

Oryx

The International Journal of Conservation

The original paper was published in the *Journal of the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire* (1903-1925 and 1926-1950) or in *Oryx*, the journal of Fauna and Flora International (from 1951).

The website of the journal is (from 2008):

<http://www.oryxthejournal.org/>

The PDF is reproduced with permission from the CD version of The Centenary Archive 1903-2003, a fully searchable database of 100 years of the publications of Fauna and Flora International.

More information on: <http://www.fauna-flora.org/>

The Society was founded in 1903 as the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, and subsequently named the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society. Fauna & Flora International is conserving the planet's threatened species and ecosystems – with the people and communities who depend on them.

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.

The [Rhino Resource Center](#) posted this PDF in June 2009. We are grateful for the permission.

NOTES ON THE GAME IN THE NILE PROVINCE AND IN SOUTH-WESTERN UGANDA.

Colonel Delme Radcliffe, M.V.O., late Senior Commissioner on the Anglo-German Frontier Commission, contributes the following notes on the fauna of the little-known districts through which the Commission journeyed :

Elephants, as almost everywhere else throughout the Uganda Protectorate, are common in the Nile Province. The ivory of these elephants is perhaps larger than that of any other elephants in Africa. The largest herds are seen north of the Aswa river, although one large herd crosses the Acholi country, coming from the Karamojon region, crosses the Nile just north of Lake Albert, and returns about twice a year. North of the Aswa river there is a large extent of bamboo jungle, which is a favourite haunt of the elephants. At times there may be five or six hundred collected together in this part. About Gondokoro, and north of it, enormous numbers of elephants are to be seen in the dry weather, when they come down to the Nile in search of the water which cannot be found further east.

The elephants are protected by the Game Laws, but this protection is practically only effective against Europeans. The natives will everywhere continue to slaughter elephants with spears, pit-falls, grass fires, &c., and the fact that ivory cannot be sold in the open market will not protect the elephants, as the natives really slaughter elephants chiefly for the sake of the meat. They do this on occasions in the most ruthless manner. For instance, one chief in the Acholi country described to me how his tribe had surrounded two hundred elephants with fire in the dry season, and had slaughtered the whole lot. He stated with great pride that almost every man in his village had an elephant to himself. Natives are incapable of appreciating the wastefulness of this slaughter.

If elephants are really to be preserved some effective means must be devised to protect them from the natives ; but, in addition, it appears that a modification of the Game Laws is desirable. At present two elephants only may be killed on one licence. The minimum weight of tusks is eleven pounds, and females are protected. I consider, however, that it would be better to raise the minimum weight of tusks to forty or even more pounds. This would automatically protect the female, as no mistake could then be made as to an animal being shootable on account of the size of its tusks. Again, the elephants which need not be protected are the large bulls. The old bulls when past the breeding age may well be shot ; and the minimum of two might be raised to four or six of

these old bulls, making perhaps an extra charge for each additional animal killed, or claiming a proportion of the ivory for the Government. The chief object should be to preserve the breeding bulls, females, and young ones, and to restrict the shooting to the old bulls.

In certain portions of the Protectorate the herds of elephants occasionally do great damage in the plantations, and permission has been given from time to time to the natives to kill a certain number in protection of their fields. The result has usually been that for one elephant killed and declared, probably twenty have been wounded, of which a certain number would be sure to die. Natives have no regard for size or sex, and fire bullets into the nearest animal they can reach. Of course cultivation must be protected, but in the Uganda Protectorate this should not be a very difficult thing to effect, because there is an immense abundance of natural food for the elephants; they are not driven by real necessity to feed in the cultivation, and a proper organisation should keep the herds away. If killing is to be done under official sanction, it should be by officers at the direction of the Commissioner or a responsible official.

In Toru and Western Uganda there are other very large herds of elephants which range the country between Ruwenzori, Lake Albert Edward, the Kagera River, and Lake Victoria. There seems cause to suppose that these elephants are confined to this area and do not cross into the Congo Free State region, although there seems to be no reason why the elephants should not wander up and down or across the African continent wherever food and water is sufficient. The Congo elephants, however, show some differences in comparison with the elephants east of the great line from Tanganyika, Lake Albert Edward, Lake Albert, and the Nile.

To the south-west of the southern end of Lake Albert, for instance, the elephants are described by E. S. Grogan and others to be smaller, to have a more vertical facial angle and very much straighter tusks than the elephants of the Uganda Protectorate. There is no doubt that the study of the natural history of the African elephant is very far from complete.

