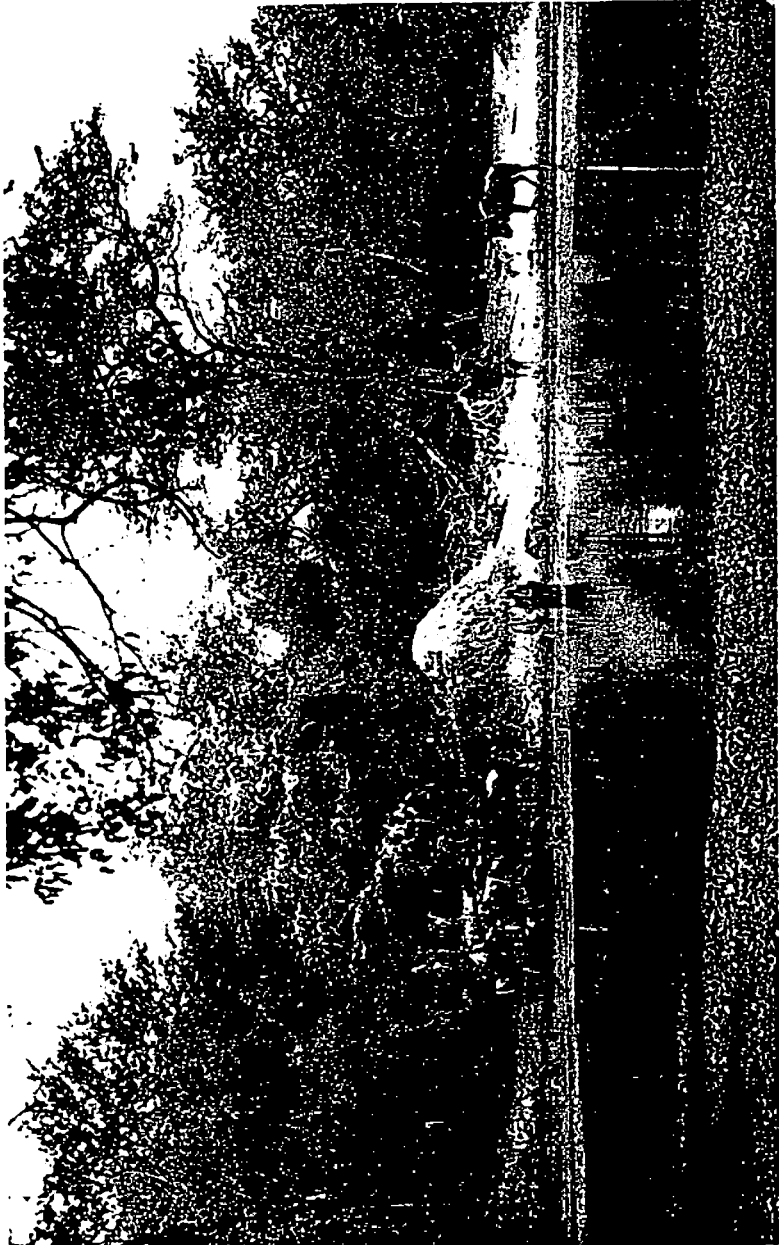


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BUBE PAN. MKUZI GAME RESERVE

13th ANNUAL REPORT
of the
NATAL PARKS, GAME AND FISH PRESERVATION BOARD
for the period
1st APRIL, 1960 to 31st MARCH, 1961

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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, 1960 to 31st March, 1961.

A. GENERAL

The Board.

The Board members as elected on the 1st December, 1959, remained unchanged except for Mr. A. M. Wood, M.P.C., who resigned in September, 1960 on his appointment to the Executive Committee of the Provincial Council of Natal. He was succeeded by Major H. Urquhart, representing the Natal Agricultural Union. The following nine members therefore continue to hold office until 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. J. U. Friend.
- Mr. E. James.
- Senator Dr. J. Pretorius.
- Mr. A. O. Simpson.
- Major H. Urquhart.

The Board met at their headquarters in Pietermaritzburg on eight occasions during the year, and once in the Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve.

Committees.

The Zululand Committee held no meetings during the period under review.

B. HEAD OFFICE

Financial.

A statement of the Revenue and Expenditure for the period 1st April, 1960 to 31st March 1961, is annexed and is self-explanatory.

