

Game
Preservation
Branch

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ANNUAL REPORT

1950 - 51

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SECTION I. GENERAL.

1. ORGANIZATION, GAME PRESERVATION BRANCH.

The Game Preservation Branch is now divided into three Sections :—

- (a) Game Preservation.
- (b) Zoological Gardens.
- (c) Fisheries.

In future budgets financial provision will be made separately for each Section.

2. FINANCE.

Expenditure for 1950/51 estimated at £E. 37,525 amounted to £E. 25,265.470 and receipts estimated at £E. 16,660 amounted to £E. 22,431.059 m/ms.

3. STATISTICS OF GAME KILLED

In 1950, 75 head of game were killed by 5 visiting Sportsmen (Appx. "A") and 1,225 by 162 officers officials and residents (Appx. "B").

4. EXPORT OF GAME HIDES.

1,885 kilos of hippopotomus hide were exported in 1950 against 4,756 kilos in 1949.

5. EXPORT OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN.

14,709 kilos of ivory were exported during the year against 4,756 kilos in 1949.

No rhinoceros horn was exported during the year.

There were 35 kilos of ivory in transit during the year.

6. PERSONNEL.

(a) Ahmed Eff. Abdel Nebi has been selected to fill the vacancy of Sudanese Assistant Game Warden.

(b) The personnel of the Fisheries Section of the Economics and Trade Department has been finally transferred to the Game Preservation Branch.

SECTION II. GAME CONSERVATION.

7. NATIONAL PARKS.

(a) *Dinder.*

Progress in the Dinder National Park has been really noticeable during the last 18 months. Fung district have put in a lot of work on the roads and with the exception of a few stretches of heavily cracked cotton soil near Beit el Wahash the roads are really good.

The "Mezlagan" at Ain el Shems has been moved to Gallegu and all traffic through the Park must now pass through the Police Post.

A site for an airstrip has been found and will be partially cleared this season before the rains and it is hoped that aircraft will be able to land there next season. The Park's value to visitors will always be severely limited by its short season. The roads cannot be opened before January and it is unusual for the grass to be burnt off before February and game is hard to see. However in February, March, April, and May visitors travelling along the road through the Park will hardly ever be out of sight of game.

The increase in game and its tameness since 1946 is almost unbelievable. Roan have perhaps made the most spectacular increase. It is almost impossible at some time of the year to be out of sight of these grand antelope and there must be thousands in the Park. Buffalo in herds of up to 300 are widespread.

9. NOTES ON RARE ANIMALS.

(a) *White Rhino (Rhinoceros simus cottoni)*.

As fresh reports of white rhino are received each year we continue to be surprised and gratified at the wideness of their distribution on the West Bank.

Starting in the south in the angle of the Nile at Nimule, they extend westwards along the Uganda frontier as far as the source of the Yei River due south of Yei. Identifications have now been made within a hundred miles of one another in the area to the north enclosed by the Bahr El Jebel as far north as Lake No, the Bahr El Ghazal to its junction with the Bahr El Arab and up that river to approximately the road linking Aweil with Darfur. Thence the western limit runs through Nyamlell--Aweil--Gogrial--Thiet--Lake Nyibor and the course of the Yei River to its source.

Identifications are particularly required of rhino found along the Bahr El Arab and any fresh discoveries in the north-west corner of Bahr El Ghazal Province.

South-west of the above area we know a pocket of rhino exists on the Ibba River in the centre of the Southern National Park. These are almost certainly white though positive identification still remains to be made.

As yet the only pocket of black rhino identified on the West Bank is that near Aweng, north-east of Gogrial, whose numbers have steadily increased and whose reputation for aggressiveness is well substantiated. A recent report of feeding habits of rhino in the Chel Valley, west of Wau, suggests that these may also be black.

No report has ever yet been made, however, of a white rhino on the East Bank of the Nile.

With upwards of 200 head in the West Nile District of Uganda and an estimated 300 in the Garamba National Park in the Belgian Congo, (both areas being contiguous with the Sudan), we can congratulate ourselves that the continuance of this species is now assured in Central Africa.

The popular conception (other than in native minds) of the white rhino as an amiable beast requires a caution. In eastern Yei District, where there is probably the heaviest concentration in the south, it is rarely a year goes by without a fatality occurring, though it must be admitted the rhino are probably hunted here. This year a man was transfixd near Loka when reputedly following up a herd of elephant which had destroyed his crops. Unfortunately our limited staff seldom permits us fully to investigate such reports.

A further interesting native report from the same area is a fight between a buffalo and a white rhino resulting in the latter's front horn being knocked off. The horn was produced but it may of course have become detached in some other way.

(b) *Giant Eland. (Taurotragus derbianus gigas).*

This important charge, while giving no immediate cause for anxiety, cannot receive such a satisfactory report as the white rhino. In spite of rigorous protection, the known herds (again all on the West Bank) show no signs of increase, except in the Southern National Park. In fact, during the last ten years several herds appear to have been exterminated.

This state of affairs is probably due to:—

- (a) their extreme susceptibility to infectious disease, and
- (b) the fact that it is impossible to police the remote areas they frequent where they are almost certainly hunted during the dry season.

In the Southern National Park alone, they have shown in the last few years a gratifying increase and a visit to the two rest-houses on the Ibba River in January, February or March should be rewarded with a view of this magnificent species. Here also they are not so excessively shy as elsewhere and Mr. Richard Owen has succeeded in taking the first photograph known to us of a giant eland in the wild state.