Next to elephants in point of size come hippopotamus. These are found everywhere where there is sufficient water within the Uganda Protectorate. In the Nile between Lake Victoria and Lake Albert, and north of Lake Albert, they are found in enormous herds, and constitute a very serious danger to navigation in small boats or canoes. They unhesitatingly attack and break up or sink any boat, without any provocation whatever. The current idea that the hippopotamus is a perfectly harmless survival of an ancient and interesting type of animal is far from the truth. They are interesting without a doubt; and were it not for their boat-destroying propensities, there would be no reason for killing them, as the damage they do is practically *nil*. The smallest fence is sufficient to keep them out of the cultivation, but as no means exist of preventing them from causing considerable loss of life by destroying boats in the navigable waterway of the Nile,

they must be cleared out. Curiously enough, in Lake Victoria they seem much less aggressive. It is true that the numbers are not large, but the great expanse of water makes it easier for them to keep out of the way of traffic.

In the Kagera River the hippopotamus are extremely dangerous, and it may be said to be a practical impossibility for a boat to go even a short distance on the river without risk of attack.

The Game Laws, so far as they affect hippopotamus, should therefore aim at keeping them out of the great navigable waterways and confining them as much as possible to the secondary streams and swamps.

After the hippopotamus, rhinoceros come next in size. In Uganda Proper they are nearly, if not quite, extinct. On the east of the Nile and in the Nile Province there are still a good number. North of the Aswa River they are still more common. They seem sufficiently protected by the Game Laws; natives do not interfere with them, they can look after themselves pretty well; they do no harm unless accidentally or intentionally approached too close, and there should be little risk of their extinction. A curious fact with reference to the rhinoceros is that south of the Kagera River they exist in extraordinary numbers, literally in places almost in herds; whereas to the north of the Kagera River not a single one is to be seen, tracked, or heard of. South of the Kagera River, they wander up and down the rocky hills with steep sides rising 3,000 feet out of the plains, on ground which appears far better suited to klipspringers or monkeys than to pachyderms.

Reports are current of the existence of the white rhinoceros in this region, and also on the left bank of the Nile opposite the Nile Province of the Uganda Protectorate. Further evidence of their existence, however, is necessary.

In the Nile Province of the Uganda Protectorate giraffes are fairly common, especially in the northern part. They are effectively protected by the existing Game Regulations against Europeans, but are still at the mercy of the natives. Really effective protection for these splendid animals is very desirable. They are absolutely harmless in every respect, and are among the most beautiful and interesting animals on the surface of the globe. They are quite defenceless, and, as the natives are very fond of their meat, they form a constant object of pursuit.

Next to the giraffes in size come elands, and similar considerations affect the protection of elands. They, too, are well protected by the Game Laws against Europeans, but, like the giraffe, are still at the mercy of the natives. They are also absolutely harmless, and there is every reason to protect them.

Apart from natural history and sporting reasons, there is cause to believe that elands may be of great economic value. The meat is equal to the very best beef—in fact, it is far better than any other meat to be procured in East Africa or the Uganda Protectorate. As each animal supplies about as much as a prize beast at home, and as they breed freely and are very tractable, there

seems every reason why an effort should be made to turn them to useful account.

In the Nile Province there are a few elands left; unless the natives can be made to spare the small remainder, there will be none.

In the neighbourhood of the Kagera River there are a few herds of elands on the British side of the river, amounting to about two hundred individuals at the present time. It seems highly desirable to protect these absolutely. At present they are being cruelly thinned out by natives on the British side, and by others from the German side, who, unfortunately, are frequently armed with rifles. If this herd could be preserved intact, in a few years' time there should be a splendid stock of elands which would spread over Ankole and Southern Uganda.

Buffaloes throughout the Uganda Protectorate were nearly exterminated by the visitation of rinderpest in the early 'nineties. They are, however, recovering with great rapidity. In the Nile Province, near Gondokoro, there are several herds of the common African type. There are similar herds on the Aswa River, and in a dense area of forest on the Jokka River. There is another herd in Magungu, on the eastern shore of Lake Albert. These herds together number now several hundred individuals.

