

Chapter 1

Africa's Apartheid Parks

The word “ivory” rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed.
You would think they were praying to it.

—Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

HERMANN VON Wissmann was one of Germany's most renowned African explorers. A travel writer and big-game hunter, Wissmann was best known for having traversed the southern Congo basin on behalf of Leopold II, king of the Belgians, in the early 1880s. Chancellor Otto von Bismarck later asked him to govern German East Africa (which he did intermittently from 1888 to 1896), not least because he was skilled at suppressing colonial revolts. Outwardly, there was little about Wissmann's career that distinguished him from other African imperialists of his day—Richard Burton, John Speke, Cecil Rhodes, Frederick Courteney Selous, H. M. Stanley, and Carl Peters among them—except in one regard: he was the primary champion of an international conference that would result in the London Convention for the Preservation of Wild Animals, Birds, and Fish in Africa in 1900 (hereafter the 1900 London Convention).¹

All of Africa's major colonial powers attended the conference and signed the 1900 London Convention: Great Britain, France, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. The first four had colonized prior to

the 1880s, mostly along the African coastline. Britain's historical stronghold lay in the Cape Colony (the nucleus of today's Republic of South Africa), on the continent's southern tip. The Suez Canal, completed in 1869, also gave Britain a toehold in Egypt, though that region was still nominally under the Ottoman Empire's control. Algiers (Algeria) was France's most important colony, but some of the coastal towns and hinterlands of west-central Africa (the nucleus of Senegal, Gabon, and a few other regions) were also within its orbit. Portugal controlled Angola on the Atlantic side of the continent and Mozambique on the Indian Ocean side. The Spanish influence was largely limited to the Canary Islands and a couple of specks (Ceuta and Fernando Po) along the northern and western coastline.²

Belgium, Germany, and Italy were new colonial powers. The Belgian presence began in the mid-1880s when Leopold II took possession of the Congo Free State (later Zaire and now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), deep in the heart of Africa, and ruled it as his personal fiefdom. A brutal overlord even by European standards, Leopold II turned his Congo colony into a rubber-, copper-, and ivory-producing sweatshop until his death in 1909, when it was turned over to a much-embarrassed Belgian government to administer. Germany's presence in Africa also began in the mid-1880s, when Bismarck took possession of German East Africa (roughly Tanzania minus Zanzibar), German Southwest Africa (Namibia), Togoland (Togo and part of Ghana), and the Cameroons (Cameroon and part of Nigeria). The Italians seized most of Somaliland (Somalia) in 1885.³

The colonization of Africa proceeded slowly until the 1880s, but once the parvenu powers arrived, European statesmen began meeting periodically to settle their differences and forge common policies. At the Berlin Conference (1884–85), they established the rules of the game for future landgrabs, agreeing that colonizing governments had to take real possession of the land they claimed with settlers and troops, not just take paper possession through fanciful maps and colorful flags. Following the principle of so-called free trade, they also banned import and transit duties in the colonized territories and set up the framework for future consultations among the colonial powers. Four years later, at the Brussels Conference (1889), they decided to stamp out the internal slave trade, which was still extant in Zanzibar and some other Arab-controlled regions of Africa. They also decided to restrict the types of firearms and ammunition that could be sold to black Africans between the twentieth parallel north and twentieth parallel south (roughly south of the Sahara and north of Boer territory) and to sanction the introduction of colonial gun licenses and big-game hunting

restrictions. A few years later, the Congo Free State, France, and Portugal met separately to sign and ratify the Congo Basin Convention (1892), which created uniform export duties on elephant tusks in the regions under their control. The 1900 London conference was the last of these meetings to occur before the outbreak of World War I. It was designed to create uniform hunting ordinances throughout colonial Africa and to jump-start a network of nature parks and game reserves.

The Berlin Conference triggered a “scramble for Africa,” a frenzied attempt by leaders of the various colonizing powers to lay claim to as much territory as possible before the other powers beat them to it. By 1900, most of sub-Saharan Africa (excepting Ethiopia and Liberia) was under European suzerainty. The Brussels Conference, meanwhile, made it easier for Europeans to suppress colonial revolts by depriving local Africans of access to modern European weaponry. It also had the inadvertent consequence of forcing African hunters to rely on “traditional” hunting techniques and equipment (spears, pits, traps, poisons, outdated muskets, and the like), while allowing Europeans to use “modern” ones (such as high-powered rifles, machine guns, modern ammunition, and scopes). The Congo Basin Convention, finally, created an economic bond among the Congo colonists, one based largely on the ivory trade. For decades thereafter, Belgium, France, and Portugal thwarted all efforts to curb the commerce in tusks.

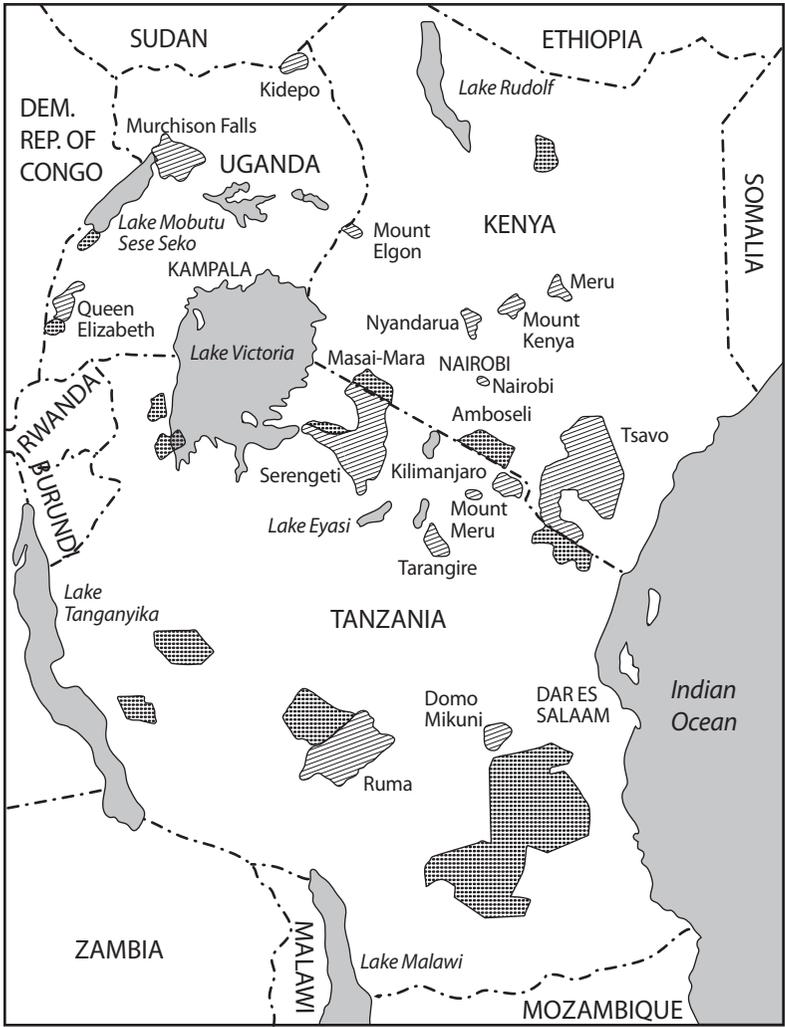
On the positive side, these diplomatic agreements suggested that European colonists shared a common vision about economic development, natural-resource use, and conservation. On the negative side, the Europeans arrived as conquerors, not as equals, and they showed little understanding of, or sympathy with, African cultures and traditions. Contradictions abounded. The Europeans made it illegal for Africans to acquire modern weaponry—and then demonized them for using “primitive” hunting techniques. They usurped pastoral and agricultural space for their own cattle and fields—and then looked askance when Africans relied on wild animals (“bush meat”) for their daily sustenance. They turned traditional hunting grounds into nature parks and game reserves—and then complained when Africans continued to hunt there. Policies that stigmatized the traditions of indigenous peoples under the banner of conservation and modernization were not ones that promised much compliance, at least not in the short run.

