Antelope Specialist Group

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

GNUSLETTER

May, 1986

Edited by R. D. Estes, Chairman 5 Granite St., Peterborough, NH 03458, USA

This Gnusletter is coming out a bit late, because I returned only in mid-May from six weeks in southern Africa. Including a report on South Africa and Namibia involved more time and effort than usual, and it was early June before it was ready to be typed (as usual, by my wife in her spare time).

PUBLICATION OF THE ANTELOPE SURVEY

Simon Stuart, SSC Species Programme Officer, has applied to WWF-International for funds to publish the results of our Antelope Survey, in four or five parts: I. East and Northeast Africa, II. Southern and South-central Africa, III. West and Central Africa, IV. North Africa and Asia. Alternatively, part IV might be separated, either into IV. North Africa and V. Asia, or IV. North Africa and the Near East, and V. the rest of Asia.

The following breakdown indicates the scope of the work and Rod East's "phenomenal progress" (Simon Stuart's words) since he began compiling, writing, and editing the survey reports last June (Table I).

Publishing the survey in parts will, hopefully, make it easier to obtain the necessary funding. Equally important, "Publication of the Antelope Survey will need to proceed fairly quickly," Rod East points out (in lit. 5 March 1986), "since, like all surveys, the information rapidly becomes out of date." Part I is nearly ready to go to press, and Rod expects to finish Part II well before the end of the year. When Part III is finished (by July, 1987) the survey of Africa south of the Sahara will be complete. Rod hopes to wind up North Africa and Asia before the end of 1987, but so far the flow of information, especially for Asia, has been fitful at best.

There are still a few holes in the coverage of sub-Saharan Africa, too, namely Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Angola. Would any ASG members or other readers who are able to provide information on the distribution, populations, and current or recent status of antelopes in any of these countries, please contact Rod at Ruakura Research Centre, Private Bag, Hamilton, New Zealand, as soon as possible?

Note (in Table I) that each part of the Antelope Survey will conclude with a Regional Action Plan. Until recently, it was intended to prepare an overall action plan after the survey was completed, but the decision to publish it serially mandated the inclusion of an action plan with each part. The participation of all ASG members is needed so that the recommendations accurately reflect the group's opinions as to which species, populations, and projects should have priority. Suggestions from non-members who are knowledgeable about the antelopes of a particular country will also be welcome.

Table 1

PREPARATION OF THE ASG ANTELOPE SURVEY FOR PUBLICATION

Country	Source of information established	Information complete, draft in prep	Draft Report completed	Approximate Length Words	Pages
I. East & Northeast Africa					
Sudan	*	*	*	9250	
Ethiopia	*	*	*	6400	
Somalia	*	*	*	3100	
Kenya	*	*	*	6000	
Uganda	*	*	*	4500	
Tanzania	*	*	*	7000	
Action plan				5000	
		Regional subtotal		41,250	92
II. Southern & South-central Africa					
Angola				1000	
Zambia	*	*		5000	
Malawi	*	*	*	8500	
Mozambique	*	*	*	4000	
Botswana	*			5000	
Zimbabwe	*	*		5000	
Namibia	*			5000	
South Africa	*	*		7500	
Swaziland	*			1000	
Lesotho	*			500	
Action plan				5000	
		Regional subtotal		47,500	105
III. West & Central Africa					
Senegal	*			4000	
Mauritania	*			1000	
Mali	*			3000	
Guinea				3000	
Sierra Leone				3000	
Liberia	*			3000	
Ivory Coast	*			4000	
Ghana				3000	
Togo				3000	
Benin	*	*		3000	
Burkina Faso	*	*		4000	
Niger	*	*	*	5800	
Nigeria	*			4000	
Chad	*			3000	
Cameroon	*			4000	
Central Afr. Rep.	*	*	*	2500	
Gabon	*			4000	
Zaire	*			5000	
Rwanda	*	*		4000	
Burundi	*			3000	
Congo Brazzaville	*			3000	
Action plan				5000	
		Regional subtotal		77,300	172
IV. North Africa & Asia				30,000	67
			Total	196,050	436

Correpsondence should go directly to Rod East, who will send copies to me.

