

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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UGANDA.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GAME DEPARTMENT.

Captain Pitman's Report for the year 1939 covers, as usual, a wide field. The Report is available for loan to members who may wish to study it in detail. In the following paragraphs the endeavour has been made to summarize some of the points of chief interest.

GAME ORDINANCE.

“In order to conform precisely with the mandatory provisions of the International Convention for the Protection of Flora and Fauna an amending Ordinance was enacted in April.

“The principal changes in the regulations include a re-definition of the term ‘trophy’; the ban on certain objectionable methods of hunting to be extended to all animals and not, as formerly, confined to game; and a new schedule of species and subspecies which though not occurring in Uganda are protected by the terms of the Convention.”

GAME RESERVES AND SANCTUARIES.

Bunyoro and Gulu.—On the occasion of a visit to the Murchison Falls in March, after torrential rains, fewer Kob and Waterbuck than usual were seen, owing to the dispersal of Ungulates in general away from the river bank. “Most gratifying, however, is the fact that nearly all the females seen of these species had young at foot.”

Eight separate herds of Elephants were seen. “They were mainly cow herds, and a conspicuous feature was the abundance of young stock.”

“A dozen Monitor Lizards were observed unearthing turtles' eggs on an isolated sandspit. Fierce fights frequently ensued as to who should have the next egg, and not only teeth but the formidable, razor-edged tails were used freely.”

“*Semliki.*—Mr. Gunn was on several occasions successful in apprehending poachers in this Reserve. His reports indicate that the most common Antelope is the Kob, which in

parts is plentiful in herds of 30 to 100. This species has evidently been much hunted, as it is exceptionally wild. There is a fair quantity of Waterbuck and Hartebeest. Locally there are many Buffaloes (the biggest lot seen totalled 100) and several small Elephant herds. Lions were heard. On the whole the grazing is very poor."

"*Lake George.*—The extension of the Lake George Reserve referred to in paragraph 10 the 1938 Report, was gazetted in January."

"*White Rhinoceros Sanctuaries.*—It is reported that the small Aiyu River sanctuary is particularly well stocked with White Rhinoceros."

ELEPHANT CONTROL.

"Although Elephants generally are as abundant as ever, there has been no necessity, thanks to the results of many years of intensive control, to increase the rate of killing."

"Most districts, which in the past were sources of constant complaint, continue to report decreasing damage in spite of no lack of Elephants."

"The average weight per control tusk, approximately 12·3 lb., is a very appreciable increase over that of last year (11·33 lb.), and differs little from that of 1937 and 1936, indicating that control measures are not adversely affecting the general standard."

"*Buganda.*—There is little to report. In many parts damage by Elephants is increasingly rare. In Buwekula (Mubende) Elephants are increasing and have appeared in a locality where they were previously unknown. In Singo, between the Kampala-Hoima main road and the Mayanja river there is a large area, almost entirely uninhabited, which is full of Elephants and where they can be conveniently left alone. To the west of the same road, in the Ntwetwe region, Captain Salmon, in response to numerous complaints of damage, carried out investigations for three days which satisfied him that the complaints were utterly frivolous."

Elsewhere control is still necessary, but apparently everywhere of a less severe order. In particular "Control in Bun-

yoro has been as effective as in the past few years. It is still necessary to take heavy toll of the herds, and 284 Elephants have been killed, which, however, is an appreciable decrease (342 in 1938). In October Elephants which attempted to emerge from the Reserve into Kibanda were speedily driven back. Elephants from the Game Reserve and the restricted sleeping sickness area, where they are numerous, periodically raid into Acholu, but the damage has been much less than usual. One marauding bull seen returning to the Reserve is believed to have tusks weighing 140 lb. each. The Aloro bull herds come from these parts. Much damage to cultivation was caused at Awach, near the Aswa river, in October."

ELEPHANT BEHAVIOUR.

"*Life in Africa.*—The Chief of Obongi (West Madi) when wheeling his cycle along a track one night about 10 o'clock was aware that Elephants were close to him. Suddenly his cycle was whipped out of his hands and smashed on the ground. He crawled away and left an Elephant pounding it to pieces!"

NOTES ON THE FAUNA.

Under the above heading Captain Pitman notes that Baboons have been very troublesome and organized destruction has been necessary.

CARNIVORA.

