

# Attractions of Lesotho's First National Park



THE BOARD of Trustees of the S.A. Wildlife Foundation decided to support the following projects in the course of this year:

Development of the first National Park in Lesotho.

Conservation programme for our marine turtles.

Conservation and research programme for South African coastal birds.

Black rhino rescue campaign in Rhodesia.

The first national park of Lesotho, the Sehlabathebe National Park, covers an area of 25 sq. miles and is on an 8,500 ft. high mountain complex. It was proclaimed a national park in the Lesotho Government Gazette dated February 27, 1970.

Early in 1969 the newly established Parks Board of Lesotho requested the South African Government to advise on the possibility of establishing a national park in Lesotho mainly for the protection of indigenous plants and animals. Senior officers of the National Parks Board visited Lesotho several times and the Sehlabathebe area was found to be the most suitable. Negotiations between the Lesotho Government and the S.A. Wildlife Foundation resulted in the financing of this undertaking by the Foundation. A grant will be made available to the Lesotho Government for the fencing-in of the Park, the purchase of a Landrover and equipment, the development of project control centres and research units and for the protection of the exceptionally clear and prominent rock paintings there.

The Sehlabathebe National Park borders Natal and the Cape Province and, being considerably higher than the adjacent country, it offers magnificent panoramic views across the lower-lying landscapes. The attractive mountain flora enhances the beautiful scenery.

Biologically the area is very interesting. There is ample evidence of terrestrial animal life and, as there is sufficient grazing, various game species could be re-introduced. The bird life lends special charm to the Park. Here some of the rarest African birds such as the bald ibis and the lammergeyer, still survive.

This National Park could increase the flow of foreign capital into Lesotho as it is ideal for the tourist. The climate is excellent, winter or summer, and the winter months have the added attraction of ski-ing. Trout-fishing prospects are unlimited and will attract scores of tourists.

## Black Rhino Rescue Campaign

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The relocation of wild animals, particularly the rare species, so as to ensure their survival in the long run, is one of the most important tasks of the S.A. Wildlife Foundation. Grants have already been made towards the re-introduction of 40 white rhino in the Kruger National Park and of 56 in the Gorongosa and Muputo Game Parks in Mozambique.

At the request of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management in Rhodesia the Foundation has now resolved to give financial assistance for relocating a breeding herd of black rhino in the Gona-re-Zhou Game Reserve.

Gona-re-Zhou was proclaimed a game reserve in December, 1968. It is in the south-east of Rhodesia and borders Mozambique. In the 1,000 square miles of mopani, thornland and forests, thousands of head of game live and roam free from the threat of man. Four of the five largest mammal species in Southern Africa are to be found here, but rhino is still missing. Because of its much sought after horn and meat, the black rhino has been completely wiped out by poachers in the Gona-re-Zhou area. A few roaming individuals are still to be found in the densest of forests, but they are doomed if they are not resettled.

Some thirty of these rhino will now be captured and re-introduced in the Gona-re-Zhou Game Reserve, which provides a most suitable habitat.

## New Head of Congo Parks

THE internationally known naturalist, Dr. Jacques Verschuren, has been appointed Director-General of the Institute of National Parks of the Congo (Kinshasa). Until recently he was working in the research laboratories of the Belgian Royal Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels.

Dr. Verschuren has spent a large part of his life in Africa, as a biologist in the Congo and Liberia, and in Tanzania for the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

He says that the immediate task in the Congo is the protection of the white rhinoceros in the Garamba National Park and of the mountain gorillas in the Albert National Park.