

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL PARKS

MOUNT KENYA

The Arthur Firmin Hut was accidentally destroyed by fire early in December. Apart from the Hut itself, which stood at an altitude of 15,000 feet, also the emergency rescue radio and items of valuable equipment such as stretchers and oxygen were also destroyed.

A replacement radio has been supplied by the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife and, following successful tests, the new system should be functioning by the end of February.

Mr. Marcus Schmuck, leader of an Austrian Mountain Training Team currently in Kenya, has given the Mountain Club of Kenya 4,300 dollars towards the construction of a new hut to be called "The Austria Hut" and to have a room called the Arthur Firmin Memorial Room. Mr. Schmuck also gave some climbing equipment to the warden for use by the trainees.

Dr. Hans Hoffman aged 61 and a member of a German climbing team, tragically died on the Mountain of apparent Pulmonary Oedema (when liquid passes from the blood and builds up in the lungs) in January.

A Medical Symposium on the subject was held at the Consolata Hospital at Nyeri under the auspices of the Mountain Rescue Committee and attended by three distinguished professors, including Professor Horrobin from Nairobi and Professors Margaria and Cerretelli from Milan.

Dr. J. Ponte of the Consolata Hospital has done much invaluable work with several cases of Pulmonary Oedema on Mount Kenya. Some very satisfactory conclusions were reached and the recommendations of the Symposium will be adopted henceforth.

The mountain climbing training of police and Parks personnel has progressed satisfactorily under the supervision of Mr. Phillip Snyder. The Austrian Training Team, led by Mr. Schmuck, returned to Kenya on February 7, to lead the three-week course in climbing Mount Kenya itself.

This is the second stage in the rescue training programme; having completed this course, the trainees will then learn rescue techniques on the peaks of the Mountain.

Heavy snow falls occurred during the February "freak weather" and this has increased the difficulties involved in climbing the main peaks. Usually at this time of year the South Face is easier to climb as the sun is in this direction; however, because of the heavy snow falls, both faces of the Mountain are covered.

TSAVO WEST

A new nature trail has been made through a lava tunnel near Shetani. Torches and gas lamps are for hire from the Chyulu Gate. The Shetani Volcano Nature Trail has been fairly popular, but the one up

at Ngulia has not been utilised at all.

A large *Neutonia* between the fish tank and the rest area on the Mzima Nature Trail fell down across the trail flattening the notice describing it.

Elephant mortality was normal up to the end of November, during which time 12 animals died. It is assumed therefore that the vegetation in the Park was of sufficient nutrition value to carry the elephants through the very dry period. With the onset of the rains the mortality rose, seventeen animals dying in December. This is attributed to the sudden climatic change.

Several bull elephants were troublesome at Kilaguni, Kitani and Mbolo Prison, in that they wanted to get at the green grass and fresh water at these places.

At Kitani the *Acacia Tortilis* were seeding and sending off the attractive aroma which elephants cannot resist, the seeds were collecting on the makuti roofs of the bandas and one bull in particular took to trying to scrape the seeds off the roof thereby seriously damaging a couple of the roofs. This was overcome by piling the seeds in front of the bandas for him.

A young bull near the Ngulia Lodge has taken to putting on his own show for the tourists. The warden witnessed him performing the same antics three times on three different occasions for a Kombi-load of tourists. His antics consisted of shaking his head from side to side whilst gripping the end of one tusk with his trunk then sitting on his backside in the middle of the road and rubbing it from side to side and finally rolling over completely on his back. As soon as the vehicle had left he got to his feet and continued feeding but performing the same tricks again next time a Kombi stopped near him.

On December 23, the warden darted a bull elephant at Kamboyo and with the aid of Dr. Sale and the scientists from the Tsavo Research Institute fixed a collar with a transmitter around his neck. The collar was 4-inch machine belting and the transmitter was fixed onto it with fibre glass. The operation went very smoothly, completed within two and half hours.

The usual pattern of rhino becoming more gregarious during the rains occurred, possibly for breeding purposes. A couple were observed copulating in the lava between Kilaguni and Mzima and were watched by a car load of tourists for about half an hour.

A member of the Field Force surprised a rhino in thick grass at Ziwayi. He was knocked down by the animal, but miraculously not gored. The rhino, however, ran over him standing on his knee as it went. The Ranger suffered no

breakages, but got rather a bad go of water on the knee.

A car was hit and very badly damaged on the driver's side on the short-cut between Kitani-Mzima road and Kilaguni. The car obviously frightened a rhino on coming round one of the corners on this track.

Patrick Hamilton trapped a male leopard on November 20, his trap was constructed of light materials to enable him to move it about easily but although it appeared very strong was not adequate enough to contain this leopard safely.

