

feration of grazers is the remarkable change in the vegetation. Large parts of the park are overgrown by bush and there are areas which deserve the designation of woodland. With the decline of the elephant, the riverine forests are expanding, at least in the areas where they are not being destroyed by people. The change in vegetation has favoured bushbuck and leopard, both of which can be seen regularly from the launch. The bird fauna must also have changed and it would be interesting to quantify this.

The increase of the human population within the park is huge. Queen Elizabeth Park was always unusual in that within its boundaries there were settlements: fishing villages, fish processing and salt mining plants and commercial centres. Now Mweya itself has grown into a huge complex, Katwe is many times larger than it ever was and the activities in the fishing villages are so lucrative – the most important being smuggling – that in addition to the natural increase of the populations they have attracted many immigrants from far afield. The Asians have been replaced by Somali traders who command an equally remarkable commercial network.

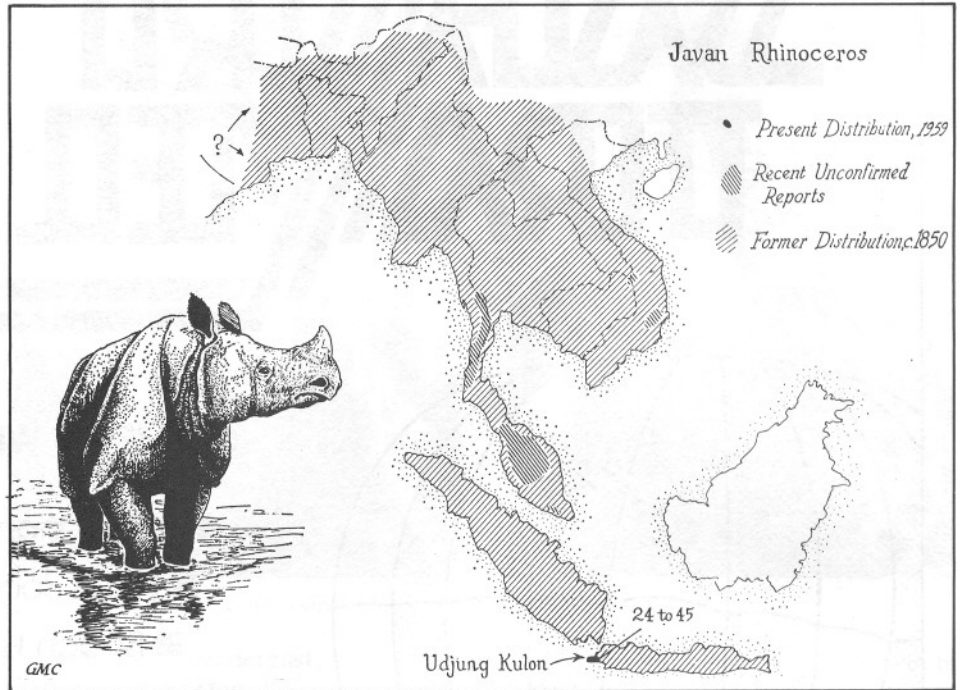
Poaching is certainly not on a large scale in spite of the fact that the meat on offer in the village butcheries is quite obviously not of domestic origin. To control the poaching that there is and to protect the remaining elephant, the infrastructure is being strengthened and the equipment – weapons, radios, vehicles – replaced and modernised. In these endeavours the park is helped by WWF, the EEC, and the World Bank.

The fraternity of postgraduate students engaged in field studies is great and their opinions in respect of what is true and what should be done is as varied as it is often uninformed. I observed with great apprehension the mistrust and disagreement existing between the various groups of expatriate helpers. Most distressing was to see how many of these experts relate to the senior warden.

These palpable tensions between the various groups consume energies which are required to rehabilitate the park and vouchsafe its future. Although the Uganda government is less ambiguous in its attitude towards poaching than most of its neighbours are, the tradesmen and the smugglers will be followed by ivory hunters and there is ample opportunity to transport game meat across the lake.

Charcoal burning within the park seems to have stopped and the canopy of the Maramambo forest appeared to be healing. But the lake is overfished – the smuggled nets from the Zaire are being blamed, but no other nets are available – and the fishery department has no boat.

The future of tourism in the Queen



Elizabeth Park and in Uganda is threatened from another direction: the government's avarice for foreign currency is self-defeating. By all means charge tourists, but let the market forces decide – Uganda prices itself out of the trade. I paid \$50 landing and navigation fees in Entebbe, and another \$45 just for the clearance. At Ishasha fees for three – who slept in their own tent for two nights as most of the bandas have collapsed – amounted to \$120. However, I was gratified to learn that the exchequer does not take away the money from the park; it credits it with all earnings in shillings.

For all that, Ishasha provided an unusual experience; the hired car having broken down, we walked across the waist of the southern section of the park. There was plenty of game to be smelled, heard and seen. All in all a very worthwhile excursion!

Imre Loeffler

WIDER HORIZONS

Rhinos rediscovered in Vietnam

Javan rhinos, thought to have been exterminated, outside of Java, by hunters and war, have been rediscovered along the Dong Nai River in southern Vietnam. George Schaller, Director for Science at Wildlife Conservation International (the field science division of the New York Zoological Society), joined Nguyen Yuang Dang, Le Din Thuy and Vo Thanh Son of Vietnam in conducting the first wildlife survey of Vietnam's southern forest areas. Dr Schaller is among the first American

scientists to join a Vietnamese field study in recent years. Investigations took place in March in the Song Be Province, 75 miles north-east of Ho Chi Minh City.

Until this discovery, Javan rhinos were thought to exist only in the Ujung Kulon National Park located on the western tip of Java. Approximately 50 rhinos constitute this population. Of the five rhino species, the Javan is decidedly the most endangered.

Although Javan rhinos were abundant throughout Asia in the 19th century, hunters and war took their toll leaving only the one known population on the island of Java. This caused American biologist Dr Van Peenen to declare to the western world in his 1969 monograph on mammals in southern Vietnam that 'at present there probably are no living members (of the Javan rhino) in South Vietnam.' Yet, concurrently, Vietnamese revolutionary soldiers reported herds of up to 20 rhinos during the 1960s. The belief that the rhinos were extinct was held by Western scientists until November 1988 when a local man shot an adult female rhino in southern Vietnam.

In the course of the March survey, the scientific team was shown the remains of this rhino along with those of another. This evidence along with records of sightings by locals and two recent rhino tracks found by the survey team led the scientists to conclude that at most 10-15 Javan rhinos have survived.

Although the Nam Cat Tien Reserve, established in 1978, covers a portion of the area in which the rhinos were discovered, it does not extend up the Dong Nai River where most of this recent evidence of rhinos was found. The Vietnamese government is currently considering the expansion of the reserve and other protective measures.