

**World Wildlife**

**YEARBOOK**  
**1976-77**

**Edited by Peter Jackson**  
Director of Information, World Wildlife Fund  
with the assistance of Clifford B. Holliday



*The Scimitar-horned oryx (Oryx dammah) is seriously threatened in the sub-Saharan deserts and is the subject of World Wildlife Fund conservation efforts (Project 1327 page 65 and Project 1219 page 94)*

Southwest Africa      Project 1352      Kaokoland/Damaraland -  
Ecological baselines  
for conservation planning

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This project aims at the collection of basic information for a master plan for the conservation, management and utilization of the nature reserves in Kaokoland.

The following are receiving special attention:

- the movements and status of the larger mammals with regard to available food, water and human encroachment of the habitat
- the physiognomy of the flora, especially with regard to the distribution of the mammals, their utilization thereof, and the influence of the local inhabitants and their livestock on the flora, especially in the marginal areas.

During the period from April 1976 to November 1976, the survey concentrated on the area west of the 150 mm isohyet. An attempt was made to pay periodical visits to all the physiological areas and the main waterholes in an attempt to establish trends. Remote areas were searched for unknown waterholes which may influence the animal distribution.

A collection of smaller mammals and reptiles was started for the compilation of a list of species for the area. Basic different plant communities were charted and a start was made in analysing by the Steppoint method and the inventory method of the Kruger National Park.

Direct and indirect methods were used to ascertain preferences in feeding of different species through visual observation, method of browsing, (height, breaking of branches, etc.) as well as macro-analysis of the faeces.

Because of the importance of tracks and faeces in establishing the presence of the shy species in an area, a photographic record of the measurements of the tracks of different species was started.

#### Mammals

During the rainy season, the movement of Springbuck, Mountain zebra, Gemsbuck and Burchell's zebra especially, are dictated by the local showers. The young shoots are utilised until they start to harden, whereupon the herds move to areas of more recent rain. After the rainy season, the herds move back

to the grasslands to feed on the long grass that has started to dry. These plains like the Giribes, Marienfluss, Otjiha, east of Otjiha and the Hartmann Valley are then visited by large herds while water is available. In May, for example, a herd of 1,350 Springbuck was to be found on the Giribes plain, while three weeks later they had disappeared.

As the water starts to diminish on the plains, the herds divide into smaller groups and move in an easterly direction. During July and August, the decrease in number on the plains with an increase in numbers in the mountains to the east of the plain, is especially noticeable. From August, the grouping of Springbuck ranges from individuals to about 30, with 35 the most common.

Mountain zebra form groups of three to eight animals and start moving towards the mountains about a month earlier than the Springbuck. The Burchell's zebra also move in a westerly direction at the beginning of the rainy season and are to be found mainly in the following parts: Giribes, Oropembe, Sanitatas and the Otjiha plains, but not further north. The herds are larger than those of the Mountain zebra (six to 30 or more). At present they seem to be the only species really covering great distances in an easterly and westerly direction in normal years.

The Gemsbuck forms herds of 10 to 50 individuals, being mainly cows and calves with the bulls in smaller groups. They utilise the plains together with other species but then move further west into the Skeleton Coast Park area. After the rainy season, most of the larger herds move back into the vicinity of the waterholes.

### Elephant

During and after the rainy season elephants cover long distances. Each area is used for a short period only before the herd moves on. In the dry season they utilise the river beds for winter browsing. Evidently the grass is utilised in the rainy season, and the shrubs and trees of the river beds in the dry season. The number in Kaokoland is not stable, there being constant movement to and from Etosha, Damaraland and Angola. No proof could be found of a long-scale east-west migration to Etosha; the increasing human activity in the Kowarib Schlucht could constitute an intimidating factor.

### Rhinoceros

This species, too, shows an increased tendency to move around in the rainy season. Their tracks are then seen in areas in which they evidently remain for only short periods before returning to their accustomed areas. Kaokoland probably does

not have more than 20 rhinos.

### Black-faced impala

The distribution of Impala has evidently spread during the last few years, and excepting the eastern sand flats, they are to be found in the whole area east of the 150 mm isohyet. This development is probably due to their original grazing being over-run by domestic goats. This does not coincide with increases in numbers as the herds are usually five or less and widely scattered. Often a ram is to be seen in a herd of Springbuck. The numbers are alarmingly low.

### Giraffe

This species is to be found only in the west as in the east they are ruthlessly hunted for their hides. They are limited mainly to the larger river beds and their distribution remains static, although they range further during the rainy season. There are probably between 60 to 70 in the whole of Kacokoland.

### Lion

There are reasonable numbers of Lion in the Sesfontain-Beesvlakte-Kowares area. Despite regular hunts, the numbers are supplemented from Damaraland and Etosha. In the west there are four known groupings of lions, i.e. at Sanitatas, the Hartmann Mountains, the upper reaches of the Hoarusib, and west of the Giribes Plains. These lions, which possibly form a separate ecological form are in extreme danger of extinction.

### Human activities

In the past the Himba people co-existed peaceably with the game. They watered their herds by day and left the nights and the remote areas to the game. The increase in cattle changed the situation drastically. The last grazing and waterholes available to the game are now being utilized by man. Water can no longer be spared for the use of game. At Sanitatas and Oropembe, for example, the waterholes are fenced and fires are lit at night to drive off the game. This results in the game being driven off to use a fountain at Ogams, 45 km further south, and further from their grazing.

In the river beds, which serve as winter grazing and the breeding ground for many species, there is increasing human activity which disturbs the game.

Professor F.C. Eloff  
Department of Zoology  
University of Pretoria