

## New game reserve for Mozambique

**Southern Mozambique was once habitat for one of the largest concentrations of wildlife in Africa, but after decades of civil war the area has been largely depleted.**

**M**ozambique's government has approved the establishment of what will be the largest privatised game reserve in the world. Encompassing 234,000 hectares in the Maputland region of southern Mozambique, the conservation project is designed to stimulate economic growth and, at the same time, protect a globally important ecosystem.

The project is unique in a number of ways. As well as being the largest public game reserve ever transferred to private management and funding, it will provide the only "sun, sea and sand" safari experience in Africa. With ninety kilometres of pristine Indian Ocean Beach front, the area is famed for the elephants that cross the huge dunes to bathe in the ocean. Through low impact development, the protection of the reserve's fragile ecosystem should be perpetually funded through tourism revenue.

The project stretches from Incha Island in the north to the South African border, encompassing the Santa Maria Peninsula and the Maputo Elephant Reserve. It will be managed by Blanchard Mozambique Enterprises (BME), an American corporation which developed the privatisation plan.

The area was once habitat for one of the largest concentrations of wildlife in Africa, but after decades of civil war the area has been largely depleted, although the Maputo Elephant Reserve still has a significant elephant population. "The region is an outstanding centre of animal diversity," says professor E.P. van Wyk of the Department of Botany at the University of Pretoria. Van Wyk describes this unique ecosystem as Mozambique's principal natural asset, comparable to some of the great game reserves of East Africa.

Through the reintroduction of wildlife and proper wildlife management, the area should attract more revenue from tourists than it could earn from agriculture, providing maximum employment for local people and, at the same time, preserving the ecosystem. The conservation plan calls for a wide range of up-scale tourist facilities ranging from small-scale safari lodges to five-star sun, sea and safari resort hotels. The plan also includes a diving resort, a fishing resort and Africa's first luxury residential development within a private "big-five" game reserve.

BME will restock a large part of the area with wildlife and build the roads, fences and other infrastructure necessary for tourism development. Game translocation alone calls for US \$14.5 million to be spent in the first phase. In conjunction with the Mozambique Foundation, BME will also provide health and educational services to the resident communities.

"It is an essential and enlightened compo-

nent of modern ecotourism that the local people are partners in development," says Dr. Benjamin Nguenya, vice-president and director of community projects for the foundation. The project will employ thousands of Mozambicans within the first year and, when fully built, it should have a major impact on the local economy, creating 12,500 jobs as well as preserving a unique area of Mozambique.

BME chief James U. Blanchard III, believes his project is the only way Mozambique can compete globally as a tourism destination. Tourism, he notes, is the fastest growing industry in the world. But, he states, the project's success will be gauged "not only by profits, but also by how well we protect and nurture the ecology of this wonderful region."

## Clouds over Garamba

**M**ixed news from Garamba National Park in northeast Zaïre. The whole of eastern Zaïre is paralysed by civil conflict. At the time of going to press, government forces have been routed on the eastern border by fighters of the Alliance Democratique des Forces de Liberation du Congo- Zaïre. In December 1996 virtually every expatriate left the area due to the movement of the conflict and the looting and destruction by deserting soldiers fleeing the rebel advance.

A government counter-offensive has been ordered and the park's future remains very much up in the air. Hopefully, Garamba will stay largely out of the conflict since it is away from the strategic centres. However, there are military bases south of the park.

In response to the tense situation in eastern Zaïre, Dr. Claude Martin, director of the World Wide Fund for Nature, which funds Garamba's conservation work, has written to both the Zaïrean government and the rebel authorities to draw their attention to the national and international importance of Zaïre's national parks and United Nations World Heritage Sites:

"These areas represent a unique heritage for the people of Zaïre and the world, both now and in the future. Wildlife and natural resources are of major benefit to the country and to the people living around these areas. As far as possible, we hope that these protected areas will be spared from the ongoing conflict. We applaud the positive attitude towards conservation that has been demonstrated by the leadership on both sides to date and urge you to continue in this vein.

