Antelope Specialist Group

I.U.C.N. S.S.C.

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AFRICA

Sierra Leone

Chris Hillman has tracked down the rumors of giant eland (January, 1983 Gnusletter) and finds them insubstantial. From John Phillipson, whose 1978 report mentions the possibility of eland in the Loma Mountains, Chris learned that one animal trapper, Dr. F. Sitter, said giant eland occurred in three small areas. Phillipson was only able to visit one of them (near Kruto), and found no evidence of giant eland. Sitter was the only source.

"I feel from the above, " writes Chris (7 Aug. 1983), "that the giant eland in Sierra Leone should be treated as a faint possibility."

Republics of Benin and Upper Volta

Prof. J. Dragesco has sent the results of a 1979 FAO aerial and ground survey of the antelopes in "Pendjari" (River) National Park of Benin and Upper Volta. The total count of 25,883 antelopes included roan (2323), hartebeest (4030), waterbuck (1907), Buffon's kob (9555), topi (194), oribi (4552), bohor reedbuck (1819), common duiker (1533). Bushbuck, sitatunga, and red-flanked duiker, also present, were uncounted. The density of kob was 3.56/km^2, that of topi 0.07. All species were considered to have a good status except for topi, which are decreasing in and outside the park. Only 13 topi were counted in the buffer zone outside the park, where in 1979 an estimated 39% of the population was shot.

Niger

John Newby and John Grettenberger have filed Antelope Inventory Reports for Niger. They make very depressing reading. Grettenberger (B. P. 10537, Niamey), reports on common duiker, red-flanked duiker, kob, Bohor reedbuck, waterbuck, oribi, roan, topi, bubal hartebeest, and bushbuck. All of these antelopes are threatened or endangered except inside Park W. The red-flanked duiker is threatened, the hartebeest is declining, the topi is endangered, and the waterbuck is declining inside the park, too. Under Conservation Measures Proposed,

Grettenberger writes, "Highest priority should be given to increased law enforcement in Park W to control heavy poaching and illegal grazing. This includes increasing the number of guards, equipment and infrastructure as well as obtaining cooperation between Niger, Benin, and Upper Volta."

Reporting on scimitar oryx, Newby estimates "probably less than 200 and certainly less than 400 head." Under additional remarks, he predicts, "The oryx will most probably become extinct within Niger in the next 3-5 years." Writing of the addax, "Probably less than 1000 and numbers decreasing as a result of hunting (desert patrols, mining exploration, tourism/desert travel). There is still no specific addax protected area in Niger but, "The soon-to-be-established Air and Ténéré National Nature Reserve will afford protection to up to 250 addax in the Western Ténéré. Another reserve is needed in the Termit area."

Sudan

Chris Hillman has written a 143-page Wildlife Information Booklet for the Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism, Southern Region, published by the New York Zoological Society in 1982, in which the habitat, conservation status, legal protection status, conservation areas of occurrence, a distribution map, and wildlife laws including hunting status, is given for each of the 26 antelopes that occur in Southern Sudan. In addition, he has found the time to write out the results of five aerial surveys that have been conducted in the Sudan between 1977 and 1982, including his and John Fryxell's 1980 survey of Boma N. P. The surveys estimate total populations and densities. A 1983 report by Mefit-Babtie estimates 360,000 tiang (Damaliscus lunatus) in Jonglei Province in the late dry season. The survey of the whole country completed in 1977 (by M. Watson & Co.) estimated the total number of tiang at 712,000 and of white-eared kob at 1,256,000, virtually all in the eastern and southern provinces. Hillman and Fryxell estimated that 849,000 white-eared kob occurred in Boma N. P. alone.

Ethiopia

Chris Hillman began his study of mountain nyala in late August. His address is c/o Wildlife Conservation Organization, P. O. Box 386, Addis Ababa.

Somalia

In response to a letter inquiring about the possibilities of doing field studies of dibatag, beira, and Hunter's antelope, Alberto Simonetta writes (27 June 1983):

"Briefly the situation (November, 1982) is as follows.

"Hunter's hartebeest: I found a few close to Belesgogani and information as to their status was contradictory. However at the time of my visit there was a very severe drought and most animals were said to have moved away.

"Dibatags are still in good numbers between Adale and Hobyo up to about 100 km inland from the coast and in some areas they coexist with gerenuks.