Today, the full spectrum of species that once roamed freely across Africa is preserved only in the continent’s three-hundred-some national parks and natural reserves. Although these parks and reserves include only a small fraction of tropical Africa’s landmass, they are nonetheless not



Figure 1.1. Map of Africa with major national parks and nature reserves. Adapted from Roland Oliver and Michael Crowder, eds., *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 313.

small in themselves, especially when compared to other protected regions in the world today.⁴ The largest national park in the United States, Denali (in Alaska), is around 7,400 square miles in size. By contrast, Kruger National Park in South Africa is nearly 8,000 square miles; the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, which straddles South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, is 13,500 square miles; and the Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania is over 19,000 square miles.



Kenya	Parks	9,200 km ²	 National park  Game reserve
	Reserves	3,500 km ²	
Tanzania	Parks	12,000 km ²	
	Reserves	24,500 km ²	
Uganda	Parks	2,800 km ²	
	Reserves	200 km ²	

Figure 1.2. National parks and nature reserves in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania). L. A. Lewis and L. Berry, *African Environments and Resources* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 18. Reproduced by permission of Taylor and Francis.

These parks are a direct legacy of European colonial rule, and they cater mostly to European and American tourists, so it is not surprising that black Africans today often refer to them as “white man’s parks.” Equally apt, however, is the less frequently heard name “apartheid parks,” for the parks were established along the same model used in the United States and elsewhere: indigenous populations were, for the most part, removed from the protected areas and new groups forbidden to migrate there, the only permanent inhabitants being animals and plants. The pecking order outside the parks was white settler, indigenous black African, and wild animal, with the indigenous populations being only slightly above the wildlife in the minds of many colonists. The pecking order inside the parks was tourist, animal, and indigenous black. Racism allowed the European colonists to view Africans as a part of the “natural” landscape and thus subject to the same brute-force relocations and control technologies they employed to subjugate the nonhuman world.

Just as Europeans carved up the African continent with little regard for its geographic, climatic, and faunal divisions (or its linguistic, ethnic, and traditional frontiers), they paid scant attention to the migratory patterns of African wildlife when they established these parks. European political and economic needs, not ecology, determined the border lines: an ideal nature park or game reserve, in the eyes of most colonial administrators, was one located on land that was deemed economically useless because it was disease infested, devoid of minerals and other resources, unsuitable for agriculture, or otherwise ill-adapted for white settlement. Few asked whether game animals were actually plentiful in these locations, whether there were sufficient food and water resources within the park boundaries, or even whether the areas were large enough to sustain the migratory patterns of the animals that were allegedly being protected. The end result was a hodgepodge of poorly placed, ill-designed “megazoo” that offered only part-time protection for migrating herds.

When Bernard Grzimek (director of the Frankfurt Zoo), for example, undertook the first comprehensive aerial survey of animal populations in Serengeti in the 1950s, he discovered that there was almost no congruity between the park’s borders and animal-migration routes: at no time of the year were all of the Serengeti herds inside the park, but at certain times of the year, there were virtually none.⁵ Similarly, the proximity of Nairobi Park to Kenya’s capital city made it a favorite destination for tourists after it was created in the 1940s, but its small size (a mere forty square miles) made it wholly unsuitable for protecting Africa’s mammals (though lions used the park as an entry point into the city suburbs, much to the consternation of the

inhabitants!).⁶ Other parks faced variations on these problems. For the Europeans to have created something more viable, they first would have had to remove their political and cultural blinders and create protected areas that were feasible from an ecological and cultural point of view. Yet at no time did the colonists seriously contemplate leaving vast tracts of African land to the local peoples and the indigenous animals or minimizing the impact of their own disruptive presence—even in the newly colonized regions of Africa where there were still few European settlers. A pecking order along the lines of indigenous African, indigenous wildlife, and white colonist did not conform to their racialized worldviews.

Ill-conceived or not, these national parks and natural reserves were created through a considerable amount of European diplomacy, and they remain to this day, as the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Africa* (1981) has succinctly noted, “the backbone of nature conservation in Africa.”⁷ Wissmann was the first to champion an international hunting convention, but he was merely giving voice to what many other imperialists were themselves coming to realize: that Africa’s animal herds migrated at will across the newly created frontiers of the British, French, Portuguese, German, Belgian, and Italian colonies; that Swahili Arab, Indian, and European traders bought and sold animal products throughout the continent, following the dictates of international commerce and not the requirements of sustainable game cropping; and that no individual colonial government could hope to regulate the trade in ivory, skins, and feathers by itself. Even Great Britain’s leaders, who controlled the lion’s share of African colonies and (by way of the London auction houses) much of the ivory trade, understood the limits of unilateralism. That is why they quickly seized the initiative from the Germans; hosted the two major conferences on wildlife conservation; and became the driving force behind countless African game ordinances, tsetse fly conferences, and wildlife-management projects in the first half of the twentieth century.

Africa’s “Big Game”

European colonists had been fascinated by the broad spectrum of wild fauna that flourished in the forests and savannas of sub-Saharan Africa—elephants, rhinos, buffaloes, lions, leopards, giraffes, hippos, apes, baboons, and gazelles, to name but a few—long before Leopold II and others seized control of the continent’s interior in the late nineteenth century. So large were their numbers and so great their variety that each new wave of immigrants tended to view the continent as a vast animal Eden, a realm shaped

by nature rather than culture. But the supposedly pristine Africa that so many Europeans saw when they arrived on the continent was the Africa of myth: the continent was, in reality, a cultural landscape, a terrain shaped and reshaped over millennia by human agency. Indigenous Africans constantly transformed the ecosystems through their daily activities, most especially through cattle keeping, agriculture, and fire setting. Fire was used to destroy tsetse fly habitat, to thwart forest growth, to clear pastureland, and to promote the spread of the game-rich savannas. Many of the grass-filled plains that Europeans mistook for natural were in fact culturally produced landscapes, game-cropping regions created and maintained by an annual fire regime.⁸

Yet Africa's animal populations were so hearty and the continent's terrain was so varied and spectacular that successive generations of European intruders could easily convince themselves they had arrived in a pristine place. And the sense of cultural superiority they carried with them was so strong and their prejudices against the indigenous Africans were so deep that they readily overlooked the role of human agency in the regions they encountered. When former president Theodore Roosevelt visited Africa in 1909 on safari, he saw a landscape awash in nature but not teeming with people:

In these greatest of the world's great hunting grounds there are mountain peaks whose snows are dazzling under the equatorial sun; swamps where the slime oozes and bubbles and festers in the steaming heat; lakes like seas; skies that burn above deserts where the iron desolation is shrouded from view by the wavering mockery of the mirage; vast grassy plains where palms and thorn-trees fringe the dwindling streams; mighty rivers rushing out of the heart of the continent through the sadness of endless marshes; forests of gorgeous beauty, where death broods in the dark and silent depths.⁹

Similarly, when Sir Julian Huxley went to Africa for the first time in 1929, he saw “a continent which had hardly changed in the last five hundred years.”¹⁰ And as late as the 1950s, Bernard Grzimek would claim: “Africa belongs to all who take comfort from the thought that there are still wild animals and virgin lands on earth.”¹¹

Colonists tended to classify Africa's mammals through the hierarchy of the hunt. At the top were the so-called trophy animals, most importantly the “big five”: the lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, and (Cape) buffalo, all highly

