

All the evidence available points to the fact that the rhinoceros is the most vulnerable animal in Kenya and in greater danger of extinction than any other species.

The Kenya Wild Life Society welcomes the measures now being taken by the Kenya Game Department, particularly

the trapping and removal of rhino from those areas such as the Makueni area of the Machakos district where human rights must prevail, to other areas where they will be protected.

The Society will give the Department all the support and assistance it can to carry out this most vital project.

## THREAT TO ...

# BLACK RHINO IN EAST AFRICA

by : G. H. SWYNNERTON

**T**HE Black Rhinoceros is primarily an animal of thornbush country. Though it occurs in other habitats it is never as numerous here as it is in thornbush.

An examination of a vegetation map of Tanganyika reveals that thornbush is the predominant vegetation type in northern Tanganyika, with arms penetrating the central regions of the territory along some of the major water courses, progressively giving way to other vegetation types in the southern areas.

The Black Rhinoceros occurs in greater numbers in northern Tanganyika and, in direct ratio to the progressive diminution of thornbush as one proceeds south, becomes less common until it must be accounted a rare animal in southern Tanganyika, where they have been given full protection since 1940.

This was the situation before the beginning of the present century. During the past 50 years, and particularly since the end of the second world war, an increasingly heavy toll of the rhinoceros population has been taken by visiting hunters to provide trophies, and by resident hunters to supply horns which are converted into cash.

This deterioration in the situation has been appreciated by Government and regulations of increasing severity have been introduced to protect the rhinoceros as its numbers have diminished. In 1921, at a cost of £3 for a temporary licence, a hunter was allowed to shoot one rhinoceros and 103 other animals, or two rhinoceros and 266 other animals on a full licence at a cost of £15. In 1928

rhinoceros were removed from the temporary licence and in 1929 an additional fee of £7. 10s. was imposed for hunting rhinoceros in the Northern Province.

Temporary game licences were revoked in 1934 and replaced by minor licences on which no rhinoceros were included. In the same year the number of rhinoceros allowed on a full game licence was reduced to one, though hunters were allowed to shoot a second rhinoceros at an additional cost of £5.

In 1940, rhinoceros were removed from the ordinary game licences and were available only on a special licence, two being permitted in the course of a year at £10 each. The number was dropped to one in 1955 and the fee payable by a visitor to Tanganyika was raised to £25. Fees were again raised in 1957 to £15 for a resident and £40 for a visitor and in 1958 to £40 and £80 respectively, at which figures they now stand. Further, the controlled area hunting system has been introduced and the intensity of hunting has been related to the availability of animals.

Why, then, it may be asked, is the rhinoceros population on the decrease? There are three answers to this question.

First, the demand for rhinoceros by visitors who are willing to pay £80 for a single animal has increased, and, outside controlled areas, there is no limit to the number of licensed hunters that may hunt rhinoceros.

Secondly, increasing numbers of people are prepared to run the negligible risk of detection for shooting rhinoceros either within or outside

a game sanctuary. The demand for rhinoceros horn is great and the price that is offered is high.

Thirdly, rhinoceros, of all the species of game animals in Tanganyika, is the least capable of adapting itself to intensive hunting and of taking avoiding action. Other animals, such as the buffalo, will retreat to swamps and forests when their numbers are reduced, returning into the open under cover of darkness. The rhinoceros will not. It has poor eyesight and an inquisitive nature and will approach the object that disturbs it to see what it is, often with a great deal of blustering and snorting, rather than take cover. The result is that many rhinoceros are shot in self-defence, either real or imagined.

It is the task of the Game Departments to protect animals against the ravages of unscrupulous, unlicensed hunters. 30 years ago a staff of 11 game rangers and 75 game scouts was sufficient to keep in check the hunting proclivities of a large proportion of a population that had fresh in its mind the strict but effective rule of an earlier administration.

At the present time such a task strains to the limits the ability of a Department with eleven game rangers, not only to supervise effectively the activities of its subordinate staff but also to keep tabs on the situation in even the best game areas. As a result poaching is widespread and the chance of picking up a pair of rhinoceros horns once they have entered the "black market" is remote.

The drain on the rhinoceros population in

Tanganyika, other than in the Serengeti National Park and in game reserves, has been such that the species will soon be placed on the list of animals nearing extinction unless improved protective measures are introduced. Four measures to improve the situation suggest themselves

- (a) the fees charged for licenses may be increased; such a step has the obvious objection that those hunters who hunt within the law may be debarred from taking out a licence; the illicit traffic in rhinoceros horn will not be affected;
- (b) higher penalties may be imposed for offences concerning rhinoceros. Provision for this is contained in the amending Ordinance recently passed by the Legislative Council, which allows a maximum fine of Shs. 20,000/- and/or two years imprisonment to be imposed.
- (c) rhinoceros may be declared royal game; this measure has the same objection as in (a), above. The unlicensed hunter would not be prevented from hunting. Nonetheless this measure could do nothing but benefit the situation.
- (d) the senior staff of the Game Department may be increased. Such a step would be the most likely to effect an improvement in the situation and would benefit not only rhinoceros but all other species of wild life.

It is considered that measure (c), mentioned above, should be implemented at once and that measure (d) should follow as soon as there is an improvement in the financial situation of



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## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Editorial .. .. .	7
Flamingoes .. .. .	8
Vanishing Rhino .. ..	14
Nairobi National Park ..	18
Lovebirds—Exploitation Stopped .. .. .	20
Launching of the American African Wild Life Fund	24
Red Lechwe in N. Rhodesia	26
Poaching—the menace which means extinction of our game. .. .. .	28
Wild Dogs Hunting ..	30
E. Africa's game position Critical .. .. .	32
More Water for Amboseli	37
Children's Section .. ..	46

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