

16th ANNUAL REPORT
of the
NATAL PARKS, GAME AND FISH
PRESERVATION BOARD
for the period
1st APRIL, 1963 to 31st MARCH, 1964

To the Honourable T. J. A. Gerdener, Administrator of Natal,
Sir,
The Natal Parks, Game and Fish Preservation Board has
the honour to submit its report for the period 1st April, 1963 to
31st March, 1964.

A. GENERAL

The composition of the Board remained unchanged. The
following nine members therefore continued to hold office :

- Mr. A. M. Wood, M.E.C. (Chairman).
- Mr. D. E. Mitchell, M.P. (Deputy Chairman).
- The Hon. Mr. F. N. Broome.
- Mr. E. James.
- Mr. J. U. Friend.
- Dr. H. B. Anthony.
- Senator Dr. J. L. Pretorius.
- Mr. A. O. Simpson.
- Major H. Urquhart.

Eight Board meetings were held during the year, all in the
Board's Head Office at Queen Elizabeth Park.
The Zululand Reserves Committee held one meeting.

B. HEAD OFFICE

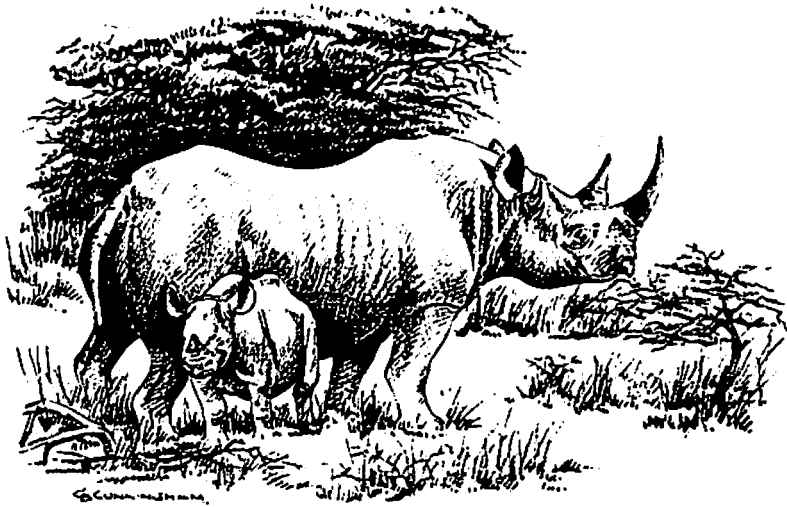
Building :
Additions to the Head Office building were completed by the
contractors. The theatre, to seat 186 people, was used for the
first time to give a film show for school children on 4th October,
1963.

Financial :
A statement of the Revenue and Expenditure for the period
1st April, 1963 to 31st March, 1964 is annexed and is self-
explanatory.

Legislation :
Several amendments to existing legislation were promulgated :
(1) Ordinance No. 21 of 1963 amended Ordinance No. 35 of
1947. This amendment related to the possession of snares inside
a Game Reserve or Park.



Wattlebird Eagle on Impatiens carcase.



Black Rhino.

C. ZULULAND RESERVES

Staff :

In March, 1964, Mr. I. C. Player took over the post of Chief Conservator, Zululand, which had been relinquished by Mr. H. B. Potter on his promotion to Deputy Director.

Mr. C. J. Ward resigned from the post of Ecologist, based on Hluhluwe Game Reserve, after ten years service.

Revenue :

An increase in revenue reflected greater use of tourist facilities, the overall total being more than R18,000 up on the previous year although the sale of square-lipped rhinoceroses, the largest single item, showed a slight drop compared with 1962-63. Rest hut fees and bait sales both showed substantial increases, as did some of the smaller items.

HLUHLUWE GAME RESERVE

Building :

Temporary quarters were constructed for the Ranger who was posted to the southern part of the reserve. Stables and horse paddocks were built at Sithole and at Headquarters as well as paddocks at several guard posts.

A new office block for the Chief Conservator and a new laundry block for the tourist camp were completed.

Prevailing Conditions :

Total rainfall for the year amounted to 50.4 inches, compared with 33 inches for 1962-63, and 38 inches for 1961-62. It was well distributed throughout the year, with the exception of February, which was hot and dry. Early in July a phenomenal rainfall produced the most severe flooding of the Hluhluwe and Inzimane rivers within living memory. More than 13 inches fell at the headquarters, but one of the three recording stations in the Reserve indicated 21 inches over a 48 hour period. Damage to riverine vegetation was very severe, up to 80% of the trees being destroyed or greatly damaged, including many of the largest and oldest specimens. Large numbers of game animals perished in the flood.