Specially Protected Game Returns.

As required by sub-section 6 of section 9 of Ordinance No. 11 of 1955, the following is a schedule of permits issued during the year for the hunting, capture or keeping in captivity of specially protected game.



Buffalo: 8 permits issued, no animals destroyed.
Eland: 4 permits issued, 6 animals destroyed.
Hippopotamus: 17 permits issued, 2 animals destroyed.
Mountain Reedbuck: 4 permits issued, no animals destroyed.
Oribi: 1 permit issued, 5 animals destroyed.
Rhinoceros: 2 permits issued, 1 animal destroyed.

Reserves.

Proclamation No. 31 of 1960 (3rd June, 1960) brought into being the new Queen Elizabeth Park Nature Reserve, Pietermaritzburg; in extent 230 acres.

Legislation.

Only one item of legislation promulgated during the year deserves mention. It was the Game Preservation Amendment Ordinance No. 36 of 1960, which permitted wider powers for the destruction of dogs found either themselves hunting unlawfully on any land, or accompanying persons so doing.

C. ZULULAND RESERVES

Revenue.

The total revenue from the Zululand reserves for the period under review topped R60,000 for the first time, and has again exceeded all previous records by over R4,000.

The upper St. Lucia Lake stations, and major game reserves in Zululand showed individual revenue increases because of their growing popularity, with the exception of the St. Lucia Estuary, which showed a slight decline for this year, due to the closing of the Estuary mouth.

The appointment of gate wardens at the Hluhluwe Game Reserve made it possible to supply accurate figures of the visitors to this reserve throughout the year. During the period under review 5,714 cars, carrying 19,705 tourists entered the reserve, of which 1,069 cars and 4,225 visitors entered during the month of July alone.

The introduction of advance booking fees during the year for accommodation at all the Board's hutted camps, open campsites and for wilderness trails, has made the control of these reservations much easier, and has been received favourably by the visiting public.

Sale of the Board's publications, postcards, hides and skins also showed a steady increase over the year.

Housing.

Four staff houses were put out to contract during the period under review. Other building projects completed included petrol and oil stores, native compounds, ablution blocks, as well as office square-davels and a bulk deep-freeze and storage building. These are mentioned in more detail in the reports which follow under the headings of individual reserves.

Roads.

The Board's roads maintenance officer spent a great deal of the year at the Mkuzi Game Reserve, opening up a net-work of tourist roads. He also constructed four earth dams and one concrete dam at Mkuzi. In December he replaced the washed-away approach road to the Umfolozi bridge.

Transport.

Where necessary, motor transport was replaced. A large shallow draft motor tourist launch came into operation on the St. Lucia Lake, and a Turbo Craft supplied to the Lake Ranger proved a very efficient and economical patrol boat. Five aluminium boats, for hire to tourists, were issued to the St. Lucia Estuary, and a number of outboard motors were supplied where necessary.

Game Capture.

"Operation Rhino" came into being during the year, as one of the Board's major projects. Dr. A. M. Harthoorn successfully carried out the experimental stages of this operation at the Umfolozi Game Reserve. Some of the Board's field officers became extremely proficient in its technicalities, under the expert guidance of Dr. Harthoorn.

The annual capture and distribution of Impala from the Mkuzi Game Reserve took place during April and May. Four hundred and seventy five (475) animals were caught and distributed to farmers in Natal. Some went to the Orange Free State.

Hluhluwe Game Reserve.

This reserve enjoyed its fair share of the building programme planned by the Board for the year under review. It included a laundry block for the hutted camp, a new native compound, and a start was made on a new house in the staff quarters area of the reserve for the Ranger-in-charge.

Good rains fell during the year, particularly over the Christmas and New Year holiday periods, when 8 inches were recorded, and many tourists were bogged. The rivers came down in flood during the summer months, and the rains made grazing conditions better than they had been for the past ten years. This improvement is also attributable to more effective perimeter fire breaks, the implementation of game control in over-populated areas, as well as anti-soil erosion and bush eradication measures.

