

That the big game of Africa needs protection is quite true but those who would work for this cause should avoid jumping to extremes in their ideas.

*Eussey Institution, Harvard University,  
Forest Hills, Boston, Massachusetts.*

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AFRICAN GAME CONSERVATION THROUGH THE LEAGUE  
OF NATIONS (A REPLY TO DR. HERBERT FRIEDMANN)

BY HENRY R. CAREY

Thoreau said, "It takes two sides to tell the truth." As this is unquestionably true, if my unknown friend Doctor Friedmann and I keep on discussing long enough the genial and patient readers of the JOURNAL OF MAMMALOGY are likely to get hold of some real nuggets of valuable information.

Doctor Friedmann's argument against my plan for supervising African game conservation by a Permanent Game Commission of the League of Nations boils down to this: (1) African game needs protection, but not as badly as Mr. Carey thinks it does, therefore (2) I "take exception to" his "proposed method" of saving the game, as he is "jumping to extremes."

At step 2, Doctor Friedmann slaps the stop signal across the road, and halts all the traffic. At the same point, I desire to go on and find a remedy. For we all agree, including Doctor Friedmann, that "the big game of Africa needs protection."

I agree with Doctor Friedmann that "insufficient knowledge coupled with great enthusiasm is frequently apt to mislead a man." I suspect, moreover, that Doctor Friedmann's knowledge of international law and the League of Nations is neither first-hand nor up-to-date enough to justify his stating with authority that the League plan of saving African game is a method which "jumps to extremes."

On the other hand, I can claim some slight knowledge of both international law and the League, having studied them rather carefully for a good many years. Nor did I formulate my plan without first consulting experts both on international law and on the League, all of whom encouraged me to develop my idea further. What really troubles Doctor Friedmann is his struggle with a new idea in government. The League is in Africa to stay. The International Sleeping Sickness Commission

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of the League met at Entebbe, Uganda, early last June (1926). The Mandates Commission has already shown remarkable results in promoting the welfare of African natives. There is a vivid contrast between their condition in Tanganyika (British, mandated) and their status just north in Kenya (British, without a mandate.)<sup>1</sup> There is no valid reason why League protection should not be extended to animals. It is logically the next step, other conservation methods having proved anything but perfect.

It is perhaps true that I have unwittingly exaggerated the plight of African animals in one or two cases. But that does not change the fact that many species need additional protection, and that protection should be sought not through one, but through *all* possible channels. The fate of my plan will depend, not upon whether Doctor Friedmann or anyone else thinks game conditions in Africa are *very* serious, or merely *rather* serious, but upon whether the League officials eventually decide to encourage the scheme.

Taking up Doctor Friedmann's points in detail, of course one realizes that the extermination of the American bison was due in part to changes in physical conditions due to settlement. Anyone who has seen "The Iron Horse," a film which is historically correct on major points, can not fail to understand that.

One reason why it is possible to compare the slaughter of game in South Africa with the possibilities in East Africa is that there are many Boers in East Africa, who constitute (according to the very latest information) a great menace to the game.

As to the disappearance of hippos from the Tana River in fifteen years, I refer Doctor Friedmann to my authority Carl Akeley,<sup>2</sup> who writes, "So much for African Hall as biography. By the time it is completed it will be more than that. It will be history. Many of the animals re-created there will have been exterminated, others will be changed in spirit and in habit by contact with civilization . . . . As late as 1910 I casually counted two hundred hippos in a journey along the banks of the Tana River, their age-old habitat. In one herd at that time I saw as many as forty-seven. Now Martin Johnson, who is in Africa for the purpose of taking pictures of wild life, writes me that the hippos are no longer there." As against this evidence from Mr. Johnson, Doctor Friedmann places his hearsay.

I am very glad to hear that the slaughter of giraffes is not as general

<sup>1</sup> See League of Nations News, June, 1926, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> See The Mentor, January, 1926, p. 20.

as I had thought. That is excellent news, but it is not a reason for dropping plans for greater game protection all around.

