

Oryx

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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.

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KENYA COLONY AND PROTECTORATE.

GAME DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT, 1935.

Staff.—One Game Warden (Captain A. T. A. Ritchie), three Game Rangers (F. H. Clarke, Captain R. Whittet, Mr. C. G. MacArthur), one Fish Warden (Mr. R. E. Dent), one Game and Vermin Control Officer (Captain J. T. Oulton).

Honorary Game Wardens—these are sixty in number; Honorary Trout Wardens—these number twenty-seven.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE.

	£
Revenue from Licences (Game, £5,537; Game Bird, £386; Trout, £893)	6,816
Revenue from Ivory and Confiscated Trophies	7,038
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Total Revenue	13,960
Total Expenditure	8,468
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Excess of Revenue over Expenditure.	£5,492

The weight of Government ivory sold in 1935 was 21,163 lb., and 1,353 lb. of rhino horn.

The value of ivory remained low: rhino horn, I am sorry to say, fetched higher prices than in recent years, an average for best quality being Sh. 15/50 per lb., as compared with Sh. 12/50 a year previously.

GENERAL REVIEW.

The last few years have shown, to an astonishing extent, that the practical difficulties of game preservation are increased by inadequate rainfall. At the risk of repeating something of what I said a year ago, I will explain briefly the causes. Drought has the following direct effects. (a) Natives gather inadequate crops, and in consequence look round for other sources of food and cash. Hard taught husbandry habits of a generation go by the board; and in much of the bush country the intensive brewing of poison

preludes the departure of large-scale hunting expeditions. (b) Animals are concentrated on such streams and waterholes as remain; and, being lethargic, are doubly vulnerable.

(a) and (b) thus result in serious damage being done to the game; and it is of course the animals with a trophy as well as a food value, elephant and rhino in particular, that suffer most.

(c) Animals are driven by hunger into crops and cause serious depredations.

(d) There is severe competition in many pastoral areas between domestic and wild animals. In some parts, as in the case of rhino in the game reserve, this competition reaches its acutest form in attacks on humans and their beasts.

(c) and (d) both call for reprisals, and game suffers still more.

The above outline is sufficient to show the additional difficulties we have to face when the rains are inadequate, as unhappily they continued to be right up to October. 1935 was thus, following the droughts of 1933 and 1934, a bad year, and one must devoutly hope that the heavy rains at its close herald a new pluvial epoch.

ELEPHANT.

General.

Fifty-five tusks were exported during the year from elephants killed on licence, of a total weight of 4,227 lb., giving an average of 77 lb. per tusk. Of these tusks, eleven weighed over a hundred pounds each.

Six hundred and nineteen tusks were handed in or confiscated of a total weight of 14,713 lb., giving an average of 24 lb.

The heaviest tusk seen during the year was one of 169 lb. from the Tana River near Garissa.

A fine elephant was shot by a visitor in the same locality. The tusks weighed 126 and 118 lb. respectively. A better beast still was shot by another visitor, near Voi, in December. The tusks weighed 129 and 125 lb. respectively.

A very curious collection of ivory was sent to the office from Lamu. It consisted of six separate tusks, all drawn from the same tusk socket. Unfortunately the skull has not yet been retrieved ; it is said that the other tusk socket contained a single quite normal tusk.

Damage, and Control Measures.

Complaints of damage by elephant were as widespread as ever during the year, and a number of elephants had perforce to be shot.

Among the more important minor undertakings were the following : Mr. Cunningham, on Laikipia, shot thirty-five. Mr. J. A. Hunter, in Solai, shot twenty, putting a summary end to a potentially most serious invasion. Some seventy odd were killed in the coastal belt, ten in the terribly thick Mrima bush by Mr. Pomeroy Salmon—no small achievement ; and the remainder by Arab hunters mainly in the Kipini-Lamu area. Mr. W. H. Hoey had to shoot thirteen more from the Elgon herd. I hope that the lesson he has given them will be sufficient to keep them from further marauding forays.