"Over the years, the investments made by international organisations in these unique sites have always been for the purpose of conserving wildlife and natural resources. Destruction of parks' wildlife must be avoided. It remains cru-

these adjacent reservoirs of wildlife.

But that in no way detracts from the Hilton management team's achievements. The fact is that within a very short time of the commencement of Hilton International's tourist operation, there was a spectacular increase of wildlife in what is now the sanctuary. Due to the constant tourist presence, regular patrolling and the establishment of permanent waterholes, dry season concentrations of wildlife continue to be excellent. Daily sightings of a hundred elephants and five hundred buffaloes are commonplace. Impala, waterbuck, Grant's gazelle, hartebeest and zebra are plentiful. Giraffe, eland and fringed-oread oryx can be seen.

Above all, it is the visitor success rate on lion sightings that is the single biggest tourist draw to Taita. The field staff fully understand the importance of lions in the context of wildlife tourism. Motorised patrols go out at first light to look for big cats. When lions or cheetahs are located, a warden will keep his vehicle parked nearby throughout the day. On seeing that vehicle, tour drivers know at once that big cats are there. Additionally, blackboards with sighting reports of all major species are kept up to date in both main lodges. These systems work so well that in 1996 there were only two days on which no lions were observed in the sanctuary by tourists.

Since it is only three hours drive from Mombasa, the Taita sanctuary is a fine destination for visitors holidaying at the beach. It must be said, however, that it may not be the top choice in Kenya for a serious photographer. Tourism here is understandably subject to strict rules, which can hinder the freedom of action sometimes required by keen wildlife photographers.

A key factor in the ecology of the area is the rotational grass burning programme which has been in effect for many years. The main objective of the burning policy is to produce a good mosaic of grassland, some long grass, some short, some mature grasses and some just coming up green and fresh. This of course results in a healthy, diverse population of ungulates, which in turn sustains the all-important lions. Another sound reason for burning some sections of the sanctuary is to help control the spread of commiphora seedlings which would otherwise encroach upon and dominate the grasslands. Indeed large areas of Tsavo West have already been swallowed up by dense growths of commiphora scrub.

Returning to our own visit to the Taita Hills Game Sanctuary in December 1996, after reporting to the main Taita Hills Lodge, a sanctuary pass for our vehicle was quickly issued. We were also allocated an excellent ranger guide. This young man not only helped us to find a large

variety of wildlife including four lions, but also answered all my questions on subjects such as spin-off benefits to the local Taita community, the grassland management policy and so on. Community benefits are considerable. Of the two hundred and forty persons employed at the lodges and within the sanctuary, seventy percent are from the Taita population. Bulk lodge supplies such as fresh fruit, vegetables and dairy products are all purchased locally; at a nearby village construction of a school is currently being financed by the sanctuary; and at Bura town an accommodation industry has sprung up to provide rooms and meals for the many tour drivers who night-stop there while their clients are at Taita or Salt Lick. Last but not least, adjacent communities are being actively encouraged and helped to develop their own wildlife sanctuaries. The boundaries of the protected area will thus be expanded and wildlife-based revenue will become directly available to indigenous land owners.

We checked in at Salt Lick Lodge at just before sundown and later that evening the lodge water hole was visited by bohor reedbuck, marsh mongoose and a herd of seventeen elephants. The November showers had caused the usual dispersal effect among the bulk of the elephant population; before the rains we would probably

have seen many more.

It is worth noting that the bore hole-fed watering place at Salt Lick and the dam near Taita Hills Lodge are virtu-

ally the only permanent water points available to the animals in this area. The Bura Valley passes through the sanctuary but now very rarely has surface water because of increased demands on the supply from people living upstream. The tourist industry is therefore once again at the heart of conservation, providing water for wild animals in a place where there would otherwise be none.

