

CONSERVATION

Africa May Lose Wildlife

► THE GREAT WILD ANIMALS of Africa are vanishing. Civilization, fire and lack of water take their toll. A black market in ivory and rhino horn encourages poachers.

This dark picture of the Dark Continent was drawn at the Fifth World Forestry Congress meeting in Seattle, Wash., by Col. Merwyn Cowie, director of the Royal National Parks of Kenya.

"In Kenya, poaching is organized on a colossal scale, ivory and rhino horn being the main products. These are smuggled out through a highly organized ring of traders across the Indian Ocean to be sold for various purposes in the East and Far East." Col. Cowie reported that recently rangers found 1,283 elephants killed by poachers in an area only 20 miles square.

He said the poachers may use poisoned arrows, pits, snares and muzzle-loaded guns.

"Muzzle-loaders are primitive weapons, loaded by packing powder down the muzzle and then cramming the barrel with all kinds of missiles, including bent nails, stones or anything else that can be procured.

"The result of using such weapons is that a very large number of animals are wounded in addition to those which are mercifully killed quickly." Col. Cowie said that in Tanganyika alone there are 80,000 licensed muzzle-loaders in the hands of inexperienced hunters.

Arrows with poisons from trees are used in some parts of East Africa. After being hit, "an elephant sometimes dies within

a few hours or lingers in pain for several days. When it eventually dies, the vultures form a spiral in the sky which indicates to the poachers precisely where to look for their prize. The tusks are then hacked out and cut up into sections and smuggled out through a highly organized smuggling ring."

Wire snares are often used to catch the wildebeest. Then, only its tail is taken to sell as a fly switch.

Col. Cowie said the African governments must strike hard at the poachers and what he called their crime against posterity.

But control of fire seems even more difficult. "I have never yet seen any part of

Africa where it is entirely possible to prevent fire," he said.

And water supplies are frequently upset by man's activities. "Lake levels are falling, rivers are drying up and springs are disappearing."

Col. Cowie sees the extinction of many wild beasts unless they can be saved by sanctuaries. But, "the sanctuaries included in the system of national parks and reserves throughout Africa are hopelessly inadequate to preserve all the species which used to roam the face of this great continent," he said.

"Africa is a harsh master and its animals are subjected to all kinds of calamities, including epizootic diseases, floods, plagues and droughts.

"Should a species in one area be destroyed by one of these misfortunes, then there is no reservoir from which to draw replenishment."

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ROCKETS AND MISSILES

Big Space Effort Planned

See Front Cover

► THE UNITED STATES has big space plans for the next eight weeks. There will be attempts at a major step forward in the Mercury man-in-space program, the orbiting of a capsule about the moon, the orbiting of a defense satellite and the recovery of another instrumented capsule and a second capsule carrying a monkey—if all goes well.

MAN-IN-SPACE. A major test of the

Mercury space capsule is about due. According to schedule, this first step would send the capsule into space and back—without orbiting. The launching vehicle would be a Redstone missile.

There will be no animal or man aboard this first time, but animals and man will follow later.

DISCOVERERS XV AND XVI. These are re-entry experiments. The Discoverer capsule, only a part of the whole Discoverer satellite, is much too small for a man. The Discoverer XV shot will be instrumented. Discoverer XVI is scheduled to contain a monkey.

MIDAS. This is the Defense Department's experimental satellite. It has infrared detectors to sight the heat from the blast-off of missiles. Probably one and possibly two Midas attempts will be made before November.

MOON ORBITS. There have been reports that National Space and Aeronautics Administration will launch a TV satellite and a space station for radiation, guidance, propulsion and communications studies, both to go into orbit around the moon. An official of NASA told SCIENCE SERVICE that the "leaks" in information so far were inaccurate in detail. But he confirmed plans for moon satellites "in 1960."

Less official sources still stick to their predictions. The shots, however, depend on the use of Atlas missiles, a military weapon over which defense requirements have priority.

COURIER. An "active" communications satellite with electronic devices to relay voice and teletype messages is also scheduled soon, probably in October. Courier is shown on the cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER. Another "passive" communications experiment, like Echo, is probable.

TIROS. A second weather satellite that takes pictures of the earth's clouds is on its way, possibly within the next eight weeks.

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DROPPABLE POD—A two-part droppable pod provides extra speed and mileage to the Air Force B-58 bomber. The fuel-carrying lower part of the pod can be dropped when fuel is used. The upper part, containing a nuclear bomb, would be carried on to target in actual combat. The pod is in production at Convair Division of General Dynamics Corporation, Fort Worth, Tex.