

## UGANDA

(From the 1950 Report of the Game Department)

## GAME RESERVES AND SANCTUARIES

*Bunyoro and Gulu.*

With the reduction in poaching the game in the reserve is much less wild than it used to be, and visitors to the Murchison Falls are seeing more of it than previously. The animals seen on the Nile boat trip, however, give a completely false idea of the numbers of the various species that are actually present in the reserve. They tend to crowd into the river valley where they are attracted by the water and good grazing. Away from the river comparatively little game is seen.

Control operations on the reserve boundaries take a heavy toll of the elephants when they leave the sanctuary and it is difficult to believe that the annual reproduction rate offsets the heavy mortality. The elephant population of the Bunyoro portion of the reserve is probably about 800. Visitors not infrequently get a false idea of the elephant population, as some of the large herds move about in close proximity to each other, so that it is possible at times to see two or three hundred elephants together. Buffalo are more numerous and black rhinoceros have been seen on the north bank of the Victoria Nile far more frequently of late.

In the Nile between the delta and the Murchison Falls the hippopotamus population is about 800 animals. With the lessening of poaching a number of schools have moved into the delta area, where they used to be seen only on rare occasions. The other rivers in the reserve all contain their quota of hippopotami. Many waterbuck (Sing-Sing or Defassa) can be seen along the Nile and other rivers.

The numbers of hartebeest (*Lelwel*) are still small. The hartebeest is easy meat for the poacher and has consequently suffered badly. Even so, with the control of poaching, a partial recovery has started. Good numbers of young have been seen in the reserve.

There was at the beginning of the year, half-way between the delta of the River Nile and the Murchison Falls, a herd of fifteen to twenty Uganda kob living on a small plain beside the river. It was observed in December that this herd had been reduced to seven or eight animals. As it is most unlikely that the missing animals have been poached, either lions or hunting dogs must be responsible.

Throughout the area oribi, bushbuck and duiker abound. Crocodiles appear to be increasing in the Victoria Nile.

*Toro (or Semliki).*

This reserve contains fair numbers of kob, reedbuck, waterbuck, hartebeest, buffalo, elephant and lion. Unfortunately it is regularly poached by parties of anything from four to thirty Africans. They are usually armed with spears and hunt with dogs, but some have rifles. The game ranger and his game scouts have patrolled the area regularly and a number of convictions against the poachers have been secured.

*Lake George.*

This reserve is well stocked with several varieties of game, mainly elephant, buffalo, hippopotamus, waterbuck, kob and warthog, with a few of the lesser animals, and has the advantage to the visitor of being easily accessible and served by a conveniently placed hotel at Kichwamba.

The herd of elephants near Katwe, now well known and popularly nicknamed the "Katwe Circus", continue to provide an entrancing spectacle. Buffalo continue to graze unconcernedly in the vicinity of the roads, but this year several have been found suffering from bullet wounds inflicted by small-bore rifles. Several cars and lorries were charged and a Public Works Department headman knocked down near the Katwe turning by a buffalo which, when eventually shot by the Game Ranger, was found to have three small bullet wounds in its shoulder and a horn broken off. The Game Department have little doubt as to where the responsibility lies, and the "trigger happy" persons concerned would do well to mend their ways before somebody gets killed or badly injured as a result of their cruelty, and they themselves get into really serious trouble.

It seems likely that the Lake George Game Reserve will be menaced by possible industrial and other development in the area. The solution of a National Park in the region would be of little value, unless an area was provided that would be of sufficient size to accommodate elephant and buffalo. These animals are great wanderers and cannot be kept "on a postage stamp".

*Lake Edward.*

Game in the area consists mainly of elephant, hippopotamus, buffalo, waterbuck, bushbuck, reedbuck and kob. There are also giant forest hog and warthog, while baboons, chimpanzees,

colobus and other monkeys abound near the Kalinzu Forest. In the south big tuskers occasionally wander in from the Parc National Albert.

During February the game ranger who was on patrol in this reserve had a narrow escape from being speared by a party of twenty poachers. On hearing them approach he had hidden his porters and was himself crouching behind a bush with his gun bearer holding his two dogs. The poachers must have seen some movement and taken it to be an animal, for the next moment two spears transixed the bush and the gun bearer fell over the ranger while taking rapid evasive action. The latter fired his shot-gun in the air to avoid further incident and the poachers dropped their spears and meat and ran. Three were finally captured.