Doctor Friedmann's list of animals seen in thirteen months in Africa would be more impressive did he furnish us the means of comparison with a similar list made five or ten years earlier. No one denies that there are still thousands of animals in Africa. Practically everyone agrees, however, that their numbers are rapidly decreasing. If Doctor Friedmann, wandering over the American plains in 1860, had seen a herd of ten thousand bison, he would have been equally optimistic, and equally wrong in being optimistic. Extermination is relative. One can form no estimate of it by taking a census at a single point of time, without comparison with other periods.

In support of my statement that "even the British reservations are anything but perfect game sanctuaries," I again quote Mr. Akeley, who wrote in 1925,<sup>3</sup> "In all the British Colonies there are great game reserves, but these reserves are not absolute sanctuary. Someone is always looking for an excuse to get in with a gun, and too often succeeds in doing so."

Of course, conditions are in some regions better than they were fifteen years ago, but progress in game protection is not likely if we look only at the bright side of the picture. While my information from a leading conservationist in Kenya (received April, 1926) shows considerable improvement in conservation, it also shows that \$250,000 worth of ivory, illegally possessed in Kenya, is annually smuggled into Italian Somaliland; that probably more rhino horn than ivory follows the same course; that the Kenya government can do very little because of lack of funds *and the apathetic state of public opinion*; that the Italian government refuses to cooperate; that in all probability "the death knell of these great herds has sounded;" and that the present staff of the Kenya Game Department consists of *one man to take care of 250,000 square miles!* I doubt very much, therefore, whether Doctor Friedmann is correct in saying that "the percentage of white population engaged in protecting game will be found to be greater there [Kenya] than here," or that the British sanctuaries are relatively water-tight. Evidently my informant in Kenya does not think so, for he strongly recommends a minimum of six wardens instead of one!

Finally, I suggest that Doctor Friedmann should read the recent writings of such men as Carl Akeley, A. Radcliffe Dugmore, and Capt.

<sup>3</sup> The Mentor, January, 1926, p. 49.

Keith Caldwell, all three of them now or very recently in Africa, and all three so thoroughly dissatisfied with game protection even in British Africa that they are giving their time to the thankless task of rousing public opinion to do better. If game protection is satisfactory, why are the great museums hastily securing groups before, as they say, it is too late?

One can not escape the ugly facts, nor dismiss them by the simple statement that these writers are alarmists. And remember that they are writing mostly of British territory, where conservation is at its best. It is well known that conditions in Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese colonies in Africa are less favorable to the animals. An official of the U. S. Biological Survey wrote me this month (July, 1926) that he does not know what, if anything, has been accomplished by Italy, Spain, or Portugal in enforcing the Game Convention of 1900 in Africa.

*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

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#### NOTES ON *MUSTELA CAMPESTRIS* JACKSON, AND ON THE AMERICAN FORMS OF LEAST WEASELS

BY MYRON H. SWENK

In 1880, Dr. Samuel Aughey, then Professor of Natural Sciences in the University of Nebraska, wrote concerning the weasels to be found in the state of Nebraska as follows: "The weasels, however, are abundant, there being at least seven species within the state. The most abundant are the Common Weasel (*Putorius noveboracensis*), the Long-tailed Weasel (*P. longicauda*) and the Common Mink (*P. vison*). Those less frequently seen are the Least Weasel (*P. pusillus*), the Small Brown Weasel (*P. cicognanii*), the Little Black Mink (*P. nigrescens*), and the Black-footed Ferret (*P. nigripes*)" (1, p. 119).

In 1901, when the writer began collecting data on the mammals of Nebraska, he soon encountered this statement by Aughey, and of course attempted to evaluate the records contained therein. Aughey, so far as is known, left no specimens of weasels representing the seven species that he accredited to the state of Nebraska, but he obviously based all of his names and identifications upon the treatment of the genus *Putorius* in Baird's "Mammals of North America" (2, pp. 159-183), which made the harmonizing of most of his species with the more modern (1896) treatments of the group by Bangs (3) and Merriam (12)