On approaching the trap to tranquillise the animal its violent rushes to each end of the trap partially burst it open, further approach was therefore abandoned and the animal darted from a safe distance whilst in the cage.

Due to the difficulty of getting a dart into the animal through the wire the animal received an overdose from a dart which was not seen to hit it and succumbed. This leopard was a very old male who from spoor appeared to have been in the company of an adult female when trapped; he had many scars from a recent fight.

The Kitani pride of 22 lions have not made any of their spectacular kills in that area; in fact they appear to have split up into three smaller groups.

A hyena was killed by a lion at the Ngulia Lodge when it came too close to a buffalo the lions had killed.

Three cheetah have been seen on several occasions on the Mtito Andei side of Kilaguni Lodge.

On several occasions the warden has tried to immobilise a giraffe with a snare round its neck trailing a long wire at Ziwayi, but could never get close enough to get in a successful shot with the dart gun.

One giraffe was knocked down by a train and killed between Kinani and Kanga Stations on December 29.

Several more baobab trees were destroyed by elephants at the end of the dry spell but with the rains this destruction has stopped. The warden has suggested the Tsavo Research Centre keeps a pictorial record of the healing process of the baobab trees enclosed in the baobab enclosure at Ngulia.

The occupancy rate at Kilaguni and Ngulia Lodges has been considerably higher during this quarter, than the previous one. The Chairman of CDC, Lord Howick, was among 20,043 visitors between October and December.

Anti-poaching patrols have continued regularly throughout the quarter. No arrests were made, but the following trophies were recovered from dead animals in the field over the October-December quarter: 59 tusks and 28 rhino horn.

Visitors to Tsavo west were: October, 5,399; November

4,478; December, 5,844; making a total of 15,721.

TSAVO EAST

The number of visitors to the Park during October was 4,513, in November, 3,509 and in December, 5,766 giving a total of 13,788 for this quarter of the year.

LAKE NAKURU

There was a 5 per cent increase in visitors to the Park in the first month of 1972 as compared to the same period in 1971. The number of cars in the park has also increased over the same period. A total of 18,611 people visited the Park in the last quarter of 1971.

Poaching has not been a major problem in the Park in the last few years. However, in the last three months of 1971, Rangers and visitors reported 11 waterbuck trailing wire snares. All of them were very weak. The chances of them surviving were very remote, and all had to be destroyed.

Foot patrols are carried out daily by Park officials from the main camp. A permanent Ranger Post 12 miles away at Nderit caters for the southern end of the Park. Radio communication is maintained between the two bases for quick communication relay.

A ringed European Swallow, No. J5638-1, came into a Parks employee's house through the window. He caught it and noted its number before releasing it—presumably for its return journey to Europe.

A sick Tawny Eagle was found near Nderit forest. It could not fly and looked very weak. Since it was blind in one eye it could hardly hunt for itself. After a few days of care, it has shown a good deal of improvement and has become the centre of attention for the many visitors who pass through the main gate into the park. It sits perched on a short acacia stump looking very contented.

MARINE

Marine Parks collaborated with the Fisheries Dept. to display coral fish in two aquaria and many species of other fish in preserved form, coral and shells at the Malindi Show. The Ministry's Stand won the first prize.

October-December was quiet on the poaching front, due probably to an incident in November when thirteen people were arrested for offences in the Park. Of these three were fined Shs. 75/- each for fishing in the Park.

The road from Malindi to Casuarina Point is nearly finished; work on the road from the town to Mida Creek is already begun.

MT. ELGIN

Evidence of poaching activities in the Park continued to be a threat despite regular anti-poaching patrols which arrested five poachers during the October/December quarter. These were sentenced to between two to 18 months

imprisonment and a sixth culprit was fined Shs. 60/- for allowing his domestic animals to stray into the Park from neighbouring farm. A total of five hideouts were discovered and 34 wire snares were removed from the forest and destroyed.

An entirely white, young Black and White Colobus was found abandoned on October 27. The baby was captured and brought to the Park Headquarters where it at first seemed to be doing well. Unfortunately it became sick after a few days and was taken to Kitale Veterinary Clinic. However, it died a day later of unknown cause. Another young Black and White Colobus found in the same state died after much effort to save it.

A buffalo with one bad eye left the Park and went to adjoining Kassowai Village where it was following any object it could see. It chased two children to their house and remained in the compound. The animal had to be destroyed.

An albino bushbuck is staying near Chepnyalili caves. A total of sixteen bush bucks perished in some old latrine pits at the former Village adjacent to the Park. The Ranger immediately filled the pits with soil.