In Southern Ankole and Buddu there are three or four herds of a very large new variety of buffalo (*Bubalis Kaffir Radcliffei*), which have their chief habitat in the dense patches of virgin forest near the left bank of the Kagera. All of these herds of buffaloes, together with many others not mentioned, are increasing in numbers with great rapidity. As they are very little molested by natives, and as they can protect themselves very well from all enemies except white men armed with rifles, there is little fear of their extermination except by some such scourge as the rinderpest. It therefore seems fair that a game licence should carry the right to secure more than one or two of the splendid trophies which buffaloes' heads are. Four or six bull buffaloes on each licence might not be too many, especially when it is remembered that the herds of buffalo live in very inaccessible forest and the opportunities for shooting them occur very rarely.

The zebras are very common in the northern part of the Nile Province, and during the dry season come down to the Nile, north of Gondokoro, in the same manner as the elephants and buffaloes.

In Southern Ankole, near the Kagera River, as well as in other parts of the Uganda Protectorate, there are also large numbers of zebras. Zebras are animals which require protection from the natives as much as any. They are very easy to kill, and in the Nile Province are speared, caught in pitfalls and trapped with the foot-rings of thorns commonly used by the Acholi and Bari natives. They are sufficiently protected against Europeans by the existing Game Regulations.

In Uganda Proper the natives do not interfere very much with the zebras, as the Baganda do not eat the meat.

There are two varieties of roan antelope within the limits

of the Uganda Protectorate. The northern variety, *Hippotragus Bakeri*, is found in the northern part of the Nile Province, though it is nowhere common. It is a very shy antelope, and sufficiently protected by the Game Laws against Europeans, though, like all the others, liable to be slaughtered by the natives. The common roan antelope is found, to a number of about fifty individuals, on the left bank of the Kagera, in Southern Ankole, and it appears desirable that this small number should be absolutely protected to avoid extinction. This antelope is very common in Karagwe, on the right bank of the Kagera; though, as the Kagera is an impassable obstacle to a rhinoceros, it is probably equally so to the roan antelope, so that it is doubtful if the numbers would be naturally kept up by the antelopes wandering into Ankole from the areas further south. Jackson's hartebeeste is common in the Uganda, where the nature of the country admits of any open country antelopes finding a habitat. They are very numerous throughout the Nile Province, but are replaced by *Damaliscus hartebeeste* at a point about eight miles north of Gondokoro. The only hartebeeste in Southern Ankole is also the *Damaliscus*, there being no Jackson's hartebeeste whatever in this area.

Kobus Defassa is the common variety of waterbuck throughout the Nile Province and in Western Uganda. This variety is distinguished, especially in the neighbourhood of Lake Albert Edward and Semliki, by very red colouring on the head and neck, and very large horns.

Almost the commonest antelope in the Nile Province is the *Kobus Thomasi*, a remarkably handsome antelope, which is found everywhere on the open grassy plains. This antelope gives way to the *Kobus Leucotis* with the same extraordinary abruptness which marks the transition from the Jackson's hartebeeste to the *Damaliscus hartebeeste*, and at the same point, about eight miles north of Gondokoro. As the *Leucotis* and the *Thomasi* are almost of identical build and habits, there seems reason to believe that these two varieties interbreed at the point where their respective areas meet. Individuals were seen in the valley which forms the meeting-place between the two varieties, whose appearance seemed to confirm this suggestion. These antelopes are sufficiently protected, except against natives, by the existing Regulations.

In Southern Ankole there are no *Kobus Thomasi*, and their place may be said to be taken by the Mpalla (*Æpyceros Melampus*), of which antelope there are a considerable number in the uninhabited portion of Bukanga, on the left bank of the Kagera. There are perhaps 1,500 individuals of this species at the present time in this district.

In Central Uganda and along the shores of Lake Victoria the extremely interesting *Tragelephas Spekei* is found. This antelope is hardly ever seen by sportsmen, owing to its nocturnal and swamp-loving habits. It is practically amphibious, and scarcely ever leaves the dense cover afforded by the reeds and long grasses of the swamps. Its food is almost entirely the creeping plants, convolvuli and fine herbs, found in the swamps. It is, however,

much hunted by natives with packs of dogs, and there is little doubt that large numbers of them are destroyed in this way. The natives eat the meat and make trumpets out of the horns. There is reason to suppose that more than one variety of this very interesting species is to be found in the Uganda Protectorate. The number of individual specimens hitherto brought home does not admit of the fact being definitely established.

Reedbuck are fairly common in the Nile Province and very numerous in Southern Uganda and Ankole. They are rarely found more than one or two at a time, though they are plentifully scattered over the plains on the left bank of the Kagera.

