

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/>

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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.

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

does not simply reduce numbers; it breaks up the elephant families and destroys the herd structure. It is the matriarch, the leader, who has the largest tusks and is the poachers' first target; without her the leaderless families tend to congregate, so that local density is high and damage to the vegetation inevitable. Last year Dr Eltringham and Mr Malpas described the future for Uganda's elephants as 'grim'; it is even grimmer today.

Tanzania is one of the greatest reservoirs of elephants in Africa, with a large concentration in the huge Selous Game Reserve and surrounding areas in the south – over 110,000 were counted there in the dry season, says a preliminary report of the Survival Service Commission (SSC) Elephant Group. Moreover, the Tanzanian Government has a strong policy on conservation. But there is considerable poaching in the north of the country, as there is in Kenya, where it has received world-wide publicity, and

**Elephant
Poaching in
East Africa**

Uganda – a map showing elephant distribution is published on pages 24 and 25. The main cause of all the poaching is of course the ivory, and the size of the problem is reflected in the figures put out by TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Fauna and Flora in Commerce, another SSC group) for Hong Kong ivory imports: 512,955 kg in 1975, the equivalent of 35,000 elephants and possibly as many as 50,000. The SSC Elephant Group, which has African and Asian sub-groups, is making surveys to find out where and to what extent elephants are threatened or endangered and make recommendations for conserving them. The co-chairmen of the Africa group are Dr Iain Douglas-Hamilton and Dr Harvey Croze.

The square-lipped (white) rhino in the Garamba National Park in Zaire appear to be recovering their numbers after the disastrous slaughter between 1963 and 1966, when the park was occupied by armed soldiers or rebels. In

**White Rhino
Increase
in Zaire**

1966/67 Dr Kai Curry-Lindahl estimated that numbers of *Ceratotherium simum cottoni* had fallen from about 1200 to about 100 (*Oryx*, January 1972, page 263). Last year three members of the Kenya Wildlife Management Project, Drs J. M. Savidge, Michael Woodford and Harvey Croze, in the course of aerial surveys for the Zaire Conservation of Nature and the Environment Project, estimated the population at over 400; moreover, the large number of calves suggest that it is a healthy and expanding population. Because white rhino thrive in heavily utilised grasslands – and there are 'massive' buffalo and hippo populations as well – they believe that numbers could build up considerably. The park is largely fire-climax grassland, being annually burned by 'hot' fires, i.e. late in the dry season – in marked contrast to the surrounding areas. But the moisture in the soil is sufficient to ensure a vigorous regrowth of grass after the burns, and thus, at the height of the dry season, when food would otherwise be scarce, the rank unpalatable stands of grass normally to be expected have been burned

off and replaced with a 'palatable sward'. As the process involves no loss of nutrients, productivity is increased, and Garamba can be thought of as a 'forest' of large herbivores instead of trees – an interesting result of park management.

The mysterious decline of Britain's large blue butterfly *Maculinea arion* can be blamed largely on myxomatosis, according to research by Dr Jeremy Thomas of the Nature Conservancy Council's (NCC) Terrestrial Ecology

Rabbits,
Ants and the
Large Blue

Unit. The link is a small brown ant *Myrmica sabuleti*, which carries the butterfly's larva from its birthplace, the thyme flower, to its own nest, and allows it, in exchange for a sugary excretion, to feed on ant grubs, and to hibernate and pupate. The indispensable *sabuleti*,

however, only occurs on arid slopes where grass is kept shorter than three centimetres, something the rabbits did. If the grass gets higher, two other species of small brown ant take over, one of which is occasionally used by the butterfly, but the other never. Conservation efforts have misfired because thyme was thought to be the critical ingredient of the butterfly's life cycle, and no attention was paid to either grass height or the resident ant species. Dr Thomas's research appears to answer most questions about the decline of the blue, but one other is inevitably raised: is the butterfly itself an exotic species which only appeared after the Normans had introduced rabbits? Or did deer keep the grass short in prehistoric England?

In thickly populated countries large wild animals tend to get eliminated. The largest surviving wild carnivore in Britain is the badger, which is harmless and even beneficial. There was thus widespread alarm in 1971 when the

Where Badgers
Had
to Be Killed

Ministry of Agriculture wanted to kill badgers alleged to be infecting dairy cows with TB; many thought it was a put-up job. But it was not. In a very few areas some badgers had bovine TB – whether they infected the cattle or the cattle infected them was immaterial – and no

naturalist or animal lover would wish this very serious disease to spread through the wild badger population – or any other animal, wild or domestic. It became clear, in fact, that in some areas badgers had to be eradicated, and the Ministry is to be congratulated for having made the best of a bad job, by conducting thorough research, taking advice from conservationists, reassuring farmers outside the South-west that their badgers were harmless, being as selective and humane as possible and following the letter of existing legislation, which allows for local eradication programmes in case of epidemics. *Bovine Tuberculosis in Badgers* (free from Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) describes the situation and the operations so far. In a few places these are now nearly complete, and it is hoped badgers will be able to rebuild disease-free populations in some formerly infected areas. Meanwhile there is no justification whatever for killing badgers outside a few, mostly very limited, areas in South-west England.