

71/02/03-09

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GAME COUNT - ETOSHA: FEBRUARY 1971

The count commenced on the morning of February 3rd and ended on the afternoon of February 9th, 1971. A total of about 40 hours were spent in the air. The pilot of the Piper Super Cub was N. Maritz with J. du Preez as observer.

WEATHER.

Overcast conditions lasted for the duration of the count with occasional thunderstorms and intermittent showers. At times the showers interfered with the counting and on one occasion the afternoon count had to be abandoned due to inclement weather conditions. It was observed that the entire reserve had had good rains and pools of water and nearly full watercourses were often seen. The small pans were mostly full while the Etosha salina was about 60% covered with water. None of the rivers had flowed as yet. The rainfall over the period of the count, as measured at Okaukuejo, was as follows:

3 Feb.	.....	35.5mm
4 "	.....	4.5mm
5 "	.....	0.1mm
6 "	.....	5.0mm
7 "	.....	0.0mm
8 "	.....	3.5mm
9 "	.....	0.0mm.

FIRE.

The areas destroyed by fire the previous year are recovering as a result of the good rains. Grass is evident everywhere and most of the trees appear to have recovered.

VELD.

Due to the good rains the veld appears to be in good condition. Annual and perennial ^{grasses} are forming a carpet of green grass on the plains and even on Groot vlakke. There are still barren, grassless areas in the Mopani belt, especially in the Sprokieswoud area. Many low-lying areas were observed to be marshy or covered with a sheet of water. Most minor pans in the veld held water, as did most of the quarries, and many of the small omurambas were filled with water, some even showed signs of having flowed for stretches.

ANIMALS COUNTED.

	<u>Nov. 1970</u>	<u>Feb. 1970</u>	<u>Nov. 1970</u>	<u>Feb. 1971</u>
ZEBRA	6199	7274	6313	10,376
WILDEBEEEST	3,079	4,789	3,386	3,740
SPRINGBOX	1,424	4,131	1,354	4,409
GREYBOX	338	1,582	1,064	1,717
KUDU	267	161	400	195
OSTRICH	233	1,653	279	811
ELAND	196	95	216	128
GIRAFFE	130	392	156	403
ELEPHANT	116	494	232	124
LIONS	21	10	21	22
RHINO	3	0	3	2
RED HARTEBEEEST	16	126	16	241
WARTHOG	13	0	13	14
MOUNTAIN ZEBRA	0	0	0	12
STEENBOK	10	0	10	40
TOTAL	12,656	20,762	14,469	22,234

REMARKS.

As expected, most of the grazers moved out onto the plains

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which facilitated the counting and gave a much higher count for the zebra population. Some species, however, remained in the bush where the new growth on the trees made the count even more difficult. The low elephant count is likely due to these animals having moved out of the confines of the reserve, either to the Kaokoveld or to Ovamboland. The conditions of the game-paths indicate that the large concentrations in the Groot-vlakte - Leeubron area were drawn mainly from the Halali, Gobaub and Ombika areas.

The attached distribution map reflects the large concentrations only. Eland, Hartebeest and Giraffe were widely scattered and only one Eland breeding herd consisting of 80 animals was found.

The arrows marked XSK and W indicate where a herd of Springbok and Wildebeest were seen crossing the inundated Etosha salina, the water being about 6" deep. The flamingoes were seen constructing nests.

RECOMMENDATION.

1. It is recommended that the project now be terminated as, under present conditions, no further information can be obtained from further counts.
2. The results of this project will in due course be presented for publication.



J.S. du Preez.