Game animals throughout the reserve were in very good condition. The mortality rate, usually at its highest during the July to September period, was remarkably low. Some losses occurred through poaching, mainly among those animals whose habitat appeared to be near the reserve boundaries, and therefore within easy reach of poachers. Square-tipped Rhinos increased in numbers in certain areas in the reserve, and decreased in areas adjoining the Crown Lands. A drive, the intention of which was to return these animals to the reserve, was not successful. A Black Rhino count showed that over the past three years there had been an increase in



BLACK RHINO

the population of this species in the reserve. One bull giraffe was born during the year, making the total population seven, comprising 5 bulls and 2 cows. Leopards were seen more frequently in the reserve this year. A healthy proportion of hyaena and jackal in the reserve helped to maintain the balance of nature. Successful game counts were carried out during the year, including experimental counts from the air of buffaloes and Black and White Rhinos. The greater density of Black Rhinos was found to be in the northern half of the reserve. Three natives were tossed by Black Rhinos this year; one, a poacher, died from his injuries. The other two recovered.

Poaching activities were well controlled during the year under review. There was a necessity for regular night patrols, which produced good results and several arrests, but also presented a number of difficulties and dangers. Sixty-five arrests were made during the year, and the sum of R790 was collected in fines. Seventeen dogs were destroyed. There were no maliciously lit fires this year, but some accidental ones did occur, these were brought under control before any extensive damage was done.

Scrub encroachment developed into a major problem, but a number of experiments by the Board's Ecologist revealed a method of treating the offending plants, and gave satisfactory results in clearing some affected areas.

During the year 19,705 people visited the reserve although there was a noticeable decrease in the number of overseas visitors.

UMFOLOZI GAME RESERVE

There was a good deal of building activity at this reserve during the year. The completed projects included a new ranger's cottage, ranger's single quarters, a wilderness trail equipment storeroom, and extended accommodation to the camp superintendent's office block. A kitchen and ablution block in the new section of the hutted camp were completed, and the foundations for six new square-davels in the new camp section were laid.

Two new rangers joined the staff at this reserve during the year, one of whom was transferred from the Drakensberg. There was one resignation. The native game guard staff was increased to fifty as a vital necessity for the protection of the reserve. Game guards patrolled in groups of four because of the dangers involved from poachers. One game guard proved himself a very proficient wireless operator, working the radio from the reserve's central control office. The head game guard Maqubu Ntombela completed forty-two years service, this year, in the Umfolozi Game Reserve area.

Fifty-two Wilderness trails were scheduled for the year under review, but only forty-two were conducted. Two hundred and twenty-five people participated in these trails; one a seventy-three year old, thoroughly enjoyed the adventure. Thirty-six trailers failed to take up their trail bookings.

The rainfall recorded for the year was 30.93 inches. Fortunately 90% of that rainfall was of a gentle soaking nature, with only a few mid-summer heavy storms, when both the Umfolozi Rivers were in full spate, the White Umfolozi rising the highest it has been since 1958. As a result of the good average rains, there was very little wash and far less erosion than the previous year. The average maximum temperature recorded for the period under review was 86.8 degrees F., and the minimum 65.5 degrees F.

Game control measures were successfully maintained throughout the year, as a result of which zebra and wildebeeste were kept down to reasonable proportions, and grazing facilities were thereby very much improved.

The Umfolozi lion still remains an active inhabitant of the reserve, in spite of an attempt by a neighbouring farmer to kill it by poisoning. The offender was duly charged for laying poison, and paid an admission of guilt. The King of Beasts was actually seen by a party of Wilderness trailers in February, and again later by some visitors to the camp, who stood watching it for some twenty minutes.

An aerial count of Square-lipped Rhinos recorded 600. A hippo took up residence in a pan within the reserve for the first time in living memory. An increase in the jackal population in the reserve during the year has resulted in the death of numbers of young duiker, steenbuck and reedbuck. The arrival of native squatters on to the reserve boundaries was also responsible for the destruction of numbers of reedbuck.



KUDU BULL AND IMPALA

A very serious situation is developing in the reserve, due to the fantastic influx of native squatters into what was vacant State-owned land. This influx was responsible for an increase in poaching activities during the year under review. It was along the eastern boundaries of these lands, which adjoin the heart of the Rhino range, where most of the poaching has been taking place. Regular day and night patrols were essential throughout the year. One hundred and twenty-two persons were arrested and two hundred dogs were destroyed during the period under review. Among those arrested were a number who were in illegal possession of firearms, for which the maximum penalty imposed was R100 or six months.

