

GAME OFFICER,
P. O. BOX 8054,
CAUSEWAY, S. RHODESIA.

21st September, 1955.

The Secretary for Mines, Lands and Surveys,
P. O. Box 8094,
Causeway, Salisbury.

RHINOCEROS : KARIBA GORGE

Further to my minute reference 1645/34/992 of 26th August, 1955, I have to report that I visited the Kariba Dam area during the period 6th to 9th September last for the purpose of investigating complaints lodged by Mr. C. Shiff concerning interference by rhinoceros with swing-fog operations in the vicinity of the dam site. Mr. Shiff confirmed that on two occasions the natives employed on swing-fog operations had been molested by rhinoceros and that as a result native employees were showing signs of nervous tension. Certain of these natives had given notice but this was not entirely due to the danger involved. Mr. Shiff was of the opinion that some of the natives wished to till their lands in preparation for the rains but the excuse in each case was to the effect that night operations in the presence of rhinoceros were dangerous.

I visited the area of operations with Mr. Shiff during daylight. He pointed out small water-hole in the Kessesse river which rhinoceros had used on occasion but it was evident that these animals were not using this water-hole at the time of my visit. It is worth noting that along the river tsetse fly are comparatively scarce following the application of insecticide from swing-fog machines. This fact was commented upon by the native trackers employed by this section and it is evident that the effects of the operations have been noted even by the resident natives.

On Tuesday night I accompanied Mr. Shiff and his swing-fog operators along the Kessesse river. Walking in low veld thickets during the night at any time is an eerie business but under normal conditions one has the advantage of the silence of the night in which to hear the movement of large animals. This advantage does not exist during the swing-fog operations and the noise of the machines added to the density of the fog which throws back the light of a torch allowing visibility of only a few yards is somewhat awe inspiring. It was quite evident that should an animal attack there would be no hope of hearing its movements and being forewarned or seeing it in the light of a torch in the event of it moving through the smoke. I suggested to Mr. Shiff that he should have a trained hunter, armed with a fairly powerful weapon and a strong torch, about 100 yards ahead of the party who would be in a better position to deal with an attack by a dangerous animal and who would also be invaluable to him in guiding him from point to point along the operational routes.

The following day I walked over the area of the Kessesse river valley and found a waterhole in the foothills at which approximately six rhinoceros were drinking regularly. It appeared that while some of them after drinking moved into the foothills others moved down on to the Kessesse river. This water-hole is situated on the Nyemasowa river which rises in the foothills and flows into the Zambesi river about five miles downstream from the dam site.

In an attempt to persuade the rhinoceros to leave this water-hole and for the moral effect it would have on the swing-fog operators one rhinoceros was shot about half a mile from the water in one of the tributaries of the Kessesse river. The destruction of this animal may or may not have the desired effect and should there be further complaints of the operations being interfered with then steps will have to be taken to shoot some more of them. The carcass of the rhinoceros was cut up and some of the meat was given to the swing-fog operators the remainder was sold to a contractor at Kariba (Mr. Bean) for the sum of £10.

One herd of impala, five zebra, nine kudu and about twelve warthogs were seen in the foothills of the Kessesse river. No animals or any evidence of them were seen along the Nyanyana river or any other point in the area. A solitary sable, three or four impala and one rhino were drinking at Ruwe pools. Elephant and buffalo appear to have vacated that area for the present. It is understood that it has finally been decided to construct the township and native compound at Kariba on the high ground of Goteka hill.

signed: A . Fraser
GAME OFFICER

COPY/MGY.