CAPTIVE BREEDING

An Inventory of Captive-bred Antelopes

At the suggestion of U. S. Seal, Chairman of the Captive Breeding Specialist Group, the International Species Inventory System (ISIS) is undertaking to provide chairmen of the different SSC specialist groups with lists of captive populations of the species with which each group is concerned, and to do this annually. An inventory of antelope captive populations was received in March, which summarizes institutional holdings as of December, 1985, including births during 1985, fraction captive-bred, and mortality in the first month. Some 52 species of antelopes are included among the 65,000 mammal and bird specimens held in the 216 zoos and 14 countries covered by ISIS. The listing also identifies subspecies, and each taxonomic entry lists the index numbers of the microfiche sheet where more detailed information (e.g. on individual specimens) can be found. The Captive Breeding Group and ISIS are thereby providing a valuable service for the specialist groups, especially when reintroductions and outcrossing to mitigate the effects of inbreeding in small, isolated populations are considerations.

Rare Antelopes in South Africa's National Zoological Gardens

Though not included in the ISIS list, some of the most endangered antelopes have been bred with considerable success in the National Zoo at Pretoria, and at this zoo's two breeding stations of 6000 and 600 ha in Lichtenburg and Potgietersrus. Among 40 different species, the following are of greatest interest: seven Derby eland, 21 addax, and 53 scimitar oryx. Nature Conservation Scientist M. J. Penroth also mentions that two farms in the Kalahari have over 40 scimitar oryx between them. According to Zoo Director Willie Labuschagne, an attempt will be made to accelerate Derby eland propagation by transplanting embryos into common eland.

Arabian Oryx Studbook

The 1984 Arabian Oryx Studbook, published in January by the San Diego Zoo, included a total of 384 O. leucotis, of which 239 are held in 22 European and American zoos. The other 145 animals (sex unspecified), though in captivity, live within their natural range in Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait.

VETERINARIAN SPECIALIST GROUP

Michael Woodford (84 Maycross Ave., Morden, Surrey SM4 4DB, U. K.) writes (in lit 13 March 1986), "The Veterinary Specialist Group is still in the process of formation, but we are in a position to advise and assist when veterinary problems are perceived by other specialist groups."

Having completed the FAO Project's Terminal Report on Rinderpest in Wildlife in Sub-Sahelian Africa, Michael is no longer involved in the OAU Pan African Rinderpest Campaign.

DUIKERS AND OTHER "BUSHMEAT"

In a letter (29 April 1986) to Mrs. Val Fuller of the Chipangali Wildlife Trust, regarding Vivian Wilson's duiker study (see May, 1984 Gnusletter), Bertrand des Clers, Director of the International Foundation for the Conservation of Game (Paris), writes:

"Your survey of the duikers of Africa is of great interest to us, specifically because duikers constitute a great source of bushmeat in many African countries.

It turns out that bushmeat contributes for instance more than 100 million US Dollars per year to the economy of the Ivory Coast.

Our Foundation is interested, together with the FAO, in highlighting this economic value of wildlife.

In this way, African governments will include wildlife in their development and investment planning and, we hope, will insure the durable utilization of species and necessary conservation of their habitats.

The FAO will shortly officially launch a survey of wildlife utilization as a food resource in Africa which could form the basis for the scientific studies which concern you."

REGIONAL RUNDOWN

Burkina Faso

The following information comes from Clark Lundgren, Project Director of the Nazinga Game Ranch Project (in lit 21 April 1986):

"As you are aware from past communications, the Nazinga Project is a cooperative endeavor between the Government of Burkina Faso, and the African Wildlife Husbandry Development Association, a non-profit Canadian organization. The project was approved by the Burkinabe Government in 1979 as a five-year program investigating the feasibility of game ranching in West Africa. The first five years of the project were devoted to establishing an infrastructure for the game ranch, and research of the region's vegetation and wildlife.