Among the notable visitors to stay at the reserve during the year was Dr. A. M. Harthoorn, who instigated "Operation Rhino" the means for immobilizing Square-lipped Rhinos. The operation was, at this stage, in the nature of an experiment, and suffered somewhat due to the unfortunate lethal effect of the drug used. Further visits and experiments by Dr. Harthoorn were planned for the new financial year.

The American and Portuguese Ambassadors, and the Minister of the Interior, also paid brief visits to the reserve during the year, to which must be added representatives of the press, who always left with very good copy. At the request of several Zululand institutions, slide shows and lectures on wild life conservation were given by the Senior Ranger. During the year under review 1,100 persons used the accommodation at the hutted camp, this being 82% of the total accommodation available over the period. A

large proportion of this figure comprised casual visitors who had not reserved accommodation. An analysis of the number of visitors from each Province is of interest: Natal, 842. Transvaal, 174. Cape, 56. O.F.S. 18. S.W.A., 8. Overseas, 12.

Two-way "walkie-talkie" radio equipment came into full operation in this reserve during the year, with very satisfying results, particularly in coping with poaching activities.

A meeting was held in the reserve with all the neighbouring native chiefs to discuss a satisfactory means of distributing meat derived from the game control campaign, with a view to stemming the poaching and wanton killing. The results of the meeting were brought into operation almost immediately, but were not as successful as anticipated.

The S.A.B.C. made several recorded radio feature programmes in both official languages in the reserve during the year. The English "A" programme feature was sent overseas, where it was broadcast to some eighty-million listeners.

A school for training horses for patrol work in the outlying districts was started, under the guidance of one of the Board's officers. Very satisfactory results have eventuated.

NDUMU GAME RESERVE

The only building project at this reserve for the year under review was a new staff house, duly completed and occupied. A new pump house and water scheme, which included a 20,000 gallon reservoir was also completed.

Good, well dispersed rains over the year greatly improved general conditions in the reserve. There were heavy floods in January which filled all the pans and caused the rivers to flood, putting the Pongolo flats entirely under water. A slight heat wave, also in January, registered the high temperature of 102 degrees F.

There was a decided increase in the numbers of nyala, impala, crocodiles and hippos in the reserve during the year. The nyala were concentrated mainly round the Inyamiti Pan, while crocodiles and hippos were to be seen in large numbers in all the pans, particularly the Inyamiti Pan during the flood periods. The bird life everywhere in the reserve was at its best during the Autumn months.

Illegal fishing was continually taking place during the year, and fonya netting activities were regularly seen in the south-western area. Action was taken against the offenders whenever possible. The Government Veterinary Department, operating along the northern borders for the control of foot-and-mouth disease, greatly assisted in curtailing the number of trespassers into the reserve by destroying their straying domestic cattle. During September, a campaign against the native squatters in the area was commenced. With the aid of the South African Police several raids were made on the native kraals, in search of weapons. One raid alone resulted



RED HARTEBEESTE

NOTES OF GENERAL INTEREST

From field officers' reports

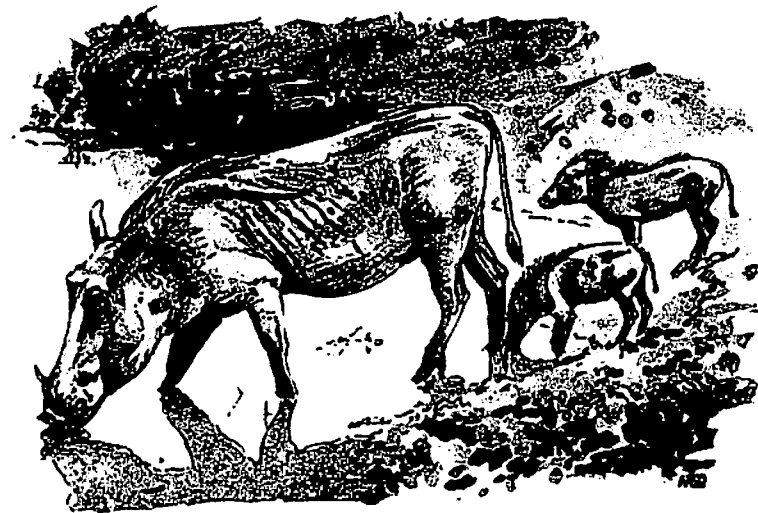
Warden, Giants Castle Game Reserve

(a) During May an attempt was made to measure the height of the Injasuti or Little Tugela Falls, which made a clear drop over a cliff known as the Red Wall. The task was greatly hampered by bad weather, but nevertheless a reading of 920 feet was obtained, and this must mean that the falls are among the highest in southern Africa.