#### *Elephant Sanctuary, Acholi and East Madi.*

During the dry season, when the grass is short, poaching is widespread throughout this sanctuary, due mainly to cultivation being so close to the eastern and northern boundaries.

The Anaka-Pakwach road, which runs through the sanctuary, is interesting for the traveller, particularly when the fresh green grass is springing up after the burn. Large herds of kob and hartebeest, with scattered oribi, can often be seen from the road, in fact as many as four hundred head have been counted in an area measuring half a mile by a quarter of a mile. Strangely enough, away from the road the numbers diminish rapidly, probably due to poaching. Lion are quite common.

The area is laced with perennial rivers and streams and elephant are numerous throughout the sanctuary. It is a stirring sight to see these great animals strolling quietly and unconcernedly across the open short-grass country, as they must have done in the days before they were harried for their ivory.

#### *White Rhinoceros Sanctuaries.*

The Mt. Kei and Mt. Otze Crown Forests, in West Nile and West Madi, are white rhinoceros sanctuaries, but the white rhino is now widespread in these districts.

### ELEPHANTS

#### *Elephant Hunting by Licence Holders.*

The tusks of elephants shot by licence holders and exported represent 536 animals, an increase of nearly 40 per cent over last year. A few large tuskers have been shot, but these have been

mainly visitors from the Congo or the Sudan who have overstayed their welcome, or unfortunates who, after years of safety in a reserve or sanctuary, have stepped across the boundary line in a moment of mental aberration; a mistake that nowadays, with hunters swarming round the edges of game reserves like flies round a honey-pot, an elephant seldom has the chance to make twice. It is interesting to note that of the elephants shot nearly 70 per cent had tusks of under 40 pounds apiece, and 40 per cent were under 30 pounds apiece. It is evident from this and the practical experience of hunters, that the present elephant population will not stand the shooting of the larger tuskers at the present rate, and it is likely that action will have to be taken in the near future to restrict the number permitted to be killed.

The large profit to be made from the sale of ivory shot on cheap elephant licences is the main attraction for the majority of present-day persons who take out game and elephant licences. The term "sportsman" can seldom be applied to licence holders nowadays.

Many of these licence holders are so inexperienced or so frightened of elephants that they wound several before they kill one.

#### *Elephant Control.*

The estimated total elephant wastage for 1950 is approximately 1,500, which is 100 more than last year's figures, due to the greater number of elephant licences taken out. This figure allows for deaths from natural causes and from poaching.

The amount of damage caused by elephants has been comparatively small, but the same cannot be said for the number of complaints, the vast majority of which are instigated either by a desire for meat or by a grudge against the Game Department! In one small area twenty-one cases of alleged damage to crops by elephant were investigated personally by an honorary game ranger. In no single case was the damage serious and in most cases it was barely visible. Complaints were received from another area that large numbers of elephants were destroying the crops and that nothing was being done about it. This matter was also investigated personally by a game ranger, who found that no elephant had been near the area for six months!

It is often argued that there should be no increase in the cost of elephant licences while the Game Department shoots large numbers of these animals on control. Nowadays this argument does not bear analysis. The number of elephants shot yearly on

control is more or less steadily dropping. During 1950 it was 781, and of these 88 per cent had tusks under 30 lb. apiece, 78 per cent under 20 lb. apiece, and 33 per cent were females. It will be seen, therefore, that control hardly affects the elephants with ivory that is of use to licence holders. In addition, game guards have instructions to spare the larger tuskers whenever possible.

### *Elephant Oddities.*

For some time reports have been current of a "performing elephant" in the game reserve below Kichwamba. The information has been received with some doubt but was later confirmed by the acting game warden, on a visit to the area. Early one morning he was watching a solitary bull elephant, with tusks of about 25 lb. apiece, quietly feeding under a large spreading thorn tree. He was on top of the escarpment and the elephant, being only 200 yards below him in short grass, could be clearly seen. Watching through binoculars he suddenly saw the animal rock back on its haunches and heave itself into the position of a dog when begging. It then stood up on its hind legs and stretched its trunk vertically upwards like a piece of vast rubber hose, until it could seize a particularly succulent branch at the top of the tree. This feat was performed three times during the next quarter of an hour. Such a sight, it is believed, is seldom seen in the wild, and this animal evidently considers itself superior to its less talented brethren as it is always reported to be on its own. Possibly it has ambitions, and parades itself below the Kichwamba Hotel, in the hope of attracting the attention of the many film-making units that pass that way.

