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Oryx - The International Journal of Conservation, is now published quarterly by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Fauna & Flora International. It is a leading scientific journal of biodiversity conservation, conservation policy and sustainable use, with a particular interest in material that has the potential to improve conservation management and practice.

The website, <http://www.oryxthejournal.org/>, plays a vital role in the journal's capacity-building work. Amongst the site's many attributes is a compendium of sources of free software for researchers and details of how to access Oryx at reduced rates or for free in developing countries. The website also includes extracts from Oryx issues 10, 25 and 50 years ago, and a gallery of research photographs that provide a fascinating insight into the places, species and people described in the journal.

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## ON THE BEST MODE OF PRESERVING THE EXISTENCE OF THE LARGER MAMMALS OF AFRICA FOR FUTURE AGES.

BY P. L. SCLATER, DR.SC., F.R.S., &amp;c.

It is, I suppose, universally admitted that, unless serious measures be taken for preserving the existence of the larger mammals still found on some parts of the earth's surface, they will all become extinct in the course of a few more generations of men, and be known to our descendants only by stuffed specimens in our museums, and by pictures and photographs in our libraries. Such has already become the case with the bison in America and with the bluebuck in Africa. Such will be the case with all the other larger mammals that require wide spaces of unenclosed land for their well-being and reproduction.

It is to endeavour to counteract the progress of this gigantic misfortune that the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire has been founded. Even if its exertions only serve to defer the evil day a little longer, a worthy deed will have been accomplished.

The efficient work that has been already performed in this direction by the institution of large Game Reserves (and game officers to guard them) in most of our African Colonies and Protectorates, must be well known to all who have studied the first volume of the Society's 'Journal.' May it go on and prosper! But it seems to me that a still larger and bolder scheme may be suggested in furtherance of the desired object, if the necessary means can be found to carry it out; and it is concerning this scheme, which I have long thought of, that I wish to offer a few remarks on the present occasion.

The five important mammals of Africa that deserve special measures to be taken for their preservation are, in my opinion, the elephant, the rhinoceros, the giraffe, the eland, and the zebra. The forms and characters of these animals are well known to us from examples living in our Zoological Gardens, but I will nevertheless say a few words on the special merits of each of them.

1. THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT (*Elephas africanus*).—It is commonly believed that the African elephant, unlike its Indian brother, is savage and untamable, and cannot be used in captivity. This, however, as is known from experience at the Gardens of the Zoological Society of London and elsewhere, is a great mistake.

Since 1865 there have been African as well as Indian elephants in the Society's menagerie. Both have been treated alike, and both, it may be said, are equally intelligent and tractable. All elephants on attaining adult age are liable to fits of ill-temper and to become dangerous, but this occurs in the Indian as well as in the African species. It would be a disgrace to our age to allow such a fine and noble animal as the African elephant to perish off the face of the earth, and I place it first on the list of the more important African animals that should be protected.

It is generally allowed that the elephants used by the Carthaginians and Romans in the field of battle in former days were of the African species, and there is no reason why they should not be employed again for hard work, at any rate in a peaceful capacity, in the present day.

2. THE AFRICAN RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros bicornis* and *R. simus*).—The rhinoceros, it must be allowed, is an animal that is not ever likely to be put to tasks similar to what the elephant might perform in captivity, and is, moreover, of a fierce and morose disposition. Its huge bulk, however, and grotesque shape render it one of the most remarkable of living mammals, and in the Game Reserves, at any rate, its life should be carefully protected. Some of the expense of preserving this rhinoceros from destruction might easily be recouped by capturing alive and sending to Europe some of the younger animals, which would probably fetch at least a thousand pounds in the market. So far as I know, the celebrated 'Theodore,' which arrived in the Zoological Society's Gardens in 1865 and lived there many years, was the only example of an African rhinoceros that has ever been brought alive to Europe. 'Theodore' was a long-nosed or black rhinoceros (*R. bicornis*), but a white or broad-nosed rhinoceros (*R. simus*) would be a still greater prize. It was generally supposed until lately that the white rhinoceros only occurred in South Africa, where it is now very nearly extinct, but recent information has proved that the white rhinoceros, or a very closely allied form, is also to be met with on the White Nile.\*