Members of the Field Staff were trapped for three days on the opposite side of the Hluhluwe river. One of the Rangers, living close to the Hluhluwe river, had to swim from his house, which was surrounded by deep water, to render assistance to Bantu employees whose compound was completely submerged.

His office, which was on slightly lower ground than the house, was in danger of being washed away as only the roof remained above water. The two pumps, supplying water to the Rest Camps, were destroyed although the machinery, which was damaged, was fortunately repairable.

Game Notes :

Two giraffe calves were born during the year, a male and a female, bringing the total to 12.

The buffalo population spread into areas where none had been recorded for 15 years or more. This spread was due to improved grazing conditions throughout the reserve. Nine bulls had to be destroyed because they had become aggressive, two were killed by poachers, and five were found dead from natural causes. An example of aggressive behaviour was the attack made by a lone buffalo bull on four mounted Guards. One of the horses was bowled over and fatally gored, resulting in a broken leg for its rider, who luckily escaped without further injury.

Another encounter between a Guard and a large mammal occurred when a member of the Bantu staff was returning from leave on his bicycle. Travelling at speed along a narrow track he collided with a black rhino. Although he ran full tilt into its side, he suffered no more than a grazed knee and buckled bicycle. The rhino fled precipitately into the bush.

Two black rhinos were seen by the Warden in a state of exhaustion after what must have been a prolonged fight, since they both had extensive head injuries and were bleeding pro-

fusely. One appeared to have part of its lips torn away and had a piece of flesh protruding from the back of its mouth. Neither would, apparently, acknowledge defeat.

Veld Management :

The eradication of encroaching scrub continued throughout the year and in four different areas scrub was either cut back or dug out by the roots.

Anti-soil erosion measures were taken where a large section of road had been washed into deep dongas during the July floods. These timely measures have resulted in the dongas being colonized by grass and further erosion was thus stopped.

Owing to the winter of 1963 being fairly wet, it was not possible to complete the burning of all the fire breaks as the grass was too green. However, despite precautions taken against fires, nine fires were started deliberately inside the Reserve. Fortunately all but one were brought under control before extensive damage was done.

Poaching :

While there has been a slight fall-off in poaching during the year, one gang, armed with a .303 rifle, was very active in the densely forested northern section of the Reserve and have managed to evade capture, despite three very close encounters with Rangers and Bantu Game Guards.

In one clash with poachers six of them attacked a Guard and during the struggle his rifle was discharged, fatally wounding one of the poachers in the leg.

In another clash, a Guard received a serious wound from a cane knife below the right eye, necessitating hospitalization. The culprit was arrested and convicted.

During the year 22 cases, involving 39 Bantu, were taken to Court and fines totalling R393.00 or 682 days imprisonment were imposed. Thirteen juveniles received corporal punishment. A European in possession of trapped wild birds was found guilty and sentenced to a fine of R10.00 or twenty days imprisonment. Two cages and a number of wild birds were confiscated.

A large number of weapons, cane knives, knob sticks, and assegais, together with snares, were confiscated.

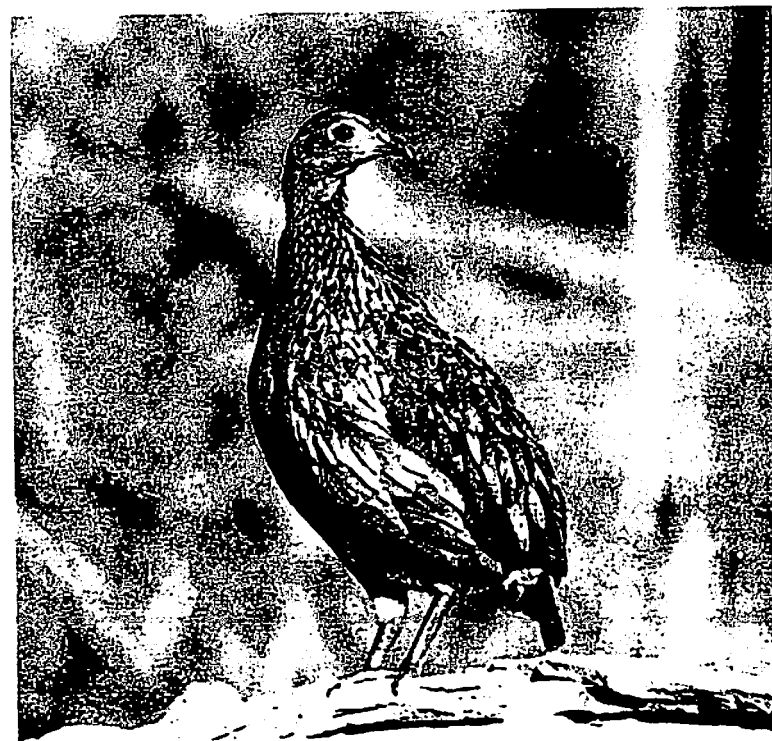
A black rhino had to be destroyed after being found with a wire snare attached to the hind leg. The wire had, during the animal's struggles to free itself, completely severed the foot from the leg and it only remained attached by the tendons. The wound had also become gangrenous. Despite its terrible injury it made a gallant effort to charge when being destroyed.