	Belgian Congo	French Congo	Portuguese Congo
YEAR	WEIGHT Kilograms	WEIGHT Kilograms	WEIGHT Kilograms
1888	54,812	18,658	28,276
1889	113,532	3,601	9,284
1890	180,605	6,305	9,412
1891	141,775	16,661	7,469
1892	186,521	4,815	3,205
1893	185,993	3,142	1,287
1894	252,083	7,238	1,192
1895	292,232	24,381	101
1896	191,316	50,738	464
1897	245,824	53,908	477
1898	215,963	84,402	254
1899	291,731	78,800	103
1900	262,665	118,434	117
1901			
1902	249,307	133,491	160
1903			
1904	166,948	132,406	21
1905	211,338	152,986	40
1906	178,207	131,424	74
1907	203,583	143,355	369
1908	228,757	138,345	411
1909	243,823	135,237	405

Figure 1.3. Ivory exports from the Congo colonies between 1888 and 1909. Total annual exports grew nearly every year, from 101,746 kilograms in 1888 to 379,465 kilograms in 1909. George Frederick Kunz, *Ivory and the Elephant in Art, in Archaeology, and in Science* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1916), 463.

prized because they were rare, elusive, or dangerous. Other trophy animals included the zebra, giraffe, and eland. Though not as difficult to hunt as the big five, they were still prized for their skins, antlers, or heads. Below them were the “pot” animals—most notably, the smaller antelopes—that seemed ready-made for shooting, if more for the meat than for the accolades. At the bottom were the “vermin”—a group that included the baboon,

wild dog, and hyena, as well as the lion and leopard (two of the big five). Many colonists favored their wholesale extermination because they fed on domesticated livestock or competed with hunters for the same game, even if it meant that the big five would one day become the big three.¹²

Africa's mammals can be more scientifically divided into three broad groups: primates, carnivores, and ungulates (hoofed animals). Africa's primates (humans aside) include the ape, monkey, bush baby, and lemur, most of which prefer the continent's tropical rain forests and mountains to its open savannas. Only the gorilla and the chimpanzee (both apes) were prized targets in the early twentieth century, and they were also the only primates to receive some protective status in the African treaties of 1900 and 1933. The second group, carnivores, are (as their name suggests) meat-eating predators that live on other animals. Not surprisingly, the list of Africa's carnivores—mongoose, hyena, leopard, lion, cheetah, fox, jackal, wild dog, weasel, and otter—is all but identical with the category of so-called vermin mammals. Few of these animals received any sympathy from colonial settlers—or, for that matter, protection from turn-of-the-century conservationists.¹³

The third broad group—ungulates—can be subdivided into ruminants and nonruminants. Ruminants are even-toed ungulates that feed on plant tissues and fibers, and they include the antelope, buffalo, and giraffe. Antelope (hollow-horned members of the Bovidae family) are by far the most plentiful ruminants; they come in a wide variety of sizes and shapes, including the duiker, steenbok, gazelle, springbok, reedbuck, waterbuck, rhebok, roan, sable, oryx, hartebeest, topi, blesbok, bontebok, wildebeest (gnu), impala, bushback, kudu, bongo, and eland. Ruminants tend to be niche-specific: they have a highly specialized diet (such as the leaf of a specific tree species) that limits their breeding range. But their general preference for grasslands and their proclivity to run in groups and herds for safety make them one of the most common animals on the African savannas. The nonruminant ungulates are older (in evolutionary terms) than the ruminants and also better adapted to eating a broader variety of vegetation and tolerating a wider variety of habitats. They include some of the most coveted trophy animals—the hippo, rhino, zebra, and elephant (a near ungulate)—as well as some less desirable ones, such as the bushpig and warthog.¹⁴

No animal is more identified with the continent than the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), the world's largest land mammal and also the world's main source of ivory. An herbivore, it uses its tusks—elongated teeth that continue to grow throughout its lifetime at a rate of nearly one

	Antwerp	London
1886		340,000
1887		330,000
1888	6,400	373,000
1889	46,600	301,000
1890	77,500	357,000
1891	59,500	421,000
1892	118,000	396,900
1893	224,000	359,000
1894	186,000	376,000
1895	274,000	344,000
1896	265,700	284,000
1897	281,000	278,000
1898	205,300	300,000
1899	292,500	267,000
1900	336,000	320,000
1901	312,000	288,000
1902	322,000	269,000
1903	356,000	224,000
1904	329,000	212,000
1905	339,500	245,500
1906	303,800	208,500
1907	312,400	241,000
1908	227,700	214,000
1909	377,000	310,000
1910	336,500	257,500
1911	342,413	246,000
1912	385,330	245,000
1913	454,776	236,250

Figure 1.4. Weight in kilograms of ivory auctioned at Antwerp and London from 1886 to 1913. George Frederick Kunz, *Ivory and the Elephant in Art, in Archaeology, and in Science* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1916), 467.

pound per year—to grub roots and to strip bark from trees. Elephants are famous for bulldozing their way through forest and brush (not to mention plantations and fields) as they migrate long distances in search of food and water. Their natural range includes all of sub-Saharan Africa, though hunting and habitat loss have severely restricted their movements today.

There are two subspecies of African elephant. The bush elephant is the larger of the two: it can attain a weight well over ten thousand pounds and reach a height of eleven feet. Its tusks, especially when small, are “soft,” making them ideal for carving. Mature tusks become long and heavy (in the 1890s, an average tusk in East Africa weighed nearly sixty pounds).¹⁵ The forest elephant has a round ear and is smaller than a bush elephant, averaging around seven thousand pounds and attaining a height of nine feet. Its tusks are also shorter and characteristically “harder” (more brittle). Its range is largely confined to the Congo basin and West Africa, though it can be found as far east as Uganda.¹⁶

Elephant herds are matriarchal. The oldest breeding cow is the leader, and the herd has around ten members, mostly calves, adolescents, and adult daughters. The twenty-two-month gestation period is unusually long for a mammal, as is the two-year suckling period. A cow can produce ten or more children across a lifetime that averages fifty to sixty years, so many females spend a considerable amount of their adulthood gestating or lactating. Females stay with the herd for life, but males strike off on their own upon reaching puberty at twelve to fifteen years, though they may join other herds for periods of time. When the matriarch is injured or killed, the rest of the herd is reluctant to abandon her, an instinct that often proved fatal to the entire herd in an era when get-rich-quick ivory predators roamed the continent.¹⁷

Before the widespread use of high-powered rifles and scopes, elephant hunting was a hazardous enterprise. Many Africans simply left these animals alone and sought their protein from more easily procured sources, but some groups specialized in killing elephants for subsistence and (once there was a thriving export market) for profit. The main obstacles to a successful hunt were the elephant’s intimidating size, sharp tusks, good sense of smell, and thick hide, which, taken together, made it difficult to get close enough to land a deadly blow. The Waata (of Kenya) overcame these hurdles by using a powerful poison derived from the *Acoanthera* tree. Hunters placed the poison on the tips of their arrows, covered themselves with elephant dung to disguise their smell, and then crept into the herd before taking their shots. Once an arrow pierced the hide, the poison would flow into the intestinal cavity, inducing cardiac arrest almost instantly. The

YEAR	WEIGHT IN POUNDS	VALUE IN DOLLARS	AVERAGE VALUE PER POUND
1896	1,091,100	\$2,226,804	\$2.04
1897	1,028,800	2,048,863	1.99
1898	1,000,200	1,990,838	1.99
1899	993,900	1,959,499	1.96
1900	988,900	1,933,334	1.95
1901	882,500	1,628,160	1.84
1902	1,082,100	1,931,332	1.78
1903	924,100	1,648,438	1.78
1904	904,500	1,754,293	1.94
1905	1,055,000	2,058,469	1.95
1906	985,500	1,978,042	2.01
1907	1,078,700	2,718,693	2.52
1908	934,500	2,094,700	2.24
1909	1,155,500	2,590,215	2.24
1910	1,120,000	2,397,833	2.14
Totals	15,225,300	\$30,959,513	\$2.03

Figure 1.5. Total imports of animal ivory into Great Britain from 1896 to 1910. Belgium, France, and Egypt were Britain's major suppliers. George Frederick Kunz, *Ivory and the Elephant in Art, in Archaeology, and in Science* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1916), 455.