Rising the following morning, we were delighted to find four lionesses with nine small cubs right beside the lodge. Later, they were joined by another lioness with three adolescent young. During our game drives that day we enjoyed fine views of Mount Kilimanjaro and again observed abundant wildlife, including buffalo, oryx, eland and two most handsome lions. Birds of prey were much in evidence including bateleur eagles, a long crested hawk eagle, black shouldered kites and a solitary European marsh harrier.

After one more night in the sanctuary, we left early next morning to drive home. The striking contrast between Tsavo's wilder, undeveloped outlying areas and Taita's more manicured appearance had been a particularly pleasing dimension of our trip, and we were well satisfied with everything we saw on this short safari. •

**The sanctuary is fortunate in being close to very large dispersal and migration zones. It could not survive in its present form without these adjacent reservoirs of wildlife.**

### **Daily sightings of a hundred elephants and five hundred buffaloes are commonplace.**

*Safari operator Joe Cheffings is a frequent contributor to Swara.*

cial that the integrity of the parks be respected. Of particular concern are the national parks and reserves in the east and northeast of the country: Parc National des Virunga; P.N. Garamba; P.N. Maïko; P.N. Kahuzi Biega and the Réserve de Faune à Okapis. Garamba and Virunga, and since last December, the Réserve de Faune à Okapis, are World Heritage Sites, and all contain unique endangered species.

"Garamba National Park, is refuge of the last remaining few northern white rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*) in the world, and Virunga, Maïko and Kahuzi Biega are famous for the protection of the mountain and eastern lowland gorillas (*Gorilla beringei* and *G.g. graueri*). The Réserve de Faune à Okapis represents one of the most important areas worldwide in the conservation of tropical forest. The loss of the wildlife and of the resources to conserve them would be a far reaching disaster. As unique species, if the last of the rhinos, gorillas or okapis were to disappear, the potential for support for these parks and reserves and the associated benefits to the people of Zaïre would also disappear."

The project's work in Garamba is aimed at developing the ability of the Institut Zaïrois pour la Conservation de la Nature (IZCN) park staff to carry out conservation work. Since the 1991 troubles, there has been specific emphasis on building up internal capacity, so that anti-poaching, monitoring and park management can respond to changing situations and can continue as much as possible in times of crisis, when the project can no longer be a full-time presence—as now!

Currently, anti-poaching continues more or less as normal and the project personnel will try to maintain back-up as feasible, thanks to the aircraft provided by Frankfurt Zoological Society, by flying in with supplies and providing periodical aerial support, until normal operations can be resumed. In this conflict-ridden border area, anti-poaching is a dangerous business. Three guards died in 1996. Vungwagba Siro was mortally wounded in April and in October Gunika Takiani was killed by a grenade and Kabadunga Balu wounded by shrapnel from the same grenade. He has since died in hospital.

On the plus side, two new baby rhinos were born during 1996. At the end of the year, the estimated population was between twenty-seven and thirty-one. Four of the estimated thirty-one have not been seen for certain for over a year, and two of these may have been poached, since they were two young males who based themselves in a rather vulnerable area to the east.

It has also been very positive that financial support for the project, including the salaries of the guards, has increased, with funds from WWF UK, WWF Germany the International Rhino Foundation and the Wildlife Conservation Society. Although still only half that needed to achieve the recommended ideal, the budget is

twice what the project was previously running on and a comprehensive management plan has been drawn up and largely completed. Only time will tell if the project will be allowed to continue its promising work.

*Kes and Fraser Smith*

## Zaïrean wins conservation prize

**B**isidi MB Yalolo was nominated Knight of the Order of the Golden Ark by HRH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands in November 1996. The Order of the Golden Ark was instituted by Prince Bernhard in 1971 to honour special services rendered to the conservation of flora and fauna throughout the world.

Bisidi is a project leader for the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) working on an environmental education programme in the Virunga region of eastern Zaïre. The project's main goal is to contribute to ecosystem protection and conservation in Virunga National Park, home to half the world's population of mountain gorillas, by involving local communities and improving collaboration with the Institut Zaïrois pour la Conservation de la Nature (IZCN), which is the park's management authority.

