

Oryx

The International Journal of Conservation

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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.

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steps for the protection of these pigmy populations wherever they are. The conservation of primitive cultures is essential for scientific research. This is not to be construed, as Dr. Bijlmer said, as meaning that actually present conditions should never be changed, but rather that the characteristics of native tribes and their primitive culture should not become irretrievably lost, but should change and evolve so gradually that full scientific information can be ensured. In conclusion, I am glad to think that we Belgians have accomplished the wish expressed by my late King and Master as long ago as 1929, when King Albert practically said "you must take care of the pigmies". Under the wise guidance of King Leopold, we Belgians have continued to do useful work in the noble cause of the protection of wild-life and the amenities of Nature.

GAME WARDENS OF KENYA.

By Captain KEITH CALDWELL.

(Reprinted from *The Listener*, 3rd November, 1937.)

In Kenya we have a Northern and a Southern Game Preserve—each of them as big as Wales. They have been very useful in the past, and of course they are the next best thing to the National Parks that we hope to get in the future, but the trouble is that we have not got a staff large enough to look after them, and a Game Reserve that cannot be properly patrolled is a danger rather than an asset, because very soon it becomes a happy hunting ground for native poachers. At the moment the position is that one Game Ranger is in charge of an area, largely desert, four times as big as Ireland, and he has to try to keep an eye on the Northern Game Reserve as well. It may take him a month or six weeks to get from end to end of his district, so really it is no wonder that poaching goes on almost unchecked.

I was up in this Northern country last March and found that the Rhinoceros had become almost extinct—in the

1,200-miles safari I have just done I only saw the tracks of two. When I was there fifteen years ago, I used to see two or three a day. This is the sort of thing that happens to a Reserve when there are not enough funds for a staff to look after it.

Our Southern Game Reserve is quite near the capital of the colony and is much easier to keep an eye on. We have always been able to give some kind of supervision to this area, and as a result there is almost as much game in it as there was thirty years ago when the railway up from the coast had only just been built. Those were the days when an Indian station-master sent a frenzied telegram to the Traffic Manager which said: "Lion on platform—self in booking office—porters at time of roaring not so brave. Please advise."

Now the key-note of all game preservation is the prevention of killing for profit. Consequently throughout the Colony the sale of meat, as well as of tusks, skins, horns, or even of live game animals, is strictly forbidden without the permission of the Game Warden. This has put the European poacher (who used to do most of the killing) out of business, but the native still finds he can make easy money by killing Elephant and Rhinoceros—especially the rhino. He is money for jam to the native poacher, because he is very blind and easy to approach, so killing him with a poisoned arrow is the simplest job in the world. Unfortunately for the rhino (and for the Game Wardens of Africa, too, as a matter of fact) his horn is worth twenty-five shillings a pound. It is exported to China for medicine by Arab, Indian, and Somali middlemen who buy very cheaply from the native poachers. Of course we do all we can to stop the stuff being exported, but since it is going to be ground up into powder in the end, there is nothing to prevent the natives cutting it up into chunks and putting it into gourds, sacks of rice, or some other equally familiar object of the landscape, and so it goes out under our very noses.

Of course, our only hope in stopping the traffic is to get good information, but even when we have got it it is a

very difficult job to catch the middleman. For instance, a native would come to the house at dead of night with a wonderful story, and later one would sally forth, accompanied by a few native police, feeling the complete sleuth. But alas! one usually came back feeling the complete fool. Catching the native poacher himself is not nearly so difficult but even if he is caught he only goes to prison and that means nothing to him—as soon as he comes out he starts again. But if he could not make any money out of it he would give it up.

Ivory is not nearly so attractive as it used to be to these gentry. Until a few years ago our tusks used to be smuggled regularly by camel caravans over the border into Italian Somaliland, where a ten per cent duty was charged and no questions were asked. Catching these folk in a thorn-bush desert was very difficult, because if their suspicions were aroused, all they had to do was bury the ivory in the sand.

I remember a couple of Somalis coming to my office and giving me full details of a big camel caravan of ivory that was on its way to the border. Of course they had no particular wish to help me, but they hated the caravan leader and they wanted to get even with him. Thanks to the telegraph, a patrol of King's African Rifles caught the smugglers red-handed and captured twelve hundred pounds' worth of ivory. We gave our informers a hundred pounds apiece, and hoped that the news of this way of making easy money would spread. But the smuggling fraternity bumped off one of the Somalis, and although the other escaped with his gains to Aden no imitators were forthcoming.

I am glad to say that nowadays the Italian Somaliland authorities will not accept ivory or rhino horn unless it is accompanied by documents that show it was legally obtained in its country of origin—so the smugglers are out of business. But native poachers are still killing Elephant and hiding the tusks, hoping for a return of the good old days.

The Game Department's job is not only preserving game : sometimes it has to see that a species does not get too numerous. For instance, as a result of continual preserva-

tion, about fifteen years ago Elephant became so plentiful in Uganda that they overflowed their usual districts, and became a menace to native cultivation. Various expedients were tried for keeping them in check, and finally licences for twenty-five Elephants were issued to approved European hunters. This was all right in theory, but in practice the hunters naturally went far afield looking for Elephant with the best ivory. This meant that peaceful herds, far away from native cultivation, were suddenly stirred up and overflowed all over the Protectorate. The result of this was that the present Elephant Control Scheme was brought into being. Nowadays practically all Elephant hunting is done by Government Rangers, who are helped by native assistants. They hold a line covering the general cultivated areas of Uganda and they shoot Elephants that attempt to break through it. But they leave all those that stay peacefully in their forest homes severely alone. Under this scheme a very large number of Elephants are annually very skilfully killed by the Government Rangers. Sometimes people say it is wrong that a Government should kill so many of these fine animals, but to my mind there is no greater mistake than trying to preserve game in districts where it conflicts with economic development. If game preservation is to be successful, it must be supported by public opinion. Now the public are not going to be enthusiastic supporters of a Game Preservation Policy if its crops are being devoured by Elephant or Zebra.

Public opinion in Kenya has improved enormously in the last ten years, thanks largely to Captain Ritchie, the Game Warden there. The result of this is that we have been able to pass very strict game laws and have got sympathetic help in enforcing them. I hope, too, that in time we shall get a staff sufficient to do the job properly, and that the Game Wardens of Africa, who are doing such good work, will get a real chance. The wild life of to-day is not wholly ours to dispose of as we please: it has been given us in trust. We must account for it to those who come after us and who will audit our records.