Nyoro (of Uganda) used a different tactic: they attached a trip wire to a large and heavy iron spear, which they positioned along an elephant trail; once the elephant's foot struck the wire, the spear would plunge into its neck or spinal cord. Other groups used rope traps, designed to lasso a leg. Once the lasso brought the animal to a standstill, it could be speared or hacked to death. Still other groups employed a pitfall, a deep pit lined with upward-pointing spears. Setting a fire to induce a directed stampede was an indiscriminate but often effective method as well. Many Africans also acquired firearms and ammunition, typically in exchange for ivory; for the most part, however, these were old-fashioned muzzle-loaders, often used in conjunction with, rather than instead of, traditional methods.¹⁸

The Europeans did not create a new trade in African ivory in the second half of the nineteenth century: rather, they usurped the already existing trade that Swahili Arab and Indian merchants pursued with local African groups. The principal trading center was the island of Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania) in the Indian Ocean, which was then under the control of the sultans of the Omani dynasty. The island specialized in three interrelated “products”: slaves, ivory, and cloves. The slave trade itself peaked in the 1860s and then gradually declined, but Swahili Arab and Indian merchants continued to rely on slave labor to transport tusks from Africa’s interior to Zanzibar and also to work the clove plantations. Hamed bin Muhammad el Murjebi, better known by the nickname “Tippu Tip” (meaning “The Sound of Guns”), was the most famous of these Swahili Arab merchants, but there were hundreds of lesser-known figures with equally menacing nicknames (“The Locust,” “The Oppressor,” “The Finisher”) who plied in “black and white ivory” alongside him. More often than not, the Europeans who opened up Africa’s interior to exploitation were merely following the slave-and-ivory routes that Swahili Arab and Indian traders had long ago blazed (Richard Burton, John Speke, David Livingstone, H. M. Stanley, and E. Lovett Cameron all launched their expeditions from Zanzibar). At first, the Swahili Arab and Indian traders found plenty of ivory in the coastal regions, but as hunters decimated one herd after the next, the ivory-and-slave routes began to stretch deep into the interior. The first merchants reached Lake Tanganyika in the mid-1820s, Uganda a few years later, and the Lualaba River (Upper Congo basin) a few years after that, creating three intermediary ivory marts at Nyangwe, Ujiji, and Kازه along the way.¹⁹

If Zanzibar was controlled by Arabs, the global ivory trade was handled mostly by Indian merchants. They shipped tusks from Zanzibar to Bombay (now Mumbai), at that time the world’s ivory entrepôt, and from there to other parts of India or to China, Europe, and the United States. In India, the hollow middle part of the tusk (known as bamboo ivory) was highly valued, as it was ideal for the production of Hindu wedding bracelets (bangles). In Europe and the United States, the solid tip was most valuable, as it could be transformed into billiard balls. Ivory was also used around the world in the production of artistic figurines, as well as in the production of piano keys, knife handles, buttons, and other common items.

By the 1880s, European ivory traders—H. M. Stanley, Emin Pasha, and Alfred Swann among them—had begun to eclipse Tippu Tip and his fellow merchants. Tippu Tip lost his hunting grounds in the Congo to the Belgian king, in Tanganyika to Germany, and in Uganda to Great Britain, all during

the “scramble.” Even Zanzibar itself fell into British hands in 1890. To the victors went the spoils: Mombasa (in British-controlled Kenya) and Dar es Salaam (in German East Africa) replaced Zanzibar as ivory trading centers, just as London and Antwerp replaced Bombay as world auction sites.²⁰ From then on, Europeans arrived en masse to hunt in Africa, dreaming of ivory glory. They came in steel-hulled ships with plenty of cargo space for tusks; they built railroads to connect the ivory interior to the ivory ports; and they carried “elephant guns,” rifles so powerful that one well-placed shot to the head or the heart sufficed to bring an animal down (though “bang bang” shooters far outnumbered crack shots).

Many observers assumed the end was near. “The question of the disappearance of the elephant here and throughout Africa is, as everyone knows, only a question of time,” Henry Drummond, the author of *Tropical Africa*, lamented in 1889: “The African elephant has never been successfully tamed, and is therefore a failure as a source of energy. As a source of ivory, on the other hand, he has been but too great a success.”²¹ Carl Schilling, author of the popular *With Flashlight and Rifle*, made a similar declaration in 1905: “The day is not far distant when it will be asked, ‘*Quid novi ex Africa?*’ [What’s the news from Africa?] And the reply will be, ‘The last African elephant has been killed.’”²²

That their predictions did not come true—in regard to elephants or any other big game—was largely due to the willingness of European statesmen and conservationists to curb the slaughter before it was too late.

Wildlife Conservation before 1900

It is paradoxical that Africa’s modern conservation movement began with the European scramble for Africa, for the white colonists were more destructive on a larger scale over a shorter period of time than any group that preceded them. The southern African experience offered a foretaste of things to come. The Dutch Boers (meaning “farmers”) who founded Cape Town in 1652 named the regions they settled after the animals they found there: Elandsberg, Rhenoster, Oliphant’s River, Quagga Fontein, Gemsbok, Leeuw Spruit, and the like.²³ By the time Britain took control of the Cape Colony in 1814 (and the Boers trekked to the Natal, Transvaal, and Orange Free State in the 1830s), the place-names, as the missionary-explorer David Livingstone later observed, were already beginning to become but cruel reminders of the eland, rhinos, elephants, quagga, gemsbok, and lions that had once abounded there. Most of these animals could still be found in southern Africa, albeit in greatly diminished numbers, but not all of

them had survived the colonists' assault. The blaauwbok (*Hippotragus leucophaeus*), an antelope with a blue velvet coat, was last seen at the end of the eighteenth century; indigenous to southern Africa, it was a favorite target for hunters before it went extinct. The quagga (*Equus quagga quagga*), a subspecies of the plains zebra found only in southern Africa, died out in 1883; its demise came at the hands of farmers, who saw it as a competitor to their sheep and who turned its hide into grain sacks. Meanwhile, two once-common animals were well on their way to becoming regionally extinct: the Cape lion (*Felis leo melanochaitus*), which could no longer be found south of the Orange River by the end of the nineteenth century, and the Southern Burchell's zebra (*Equus burchelli*), which disappeared from southern Africa early in the twentieth century. Other species, notably the Cape mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*), the bontebok (*Damaliscus pygargus*), and the white-tailed gnu (*Connochaetes gnu*), were endangered. The South African wild ostrich (*Struthio camelus*)—hunted for its feathers and eggs—would have been endangered but for the fact that the local colonists domesticated it for commercial profit.

