

NYASALAND



PROTECTORATE

Annual Report of the Department of Game, Fish and Tsetse Control for the year ended 31st December, 1950

A. STAFF AND GENERAL

1. Staff difficulties in the Game Control side of the Department continued to be severe and the year saw further changes in this section. The departure of Mr. Bayley in March left the Northern Province without a Game Control Officer and no replacement had been found by the end of the year. The Department gained, however, by the transfer of Mr. Muldoo from the Agricultural Department to the Central Province Game Control establishment. Both this officer and Mr. Llewellyn in the Southern Province were seconded for famine relief for most of the first quarter.

2. The Fisheries Staff was increased by the recruitment of Mr. Dunlop as Fish Ranger, and, at the close of the year by Mr. Giffkins as Trout Warden. Under the provisions of the Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme for a Protectorate-wide Tsetse Survey, Messrs. Harington, Lewis and Graham were recruited as Tsetse Survey Officers during March and Mr. Beauchamp joined them in December.

3. Both Mr. Sanson, Fisheries Officer, and Mr. Borley, Director, proceeded on leave during 1950. Mr. Mitchell, Tsetse Entomologist, acting as Head of Department in the absence of the Director.

4. The staff position as at 31st December, 1950, is set forth in Appendix I.

B. GAME

5. The main emphasis of work during the year has remained on crop protection. Staff difficulties and the secondment of officers to famine relief, interfered with organization and did not permit the Game Control Section to proceed beyond its priority task.

6. In the Northern Province little really systematic work has been possible in default of a full-time European officer from March onwards. Prior to the departure of the Game Control Officer, some good work was done against baboons in Chintche District, and the Tsetse Ranger, Karonga, has given useful part-time supervision to a small team in that District. The main team in Mzimba, supervised by the District Officers in what little time they could spare from Administrative duties, has not been so successful and it is doubtful if it has been of much value except from a political aspect. It was retained in deference to the wishes of the Provincial Commissioner and because it was not expected that it would take so long to find a replacement for the Game Control Officer.

7. In the Central Province a much more systematic effort has been possible. At the instance of the Director, with the assent of the Provincial Natural Resources Board and active direction of the Provincial Commissioner, a system of priorities has been worked out and rigidly adhered to, especially in regard to Kota Kota and Dowa Districts. Here a policy of undeviating effort on the productive lake-shore plains and the ignoring of the unfruitful hills and steep country has resulted in a decisive degree of protection being accorded to these important areas. The plateau section of the Central Province was without a Game Control Officer till July and the country does not so easily lend itself to division for systematic attack, so that the effort here has been rather more diffuse. In addition to the efforts of the regular staff, Mr. Mansell Bartlett has given voluntary supervision to a team of poisoners on the Lake-shore of Dowa District and some good results, in point of numbers, have been achieved. In Kota Kota District the baboons, against which poison is chiefly aimed, appear to have become aware of the danger of baits and this method seems no longer to produce results.

8. In the Southern Province the long secondment of the Game Control Officer to famine relief both restricted the intensity of the effort at the time and also made it desirable, on political grounds, that when he was eventually released his team should be moved fairly rapidly round the Province. Useful work was done in several individual areas but they were too small and too scattered to make it probable that any lasting effect has been achieved in any one of them.

9. In the field of crop protection mention should be made of an attempt to stimulate private action against vermin by the payment of bounties. It was intended to apply this system in all three Provinces but the Provincial Development Committee of the Southern Province disallowed the scheme, taking the view that no financial encouragement ought to be necessary for an activity so much in the interests of the general community. The scheme applied in the other two Provinces produced extraordinarily uneven results. In the Northern Province 2,396 head of vermin were destroyed in the Chintech District and only 152 in the other two Districts while in the Central Province 1,189 head were destroyed in Fort Manning sub-District against 214 head in the rest of the Province.