Bushbuck are really scarce both in the Nile Province and in Uganda, though no doubt their habits cause them to appear really rarer than they actually are. Harnessed antelope, on the other hand, are pretty common in the Nile Province, and can generally be found where bush with open spaces in the neighbourhood of water give them the protection and feeding they require.

A very common little antelope both in the Nile Province and throughout Ankole is the oribi. They are found practically everywhere in grassy and thorny country. In the Nile Province there is another tiny antelope, *Nanotragus Hemprichii*, not much larger than a hare. This little beast is not so common as the oribi, and is rarely shot. In Ankole and Karagwe klipspringers are common wherever the ground suits them. The species in this part show some differences when compared with the klipspringers of other parts of Africa, and may prove to be an intermediate variety. They are very sporting little animals, and a day after them with a rook rifle is the nearest approach to hill stalking that one may get within the limits of the Uganda Protectorate.

Animals of prey are common in proportion to the amount of game upon which they are dependent for food. There are large numbers of lions throughout the Nile Province, and also in Southern Ankole, where the big herds of elands, zebra, damaliscus, roan, and mpalla give them plenty of food. Leopards are also common, though very much less frequently seen than the lions. They live principally on the small antelope, monkeys, guinea-fowl, &c., but they take toll of the natives' goats and thus become sometimes a great nuisance. At Mumela Camp, for instance, where the Anglo-German Boundary Commission had a temporary headquarters in 1903, a leopard took goats from one hut or other almost every night for a month. The natives begged the Europeans to kill him, and three officers turned out to do so. He was tracked into a piece of grass, but before being finally despatched, he wounded more or less seriously no less than thirteen men.

The lions both in the Nile and near the Kagera take to man-eating occasionally. Many instances in both districts were brought to notice. One lion, for instance, between Nimule and Gondokoro killed nine people in ten days.

The lions in Bukanga have an extremely bad reputation among the natives, and, judging from the number of casualties, this fear

appears to be justified. The officers of the British Boundary Commission had experience on more than one occasion of unusual and unprovoked truculence on the part of the lions.

Cheetahs do not apparently exist to the west of the Mau Plateau.

Hyænas can scarcely be called sporting animals, but may be referred to as they are occasionally seen, though they are not common either in the Nile Province or South-Western Uganda. Wild dogs (*Lycaon pictus*) are sometimes found in the Nile Province. They are extremely interesting animals, though it is perhaps fortunate they are not more common, for the destruction they cause to game is immense. They undoubtedly exist in South-Western Ankole. One individual was seen during the work of the Anglo-German Boundary Commission.

In a general sense, referring to the Game Regulations and the probability of their effecting the purpose to which they are framed, it may be said that on the whole, with slight modifications such as have been suggested above, they are very satisfactory, so far as protecting the game from Europeans is concerned. The protection, however, as has been repeatedly stated, is not so effective against the natives. It must be remembered that before the advent of the British Government in Africa, the natives themselves to a certain extent protected the game by parcelling out the whole country into beats, so that each beat was the reserve for a particular tribe or village. Any encroachment by neighbours on the reserves meant bloodshed. Hunting expeditions also usually had to be organised on a somewhat large scale, as a hunting party unless sufficiently numerous and well armed ran the risk of being attacked on the way home and having all its game taken away from it. Again, various tribes never pursued the game at all, as, for instance, the Masai. This, of course, acted as a most effective protection in the area which the Masai reserved for themselves. Now, however, all this is changed. The Pax Britannica is so complete that fighting is not permitted anywhere. The result is that the native limitations are no longer observed, and hunting can go on unchecked anywhere. The effect is very striking in the Masai plains in East Africa. Ten years ago any Mkamba (a tribe of extremely keen hunters with spears and bows and poisoned arrows) would have had a Masai spear through him for a certainty if he had come two miles down from his own hills. Now, however, all the Masai plains are swarming with Mkambe hunters, and the slaughter they occasion amongst the game must be seen to be believed. It seems therefore only fair, as the British rule protects life and property amongst the natives, protects their cattle and affords everyone equal facilities for growing their crops and maintaining themselves, that some restraint should be enforced on the natives in order to protect the game. It is of course extremely difficult to interfere with instinctive and natural habits which are in the ordinary nature of life to the natives, but it is much to be feared that unless some effectual protection is afforded the only effect of the Game Regulations will be to retard for a short time the final disappearance of all the game in Africa.