Like most farmers and pastoralists, the colonists had an ambivalent relationship to the local wildlife. On the one hand, they did everything they could to eradicate these creatures from areas under cultivation ("cleaning" the land, in Boer terminology). Wild animals were deemed nuisances or vermin: lions and leopards ate sheep, elephants and zebras marauded crops, and antelopes and gazelles competed for grazing space with cattle. On the other hand, many of these same farmers also depended on the consumption or sale of elephant ivory, rhino horn, hippo teeth, ostrich feathers, and antelope meat for their economic well-being, and so, the prospect of complete extinction was cause for alarm. To ensure a modicum of sustainability, the Cape Colony introduced game legislation (a closed season, protection for immature animals, antitrespassing measures) for the elephant, hippopotamus, and bontebok in 1822. In the Transvaal, the first game-protection measure came in 1846, and more legislation followed in 1858, 1891, and 1894.²⁴

For the most part, these early game laws served the colonists poorly as conservation measures: they protected only those species that were important for subsistence hunting ("for the pot," in the language of the day) or had a well-recognized commercial value, while at the same time singling out any species that trampled crops or preyed on game for complete eradication. They did, however, accomplish one thing: they fostered a network of early game reserves (some of which later became national parks), which offered a measure of protection for a wide variety of species that were

neither game nor vermin. The Natal established the Hluhluwe, St. Lucia, and Umfolozi reserves in 1897. The Transvaal established the Pongola Game Reserve in 1894 and the Sabi Reserve in 1898. A Volksraad proclamation of 1895, which gave rise to the Sabi Reserve, told the tale:

The undersigned, seeing that nearly all big game in this Republic have been exterminated, and that those animals still remaining are becoming less day by day, so that there is a danger of their becoming altogether extinct in the near future, request to be permitted . . . to discuss the desirability of authorizing the Government to proclaim as a Government Game Reserve, where killing of game shall altogether be prohibited, certain portions of the district of Lydenburg, being Government land, where most of the big game species are still to be found, to wit the territory situated between the Crocodile and the Sabi Rivers.²⁵

Ironically, the crocodiles in the Crocodile River received no protection. They were “vermin” and therefore worthy of eradication.

South African colonists managed to wreak much of their eco-havoc with the use of inaccurate and slow-firing muzzle rifles. By the time a new influx of Europeans colonized Africa in the 1880s, breech-loading and magazine rifles were in common use. These were high-velocity weapons powerful enough, owing to their accuracy and rapid-fire capabilities, to obliterate entire herds in a short period of time. Moreover, though colonists still hunted primarily for meat and profit, the ritualized sporting enterprise—the safari—had come into vogue among Europe’s privileged classes.²⁶ The most fashionable safari sites were British East Africa (Kenya) and German East Africa (Tanzania), though British Uganda and many other colonies saw an upswing in visitors as well. Safari enterprises, mostly headquartered in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, proved enormously profitable and helped spur the colonial economy: a typical two-month safari in 1910 cost \$1,700 (roughly equal to \$30,000 today) and employed thirty or more black servants as headmen, gun bearers, cooks, butlers, horse boys, and porters.²⁷

While rich Europeans went on safaris, the less well to do sojourned in Africa to prospect for gold and diamonds; to establish coffee, cotton, and banana plantations; or to pursue dozens of other commercial and industrial enterprises. The influx of whites in turn fueled a railroad-building craze reminiscent of that in the American and Canadian West a half century earlier. The Germans built the Central Railway from the port of Dar es Salaam

to Kigoma (Lake Tanganyika), while the British built the Uganda Railway from the port of Mombasa to Kisumu (Lake Victoria). The railroads made it possible to establish new white settlement communities—in the Kenyan Highlands, for example—at the expense of game territory and black African hunting grounds. Railroads also made it possible for white hunters to enjoy an ersatz safari in the African interior. “Thanks to the Uganda Railroad, many government roads and bridges, and a network of well-defined native paths,” Richard Tjader, a big-game hunter, wrote in 1910, “most parts of the country are now easily, comfortably, and safely reached, so that even ladies may greatly enjoy a short sojourn in the Protectorate.”²⁸

Europeans used terms such as the *white man's burden*, *mission civilizatrice* (civilizing mission), and *Kultur* (culture) to justify their presence, but local blacks (and medical historians) remember the years from 1890 to 1930 more as a time of epidemic disease rather than enlightenment and prosperity. Outbreaks of cholera and smallpox hit eastern Africa in the 1890s, decimating indigenous populations. Rinderpest, a cattle virus, as well as many lesser-known animal diseases, attacked domestic and wild herds at the same time. Many wild species were immune to rinderpest, but the buffalo, eland, kudu, and zebra were not, and they succumbed to the disease in large numbers. Cholera, smallpox, and rinderpest had immediate social consequences, for the pathogens sapped the military strength and economic viability of the Masai, Ngoni, and other African groups and starved the survivors into submission. “Through all this great plain we passed carcasses of buffalo,” Frederick Lugard, one of Britain's most celebrated elephant hunters, wrote in his diaries as he traveled through Kavirondo, “and the vast herds of which I had heard, and which I hoped would feed my hungry men, were gone! The breath of the pestilence had destroyed them as utterly as the Westerners of Buffalo Bill and his crew and the corned-beef factories of Chicago have destroyed the bison of America.”²⁹ It is hardly surprising, then, that the Masai used the word *Emutai* (derived from *a-mut*, meaning “to finish off”) to describe their experience with this devastation.³⁰

It is highly unlikely that any single East African species was in danger of extinction at the beginning of the twentieth century. The white population of East Africa was minuscule compared to that of South Africa. Kenya had just 600 white settlers in 1905, a number that would grow to just 9,651 settlers by 1921. As late as 1946, the white population was still under 25,000.³¹ In 1911, Germany's four Africa colonies (East Africa, Southwest Africa, Cameroons, and Togoland) had a white population of 20,000 in a lebensraum of 1 million square miles.³² Safaris, moreover, were an exclusive adventure of the rich, and even in the 1920s (the peak decade for their popularity), they accounted

for only a small fraction of the total game killed. Though rinderpest decimated the buffalo and eland population in the 1890s, Uganda administrators felt compelled to remove buffalo from the endangered list a scant decade later, the herds having multiplied so fast that they had become “not only a constant nuisance, but also a serious danger to the people.”³³ Nonetheless, Wissmann and many other colonial administrators understood that the cumulative impact of extravagant safaris, white settlements, and disease posed a long-term danger to the herds, and they moved the issue of African game conservation to the top of their colonial agendas.

The most important of the new colonial laws was the German East African Game Ordinance of 1896, which Wissmann wrote and promulgated. Though the measure was short-lived (Wissmann’s successor as governor lifted it a couple of years later), it nevertheless served as a model for game laws and natural reserves elsewhere in Africa and also as a focal point for international negotiations. “I have too often seen how every European who possesses a gun on board a Congo steamer fires in the most reckless fashion, especially at hippopotami, without having any regard as to whether or not he can possess himself of the animal when killed,” Wissmann wrote in 1897 to Baron Oswald Freiherr von Richthofen (head of the German Colonial Office from 1896 to 1898). “I have seen so much big game killed or mortally wounded in this wanton fashion, and, indeed, only by Europeans.”³⁴ He convinced the Colonial Office that the time had come not just to restrict hunting but also to “turn some of the game-rich areas of German East Africa into a national park.” Wissmann’s model—despite a nominal nod to Yellowstone, the world’s first national park—was more akin to a European hunting estate than a U.S. national park: he envisaged large game reserves that protected females and young during the critical breeding season, while still permitting the possibility of seasonal hunting for the privileged few. Wissmann himself picked the first two sites—one along the Rufiji River in the south and the other west of the famed Kilimanjaro—where hunting would be banned year-round, at least to most hunters, black and white alike. At the same time, he introduced a licensing system for the hunting of elephants and rhinos elsewhere in the colony, and he made it illegal to shoot elephants with tusks under three kilograms. The killing of females and young was prohibited year-round. He also outlawed certain hunting techniques, mostly indigenous ones (such as the use of fire to flush game), on the grounds that they were contrary to the “hunter’s ethos.” Many of these stipulations would find their way into the 1900 and 1933 treaties.³⁵

