

KENYA

Rhino horns go up in flames

On the same hillside in Nairobi National Park where last year he had burnt to ashes three million dollars worth of ivory, President Daniel arap Moi set ablaze, on the afternoon of 25 January, 283 rhino horns and over 13,000 wild animal skins. The trophies, confiscated from poachers over the last decade and a half, are estimated to have a value of Ksh 7 million (US\$ 330,000) on the black market.

An enthusiastic crowd of dignitaries, journalists and conservationists stood under a brilliant blue sky while the President first unveiled a monument which commemorates the ivory burning. The brass sculptures and bas reliefs on a marble block were created by artist Terry Matthews and were made possible through the generosity of the East African Wild Life Society and the World Wide Fund for Nature (see 'Society Highlights', page 21).

Referring to the grim days last July when he had burnt the ivory to demonstrate to the world Kenya's commitment to eliminating the ivory trade once and for all, the President spoke of how much the situation had improved. The country had lost at least 800 elephants to poachers in 1988 and only 100 in 1989, and now had a total population of around 19,000. Since the burning of the ivory and the decision by many countries to stop trading in ivory, the price in Africa had fallen by 50 per cent. The rhino population was also doing well, increasing at an annual rate of 5 per cent since 1986. Last year there had been 28 births as against eight deaths in rhino sanctuaries while in other protected areas there had been 59 births and only 13 deaths.

The trophies quickly caught alight at the touch of the President's torch, and as the intense heat forced back the spectators, conservationists had good cause to believe that Kenya will have a wildlife heritage to pass on to future generations.

WIDER HORIZONS

Recent follow-up to the ivory ban

At the October 1989 CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) conference in Switzerland, countries which are signatories to CITES voted by a majority of 76 to 11 to move the African elephant from the Appendix II List to Appendix I (see the article by Cynthia Moss in this year's January/February issue). This was in order to ban member states from all commercial international trade in elephant products.



The horns and skins waiting to be set alight.

There was in this resolution a set of criteria for down-listing individual populations in the future. These criteria are: (1) that the elephant population is healthy; (2) that there be a good conservation programme; and (3) that there are controls on the country's ivory trade. Those countries wishing to have their elephant populations voted back down to Appendix II could invite a panel of experts to verify that the criteria have been met. Many conservationists stood up and cheered. Some were, perhaps, blinkered by wishful thinking; they believed that the ivory trade would stop. But would this ban on paper work and be accepted in practice?

First of all, under CITES regulations member states have the option to put in a reservation up to 90 days after the vote for Appendix I listing is passed to enable them to trade outside CITES in that species or its products, in this case ivory. Countries in southern Africa felt that as there was no guarantee that they would ever get Appendix II status for their elephants they should for surety take out reservations. Even during the CITES conference itself, Zimbabwe was already signing the papers for this. Since the October meeting, the SADCC countries (with the exception of Tanzania) have decided to continue trading in ivory and have set up their own cartel.

Secondly, the ban only applies to the hundred or so countries which were signatories to CITES at the time of the vote. There are other countries which are outside the trade controls of CITES for wildlife and may continue to buy and sell ivory.

The optimistic fervour had not taken into account these two matters and did not

realise the limited powers of the ban. Unfortunately for the elephant, its placement on Appendix I has not had the desired effect. As of mid-January 1990, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi, South Africa and Zambia have taken out reservations, but the biggest shock of all to conservationists came when Britain ruled in favour of Hong Kong's ivory trade. Maybe this was a political decision as a consequence of the future status of Hong Kong and the present refugee problem there. Hong Kong has 670 tonnes of ivory in stock, of which close to 500 tonnes is raw and unworked. The British government has taken out the reservation for six months to allow traders to

Photographed in 1989, a master carver in Delhi works on an ivory statue.



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