

# 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.

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## UGANDA.

### EXTRACTS FROM THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GAME DEPARTMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1937.

The annual report for the year 1937 of the Game Department of the Uganda Protectorate is, like all Captain Pitman's reports, an interesting and human document. "All the reserves," we read, "continue to be well stocked with wild life, particularly the Bunyoro and Gulu reserve. The new motor road to the Bwamba region has made the Semliki reserve accessible."

The report, which covers more than fifty pages, does not lend itself readily to résumé; but the following extracts from it will, it is thought, be of interest to those members who have not occasion to study it in detail.

"In recent years it has been frequently suggested that poaching by natives is the rule and not the exception, so that it is interesting to record that in the favoured localities of this island never have *sititunga* been so plentiful, or so tame, testimony to the fact that they can be rarely subjected to undue molestation. Along the sheltered shore-line and in the open glades in the north-east numbers were observed grazing fearlessly throughout the day."

"As it is impossible to guard Damba Island effectively and as its south-western end adjoins the inhabited island of Kome, one has to rely to a great extent on the co-operation and goodwill of the local natives to respect the sanctuary. It is gratifying to know, as revealed by the situation in January, that the sanctity of the reserve is generally respected."

### GAME TROPHIES.

"The relatively high prices of ivory, the cheap licences, and an abundance of Elephants, have combined to make

hunting popular. The number of large tuskers is much larger than for many years."

"The extensive sleeping sickness areas into which the public are denied entry act as reservoirs for large herds which contain their quota of the best breeding stock and large tuskers."

"The unlawful trade in colobus and *ntalaganiya* skins, and in ostrich eggs, dies hard, and from time to time it has been necessary to confiscate illegally acquired trophies."

#### ELEPHANT CONTROL.

Some enthusiasts for wild life—and are we not all enthusiasts—are inclined to suggest that the Game Department shoots Elephants for revenue and for revenue only. The following extracts from the part of the report which deals with Elephant Control suggest that Elephant Control is a matter of serious necessity.

"The outstanding feature of the Elephant situation is the abundance of Elephants.

Not only are there plenty, but it is evident that there is adequate breeding stock of first-class quality and no lack of big tuskers."

"The African members of the staff are to be congratulated on their achievements. Few people realize the exacting, nerve-racking nature of incessant Elephant hunting year in and year out and in this connection a little episode is worth recording. A couple of these guards were being chaffed about their work by a European, and they replied: 'Well, sir, if you expected to meet your Maker every moment of the day when you were at work, would you call fifty shillings a month high pay!'"

“The general conduct of control work this year has fallen more heavily than usual on the Officers of the Provincial Administration: their welcome assistance, and that of the Officers of the King’s African Rifles stationed at Bombo in helping to deter the raiding Elephants in Bulemezi, is very greatly appreciated.”

#### BUGANDA PROVINCE.

“In the uninhabited region to the north of the Mabira Forest a group of Elephants is unfortunately well-established, and its members from time to time raid the plantations of the Mabira Company and the neighbouring Baganda settlements.

It is evident that, owing to the restrictions on control in Bugerere due to the presence, or threat, of rinderpest, considerable numbers of Elephants have re-established themselves in this island county and along the Sezibwa River from where they carry out a good deal of raiding.”

#### NORTHERN PROVINCE.

“*Acholi (Kitgum)*.—Damage to crops is reported from widely separated localities, chiefly Palabek, Lokung, Payera, and Pajule, and the solitary game guard, through no fault of his own, more often than not arrives too late to come up with the raiders.

The Assistant District Commissioner reports that there are signs that the Elephants are becoming conscious of the danger of shamba-raiding, for in most cases after a raid they leave quickly and travel rapidly for anything up to two days. Additional help will enable swift retaliation. The greater part of the raiding occurs between April and September, during which period a couple of guards would be kept busy. Licence-holders have also shot many marauding bulls.

*Lango*.—Considerable damage to food crops has been caused in the western portion of the district from which there have been many complaints. Control has been inadequate and it is necessary to afford additional assistance.

The owner of a plot, in defence of his crops, killed a bull with a single tusk of 122½ lb."

"The Assistant District Commissioner reports that traces of a raiding party which ring-fired a herd and killed a number of Elephants were found in February on the Madi side of the foothills between Metuli and the Nile. Thanks to the co-operation of the District Commissioner of the neighbouring Sudan station (Latuka), a party of Sudan natives led by a Chief was brought to justice, and sixteen pairs of tusks were handed over to the Uganda Administration.

