
1. INTRODUCTION: THE VALUE OF PRICELESS WILDLIFE

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Across the savannas of Africa dramatic changes are occurring. Grasslands are being put under the plough, trees felled, the human population is increasing, and wildlife decreasing. Pockets of wilderness survive or appear to survive as protected areas but even there species richness of large mammals is decreasing. The fate of Africa's unparalleled and spectacularly rich communities of large herbivores and their associated predators rests in the hands of man.

A closer inspection of the problem outlined shows that wildlife can occur in two dramatically different situations, those inside and those outside protected areas. These latter areas are often used for livestock grazing or for arable cultivation. Under both these forms of land use, wildlife is often considered harmful, because it is thought to compete with livestock, to harbour diseases detrimental to livestock, or to cause crop damage. Frequently wildlife poses a direct threat to the lives of people eking out an existence in or close to their habitat. Hence, wildlife has no value outside the protected areas, it dwindles and disappears either through active persecution, loss of habitat, or competition with livestock (Prins, 1992; Norton-Griffiths, 1996/1997). Is there still a future for these priceless animals? Or are they worthless? If wildlife has an economic value, who would be the beneficiaries? These questions are central to this book.

For many years, it has been the aim to separate wildlife from livestock and cul-

tivation. In 1933 the Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in their Natural State was signed in London and this convention called for the creation of National Parks. National Parks were to be large areas where hunting would be prohibited and which would be set aside for perpetuity (Bonner, 1993). Before then, reserves had been set aside for wildlife, for example, in South Africa (Stevenson-Hamilton, 1974), and some large game hunters at the time thought that people and wildlife could co-exist. Meinertzhagen wrote in 1904 *"In view of the likelihood of a vast invasion by European settlers into Kenya it seems that the larger game must disappear. One cannot have game and farms and I have suggested to the Game Ranger that he puts up a scheme for a very large area in country unsuitable for white settlement where game can remain for ever . . . There must be no risk of interference from an east African administration which cares nothing for game. I think the area might be some three to four thousand square miles [about 12,000 km²] and possibly in Masai country. The Masai are good game preservers but are very wasteful of their grazing land [sic, after the great rinderpest of the 1890s when they had hardly any cattle left]. Moreover, both game and Masai cattle can co-exist"* (Meinertzhagen, 1983).

Since that time National Parks have been created all over Africa and quite some wildlife has survived outside the protected areas. Yet, both in the Parks and outside of them, wildlife is decreasing in high numbers in many African countries.

The idea for this book came from long discussions on conservation strategies in Africa; should the main effort and focus be on protected areas or on areas where wildlife, people and livestock live together? Meinertzhagen in 1904 had a clear vision of both separation and coexistence, depending on the origin of the landholder (see above). It was decided to organize a workshop with people who had first hand experiences on the use of wildlife outside protected areas, on the significance of dispersal areas for protected areas and on research in the wildlife/livestock/people interface.

In 1996 we invited a number of people with direct experience on the costs and benefits of wildlife in Africa: ranchers; safari hunters, national parks planners, specialists on crop damage, ecologists, tour operators, community developers in wildlife areas, veterinarians, game croppers, and economists to come to a workshop in the bush in Kenya. Our hosting ranch, "Lewa Downs", is in the process of changing from a cattle operation to a conservancy aimed at protecting the wilderness, including endangered species. The conservancy is in the process of becoming a commercial operation and as such a fine example of a major drive across savanna Africa to turn wildlife into an economic asset.

Our motivation in inviting these specialists from these very diverse fields originated from a conviction that most areas with a protection status in Africa are too small to ensure the long-term survival of the majority of animal species that live in them notwithstanding the often large to very large size of these protected areas (Soulé, Wilcox and Holtby, 1979). This has implications for widespread conflict in policy on wildlife management which could be described as a conflict between the *preservationist* and *conservationist* viewpoint. A practical preservationist's point of view