

Oryx

The International Journal of Conservation

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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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UGANDA GAME DEPARTMENT REPORT, 1951

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

Game Department Staff

Game Scouts.—It is satisfactory to read that game scouts have been put on the same salary and terms of service as game guards. This has been done in order to enable the Department to enlist and keep good men in spite of the many temptations of their work. The work of game scouts, and there are only 20 of them for the whole Protectorate, is to enforce the preservation laws, whereas game guards are employed chiefly in game control.

Poaching.—Poaching game for the sale of its meat is on the increase everywhere and the number of organized “rackets” is becoming alarming. Some of the worst areas are Toro, Ankole, West Nile, Southern Busoga and Buganda. The “butchers” frequently employ hunters who are armed with legal or illegal weapons. From Buganda poachers with illegal weapons, having cleaned out most of the game in their own country, are now spreading into neighbouring districts. The latest menace is organized lorry-borne poaching parties who take their booty to the places where it will fetch the highest price and are able to reach both the remoter areas where game is still (at the moment) fairly plentiful and carry large quantities of meat on their vehicles.

In 1951 for every resident's game licence issued there were over $3\frac{1}{4}$ licensed rifles in the Protectorate, and for every bird licence there were nearly $1\frac{1}{2}$ shotguns. When one realizes that, apart from the pure poacher, a very large proportion of present-day licence holders merely take out game licences and bird licences for the amount of meat they can get in return, either for their own use or for sale, and therefore shoot anything and everything without regard to the restrictions of the game ordinance, one can appreciate the grave danger to the remaining stocks of game in the Protectorate and the fact that to save the situation very much stricter control and sufficient staff to enforce the game laws are vitally necessary.

Tribal Hunting.—Whatever is to be said for or against tribal hunting, and there is no doubt that when properly conducted and organized it is fine, manly sport and good discipline training, it must be strictly controlled and restricted in the future otherwise it will die a natural death in a very short time as a result of the virtual extermination of game in the areas in which it is allowed.

The Game Ranger, Gulu, has stated that he considers that if

the present rate of hunting, combined with poaching, continues the game in Acholi will be exterminated within, at the very outside, ten years. He calculates that at least one-tenth of the total game population in Acholi, outside the reserves, was killed last year by various means. One of the worst aspects of this is that on these hunts a large proportion of female and immature animals get killed, making it more difficult for the species to reassert themselves.

Gorilla.—A fairly reliable estimate of the gorilla population of the Muhavura and Mgahina volcanoes gives their number as about 12 including two or three juveniles. It is still uncertain whether these creatures are permanently resident in Uganda or are visitors from the Belgian Congo but it seems fairly certain that there is movement backwards and forwards across the border. The gorilla population of the Kayonza (or Impenetrable) forest is unknown but it may be considerably higher than is generally believed.

Chimpanzee.—No reports were received of any chimpanzees having been killed or captured during the year. This ape is reasonably plentiful in various parts of western Uganda. They are not often seen but can be frequently heard in forest areas.

Lion.—During the year there appeared to be a marked and satisfactory increase of lions all over the Protectorate and it is gratifying to be able to report that with this increase there was little extra damage to stock. In the parts of the country where game has been almost eliminated either by tsetse control operations or large-scale poaching, it is hard to say how the lions manage to survive without stock raiding. It can be assumed that in these areas they live to a very large extent on bush-pigs and therefore every encouragement should be given to protecting them in view of the serious damage that pigs do to cultivation.

The best lion story of the year comes from an African who sent his motor bicycle into a well-known garage in Kampala for repairs. After detailing the list of repairs required the letter continued, "Personally, I am very ill on account of a collision with a lion whereby the motor cycle fell on me and it sustained severe injuries and one of my legs got broken. On account of the shock, the lion did not harm me."

Leopard.—The protection given to leopards since 1946 is beginning to show results and even though leopards are rarely seen there has been a small but noticeable increase in their population. As yet this increase has not had any marked effect on the numbers of pig and baboon. Nevertheless it should be remembered that leopard kills are rarely found.