The number of tusks handed in from all the control measures was 329 of a total weight of 5,589 lb., giving an average per tusk of 17 lb.

The issue of Governor's Permits in the Meru area continued till June, when it was considered advisable to modify the scheme ; from then on till the end of the year Major Elliott and Mr. Carr Hartley were put in sole charge of the campaign, and worked together till Major Elliott went home in August, after which Mr. Carr Hartley carried on single-handed, showing great competence and abiding by his instructions with meticulous care. Mr. Carr Hartley shot over a hundred elephants, and I believe I am correct in saying that he did not lose one wounded : a very fine performance.

In all, in the Meru district, some 290 elephants were killed carrying tusks averaging 15 lb. each. Approximately 55 per cent were males.

I described at some length in my last report the problem of the Kisii herd and the various attempts that had been made to solve it. Early in the year I went over the area involved hoping to find some reasonable solution—by reasonable I mean within the capacity of our finances. The more I learn of it the more it appears that no peripheral control scheme can hope for great success with this herd unless its numbers are first considerably reduced, for there is perpetual pressure pushing them outwards. The objection to setting about this heavy reduction forthwith is that it would have the immediate effect of dispersing a host of angry beasts from their legitimate grounds into areas where they can and will cause a reign of terror. It is thus somewhat of a vicious circle. The only obvious alternative is heavy and consistent shooting in the South Kavirondo Native Reserve but this is not easily secured.

RHINO.

The settlers of Nyeri and Ngobit decided, early in the year, that rhino had greatly increased on and in the vicinity of farms and that their numbers must be drastically reduced. The matter was brought into tragic prominence by the death of Mr. H. Carpenter, who, while out riding, was caught and killed by a rhino.

Mr. Cunningham, Honorary Game Warden, carried out the work brilliantly, killing twenty rhino at Ngobit and twenty-seven round Nyeri. Major Kingdon took part in the campaign on his side of the district and shot fourteen.

This wholesale killing of rhino will be regretted by game lovers, but one should hesitate before condemning it as unjustifiable. The dwellers in the Nyeri area are just as keen on game and game preservation as any other community, perhaps more so; but they have found, many of them by unpleasant experience, that to treat rhino as foolish and deny them vindictiveness is to make a generalization which is unduly optimistic and certainly not borne out by facts. From my own experience of rhino, I am satisfied that the majority, under normal conditions, are blusterers and bluffers.

I am equally certain that any one of them, given reasonable provocation, will charge and charge with intent "to make a job of it". In that word "reasonable" lies the difficulty of predicting what any individual beast will do, for a rhino's interpretation of the word is very arbitrary. One thing I think is clear: if on account of forest fires, climatic conditions, or other causes, a rhino moves from his normal haunts to a strange beat, he is certain to be more bellicose than usual. It may in some cases be direct cause and effect; he may have changed his ground as a result of being driven off by another animal, and this may have affected his temper. Be that as it may, I think the mere fact of being on unfamiliar ground is in itself sufficient to make them more prone to attack.

If this belief is correct it will account for much of the trouble in the Nyeri area, since I think that many of the rhino that were shot there last year are animals that have come down from high on the Aberdares, the burning of scrub above the forest zone doubtless having much to do with the migration.

Motoring up the Great North Road—we are back in England at the moment—one is much annoyed by a 20-mile limit as one approaches some small town. One looks on the restriction in a very different light if one lives in the town and one's front door opens on the main street. By the same token, before condemning Nyeri and its rhino, remember that you don't live there!

DAMAGE BY GAME AND VERMIN.

