

WRONG RHINO FIGURES

Sir — The review of the status of the black rhino in Kenya, by Drs. Hillman and Bradley Martin, in the last issue of "Africana" was interesting to read, but I was very surprised to see that I had been completely misquoted in the table giving the rhino population of Samburu-Isiolo Game Reserve in 1973.

The implication is that John Barkham and I estimated a population of 69 rhino living in the reserve from our aerial survey. How far from the truth this is!

Only five rhino were seen during this aerial survey, which covered 25 per cent of the reserve area, and we therefore estimated a population of only 20 rhino in the whole reserve. During the same survey, a population of 59 rhino was estimated for the 2,200 sq. km. area around and including the game reserve.

Furthermore, during our three months field-working period in the reserve, the six-

member expedition saw rhino on only four occasions. No rhino were seen during two series of ground (Land-Rover) transects, which covered 50 per cent of the reserve area and included all parts of the reserve. Readers may be interested in the conclusions the expedition reached on the status of black rhino in Samburu-Isiolo Game Reserve in 1973:

"The animals are very shy and have suffered greatly from poaching on the edges of the reserve in the north and the south where their remaining strongholds lie."

Therefore the decline of rhino in Samburu-Isiolo G.R. has not been as rapid as the Africana article seems to suggest. However, the actual rate of decline is now irrelevant, compared with the serious problem of how to effectively conserve the remaining two to 10 rhinos, whom I hope have not been poached as I write this letter.

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