Subsequently a number of Elephants were found dead near Dufile presumably from the herd attacked."

#### WESTERN PROVINCE.

"The Lake George Game Reserve is becoming increasingly well stocked and the restricted sleeping sickness areas between Katwe and the Belgian Congo frontier, particularly in the vicinity of the Lubilia River, are a wonderful haunt of Elephants, including several exceptionally fine tuskers, which can be seen most evenings alongside the main road.

A licence-holder obtained a pair of 100 lb. tusks; also, three tusks of over 70 lb. and three over 80 lb. were obtained under licence."

"*Ankole*.—An outstanding feature of the situation in Ankole is the abundance of Elephants on the Lake Edward flats and in the vicinity of Lake George.

In early April, when on tour, the Game Warden each evening could see below him, from the elevated scarp near Kichwamba, several herds up to a total of about 500 animals.

In early June Elephants had caused considerable damage by trampling the tobacco seed beds near Kyamahunga on the outskirts of the Kalinzu Forest in Western Ankole.

In Ankole the Elephant situation remains much the same as in previous years. Complaints of shamba-raiders have

been received from seven out of the ten Sazas in the district. These the game guard has dealt with to the best of his ability and in so doing has destroyed 115 Elephants. This total should have effected an appreciable reduction in the Elephant herds which periodically enter the cultivated areas."

#### GENERAL.

"At the end of the year Mr. Roy Home, while taking cinematograph pictures for the Government, came across an Elephant lying down close to him in the cover in the Lubilia River, near Lake Edward. There were also numerous traces in this locality indicating that it was by no means the exception for some of the Elephants to lie down.

During the early months of the year several reports were received about the behaviour of an exceptionally aggressive bull Elephant carrying tusks of about 70 lb. apiece, which frequented the sanctuary and game reserve in Gulu opposite Pakwach (West Nile), and which made a habit of making most ferocious, unprovoked attacks on members of his own species. On one occasion he was seen to go up to a party of about seven Elephants standing in the shade of a clump of trees, charge and scatter them. He was constantly observed fighting with single bulls. In one of these encounters the hostile brute forced his opponent into the Nile: the latter went under, came up, and tried to regain the bank, but this only resulted in a second terrific charge and both beasts fell into the river disappearing completely beneath the water.

When they reappeared and the aggressor saw the other a fresh attack was made. As it was evident that the weaker animal—the attacked—was going to go under probably to drown, the interested onlooker entered a canoe and moved into a position from which both animals got his wind, and made them return to the bank.

This truculent animal is reported to be sound in body, so it is difficult to account for its offensive behaviour.

It is believed that it is the bull which a short while previously menaced a party of visitors, who had received special

permission to enter the Elephant sanctuary to take photographs, to such an extent that the party had to withdraw without fulfilling its object."

"The driver of a train has reported the following: 'On the night of the 10th April I was working up engineering train from Mbulamuti to Kampala. After leaving Luzinga, near mile  $18\frac{1}{2}$  my fireman informed me that there was a Lion on the track. I was unable to see anything from my side of the engine as we were going round a curve.

" 'On rounding the curve I saw an adult Elephant running in front of the engine. I sounded the whistle several times but the elephant did not leave the track, but increased its speed, and continued in front of the engine. I was undecided whether to stop or proceed, but eventually I proceeded slowly towards the animal which had stopped at a sleeper bridge near mile  $17\frac{1}{2}$ . When the engine was almost up to the bridge the Elephant turned and moved slightly off the track. I then proceeded slowly past. The Elephant was standing on the left side of the track, and as the engine passed the Elephant screamed and made a grab for my first fireman. The fireman fell down on the footplate. My second fireman was lying down in the tender. They were both very much afraid and later, on return to Kampala, the first fireman reported sick.' "

#### MAMMALIAN FAUNA IN GENERAL.

From a mass of notes on the general position as regards mammalian fauna the following extracts are selected:—

"*Lion*.—A meteorologist of the Forestry Department was lost three days in the Budongo Forest and all the labour were out one night looking for him. He turned up eventually having been chased by Lions which sat under the tree he climbed and killed chimpanzees to while away the time waiting for him to fall down."

"*Leopard*.—It is now widely realized by the African that a Leopard skin is a source of considerable profit, and in

consequence the Leopard is being assiduously hunted not on account of its numerous misdeeds but for the value of its pelt.

It is a great mistake to reduce Leopard numbers too low in areas in which the destructive Wild Pigs abound and in the course of tours every endeavour is made to explain this point of view to the Chiefs and their people.”