The EAWLS Mobile film toured schools, wildlife clubs and public places around the park and as far as Eldoret, Kapenguria and Broderick Falls in Western Province. Most of the Secondary School students who saw these films especially members of Wildlife Clubs felt more optimistic after the films about the future of our Wildlife. Its value in educating the public is immeasurable, says the warden.

TANZANIA

ARUSHA

A great deal of nesting is taking place now, especially of species using holes in trees and banks. Sharpe's Starling was found, possibly the first recorded in Tanzania away from Mt. Meru and Kilimanjaro.

Migrants were more frequent, a party of ten Golden Orioles being seen at the HQ.

Nine Rhino were seen in one day by one visitor, and Hippo were frequently seen out of the water on the shores of Big and Small Momela Lakes, sometimes accompanied by very small young.

Bushbuck are congregating, 27 being seen along the shore of the Senato Pool, 21 by Lake Kusare and 18 in a forest glade near the senior park warden's house, where Red Forest Duikers and Suni have also been seen frequently in the open near the forest edge.

RUAHA

Two poachers were captured by Rangers from Ilunda Post, at Mafinga. They had killed a buffalo, with poisoned arrows.

Mpululu Ranger Post was burned out by poachers who vandalised the Post while the Rangers were away on patrol. News of the fire came from a

hunting safari in the Rungwa Game Reserve. Further proof of the urgent need for radio communication with the Parks more distant outposts!

The relatively low incidence of poaching in this bad drought year is believed to be due largely to the return of confiscated weapons by the Courts to the Park for destruction.

Elephant are attacking Baobabs more than ever before in this bad drought year. A number of emaciated animals have been observed this year, for the first time. This is the first indication that the degraded habitat is beginning to have an adverse effect on elephants themselves, but so far this is likely to be only seasonal.

An uproar of sound on the east bank opposite Msembe at intervals throughout the night, denoted a male buffalo kill by the two large male lions usually encountered downstream of Msembe.

Both them were seen by a Ranger retiring with full bellies into a thicket by the Mdonya.

A pair of Orange bellied Parrot (*Poicephalus rufiventer*) was observed near the baobab 'forest', about 17 km. downstream from Msembe. This parrot is normally found in Masailand, and in Ruaha is very uncommon, being probably at the extreme limit of its range.

At Gombe, an exciting discovery was reported of cannibalism in chimpanzees, observed by Mr. D. Bygott.

MIKUMI

A lioness with two cubs went past the Mikumi Wildlife Camp and saw three resident warthogs. The mother sent her children off on a practice kill. Lodge visitors witnessed the cubs dispatch one of the warthogs.

A thirsty elephant, managed to open a tap near the Warden's house, but was so enthusiastic he broke the handle.

After satisfying his ego but failing to get enough water for a bath, he broke the whole thing. Water gushed out providing a small dam and a fine bath.

Park officials have been very much concerned about poaching in and around the Park and appeals have been made to both the government officials and the TANU elders for co-operation.

Some people are sympathetic, especially those at the northern end of the Park who agreed to an extension which will help a great deal in stopping poaching at the far end of the Mikata River.

Five poachers were arrested in October and sent to court. Seven steel wire snares were captured in the Maharaka valley and one warthog, one hartebeest and one buffalo were found dead in snares.

A rhino, probably incensed by the death of her baby charged the Warden's Land-Rover. No serious damage was done.

An elephant was knocked down and killed by a train in the Chamgore/Kizorobi area: a Zebra was killed by a lorry on the road near the Lodge entrance.

Rangers Khalfani and Kales were woken suddenly one night by an uproar outside. They saw two female lions, one on the hind-quarters and the other on the neck of a big male buffalo.

The fight lasted 45 minutes, before the buffalo succumbed.

A bull elephant decided to remove the palm thatch from part of the Warden's house. He was not interested in the thatch, but the dry sisal poles beneath it. An electric fence was later temporarily installed.

SERENGETI

Early in October it was noted that Seronera lion cubs seemed to be suffering from mange, on the face and paws. However, later in the month this seemed to disappear, coinciding with a big influx of wildebeest from the West, and ample kills for the pride.

Elephant bulls continue to devastate the Seronera valley. On October 1, 17 bulls were noted along the river. It is most important that immediate action is taken to stabilise the situation the warden writes. The alternative is a desolate and treeless Seronera valley dotted with bare buildings, and this will come within a few years, unless a more realistic approach is taken to the problem.

Game viewing in and around Seronera was unusually good throughout October. In one day out, 68 lion, three cheetah, a leopard, and many buffalo were seen.

On October 10, a near-dead Masai staggered into Seronera, stating that he had been shot by an arrow (he alleged 'poisoned') in the Ikoma area on October 3. He was rushed to Musoma hospital where he is stated to be making good progress.

Very late topi calving was noted in the Kogatende area during November.