Wissmann’s role was important, but officials in other colonial states introduced measures on their own, both before and after him, and for

much the same reason: they were concerned about the long-term viability of their game stocks, most especially the elephants. The Congo Free State promulgated an elephant-protection measure in 1889. German Southwest Africa gave protection to ostriches and other game in 1892. Hunting laws came to British East Africa (Kenya) in 1897, through the personal intervention of Lord Salisbury, Britain's prime minister and foreign secretary. "My attention," he told Commissioner Arthur Hardinge and Commissioner E. J. L. Berkeley of the East Africa and Uganda colonies, "has recently been called to the excessive destruction, by travellers and others in East Africa, of the larger wild animals generally known as 'big game.' There is reason to fear that unless some check is imposed upon the indiscriminate slaughter of these animals, they will, in the course of a few years, disappear from the British Protectorate."³⁶ In his response to Lord Salisbury, Hardinge divulged his sly strategy for game protection in British East Africa: "Keep as close as possible to the German Regulations, but make our own slightly more favourable to wealthy sportsmen who bring money into the territory."³⁷

A colony-by-colony approach to game protection, however, proved difficult to implement in the absence of transborder cooperation. Thus, when German Southwest Africa banned the sale of female ostrich feathers in 1892, traders just smuggled their goods across the borders to Portuguese and British towns and ports, where they were able to exchange the feathers for ammunition and other goods. The Germans felt compelled to lift the ban a few years later and impose in its stead a nominal export duty of four German marks per kilogram on feathers.³⁸

The need for uniform regulations was even more obvious in East Africa, where elephant, zebra, gnu, giraffe, eland, and other herds migrated between the frontiers of the German and British protectorates.³⁹ British game laws, for instance, mandated the confiscation of elephant tusks under five kilograms. Custom authorities, however, discovered the laws were impossible to enforce at ports such as Mombasa, Kanga, and Kismayu because traders could easily transport their contraband across the unguarded German and Italian frontiers without fear of confiscation.⁴⁰ When British authorities urged the Germans to adopt Britain's tusk-size regulations, the German authorities refused on purely practical grounds. "If the natives found that by crossing the Ruvuma they could find a ready market for their ivory," Paul Kayser (head of the German Colonial Office from 1890 to 1896) told Lord Salisbury, "all the ivory trade on the east coast would be diverted to the Portuguese possessions."⁴¹ A few years later, when German East Africa finally did enact stringent tusk-size laws, Kayser's prediction came true: "Every prohibition to export," Governor Gustav Adolf von

Götzen lamented in 1903, “is an incentive to smuggling, and this will not cease so long as the Zanzibar market is not also closed to small ivory.”⁴²

If concern over the disappearance of East Africa’s big game led the German and British colonial administrators in the direction of game laws, the logic of the export trade finally pushed them in the direction of international cooperation. When Wissmann floated the idea of an international agreement in 1897, Lord Salisbury not only concurred but also insisted that London host the conference (Wissmann wanted the conference to be held in Brussels). The British Foreign Office drafted a treaty and invited plenipotentiaries from Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, and Belgium. The conference commenced on April 24, 1900, and the delegates signed the London Convention on May 19.⁴³

The 1900 London Conference: Environmental Laissez-Faire

The 1900 London Convention did not cover as much landmass as its grandiose title (Convention for the Preservation of Wild Animals, Birds, and Fish in Africa) might suggest. Article I delineated the twentieth parallel north (the same demarcation used at the 1889 Brussels Conference) as the northernmost limit of the treaty’s jurisdiction. This demarcation line corresponded roughly to the faunal and political divisions that separated Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa, so it made sense from a conservationist perspective (though it did open up the potential for new smuggling routes along what was largely an unguarded border). More problematic was the conference organizers’ decision to invite only the European colonists to meet in London, not the two remaining indigenous powers of Africa—Liberia, which had lost some territory during the “scramble” but had remained independent, and Abyssinia (Ethiopia), which had survived Italy’s colonization bid in 1896. Both countries were located below the twentieth parallel north and were therefore within the purported jurisdiction of the treaty.

The southern demarcation zone, which followed the twentieth parallel south, made no sense whatsoever from the perspective of Africa’s flora and fauna. This line was dictated solely by what the conference delegates delicately called the ongoing “difficulties” there, diplomatspeak for the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902). It excluded a considerable amount of African territory, including all or parts of German Southwest Africa (Namibia), Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique), Bechuanaland (Botswana), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and Madagascar, as well as the Cape Colony, Natal, Orange Free State, and Transvaal (Union of South Africa). After the war ended, the Germans, Portuguese, and British extended the zone south-

ward to the Cape, but resistance to wildlife protection in the new Union of South Africa was evident for many decades thereafter.⁴⁴

Article II and the schedules (which were appended to the treaty) spelled out the chief goals of the 1900 conference: to facilitate the creation of uniform game regulations by enumerating the animals to be protected, establishing closed seasons, and creating a licensing system. Section 7 of this article prohibited the “hunting of wild animals by any persons except holders of licenses issued by the Local Government.” Since the vast majority of indigenous hunters could not afford these licenses (even if they were available for purchase deep in the African interior), this stipulation for all intents and purposes turned subsistence hunting into poaching. At the same time, Section 8 prohibited the “use of nets and pitfalls for taking animals,” two trapping methods that Africans traditionally had used as means of subsistence and commercial hunting. (Subsequent game laws would ban still more traditional techniques, including foot snares, pits, traps, weighted harpoons, and poison-tipped arrows.) The putative reason for banning these techniques was that they were cruel to animals, but the actual reason was that the “passive” techniques of African hunters interfered with the “active” hunting methods of Europeans: horses fell into pits, and safari hunters got snared, trapped, and harpooned.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the delegates reaffirmed the provisions of the Brussels Conference, which forbade the supply of modern arms and ammunition to African blacks. This too ensured that the onus of the treaty fell harder on the indigenous populations than on the Europeans. The convention deprived black Africans of their right to use traditional hunting methods without lifting the ban on the use of European weaponry.⁴⁶

The schedules gave only a small number of species any real protection, nearly all of them central to sporting and commercial enterprises. Schedule I accorded full protection to eight animals “on account of their rarity and threatened extermination”: the giraffe, gorilla, chimpanzee, mountain zebra, wild ass, white-tailed gnu (black wildebeest), eland, and Liberian (pygmy) hippo. Four birds were singled out for preservation “on account of their usefulness” to agriculture: the vulture, secretary bird, owl, and rhinoceros bird (oxpecker). Schedule II proscribed the killing of immature elephants, rhinos, hippos, zebras, buffaloes, ibexes, chevrotains, and various antelope and gazelle species. Schedule III prohibited “to a certain extent” the killing of females of these species “when accompanied by their young.” Schedule IV set limits to the number of these animals (and a dozen or so others, including pigs, monkeys, cheetahs, and jackals) that could be hunted each year. Kill limits were also placed on several birds: the ostrich,

marabout, egret, bustard, francolin, guinea-fowl, and “other ‘Game’ birds.” In regard to fish, there was only one reference in the entire treaty: Article II, Section 9 prohibited “the use of dynamite or other explosives, and of poison, for the purpose of taking fish in rivers, streams, brooks, lakes, ponds, or lagoons.”

Whereas Schedules I through IV *protected* specific species, Schedule V had the opposite goal of *eradicating* so-called vermin species: lions, leopards, hyenas, (wild) hunting dogs, otters, baboons and “other harmful Monkeys,” large birds of prey (except the vulture, secretary bird, and owl), crocodiles, poisonous snakes, and pythons. The eggs of some animals—crocodiles, pythons, and poisonous snakes—were also singled out for destruction. The vermin clauses were designed to augment herbivore herds by controlling predators and to stop diseases (such as rinderpest) from jumping from wildlife to domestic herds. Wissmann, who attended the conference as an expert for the German government, advocated a policy of complete extermination, but Edwin Ray Lankester, director of the British Natural History Museum, called attention to the problematic nature of such a decision: “Certain species of animals, even if they are dangerous, should not be entirely exterminated because they are useful from other perspectives, such as preventing the excessive multiplication of other species.” On Lankester’s advice, the conference decided to permit a policy of animal control if it was “desirable for important administrative reasons,” but it chose the phrase “reduce the numbers within sufficient limits” instead of “exterminate.”⁴⁷ Still, it was odd that a preservationist document listed as vermin almost as many animals as it accorded the status of “full protection.”