“*Striped Hyena*.—Two examples of the Striped Hyena, a species rare in Uganda, were seen on the Soroti Stock Farm in August.”

“Both of the Masaka game guards were injured by Buffaloes in different parts of Buddu, one being very roughly treated by a wounded Buffalo which did not desist until it fell dead by his side. *The injured guard was seriously concerned at the loss of a few rounds of Government ammunition which were missing after the encounter.*<sup>1</sup>

A Bunyoro guard was very seriously injured by a Buffalo cow which had just calved. It was one of those regrettable accidents which might happen to anyone when following Elephants, as the guard was doing through cover in buffalo frequented country.

In spite of severe injuries to the eye and head, the guard not only survived but retained his sight.”

“*Roan Antelope*.—This splendid Antelope is reported to be increasing in its various habitats, Acholi, Lango, Karamoja, Sebei, and Southern Ankole. There is also a small herd in East Madi.

*Eland*.—The Eland also appears to have regained its numbers in some of the localities in which in recent years it has been subject to successive epizootics of rinderpest, particularly in parts of the extensive region north-east from the Kagera-Kakitumba confluence to the mouth of the River Kafu. Some of the herds are of considerable size.

<sup>1</sup> The italics are ours.—Ed.



A herd is still to be found on the slopes of Kabuga Hill in Southern Toro."

"*Bush Pig*.—The tale of the Bush Pig is unfortunately always evil. It has no redeeming graces, except perhaps when a pet in captivity, and in Teso, Bunyoro, Kigezi, and Toro it is a veritable curse. Attention is drawn to the folly of killing too many Leopards which eat numerous Pigs and thereby benefit the cultivators.

Damage in Bunyoro has shown a marked increase in spite of regular communal hunts, and in the Buruli and Bugerere counties of Eastern Mengo much damage is done to the groundnut crops."

"*Hippopotamus*. — The Hippopotamus is abundant throughout the waters of the Protectorate.

Lake George, the Kazinga Channel, and Lake Edward are unquestionably the main stronghold, but the waters of the Nile and the Victoria Nyanza are a good second.

It was estimated in a trip up the Kazinga Channel in April that in the eight miles stretch between Katunguru and Lake George there must have been fully two thousand Hippopotamuses. Other observers suggest that there are just as many in the stretch between Katunguru and Lake Edward, and that in Lake George they are even thicker. In Lake Edward, Katwe Bay swarms with them, as does the whole length of the western (or northern) coast from Katwe to the boundary river, the Lubilia. Again along the eastern shore, for the thirty miles to the boundary river, the Ishasha, the Hippopotamus is found in incredible numbers, described as far more numerous than in the stretch of Nile traversed between Lake Albert and the Murchison Falls.

The herd instinct is stronger in the Hippopotamus than in most species, and in each case of five killed in the water, the remainder of the herd or party kept in the vicinity after the carcase had floated to the surface until either it was cut up or had been towed away."

“ *White Rhinoceros*.—There is no definite information at present available of existing White Rhinoceros numbers, but reliable observers report a noticeable increase over 1935.

Young were found to be unusually numerous in the Rigbo region of the West Nile District during 1936.”

“ The Assistant District Commissioner of Madi reports that the White Rhinoceros continues to be numerous in all except the more hilly parts.

Arrangements are being made in the West Nile District and in West Madi to set aside as sanctuaries certain areas which are being converted into forest reserves.”

“ *Giraffe*.—The Giraffe undoubtedly is increasing. In East Madi there now appear to be two herds instead of one : in Eastern Acholi, in Karamoja, and in Sebei it is reported to be plentiful.

A guard, who is a keen and capable naturalist, returned from the Lake Gedge region with a most amazing story which there is no reason to disbelieve. Unsolicited he volunteered the information, which incidentally he considered a great joke, that the Karamojong in that locality wanted Giraffe hair as formerly but being afraid to kill the animals for which they would be severely punished by Government, now use large scissors to cut off the coveted long tail hairs from the sleeping Giraffe ! ”

#### BIRDS.

From a number of interesting notes on birds we extract the following :—

“ *Goliath Heron (Ardea goliath)*.—An occupied nest was observed at Lake Karenje, Western Ankole, on 18th April. Placed on a low bush growing alongside a large rock occupied by numerous swarms of vicious bees it was by day quite inaccessible.

Two other occupied nests were seen in the Nyamgasani delta on the shores of Lake Edward on Christmas Day.”

“*Afropavo congensis*.—Exhaustive inquiries were made during a visit to the Mabira Forest in September as to the possibility of the occurrence of the African Peacock, with negative results as was anticipated.