10. Man-eating carnivora, particularly leopards, figured more largely in the game picture than they commonly do. Four leopards and one lion harried the Kota Kota District at various times during the year and three leopards and one lion the central part of the Southern Province. Three of the man-eaters in the Kota Kota District were dealt with personally by the Game Control Officer and the remainder by the team, while the Southern Province Game Control team accounted for the lion and one of the leopards in that Province. A second leopard was shot by Mr. Usher, Honorary Game Warden, and he made determined efforts to get the third. It was eventually disposed of by Africans using a trap gun.

11. An analysis of African Staff employed, animals destroyed and ammunition expended appears at Appendix II. The proportion of game destroyed, as distinct from the vermin which constitute the more serious marauders, shows a reduction from 1949 figures.

12. Appendix III shows the value of ivory collected in the course of crop protection. Revenue accruing to the Native Development and Welfare Fund from sale of meat was negligible during 1950, most of the little game shot having been used to feed labour employed on the survey of the Kasungu tobacco estates, or handed over to Native Treasuries for sale.

13. Crocodile destruction continued in the Central and Southern Provinces, under the charge of Mr. Jollyman acting in an honorary capacity. Some 284 dead crocodiles were actually found and it is expected that a number of others perished in inaccessible places.

14. Some experiments were made during the year with electric fencing units, one in the Northern and one in the Southern Province. Owing to the preoccupation of the Game Control Staff with famine relief measures during most of the growing season it was not possible for them to undertake the necessary recording in connection with the experiments. Certain officers of the Agricultural Department, who were favourably situated to judge efficacy, kindly undertook to supervise the working of the sets. The Southern Province set arrived rather too late in the year for conclusive results to be obtained but during the time it was in action it certainly served to turn back pig, the only type of marauding game in the particular locality. It seems, however, that the difficulty of obtaining supplies of wire in adequate quantities or at inexpensive rates is likely to limit seriously the application of this method.

15. There is little to report in connection with game conservation for the reasons already stated, but both the Kota Kota and Lengwe Game Reserves were inspected with a view to relinquishment on more easily recognizable boundaries. Recommendations were made concerning both, entailing a considerable extension of the Kota Kota Reserve. Definite agreement was reached with the Agricultural Department and the Provincial and District Administration with respect to the Lengwe Reserve but the new boundaries of Kota Kota were still under consideration at the end of the year. The new Lengwe boundaries will include nearly all the thicket country favoured by the Nyala, which, curiously enough, lies outside the boundaries of the Reserve as defined in 1934. During the course of Tsetse investigations in the Lower River District, the Tsetse Entomologist discovered another potential Nyala Reserve area, more remote from settlement than the Lengwe and there are good hopes of creating a new sanctuary there. The area also carries a fair population of Rhinoceros and generally should be a considerable asset to the game conservation programme.

C. FISHERY

The State of the Fish Stocks :

16. Considerable data has been, and is being, accumulated for the various important species of fish and it may be said that the pattern of the fishery is being slowly revealed. The main study is directed to the Tilapia fishery, on account of its prime importance, but the other main types of fish are not being neglected.

17. The fishing licences for the 1950-51 season imposed a close season on non-African seine and ring net-fishing in the S.E. arm from 1st November, 1950, to 31st January, 1951, in protection of the overfished Tilapia group. A similar close season was imposed for the 1948-49 season but had to be abandoned for the 1949-50 season under stress of famine.

18. Data from the S.E. arm suggest a slight recovery in the fishery for the open water species of Tilapia since the 1948 close season. The fact that the non-African concerns made very little use of shore seine nets is indicative of the continuing shortage in the inshore stocks but it should be noted that African shore seine catches, mostly dependent on these stocks, show a slight improvement. Examination of the data of the catches of a ring net, fished consistently by one non-African firm in the S.E. arm since 1944, show a fall in Tilapia catch per single hand of net from 40 dozen in 1947 to 30 dozen in 1948. The imposition of a close season from 1st October, 1948, to 31st January, 1949, was followed by a rise in catch per unit effort to 50 dozen for 1949 though the number of casts was equal to that for 1948, and the total catch consequently bigger. Addition of average figures for October, November and December to the 1948 totals would not have brought the total catch for that year up to the 1949 figure and would have depressed the catch per unit effort.