"At present, the project is working under a 4-year extension, for which the terms are still being discussed with the Burkinabe Government. The research program's progressed a bit slower than anticipated initially, but is now very active, with 2 project wildlife biologists, 4 Peace Corps biologists, and the involvement of researchers from O.R.S.T.O.M., The University in Ouagadougou, and Wageningen University in Holland. A basic research plan developed by Dr. Clive SPINAGE (FAO), who served until 1984 as the project's Research Coordinator, is being followed with the primary aim of determining the region's carrying capacity for large herbivores. In addition to research, it is anticipated that the first trial harvesting will be conducted in 1986.

"At the end of 1985, the involvement of FAO with the parks system in Burkina Faso was ended. With that, the position of an FAO research coordinator to the Nazinga Project was also terminated. As a result, contingent on the final extension agreement with the Government, the Nazinga Project is interested in hiring a research Coordinator. The position would be a one-year appointment, with the potential of renewal for a further 1.5 years. Please find enclosed a job description.

"We'd greatly appreciate it if you have any suggestions or if you could circulate this information, and would be very interested in contacting any candidates you feel might be qualified and available."

Senegal

Reintroduction of Gazella dama from the Rescue Center for Saharan Wildlife in Almeria, Spain has begun. The original plan of putting the gazelles in the Langue de Barbarie N. P. (discussed in 1982 Gnusletters) has been changed and the operation will now take place in three phases. A. R. Dupuy, Chief Conservator of National Parks, reports (in lit 25 Feb 1986) that a Spanish military transport flew two males and six females from Madrid to Saint-Louis, where they were placed in an enclosure constructed for them in the nearby Special Faunal Reserve of Gueumbeul, created in 1983. Here they will remain 2-4 years, gradually adapting to the Senegal environment and increasing, under close supervision and study. The birth of two fawns is a promising start.

During the second phase, the offspring of this breeding herd will be released into the 720-hectare reserve, which is completely fenced, and protected by a conservator and four game guards. After another 2-4 years, gazelles will be released on the sandy plains of the Ferlo River. WWF-International and the Frankfurt Zoological Society are funding the project.

As part of the national plan to reconstruct the large-mammal fauna of Senegal, ostrich and later giraffe will be reintroduced in the same manner. Redfronted and dorcas gazelles have already been successfully translocated to the Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoud.

Morocco

Correction - The report that Gazella cuvieri from Almeria have been released in Morocco, published in the January 1986 Gnusletter, was incorrect. A letter from Juan Escos (3 March 1986) notes that the first gazelles, which have yet to be sent, will go to the Rabat Zoo, but only after the official studbook of this species, now in preparation, is finished.

Chris Loggers, the Peace Corps Volunteer who has been studying gazelle food habits in a reserve northwest of Marrakech (see September 1985 Gnusletter), has completed a distribution map for dorcas and Cuvier's gazelle, and Barbary sheep in Morocco. He writes (12 February 1986), "Distributions for all species is more widespread than expected but the situation is not good. The expanding human population continues pushing grazing further into the mountainous areas, destroying what little Cuvier's and Barbary sheep habitat remains.

"Only one pocket of indigenous dorcas gazelles remains on the Atlantic side of the Atlas mountains: those at Sidi Chiker's reserve. Past literatur does not allocate this population any subspecific status; some group it with G. d. massaesyla and others with G. d. neglecta. I would appreciate any comments from members of your group.

"On the other side of the Atlas mountains, pockets harboring small populations are scattered from north to south. Little information is available from below the Oued Draa (all of former Western Sahara) due to the war.

