

# Oryx

The International Journal of Conservation

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The website of the journal is (from 2008):

<http://www.oryxthejournal.org/>

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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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for many years in Nigeria. It can never be anything but an idle dream unless steps are taken now to preserve by practical measures such fauna as remains.

There are of course many other considerations, only a few of which can even be mentioned. The methods by which the hunter obtains his meat in the hunting forest should not be unduly restricted. He should be educated to discard the crueller of his old methods ; but attempts should not be made to force him immediately to abandon them. If that is done the sympathy of the native for the whole scheme will be lost, and it will fail. Special steps must be taken for the protection of the Gorilla, the Chimpanzee, and a few other species. A system of rewards for active game preservation should be instituted. In Nigeria the administration of the game laws is, at present, vested in three departments, the Administrative, Police, and Forestry. It is thought that the Forestry Department alone should be responsible.

The measures suggested in this article would not be a heavy charge against the public purse. Admitting that it is fair to give back to Nature what has been taken away, taxes from arms and ammunition, fees from shooting licences, charges for "Stranger" hunters, and fines, ought all to be credited to Game Preservation. Charges would be the cost of maintaining the Hunting Forests and their Sanctuaries, measures for the special protection of certain species, and the cost of rewards for good work in protection. Put upon a business footing Game Preservation could be made to pay ; the game is one of the real assets of the country and ought not to be frittered away.

It is generally realized in Nigeria that the present system does not work, because it is not suitable to the local conditions, and that, however zealous officials responsible for its execution are, it cannot be made to work. Should not the less desirable, but possible, be substituted for the more nearly ideal, but impossible ?

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## THE BENGAL RHINOCEROS SANCTUARY

By E. O. SHEBBEARE

I was much interested in an account of a visit to the Rhino in the Kasiranga Reserve in Assam, which appeared in a recent *Journal*. Before leaving Bengal last May I paid a farewell visit to the Rhino sanctuary near Nilpara, in Northern Bengal,

which was established about 1933 after a serious outbreak of poaching which had greatly reduced the number of animals and was only checked in 1930.

We were a party of eight, counting the mahouts of the three Elephants which we took in. It took us about an hour and a half to locate the Rhino in heavy grass for, being a cool morning, they were not wallowing. Once we had found them we managed to get among seven, of which we had a good view of five. I had been away in Malaya and had not visited this sanctuary since 1938, and it struck me that it is a good deal easier to see Rhino now than it was then. There are several reasons which may account for this. Firstly there are almost certainly more animals to see. In 1938 the stock had not recovered from the 1930 poaching, furthermore they are probably less wary, not having been shot up. Another reason is that a large loop of the Malangi River "died" a few years ago, resulting in an enormous wallow in which it is possible to see several animals at one time. The most important reason, I believe, is that many more people visit the place in a year nowadays than would have visited it in ten in my time; not only have the Elephants become stauncher to Rhino but the Rhino stauncher to Elephant. I am told that last year a Governor's party got out of their plane at the near-by air-strip into waiting cars and from these transferred to pad-Elephants at the edge of the forest and so to the wallow where I am told the Rhino hardly bothered to get out of the water to look at them—all within a couple of hours from Calcutta.

We found the Rhino uneasy, or even alarmed, if approached too closely in heavy grass, but much tamer in the open when they could see the Elephants. This is understandable, for although there is a certain mutual antipathy between the two animals the Rhino must realize that they would "have the legs" of any Elephant should the latter become aggressive. It is unlikely that Rhino associate Elephants with the presence of men, since far more wide-awake creatures such as Tiger, or even Leopard, seldom recognize human riders in similar circumstances. There was an almost comic incident when we approached a group of Rhino hidden in heavy grass. We were in a small open patch and a cow Rhino with her three-parts-grown daughter were nearest to us in the hidden group which had begun to get uneasy at our presence. The mother, after making all the strange noises of which a Rhino is capable without any effect, decided that some sort of demonstration was indicated and made a feint charge roughly in the direction of the menace, but taking care to miss us by several yards. The daughter,

not so cunning, made a parallel charge pulling up almost under the trunks of the Elephants, where she stood, broadside on, looking extremely foolish and apparently wondering what she should do next for some seconds before disappearing back into cover. The Elephants regarded it all with almost scornful detachment.

Before we had come up with the Rhino and when we were following separate tracks I was lucky enough to come face to face with a good bull almost in the open ; neither he nor the Elephant showed any sign of nervousness, though only about thirty yards apart. He would probably have let us get closer, but I slipped away to try to find my friend who had the camera, and later some of his own harem stampeded him. On our way home we met a young cow or bull which had dried off after a wallow in light-coloured clay and looked as if it had been whitewashed. We saw it approaching in short grass nearly half a mile away, but it would not let us approach nearer than about 150 yards ; perhaps because it was so small and all alone.

I have an uncomfortable feeling that the fact that these Rhino have escaped serious poaching in recent years is due less to our efforts to protect them than to the demand for their horns being temporarily in abeyance, perhaps because of unrest in China. We must be prepared for another outbreak of poaching that might exterminate all the animals in this sanctuary at any time. I believe that the best protection they can have is visitors and publicity, and if this could be combined with a scheme which would secure them national protection for all time, the sanctuary would have an educative value which it lacks at present.

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## OCCASIONAL NOTES

### THE NATAL SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF WILD LIFE AND NATURAL RESORTS

On the 6th December, 1946, the inaugural meeting of the Society above named was held in Durban. At this meeting the constitution of the new Society was adopted and the following were declared to be its aims and objects :—

“(a) Advocate the conservation of all economic wild life,