

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

IMW-5
Tanganyika National Parks

P.O. Box 5113
Nairobi, Kenya
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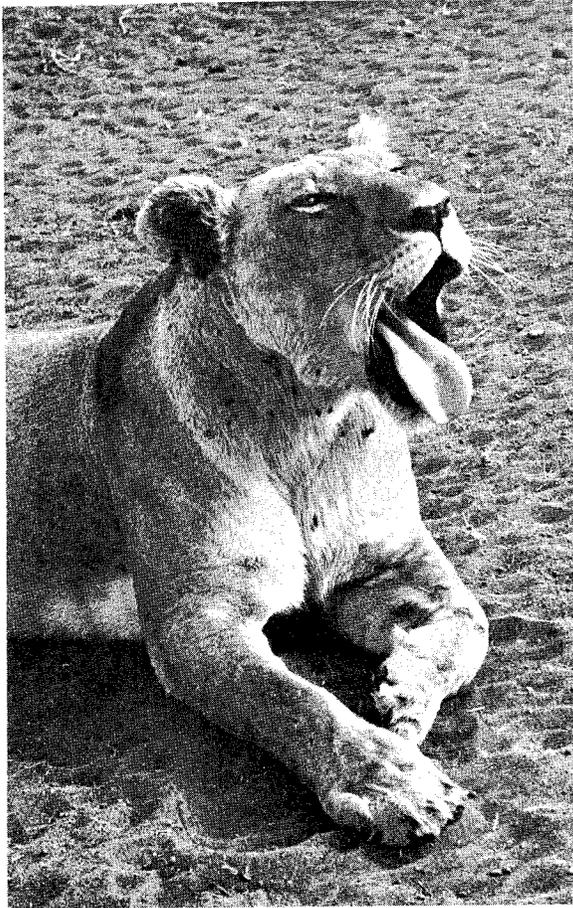
Mr. Richard H. Nolte
Institute of Current World Affairs
366 Madison Avenue
New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Since I was here last year, interest in the preservation of East African wildlife has increased noticeably. In the past the crusade to protect game from extinction has been the domain of nature lovers and conservationists, and generally their appeal has tended to be somewhat sentimental. Recently, however, the cause of game has gained new adherents, and sentimentality is being replaced by a realistic, businesslike approach. The new African nations need foreign exchange, and more government leaders are taking the position that whatever their own feelings about game, it is a valuable economic asset and should be protected carefully. This is not to say the future is certain and the battle won, but I think a break-through has been made in convincing Africans to treasure their valuable heritage. It will be a long time before many Africans understand the scientific and moral values of wildlife preservation, but dollars and cents have their own value.

Unfortunately poachers, the main menace to wildlife, have not understood this logic, and one can hardly blame them. In this they are supported by the vast bulk of African opinion. Africans have always lived near wildlife, and game usually was an important part of their diet. Most tribal Africans regard wild animals either as pests to be destroyed or meat on the hoof to be killed and eaten. In Swahili, as well as several other African languages, the same word (nyama) means both wild animals and meat. Many of the reserves used to be traditional hunting grounds, and by protecting game, the white man has converted a normal activity into one which is prohibited. Africans have not unreasonably assumed that national parks are run exclusively for the benefit of the white man. Thus even the racial issue has affected the cause of conservation, and this is another reason why it has so few African adherents. Nevertheless, the law is taking an increasingly serious view of poaching and similar offences. A Kenya magistrate recently said, in sentencing a poacher: "The court will not show any more tolerance to people who illegally hunt wild animals." He then imposed six months imprisonment for a crime which a year ago would have probably carried only a fine.

As an indication of renewed interest in game conservation, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)



(bat-eared foxes)

THIS

(lion)

or

THIS

(Waliangulu poachers---courtesy K.I.S.)



with several other organizations is sponsoring a conference on this subject in Arusha. I will report on this later, but here I'll describe a trip I made recently around northern Tanganyika visiting national parks and talking with those responsible for their administration.