I referred in my last report to the problem created in pastoral areas by the existence of vast herds of plains game. This problem has been growing more acute for some years, and was of course made more pressing by the drought. As a result of constant calls for assistance from Nanyuki, I visited that area in March and found that the trouble there had by no means been exaggerated. Thousands of zebra and oryx, reinforced by eland and countless "Tommies" were to be seen in any place that still could show a trace of grass; and

the lot of the cattle and sheep owners was made the more difficult. A proportion of the vast assembly had doubtless migrated down from the still drier country to the north, but there is undoubtedly a great quantity of game now resident in this area. During normal times, when grass is everywhere and the whole of Laikipia is green, this game is dispersed and few settlers suffer loss of grazing to a serious extent. As some mitigation, where things were most serious, we issued a quantity of old .303 ammunition. In addition the Assistant Game Warden, Northern Frontier District, went to Nanyuki to help in the organization of a regular campaign. Soon after his arrival there relief came—from a quarter to which we had long looked in vain—the sky.

For the time being the trouble was over, but it will sooner or later return in worse degree, for there are now few carnivora in the settled areas, and practically no shooting takes place, and thus there is nothing to check the natural increase of the herds. In fact the control of gregarious game is one of the most troublesome problems which beset game preservation in Kenya. The problem would solve itself if only one could find a market for hides and meat. The latter appears almost hopeless owing to practical difficulties of preparation and distribution. I am more hopeful of hides, zebra hides at least. There is at present a market for them in America though it is unfortunately an exacting one and without guarantee of permanence.

At the risk of being tedious, I must repeat what I have often said before: that this matter of vast herds of game cannot be dealt with, at present at least, by individual effort. With closer settlement such would be possible, or with universal and adequate fencing; for then everyone would deal with the game on his own land. Now, a large landowner can harry the herds on his land and drive them off, only to have other and larger herds invade him from the unoccupied lands nearby. It is a serious matter, and one with which Government will in all probability have to concern itself for some time to come.

The most important trouble that remains to be mentioned was that caused by baboons, and to a lesser degree buffalo, elephant, lion, and waterbuck, on the Tana River. In response to calls for help, Captain Whittet undertook two safaris on the middle Tana, and contrived to improve things considerably. A trained poisoner was also sent to Kipini for baboon work. It is to be hoped that, before long, the degree of protection now afforded to leopards will begin to show some effect on the baboon population of the river, since their depredations on some stretches make cultivation a vain business.

Other complaints were of bush pig in Kisii, hyænas from Elementeita forest reserve and baboons in Tambach, with all of which Captain Oulton dealt before going on leave. Taking into consideration the fact that the year followed a long period of drought the amount of damage reported from far and near was somewhat less than might have been anticipated.

POACHING AND SOME NOTABLE CAPTURES.

Captain Whittet's report of the Northern Frontier District was much more encouraging than usual.

He stated that there appeared to be a decrease in poaching over much of the area, attributable, firstly, to the fact that Italian Somaliland was too engaged in other matters to deal in ivory and rhino horn and, secondly, to the presence of more military and police in the Northern Frontier District than is normally the case.

Mr. MacArthur caught and secured the conviction of seven Wateita killing game by means of pits in the vicinity of Maktau, the first time for many years that this means of poaching has come to light in Kenya. The pits extended for 120 yards and it was clear from the skeletons nearby that they had done serious damage.

Two catches of rhino horn coming through from Tanganyika Territory were made. In the first case a Somali carrying eleven horns on the Moshi train was caught by Mr. MacArthur on arrival at Voi. In the second case the Mombasa scouts caught two Moshi Arabs with thirty-nine rhino horns.

The Kitui scouts in July brought back a good haul from the direction of the Tharaka country : they had seventeen tusks, twelve rhino horns, and three Somali and twenty-four Wakamba malefactors.

In November Abass Loo and his Mombasa colleagues returned from a long and very successful safari in the Malindi hinterland. They secured the conviction of some forty Giriama and Wasanye and recovered 1,700 lb. of ivory and four rhino horns. The success of this safari was largely due to the great assistance given then and at other times to our scouts by Captain Rimington, who was District Officer, Malindi, and to him we offer our best thanks.

Mr. Mbarak Ali, Honorary Game Warden, arrested two Indians and three natives with six tusks and eight rhino horns in Mombasa.

