

HORIZONS

KENYA

Kisite Marine National Park

The Kisite Marine National Park on the southern coast of Kenya is not as well known as those at Malindi and Watamu, but it certainly deserves to be.

Shimoni, the point of departure for visitors to the park, is about 80 kilometres south of Mombasa and so is in easy reach for people staying along the south coast. The last 15 kilometres to Shimoni are along a dirt road which, when I was down there in early September and again at the end of November, was in a poor condition. Hopefully the authorities will have repaired it by the time this issue of *Swara* reaches you.

The wealth of underwater life in this area of the Indian Ocean is apparent as soon as you arrive at Shimoni. When I was there in November there were hundreds of fishes visible from the jetty in the very clear waters below, and 20 minutes out from land, three graceful dolphins rose out of the water a mere 15 yards from the boat. Kisite Island itself, which is surrounded by a sand bar against which the coral has grown, is six kilometres from Shimoni, or about an hour's ride in a motor-powered boat.

I am not competent to identify all the species of fish I saw, but I can testify to their abundance and beauty. Those I did identify included two of the glorious turquoise and purple *Scarus sordidus* and several agile and vividly-coloured angel butterfly fish.

It is not necessary to be an expert swimmer to enjoy goggling in a marine national park. I am, at best, no more than adequate in the water, but equipped with well-fitting goggles, a snorkel and a pair of flippers. I had no difficulty swimming for nearly an hour above the characteristically shaped corals, watching the fish and admiring the occasional starfish and sea anemone.

Boat rides to the park are available from several sources at Shimoni, including local fishermen, the Pemba Channel Fishing Club and Kisite Dhow Safaris. The latter also provide a superb Swahili seafood lunch at their restaurant on nearby Wasini Island. As the best goggling is to be had at low tides, it is advisable to check boat departure times in advance. Kisite Dhow Safaris can be reached through P.O. Box 81953, Mombasa, Tel. 25928, and Pemba Fishing Club at P.O. Box 54, Ukunda, Tel. Msambweni 5Y2.

Shereen Karmali

Michael Gore/Nature Photographers



Lion with cubs.

TANZANIA

The following reports on some of Tanzania's national parks were sent to Swara by Mr. G. Mercer, one of the Society's members in Tanzania.

Mikumi National Park

Mikumi, like all the southern parks and reserves in Tanzania, has still not established the high reputation it deserves, except among people who live here, and most tourists still head for the north.

This is a pity as Mikumi, though lacking the more spectacular natural assets of Kilimanjaro, Arusha, Manyara, Ngorongoro and the Serengeti, has a subtle beauty in its scenery and ever-changing light, and an impressive variety of animals and birds.

In recent months, a few tracks which have been unusable for some time (due to collapsed bridges and culverts) have been re-opened, though unusually heavy and persistent rainfall towards the end of last year threatened to delay further progress.

Animal populations seem to be increasingly healthy, with an abundance of young elephants, giraffes, warthogs and lions. Other species, such as zebra and wildebeeste, kudu and sable, whilst not apparently increasing, are at least maintaining their numbers. An increase of elephants, incidentally, would not necessarily be an ecological threat to the park as Mikumi's elephants are mainly grazers, and already exist quite successfully in large numbers.

Lions are probably increasing slightly in some areas, and are seen regularly, often with cubs. Leopards, which are perhaps sighted more often in Mikumi

than in most East African parks, have been observed frequently in recent years, and, once again, several cubs and young animals have been seen.

A small pack of wild dogs has been virtually resident in the park for over a year now, and they too have small pups with them.

Encouraging numbers of eland and Lichtenstein's Hartebeeste have been observed, and at least two huge herds of buffalo are usually in evidence in separate areas of the park.

Unfortunately poaching is also on the increase, and many wire snares are being discovered around the fringes of the park in certain localities. At the moment, the poaching appears to be for meat rather than for horn or skins, but the implications are disturbing.

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The Selous Game Reserve

The Selous still remains 'The Great Unknown', its vast and wild areas more secluded now than they were a century ago, except in the northern sector, which is slowly becoming more popular.

The Selous is one of the few areas of Africa where rhino live in something like their previous numbers (although one is still lucky, of course, to see them). They are observed from time to time, and no large scale poaching is apparent.

Other game animals are abundant, though the nature of the country often precludes the 'easy' viewing that is possible in Ngorongoro or the Serengeti.