Tourists :

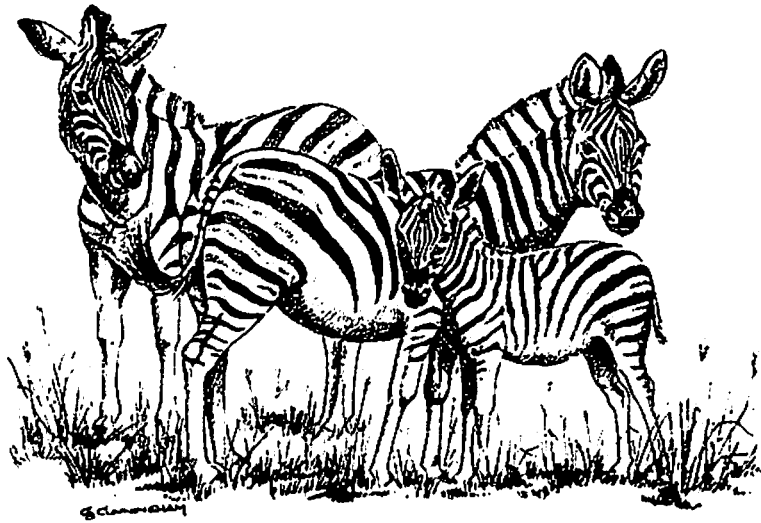
The number of tourists was the highest on record, amounting to 20,438, and requests for accommodation at the rest camp often exceeded what was available.

In February American visitors from the "Caronia" and the "Brazil" took up the whole camp. At the time of the Kirstenbosch Jubilee celebrations, some 70 botanists from 19 countries visited the Reserve.

Personalities included His Honour the Administrator and Mrs. Gerdener, four Members of the Provincial Council on an official tour, and two others who came privately, Mr. William H. Wilt, the American Ambassador, Mr. Ernst Larson, Consul for Norway, Mr. Harold Dodd, famous English surgeon, Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Russell, Air Vice-Marshal G. H. White, Major General N. D. Fellowes, Mr. and Mrs. I. G. Horak and sixteen members of a Japanese Trade Mission sponsored by the S.A. Sugar Association.



Juvenile Francolin.



Zebra.

UMFOLOZI GAME RESERVE

Building :

Rangers' single quarters were built at Mhlopeni, a Receptionist's cottage at Mpila, and storeroom for the Wilderness Trails Officer. Sundry improvements were effected and repair work was carried out on pumping equipment damaged by the July flood.

Prevailing Conditions :

The outstanding natural event of 1963 was the great flood which struck the Reserve early in July. So sudden was the deluge, accompanied by shrieking winds, that both men and animals were caught unawares. Streams that had for years been dry became raging torrents overnight and both the Black and White Umfolozi rose to heights not recorded for decades. Flood waters poured far beyond the normal river courses and the sudden transition resulted in the death of many creatures, both large and small. Warthog carcasses were found afterwards slung 25 feet up in fig trees and a fine kudu bull was found lying on some rocks where it had been thrown and battered by the rush of water. Along the Black Umfolozi about 60% of the sycamore figs were destroyed and their huge boles lay scattered far down the river.

Game Capture :

A special effort was made to capture and remove square-lipped rhinos from the area south of the reserve boundary. Many

of these animals were fully grown adults. The large bulls, in particular, presented an exacting task in loading them onto the lorry.

The bomas continued to supply tamed and crated rhinos for export. A total of 12 animals went overseas, 4 left for destinations within Africa, north of the Republic, and 41 were removed to other parts of South Africa. Buffalo, zebra, wildebeest and waterbuck were also successfully immobilized, using the drug M99.

Game Notes :

The largest concentration of square-lipped rhinos was in the area between the Black and White Umfolozi rivers, Mpila in the east and the Mtunzini barrier in the west.