A large consignment of rhino horns coming from Uganda was held up at Mombasa by the Customs. It was accompanied by Customs papers purporting to show that it was in transit coming from Ruanda-Urundi. It appeared on investigation that the papers were forgeries, and the horn, 615 lb. in weight, was confiscated by order of the Court in Uganda.

I am glad to be able to state that those deadly devices, poisoned arrow traps, which I reported as prevalent in the Sabaki country and other parts of the low bush zone several years ago, are almost if not entirely a thing of the past. Mr. MacArthur is much to be congratulated on having accomplished this, for the Wasanye are wild and elusive folk and never did their hunting near the highways.

NOTES OF IMPORTANCE.

On two occasions in the Northern Frontier District police and game scouts working in conjunction met with forcible opposition from large parties of armed poachers. Our people were fortunate both times, and escaped injury ; two of the poachers were killed in each case. These fatalities—I wish I could consider them regrettable—had a salutary effect on Somali and Boran game activity.

The Garbatulla elephants maintained their reputation. Between Merti and Garbatulla, the District Commissioner's lorry was on one occasion stuck in a dry river bed when a herd of elephant approached. A cow, more venturesome and ill-tempered than the rest, savaged the lorry and was in the process of demolishing it when a Tribal Retainer ran up and shot her.

Mr. MacArthur assisted the District Commissioner, Voi, to repatriate to their reserve some 750 Wakamba who were squatting about the Taveta area. I fear that a considerable number of these folk did not remain in their own country. Doubtless administration and the supervision of headmen proved irksome and curbed their hunting proclivities unduly, so they again trickled off, and are now I gather a source of trouble to the Tanganyika authorities. This centrifugal urge of the Wakamba accounts for much of the more serious sporadic poaching that, with a skeleton staff, we find so difficult to suppress in the less accessible bush areas.

Major C. H. Fowle killed an astonishing rhino on his farm near Nanyuki. The front horn was $45\frac{7}{8}$ inches long and was not carried vertically in the normal manner but protruded forward horizontally. The back horn was 22 inches long. The two horns together weighed $29\frac{1}{2}$ lb. and are the most remarkable pair I have seen. The animal carrying them was a male, and must have suffered great inconvenience from the front horn, for the great beast was shot in a vicious and quite unprovoked charge.

Several European storks (*Ciconia ciconia*) ringed in Germany were recovered during the year, chiefly from the Nandi Reserve.

The blood lust of the Kenya-Uganda Railway appears to abate somewhat, for their bag of giraffe during the year totalled fifteen only: less than usual. Incidentally I gather that the suggestion made some time ago to change the name of the engines' bumpers from cowcatchers to giraffe-catchers, has been abandoned.

Our old friend the Nandi bear (*Ursus bado kidogo*), after several years' hibernation, was seen again on two occasions

by competent observers—if they will forgive my patronage. I will give extracts from their accounts in their own words. Captain F. D. Hislop, when District Commissioner, Kapsabet, wrote as follows :—

“ I have to announce that I believe we saw a Nandi Bear ! Naturally, I cannot be positive. Just at dusk, we were about half mile short of the point where the Londiani and Eldama Ravine roads fork. Suddenly, loping along the right-hand side of the road which is bordered by forest, we saw a dark grey creature, about three feet high to the back, round and even podgy, with a small, pointed head. It moved on all four legs, but with a slight pronounced power in the hind legs. It went on for about fifty yards until it found an opening into the forest and disappeared.

“ I am unable to say what it was if not a bear. It was not a hyena or a baboon—of that I am certain. I have never seen any other animal like it. Its whole appearance and action was like a bear, such as I have seen in zoos. It was a compact, powerful-looking beast, and obviously not afraid of the car, as it moved quite sedately until it found a chance to cut into the forest.

“ I really think it must have been the legendary animal, but of course I cannot assert this as a fact.”