3. THE GIRAFFE (*Giraffa camelopardalis*).—Like the rhinoceros, the giraffe, I fear, is not likely ever to be useful to mankind as a domestic animal, so that I cannot point out any strict utilitarian grounds for its preservation. But the giraffe, nevertheless, deserves to be carefully kept in being as one of the most highly specialised and remarkable forms of mammal life that have ever existed on the earth. What a disgrace it would be to the present age if future generations were able to say that we had deliberately allowed such a remarkable animal to perish without taking all the safeguards possible for its preservation! Even if there were not ample space for it in our African Game Preserves, the giraffe, as we know from actual experience, thrives and breeds readily in captivity. For a long series of years, from 1836 to

\* See Selater, *Proc. Zool. Soc.*, 1903, vol. ii., p. 194.

1892, there was a fine herd of giraffes living in the Zoological Society's Gardens. No less than seventeen young ones were bred there during this period, and of these nearly all attained adult age.

In many of the Continental gardens giraffes have also been bred, and it was the entire stoppage of the supply of imported specimens by the Sudanese rebellion that mainly caused these most interesting experiments to come to an end. But giraffes are now again reaching the European market, and there can be little doubt that in the course of a few years they will be again found in most of the larger zoological gardens of Europe.

4. THE ELAND (*Taurotragus oryx*).—The eland is not only the largest and finest of the great group of African antelopes, but is one that has been shown by actual experiment to be admirably adapted for captivity. About 1842 elands were first imported alive into England for the celebrated menagerie of Edward, thirteenth Earl of Derby. At Knowsley they did exceedingly well, and calves were produced in many successive years. At the dispersal of the Derby menagerie in 1851 the two males and three females, which then represented the species, passed by bequest into the Gardens of the Zoological Society of London, and made the foundation of a herd of this magnificent antelope, which has been kept up with varying fortunes ever since.

In former days Viscount Hill had also a fine herd of elands at Hawkstone, in Shropshire; and at the present time the Duke of Bedford maintains a herd at Woburn, so that there can be no doubt of the capability of the eland to endure even a British climate, and to reproduce its species in captivity.

The eland may now be said to be extinct in the Cape Colony, but exists under slightly varying forms all along the eastern side of Africa up Mount Kenia and the White Nile.

The flesh of the eland is allowed by all who have had the privilege of tasting it to be most succulent and nutritious, so that, in case this animal could be kept in a domestic state on a large scale, a fourth meat could be added to our present restricted diet of mutton, beef, and venison. At all events, let us try the experiment, and endeavour to preserve this splendid animal for the benefit of future ages.

5. THE ZEBRAS (*Equus Burchelli*, *E. zebra*, and *E. Grevii*).—The zebra, though last on the list, is by no means the least important of the larger African mammals that call for protection against the advancing tide of civilisation. Its closely allied brethren, the horse and the ass, have been the servants of mankind for ages, and there seems to be no reason whatever why the zebra, if properly treated, should not take a place along with them in the domestic equine series. The strength and hardiness of the zebra are known to those who have met with it in its native wilds, and its beautiful and compact form are manifest to all who view the zebra in captivity. It cannot, however, be expected that wild-caught animals, or even their immediate progeny, can be easily

trained and educated for the use of man. It must take some generations of captive life before the zebra can be rendered fit for the performance of the duties of the horse and the ass. And this chance of treatment the zebra has never yet enjoyed. But there is no reason why this experiment should not be attempted. Professor Ewart has shown us what interesting results may be obtained by crossing the zebra with ponies and asses, and there is every prospect of success if the process be carried out on a larger scale.