The Game Warden was privileged to see a number of specimens of this extraordinary bird when Dr. James Chapin passed through Uganda in August after his successful quest to the Congo forests, and one fact is quite evident that if this newly-discovered species does exist in any of the Uganda forests it could not be overlooked on account of its voice. It has a most strident and unmistakable call which is uttered frequently after dark.”

“*African Darter or Snake-bird (Anhinga rufa rufa)*.—While crossing the Kazinga Channel in the middle of the day in April the Game Warden watched a Darter fishing. In 17 minutes it had caught and consumed twenty-five small fish. It only had three blanks in twenty-eight dives.”

“*Trumpeter Hornbill (Bycanistes subcylindricus)*.—One of the most comical spectacles one could ever wish to see is that of fifty or sixty of these grotesque ungainly birds in one mob taking flying termites on the wing. Most remarkable was the way in which they skilfully avoided colliding with each other in such a restricted space, while to see them stall in mid-air on their tails was a revelation.”

“*Coly or Mouse-bird (Colius striatus kivuensis)*.—This well-known little species, which is a most persistent flower and fruit garden raider, is also carnivorous when occasion suits. This unpleasing trait although suspected was not confirmed till this year when a coly was seen to creep rat-like down the branch of a bush to a suspended sunbird’s nest, rip it open, and fly off with a newly-hatched chick in its beak.”

“*Co-operation with European Bird-Marking Stations*.—Twenty-two rings from White Storks ringed in Europe have

been received by this Department. It is reported that an unusual number of Storks visited Lango during the early months of the year."

#### REPTILES.

Under this heading the following note occurs of the, by now, world famous Crocodile Lutembe :—

"During the initial half of February one of Lutembe's intimate acquaintances amongst the local Baganda who are her self-appointed keepers decided for reasons best known to himself to offer his protégé a lump of semi-dried fish from his hand instead of dangled at the end of a long strip of banana fibre as is usual.

Lutembe is not the daintest of feeders, nor yet are her table manners of the best, so that with one convulsive gulp she seized both the offering and the hand that offered it! But wait a minute! Lutembe the intelligent, at least that's what the admiring local folk say, immediately realized that something was wrong—alas she had bitten the hand that fed her. Hastily she opened her noisome, trap-like jaws and released the limb to the astonishment of the native onlookers. 'There is a lady if you like,' they all chorused, and Lutembe's fame is greater than ever. Luckily this rash act resulted in no serious injury.

In April, a European visitor, unable to obtain the customary local assistance, having seen the technique followed on the previous day, proceeded to call out Lutembe successfully on his own, and he gave her a right royal feast of all the dried fish he could find! Too late were the churlish keepers, their refusal to help *without prior payment* had recoiled on their own heads!

For much of the year Lutembe was most capricious and arriving early at her regular haunts she would leave so early that many parties of visitors, some of whom had come from as far afield as the United States of America and Cape Town specially to see her, had to go away disappointed.

At the end of the year she all but brought her life to a close, evidently in mortal combat with one of her own

species. She was in a sorry plight but was well on the road to recovery when 1937 ended. If a Crocodile can ever look pathetic Lutembe from all accounts certainly looked it during this period of crisis, and curiously enough did return to her human associations to die or be cured."

The foregoing extracts give some idea of the variety of game in the Uganda Protectorate and of the problems of fauna preservation and control. In particular the report shows that preservation of fauna must be governed with common sense. The degree of native support for acquiescence in conservation is very encouraging; but the credit for this is probably due in a great degree to the combination with conservation of rational control.

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## REVIEWS.

THE LORE OF THE LYREBIRD. By AMBROSE PRATT.  
Robinson and Mullens, Ltd., Melbourne, and Thanet  
House, 231-2 Strand, London, W.C. 2. 5s.

It is not so many years ago since one could obtain in Sydney or Melbourne, or even in seaport towns of Great Britain, tails, or even the stuffed skins of Lyrebirds to satisfy a peculiar taste in ornaments that prevailed in the Victorian era and after. At that time this avian wonder and other curiosities of the animal kingdom with which Australia is blest were regarded, principally, as objects to be "collected". But a great change has come over the people of Australia. Now they have awakened to the fact that in their wild birds and mammals they have a priceless possession which must be preserved for the benefit of future generations. They now realize that the Lyrebird is one of the most wonderful birds in the world, and is confined to the timbered mountain ranges of their eastern seaboard.

No one has done more to educate the people in the life