"*Lion.*—Lions are still not uncommon in parts. A man-eating Lion which had killed five people in fourteen days was shot by a game guard in Ankole, in the vicinity of the Merama Hill Customs Post. It was a stout effort on the part of the guard, who followed a trail at dawn after a man had been carried off and found the victim's legs at the edge of a patch of dense bush. Three hours' crawling about on all fours eventually gave the avenger the opportunity to bring a very creditable performance to a successful conclusion. The Lion was in magnificent condition and a man-eater by preference. He was a contemptuous creature who unconcernedly made use of the road bridge across the river, and ignored the tempting

baits tethered for his downfall. The night that he took his last victim he passed within five yards of the bullock left out for him, and skilfully avoided the guard on watch without offering a chance of a shot.

“ In Masaka there have been two human fatalities, and complaints of cattle and goat killing have been common. One of the local people speared and killed a Lion which had killed seven of his goats ; two others which had caused considerable damage were trapped and killed. A game guard shot a very fine, black-maned Lino.

“ At Bwera, in Toro, two Lions killed a man defending his cattle.

“ *Leopard.*—In Kigezi Leopards were poisoned which had taken six sheep from the Kachwekano Agricultural Farm. Several cases of Leopard bite have been treated in Kabale hospital.

“ In Kabula county, Masaka, a fourteen-year-old boy speared and killed a Leopard which had killed one of his father’s goats. In the same county a Leopard which had entered a house and seized and ate a child, was tracked down and killed the next day after it had seriously injured three of its pursuers.

“ In Teso two men were injured, one fatally, in the course of hunts. In the Central District Leopards have been responsible for many losses amongst stock, and a child was killed. In Agule a particularly murderously inclined Leopard was eventually trapped.

“ Propaganda, by means of broadcasting and circulars to Chiefs, has been used in an endeavour to curtail the excessive destruction of Leopards.”

(Whether propaganda will avail against the dislike which the Leopards go out of their way to inspire may be regarded as doubtful !)

UNGULATES.

“ *Buffalo.*—There is scarcely a district from which complaints, concerning more the presence of Buffaloes than actual

damage, are not frequent. Wherever this big bad beast occurs it is evidently increasing rapidly, particularly in parts of Karamoja, in Busoga, Mengo, Masaka, Mubende, Ankole, Toro, Kigezi, Bunyoro, Acholi, and West Nile. In the last-named district a herd totalling one thousand has been seen near Rhino Camp.

“The Toro Game Ranger, Mr. Banks, with several of his guards spent the first few months of the year in Ankole engaged in an anti-Buffalo campaign which resulted in an appreciable decrease in the numbers in certain localities.

“In the Masaka District the game guards have destroyed sixty. In Toro, Buffaloes have been responsible for the deaths of three men.”

“*Roan Antelope*.—A herd has been seen at Agwata, near Lake Kwania. This seems to indicate a southerly extension of this Antelope’s range in Lango.”

“*Antelopes*.—Reliable reports indicate that in many parts of Northern Uganda, outside the game reserves, the Antelopes are being mercilessly hunted on an extensive scale.

“In the south-western section of the fly-belt in Southern Ankole, during the last twelve months the Antelopes have greatly decreased.

“On the other hand there still remain a few localities where a substantial increase is noticeable.”

“*White Rhinoceros*.—During February and March Captain Salmon investigated the White Rhinoceros situation in the West Nile District and West Madi. As far as numbers are concerned—there appears to be a 50 per cent increase since the last investigation was made ten years ago—the situation is satisfactory, but, unfortunately, the organized hunts which sweep through the countryside during the dry season have changed the placid, fearless Rhinoceros of a decade back into a timid, suspicious creature. In only one locality, indicating freedom from the disturbing influence of the tribal hunt, did the investigator come across an extremely complacent lot of animals, reminiscent of the old days. The longest horn seen was estimated to be about 38 inches. Captain Salmon is of the opinion that in these localities there must be at least 220

examples of the White Rhinoceros. According to season this interesting species is likely to be found throughout West Madi and in a great part of the West Nile district, its range extending from the Sudan border in the north to Pakwach and Panyamur in the south.

“The percentage of young generally is satisfactory, though in the southern portions of the Rhinoceros habitat, where innumerable spiked and leather thong foot traps were found, scarcely a juvenile was seen. A pair was observed mating.