A well-known local resident has for some time been trying to find the reason for the unusually large proportion of elephants in the Lakes Edward and George area that have part of their tails missing. He has now presented the following ingenious solution. While watching some elephant wading across to one of the islands in Lake Edward he saw a three-quarter grown hippo come to the surface behind one of the animals and take a playful nip at the end of its tail. The elephant shot forward as though stung and the hippo submerged like a naughty schoolboy in a swimming-bath.

## BREACHES OF THE GAME LAWS

### *Selling of Game Meat.*

The Toro District has again been one of the worst areas in regard to the selling of game meat, and the attitude of some of

the native authorities has again been deplorable. The owner of an illegal .303 in the North-East Toro had become so bold that he was selling game meat on the main Mubende to Fort Portal road, and he had been doing so well that he employed his own hunter. A game guard who tried to arrest the hunter was fired at and the Game Ranger decided that drastic action was required. After a cross-country night march the poacher's village was surrounded by a strong force of game guards and scouts and the man himself caught with a large quantity of buffalo and eland meat. A number of people who had come to buy the meat were found in the village, and also the local chief, who pleaded that he was unable to stop the poaching as the Gombolola chief would not take any action. An ambush was laid for the hunter, who was caught red-handed with the illegal .303 rifle. A great deal of help was given by an old man who claimed that as the poacher had already murdered his son, he himself was quite ready to die, and so was not afraid to give information.

The Game Ranger reports that in the same area buffalo are frequently killed by driving them into a row of spears that have previously been fixed in the ground at an angle of 45 degrees.

### *Leopard Skins.*

The lure of leopard skins is such that people of all races and all sections of the community appear to find it convenient to ignore the law in regard to the killing of leopards and the disposal of their skins. This is particularly despicable in the case of those who take advantage of their position to obtain skins; by their selfishness they encourage the illegal killing of these magnificent animals, which are the main enemy of those pests the baboon and the bush-pig.

### *Traps, Snares, and Game-pits.*

The use of these, particularly wheel traps and wire snares, is still widespread. Poaching with wheel traps was found to be on a large scale on the Teso-Karamoja border, but energetic action by the Sub-County Chief Achwa helped to reduce this cruel practice.

Shops all over the country stock wire cable of varying thickness, suitable for making snares strong enough to catch anything from buffalo or even elephant, downwards. This they sell to poachers, for there is very seldom any other possible local use. Gin traps are also sold, ostensibly for defence of cultivation. These are evils with which it is difficult to deal.

On the shores of Lake Albert wire from old motor tyres is

made into game snares. On one occasion during a foot patrol, the Game Ranger, Hoima, came upon a man, a leper terribly mutilated by the disease and totally blind, who was sitting happily outside his house making snares from the wire recovered from some old lorry tyres. A search of his and two adjoining huts produced twelve wire snares, two gin traps, and some game meat. He was prosecuted in the local African court, as it transpired that he and an assistant had worked up quite a considerable trade in wire snares and game meat.

On another patrol four poachers' huts in Buhuka were searched and 10 wire snares, 1 foot trap, and 4 hippo spears, complete with ropes and floats, were found. In addition, the skins of 10 adult kob, 22 juvenile kob, 1 hartebeest, 2 bushbuck, 2 duiker, and the tails of 14 hippo were discovered. Apart from trapping with wire snares in this area the poachers chase the herds of kob with dogs shortly after the young have been born and kill the latter when they become exhausted.

From the above few examples the menace of this type of poaching can be appreciated. So much could be done by the native authorities to eradicate it if only they were so inclined.

#### *Reduction in Poaching.*

There is no doubt that there has been a reduction in poaching in a number of areas as a result of the efforts of the Game Department staff, but the latter are nowhere in sufficient numbers to deal with the situation thoroughly.

