

IMPALA

14th ANNUAL REPORT
of the
NATAL PARKS, GAME AND FISH PRESERVATION BOARD
for the period
1st APRIL, 1961, to 31st MARCH, 1962

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, 1961 to 31st March, 1962.

A. GENERAL

The Board.

The Board members elected on the 1st December, 1959, remained unchanged. The following nine members, therefore, continue to hold office until the 30th November, 1962.

Mr. E. J. V. Grantham, M.E.C., *Chairman.*
Mr. D. E. Mitchell, M.P., *Deputy Chairman.*
Dr. H. B. Anthony.
The Hon. Mr. F. N. Broome.
Mr. E. J. U. Friend.
Mr. E. James.
Senator Dr. J. Pretorius.
Mr. A. O. Simpson.
Major H. Urquhart.

Seven Board meetings were held during the year, 2 in the old Head Office in Church Street, Pietermaritzburg, and the remaining 5 in the new headquarters in Queen Elizabeth Park.

Committees.

The Zululand Committee held one meeting during the period under review.

B. HEAD OFFICE

A very important step in the progress of the Natal Parks Board was achieved during the year under review, when the Head Office staff moved to their new offices at Queen Elizabeth Park on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg. The first stage of the building plan was completed in time for this move to be made on the 1st September, 1961. The remaining stages of the headquarters building plan have been placed on the estimates for the new financial year.



INYALA BULL

the year by the addition of outbuildings, comprising box rooms, garages, a workshop and a petrol and oil store. These buildings were all erected departmentally.

Later in the year quarters for visiting servants were completed at Fannies Island, and work on a new ablution block was started.

At Umfolozi a camp laundry was built, as was an office and a store room.

The rebuilding of the rest camp at Charters Creek continued satisfactorily during the year.

The Board's Road Maintenance Officer was fully occupied with normal road maintenance work, and no new roads were constructed. The St. Lucia Estuary roads received some necessary attention and the Board's bulldozer was kept busy clearing the southern boundary of the extended Umfolozi Reserve.

Operation Rhino.

The immobilizing of Square-lipped Rhinos continued very successfully in the Umfolozi Reserve. Over 30 Rhinos were captured, some for purely experimental purposes, whilst others were removed to the Kruger National Park, the Willem Pretorius Game Reserve in the O.F.S. and to our own Mkuzi and Ndumu Game Reserves.

HLUHLUWE

Building:

A comparatively small building programme was carried out in this Reserve. This included the completion and occupation of the new staff quarters, some store rooms and alterations to the main office building in the hutted camp. A telephone line was extended from the main camp exchange to the new staff quarters.

Parts of the boundary fence were electrified in an attempt to keep animals in and poachers out of the Reserve. Several new huts were built in various Game Guard camps throughout the Reserve.

The Department of Water Affairs started work on the construction of the much disputed Hluhluwe River dam.

Prevailing Conditions.

Throughout the 1961 winter months good rains fell and the Reserve remained green. The total rainfall for the period was 36.75 inches.

Game Notes.

There were 45 deaths among the Black Rhino population in the Reserve. These deaths were caused by a mysterious disease which baffled even officials from the Government Veterinary Department. The deaths occurred in the most thickly populated Black Rhino areas and the epidemic suddenly ceased at the end of October. Six further deaths of Black Rhino caused by fighting, snaring and falling over a cliff were also recorded. Square-lipped Rhinos were seen less frequently in the Reserve during the year, but no fatalities were recorded.

A Buffalo count revealed a total of 774 individuals distributed throughout the Reserve and in the Corridor. Six of these animals had to be destroyed by the ranging staff because they became dangerous. Four were killed by poachers, three died of old age and two from causes unknown.

The Giraffe population in the Reserve reached a total of nine as a result of the birth of a bull and a heifer.

A careful study of the Mountain Reedbuck population suggests that only about 45 now occur in the Reserve.

Large scale Impala ear-tagging operations were carried out in the Reserve during the year to help establish the pattern of seasonal movements of this species.

Very large numbers of Inyalas were observed in the northern section of the Reserve where there has been a substantial increase in this species.

The "Operation Rhino" team successfully immobilized Black Rhinos for the first time and further similar experiments are planned.

Game control was maintained throughout the year by the specially appointed game control staff.

Poaching.