Leopards are sighted fairly regularly, as are wild dogs and small groups of Greater Kudu. On the river, hippos are maintaining their usual abundance and many crocodiles, including several large specimens, have been seen during the dry season.

Bird life is as varied as ever, with the beautiful Boehm's Bee-Eater resident in the Rufiji River Camp — where Pet's Fishing Owl can also be seen and heard at times — and many other species in the various habitats.

Ruaha National Park

Ruaha, like the Selous, continues to exist in wild seclusion, away from the tourist routes, and known to only a few local people and perhaps a handful of outside visitors. However, a new and imaginatively designed lodge might help to attract more visitors to this underrated and interesting area.

Some of Ruaha's tracks have become overgrown in places, but generally, the game-viewing circuits are well maintained.

As in the Selous, game is plentiful, but one has to work hard to make the most of the situation. An increasing number of people enjoy the challenge of such game country, where bush craft becomes as important as binoculars, and where one has to read the country, as well as the guidebook.

For those who prefer their safaris to be more leisurely, Ruaha can also be as relaxing and peaceful as anywhere, and one can sit under a fig tree all day and watch the animals come to the river.

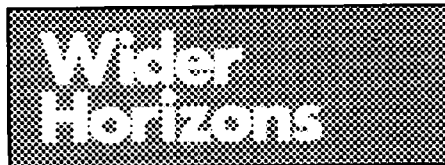
Ngorongoro

The reduction of the rhino population in recent years is still, unfortunately, one of the most notable aspects of the Crater, and an outbreak of disease among the buffaloes in the area is another sad, if perhaps less permanent, occurrence. On the positive side, cheetah are regularly observed once again in the Crater itself.



J.F. Reynolds
Greater Kudu.

and the other game usually associated with Ngorongoro are present in normal numbers.



Marathon swim by elephants in Zimbabwe

The June issue of *Zimbabwe Wildlife*, the magazine of the Wildlife Society of Zimbabwe, describes a spectacular feat by three bull elephants in Lake Kariba. The three bulls were spotted one afternoon, swimming several kilometres from the north shore of the lake. They were followed for nearly two hours by the National Parks Warden-in-Charge, Graham Hall, until it was no longer possible to see them in the fading light.

The next morning, Hall could find no trace of the animals and so assumed they had safely reached land during the night. However, later that afternoon, two sightings were made: one of a single bull near the southern shore of the lake, and the other of two bulls not far from the town of Kariba on the north shore. Hall found, and stayed with, these bulls until they finally reached land at 6.20 p.m.

Given the time and the place they were first sighted, the two bulls were in the water continuously for at least 27

hours and swam for a minimum of 35-40 km. Apparently towards the end of their marathon, Hall noted that the bulls' 'extremities had taken on a much lighter hue to the extent that their feet and trunks appeared almost white. It also seemed that they were assisting each other in their endurance test: whilst one inflated his lungs, the other rested his forelegs on his back', and from time to time they changed places.

Once on dry land, both animals were quite steady on their legs and soon disappeared into the bush. The third bull is still swimming when night fell and since Hall found no signs or reports of an elephant drowning, one can only hope it also made land safely.

Elephants wading or swimming in Lake Kariba are apparently a frequent sight, but nothing on quite this scale has ever been recorded before.

Ghanaian model forestry project threatened

A model forestry project at the Subri River Forest Reserve in western Ghana may soon face the axe. After six years' intensive research, and investment of nearly \$4 million in the project, the United Nations Development Programme is withdrawing financial support.

The Subri experience could benefit tropical foresters everywhere, for no efficient method exists to establish new plantations in forests ruined by years of cutting without replanting. The technique

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developed at Subri makes productive use of the species the axe leaves behind, instead of simply burning them. Burning is quick and easy, but the fire leaves an ideal seedbed for weeds, and the cost of regular weedings often makes tree planting uneconomical except for the highest value species.

At Subri, any young trees which might profitably be left to mature are identified and spared. Narrow belts of untouched natural forest are also preserved to help maintain the ecological balance. The best of the low-value, left-over trees are cut, sawn and sold locally, and the remainder are converted to charcoal. Burning is minimised to avoid weed infestation. Food crops, usually plantain, are planted immediately on the cleared land to maintain the ground cover and help keep down weeds. The food crop provides a useful additional source of income for the first few years. Finally, trees are planted between the rows of plantain during the rainy season.

The cost of the Subri conversion technique is almost three times that of the conventional burn and weed approach, and it requires 37 per cent more labour; but revenues from the sawn lumber, charcoal and plantain make plantation establishment a net money earner.