(b) One morning during October a garden hose was left running on to a flower bed without any sprinkler or other attachment on its end. At midday it was reported that no water was coming through the tap, but believing a defective washer to be the only cause of the trouble no attention was given to it until late in the afternoon. When the tap was unscrewed a 21 inches long black water snake was surprisingly found there. It must have travelled up the hose pipe and before it had completely squeezed through the tap, someone had closed it and trapped the snake some two inches from the end of its tail. Had it managed to get past this tap it would doubtless have emerged later in somebody's bath!

Ranger, Umfolozi Game Reserve

In July two rangers and a game guard on a horse patrol had just negotiated a steep and stony path to the head of a cliff, when



WARTHOGS

they were charged by a Black Rhino. The two rangers being caught on the cliff edge and unable to retreat swung out of their saddles into a tree, knowing that the riderless horses would probably get away without damage to themselves. The game guard, however, who was some distance away decided for his getaway to dash through the fast closing gap between rhino and cliff. This move caught the attention of the rhino which pursued the mounted guard at a deadly pace, leaving the rangers to round up their mounts. Only after half a mile had been covered was the guard able to shake off his angry pursuer.

Senior Warden, Umfolozi Game Reserve

An experience in May was illustrative of the need for constant caution. When pushing through a thicket of reeds to the river bank, in search of crocodiles, an unfamiliar sound was heard close at hand as a stunted and overgrown *Ficus* tree was passed. Fortunately it was not immediately investigated, because a following game guard later pointed out a spot nearby, where spoor indicated that a leopard had grabbed a warthog and dragged it through the reeds. Following the drag marks a dead warthog was found at the entrance to a hollow beneath the stunted tree passed earlier. A low growl from within what was undoubtedly the leopard's lair caused a hasty withdrawal from the vicinity.

Warden, Hluhluwe Game Reserve

(a) A game guard was indeed lucky to be alive after being twice tossed into the air by a Black Rhino, resulting in gaping wounds

in the thigh and buttocks. When the rhino made a third attack the guard undoubtedly saved his life by grabbing hold of the animal's anterior horn and hanging on for dear life. The rhino tossed its head violently from side to side in an attempt to dislodge the guard, and when it eventually managed this with a particularly vigorous shake the man was thrown aside into some bushes. At this point the rhino fled.



IMPALA

(b) A native cyclist was riding along a track where, incidentally, he had no right to be, when unknowingly he rode past a buffalo bull concealed in long grass. The startled animal charged, hit the man in the back, knocked him flying off his bicycle, and then decamped. The native suffered no worse injuries than a sore back and grazed hands and face, but he now has a most healthy respect for buffaloes.

(c) Early one morning a game guard found that he was sharing his bed with a nine feet seven inches long python.

Senior Ranger, Mkuzi Game Reserve

During November a female impala was observed lying down giving birth to its lamb, with a male standing nearby apparently on guard. Several female inyala, disturbed by the vehicle, made off in the direction of the impala and were immediately attacked by the male. It was amusing to see how disturbed he was at the approach of so many animals towards the spot where his female was hidden. He

made thrusts in all directions with his sharp horns as the inyala dodged nimbly, and it was not until the last of them was safely away that the impala came stamping and snorting back to take up his guard again. He never flinched as the vehicle passed closely by.

Senior Ranger, Sordwana Bay

On an overcast day in November with a strong south wind blowing a man and his wife were fishing in the bay, the man using a very light rod and small shad spoon. In order to prepare lunch the lady left her husband for a short while, but when she next saw him he was holding a kingfish nearly as big as himself. The story of the catch is that a large wave broke and threw a grunter of about 6 lbs. on to the sand; as the man rushed forward to retrieve it, a huge kingfish, which it can only be presumed was chasing the grunter, was also stranded by the receding wave. Throwing the grunter ashore the man closed with the kingfish as the next wave came roaring in. He won his struggle and recovered both the fish he had caught with his bare hands. The kingfish weighed 69 lbs.



BUFFALO