Poaching activities attained very high proportions on occasions,

but due to the efficiency of the staff, most of the offenders were either arrested or put to flight before they could kill any game. Seventy-nine poaching cases were recorded during the year; 39 arrests, involving a total of 53 poachers, resulted. Two of these offenders were Europeans. Sentences totalling 66 months and fines amounting to R879 were imposed. A large assortment of poaching implements and weapons was confiscated. Twenty-one animals are known to have been killed by poachers.

One poacher who snared and killed a Black Rhino was arrested, convicted and sentenced to one year's imprisonment or to a fine of R200. A gang of five poachers attacked two game guards on one occasion, the guards suffered injuries and one suffered assegai wounds which could well have had very serious results. A great deal of this poaching took place at night, and the staff did well to bring so many offenders before the courts.

Tourists.

Visitors to the Reserve during the year numbered 19,251, which was 454 less than the previous year. This is attributed to the increased number of visitors to the other Zululand Reserves. There was, however, an increase in the number of overseas visitors, which was gratifying.

A total number of 5,432 cars passed through the Reserve check gates during the year, comprising 1,703 from the Transvaal, 157 from the O.F.S., 479 from the Cape, 2,603 from Natal, 278 foreign and 212 official vehicles. Sales of the Board's publications, game products and the entrance fees collected at the check gates alone produced a total of R2,581.95.

The hutted camp was fully booked for all the holiday periods. An increase in the number of daily visitors was very noticeable during December and January. The Department of Education's film unit also visited the Reserve during the period under review.

General.

Further good progress was maintained in eradicating scrub vegetation by application of weed killer. This resulted in the development of additional grass cover in treated areas. Anti-soil erosion work, too, was carried out in certain sections of the Reserve, with gratifying results.

Several fires were started by Bantu along the boundaries with the object of attracting game to the perimeter of the Reserve where they can more easily be poached. They were successfully extinguished by ranging staff before any appreciable damage was done, perhaps because the grass was greener and less combustible than usual.

UMFOLOZI GAME RESERVE

Building.

A further camp unit of 6 "squaredavels" was completed at this station, making a total of 12 for the use of visitors. The new unit was brought into use in October, and has met the demand

for increased accommodation there. Other building works completed included extensions to the office of the Ranger-in-Charge, a "squaredavel" for the Gomé outpost, and a workshop for the motor mechanic. Suitable quarters for visitors' nursemaids and servants were also provided. A telephone extension was installed in the house of the Ranger-in-charge.

A 500-gallon bowser was installed for the supply of petrol to visitors and staff alike.

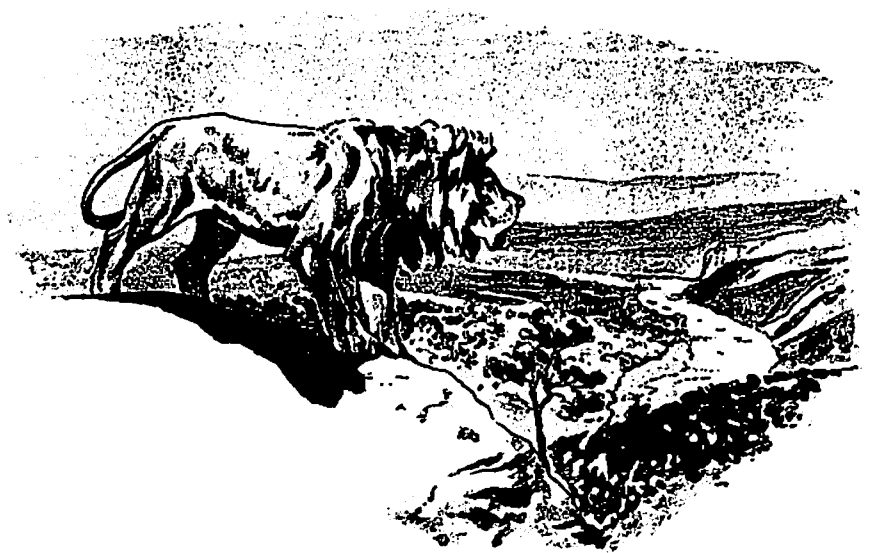
Weather.