A similar mystery surrounds the animal which slew a forest hog on Zinga Estate, Kaimosi. Mr. Gunnar Anderssen was good enough to forward the following particulars :—

“ It was about the end of June, 1935, in the very wet weather, when rain was starting rather early each day, often about 11 o'clock. We were planting shade trees in the coffee. One particular day the first shower of rain came on about 12 noon. I gave out posho for the day and told the boys to go on collecting shade plants for the next day. As they went away through the *shamba* they started making a terrible noise, yelling and shouting. When I came

to see what was wrong I found them still shouting, a few hundred yards from my house, round a killed forest pig. At the same time I heard a roar from the forest—not like anything I have heard before. That the pig had been killed by a very powerful animal could easily be seen, and to judge from the roar he was not very pleased to be driven off.

“ I asked the boys to help me to track, but they refused absolutely, explaining that they would not have anything to do with the ‘ Sheitani ’ as it was translated to me from Nandi language. It was no use me going alone into the forest, so, when the boys had cooled down a bit, I took their description of the beast, without making any suggestions to them :—

“ ‘ Very big, with long black hair and a long tail ’ ;

“ ‘ With long black hair, the tail carried like a dog’s, the head not very big.’

“ Very big and powerful it must have been from the way the pig had been handled. As regards black hair, we found long black hair lost in the battle, soft hair : this was not from the pig, which had coarser hair.

“ I could not get a clear foot-mark in the grass. What I could see looked very large, something like the mark of an old leopard which could not draw in his claws properly.

“ The pig appeared to have been killed in an extraordinary way, as if it had been hit with, say, a log, breaking the backbone ; it had then been turned over and the stomach torn open with powerful claws. The stomach, heart, etc., had been eaten.

“ I suggested to the boys that it must have been a hyæna with longer front legs than hind legs, but they said no. They knew about the very big forest hyæna, but that hyæna was not black, more like the colour of my washed-out corduroys. No : this was the ‘ devil ’ and they would not have anything to do with it.

“ As rain started again, I could not follow the tracks to get foot-marks on softer ground.”

NOTES FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION.

Leopards are now Game animals ; and no leopard skins accordingly can legally be bought unless the seller, be he native or not, has a permit issued by the Game Warden allowing the sale of the skin.

This is similarly true of colobus and blue monkey skins. All members of the community are earnestly requested to inform the Game Department or the Police of offers by natives without permits of skins of these animals for sale.

No game trophy may legally be exported from the Colony, unless an export permit for it has been obtained from the Game Warden's Office.

A troop of lions is now normally resident near Lone Tree, and anyone visiting the Game Reserve in the vicinity is advised not to go into thick cover.

In order to ensure that game is easily visible and not nervous in the Game Reserve near Nairobi, motorists are requested not to flurry animals unduly by driving near them at speed, nor to allow their dogs to hunt. I much prefer to base such requests on the interests of the community rather than on the liability to prosecution !

FISH.

The trout fishing season has been surprisingly good throughout the Colony. Fish have been plentiful and in good condition, in spite of the lowness of the rivers. A number of large fish have been taken as predicted, the lower water causing these pool dwellers to move about more than usual in their hunt for food.

The temperature of the rivers as a whole has been lower for a greater distance downstream than in the past three years ; consequently there will be a big supply of small fish (rainbows particularly) in the streams during 1936. I expect this to be a season of large baskets of medium-sized fish, provided the rains are good, and the rivers come up a bit. Stone Fly and Ephemerid Nymphs seen very plentiful in the streams, so that the condition of the fish should be good.

Crabs are not numerous and in some streams can no longer be relied upon to provide a large proportion of the trout's food, but may be considered only as a trout's luxury.

There seems to be very little poaching taking place on trout streams with the possible exception of one or two rivers in the native reserves and in privately owned land.

The poaching is confined almost entirely to natives, who use wire-netting as a Seine net or as a trap. The wire-netting so prevalent on Lake Naivasha last year is now rarely used.