As a member of the IZCN staff, Bisidi has been involved in the project since 1989 and has headed it since 1994, when insecurity increased due to the arrival of Rwandan refugees who settled in camps around the park. The area has since suffered from massive deforestation for fuel wood and shelter.

WWF, in conjunction with IZCN and with funding and support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is now focusing efforts on reforestation.

Tree nurseries have been developed with the participation of the local people and, to date, almost two million trees have been planted.

*WWF*

## Lions, lions, lions.....

**W**atching a dozen hungry and very in experienced lions trying to catch buffalo in the Aberdares led to the reflection that these introduced lions have changed the Aberdares in a relatively short time. For visitors, who know no difference, this spectacle is probably very exciting—but try to find a forest hog or a bongo? If ever there was a case for wildlife management, this is it.

A personal view, perhaps, but one which is shared by others: drastically reduce the lion population in the Aberdares and let the forest animals come back.

*Peter Davey*

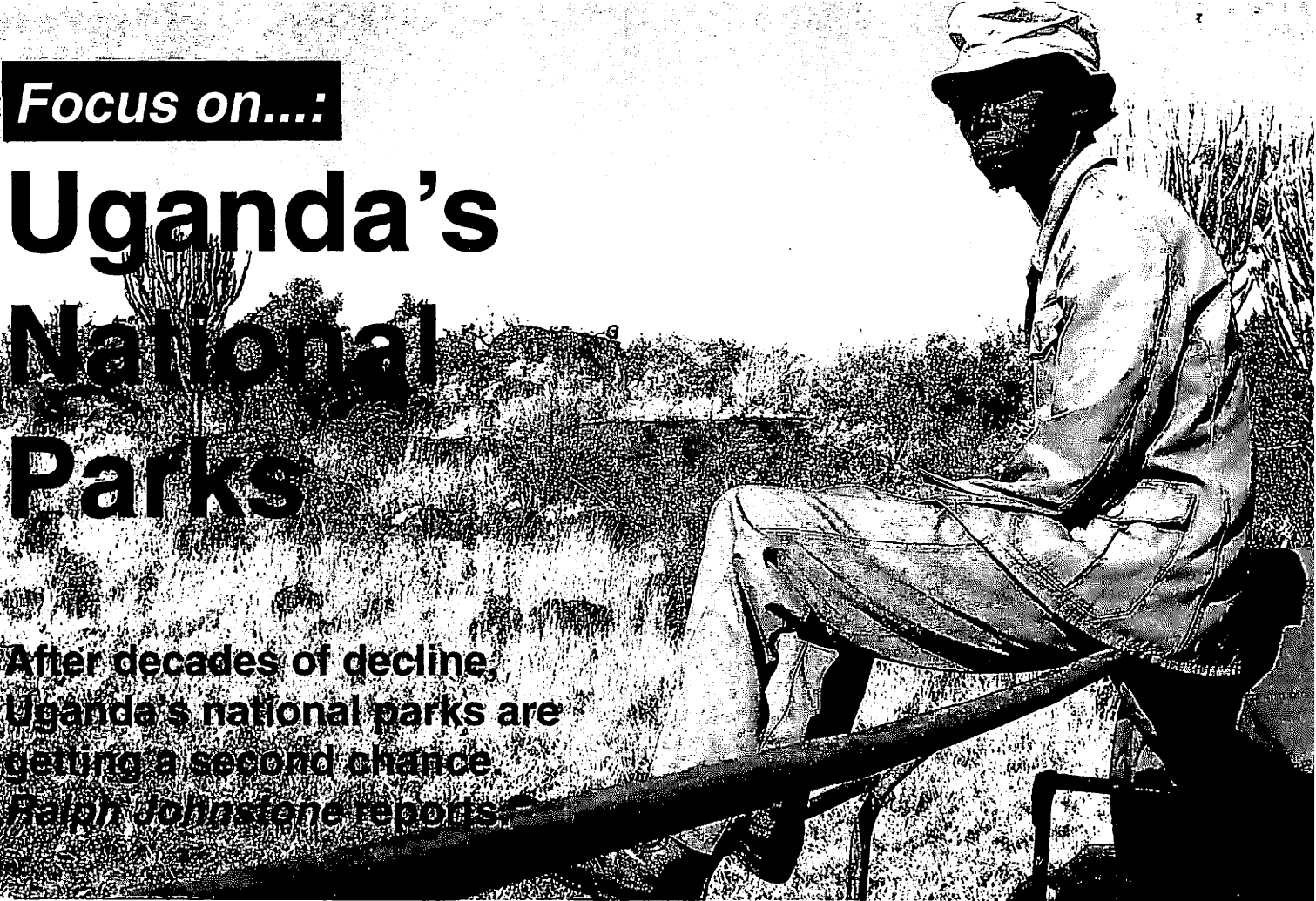
**The arrival of Rwandan refugees who settled in camps around Virunga National Park has led to massive deforestation for fuel wood and shelter.**

