

Ghana's New Forest National Park

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In May 1974 Ghana created its first high forest national park. This is a forest reserve in the Bia tributaries area of the Western Region, comprising 118 square miles of some of the highest forest in West Africa, including primary unlogged forest, with an annual rainfall of 57 inches spread over ten to eleven months. The area was chosen partly for the large numbers of elephants and monkeys. The possibility of a forest national park in this region has been under consideration for at least five years; success was achieved after lengthy negotiations under the keen direction of the Chief Game and Wildlife Officer, Dr E. O. A. Asibey.

In 1970, when Asibey visited the Bia Tributaries area, hunting and trapping were widespread despite the protection laws. Bushmeat was readily available at roadsides, and young animals were frequently toted around European compounds (Jeffrey 1970a). Fully protected species, pregnant females, and females with young were shot indiscriminately, often by illegal night-hunting. For this the hunter straps a carbide lamp on his head, and the bright light blinds the animal long enough for it to be shot between the eyes, a method that is particularly effective against duikers and other antelopes. Nevertheless, Asibey felt it worth while to set up a small Game and Wildlife district office, and a team of guards started to control hunting and trapping, and to enforce the Wildlife Conservation Regulations when they became law in 1971. The problems were immense, for the local village communities had enjoyed hunting rights in the hinterlands for hundreds of years. Now, deprived of a major source of protein when their diet was already protein-deficient, they would not accept that pressure on the wild-meat supply had become so great that heavy restrictions must be imposed to guarantee supplies in the future.

Roadside sales of bushmeat stopped, and all dealings with hunters and trappers went underground. Bushmeat traders used special routes through the forest to avoid more public paths and roads, smoked meat was stored and sold in appointed places, and much meat left the area hidden in mammy trucks for re-sale in the big markets. Smuggling was a big problem as the Bia Tributaries area contains about fifty miles of unroaded international boundary. Bushmeat and live animals (especially young chimpanzees) were smuggled west over the Ivory Coast border by a maze of forest paths. With visibility in the forest down to twenty yards, catching poachers red-handed was almost impossible. Even when they were caught it was difficult to prove that the owner had actually shot or trapped the animals, and many offenders got off lightly in court. However, this situation was greatly improved when in early 1974 a decree was passed (reported in *Oryx*, June 1974, page 413), which among other things made it illegal even to be in possession of illegal animal goods.

Several bush camps established in and around the new national park are now manned constantly by Game and Wildlife employees, who patrol the forest paths, and gun shots in protected areas have become fewer. After due warning all wire snares and other traps found in the forest were confiscated. Most hunters were found to be without game licences; many have

now been issued and the police have tightened their control on firearms licences.

A species list of some 90 mammals, including rats, bats and shrews, was recorded in the area during six years of observations (Jeffrey in press). Proof of a species presence was taken from personal field sightings, shot and trapped specimens, and skins and skulls in villages. The author considers that the 16 mammals listed below are rare in the area and not usually found away from their forest habitat.

Giant forest squirrel *Protexerus stangeri*: three records;

Long-footed rat *Malacomys longipes*: only one out of 1170 murid specimens collected;

Beecroft's flying squirrel *Anomalurus beecrofti*: of the four Anomalurid species found, this one was collected only twice in forest;

Giant pangolin *Manis gigantea*: one record, very rare;

Diana monkey *Cercopithecus diana*: several records from forest but not known to invade bush or farmland;

Red colobus *Colobus verus*: recorded by IUCN (1968) as rare in Ghana, this species was seen on several occasions in low dense bush with Cercopithecoid monkeys. Its quiet and retiring habits render it less conspicuous than its more obvious associates and due to this it may be more common than supposed (Booth 1957);

Chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes*: numerous skulls in villages indicate that it was once common, but now only small numbers remain;

Honey badger *Mellivora capensis*: one skin collected;

Golden cat *Felis aurata*: one skin collected, dark-coloured form typical of forests.

Leopard *Panthera pardus*: many old skins retained by village chiefs indicate it was once fairly common; three recent records;

Forest elephant *Loxodonta africana cyclotis*: common and a pest on farms bordering its forest habitat;

Giant forest hog *Hylochoerus meinertzhageni*: although only recently discovered in Ghana (by G. S. Cansdale in 1948), it is probably fairly common in the Bia Tributaries area;

Bongo *Taurotragus euryceros*: sometimes protected by local custom; two small feeding parties recorded on disused roads; three sets of horns seen in villages;

Yellow-backed duiker *Cephalophus silvicultor*: two skins seen; presumed very rare;

Forest buffalo *Syncerus caffer nanus*: present according to local hunters.

References

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Can the Animal Technician Help?

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In *Oryx*, June 1974, W. R. Kingston proposed that twenty-five pairs of golden lion marmosets *Leontopithecus rosalia* be placed in a laboratory-type setting for the purpose of increasing captive reproduction and possibly acting as a bank to save the species. This proposal suggests that Mr Kingston is not familiar with the captive husbandry of the species.

I have been collecting data on captive animals for over thirty years and have examined the records of most zoos in Europe and North America, as well as the Far East and Australia. Since mid-1970 I have been serving as the studbook keeper for the golden lion marmoset for the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA), and in early 1973 a studbook was issued and noticed in *Oryx*. (As a matter of interest, I did not receive a single request for a copy as a result of this note.)

At the time information was being collected for the studbook it was decided not to request data on animals that had been in collection prior to 1960, unless they or their descendants were living as of January 1 1960. Before that records systems in many collections were not well maintained, and also this was felt to be a good base-line year from which to begin. But I have now gone over all my data since the end of World War II, beginning January 1 1946; much of this has not been published.

The pet trade aside, examination of zoo records shows that 30 United States collections, including one laboratory, imported 168 golden lion marmosets from 1946 to 1968. Eighteen of these succeeded in breeding some 231 specimens as of mid-1974, and as of 1 September 1974 no fewer than 72 were still living. Even more important, 23 of the 72 represented second-generation breeding. In 18 of these both parents were captive-bred, and in 14 one parent was captive-bred. However, the 26 European collections that imported 153 animals in the same time frame bred only 30, and bred not a single one to the second generation. Only two of these animals are now living; one is a wild import, one a captive-bred specimen.

The one laboratory that imported the species, the Houston Dental Science Institute of Dr Barnett Levy, certainly cannot be held up as a model of what the laboratory can do. Thirteen (6/7) specimens were imported in 1963. One lived ten years, but not a single birth was registered in this laboratory where the animals were kept in much the manner suggested by Mr Kingston, and for many years fed on the diet described by Dr Levy. On the other hand, the