Geoffrey Barnard (Earthscan)

5318

Yemen bans rhino horn imports

The Government of the Yemen Arab Republic has now issued a decree forbidding the importation of rhinoceros horn in any form into the country, for many years the world's major market for that illicit product. The move followed detailed discussions over several months between Robert P. Smith, President of

the African Wildlife Leadership Foundation of Washington, D.C., and North Yemen's Ambassador to the United States, Mohammad A. Al-Eryani.

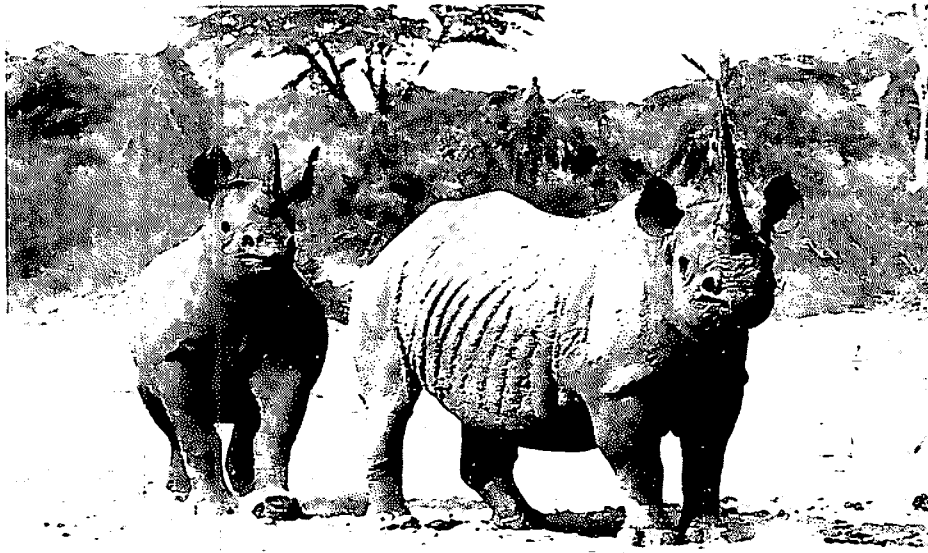
Major campaigns have been launched by organisations such as AWLF and WWF/IUCN to save the rhino, whose horn has assumed an all-time high value in the markets of Asia and the Middle East. A single rhino horn can bring in \$2,000, or, as Mr Smith noted, more than the average Kenyan or Ugandan earns in several years.

Although some of the horn is used in traditional Asian medicine, much of it finds its way to the Yemen Arab Republic, where it is fashioned into elaborate and intricately worked dagger handles. These status symbols, called *djambias*, fetch prices of a thousand dollars or more. The result is a thriving market in North Yemen for rhino horn, and the effect on the seriously endangered Black Rhino is devastating. Their numbers have dropped from some 200,000 only ten years ago to some 20,000 today — a slaughter of 90 per cent of the population.

Conservationists in East Africa and elsewhere have therefore warmly welcomed the Yemeni ban which, if strictly enforced, will go a long way toward ensuring the ultimate survival of the world's most endangered large mammal.

'We have been struggling for years to save the rhino from extinction,' says Smith, 'but our vigorous efforts in Africa, through intensified anti-poaching patrols and the like — critically important though they are — could not get at the root of the problem. The markets, which are the source of the trade, remain the most serious threat. I am therefore deeply gratified by the Yemeni action in banning further importation.'

One of the famous long-horned rhino in Amboseli.

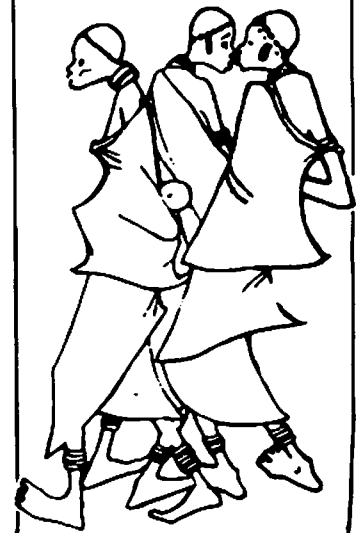


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The Giant Tortoises of Aldabra

Giant Tortoises, relics of the age when reptiles dominated the earth, were long ago exterminated by natural enemies on the continents, but continued to exist in large numbers in the safety of oceanic islands. Some two centuries ago, however, the island tortoises were indiscriminately slaughtered by settlers and sailors for their oil and meat. Today, giant tortoises survive only in the Galapagos Islands of the Pacific and on the Seychelles island of Aldabra in the Indian Ocean. Whereas the Galapagos species of Giant Tortoise numbers less than 15,000, scattered over several islands, the tiny coral atoll of Aldabra harbours the astonishing number of 152,000 of the Seychellois species.

