Operation Genesis

"OPERATION GENESIS" — one of the largest and most ambitious game resettlement projects to be undertaken anywhere in the world — has been launched to introduce more than 4,000 animals to the Pilanesberg Nature Reserve in Bophuthatswana.

The animals include 900 eland from Southwest Africa and Natal, 700 red hartebeest from Southwest Africa and Kimberley, 55 giraffe from Southwest Africa, 670 blue wildebeest from Natal, 80 white rhino from Natal, 500 impla from Natal and Transvaal, 20 waterbuck from Transvaal, 1,100 zebra from Transvaal and Botswana, 10 buffaloes from Addo National Park, 30 cheetah and a number of elephant from Southwest Africa/Namibia.

This mammoth task, which has the support of the World Wildlife Fund, is eventually expected to cost 1.5 million rand and will make Pilanesberg one of the most attractive and largest game reserves in the world.

The restocking is being co-ordinated by the Southern Africa Nature Foundation which will contribute ½ million rand to the project.

This money was donated by commerce and industry and include game donations from the National Parks Board and Nature Conservation Departments of the Cape, Natal and Southwest Africa/Namibia.

Other donations include the use of a helicopter, two large trucks, elephant fencing and fuel for game-catching operations.

The SA Nature Foundation has presented the first cheque for 28,000 rand for the purchase of blue wildebeest, rhino and impla. The cheque was presented by Mr. Ian MacKenzie, Trustee of the Foundation, to Mr. Matjie, Deputy-Secretary for Agriculture of Bophuthatswana, at a press conference.

The initial restocking phase has already broought four kyoung elephant and a number of white rhino, eland, giraffe, blue wilbeest, red wildebeest and crocodiles to this unique reserve.

The Director of the SA Nature Foundation, Mr. Jacques Verster, said the reserve was to be stocked to two-thirds of its capacity. "After that we will let nature take its cours." The Pilanesberg Game Reserve is near Rustenburg in the Western Transvaal, less than three hours' drive from Johannesburg.

Its 60,000 hectares of lush vegation lies in the bowl of an old volcano and besides its natural mountain boundary the reserve is fenced in.

Pilanesberg represents one of the first attempts to design and develop a major game reserve according to African — not Western-concepts and many of its features are unique.

For instance all facilities for the reserve, as well as the offices and staff quarters, are situated outside the are leaving the animals free to roam undisturbed as they please.

Last year the World Wildfife Fund accepted it as a project and it has since aacclaimed it one of the best planned nature conservation operation ever presented to he organisation.

The influential World Wildlife Fund is represented in 27 countries and the park's offocial recognition means that it will be actively promoted world-wide.

The catching and releasing of game during Operation Genesis will be performed by a full-time team working for the reserve. They will be assisted by parks board officials and people involved in nature conservation in Southern Africa.

The SA Nature Foundation, an establishment of commerce and industry in Southern Africa, was formed in 1968 by Dr. Anton Rupert in the interest of nature conservation. It draws annual financial support from nearly 200 companies. More than 2 million rand had already been channelled into 64 key projects in 10 countries on the sub-continent and has led to the creation of 14 national parks and nature reserves. The SA Nature Foundation represents the World Wildlife Fund in Southern Africa.

The future of turtles

STRETCHES of Kenya's Coast south of Lamu constitute the breeding-ground for three species of turtles, the Olive Ridley, which has never been seen breeding anywhere else along the East African Coast than on Maziwi Island which is probably the most important single nesting ground in East Africa, the Green Turtle and the Maziwi Hawksbill.

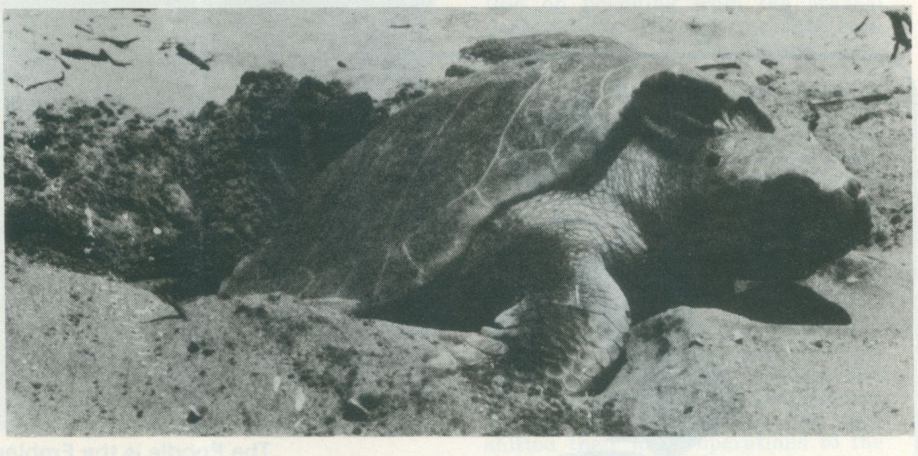
Regrettably, predation on nesting animals is so high, both from human and animal, that turtle recruitment is probably *nil.* In 1974 Jack Frazier conducted a Marine Turtle Survey of the Kenya coast. In the course of his survey he found that the two localities where turtles nested were the flat mangrove and sand bar beaches from Ras Ngomeni to Mto Kilifi in the south of Ungwana Bay between Malingi and Lamu where several dozen turtles a year nest, and on the beaches from Ras Shaka to Ras Biongwe where he estimated that possibly several hundred made their nests in the sand dunes.

The area is imminently suitable for a Turtle, Reserve where hatcheries and protection to the nests and young hatchlings could be afforded. This was in 1974, a further survey was carried out in 1975. It is now questionable if the area can be saved.

Tortoise Shell

Tortoise shell is the shell or carapace from the marine turtle. All turtles are included in Appendix II of the Convention for Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The Green, Olive Ridley and Hawksbill turtles are classed as endangered species and included in Appendix I of the Convention.

For the period 1976 to 1979 Kenya shows no export of tortoise shell but the import figures from Japan of tortoiseshell being imported from Kenya show a very different picture.



THE World Wildlife Fund and the IUCN have channelled considerable funds into scientific research and conservation measures for the marine turtles.

Tortoise shell imported into Japan from Kenya	1976	1977	1978	1979
	2,712kg	2,655kg	2,850kg	2,051kg

Over 2½ tons of shell annually!

As this is greatly in excess of all the turtles known to strand on Kenya's beaches, where does it come from? Who is collecting turtles in such vast amounts as to ensure their complete extinction in Kenyan waters?

It is perhaps no coincidence that the Japanese fishing fleet is operating off Kenya's shore. Can it be that the turtles are netted in Kenyan waters before they ever get to shore?

Turtle Conservation

A World Conference on Sea Turtle Conservation was held in Washington to find solutions to sea-turtle conservation.

Topics included:

- Value and importance of sea turtles.
- Present knowledge of sea turtle biology.
- Major threats to survival.
- Sea turtle populations.
- Protective Legislation and Management.
- Conservation Strategy, recovery plans and treaties.

The giant oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico threatened the hatching of the Atlantic Ridley turtle — about 10,000 Atlantic Ridley eggs were about to hatch. The hatching period lasts only a few days. As the hatchlings scrambled out of their shallow nests and headed for the open, oil-polluted sea they were collected and airlifted to an oil-free region of the Gulf. They were then gently lowered on to a huge bed of floating seaweed. For this year the hatchlings were saved, but what of the future?