

THE TSAVO WILDLIFE SEMINAR

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The Wildlife Clubs of Kenya Association was started late in 1968 as a result of the spontaneous interest shown by secondary school and teacher training college students in learning more about their country's wildlife.

The objects of the Clubs are to spread knowledge about the wildlife and the environment of Kenya, to make young Kenyans aware of the great economic, cultural, and aesthetic value of natural resources, and to develop a better understanding of how to conserve them.

With support from several fund-raising bodies, a national headquarters has been established at the National Museum, Nairobi: this provides quarterly newsletters, and guides the clubs in organising their own activities and field trips.

The great success of the recent seminar emphasised the fact that Africans themselves are intensely interested in their unequalled wildlife resources.

Wildlife conservation has been practised in African circles for many years, but this has deteriorated with the advance of modern civilisation. Among other factors, a monetary economy has stimulated the indiscriminate killing of animals.

In the past, local hunters were much more selective. They killed a few animals at a time to meet their immediate requirements. As the years went by, wild animal products met an increasing demand which consequently led to mass killing. Despite the activities of game wardens, poaching has reached serious proportions. 'In the northern areas of Kenya the poach-

ing position is the worst yet experienced,' reported the *East African Standard* on 14 May this year.

'Large gangs of ex-shifita have turned to poaching. One party contacted consisted of 68 people armed with 42 firearms, including two Bren guns and two Stens . . . At the moment poachers get £50 for a leopard skin and £15 for a zebra skin.'

It was for this reason, among others, that Wildlife Clubs of Kenya were formed - with the hope that through education the people of Kenya may realise the value of wildlife and appreciate its presence.

The Tsavo Wildlife Seminar, the first of its kind, was organised by a national Association which co-ordinates the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya. Like the Clubs themselves, this national body was formed after a wildlife seminar held in 1968 at Kagumo High School near Nyeri, which was attended by representatives of 12 secondary schools. The Kagumo seminar was organised mainly by the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife as part of its National Wildlife Education Programme. Today, there are 48 Wildlife Clubs in Kenya. Thirty of these were represented at the 1970 Wildlife Clubs Seminar in Tsavo East National Park.

The delegates were welcomed in Nairobi on 11 April by the National Secretary for the Wildlife Clubs, and by the National Museums Education Officers who would lead them in their activities throughout the following week.

The following day the delegates left for Tsavo East National Park, where they spent a week in the newly-built Education Centre. They were engaged in various activities, such as game viewing, bird watching, seeing anti-poaching demonstrations, attending lectures and film shows. During the practical sessions they learned how to take latex moulds of animal tracks. They also held discussions on the activities of Wildlife Clubs and on the major issues of wildlife conservation.

Upon returning to Nairobi the delegates saw lion at a warthog kill in Nairobi National Park. The delegates were then addressed at the Education Centre by Perez Olindo, Director of Kenya National Parks. He urged the students to take a keen interest in wildlife and its conservation. It is to the great pleasure of all Wildlife Club members that the Director, Mr Olindo, has announced that all entry fees to National Parks and Reserves will be waived for Wildlife Club groups.

On Monday, 20 April, all delegates left for their homes, more determined than ever to help in the conservation of wildlife so that future generations may see what they had seen. ●



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PHOTOS BY MARK BOULTON



1 The author meets a young rhino, currently one of the Ophans of Tsavo. It may come as a surprise to people in developed countries that they are more likely to have seen rhino, elephant, or giraffe than most East African students. The Wildlife Clubs will provide opportunities to correct this situation. 2 Underwater observation post at Mzima Springs, Tsavo West. 3 Delegates to the Tsavo seminar game-watching. 4 More game-watching at Mzima Springs—this time above water

Centre-spread: Young olive baboons in Nairobi National Park (photo by Mark Boulton)