#### *Legislation.*

*Legal Notice No. 45* amends the schedules of the Game Ordinance, drastically reducing the numbers of all species of animals permitted to be hunted, killed, or captured by holders of both full and fourteen-day game licences. It addition it affords complete protection to cheetah, giraffe, klipspringer and mountain reedbuck. It also extends to further waters of the Protectorate the complete protection of the hippopotamus. These reforms were long overdue.

### NOTES ON THE FAUNA

#### *Mammals.*

*Gorilla.*—There have been no definite reports regarding these animals this year, but there are indications that they are slowly increasing.

*Chimpanzee.*—This ape continues to be reasonably plentiful in various parts of western Uganda.

*Colobus*.—These attractive monkeys, although not infrequently poached for their skins, manage to hold their own well and are present in most patches of forest in western Uganda.

*Golden Cat*.—These cats, which are extremely fierce, are seldom seen, as they are almost entirely nocturnal. They vary tremendously in colour, and specimens have been obtained varying from bright red to dusky grey.

*African Wild Cat*.—This animal is widely distributed though rarely seen. It is also known as the "Kaffir Cat" and is the ancestor of the domestic tabby cat.<sup>1</sup>

*Striped Hyena*.—It is reported by the Agricultural Officer, Karamoja, that the striped hyena is very much more common in that district than had previously been thought. It is somewhat smaller than the spotted hyena and its call is very much more shrill. It is almost unknown in the rest of Uganda.

The Karamojong claim that the striped hyena acts as pilot to the spotted variety, its duty being to hunt out the larger beasts which it cannot tackle by itself, and then to call up its bigger brethren. It is expected to do the same if it finds a supply of carrion!

*Buffalo*.—As usual, measures have had to be taken to try to keep the numbers of this hardy and prolific animal in check, for it seems able to thrive and multiply under the most adverse conditions.

The normal crop of complaints about the evil doing of buffalo have been received by game rangers throughout the Protectorate, but these seldom bear close investigation. They are normally instigated by a desire for meat, for the thought of a juicy buffalo steak, if these animals are known to be in the vicinity, induces the local people to send in complaints of damage.

The Game Ranger, Hoima, reports the following as a typical example of the complaints received: "It was reported from the Kabale cotton-growing area of Bunyoro that buffalo were doing serious damage to the cotton shambas. A game guard was immediately sent there. He found that since the cotton had been planted the owners had not taken the trouble to hoe the plots, which were so overgrown with grass that he could barely find the cotton plants. It is a mystery how the local people expect the buffalo to differentiate between the virgin bush and the overgrown cotton plots."

*Lord Derby's (or Giant) Eland*.—This, the largest of all the antelopes, is a visitor to West Nile District from the Sudan, but

<sup>1</sup> For origins of the domestic cat see *Oryx*, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 65-71.—Ed.



it would appear from recent reports that there is a possibility that some may establish themselves permanently in the Protectorate. These animals are fully protected.

*Uganda Kob.*—These beautiful antelope, which are Uganda's speciality, have been sadly reduced in numbers as they are very easy to poach. Tribal hunts and tsetse control game eviction operations have also taken their toll. It is gratifying that they are still present in reasonable numbers in parts of Bunyoro, Lango and the Semliki valley. In other areas, if they occur at all, their numbers are small.

*Giant Forest Hog.*—This fine hog, which has often in long grass been mistaken for a young buffalo, is plentiful in parts of western Uganda. In February two game rangers, on *safari* together near the Hindagi River, in Toro, came across a forest hog that had evidently been wounded by a spear a few days before. It could not walk properly as its hindquarters were semi-paralysed; four of its companions were clustered around it making a tremendous noise and trying to help it out of a mud hole. The four made off when the rangers appeared. The latter shot the wounded animal to end its suffering, whereupon one of its companions returned and stood about ten yards away, plucking up courage to take offensive action. Shouting at it only made it nod its head, so one of the rangers threw his hat at the beast, which unnerved it and it ran off. Anyone who has had the misfortune to see the hat in question would not be surprised at the effect it had on the hog!

*Hippopotamus.*—The hippopotamus thrives in nearly all the waterways of Uganda and by its presence renders valuable aid to the economic fisheries, for its excreta promotes the growth of phyto-plankton on which *tilapia* feed. Two research officers who dredged the Victoria Nile below the Murchison Falls to look for molluscs found that the bottom was not mud, sand, or stone but solid hippo-dung! Needless to say, there are vast numbers of hippo in the area.