Some unseasonal rain storms occurred, and the Black Umfolozi River came down in flood during September and October. Apart from these floods, the Reserve suffered a severe drought during most of the summer months. Only the artificially fed water holes maintained their water supply. The total rainfall for the year was 26.9 inches.

Animal Notes.

There were definite indications of increases in the populations of various species of animal occurring in the Reserve, including Black Rhinos, Square-lipped Rhinos and Leopards. Increased numbers of the latter, which have been seen much more frequently by the ranging staff, are attributed partly to the sanctuary provided them by the Wilderness area where they are undisturbed. The death of 21 Square-lipped Rhinos was recorded during the year.

The now famous Umfolozi Lion has been seen several times by the ranging staff, Game Guards and even by a party of Wilder-



UMFOLOZI LION

ness Trailers. He has been heard roaring almost nightly in various parts of the Reserve, and is known to have completed a circle round the Reserve in one night, passing quite near the trailers' camp at one stage. His favourite diet appears to be Kudu males, Waterbuck and Warthogs in that order.

Unsuccessful attempts were made to immobilize Inyalas by darting, but work on this problem continues.

A Square-lipped Rhino carcase was made available to the Pretoria Museum.

Game Control measures were continued throughout the year, Warthogs receiving the most attention. A magistrate, new to the area, gave some assistance in arrangements for distributing game control carcasses to the neighbouring Bantu.

Operation Rhino.

The beginning of this very important project was mentioned in the 13th Annual Report. In June 1961, what had been merely an interesting experiment became a successful operation of great practical value.

Dr. A. M. Harthoorn revisited Umfolozi Game Reserve and brought with him a new combination of drugs which proved suitable for immobilizing Square-lipped Rhinos. Much work was needed to evolve a technique for the capture and translocation of the animals, but the whole operation became a remarkable example of what may be achieved by good teamwork. Board officers were able to transfer a number of Rhinos to other Natal reserves and they also caught and crated four for the Kruger National Park and four for the Willem Pretorius Nature Reserve. These longer transportations proved as successful as the shorter ones within the province.

Prevailing Conditions.

Due to the long severe drought period, the vegetation suffered greatly. Many areas, in which the veld survived the dry conditions, were seriously overgrazed by Warthogs and Rhinos, but in spite of these adverse conditions the Reserve remained in very much better condition than the neighbouring territories throughout the year.

Reserve Boundaries.

A great deal of discussion took place on the Reserve Boundaries question during the year. Native squatters developed into a very serious problem to the extent that a strong force of S.A. Police moved in and commenced evicting the offenders. This action permitted fencing operations to commence. A test case against a squatting offender resulted in a sentence of R60 or 60 days.

Poaching.

There was a very decided increase in poaching activities this year; a good deal of it took place at night and made the work of the ranging staff much more difficult. Poachers, operating in gangs, made repeated attacks on Game Guards and it has, regret-



BLACK RHINO

tably, to be reported that one Game Guard was murdered. His killer was duly apprehended, convicted and sentenced to death. Advanced warning was given to the station on one occasion of an impending mass attack by poachers. Reinforcements from neighbouring stations were called in and very careful watch and a close radio link was maintained. Only the intervention of a strong force of S.A.P. prevented the squatters from actually entering the Game Reserve. A section of the S.A.P. firearms squad was subsequently posted to the surrounding area, where raids were carried out and a large number of unlicensed firearms were recovered. A local private plane owner gave valuable assistance during this period.

Snaring was prevalent and a very large number of snares were collected. Some of the animals caught were successfully released and many of the snare setters were apprehended, charged and paid the penalties imposed by the courts.

In all, 77 cases of poaching, involving 140 persons were brought before the courts. Convictions were obtained and sentences averaging R50 or 90 days were imposed upon 135 accused persons. A number of Europeans were involved, but the principal offenders were the encroaching squatters mentioned earlier.

Staff.

Various staff changes occurred at this station during the year, due to the increase in poaching activities, and the tremendous

advance in the work of "Operation Rhino". Two Rangers were transferred to the "Operation Rhino" team. Two new Rangers were appointed and one Ranger from the St. Lucia Research Centre was transferred to this station.

The head Game Guard, Magqubu Ntombela, completed 43 years' service in the Umfolozi area this year.

Visitors.

