



Annual Report

Department

Game, Fish and Forest Control

Year ended 31st December

1955



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the Reserves and other sanctuaries. There were a number of prosecutions or poaching but this is certainly a reflection of increasing vigilance rather than increasing poaching.

15. Visits by Game Staff and Honorary Game Wardens to the Reserves and other sanctuaries showed an encouraging position, particularly in respect to Kasungu Reserve and the Nyika and Majete non-shooting areas. Mr. Hayes, visiting the Nyika for three days in October saw a total of 438 head distributed through separate herds, many of which were seen on more than one occasion. Six species were represented. The Director in the course of an overnight visit to Kasungu in November, after early rains had permitted some dispersal of game from the major river line inspected, saw some 60 head including three separate elephant herds. The animals were calm and observed with ease, and all were within half an hour of easy walking from the Reserve camp at the end of the 13 mile access road made last year. The Game Control Officer reports a number of similar experiences. Very good concentrations of game were also round the Majete water holes in October. It is not, of course, pretended that these numbers would be worthy of comment in many African territories but in Nyasaland, where game is generally scarce, wild and now almost completely nocturnal in its movements, the contrast is refreshing.

16. There are reports of heavy depredations by wild dog on the Nyika and some have been active in the Mwabvi. With regard to the former, depredations may have been heavy but one nevertheless gets an impression of an overall increase in game as far as the Nyasaland section is concerned.

17. A Game Officer's inspection of the Mwabvi, now some two hunting seasons old, showed a fairly representative collection of species and a fair standard of tameness, though the animals appear to withdraw to the south-western corner during most of the daylight hours of the very hot weather and hence are difficult to observe at that time. Rhinoceros are there in what, for Nyasaland, represent reasonable numbers, and elephant visited the area for a part of the year. They have not previously been reported in this Reserve. Unfortunately, presence of Nyala is now open to question, as they have still not been actually seen by a European, though when the area was first visited by Mr. Mitchell in 1950 it was confidently asserted by the local Africans that they were present.

18. The Departmental proposals for the revision of the boundaries of the Kota Kota Reserve were accepted during the year and the Reserve received an extension in the west which adds some 300 sq miles to its area. This is all very poor agricultural land and its inclusion in the Reserve should ease the problem of keeping the larger animals off the rich land on the eastern edge.

### (c) Fishery

#### STATE OF THE FISH STOCKS

19. Analysis of statistics for 1954 suggests the need for caution in the ring net fishery for *Tilapia* in the south-east Arm. The average catch per single haul of net by the older of two non-African firms show a slight but perceptible fall for the second year in succession, while those of the other, having risen greatly in 1953, fell very sharply in 1954 so that the overall picture for this year was of fall. There was a very considerable increase in the number of hauls made but this did not offset the fall in average catch and this year showed a landing of 210,710 dozen *Tilapia* as against 228,120 dozen last year with a markedly smaller effort.

20. The position does not, at present, seem at all serious. In general this fall in average catch per unit effort by the older firm is the result of very poor catches in January. Catches per unit effort for the other months show an increase on the whole, and even the average for the year is still nearly double that of 1948. The very sharp fall in the average catch of the newer firm may well have been caused by less skilful fishing.