There are three national parks in Tanganyika: Ngurdoto Crater (designated in June 1960 but officially opened only on September 8), Lake Manyara, and by far the largest and most important, Serengeti. Four additional areas are under consideration for national park status, and two areas will become parks as soon as the money necessary for development (i.e. roads, safari lodges) is appropriated: the Northern Selous and the Southern Rungwa. The Chagga have asked that the highlands of Kilimanjaro be included in a national park, but lack of funds make this impossible at the present time. I visited all three national parks and Ngorongoro Crater, the greatest game concentration in Tanganyika and the world. Ironically after being a part of Serengeti, it is now only a Masai game reserve where cattle, warthogs and rhino graze together.

The objectives of the Tanganyika National Parks (TNP) administration are twofold: 1) the conservation of wildlife and the maintenance of the natural balance, and 2) human enjoyment. Within park boundaries, the interests of animals are paramount, and only park officers can interfere. Today the Tanganyika parks (and generally this can be applied to Kenya) face three major problems: poaching, insufficient water and mismanagement of land, and inadequate boundaries.

A poacher is one who hunts illegally, and generally he has two objectives: the acquisition of trophies for sale (i.e., rhino horn, ivory), and meat for consumption and sale. The scale of poaching in and around Serengeti (there is little at Lake Manyara and Ngurdoto) is almost unbelievable. Myles Turner, Serengeti's Deputy Chief Park Warden, has just returned from a two day sweep northwest of the park's boundaries on the migratory routes of Serengeti's massive game herds. Turner says: "In my five years of anti-poaching experience and many previous years as a professional hunter, I have never seen anything like it. Every able-bodied man, woman and child from the surrounding settlements is at present engaged in a campaign of slaughter and extermination." He arrested 25 poachers while at least 50 escaped, and he didn't even bother with the large number of women and children cutting up meat. Turner discovered 17 large poachers camps, 13 of which were active, containing a conservative estimate of 15 tons of dried meat. Land Rover tracks led right to the camps, and he even managed to capture a motorized gang of poachers. In one camp similar to others, he found hundreds of pounds of dried and unidentifiable meat, two buffalo, two eland, three zebra, one kongoni and two wildebeeste in the process of being cut up. Trucks carried the meat from the camps to buyers. The camps were permanent and averaged six or seven grass huts. Turner says the situation is completely out of control, and unless something is done on a large scale

immediately, the herds will be doomed within a decade or less. "It is a sad and appalling state of affairs that the Serengeti staff at Seronera know this is going on and under the present conditions are completely unable to cope with it."

Nevertheless, in the opinion of some, poachers perform a limited service. Everyone abhors their cruelty and indiscriminate killing and as a breakdown of law and order poaching must be brought to a complete halt. But there is evidence of massive overgrazing on the Serengeti Plains, and in their own way poachers help to keep the number of animals down so that the situation does not become completely out of control.

The second major problem is water. For the past eighteen months most of East Africa has been experiencing a severe drought due to the failure of three consecutive rains. Fantastic numbers of animals have died as a result, but bad land management has also caused large areas to dry up prematurely. Much land has been denuded of its protective cover of vegetation, and this has destroyed watersheds upon which parks depend. Some of this has been caused by poachers burning large areas to herd game into traps or gather honey, some has resulted from overgrazing, and some has come about from nearby herders moving their cattle into the parks to avail themselves of water and grass. The Masai are especially truant in this respect, and this is dangerous because the greatest concentration of plains game (Ngorongoro and Serengeti) lie within their traditional tribal area. Also nearby communities decrease water supplies by using too much water or destroying drainage patterns while clearing land for their shambas. This is an important problem at Lake Manyara National Park where Mr. Morgan-Davies, the Park Warden, told me a growing village straddling the main water supply (Lake Manyara itself is a soda lake and not potable) is slowly cutting it off. The only adequate way of ensuring the water supply is by removing the village, even though it is outside the park.