The hutted camp was very well supported throughout the year. During holiday periods all the available accommodation was used. Among the V.I.P.'s to visit the Reserve during the year was the Administrator of the Orange Free State, who came to witness the capture of the Square-lipped Rhinos presented to the Willem Pretorius Game Reserve. The renowned ornithologist, Mr. Peter Scott and Mrs. Scott, the American Consul and the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner also visited the reserve.

NDUMU GAME RESERVE

During the year a Rhino paddock was constructed, and several miles of new tourist roads were laid around the Nyamiti Pan and through the Fig Forest to the confluence of the Usutu and Pongola Rivers. The Reserve boundary fences also received some attention.

Very good but unseasonal rains fell, filling the pans and maintaining a high water level for most of the year. Five inches of rain were recorded over 3 days during October, the Usutu River flooded and some of the boundary fences were damaged.

Temperatures during the summer months rose as high as 101°F.

There was an increase in the number of Bushbuck, Inyala, Impala and Livingstone Antelopes (Suni) during the year and Hippos and Crocodiles were plentiful. Although a number of Hippo fights occurred there were no known fatalities. The high water levels depleted the bird life on the pans. A number of Hippos were seen grazing in the East section since the removal of natives from that area. Two Hippos charged some native trespassers, treeing one, but the remainder managed to escape.

The hutted camp was very well booked throughout the holiday periods. The demand was particularly great during July.

The SATOUR film unit operated in the Reserve and some excellent Hippo movie film was exposed.

By the end of the year under review, 340 different species of birds had been recorded as occurring in the Reserve.

Four Square-lipped Rhinos were successfully moved to the new Rhino enclosure in the Reserve during the year, where they have settled down in their new environment.

There were 114 convictions against poachers and an amount of R374 was collected in fines. This reserve again experienced the activities of snare setters, who caused the death of a Hippopotamus. The staff removed 548 snares and a number of traps and poaching weapons were confiscated.

The ejection of native squatters from the Reserve continued and 26 complete kraals were ejected this year; only 45 kraals remain within the Reserve's boundaries. A general census of natives in the area was taken by the staff to assist and for the information of the local Magistrate.

Several raids were carried out in neighbouring kraals in collaboration with the S.A.P. in search of illegal brewing activities. During the summer months a good deal of illegal fishing took place, particularly at night, necessitating regular night patrols.

MKUZI GAME RESERVE

The major building project at this station, the new hutted camp, was completed, but minor difficulties prevented it from being opened for use by the public. A further staff house site was cleared in readiness for building operations. A new water-pipe line was laid to improve the water supply to the new hutted camp.

Very hot and dry summer months were experienced, when the maximum temperature recorded was 120°F. Good rains came late in the season and 26.75 inches of rain had been recorded by the end of the year. An outbreak of Army-worm occurred during April.

Three Square-lipped Rhinos, immobilized in the Umfolozi Game Reserve, were successfully moved to this station during the year, but they broke out of their previously prepared paddock and wandered into the surrounding territory and one had to be redarted and returned to the reserve, but all is now well. A fall of 3½ inches of rain in 48 hours while the first Rhino was being transported from Umfolozi made the operation an extremely difficult one. Perseverance and team-work, by all concerned, were responsible for the eventual success of this, the first attempt to move an immobilized White Rhino in Natal.

Impala catching was done on 10 nights in March and April, and 666 animals were secured. Of these, 597 were distributed to farmers all over Natal and to some parts of the Orange Free State. False Bay Park was restocked with 53. Losses during the capturing operations amounted to less than 2%.

Poaching was again very prevalent in the Reserve this year, and snaring was particularly bad, over 600 snares having been recovered. Arrests were made and convictions obtained in a number of cases. A sentence worthy of mention was imposed on a trespasser-cum-hunter, caught in possession of Hippo products. He received a fine of R200 or 180 days. A large number of native dogs were destroyed. Some Europeans were also known to be involved in the poaching activities, but only one was successfully detained and punished.

Indications of the popularity of this Reserve, and the support which the new hutted camp will receive, were evidenced by the heavy reservations made for the old rustic huts for the Easter and July season. A large number of applications had to be turned away

daily visitors from far and wide indicated that the Reserve has provided large numbers of visitors with relaxation and recreation this year.

A straying Hippo was reported in the Reserve area and although no actual contact was made with the animal, evidence of its presence was found in many places in the area.

A Caracal Lynx was also reported in the Reserve area. Its spoor was seen, but careful investigations failed to locate the animal.