**"Drastically reduce the lion population in the Aberdares and let the forest animals come back."**

**Focus on...:**

# Uganda's National Parks

**After decades of decline, Uganda's national parks are getting a second chance.**  
*Ralph Johnstone reports.*



© Paul Joynton-Hicks / In The Dark

**F**OR AFRICANS, THE NILE HAS always been the 'Mzee' of rivers—an old, wise river, silent witness to every chapter of the continent's turbulent history. But nowhere in this fabled waterway's four thousand mile course has it witnessed such swift, dramatic change as it has in the last decade in its early meanderings through western Uganda. Here, in the lush rolling savannah around Murchison Falls, the Nile has seen history turned on its head.

Today, there is little to remind the visitor of the horrors that have gone before. Each morning, a launchload of tourists cruises the fast-flowing river beneath the falls, marvelling at the huge hippos rolling and bobbing in the frothy waters. Herds of waterbuck and kob graze in the lush grass; cormorants, herons and shoebill storks slink through the shallows. On these sun-baked shores, nature is at peace.

It is a peace that has only very recently returned. Up until two decades ago, the palm-scattered plains around Murchison Falls were one of the most populous parcels of land in Africa. For the great white hunter, this was the promised land: a great green field teem-

ing with elephant and rhino, buffalo, leopard and lion. Then, in one bloody decade, the animals were wiped out, machine-gunned to virtual extinction by the lawless marauders of Idi Amin and the Tanzanian troops that overthrew him.

Today, the last vestige of the hunters' heyday, the Paraa Safari Lodge, is being rebuilt by the Sarova hotel chain, which plans to open the luxury fifty-eight room Sarova Paraa later this year.

## **In one bloody decade, the animals were wiped out.**

But while the smashed windows and bullet holes will be gone, there remain other reminders of the fragility of the present peace. Last year, a tourist bus was hijacked here and a major road through the park has since been closed to unaccompanied vehicles, slowing Sarova's already snail-like progress. To this day, the area north of the river is considered rebel territory. The renovation of two other lodges in the area is presently on hold.

But south of the river, opposite the war-racked ruins, a new generation

of rangers is slowly laying the foundations of a solid peace. In the last few years, travellers from Kampala and Nairobi have started to return to the two riverside campsites; in the last year, two lodges have opened, luring the first foreign package tourists Murchison has seen in nearly two decades. The latest generation of rangers is cautiously optimistic. All agree: war must never again be allowed to turn their park into a graveyard.

Like most of their countrymen, the staff at Murchison all know someone who was killed in the anarchic years following Obote's 'Second Revolution'. They still talk about it, in the casual, matter-of-fact tones that characterise this nation's numbness to war. "The wives and children were lined up and shot over there," says one ranger, pointing to the rows of abandoned staff huts opposite one of the new lodges.