Finally the park boundaries often leave something to be desired. Ideally each park should represent an ecological whole so animals can live their entire lives within the protection of the park. Animals have a way of knowing where they are protected, but when migrations are involved, there is no way of stopping animals leaving the park except by erecting barriers, and this is not always effective (i.e., elephants, bat-eared foxes). This has been done in part of Lake Manyara National Park, but unfortunately a large portion of the lake has temporarily dried up, and one can drive around the end of the fence in a Land Rover. At Serengeti there are huge migrations and for a good part of each year much game is outside its borders. It is at this time that most poaching takes place. Ideally one would hope the boundaries could be changed to include the larger area, but the TNP has just finished a long wrangle over the present boundaries of the park, and they consider it unwise to reopen the issue at the present moment. Many game experts feel the parks are so small that the antics of humans divert the animals from their natural way of life and result in a

lower breeding potential. They call for large reserves closed to the public where animals can get away by themselves.

Many animals also have a predilection for bananas and other crops grown by man. When villages are near parks, as is the one at Lake Manyara, some of the larger animals make nightly forays into nearby shambas, uprooting trees and being a nuisance. Under such circumstances park officials are forced to kill troublesome animals in spite of their rarity. It appears animals have their opportunities, however. Mr. Morgan-Davies tells the following story in the recent TNP Annual Report.

After a family dispute an elderly woman left for the bush intent on suicide. Three days later she came upon a lion and its kill. Fortified by historical precedent, she offered herself as a sacrifice. The beast, however, flicked her aside and continued its meal. I am happy to say that the old lady, having been so summarily rejected, then decided to face life anew.

* * * * *

There is definitely hope for the future, however. John Owen, Director of Tanganyika National Parks, is optimistic. Owen, the son of a dedicated missionary in East Africa, Archdeacon Owen, (known as archdemon to those whose customs he opposed) has spent most of his life in the area. He was in the Sudan Civil Service for twenty years, assistant to the managing director of Cortaulds in London for five years, and in February 1960 he became Director of TNP. Although he has had little previous experience in the field of conservation, his colleagues have great respect for him and think he is doing an admirable job. Owen considers the immediate task to be:

Lake Manyara game barrier

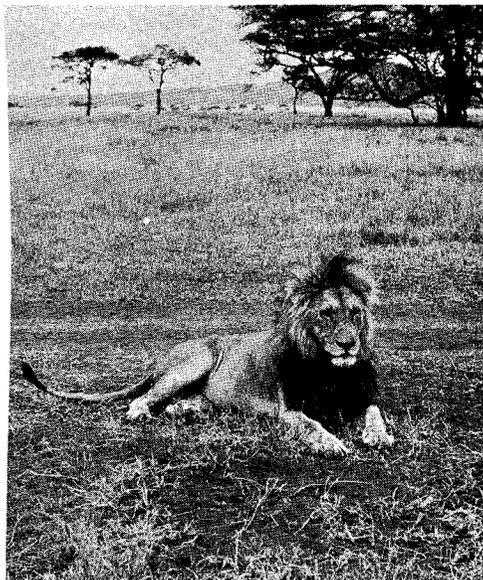


- 1) to awaken African public opinion to the economic and cultural value of their unique heritage of wildlife;
- 2) to train African staff for the administration of the parks;
- 3) to set aside sufficient areas as National Parks to preserve all the existing species of animals in adequate numbers for posterity;
- 4) to build up and exploit the tourist potential of the National Parks

so that their economic value becomes obvious to the people of Tanganyika;

- 5) to acquire by research the knowledge necessary to conserve in the best possible way the wildlife and its habitat;
- 6) to build up the stock of animals by putting in water supplies, fire breaks, etc., and by providing adequate measures to control poaching.

He feels the next ten years will be crucial, because by then Africans will realize the value of game. Until that time the administration of parks can only be a holding operation. Already the value of game is realized by many at higher levels.



If wildlife is completely protected, the evidence suggests it will multiply out of hand. Here, people love to point out the problems Americans have had with overpopulation of deer through excessive protection. Most would agree with the view expressed by Sir Julian Huxley:

It is clear that as the African territories are developed, their wildlife habitats will cease to be strictly 'natural'. To put the matter in another way, if any habitat is to be conserved it must be managed. It is further clear that habitat management must be scientific.

Game cropping, or wildlife management as it is called, has become yet another argument for the conservation of game. It is generally agreed that in many parts of East Africa game makes more effective use of rangeland in the production of protein than do domestic cattle. Widespread poaching (for meat as well as trophies) would indicate that Africans have some taste for wild animal meat, especially when it is cheap. Many see indications that there is a potential market for game meat. If those presently engaged in poaching could be switched to the more lawful profession of game cropping, both men and animals would benefit. This is being tried in Kenya now, but for several reasons its success is not yet assured.

