

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor welcomes letters from readers, but they must be brief. Photographs, to accompany letters, which illustrate points of interest are invited. A stamped, addressed envelope must be sent with photographs if their return is desired.

WHITE RHINO

SIR—Congratulations on the excellent magazine; may it go far in spreading the word of conservation.

I should like to comment on A. Cullen's letter which appeared in the June issue, regarding the position of the

square-lipped or white rhino in the Umfolozi Game Reserve of Natal.

May I assure him that all Natalians are very proud of their natural heritage, especially in the 600-odd white rhino at Umfolozi, and every care is taken as regards their safety. So much so that the Parks Board is at this moment capturing and transporting

rhinos to many other parts of the country, including Rhodesia, as a safety measure against them, in their present isolated state, being wiped out by disease.

I suggest Mr. Cullen refers to either some recent editions of "African Wild Life" or the "Lanimergeyer", the journal of the Natal Parks Board, for further enlightenment on the subject.

In conclusion, may I say that as regards wild life conservation, the reserves in South Africa are the most stable in Africa, as is the attitude of the peoples towards this subject.

B. J. HUNTLEY.

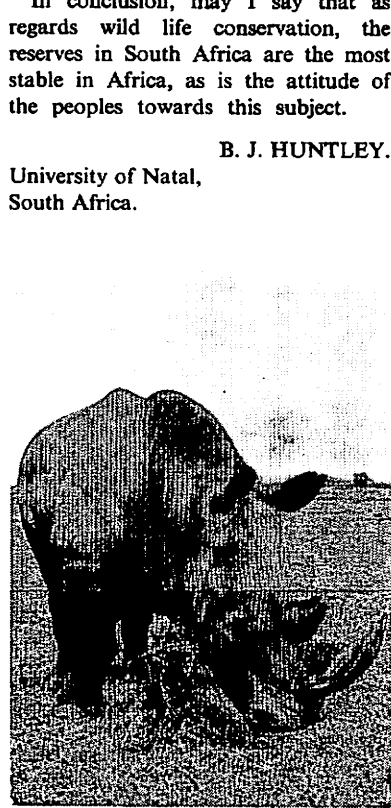
University of Natal,
South Africa.

UNIQUE VISITOR

SIR—On the 11th July, in company with Prince Pignatelli, I was bird watching on Lake Naivasha when we sighted a pair of duck swimming in one of the lily-covered lagoons.

Although both of us have a fair knowledge of the wild fowl of East Africa, neither could place this pair of duck. They were dark, almost black, set low in the water, and with quite bright large orange to red heads and short red mandible.

We got within about 50 feet of them before they took to the air, and we noticed that in flight their wings were well set back, with a distinct white under-wing band.



THE WIDE-LIPPED RHINO is safe in South Africa. (See White Rhino) Photo by C. Ziegler.

SIR—With regard to Mr. Cullen's letter on our white rhino.

Have no fears, we are looking after them well. We believe that South Africa leads the world in nature conservancy and everything is under control down here.

We are catching white rhino and transporting them to safer areas.

L. P. WARLAND.

Johannesburg.

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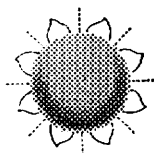
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WAYS OF THE WILD

Continued

ours. When danger threatens she whips along the ground to reach the safety of a tree, the baby clinging on for dear life, its wizened little face buried deep in the mother's fur.

OSTRICHES neatly divide the duties of sitting on the nest in a manner most logical. The ostrich hen is dun-coloured, blending with the surroundings in the daytime, while the cock is dark, being nearly invisible at night. Thus they neatly divide their duty.

Ostriches *do not* bury their heads in the sand. The nearest they come to doing this is to flatten the neck along the ground when already sitting, transforming themselves into a bush or shrub.

One ostrich egg contains the equivalent of 24 hens' eggs, and a clutch consists of about 2 eggs. Thickness of the shell? About an inch, enough to support the weight of man.

