



Progress Report of the Forest Administration for the year 1937-38

SHILLONG

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CHAPTER IX

THE PRESERVATION OF WILD LIFE AND ELEPHANT CONTROL

I.—THE PRESERVATION OF WILD LIFE

133. The Sonai Rupai Game Sanctuary was extended by 5,738 acres to include well-stocked game country. The three main Sanctuaries were well-controlled with the limited funds available and the stock of wild animals has definitely increased. The areas are regularly patrolled but staff is insufficient and more guards are needed so that additional support may be available. When armed resistance is encountered, arrest is at present rendered extremely difficult and often impossible. Determined armed resistance has been encountered on several occasions culminating in the murder of Bhimbahadur Chetri, a keen and energetic game watcher, soon after the close of the year within the Sonai Rupai Sanctuary. The death of this loyal worker is deeply regretted. The assistance of the two Honorary Forest Officers Messrs. Milburne and Scott in Darrang has been extensive and is very much appreciated.

134. Several visitors to the Sanctuaries including His Excellency the Governor of Assam have expressed their warm appreciation of the arrangements made and the large number of animals seen. During the 2 mornings of His Excellency's visit 17 rhino were seen at close quarters in addition to buffalo, sambhar, swamp and hog deer, pig, otter and a variety of birds.

135. As mentioned in paragraph 108 of last year's Report the formation of the proposed wild buffalo protection Reserve in North Lakhimpur has received considerable opposition and final orders have not yet been passed by Government. As the Divisional Forest Officer reports, endeavours are being made to reduce the amount of high land in the area for settlement of which only a small part is available for the buffalo in the Rains. It is hoped that the matter may be finally settled during the coming year.

136. After one year's trial it has been found that the Revised Shooting Rules require modification. It is claimed that fees are too high thereby preventing many people from taking out licenses. The presence of reliable sportsmen in our forests is needed in assisting the detection and apprehension of poachers. After the close of the year certain proposals for revision of the rules have been submitted to Government.

137. As referred to in paragraph 111 of last year's Report, the control over the sale of flesh, skins and trophies of wild animals requires legislation as a prevention to illegal shooting. The Political Officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract, has already prohibited the sale of venison within his jurisdiction a welcome step in the right direction.

138. There were 31 Honorary Forest Officers during the year. A number of these gentlemen gave valuable assistance to the Department and our best thanks for their services are here recorded.

139. From time to time articles have appeared in the Press deploring the wholesale destruction of game in and out of season. That there are grounds for these complaints cannot be disputed and so long as public opinion is absent there is I fear little possible remedy. So far as the Forest Department is concerned every effort is being made to protect game within the Reserved Forests under our direct control and the increase of the valuable fauna within our Sanctuaries amply testify to the success of the measures which have been adopted.

140. An increasing population and expanding land settlement must inevitably lead to the extinction of wild life: such is the price which 'civilized progress' demands.