

# Oryx

The International Journal of Conservation

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The Society was founded in 1903 as the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, and subsequently named the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society. Fauna & Flora International is conserving the planet's threatened species and ecosystems – with the people and communities who depend on them.

Oryx - The International Journal of Conservation, is now published quarterly by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Fauna & Flora International. It is a leading scientific journal of biodiversity conservation, conservation policy and sustainable use, with a particular interest in material that has the potential to improve conservation management and practice.

The website, <http://www.oryxthejournal.org/>, plays a vital role in the journal's capacity-building work. Amongst the site's many attributes is a compendium of sources of free software for researchers and details of how to access Oryx at reduced rates or for free in developing countries. The website also includes extracts from Oryx issues 10, 25 and 50 years ago, and a gallery of research photographs that provide a fascinating insight into the places, species and people described in the journal.

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## NATURE IN THE BELGIAN CONGO.

By H.E. BARON DE CARTIER DE MARCHIENNE.

(Reprinted from *The Listener*, 3rd November, 1937.)

Belgium has been fortunate in the fact that her Royal Family has always taken the greatest interest in the movement for the protection of the flora and fauna and the amenities of Nature. King Albert and King Leopold III have both fully realized how essential, in the interests of science, it is that wild animals, birds, butterflies, insects, and fish should be kept in their present condition. All the parks of the Royal Domain are bird sanctuaries.

It was owing to the foresight and organizing genius of King Albert that we now have in the Belgian Congo three magnificent National Parks which enclose forests, mountainsides, lakes, rivers, and swamps, wherein is every variety of altitude and climate.

When the "Parc National Albert" was conceived a few years ago, it only covered an area of 700,000 acres: now the total area covered by it and the two other National Parks since created—respectively in the regions of Kagera and Katanga and the Lualaba Lakes—is about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million acres. Since November, 1934, these Parks have been merged into one big undertaking named "l'Institut des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge" under the very able direction of Dr. van Straelen, its President. Among the foreign members of its Commission are such distinguished people as His Grace the Duke of Bedford; the Earl of Onslow, President of the Zoological Society and of the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the British Empire; Dr. J. C. Merriam, President of the Carnegie Institute; Mr. Trubee Davison, President of the American Museum of Natural History; and M. van Tienhoven, Chairman of the Netherland Committee for the International Protection of Nature.

King Leopold III is certainly as enthusiastic as King Albert was in this good cause, and some of you may probably recall the wonderful impression His Majesty made at the Dinner

of the African Society in London on 16th November, 1933, when he practically mapped out, in the most statesmanlike way, the international aspect of the urgent need of protecting Nature for scientific research. I well remember the intense interest this subject evoked in all scientific circles, and I am glad to know that, since then, Belgium has not failed in her duty to blaze the trail in this matter. The Belgian Colonial Authorities in the Congo have worked hand-in-hand with the British Colonial officials in furthering this good cause—the protection of wild animals, birds, and fish. Amongst the rare animals found in the National Parks are Mountain Gorillas, Okapis, White Rhinoceros and other species.

It goes without saying that, in the organization of such vast territories, some difficulties are encountered with regard to the aborigines who inhabited these regions in the past ; but I can assure you that the Belgian Colonial Authorities have been careful to compensate these peoples fully and they have been given, elsewhere, good land under very favourable conditions in exchange for that surrendered by them.

However, in the Ituri forest, where pigmy tribes have settled from time immemorial and where they have so far successfully resisted the attacks of their negro neighbours, they could not be ruthlessly ousted from their forest homes. These pigmies have remained in the forest fastnesses and are, in fact, on the best of terms with the local authorities, and have become most useful helpers to the Game Wardens. This leads me to mention the pigmy problem that has, of late, become so acute since interesting and new data have come to light regarding these little people, not only in the Congo, but in Sumatra, New Guinea and elsewhere. It was my good fortune, some time ago, to hear in Amsterdam a lecture by Dr. Bijlmer on the pigmies that inhabit New Guinea. This lecture was given under the auspices of the Netherland Committee for the International Protection of Nature, and was presided over by M. van Tienhoven. I, for one, heartily endorse the opinion that was expressed then, of the necessity in which we find ourselves of taking immediate

steps for the protection of these pigmy populations wherever they are. The conservation of primitive cultures is essential for scientific research. This is not to be construed, as Dr. Bijlmer said, as meaning that actually present conditions should never be changed, but rather that the characteristics of native tribes and their primitive culture should not become irretrievably lost, but should change and evolve so gradually that full scientific information can be ensured. In conclusion, I am glad to think that we Belgians have accomplished the wish expressed by my late King and Master as long ago as 1929, when King Albert practically said "you must take care of the pigmies". Under the wise guidance of King Leopold, we Belgians have continued to do useful work in the noble cause of the protection of wild-life and the amenities of Nature.

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## GAME WARDENS OF KENYA.

By Captain KEITH CALDWELL.

(Reprinted from *The Listener*, 3rd November, 1937.)

In Kenya we have a Northern and a Southern Game Preserve—each of them as big as Wales. They have been very useful in the past, and of course they are the next best thing to the National Parks that we hope to get in the future, but the trouble is that we have not got a staff large enough to look after them, and a Game Reserve that cannot be properly patrolled is a danger rather than an asset, because very soon it becomes a happy hunting ground for native poachers. At the moment the position is that one Game Ranger is in charge of an area, largely desert, four times as big as Ireland, and he has to try to keep an eye on the Northern Game Reserve as well. It may take him a month or six weeks to get from end to end of his district, so really it is no wonder that poaching goes on almost unchecked.

I was up in this Northern country last March and found that the Rhinoceros had become almost extinct—in the