



A REMARKABLE PICTURE OF A GROUP OF WHITE RHINOCEROS—A DISAPPEARING SPECIES

BIG GAME'S CHANCES IN THE SUDAN

Some Facts that Must Be Faced

By CAPT. H. C. BROCKLEHURST

IN A COUNTRY as vast as the Sudan, consisting of more than one million square miles and boasting a wealth and variety of game unequalled in any other part of Africa, it is not possible for a single game warden to do more than outline a policy for its protection. During the winter months his time is fully occupied issuing licences and attending to the many requirements of shooting parties, and it is only towards the end of the season that he is able to leave his office in Khartoum and visit a few of the game districts in the limited time before the heavy rains commence. For a short period the staff was increased by the appointment of an assistant warden; but in the interests of economy, this was again reduced to the original complement. Consequently, most of the practical work has been undertaken by the district commissioners, who, without exception, have done all in their power in the interests of game preservation.

Certain areas have been allocated as reserves where no shooting is allowed; but it is not possible, without a large staff of rangers, to prevent altogether natives living in these areas from hunting with nets, dogs and traps. In the more inaccessible districts considerable damage is done, especially during the breeding season, when large numbers of giraffe, thiang and other game are ruthlessly slaughtered.

WHITE RHINOS DECREASING

The amount of damage done by white hunters, both visitors and residents, shooting on a licence, is comparatively small and almost negligible. In late years many have deserted the rifle for the camera, and those in search of good museum specimens, generally "grass" an old male, whose removal would, in all probability, be an advantage to the herd. There is, however, one exception to this theory where the white hunter certainly did more damage than the native, and that is in the case of the white rhinoceros. To the native all game is meat, and he cares little whether they are males, females or calves, whereas the collector is in search of a good horn which, in the case of the white rhinoceros, is invariably the female.

It is by no means easy to determine the sex, especially in long grass, and no doubt many a female rhinoceros would have been spared if the hunter had only known. These animals, which at one

time, were on the verge of extinction, have been strictly preserved for a number of years, and there is no doubt whatever that their numbers in the Sudan are considerably on the increase.

There is little fear of the elephant becoming extinct in the Sudan for many years to come. The Sudd area alone forms a natural sanctuary, where huge herds numbering several hundreds, wander about undisturbed except by the occasional whistle of a passing steamer or the roar of a low-flying aeroplane. Shooting from a steamer is not allowed, and it is almost impossible for any human being to penetrate the dense mass of water-logged papyrus.

ELEPHANTS MOVING FROM THE CONGO

These herds have noticeably increased in late years, many having come across the border from the Belgian Congo, where large numbers are slaughtered annually to provide food for the natives working on the gold mines. A similar increase has been observed along the Atbara River and along the borders of Abyssinia, where the elephant have crossed into the Sudan in order to avoid persecution by Abyssinian ivory hunters.

The burning of elephant was, until quite recently, one of the most destructive methods of hunting by natives, sometimes more than 100 animals were destroyed at a single round-up. Such cases are now very scarce, and offenders are severely dealt with.

It seems a pity that the weight for warrantable ivory should lately have been reduced from 30lb. to 20lb. The weight was fixed at 30lb. in order to include all females, which seldom carry tusks exceeding 28lb. each. If all Governments concerned would agree to 30lb. as an international weight for warrantable ivory and enforce confiscation at ports of underweight tusks, it would undoubtedly reduce the number of female elephants killed.

The number of Nile lechwe allowed on a licence has lately been increased by two. They appear to be plentiful on the Bahr el Jebel, and their existence has recently been reported on the Pibor River and eastwards into Abyssinia.

In the Red Sea province several hills were declared as sanctuaries for ibex, but it was found that the stock in these sanctuaries decreased rather than

increased. The reason for this was found to be that the native took care to preserve the ibex in the neighbourhood of his village in order to encourage the visiting sportsmen, from whom he derived considerable benefit. He considered the sanctuaries as "no man's land," where he could hunt the ibex himself or drive them into a more profitable area.

A POSSIBLE SANCTUARY

A sanctuary for wild animals on the lines of the Kruger National Park of South Africa, which is so ably managed by Colonel Stevenson-Hamilton, would undoubtedly be an asset to the Sudan. An ideal situation exists within a few hours of Khartoum in the valley of the Dinder River, where more than 20 different species are to be seen in abundance, while others could be introduced from time to time. A comparatively small outlay would be sufficient for a beginning in order to build a rough motor road and a rest-house for visitors. The existing police post on the upper reaches of the river could be substituted by a smaller and more mobile force, which could patrol the area in a car, and deal effectively with Abyssinian poachers. Such a park, which could be reached from England in eleven days, would be a great attraction to visitors and would undoubtedly stimulate interest in the protection of wild life.

Mere sanctuaries on paper are of little use without a staff of rangers and constant supervision, which, over so large an area, would entail considerable expense, so it is to the district commissioners that one must look for the preservation of the fauna. The game warden should visit as much of the country as time and conditions permit in order to advise and encourage those who are willing and in a position to help.

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

Canadian Buffalo Increasing Again

UPWARDS of half a million pounds of buffalo-meat were placed on the Canadian market during recent weeks as a result of the slaughter of some 1,200 animals from the herd in Buffalo National Park at Wainwright, Alberta. The disposal of these members of Canada's great national herd was made necessary by the grazing limitations of the immense fenced reserve at Wainwright, and the 1,200 slaughtered are the equivalent to the 1932 increase. This reduction brings the herd down to approximately 6,300.

The annual reduction of the herd at Wainwright, which is administered by the Department of the Interior through the National Parks of Canada, calls to mind that country's success in bringing back the buffalo. The herd at Wainwright developed from the Pablo herd purchased by the Dominion Government in 1907.