For western Uganda's once-thriving animal kingdom, peace has not arrived a moment too soon. Already, the rhinos are gone, hunted to extinction by the officially-sanctioned poachers of 'Obote Two'—a map of Murchison, published in 1964 by *Guns & Ammo* magazine, still offers directions to

'Rhino View Point'. The elephants, too, are only clinging on, though south of Murchison, in Queen Elizabeth National Park, a handful of herds is staging a miraculous comeback, protected from poachers by a dedicated new team of rangers. The lions are creeping back, too; although our guidebook said the king was dead at Murchison Falls, we saw two adults just west of the Sarova site—appropriately enough, a courting couple.

Uganda still has a long way to go before it will be able to match the abundant wilderness and sophisticated service of Kenya and Tanzania. But at last, the country is drawing its collective breath and looking forward. "This is a government of peace," said one of the rangers at Murchison, echoing a sentiment we heard time and again throughout southern Uganda. Everyone here has suffered too much for too long; now they want to get on with the lives they have learned to treasure. There is much to be done.

Of course, this being East Africa, progress has come with a price. Even in the national parks, the aim of the game is to make money. As the director of the Uganda Wildlife Authority, Dr. Eric Edroma, bluntly told me: "We must justify conservation in economic terms. The parks must have monetary value."

To this end, the country has awarded a number of concessions to local and Kenyan firms to build and run lodges in five of its parks. With the lengthy bureaucracy and limited infrastructure that afflict any move into Uganda, progress has been slow, but in the past two years several lodges have opened or passed to private operators. In Queen Elizabeth park, the Mwea Safari Lodge was until last year run by the government, and had become as renowned for its slack service and surly staff as for its bountiful elephant and hippo herds. Now the lodge has been leased to a local industrial conglomerate, which is renovating it in industrial style—including two residential units and a conference centre—but will doubtless rectify standards of service.

While not all Uganda's parks are undergoing such tumultuous change, there have been some laudable developments to boost the country's standing in the increasingly competitive tourism market. After years of charging an exorbitant \$23 entrance fee for its parks,

the fee has been reduced to \$15 or \$10 daily—following Kenya's price structuring to lure people to its less-visited parks. The quality of visitors too is being targeted, to avoid what Edroma calls 'the disastrous environmental consequences' its neighbours face from mass tourism.

While the Uganda Wildlife Authority is yet to formulate a clear policy to promote eco-tourism, efforts are being increasingly focused on activities other than game drives—nature walks, bird watching, water sports on rivers and lakes. As the first big hotel operator in the parks, Sarova promises to offer a shining example of what can be achieved. It is currently 'market testing' several new eco-products in Kenya—use of more local and natural products, camel safaris and other methods of game-viewing less destructive than vehicles—and, according to marketing director James Sullivan-Tailor, is not put off by Uganda's intention to limit tourist numbers. "We see it as an opportunity to develop our eco-products, to work in harmony with the natural environment."

While eco-tourism is a relatively new buzzword in the industry, Uganda's stated environmental goals have already impressed the West. As well as several conservation projects supported by the European Union, the Swedish International Development Agency and the German donor EPZ, the Uganda Wildlife Authority is currently negotiating a 'Protected Area Management and Sustainable Utilisation' programme with the World Bank, which could see as much as \$20 million of donor funds committed to local conservation management.

While Uganda's tourist arrivals remain less than ten percent of Kenya's, the number of visitors to its twelve parks has quadrupled over the past five years. Latest statistics show more than thirty-two thousand visitors to the parks in the first six months of 1996, compared to forty-two thousand in the whole of 1995, and Murchison Falls had more visitors in those six months than the whole of the previous year. Uganda's tourist revenue has almost doubled in the past two years—an anticipated

\$1.7 million in 1995-96.

Not all the money is being absorbed by the notoriously porous Ugandan bureaucracy. The Uganda Wildlife Authority has followed Kenya's lead in moving to channel funds back to the true custodians of its wildlife—the local people. Since 1994, the authority has been giving twelve percent of its tourism receipts to the local communities around its parks (although these funds have been reduced by the statute which established the Uganda Wildlife Authority last year). The communities also have 'controlled access' to twenty percent of the park lands, where they are allowed to draw water, graze cattle, and collect firewood and medicinal plants. "Where we used to have conflict," says Edroma, "we are now gaining friendship."