A game ranger reports that the Juma River, in Lango, is a favourite place for lone hippo. One was seen in a mud hole only just large enough to accommodate it, and the ranger got within ten yards before being seen. The animal regarded him apprehensively for a bit and then slowly started getting up. When it was half-way out, the mud gave a very loud sucking noise which frightened the hippo so much that it bolted. Two others were found using their tails to flick water on to their backs and the ranger comments that it was interesting to watch how the tail came up with just the right speed, so that it picked up the

maximum amount of water and threw it forward over the back, shoulders, and neck.

*White Rhinoceros.*—Latest reports indicate that the white rhinoceros in West Nile and West Madi are even more numerous than was recently thought. They are very strictly protected and therefore seldom molested, but two were found dead this year and a pair of horns from a third was brought in. It is believed that an illegal trade in rhino horn was starting in a small way in the district, but the severe punishments meted out to eight Africans involved in the killing appear to have had a salutary effect and to have nipped the trade in the bud.

#### BIRDS

##### *Passage Migrants and Winter Visitors*

Among those reported from Entebbe were: Siberian ringed plover, little ringed plover, Kentish plover, turnstone, curlew sandpiper, sanderling, ruff, little stint, Temminck's stint, Terek sandpiper, common sandpiper, marsh sandpiper, wood sandpiper, greenshank, bar-tailed godwit, common curlew, whimbrel, corncrake, European nightjar, spotted flycatcher, white wagtail, wheatear, whinchat and willow warbler.

##### *Bird Ringing.*

Extensive ringing was carried out at Entebbe by Dr. W. J. Eggeling, Conservator of Forests (now transferred to Tanganyika). Five hundred and fifty-two individual birds of thirty species were ringed, among them Siberian ringed plover, 38; Kittlitz's sand plover, 66; little stint, 73; common sandpiper, 167; water dikkop, 41; African pied wagtail, 102.

#### GENERAL

##### *Tsetse Control and Game.*

Game eviction operations in the interests of tsetse control have continued to a greater or lesser degree in various tsetse-fly-ridden areas in the Protectorate. It is understood from the Director of Tsetse Control, however, that these operations have nearly been completed in Acholi and that in present circumstances it is not foreseen that the need for game eviction in further areas of Uganda will arise.

##### *Brutal Murder of a Game Guard*

On 20th July, 1950, Game Guard Erinayo Muno was hunting buffalo in the Siba Forest near the Waki River, in Bunyoro. He had five porters with him. About four miles from the road they

came on a small hut in the forest around which the vegetation had been cleared and cotton planted. As they passed the hut a man ran out carrying a locally made shot-gun and shouted at the porters to go away. The game guard, who was new to the district and didn't know the hut-owner, asked him why he was shouting at his porters, whereupon the man turned round and shot him stone dead.

The porters, who recognized the man as a notorious poacher for whom the Game Department has long been searching, immediately fled. The poacher fired two more shots to frighten them and then dragged the game guard's body into the hut and set fire to it. By the time the police had arrived the man had disappeared, taking his shot-gun and game guard's .404 rifle with him.

This poacher, who has been hunting elephant and buffalo for a very long time with an illegal .303 rifle, was found by another game guard in the Budongo Forest earlier in the year with an elephant that he had just shot. After a fight the game guard and his porter secured the rifle, but the poacher escaped. All efforts to trace him failed, but two months later he was again hunting in this area and issued an ultimatum that he would shoot any Government servant who came near him. He has now carried out his threat in one case.

Immediately after the murder all game guards and game scouts in Bunyoro District were called off other duties for a month to assist the police in hunting the murderer, but without success.

All efforts to apprehend this man have so far failed, due to the fact that he is being helped, fed and hidden by the local people. It must be recorded to the undying shame of the people of Bunyoro concerned that they are willing to protect a cold-blooded and brutal murderer as long as he will provide them with free or cheap meat from the animals he poaches. The Gombolola chief, Kigoroby, who shielded the poacher for some time after his first offence, was arrested and convicted for aiding him.

One result of this successful murder has been the issuing of similar threats by a number of armed poachers that they will kill any Government servant who interferes with them. The Game Department do not intend to rest until the murderer has been hunted down.