the Lomati Flats. I have seen their tracks and droppings on the Lebombo Hills.

\*SABLE ANTELOPE (*Hippotragus niger*).—None in 1905 south of the Crocodile River.

BUSHBUCK (*Tragelaphus scriptus*).—Very numerous throughout the district. Nearly every big kloof holds them.

\*KUDU (*Strepsiceros capensis*).—A nice stock in one or two limited areas. I was told by a man (who knows most about them within forty miles of Barberton) that he estimated there were at least ninety within twenty-five miles of Barberton. I have seen numerous tracks of them near the Three Sisters.

\*ELAND.—Extinct in the district. The last were killed during the war.

\*BUFFALO (*Bos caffer*).—Practically extinct outside the Reserve. It is rumoured that there are a few in the low mountain-bush between Malelane and Jeppe's Concession. This is possible, but not probable.

\*GIRAFFE (*Giraffa capensis*).—Extinct outside the Reserve.

\*HIPPOPOTAMUS (*H. amphibius*).—Scarce, but more numerous in the Komati River than stated by Major Hamilton. I have seen in 1904 thirteen heads out of the water in one pool in the Komati River, and photographed eleven, and saw them this year, but never so many as thirteen at a time.

BUSH PIG (*Potamochoerus chæropotamus*).—Common in certain localities; in thickly wooded kloofs and valleys.

WART HOG (*Phacochoerus æthiopicus*).—Common in the bush veld.

\*ZEBRA (*Equus burchelli*).—Fairly numerous on the Lomati Flats (south-east end); a small band near Louw's Creek.

\*RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros bicornis*).—Extinct outside the Reserve. The last killed near Barberton was killed near the Three Sisters in 1894.

\*ELEPHANT (*Elephas africanus*).—Extinct outside the Reserve for many years past.

The above, I think, includes all the larger antelopes that have been indigenous within the memory of the present generation in the Barberton district.

It may be as well to warn readers of this journal who are not

familiar with the names given in South Africa to certain animals, that among the extraordinary misnomers are the following: A leopard is called a tiger; a hyæna is called a wolf; a giraffe is called a camel or cameel; a zebra is called a quagga; a hippopotamus is called a sea-cow; a cheetah is called a leopard.

The following are some of the extinct or extremely rare survivors of species south of the Zambesi, as far as I can learn, or confined to comparatively restricted areas not mentioned in the foregoing notes:—

**RED HARTEBEESTE** (*Bubalis caama*).—Very rare in the Orange Colony and Transvaal; extinct in Cape Colony; a few in Natal; fairly plentiful in parts of South-West Africa.

**BONTEBOK** (*Damaliscus pygargus*).—Only exists on two farms in the Strand Veld (*vide* Selater's 'Fauna of South Africa').

**SESSAPY** (*Damaliscus lunatus*).—A few in the North-Eastern Transvaal.

**BLAAUWBOK** (*Hippotragus leucophæus*).—Quite extinct for a hundred years.

**INYALA** (*Tragelaphus angasi*).—Common in Swaziland and low bush countries of the East Coast.

**MOUNTAIN ZEBRA** (*Equus zebra*).—Still found in very reduced numbers in parts of Cape Colony.

**QUAGGA** (*Equus quagga*).—Quite extinct since 1878.

**WHITE RHINOCEROS** (*Rhinoceros simus*).—Extinct except in the Zulu Reserve. Some thirteen survived there in 1904.

**BLACK RHINOCEROS** (*Rhinoceros bicornis*).—Extinct in Cape Colony since about 1853; in the Orange Colony since about 1842. Only a few survive in Zululand, and perhaps one or two in the Transvaal.

I should like to take this opportunity of placing before others who may be able to throw some light on the matter a statement that has several times been made to me in the Barberton District of the existence of two very distinct varieties of the rooi rhebok. One gentleman of my acquaintance, Mr. Chas. Currie, A.R.M., who is a keen observer and a sportsman of great experience, is absolutely positive of this being a fact. There is (1) the *Ingxala*, the common rooi rhebok, which is found in sugar-bush and mountain-bush; (2) the *Inhlang*, which is only found on bare, stony, and rocky hills where there is very thin bush or even none. The latter is distinctly lighter in colour, bigger and heavier in the body, and carries a smaller head. I do not know if I have spelt the native names right; possibly they should be written N'xala and N'hlang.

I might add that the Barberton district is extremely rich in small mammals, such as the cats, mongooses, zorillas, lemurs, rats, mice, bats, &c., as well as ant-bears, pangolins, porcupines, &c. The former have never been properly collected or scientifically studied, and I believe a naturalist would find it a rich field for

research. Birds have been collected, but as the district presents every variety of altitude and climate, high, low, and middle veld, bush veld, forest, mountains bare and wooded, and heavily timbered kloofs, and is traversed by several large rivers, I doubt if any really representative collection has been made. I doubt if a better field for the ornithologist can be found in the Transvaal. I had hoped to study the ornithology of my district, but had neither time nor opportunity to do so during my two years of residence, but saw enough to convince me that a year's observation and attention to the birds would yield a great deal of new information, and probably not a few new species and varieties. I shall be happy to give any information in my power to assist any naturalist who has any idea of going there, and could give the names of residents who would be likely to supply useful information.

As a practical suggestion, may I remark that I believe no small good might be done by the circulation of our journal among the branches of the Transvaal Game Protection Society, the resident magistrates, the editors of local newspapers, and the members of the new Legislature?