"Cuvier's numbers are very low, some areas containing only a few individuals. We have no idea of total numbers but guess less than 200 remain. Hunting and trapping with legholds, though illegal, still pose great threats. No improvement is expected in the situation in the near future. All the information was sent to IUCN and I will send you a copy when possible."

Ethiopia

After spending about six months at Cambridge writing up the results of his mountain nyala research, Chris Hillman writes (letter to Rod East of 17 February 1986) that he will be going back to Ethiopia in June for another two years. Congratulations, Chris.

South Africa and Namibia

A Research Fellowship from the University of Cape Town, originally awarded in 1984, supplemented by a grant from the Harvard Travelers Club, enabled me to spend six weeks in South Africa and Namibia in April and May. My research was to compare the incidence and impact on woody vegetation of horning by blue wildebeest (Connochaetes t. taurinus) and black wildebeest (C. gnou) bulls with that of the Serengeti wildebeest (C. t. mearnsi). I spent three weeks doing field work in Kruger N. P., Mkuzi Reserve, Willem Pretorius Reserve, and Etosha N. P. (report in preparation).

For not only granting permission, but also for providing transportation, accommodation, and the help of research staff, I am indebted to the National Parks Board, the Natal Parks, Game and Fish Preservation Board, the Orange Free State Division of Nature Conservation, and the SWA/Namibia Department of Agriculture and Nature Conservation. I am also personally grateful to Salomon Joubert, Eugene

Joubert, Michael Keep, and I. L. Rautenbach for helping me obtain the approval and cooperation of these organizations, and to Ross English, Peter Goodman, Savvas Vrahimis, and Trevor Nott for the long hours and expert advice they invested in my field work.

General Impressions

In addition to comparing the horning behavior and ecological impact of the different wildebeest species and subspecies, I was also mentally comparing management, research, and tourism in the wildlife parks of South Africa and Namibia with their counterparts in other African countries where I have worked.

In all these respects, the parks of South Africa and Namibia are more like those of the U. S. or Canada than like most African parks I know. The difference simply reflects the vast economic gulf that exists between the modern industrialized states and the struggling nations of the Third World. By African standards, the investment of money, time, and research that has gone into South Africa's and even Namibia's wildlife programs is tremendous. An inkling of the financial investment may be conveyed by the fact that a gameproof fence 1640 km long encloses the whole of Etosha N. P.'s 22,270 km^2 (Berry 1980).

Not for the first time, I marveled at the facilities, the time, wealth of background data, and logistical support enjoyed by researchers in South African parks. Studies that continue for five years or more are quite normal, and the sort of back-up that is available includes the use of helicopters and technical staff to round up and mark hundreds of animals at one go, an operation costing more than the entire research budgets of most East African projects.

Wildlife parks are very popular as vacation resorts in South Africa and Namibia. Accommodations, mainly in the form of housekeeping rondavels, are plentiful, luxurious yet inexpensive compared to East African game lodges.

On the downside, virtually all of the parks include only sections of much larger ecosystems, between which impenetrable barriers have been erected. Natural stocking rates and seasonal movements (e.g. wet-season dispersal/dry-season concentration) have been further disrupted by establishing artificial water points in areas that were formerly uninhabitable in the dry season. The combination of high stocking rates and inability to disperse mandates the intensive management and culling of species like elephant, buffalo, and impala that are routine in South African game reserves. The longing to experience a natural ecosystem like that of the Serengeti was voiced by nearly every wildlife person I met.

In the case of the wildebeest, fences have bisected their range not only in Etosha, but also in Kruger, Mkuzi, and Umfulozi/Hluhluwe, preventing their traditional seasonal migrations. Each population has suffered drastic reduction in numbers and lost the ecological dominance it once enjoyed in open habitats. Their decline was followed by changes in the habitat, in most if not all cases by an increase of trees and a decrease of open grassland (Whyte 1986, P. Goodman pers. comm., R. Emslie pers. comm., Berry 1980). On the basis of the evidence I have that an increase in the wildebeest population has been a principal factor in the transformation of Serengeti Acacia/Commiphora woodland into tree grassland over the past 1/4 century, largely due to the impact of horning on young trees (Estes, Rodgers and Nielsen in prep.), it is not unreasonable to postulate that bush encroachment would follow a sharp decline in the wildebeest population.