A number of rhinos died in the north-western areas, but the epidemic subsided. Veterinary experts made no positive diagnosis of the cause.

Nineteen young eland were transported from the Drakensberg reserves for ultimate release in Umfolozi. Red bush duiker, klipspringer, leopard and black-backed jackal all appeared to be on the increase.

The lone Umfolozi lion continued to wander through the bush, being frequently heard and sometimes seen.

Poaching :

Patrolling was rendered more efficient by the use of horses, and a decrease in poaching took place within the Reserve, although the resistance of those apprehended seemed to have stiffened. The total number arrested and charged amounted to 147; 205 dogs were destroyed; 5 firearms and 145 assegais seized.

Game Guard Samuel Mthetwa was accidentally drowned while on patrol, attempting to cross the Black Umfolozi in the company of another Guard.

Tourists :

The increasing popularity of the Reserve was shown by an increase in revenue from rest huts and wilderness trails by R2,500 compared with the previous year. Visitors staying in the rest camp numbered 2,450, which represented a utilization of 44% of the accommodation throughout the year. These visitors, together with another 1,558 casuals, came in 1,126 vehicles. Wilderness trails showed a particularly impressive jump in popularity.

In August 1963, the MGM film company arrived to make the film "Rhino", in which project staff members assisted the representatives of the company.

NDUMU GAME RESERVE

No new construction work was undertaken, but the usual maintenance was carried out on roads and buildings. Three miles of sisal hedge were planted along the southern boundary in an attempt to stop inyala from jumping the fence.

Conditions for game continued to improve with the exodus of Bantu from the Reserve. Most of the 719 people still living in the Reserve live along the Usutu River and both the western and southern areas were cleared of huts. A large hippo population was concentrated in the eastern section and, on some days, hippos could be seen grazing in the north-eastern corner. There were big herds in the Pongola River and each of the pans had a resident herd.

Square-lipped rhinos, originally brought from Umfolozi, were doing well and the birth of two calves brought the number to 16, which have scattered all over the Reserve. The two black rhinos were to be seen together in the western area. One of these was a female brought from Mkuzi Game Reserve.

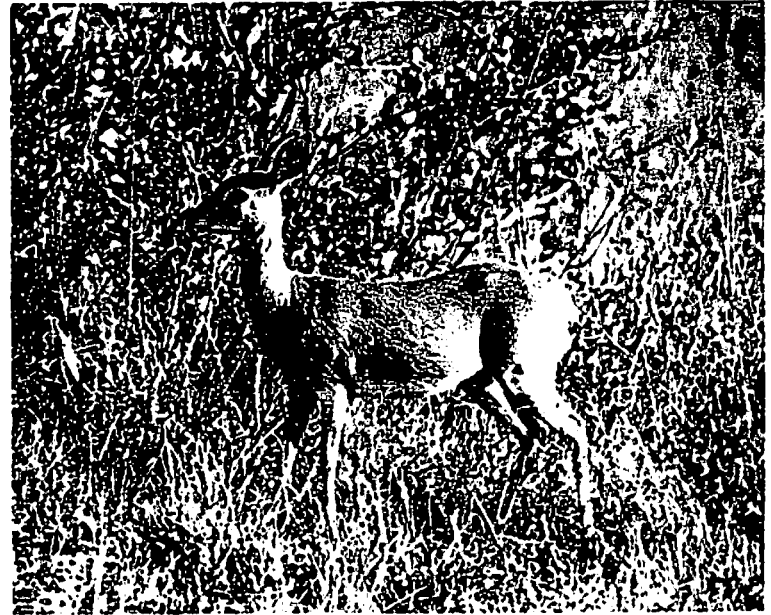
Inyala were estimated to have reached a total of about 2,000 and impala numbered about 400. Reedbuck were on the increase, as well as grey duiker and red bush duiker. A leopard was seen with a well grown cub on several occasions. At the confluence of the Usutu and Pongola rivers samango monkeys and a Pel's fishing owl were a source of great interest to visitors. Many kinds of birds were to be seen around Nyamiti Pan as well as the ubiquitous crocodiles

An experiment in crocodile rearing was started and 125 youngsters, 10 inches to a foot in length, were kept in an enclosure.

Prosecutions against 88 Bantu for contraventions of the Game Ordinance resulted in fines totalling R587. Snares and traps removed from the Reserve and along the boundary amounted to 535 and 10 assegais were confiscated.

Visitors totalled 2,385, an increase on the previous year of 490.