A 12-foot python, killed on private property within the Reserve, was found, on investigation, to have been feeding upon the cat population living on the property concerned.

A dead whale, washed up on the foreshore near the mouth, caused a nauseating smell and fears of a shark danger. A close watch was maintained while it remained in the area, and all native bathers were warned to beware.

NOTES OF GENERAL INTEREST

From Field Officers' reports

RESCUE OF BOGGED SQUARE-LIPPED RHINO

Report N. A. Steele — Umfolozi

November, 1959

A report was received late at night that a Square-Lipped Rhino was bogged down at the confluence of the Tjevu and Black Umfolozi Rivers. Three Rangers and a gang of Game Guards set off for the area to attempt a rescue. The animal was well and truly bogged, and it appeared to be exhausted. The Land Rover was driven on to the river bed, and a steel cable hitched round the Rhino's hump. The first pull was unsuccessful. The animal rolled on to its side, and this time became very badly stuck. It was impossible to lift the Rhino up the slight bank out of the bog, so the job was tackled with pick and shovel. After two hours of hard work, the bank was removed. The cable was tied round the Rhino once more, and connected to two Land Rovers, this time. The Rhino was towed out on to the bank, but it unfortunately panicked and rolled back, nearly drowning in the mud as its nostrils became submerged. The whole gang of workers lifted its head and placed logs underneath it. The Land Rovers then moved round to another position, and a further attempt was made. The Rhino, screaming and trumpeting, tried to help itself, but moved in the wrong direction. At 3.30 p.m. digging re-started, filling the hole made in the mud by the Rhino. Each time the animal moved, sand was thrown underneath its belly. At 4.15 p.m. it was finally extricated and the tired rescuers returned to their quarters.

BABOONS THROWING STONES?

Report N. A. Steele — Umfolozi

June 1962

From time to time one hears reports of Baboons which are alleged to have rolled boulders down on people standing below

hem, and even reports of their having thrown objects at people. An incident was observed which will correct this erroneous supposition. Whilst standing below a troop of Baboons, they became annoyed at the presence of the Ranger's dog, and proceeded to jump about on the krantz above and generally show their dislike at having their sleeping place invaded. As they moved to and fro and barked their warnings, they unintentionally dislodged boulders and stones, which then rumbled down the slopes, past the Ranger and his dog.

RESCUED FROM A SWOLLEN RIVER

Report N. A. Steele — Umfolozi

January, 1961

On the morning of the 31st December, Mpila Camp was radioed and arrangements made with the Senior Warden to come to the assistance of the Rangers across the swollen White Umfolozi River. The Senior Warden arrived, and alone he rowed a boat with considerable skill across to the other side, where it was lifted out and launched again well up stream. Each with an oar, the Senior Warden and the Senior Ranger rowed desperately against the raging current, when, at a psychological moment, an oar broke. Shocked at this untimely disaster and the sight of the thunderous waves into which the boat seemed doomed to drift and be swallowed up, the two men sat staring; at last a chance came, at the boat swung past an island. With the agility born of a lifetime dread of water, the Senior Ranger grabbed at a tree as they passed, and it stayed the boat. Temporarily safe from the flood, the problem was now to get another oar. The Senior Warden took it upon himself to swim for the left bank, which he only just accomplished in the swift current. Shivering on the island the Senior Ranger anxiously gazed upstream, fearful lest another wall of water would sweep past and carry all with it. The Senior Warden later returned on a surf-ski, and, with the new oar, the boat was launched again, but not before someone accidentally dropped the rowlocks into the water! These were fortunately soon recovered. It was with considerable relief that the party eventually stepped out on to the left bank and safety. A somewhat chilling end to the year!

ATTACK BY A BUFFALO

Report A. M. Erasmus — Umfolozi

February, 1962

A Native Game Guard was bowled over by a charging Buffalo which he inadvertently surprised in a stream bed. The Buffalo stood astride the prostrate guard, who was lying on his back. The Guard recovered enough to hit the Buffalo on its head with his sticks, whereupon the animal then fortunately ran off, allowing the Guard to continue his patrol.

STRANGE BEHAVIOUR OF A PYTHON

Report A. M. Erasmus — Umfolozi

July, 1962

A Python, approximately 10 feet long, was observed moving