“The local inhabitants still refuse to believe in what, from long experience, is known as fact, and that is the almost absolute harmlessness of the White Rhinoceros. In the vicinity of Rhino Camp a distinct lessening in the Rhinoceros population is certainly due to the greatly increased native settlement which is encroaching heavily on the erstwhile Rhinoceros areas. In contrast, in other localities considerable increases are now apparent, and in some places where this animal was a rarity years ago there are now well-established colonies.

“In the Koich river area the increase is particularly noticeable, and in this locality Captain Salmon came across a cow with two calves, each of about 4 months old. His guide told him he had first seen them when they were just able to stand up, probably within a day of birth, so that there can be no reasonable doubt that they are twins. In the Rogem area another cow was seen to be accompanied by two calves about a quarter grown, but from their behaviour it is possible that one was an orphan.

“In West Madi, in October, a White Rhinoceros was found dead as a result of a fight with one of its own kind. There were sixteen horn wounds on the body.

“At the end of the year four of these strange animals were seen together near Pakwach.”

“*Giraffe*.—Owing to the persistent depredations to the cotton crops in East Madi nine Giraffe had to be destroyed before the herds curbed their appetite for the country’s one economic crop.

“It is estimated that there are at least 150 of these big creatures in the vicinity of the inhabited areas of East Madi.”

BIRDS.

“ *Whale-headed Stork*.—A magnificent specimen of *Balæniceps rex* was seen on the left (Bunyoro) bank of the Nile at 2.30 p.m. on the 27th March several miles downstream of the Murchison Falls. It was standing at the edge of a large expanse of dry flats, a most unusual locality and time for this sudd-frequenting species.”

“ *Duck*.—It is reported that a remarkable feature at the end of 1939 has been the non-appearance on Lake Saka of the large flights of Pochard which normally visit the lake from September to January. At no time has a total of twenty-five of this species been seen.”

“ *Eagle*.—A strange incident is reported from Mt. Elgon in May. It appears that an eagle swooped down on an unattended infant of four months and carried it off a distance of six yards before the child fell out of its clothes, which were taken on a further fourteen yards. Luckily the child was not seriously injured. The Sebei call this bird ‘Sichodit’. It is not known whether this name is generic or applicable to one species only. It is possible that the Eagle concerned is the exceptionally long-taloned, crowned Hawk Eagle, *Stephanoaëtus coronatus*, which is an enormous and very powerful bird.”

“ *Black-bellied Bustard*.—A hen black-bellied Bustard accompanied by a week-old chick was observed in the Veterinary Paddocks at Old Entebbe on the 12th January. On the 17th March one of the Veterinary Officers came across a nest of this species containing one egg on the point of hatching out.

“As it is believed that there is only one pair of black-bellied Bustards in the Veterinary Paddocks it would appear that this species is double-brooded.”

“ *Swallow*.—A curious accident to a Swallow was reported near Fort Portal. The Swallow was caught in the tough yellow web of the large black and yellow spider—4 to 5 inches across the legs—which is a familiar forest species. The web had been constructed at one end of a veranda and the capture of so

large a victim as a Swallow must have been unintentional. The bird was hopelessly entangled, but the spider made no attempt to attack it. The bird eventually had to be released."

"*Co-operation with European Bird-marking Stations.*— Between the 1st October and the end of the year two rings from white Storks ringed in Europe, and the details of a ringed Swallow, have been received by this Department. Information as to when and where these birds were marked is, unfortunately, not available and will have to await the return of happier times. It is strange that so few rings should have been sent in compared with the finds of the last three years."

FISHERIES.

There is a full and interesting report of the fisheries of the Protectorate. It does not lend itself easily to summarization. It is evident that the fisheries of e.g. Lake Victoria are improving as the result of intelligent control.

The wholesale value of fish caught in Uganda waters is reported to be "at least £100,000". This may not seem to be a large total when compared with the value of British Fisheries; but it no doubt represents a greater intrinsic value in the native economy than the mere figure suggests. It must be taken into account that these fisheries are, in part at least, the raw material of other industries. For instance, there is an export trade in salted and smoked fish from the Lake Edward Region to the Belgian Congo, the total annual value of which is estimated to be some £25,000. The introduction of rainbow trout in the River Bukwa seems to have met with considerable success.