The debates over Schedules I through V proceeded smoothly, until discussion turned to the most lucrative area of African commerce—the trade in feathers, skins, and tusks. The British and German governments, in their original Draft of Suggested Bases for Deliberations of an International Conference for the Protection of Wild Animals, Birds, and Fishes in Africa (hereafter the British-German Draft) included a sweeping prohibition on “wholesale trade in the hides, horns, and tusks of wild animals and skins and plumage of birds.”⁴⁸ The French and Portuguese, however, made it clear that they would not even attend the conference unless this clause was removed, so the British Foreign Office replaced it with a much milder restriction when it submitted its second draft, the *Avant-Projet d’Acte Général* (hereafter the *Avant-Projet*), at the conference itself. The reformulated text simply called for the “establishment of higher and more uniform tariffs for the exporting of the hides, skins, and tusks of wild animals, and the carcasses and feathers of birds.”⁴⁹

During the conference debates, the French and Portuguese delegates assaulted this reformulation as well, especially the phrase “higher and more uniform tariffs.” The British delegates, for example, argued that the marabou stork should receive complete protection on the grounds that it was disappearing from the skies of West Africa (“It is a regular business in the Cassamance,” one report read, “to give a native a gun with dust-shot cartridges and send him into the interior to shoot small birds for the milliners in Paris”).⁵⁰ But the French representative, Louis Gustave Binger, compelled the removal of marabou from the fully protected list on the grounds that these birds were still plentiful in Senegal and “their feathers are an object of commerce.”⁵¹ The irony of the French position was not lost on the other plenipotentiaries: a conference whose avowed purpose was to stop “the destruction of animals for the purpose of pecuniary gain,”⁵² it was noted, was scratching marabou off the full-protected list on the grounds that “their feathers were an object of commerce.”

The French also fought hard to protect their ostrich-feather enterprises. When Wissmann suggested placing a duty on feather exports, Binger countered, “Such a scheme would have the effect of putting the French Colonies at a grave disadvantage vis-à-vis the Cape Colony, which could avoid establishing an export tax and where energetic measures have been taken for the preservation of ostriches. We are entirely committed to protecting the species but cannot accept an export tax on feathers.”⁵³ A compromise was then agreed upon. Ostriches were added to Schedule IV (giving them partial protection) and a clause was added to Article II guaranteeing “the protection of the eggs of ostriches” from wanton predation, but no export duty was imposed on feathers. This compromise too was fraught with irony: the French refused to regulate the trade in *wild* ostrich feathers because it would benefit southern Africans, who had established a sustainable feather-farming industry based on *domesticated* ostriches.

The Portuguese and French delegates then joined forces against the proposal to impose an export tax on all animal hides and tusks. “The establishment of ‘higher and more uniform tariffs’ on hides exported from a part of Africa,” claimed the Portuguese plenipotentiary Jayme Batalha-Reis, “could result in damage to existing European industries, for example Portuguese firms that rely on hides of African origin. The zone demarcated by Article I is only a part of the natural region where African animals should be protected. We might therefore be pressed to invoke Article II, section 9, in such a way that the trade be restricted in areas situated outside of this designated zone, where export tariffs are lower or absent.” Binger agreed: “If we handicap commerce in African hides by the establishment of higher

and more uniform tariffs, then hides of American provenance would have a competitive advantage. It would suffice, and also be more useful, if we just enumerate certain hides whose export would be forbidden.”⁵⁴ In the end, the French and Portuguese prevailed. The final text imposed export duties only on certain specified products—“on the hides and skins of giraffes, antelopes, zebras, rhinoceroses, and hippopotami, on rhinoceros and antelope horns, and on hippopotamus tusks.”

Conspicuously absent from this list was the elephant tusk! The Avant-Projet foresaw a high export tax on tusks that weighed less than five kilograms. The rate would increase ad valorem on tusks between five and fifteen kilograms. All tusks above fifteen kilograms would be subject to a uniform tax. But France, Portugal, and Belgium—the three parties to the 1892 Congo Basin Convention—closed ranks and refused to modify their existing arrangements. “We will not achieve important results from the point of view of animal protection by imposing tariffs, even high ones, on large elephant tusks, which will still have a considerable commercial value,” Binger stated. “But since small tusks are less valuable, one could shut down legitimate commerce on them completely just by imposing heavy tariffs on them.”⁵⁵ Bowing to the inevitable, Wissmann proposed a total ban on the export of tusks that weighed less than five kilograms but no export duty at all on heavier tusks. This compromise proved acceptable to a majority of the delegates. Article II, Section 11 of the convention thus simply proscribed “hunting or killing young elephants” and imposed “severe penalties against the hunters, and the confiscation in every case, by the Local Governments, of all elephant tusks weighing less than 5 kilogrammes.” This was a small victory for the British, who placed special importance on the protection of immature elephants. But it was a major victory for the Belgians, French, and Portuguese, who were determined to defeat all efforts to impose export duties on mature ivory tusks.

Article III foresaw the establishment of game reserves within eighteen months of the treaty’s ratification. The convention defined reserves as “sufficiently large tracts of land which have all the qualifications necessary as regards food, water, and, if possible, salt, for preserving birds or other wild animals, and for affording them the necessary quiet during the breeding time.” Within the reserve, it was to be “unlawful to hunt, capture, or kill any bird or other wild animal,” except vermin. The Avant-Projet text called for the establishment of animal sanctuaries in all colonies encompassed by the convention, but Binger reworded Article 2, Section 5 to read: “establishment, *as far as possible*, of reserves” within the convention zone. “The creation of Reserves does not appear to be viable in certain very populous colonies,

such as Gambia,” he explained.⁵⁶ Batalha-Reis, the Portuguese plenipotentiary, expressed even greater hesitancy about nature reserves. He demanded the assurance that local administrators would have the right to create reserves solely for the protection of specific species (such as the elephant or zebra), the prerogative to alter the boundaries of the reserve as they saw fit, and the authority to disband the reserves entirely if they so desired.⁵⁷ All of these demands were duly written into the treaty text—a significant watering down of the treaty, as it left the reserves hostage to the changing whims of colonial administrators. Finally, the delegates inserted an elastic clause into Article III to permit the suspension of the treaty’s stipulations as “necessitated by temporary difficulties in the administrative organization of certain territories.”⁵⁸ This clause was designed to give administrators leeway during times of civil strife and disease epidemics, but of course, it also provided them wiggle room for renegeing on their promises.