The government's policy of employing rangers from local communities is also making slow headway in the tricky business of grassroots conservation education. "Many of the older people still don't understand why they have to stop taking meat and plants from the forest," said a guide at Bwindi, where farmers and forest-gatherers are finally being compensated for damaged crops and lost opportunities. "But now they're being given a percentage of the visitors' money, things are slowly improving."

Similar slow success is being made in the battle against poaching, until recently a mainstay of the park communities' livelihood. In the

north of Murchison Falls, rebels still take deer for their dinner, as do the Karamojong people in Kidepo National Park. But at Queen Elizabeth, where until recently the central Kazinga Channel was strewn with hippo traps, rangers claim they have ousted the poachers—only to come up against a new threat: the felling of trees to provide fishermen with firewood to dry their fish.

Sitting up on the campsite overlooking the Kazinga Channel, watching the warthogs and hippos rummaging between the tents against a flaming Rwenzori sunset, the future does indeed look rosy for Uganda's parks. There are clearly many obstacles ahead, but this country and its resilient people have proved time and again that nothing is insurmountable. •

**"Where we used to have conflict, we are now gaining friends."**

**Uganda's tourist revenue has almost doubled in the past two years.**

# What Future the Rwenzori?

Guy Yeoman closed his essay—*Last Chance for Rwenzori* (Swara 12:5)—on an optimistic note, says EAWLS vice-chairman *Imre Loeffler*. He thought that establishing a national park on the Ugandan side of the range might safeguard the Rwenzori's precarious ecosystem. Seven years later, some progress has been made, but the future of the Rwenzori is still in the balance.

THE RWENZORI IS IMPORTANT to many different people with many different interests and many different attitudes. These multifarious interests must be recognised and reconciled. Everywhere in Africa it has taken a long time to recognise that conserving and managing any given area is largely dependent on the cooperation of local communities and that this cooperation in turn depends on the dual influence of economy and education.

In the case of the Rwenzori, the fact that the Ugandan side was not made into a national park much earlier is explained by the dense population on the lower slopes of the mountain on its eastern side. That the western Zaïrean side of the central massif has been a national park for a long time is not only a matter of greater foresight, or greater disregard of local interests on the part of the distant central government, but a consequence of the physical asymmetry and geological oddity of the Rwenzori. This mountain is tilted—and tilting still!—and the western slopes are much steeper than the eastern ones; hence the soil is different, biodiversity is less and the slopes are less densely populated.

The Rwenzori has been, and will remain the mountain of the Bakonjo, a Bantu-speaking people who have lived for many generations on the mountain and whose culture is adapted to the dictates of steep slopes, abundant rain, fog and clouds, hot days and cold nights. The Bakonjo live on the Rwenzori; they

regard it as theirs. Thirty years ago, they even thought that they could make the Rwenzori an independent state. Although that would not be viable, neither will a national park or any other conservation effort thrive without Bakonjo cooperation.

Whilst recognising the importance of the interests of local communities, contemporary conservation philosophy does not, however, make them paramount owners of the natural resources in their neighbourhood. The fact is that people may sit astride resources without even realising their im-

**“The long hike along the ridge of the mountain north of the central peaks is one of the most exhilarating walks in Africa.”**

portance to others. This is eminently the case with this mountain: the Rwenzori is one of the principal sources of the White Nile. It is also an area of immense biodiversity, home to countless unnamed species of plants and invertebrate animals; its peaks are a coveted destination of mountaineers; it is rich in minerals: copper, cobalt, selenium, perhaps mercury and some gold. Finally, it is important as the home of some three hundred thousand Bakonjo.