The otter is indigenous to our mountain streams, where they have lived on crabs since the rivers and the crabs first existed. They have not recently invaded the streams in order to obtain a fish diet. In Lake Naivasha the worst and most serious poachers are cormorants and pelicans : both of which have increased in numbers since the introduction of tilapia and bass, until to-day I am positive that unless large numbers of both are killed the fishing on the lake will disappear. During Christmas week a count of young cormorants on Crescent Island was made by counting the young birds that could be seen in the nests : these came to nearly 200. At present I feel sure that there are not less than one thousand cormorants resident on the lake. An examination of the stomachs of a number which I have shot show them to be feeding entirely on black bass up to 2 lb. in weight. The pelicans : instead of a few birds who resided only for a short while before the introduction of fish, they are now resident in hundreds or thousands. I have recently seen one flock containing at the very least 500 birds. Beautiful and quaint as they are, their enormous consumption of fish makes it impossible for them to be allowed on Lake Naivasha except in very small numbers.

I had hoped that the black bass would have bred in sufficient numbers to provide for our fishermen and the fish-eating birds, but this the bass cannot do. They are already very scarce, so scarce, indeed, that no one fishes for them, and this in spite of shoals of young bass having been seen. As pelicans are not on the protected list I would ask every duck shooter to help by shooting any cormorant or pelican that

comes within range ; in the meantime I am trying to evolve an efficient method for the wholesale destruction of these birds, before they exterminate our fish, which they will undoubtedly do unless their numbers are reduced.

GAME BIRDS.

A movement was started in several settled areas to inaugurate a scheme of game bird protection. A close season has been suggested, and will doubtless be proclaimed in districts which ask for it.

It is of course the case that the proclamation of a close season will not by itself be of any great benefit ; for it is at present an offence under the Game Birds Ordinance to shoot any game birds on private land without the consent of the owner, and there is accordingly power already in the hands of any landowner to protect his birds over such periods of the year as he considers necessary.

It is argued however, and rightly I believe, that a close season will prove a stimulus to co-operation among landowners to take other steps which are essential for any considerable improvement. Such steps are—the suppression of squatters' and other unrestrained dogs ; the prevention of bird and egg destruction by squatters' children ; the killing of indigenous vermin, jackals, mongooses, and the rest ; the dedication for breeding purposes of certain suitable areas, which, not necessarily extensive, will not be cleared and where wood gathering, etc., will not be allowed ; the provision of drinking pools and grit holes if necessary.

The disappearance of game birds in many settled areas is due in very minor degree only, I believe, to the shot-gun. The clearing of breeding grounds and to some extent of feeding grounds, the depredations of immigrant natives and their dogs have, I think, been far more potent factors.

Though I have above been considering the guineafowl and francolin only, much the same applies in places to our home breeding ducks. It is to these birds, with perhaps the addition of the bustards, that a close season, coupled with individual and communal effort, will prove valuable and warrantable.

In this connection and in support of the above statements may I call attention to the definite fact that in vast areas of Kenya where the natives do not yet tamper with the game birds such as Masai, Samburu, Rendile, etc., those birds are invariably abundant to a remarkable degree notwithstanding grass fires and unlimited vermin.

CONSERVATION NOTES.

BURMA.

The Burma Wild Life Protection Bill became law on 11th October, 1936. It extends to the whole of Burma, except in so far as any area may be exempted from its operation by the Local Government.

The following are the main operative provisions of the Act :

Sanctuaries.—The Local Government may, by notification, declare any land which is at the disposal of the Government, and, subject to the consent of the owner and to such conditions as may be determined by mutual agreement, any land which is private property, to be a sanctuary.

Provided that before any area is declared to be a sanctuary, notices of the proposal to declare such area as a sanctuary should be published for a period of not less than three months, calling for objections to such proposal.

No person shall in a sanctuary—

(a) Hunt any animal except with the special permission of the Local Government which shall be granted only for scientific purposes or to preserve the balance of animals ;

(b) Drive, stampede, or wilfully disturb any animal.

Reserved Forests.—Subject to any right created by grant or contract in the manner prescribed in section 23 of the Burma Forest Act, 1902, no person shall in a reserved forest save under and in accordance with the conditions of a licence,

(a) Hunt, drive, stampede or wilfully disturb any animal,
or,

(b) Remove any animal or part or product thereof.