Near Nyamburi Guard Post on November 24 vultures were seen descending in the thick forest. On investigation it was found that five wildebeest had been driven by lions over a 25-foot cliff and were lying, still alive with broken backs and legs at the foot of the cliff. The wildebeest were destroyed.

A disturbed night was spent in Kogatende camp on November 26. First a leopard killed an impala within a few yards of the rondavels, and fed, purred and grunted all night.

Next a rhino arrived and blundered about. Two resident buffalo bulls rubbed themselves on trees around the rondavels, a small herd of cow elephant fed in the bush downstream, while hippo splashed and surged in the river.

All this while a very disturbed Egyptian goose spent the night



It could be the longest horn on any living rhino—and this Mountain Park's animal could well measure up to Amboseli's "Gertie," whose horn was 39 inches long.

honking nervously on a sand bank below the camp.

Two Aardwolves were seen one mile north of Seronera airfield at 6 p.m. on 28th November. A rare sight.

A new bird to the Serengeti Check List—the Spurwing Plover (*Hoplopterus Spiniferus Linnaeus*) was noted on a sand bank on the Mara/Bologna junction.

Large flocks of White and Abdim Storks arrived in the Serengeti this month. European bee-eaters were noted in the Northern Extension, and the Eastern plains contained many flocks of Caspian Plovers.

The increase of resident buffalo in the Seronera area is most noticeable this year. Large groups of bulls, and one breeding herd are scattered in the Seronera valley, forming a useful additional meat supply to the Seronera lion pride.

A serval cat was seen to leap into the Mara River and swim strongly across a distance of about 130 yards of deep water.

On December 4 in the Seronera area, a cheetah was observed chasing a hare. Both animals disappeared at speed down a large pig hole.

UGANDA

GENERAL

It is reported with regret that some lives were lost within the Parks during the quarter, ending December 31.

● A poacher was shot dead in Murchison Falls Park by a Ranger in self-defence.

● A Katunguru resident was killed by four lions just inside Queen Elizabeth Park.

● Fedello Oburam, an employee of the Ministry of Works was killed by hyenas on Christmas Eve while asleep on the roadside at night.

● A poacher was killed by a fellow poacher when he failed to kill a buffalo attacking them.

● A person murdered outside of the Queen Elizabeth Park was tied up in a gunny bag and thrown into River Nyamugasani. The body was recovered by Park Rangers.

A Parks' employee, Porter Livingstone Odong was charged by a buffalo while travelling from Chobe Camping Site to the sub-headquarters. He received minor injuries. The buffalo was later destroyed.

Rangers Dominico Oneka and K. Ocaya of Murchison Falls National Park were also charged by a wounded buffalo and one of them received serious leg wounds.

The Director of Uganda National Parks, after consulting with the Warden in charge of Kidepo Valley National Park, issued a statement that hunting incursions into that Park by Sudanese Anyanya became serious through the quarter. Firm action has to be taken against the poaching and loss of life in battles between Rangers and Anyanya and assistance is being sought.

Wardens of Parc Albert National and Queen Elizabeth National Park met in Mweya to discuss common problems covering poaching in Zaire/Uganda border, formalities at the Customs and mutual assistance between Ranger Forces of the two Parks.

Visitor intake throughout the Parks was good! Murchison—15,911; Q.E.: 9,169; Kidepo: 601.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The National Institute of Ecology has replaced almost entirely the Nuffield Unit of Tropical Animal Ecology. The new Institute is still closely

affiliated to Uganda National Parks and Makerere.

Some licensed hunters were found sitting at the road between Katookye and Ishasha to shoot at game as it crossed between the Park to the Game Reserve.

A park-wide aerial game census was carried out. Species counted were 3,233 elephant 16,277 buffalo.

KIDEPO

The Katurum Lodge project is a year behind schedule, but construction is now pressing ahead.

Two patrols by the Ranger Force outside the Park in the vicinity of Loitanit and Naoyuro produced hauls of 30 and 23 wire snares respectively.

MURCHISON

Kateer Lodge construction is in progress. The Junior Staff Residence is completed and the Lodge itself is now roofed in some section.

Over Christmas time game was under frequent attack by poachers especially along the western boundary in Bunyoro. However, local chiefs have given more assistance than ever before in the Park's anti-poaching activities.

The death of the daughter of the elephant "Dustbin Nelly" is reported with regret. This young elephant of 6-7 years had a fight with a visiting bull who overpowered her and she died soon after the fight. It will be remembered that her brother, "Moonflower", was shot two years ago due to his attacks on visitors. Now one child follows Dustbin Nelly and the Paraa herd now numbers seven.

Two newly born white rhino calves were seen near Pakuba Ranger Post.