Twelve elephants, in four small groups, were known to be living in the State lands to the south of the Reserve.



Steenbuck.

MKUZI GAME RESERVE

Building :

A new pumphouse was built to replace one destroyed by floodwater. An independent pumping system was installed to supply water to Bube Pan, where the game viewing hide continued to enjoy great popularity. Other utility buildings were completed and an open campsite was cleared and fenced near the entrance to the Reserve.

Prevailing Conditions :

A well-distributed rainfall of 27.4 inches ensured adequate water supplies throughout the year. August was the only month without rain and in January 8.2 inches fell. The July precipitation was 4.8 inches — far more than normal but much less than many other parts of Zululand received at that time. The Mkuze River rose to an unprecedented height and large areas of the Reserve were inundated. One of the guard camps was surrounded by 3 feet of water and long sections of road were impassable for two weeks after the flood. Nsumu and Ndhlonhlela pans were filled to the limit of their capacity.

Heavy game losses occurred all along the floodplains of the Mkuze River and many animals drowned in Nsumu Pan. Although many of the carcasses must have been carried far downstream, 366 were actually counted. Of these, 214 were blue wildebeest, 68 were impala, 46 were inyala and 11 were warthog. Vultures became so gorged that many of the carcasses were left untouched.

The annual temperature pattern showed a rapid rise in spring to a maximum of 101° in September, although the same month had a minimum of only 58°. In February the thermometer reached 106° on the hottest day.

Adequate rainfall produced a good growth of vegetation and grass reached the seeding stage in many areas where former years had yielded scarcely a green blade. Nevertheless the greater part of the Reserve still suffered heavily from overgrazing.

Game Populations :

There were an estimated 20,000 impala in the Reserve as well as large numbers of wildebeest and warthog. In April and May, impala were captured for distribution and in January an important step was taken in the disposal of surplus game when the first consignment of impala carcasses was sent to the Durban Municipal Market. In the ensuing month 244 carcasses were sold at an average price of slightly over 8 cents per pound.

About 20 black rhinos were seen in the Reserve and females with calves were observed on six occasions. One female, which had a broken snare attached to it, was immobilized, transferred to Umfolozi, where it was kept in captivity until recovery was complete. She was then moved to Ndumu Game Reserve. Two black rhinos were found dead.

Two more square-lipped rhinos from Umfolozi brought the number to three, a group of two bulls and one cow.

Hyenas and jackal both appeared to be on the increase. Hyenas were commonly encountered during game control work and sometimes showed a remarkable boldness. One animal made off with the carcass of a recently shot impala and would only relinquish its prize when pursued in a Landrover.

Horses were brought into the Reserve for the first time and mounted patrols initiated.

The staff received the closest co-operation from the South African Police and from the Magistrate's Office at Ubombo.

Tourists :

Visitors to the Reserve numbered 3,008. Of the 893 vehicles in which they came, 446 were from Natal, 291 from the Transvaal, 71 from the Cape, 21 from the Orange Free State and 64 from elsewhere.

SORDWANA BAY NATURE RESERVE

This Reserve remained in the care of staff from Mkuzi and the usual seasonal crowds of visitors came to camp in the prepared sites.

KOSI BAY NATURE RESERVE

Improvements were effected to the facilities for visitors to the campsites but patronage of the Reserve by the public continued to be limited. Inaccessibility and the small size of the Reserve militate against its attractiveness, and anyone wishing to visit Nhlange Lake or the Estuary are obliged first to obtain authority from the Department of Bantu Administration and Development.

The Ranger seized 36 illegal nets and obtained convictions against 22 individuals. The penalties imposed on convictions amounted to 420 days imprisonment or R250.00 in fines. There were no prosecutions for infringement of the conditions under which fish kraals are permitted in the estuary channel. The hundred-foot gap between the kraals on each side was observed by all the fisherman concerned.

Angling results were not good, but some quite good catches were made by underwater spear fishermen in the estuary.

Hippo in the Kosi system numbered 22, an increase of 6 compared with five years earlier. One old male was destroyed after it had caused the death of a boy. The animal was found to have a damaged nose, presumably as the result of a fight with another hippo, and the nostrils could not close properly. It was unable, therefore, to submerge and had taken to living in a shallow pan away from the main lake system. Complaints of damage to crops by hippo were investigated and recommendations made for compensating the crop owners where necessary.

A survey of the marine Turtles along the Tongaland coast occupied much of the Ranger's time between 21st November and 5th February. He was assisted by two University students and a comprehensive report was prepared, with recommendation for the conservation of these large marine reptiles.