Even the Bakonjo claims to the area need qualification. The Bakonjo did not frequent the high peaks, and it took some persuasion on the part of the Duke of Abruzzi to make them put their feet onto snow. Much is made of their

ancient mythology and their fear of spirits but the fact is that they had no shoes and their clothes made of animal skins did not provide enough protection. In any case, commuting on glaciers is a pastime largely developed by rich upper class Europeans in the past hundred years.

In the wake of the Duke's famous safari, there was a steady trickle of such intrepid rich men, and the occasional woman, who came to scale these elusive, difficult and beautiful peaks, some twenty-five of which are over 4,500 metres. The income generated for the Bakonjo by these mountaineers, and the many naturalists who followed, was considerable in terms of cash but tiny in terms of their mountain economy. This is based on agriculture and hunting and gathering.

Formerly, game was plentiful. Buffalo, bushbuck and duiker were the main providers of meat with an occasional elephant guaranteeing a big feast. Hyrax and monkeys provided furs. The chimpanzee was never hunted. Hunting methods were traditional, the most important being trapping, followed by the spear; the arrow was not very useful in the forest.

The establishment of the Mountain Club after the War created a little economic niche for guides and porters, but the real changes of modern times were related to the opening of the Kilembe mine. This brought a cash economy to the area, and the water requirements of the mine necessitated the building of aqueducts and pipelines on





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**N**OT SO LONG AGO, UGANDA WAS held up as a prime example of an African country gone wrong. Once known for its sophistication and prosperity, the country had descended through a succession of corrupt and despotic regimes to a state of near anarchy. Not surprisingly, amongst the victims was the country's environment. What little development there was was greedy and short-sighted: wetlands were drained, forests were felled and wildlife was indiscriminately hunted. There was no such thing as environmental strategy, nor any concept of environmental education.

Then, in 1986, the almost unthinkable happened. When the guerrillas of the National Resistance Army ousted President Milton Obote they declared that the environment was high on their list of priorities. That was over ten years ago.

Today Uganda is seen as an example of what can go right in Africa. Environmental protection is enshrined in the country's new constitution and

every year more tourists arrive to witness Uganda's recovery. That's not to say there are no problems. Two of Uganda's neighbours are embroiled in civil war, creating instability and refugee problems, while within its borders armed rebellion still simmers. Add to these the pressures imposed by an expanding population and one can see that the battles to protect Uganda's environment remain tough. This edition of *Swara* features five stories showing some of Uganda's successes and challenges.

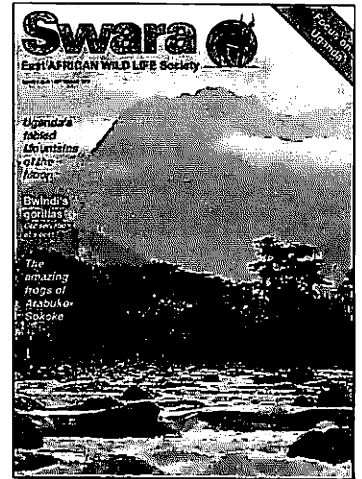
Elsewhere, we take a look at one of the region's most interesting habitats. Down on Kenya's coast lies the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. Featured a number of times in *Swara*, it has yet to exhaust its surprises. This issue looks at Arabuko-Sokoke's astonishing abundance of frogs and asks how such an apparently hostile habitat can support such variety.

Part of the answer lies in Arabuko-Sokoke's preservation as an intact ecosystem. How long it will stay that way is another question. Recent research, as *Insight* contributor Tim McClanahan points out, shows that even a little habitat destruction can cause major biodiversity loss. Industrialists and hard-pressed rural farmers alike often perceive the natural world around them as, if not infinite, then at least plentiful. What matter then if they take some of it for themselves? The answer, it seems, is that it matters a lot more than we might realise. That is why we need strong legislation to protect the environment. Uganda's example of emphasising environmental issues at the highest level is therefore extremely heartening.

David Simpson, Editor

The impala antelope is the symbol of the East African Wild Life Society. *Swara* (sometimes pronounced 'swala') is the Swahili word for antelope.

## In Brief:



Cover photograph:

The Rwenzori Mountains.

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