In 1981, the Government of Seychelles declared Aldabra a Special Reserve under the National Parks and Nature Conservancy Act, giving wide powers to the reserve's warden for the proper enforcement of conservation and management regulations. The warden appointed was Jim Stevenson, who is funded by WWF.

The Giant Tortoises, weighing up to 400 lbs and with a lifespan of 150 years, are the most remarkable feature of the island, which also shelters large colonies of boobies and Frigate Birds, as well as the last flightless bird in the Indian Ocean region, the White-throated Rail.

In addition to the monitoring and conservation of the wildlife of the atoll, Jim Stevenson and others have also taken

the opportunity to survey a unique natural experiment in which 200 Aldabra tortoises have been taken to the small island of Curieuse in the granitic Seychelles. This is a much wetter island than Aldabra, with more luxuriant vegetation, and is representative of tortoise habitats before their widespread extinction in the 18th and 19th centuries. The intention of the experiment is to provide a tourist attraction close to Mahe, where visitors can see free-ranging tortoises in the wild, and also to study growth and reproduction in environmental conditions very different from those of Aldabra. The Curieuse tortoises are breeding freely and growing much faster than those on Aldabra.

WWF Monthly Report

CITES meeting in Nairobi

The representatives of 22 African countries which have ratified the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species met in Nairobi in November to review their positions on the trade in certain indigenous African species. The meeting was hosted by IUCN and was in preparation for the main CITES conference in Botswana in April, which will be attended by all the CITES signatories.

At the Nairobi meeting, proposals were put forward to make changes in the convention so as to restrict trade in a number of endangered species such as the Nile Crocodile, leopard, the Bottlenose Whale, the oryx, addax and dama

gazelles and the Sahelian ostrich. There was also some discussion about the possibility of allowing trade in the products of endangered animals bred on commercial ranches.