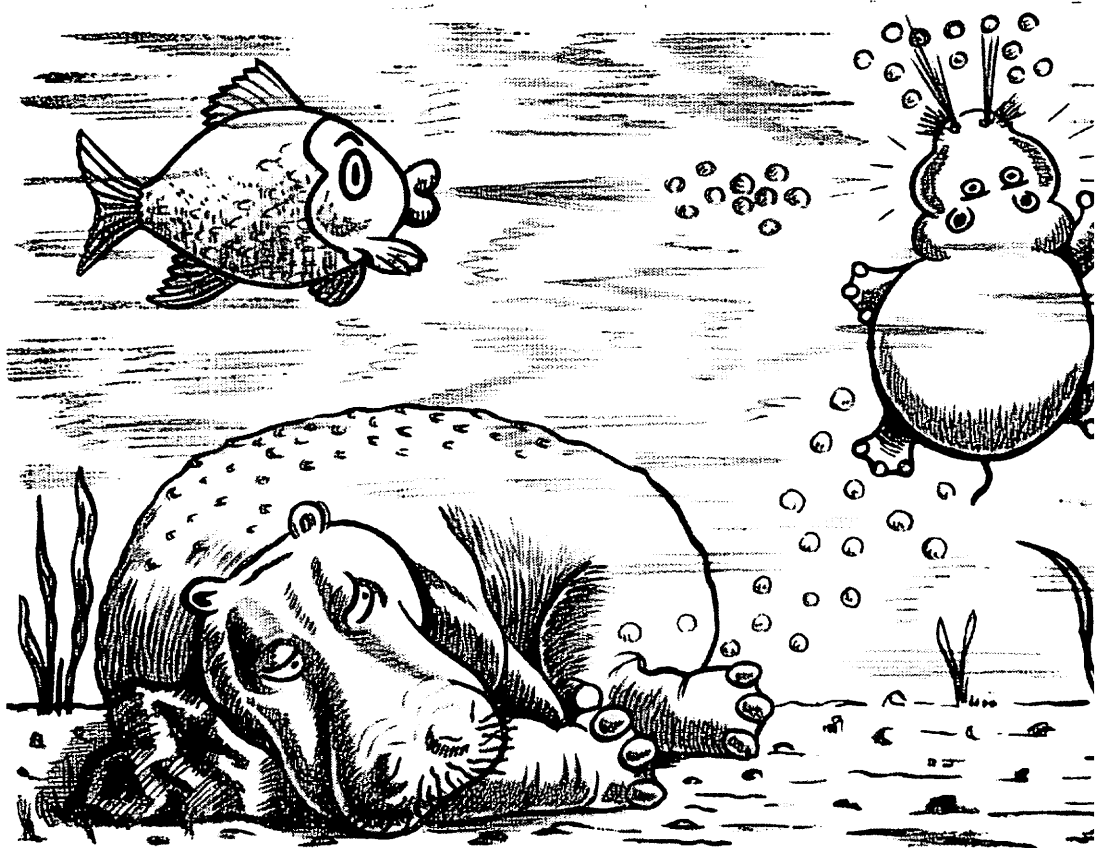
The diet of an ostrich is varied; stones, buttons, nuts, bolts—all these are gulped by the voracious bird.

An unusual death occurred recently when Decimal Dan, an ostrich on one of the well-known ostrich farms near Oudtshoorn in South Africa, swallowed a one-cent piece, choked and died.

Explanation: South Africa has just converted from sterling to decimal currency and the larger coins proved to be Decimal Dan's undoing, which only goes to show what a dog's life it is for a bird to try and keep pace with the changing face of man.



And thus died Decimal Dan.



Without the aid of snorkel or aqualung.

DO animals talk? Although animals do not have language with syntax and semantics, they use certain instinctive gestures and sounds to convey meaning.

The ground squirrel can utter four sounds, yet one of those sounds has so many intonations that almost all his emotions can be expressed.

An ape has a vocabulary of about 20 sounds and, in contrast to the lesser apes, the anthropoid apes are sparing with the sounds they utter and do not chatter in the way that, say, baboons do.

A scientist once averred that chimpanzees have a vocabulary of 30 "words", and that certain of these "words" have a definite affinity with the tongue-clicks of Bushmen (a fast dwindling aborigine race living in the Kalahari Desert).

Another scientist discovered that, anatomically, there is no reason why anthropoid apes should not speak, since they have all the necessary vocal chords. In fact he maintained that should they speak they would have a slight Irish accent.

Giraffes can utter noises, a giraffelet making bleating sounds like a sheep. Even the adult forces a sound of sorts up that lanky larynx.

That vexed question of "crocodile tears" has kept allegorists (and Kipling) busy for many sententious sentences.

The truth of the matter is that when the croc lies in the baking rays of the sun the moisture in its lungs and skin evaporates and the concentration of salt in the blood increases rapidly.

In order to neutralise this excessive concentration, a discharge occurs near the eyes, creating the impression that the crocodile is weeping "salt tears". An

interesting side note on crocs is that if the crocodile population of the Kruger National Park were permitted to expand without the attention of hawks, their cannibalistic fathers and various other predators, the whole Park would be over-run with crocs within six years.

IN this same sanctuary, lions have gone sophisticated and use the motor cars that cruise slowly through the park to aid them in their hunting. The exhaust fumes mask the warning scent of the lion and he can pounce on the oblivious antelope before it has time to flee.

A lion can kill a zebra with one blow of its sledge-hammer paw. An incident was observed where a zebra was dead in half a second. A hunter who performed an autopsy found one lethal blow had dislocated the zebra's neck. That is the Law of the Jungle. The stronger must kill the weaker, and the fleet of foot must evade the sly. Animals kill that they and their young might live, not for pleasure. Nature rules roughly, but on the whole justly, and not wastefully.

Only man rules wastefully when he enters the animal world as predator, not as observer and protector. The noose of the poacher is far less merciful—to put it mildly—than the swift stroke of the lion and the pit of the hunter or the crippling shot of the inept white man are slow when compared with the functional speed of the crocodile or cheetah.

That is why there is a need for Game Reserves, where near-extinct species may be saved. Zoos are also necessary and play a most important part in the preservation of near-extinct species, or in the study of other species, yet the Theory of the Fleeting Glimpse (so well known by strip-teasers) causes the visitor to experience a greater thrill when watching a single antelope clearing the road in a single bound, than when seeing a whole troupe of lions roar histrionically in a circus.