In Etosha Park, the wildebeest population went from an estimated 25,000 before fencing to c. 2500 today (Berry 1980). Stands of spindly young Acacia nebrowni are a prominent feature in the grasslands, but whether they have increased due to the wildebeest's decline - or even if woody vegetation has increased - cannot be determined due to the lack of concrete information about Etosha's grasslands in former times.

From the perspective of visitors, the pervasive presence of man and his works in South African parks, and the comparatively strict regulations that go with large numbers of people, make the experience less exciting and immediate than in East African parks. To accommodate all the visitors and the personnel needed to look after them, plus management and research staff, rest camps and administrative headquarters have grown into veritable towns crammed with people, especially during holidays. However, for the hardy few who want to experience Africa in the old way, there are guided walking trips into roadless areas of Kruger and other parks.

The absence of non-whites among the hordes of visitors is striking. Very few families of African descent visit East African parks, either, but there hostels have been built to accommodate groups of schoolchildren, who come to see and learn about their natural heritage. Wildlife clubs have been remarkably effective in stimulating interest in animals and conservation among the schoolchildren of Kenya and Zambia. These approaches could be applied to South Africa and Namibia, to begin building the broad base of support for wildlife conservation that is so essential to the future of their outstanding wildlife parks and conservation programs.

A Regional Meeting of the Antelope Specialist Group

To take full advantage of my African visit, I called a regional meeting of the ASG at Pretoria, which was held in the conference room of the National Parks Board on May 15th. The purpose was a) to make the arrangements necessary to complete the antelope survey of southern Africa, b) to discuss conservation objectives and problems in the different provinces and neighboring countries, c) consider how IUCN could help, and d) talk about antelope action plans for southern Africa.

Jeremy Anderson made all the arrangements, prepared an agenda, and took notes for me to use in writing this report. It was hoped that all ASG members from the region would be able to attend, but Vivian Wilson (Zimbabwe) and José Tello (Mozambique) had other commitments, and Salomon Joubert had to cancel plans to attend at the last minute. The participants included:

*Dr. Jeremy L. Anderson,Bophuthatswana National Parks
Mr. Richard Carr, Transvaal Division of Nature Conservation
*Dr. Richard D. Estes, ASG Chairman
*Dr. Michael Keep, Natal Parks Board
Mr. Willie Labuschagne, Director, National Zoological Gardens, Pretoria (see under Captive Breeding, page 1)
Mr. Peter Lloyd, Cape Province Department of Nature and Environmental Conservation
*Dr. Norman Owen-Smith, Witwatersrand University
Dr. R. H. N. Smithers, Transvaal Museum
Dr. Piet Van Der Walt, S.W.A./Namibia Department of Nature Conservation
Mr. Savvas Vrahimis, Orange Free State Division of Nature Conservation
(Ms. Sally Anthrobus, an editor of Custos, magazine of the National Parks Board. Asterisks denote ASG members.)

Herewith a brief summary of the highlights.

1. Survey arrangements - Thanks to the willingness of the participants to accept responsibility for gathering the available information about antelopes within their respective jurisdictions, nearly all the gaps in the coverage of South Africa and Namibia can now be filled, thus ensuring that Rod East will soon have all the data he needs to finish drafting reports for these countries. Reporting has been divided up as follows:

Transvaal - Richard Carr (excluding Kruger N. P., for which Salomon Joubert is responsible).

Natal - Michael Keep (the one province for which full information has already been provided).