"The beira is scattered in small pockets over a large area in the North and I have a list of localities where it certainly occurs; none of them is easily reached, though some are not far (5-10 miles) from motorable roads and in a couple of places they may actually be met occasionally on the track itself. The beira

is nowhere really common.

"Anyway I think that you must allow for an average of a fortnight to get in a proper study area and coming back for each of these species, so that for a study of the three of them you shall need quite some time."

East Africa

Fritz Walther has submitted detailed Inventory Reports for Grant's and Thomson's gazelles of East Africa.

Zambia

Geoffrey Howard and Richard Jeffery carried out their third census of the Kafue lechwe last June. In a report to the Director, National Parks and Wildlife Services, entitled Kafue lechwe population status, 1981-1983, they find that the population has not fallen in the 18 months since their first count, and estimate the total at 41,000+/- 9-12000. This is less than half the population estimate of Richard Bell & co. in 1970-1972, but about the same as estimated by John Hanks in 1969. "Whether the Kafue lechwe numbers will rise, fall or remain stable cannot as yet be predicted but can adequately be monitored by regular censuses to assist with the continuing conservation efforts for this unique antelope."

Mozambique

J. Lobao Tello, an ASG member, is preparing a report on the antelopes of Mozambique, in Portuguese.

Botswana

The issue of the veterinary fences that have played havoc with Kalahari migratory game, reported in the last Gnusletter, has received a lot of attention lately. Bob Scott (in lit., 8 Aug. 1983), tells me it was on the agenda at the SSC meeting in Harare last April, where Doug Williamson was present. The subject was raised during a visit to the European Economic Community by WWF (U.K.) representative, Janet Barber, and in response to questions raised by Stanley Johnson, a member of the European Parliament, the EEC plans to review the cattle and wildlife situation in Botswana. Prince Bernhard sent a congratulatory telegram (3 August) offering WWF/IUCN assistance in establishing a review mission and suggesting terms of reference.

Maybe something will come of all this.

ASIA

India

A 25-year-old man committed self-immolation to protest the killing of nilgai last May. Har Narain Bajpal, general secretary of the Yuva Janata, prepared his funeral pyre outside his village of Jaura where two nilgai had been shot. (This species can be hunted on licence.). He had begun a fast and notified the sub-division magistrate and the police superintendent that he would commit self-immolation at noon on May 11th if no action had been taken to arrest the hunters within 15 days. According to an article in the Indian Express of 15 May, "The only action taken was to post a police posse in Jaura village on May 11 when Mr Bajpal was to commit suicide ... The station house officer of Mangalpur, ... five sub-inspectors and three constables were present when Mr. Bajpal lit his pyre."

The more direct and stringent anti-poaching measures taken by the Bishnois sound more effective. The following description is taken verbatim from I. K. Sharma's letter of 2 August, 1983.

"On hearing a bang of a gun or noticing poachers with jeep in their area, the first noticer loudly alarm of that, on that robust youths rush out of their huts with staffs and try to encircle the poacher or poachers, then tie him or them to a tree or trees with strong strings and severely beaten as stringent penalty. Later poachers are freed after realising heavy fine and seizing the arms of poachers. The hunted antelope if any, is buried in the ground.

"... Elsewhere poachers do not meet such forceful anti-poaching armed army of force (volunteers). Secondly if caught by officials of anti-poaching staff, at an official sanctuary, the legal procedure have several lacunae and the legal procedure is very lengthly to they considerably succeed to evade deterrent penalties which may desist to commit poaching in future and examplary to others."

G. M. Oza, Chairman of the ASG Asian Subgroup, has sent out Antelope Inventory Report forms to correspondents all over India and as of early July, had received some 14 replies. Two of the most complete reports concern the blackbuck, one from Elizabeth Carey Mungall, based on her field study of the blackbuck, and the other from N. L. N. S. Prasad, of Cochin, who has done a PhD thesis on this species. His conclusion:

"As per information collected and areas personally visited, the minimum population of blackbuck estimated in the country is about 10,000 only. This shows how alarming the situation is. Many of the local populations are very small and threatened with extinction, mostly because of the habitat destruction. In places where considerable numbers exist (e.g. Point Calimere Sanctuary in Tamilnadu, and Velavadar N. P. in Gujarat) the natural disasters decimate the populations. Poaching of course has its detrimental effects in areas where protection measures were meager."