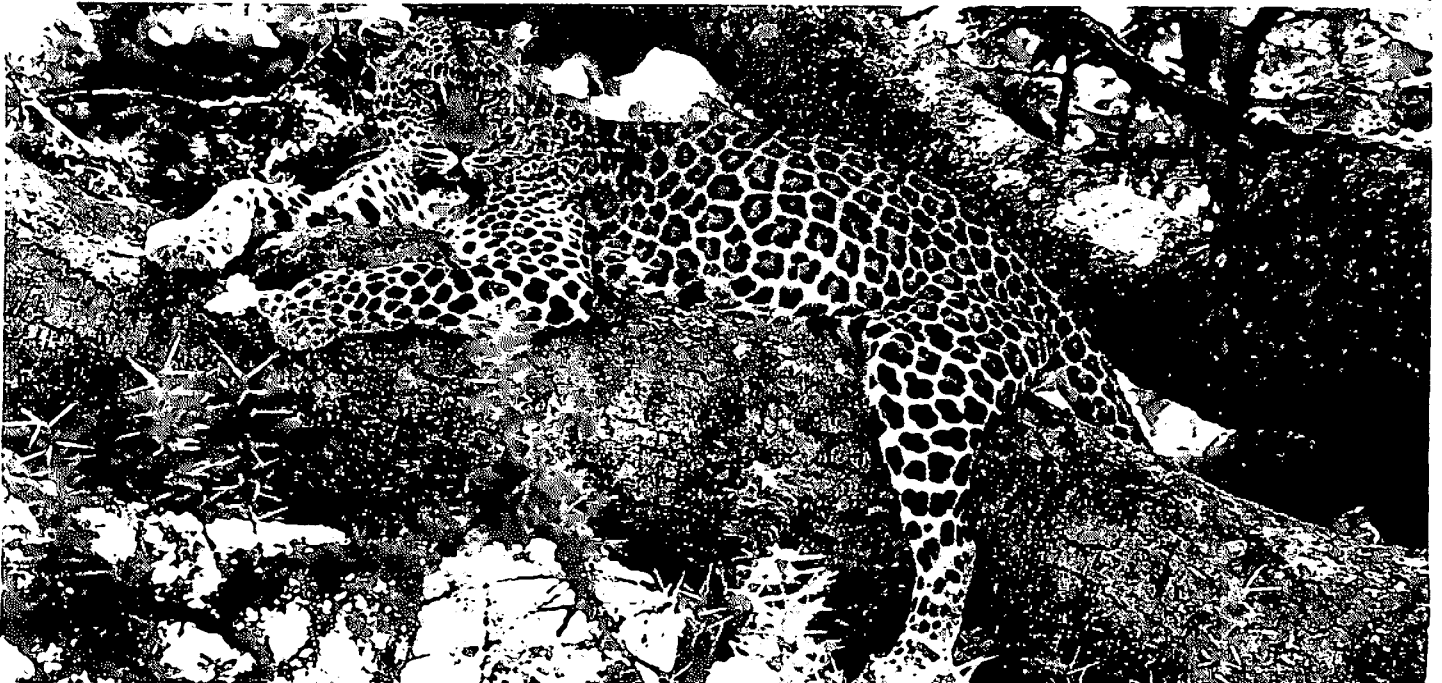
World Charter for Nature

By a resolution on 29 October last year, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the World Charter for Nature by a vote of 111 for, 1 against and 18 abstentions. This decision marks the culmination of a seven-year effort by IUCN.

The World Charter for Nature lays down universal principles of conservation by which all human conduct affecting nature is to be guided and judged. It thus provides an important complement to the 1980 World Conservation Strategy, also developed by IUCN with the advice, cooperation and financial assistance of the United Nations Environment Programme and WWF. The functions and responsibilities of states, corporations and individuals are stated and shall be reflected in the law and practice of each state. Ultimately, the charter warns, 'failure to conserve natural systems leads to the breakdown of the economic, social and political framework of civilisation'.

The Director General of IUCN, Dr Lee M. Talbot, welcomed the official adoption of the charter which, he said, finally raises the international recognition of environmental principles to the same level as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Leopard in the Maasai Mara.



Alan Banks

FROM WWF & IUCN



New appointments at WWF

In December, WWF announced several key appointments aimed at strengthening its senior management at international headquarters in Gland, Switzerland.

The appointments, ratified at a meeting of the International Board of Trustees, chaired by WWF's President, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, are:

- Mr Louis Franck (Belgium) and Dr Luc Hoffmann (Switzerland), as Vice-Presidents of WWF-International.
- Mr Frank Schmidt (Switzerland) to the new post of Assistant Director-General.
- Dr Conrad von Ulm (Germany) to the position of Director of Finance and Administration.

Announcing the new appointments, WWF's Director-General, Mr Charles de Haes, said Mr Franck and Dr Hoffmann would assume special responsibilities in finance and conservation respectively.

Pharmacological tests on rhino horn

As part of its efforts to stem the trade in rhino horn in Asia, where it is popularly used as a pharmaceutical, WWF/IUCN have just released details of a special pharmacological study of rhino horn carried out for them by the international pharmaceutical concern Hoffmann-LaRoche & Co. The study found no evidence that rhino horn has any medicinal effect as an antipyretic and



Black Rhino.

would be ineffective in reducing fever, a common usage in much of Asia.

Tests also showed that rhino horn, which, like finger-nails, is made of agglutinated hair, has no analgesic, anti-inflammatory anti-spasmodic nor diuretic properties, and no bactericidal effect could be found against suppuration and intestinal bacteria.

'This proves that rhino horn is of no use to anyone except the original owner', noted Dr Arne Schioz, WWF Director

of Conservation. 'You would get the same effect from chewing your own finger-nails.'

Swedish furriers support conservation

A special 'environmental dinner' was held in Stockholm in December to honour last year's Nobel Prize winners. The event was sponsored by the Federation of Swedish Industries together with the Nobel Foundation, with proceeds going to WWF.

A major theme of the evening was the promotion of Swedish environmental achievements and techniques and to show how conservation is supported by Swedish enterprise.

An example of the latter was provided by a fashion show of ranch-bred fur fashions. This highlights a 1977 agreement in which the Swedish Furriers Association and World Wildlife Fund, supported by the Swedish Museum of Natural History and other leading conservation organisations in the country, agreed to stop the sale of furs of endangered animals and to promote a 'positive' list of those domestically bred animals which, from a conservation point of view, are allowed to be sold, thereby taking pressure off wild populations. The number of prohibited species on the Swedish list greatly exceeds the endangered species listed by CITES.



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