Orange Free State - Savvas Vrahimis

Cape Province - Peter Lloyd

S.W.A./Namibia - Piet Van Der Walt

Independent States (Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Venda, and Transkei) - Jeremy Anderson

Swaziland and Lesotho - still uncovered

2. Conservation status of South African antelopes - Wildlife is very effectively protected throughout South Africa and in most of Namibia. According to Reay Smithers, who has correlated a Red Data Book on South African mammals, the only antelope on the endangered list is the roan (Hippotragus equinus). Other antelopes that are rare or vulnerable in one or more of the provinces, mainly because of limited habitat or competition with more robust antelopes, are common reedbuck (Redunca arundinum, takeover of limited habitat in eastern Cape by introduced impala), Vaal rhebok (Pelea capreolus, in Orange Free State), red duiker (Cephalophus natalensis), suni (Nesotragus moschatus), oribi (Ourebia ourebi), klipspringer (Oreotragus oreotragus), tsessebe (Damaliscus lunatus), and sable (Hippotragus niger).

3. Problems with translocations - The introduction of game species on private lands has grown so popular and widespread as to become a problem in the whole region. On the plus side, the desire of landowners to have wildlife on their property has enabled once threatened antelopes like black wildebeest and blesbok to recover much of the range they lost. But it has become too much of a good thing, because governments have no control over the sale and destination of wildlife produced on private land and sold at public auctions. Of some 50,000 antelopes that are captured and sold per year, mainly in public game auctions, most are raised on private land. How lucrative game-ranching can be is indicated by the going price for male sable, a favorite hunter's trophy, at Transvaal game auctions: $3000! A sizeable proportion of the privately sold antelopes end up in unsuitable habitat where they eventually die, and many are introduced into areas outside the species' historic range. Thus, the blesbok, formerly limited to the Highveld, now ranges over most of South Africa, in innumerable isolated herds. Perhaps potentially most serious is the increasing incidence of hybridization, notably between blesbok (Damaliscus dorcas phillipsi) and bontebok (D. d. dorcas), and even between the two species of wildebeest.

The consensus of the meeting was that a national policy on wildlife translocations is needed that would give provincial conservation authorities control over the distribution of game species on private as well as on public lands. The preliminary step of keeping a register of herds on private land has already been taken by the Transvaal Department of Nature Conservation in the case of roan, sable and tsessebe. Namibia has a regulation that allows introductions only of species which occur south of the Zambesi. The provincial representatives agreed to get together with a view toward formulating a common policy on translocations. Guidelines and a policy statement from IUCN on translocations would be welcomed.

4. Naturalizing nature reserves (see also under 7) - The problem of translocating species outside their former range also exists on public lands. Nearly universal acceptance by wildlife biologists of the principle that parks and reserves should faithfully represent natural ecosystems has been slow to permeate through the ranks of management and policy makers. For instance, common zebra, impala, buffalo and even gemsbok have been introduced to the Willem Pretorius Reserve, in the heart of the Highveld; bontebok range the fynbos heath in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve; and in Namibia blue wildebeest and springbok are kept in the mountainous Daan Viljoen Game Park, near Windhoek. Many other examples could be cited.

5. A ban on wildebeest - As it happens, there are two antelopes whose translocation is now completely controlled in South Africa. Because Connochaetes is a reservoir of malignant catarrh (Afrikaans snotsiekte), and no completely reliable way is known to detect carriers of the disease, translocation of wildebeest has been forbidden by the S. A. Department of Veterinary Services, except to landowners that already have herds. In principle, animals from disease-free herds are exempted, but so far no herd of C. gnou and only one herd of C. taurinus has been certified. As veterinarian Michael Keep points out in a report on the subject, "While this restriction will have little effect on the conservation status of C. t. taurinus, it will inhibit the increase of the less common C. gnou." Sales of surplus stock from reserves such as Willem Pretorius, which used to bring in revenue while serving to reintroduce one of the dominant Highveld antelopes to its former range, are now limited to wildebeest owners who want extra bulls for sport hunting.