Game cropping, to be successful, depends upon precise scientific data of a nature hard to come across in Tanganyika. Before any scheme can be implemented, there will have to be considerably more research, but John Owen estimates that from the area of Serengeti alone 20-40,000 head of plains game (i.e.,

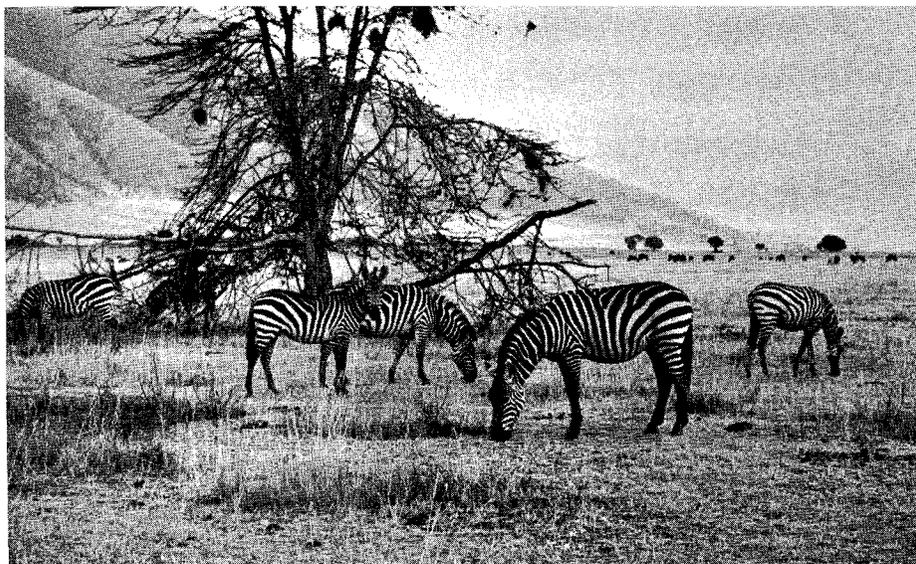
zebra, wildebeeste, gazelle) could be cropped each year without unduly straining their reproductive capacities. Besides putting much needed proteins in the bellies of Africans, this could produce a revenue of £150-200,000 per annum.

Game cropping may be logical economically, but if Africans don't like the idea for any one of a number of reasons, it will be a difficult project to implement. At the same time not only the leaders but the people in a democratic country (which Tanganyika hopes to be) must be convinced of the value of game or it will disappear soon after uhuru (freedom).

Thus the TNP has embarked on a massive campaign aimed at educating the public. Besides movies and posters in Swahili ("Our National Parks are the envy of the world--- be proud of them"), prizes are given in schools for themes on conservation, and TNP is sponsoring numerous trips by school children and chiefs to the various national parks. John Owen says, "It is easy to be cynical about the effectiveness of propaganda, but it is also easy to underestimate the power of the right approach in this country".

Owen also hopes to build up a thriving tourist industry both from within and without the country, for he feels the tourist potential has barely been scratched. He is confident that once the Africans see the benefits brought by game cropping and tourists, they will become convinced conservationists and will no longer insist on grazing their cattle in national park land. Some people object to increased tourism on the grounds that tourists invariably leave a mess. Owen responds that animals are more than happy to eat banana peels and paper, and they are content to pay this price for survival.

The outlook is brighter than last year, and Owen is



only one of a growing number who feel there is hope. In his own words:

"In recent years there has been a considerable amount of pessimism voiced in the press and elsewhere as to the chances of saving the game of East Africa from rapid extinction. As far as this country is concerned this pessimism is misplaced, provided that what can be done is done. This is not to say that the task will be an easy one, but in a world that is bedevilled with so many problems that appear to be insoluble we count ourselves lucky in having to deal with one which is undoubtedly difficult but to which we know a solution can be found."

Very sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ian Michael Wright". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ian Michael Wright

Received New York September 25, 1961