The unadministered area in the north-west corner of Bahr El Ghazal Province is believed to hold this species and it is hoped that within the next year or two these reports will be investigated.

(c) *Mrs. Gray's Lechwe. (Onotragus megaceros).*

Rigorous protection has enabled this free-breeding species to become firmly established in its chosen haunts and it is doubtful whether it is much poached, except on the death of a Shilluk Ret, or king, when the skin of the females are traditionally required for the new coronation ceremonies.

The Upper Nile Province reserves on Fanyikang and Zeraf Islands hold sizeable herds and there is a satisfactory increase in the Shambe reserve.

Two herds not previously reported are to be found south of Bor and in the Aliab Dinka, north of Minkaman. The Machar Marshes, as reported elsewhere, are also expected to hold a large stock.

Forbidden forms of hunting are generally understood but frequently practised and hard to eradicate. Hippo pits still exist in many places along the Nile, particularly on the islands which are seldom visited, and the elephant pits in the Zande District have already been referred to.

The use of hunting nets has been regularised in most Districts to be permissible outside the grass-burning season, thus ensuring they are not used in conjunction with fire. It has been shown that these nets are highly inefficient and in themselves will never result in an eradication of small game.

16. NOTES ON GAME AREAS.

(a) *The Badingilu Swamp, Equatoria Province.*

An interesting new game area has recently been opened up some thirty miles north-east of Mongalla in the Badigeru Swamp (as it is marked on the 1:25,000 map) or Badingilu, as it is locally known. This is not strictly a swamp but only a water-hole in the shallow river-bed of the Kinyeti River after it loses itself underground on the vast grassy plain which continues unbroken into Upper Nile Province.

This vaguely defined river-bed holds swampy patches in many places up to the end of February but Badingilu is the only permanent water between the Lafon water-holes and the Nile. In consequence, from the beginning of February on till the first rains make pools in the plains, Badingilu is the resort of many of the commoner species of game and countless water-birds.

The area used to be much frequented by parties of Abyssinian ivory poachers up till 1930, but since then, until re-discovered in the last two years, the area has been visited only by a few Dinka fishing parties from Mongalla and the game is quite undisturbed. It will be gazetted as a Game Reserve shortly.

(b) *The Machar Marshes, Upper Nile Province.*

Another previously unexplored area of considerable game interest has recently been in course of exploration by the Jonglei Investigation Team. The Machar Marshes, which lie in the Eastern and Central Nuer Districts, consist of an area of swamp some one hundred miles square, fed by the rivers Yabus, Daga and numerous smaller streams originating in the Abyssinian foothills and having only one clearly defined outlet channel, the Khor Adar, which enters the Nile near Melut.

SECTION III. KHARTOUM ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

17. ADMISSION.

Admission totalled 74,317 people in 1950 for a revenue of £E. 1,298 as against 73,000 people for £E. 1,253 in 1949.

18. EXPORT OF ANIMALS.

Animals and birds were exported to foreign Zoos in 1950 to the value of £E. 9,400. Many of these were sent by air, including two white rhinoceros, buffaloes, lion and leopard cubs and many species of birds, thus ensuring a speedy and safe arrival. Shipments by sea have also maintained our high reputation for successful deliveries.

19. DISEASES.

The Gardens were entirely free from epidemic diseases during this period, and the heavy losses in birds incurred in previous years from nimitti.

20. COLLECTING CENTRES, SOUTHERN SUDAN.

During this period, two new small collecting centres have been opened at Torit and Yambio respectively. These are not regularly staffed but provide a prepared reception for the specialised fauna of the eastern plains and the Zande rain forest.

The collecting centre of Wau has been moved, owing to parasitic infestation of the ground, to a pleasant new site in Mackintosh Park, where it forms the focus of the new public gardens. It has also been necessary to rebuild the Tonj centre as the original land was required for other purposes.

Apart from the usual commoner antelope such as water-buck, cob, bushbuck, oribi and duiker and a good supply of waterbirds, the Bahr el Ghazal centres collected one situtunga and eight young giant eland for the Khartoum Zoo. A pangolin brought into Wau failed to survive and a ban has now been placed on collection of this species which we have never been able to keep alive for more than a few months in captivity.

The Juba collecting centre was also moved owing to a parasitic infestation which carried off a number of antelope including a lesser kudu and a red-flanked duiker (*Cephalophus rufilatus*). The most serious loss of the year, though, was what was believed to be a giant bushbuck (*Tragelophus barkeri*) from the Imatongs which was taken by a leopard.

The Khartoum Zoo supplied a pair of chetal with the object of breeding-up a small herd for release in the South. These, together with a pair each of peacock, Iraq geese, spurwing geese, Nile geese and demoiselle cranes, have greatly added to the attraction of the indigenous species in this centre.

Of the latter the most interesting and unusual is a young mature female caracal (African Lynx) which had been brought up from a kitten by a British Missionary and was allowed to run free until she was turned over to the centre. This beautiful creature's chief recreation has been playing madly round the garden with the Assistant Game Warden's dachshund. She is gradually becoming wilder but still allows herself to be handled and purrs with pleasure like a domestic cat.

This collecting centre provides one of the few amenities of Juba and its constant popularity with visitors and residents alike does much to advertise and stimulate interest in the work of game conservation in the South.

A. FORBES

Lt. Col.

Game Warden