6. Wither Natal's parks? The famous game parks of Umfulozi, Hluhluwe, Mkuzi, and Ndumu are all in Zululand and could be removed from the jurisdiction of the Natal Parks, Game and Fish Preservation Board when the Independent State of Kwazulu is established. Whether this happens, or whether Natal and Kwazulu unite to form South Africa's first multiracial government, depends on the outcome of ongoing negotiations between the two parties. Although it was not discussed at our meeting, the Natal-Zulu ndaba was the focus of national attention at the time, and overshadows all other conservation concerns.

7. O.F.S. reserves threatened by inundation - Of the 13 game reserves in the Orange Free State, all but one are located around manmade lakes on land expropriated for irrigation and hydroelectric projects. Proposals to raise the level of some of the dams have been made, even though substantial portions of the game reserves would be flooded as a result. In Willem Pretorius Reserve, for instance, severe erosion along the shoreline has partially filled the lake with silt. By raising the dam some three meters, the desired depth would be restored, the erosion badlands would be covered - and so would much of the best grassland.

Whether this would cause much of a public outcry is doubtful, for it is a major resort complex overlooking the lake and not the wildlife that makes Willem Pretorius a popular vacation spot. Yet this reserve is the largest piece of Highveld in the public domain, it is scenic, and contains quite spectacular herds of black wildebeest, blesbok and springbok. If the houses, old fences, and exotic trees left standing since the land was condemned were removed, and if the grasslands were managed (by rotational burning) so as to create the conditions that favor Themeda triandra and other preferred Highveld grasses, the reserve's carrying capacity could be increased. After that, it would only be necessary to reintroduce the large predators to make Willem Pretorius a beautiful if small showcase of the Highveld ecosystem that was, and a major public attraction.

Savvas Vrahimis, who has spent six years studying the black wildebeest, has decided to include a management plan for the Willem Pretorius Reserve as part of his MSc thesis at the University of the Orange Free State. He has also agreed to suggest areas that would be most suitable and possible for a Highveld National Park, a project that is still one of the state goals of the Antelope Specialist Group.

8. Wildlife conservation in Namibia - According to Dr. Van Der Walt, Deputy Director of the S.W.A./Namibia Department of Agriculture and Nature Conservation, 12% of Namibia has been set aside for nature conservation. In addition to Etosha, which is one of Africa's largest and oldest game preserves, Namibia boasts the even larger Namib-Naukluft Park (5 million ha), and the spectacular Skeleton Coast Park. There are plans to increase conservation land to 16-18% within the next four years. The main addition would be a 1.5 million hectare park and nature reserve in Eastern Bushmanland, where it is proposed that wildlife and a few hundred Ju/wa Bushmen could coexist as in bygone times. Both men and beast would be a tourist attraction.

The plan is vehemently opposed by the !Kung San Foundation of Cambridge, Massachusetts, who maintain that some 27,000 of the 29,000 Bushman peoples in

Namibia have already been dispossessed of over 70% of their lands, to become totally dependent on wages and government handouts for their survival. Apparently the Ju/Wasi are also unwilling. Although they lived as hunter-gatherers up to 20 years ago, nowadays they obtain at most 20% of their food by foraging (Marshall 1984). Raising cattle and crops offers the best hope the Bushman has of being self-sufficient. But the proposed nature reserve would bar most Ju/Wasi from the only part of Bushmanland where surface water is available for their livestock and gardens, obviating the need to drill expensive wells.

Another proposed reserve would take up 12% of the Caprivi Strip which divides Angola and part of Zambia from Botswana. The purpose is to protect the lechwe and sitatunga habitat adjoining Botswana's Chobe National Park, an area where an estimated 70,000 lechwe congregated during the early 1960's, since reduced to around 500 head.

(Editor's Note: As in Natal, the future course of wildlife conservation in Namibia depends on what happens after Independence, which could come this year.)

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