The zebras, though now nearly extinct in the Cape Colony and adjacent countries, are found in districts suitable to their mode of life throughout the eastern side of Africa up to Somaliland. Within the limits of British East Africa both the magnificent Grévy's zebra and a representative form of Burchell's zebra are met with.

Now, it so happens, most fortunately, that there is one portion of British territory in Africa in which all the five animals above mentioned are to be found in greater or less abundance. The East African Protectorate, which covers an enormous area of undeveloped and, as it appears, sparsely peopled land, especially in its central and north-eastern parts, has great advantages for the plan which I venture to propose for the preservation of these larger mammals. On referring to the excellent map of East Africa published in the first number of this Journal, it will be observed that two large Game Reserves, coloured green and denominated the 'Sugota Reserve' and the 'Juba Land Reserve,' are conspicuous in the centre of the East African Protectorate. The southern boundary of the Juba Land Reserve is, as there shown, the River Guaso Nyiro. If to this reserve were added the adjacent district on the south, which surrounds Mount Kenia and extends down to the River Tana, it appears to me that we should have a splendid range of country for the preservation of animal life of every sort and variety. There would be the forests of Mount Kenia in which the elephant occurs, and the swamps of the Guaso Nyiro which would harbour the rhinoceros, while the more open plains of Jubaland would probably supply the zebra, the eland, and giraffe. The locality is the more convenient as being easily accessible by the Uganda Railway with its headquarters at Nairobi.

The elephant being the principal object of my scheme, the first question arises, How is the elephant to be captured in Africa? To this I reply that the only known way of capturing wild elephants is the employment of tame elephants for that purpose, as is the well-known practice in certain districts of our Indian Empire. We must ask the assistance of Lord Curzon of Kedleston for this purpose, and beg the favour of the loan (for a few years) of a Kheddah with its complete equipment of officers, trained elephants, and men. They can be easily shipped at Chittagong, or at one of the adjacent ports on the Bay of Bengal, and conveyed by steam to Mombasa, the terminus of the Uganda Railway. Thence they may be taken by railway to Nairobi, and thence marched up on foot to a convenient position on the slopes

of Mount Kenia, where permanent headquarters should be established in a carefully selected spot. Elephants are, of course, the first object, and the enclosures necessary for the purpose should be formed and the trained Indian elephants set to work to capture their African cousins.

But the other animals described above should not be lost sight of. Convenient quarters should be formed somewhere in the same district for elands and zebras, which, according to the best authorities, are often found together in the same country.

Whether the giraffe can be treated in the same way is perhaps a little doubtful, but young giraffes should be captured and a supply kept ready for exportation to Europe, where they will always fetch a liberal price. A supply of elands and zebras should also be collected for exportation. All these four animals will command large prices in the European market, varying from a hundred up to a thousand pounds.

If the scheme is well started and well managed, I do not doubt that the sale of animals for European menageries would produce, in a few years' time, a considerable revenue; and when the initial expenses have been found the Kheddah might possibly pay for its own maintenance.

It is generally understood that before long the Government of the East African Protectorate will be transferred from the Foreign to the Colonial Office. The Colonial Minister should, therefore, be approached on this subject. Mr. Lyttelton is a statesman with a wide grasp of views and great intelligence. He will, I am sure, at once perceive the importance of this matter, and agree to appropriate a sufficient portion of the revenue of the new Colony to such a worthy and important object. Should he fail in his response to this appeal (which I can hardly believe likely), we must have recourse to the liberality of the African millionaire, who could not possibly spend the proceeds of the Rand in a better or more appropriate manner than in an attempt to preserve these magnificent inhabitants of Africa for the benefit of future generations.

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[We gladly welcome Mr. Selater's interesting paper, but it should be noted that the Society are not unanimous about the expediency of capturing wild animals on a large scale, on account of the great disturbance and terror which it causes, as well as in many cases the destruction of the dams. Moreover, experience shows that wild animals captured in the adult state have short lives in captivity, even if kept in wide enclosures.—EDITOR.]