Water (or Marsh) Mongoose (Atilax paludinosus).—The following interesting incident was reported by the late Mr. M. S. Tweedale, honorary game ranger, who was employed by the Uganda Fish Marketing Corporation in the Semliki valley. While waiting for crocodiles to come out on a sand-bank he happened to glance around and noticed what appeared to be a dead mongoose on its back with all four legs in the air. He did not approach it as he did not want to startle the crocodiles. Suddenly a large brown eagle swooped on the supposedly dead mongoose. The bird then rose two or three feet into the air and fell to the ground. The mongoose immediately got up and was starting to carry it away when Mr. Tweedale decided to investigate. As he approached the mongoose ran away; he found that the eagle had had its throat bitten out.

Uganda Kob.—These beautiful antelope continue to suffer at the hands of poachers and in tribal hunts, but appear to be holding their own in a few restricted areas of the Protectorate. An honorary game ranger reports having seen two albino females near the Semliki River.

Bush-Pig.—Near Bundale on the Victoria Nile the Fisheries Officer, Serere, from his launch saw what he took to be the local "Loch Ness Monster" crossing the river from Busoga. On second thoughts he considered it to be a gigantic lung fish, as two long "fins" appeared and started to thrash the air. On approaching in the launch it was found that the "monster" was two bush-pigs swimming nose to tail with tails sticking vertically out of the water. As they came to the boat they dived and swam underneath appearing on the far side; rapidly reaching the far bank they then ran off through the papyrus. The current is strong at this point but did not seem to affect them. Bush-pig are strong swimmers and readily take to water.

White Rhinoceros.—There is no doubt that these great beasts are steadily increasing and are particularly numerous in the Lafori-Waka area of West Madi. Probably their numbers now exceed 300; it may be considerably more. The next problem is to find a suitable area which can become a national park for these magnificent animals, so that they may be protected in perpetuity.

Tsetse Control.—Game eviction operations in the interests of tsetse control have continued in various tsetse-fly ridden areas in the Protectorate. The most important of these operations at the moment is along the Bunyoro-Mengo Border. These operations sometimes have an unfortunate effect on the attitude of various Africans to the need to conserve game. The Acholi for

example have often declared that they did not see why they should not kill all the game in their own country themselves, before Government came and did it for them.

Game Fences.—The Conservator of Forests has reported that considerable success has been achieved in dissuading elephant, hippo, and buffalo from entering the younger areas of plantations near Katwe, in the game reserve, by the use of an electrified single-strand wire fence. It is also believed to have proved fairly successful as far as buck are concerned. With elephants it sometimes fails when a herd approached a fence, as although the front animals immediately stop they are sometimes rudely pushed through by the impatient beasts at the back!

THE PROTECTION OF THE AGRIMI

FURTHER NOTES

By HUGH FARMAR

After my report¹ was in print I received Bulletin No. 6 of the Commission de la Chasse en Montagne dated the 21st July, 1952. This bulletin contains a very interesting section on the game of Greece and, in particular, a report by M. Georges Livas on the Cretan wild goat and the goats on the island of Ghyaros (Ghiura), in the Northern Sporades, and on the island of Antimilos.

Dealing first with the Cretan wild goat M. Livas states that since 1940 wartime conditions have prevented the Agricultural Service from estimating the numbers remaining, but that the stock is thought to number several hundreds. He goes on to say that to stop poaching the service of the Ministry of Agriculture has decided upon and has already put into effect stringent measures of protection and has instituted a system of substantial rewards for anyone who reports acts of poaching and the names of those responsible. I think it only proper to state that, neither in the region of the White Mountains where the wild goats survive nor elsewhere in Crete, did I in mid-June find evidence or hear of any hint of protective measures having been taken. Nor has M. Santorineos, the secretary of the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature, mentioned anything of the sort in subsequent correspondence.

¹ "The Protection of the Agrimi," *Oryx*, Vol. 1, No. 7.