The plenipotentiaries signed the 1900 London Convention at the conference’s end, with the understanding that it would be valid for fifteen years, after which it could be renewed, modified, or allowed to lapse. Problems with ratification, however, arose even before the ink had dried. First and foremost, the French representative announced at the concluding session of the conference that France would not ratify the treaty unless Abyssinia and Liberia also came on board. Neither of these countries, however, had even been invited to the conference (and when later asked to sign, the Liberian government blandly replied that its people “would most certainly resent any attempt to prevent their shooting, or otherwise destroying, the elephants which trample down their crops, or the leopards which carry off their sheep and goats”).⁵⁹ Leopold II’s representative then announced that Belgium would not ratify the convention unless France did so first. For its part, Portugal held out until all of southern Africa was on board (which would not occur until 1902).⁶⁰

Ultimately, the refusal of the Congo powers to declare themselves wholeheartedly in favor of the London Convention doomed its ratification. The treaty bounced around for a dozen years or so, before being quietly shelved when World War I broke out in 1914. Still, the conference partially achieved two of its primary objectives. First, nearly all the colonial governments rewrote their game ordinances to conform to the principles laid down in the convention, which included laws mandating closed seasons, minimum tusk weights, licenses, and protection for immature animals and endangered species. Second, many governments at least made a nod in the direction of setting up protected areas, and several of them established extensive networks of national parks and nature reserves.⁶¹ To their credit, France,

Belgium, and Portugal were among those countries that rewrote their game laws and established protected areas in conformity with the convention. They did not, however, enforce the five-kilogram minimum on tusks or do much to regulate the trade in hides and feathers.

The British Experience, 1900 to 1933

The most immediate consequence of the 1900 London Convention was that it spurred the creation of the British-based Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire. The Fauna Society, as its supporters affectionately called it, was founded in 1903 to lobby for the creation of larger game reserves and stricter game laws. For the next thirty years, it would be the single most important force for nature protection, not just in British colonies but in all of sub-Saharan Africa and much of Asia as well. It was nominally independent, but virtually all of its founding members were prominent statesmen and colonial administrators who maintained close ties to the British Foreign and Colonial offices. Because most of its members also happened to be big-game hunters or former hunters, detractors quickly dubbed them the penitent butchers.⁶² It is an apt term, but it could be applied equally to nearly everyone involved with the 1900 London Convention or, for that matter, to nearly everyone involved in animal conservation in that era around the globe.

Efforts to establish similar lobbying groups on the continent met with some success, though none became anywhere near as powerful as the Fauna Society. The Wildschutzkommission der deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft (Game Protection Commission of the German Colonial Society), established in 1911, went defunct after World War I when Germany lost its African colonies to Britain and France. In Belgium, the Institut des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge (Institute of National Parks in the Belgian Congo) and the Fondation pour Favoriser l'Étude Scientifique des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge (Foundation to Promote Scientific Study of the National Parks of the Belgian Congo) were the driving forces in African affairs, and France's most important wildlife institution was the Société d'Acclimatation et de Protection de la Nature (Society for the Acclimation and Protection of Nature). Other European nationals founded similar organizations in their own countries, even if they possessed no African colonies.

Paul Sarasin (founder of the Swiss League for the Protection of Nature) and P. G. van Tienhoven (founder of the Netherlands Committee for International Nature Protection) attempted time and again to bring these national organizations under one roof, but they had only limited success.

The first International Congress for the Protection of Nature was held in Paris in 1909, and seventeen European nations signed the Act of Foundation of the Consultative Commission for the International Protection of Nature in Bern in 1913, but World War I broke out before the Consultative Commission ever had a chance to meet. After the war, the congress met twice in Paris (in 1923 and 1931), out of which the International Office for the Protection of Nature emerged in 1934. However, it did not survive the impact of World War II. It was not until 1948 that a viable international organization was established—the International Union for the Protection of Nature, in Morges, Switzerland (renamed the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in 1956 and renamed anew the World Conservation Union in 1991). As a result, during the period between the two African conventions (1900 to 1933), the Fauna Society reigned supreme, as did British notions of nature protection.

The various national organizations spent much of their time lobbying for national parks and game reserves, and by 1933, they had achieved many successes. German East Africa (renamed Tanganyika Territory after the League of Nations placed it under British mandate) created eleven reserves, including the famous Serengeti, Kilimanjaro, and Selous reserves. The Union of South Africa established a total of eighteen protected areas, including the Etosha Game Reserve of former German Southwest Africa (which South Africa absorbed after World War I). The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan created six reserves, the Gold Coast one, Nigeria five, Nyasaland four, Northern Rhodesia five, Southern Rhodesia five, and Uganda six. British East Africa (renamed the Kenya Protectorate after World War I) possessed just two protected areas—the Northern and Southern reserves—but they were large, totaling around forty-eight thousand square miles together, about equal in size to the whole of England. The French established seventeen reserves in French West Africa, eleven in Algeria, ten in Madagascar, seven in French Equatorial Africa, and four in the Cameroons. Portugal created ten reserves in Angola and four in Mozambique. The Italian colonies had a total of eight. The Belgian Congo created thirteen protected areas, including the Parc National Albert (now Virunga National Park) in 1925, the first in Africa to be called a national park rather than a game reserve (though colonial park was more apt). South Africa followed suit, turning the Sabi Game Reserve in the Transvaal into the Kruger National Park in 1926 and adding three more parks in 1931.⁶³

The British government took the lead in creating game departments to police the reserves and enforce the game laws, though personnel shortages and minuscule budgets hobbled all efforts at effective administration.

Revenues from game licenses and export duties contributed nearly 10 percent of the Kenya Protectorate's yearly budget (£68,069 in 1899–1900 and £121,692 in 1904–5), but only a small fraction of that money ever found its way to the Game Department, so the chief wardens were able to hire only a handful of assistants.⁶⁴ Under those circumstances, as one of Kenya's first game wardens, R. B. Woosnam, wryly observed, the new game laws had little impact on the behavior of hunters, "except that it gave birth to the ivory-smuggling trade."⁶⁵

Enforcement improved over time, but even as late as 1939, the Game Department employed only five European officers and seventy African game scouts to patrol the entire perimeter of the Kenya Protectorate, which had a landmass of two hundred and twenty-five thousand square miles. The wardens, moreover, placed almost all of their personnel into the Southern Reserve, leaving the Northern Reserve to the Somali poachers who fenced tusks at nearby Italian-controlled ports. The port of Kismayu was a particular problem for the fencing of elephant ivory and rhino horn: "There is no possibility of suppressing the killing of the animal concerned so long as a free market exists over our borders," the Game Department concluded.⁶⁶ Assistant Game Warden K. F. T. Caldwell was even more blunt about the problems British officials were having with Italy: "Any specially protected animal can be immediately disposed of across the neighbouring border. Once such trophies have crossed the frontier they can be openly sold; *in fact to state that they were obtained from a neighbouring territory is accepted as a defence to any charge of their being illegally acquired.*"⁶⁷ In 1932, the British and Italian governments finally agreed to a joint effort to halt the poaching, but neither country sent enough game wardens and scouts to enforce the laws; when British troops seized Somaliland from Italy during World War II, they uncovered a still-booming business in illicit ivory and animal skins.⁶⁸

British colonial administrators had to contend with discontent among indigenous Africans as well. "In Unyoro and Toro particularly, and in a less degree in other parts of the Protectorate, the Game Regulations have not been observed by the natives," the Uganda commissioner admitted to the Foreign Office in 1903:

The business of procuring ivory is too lucrative not to tempt the Chiefs, and it is encouraged by the petty traders. . . . Before we took over the country, the necessities of the Chiefs and people, both in revenue and food, lay in the killing of elephants. This we have prohibited, giving them but little or nothing in re-

turn, and still expect them to be honest. All the Chiefs of Sazas get from the Government is 10 per cent on the cash which they collect for the hut tax, which in many cases does not amount to 100 rupees a year—too small a sum on which to keep up their position—whilst as regards the people at large, we have given them absolutely no return whatever.⁶⁹

Six years later, the next Uganda governor wrote to the secretary of state for the colonies, this time to voice concerns about the newly created Toro and Bunyoro reserves. “The chiefs of Toro complained bitterly to me of the ravages of elephants, and begged for some relief,” he wrote:

They asserted that the plantations were so frequently destroyed that the people are being forced to abandon the country. The elephants have become so fearless that they do not even hesitate to destroy habitations that stand in their way. They even attack travellers on the roads, and I was assured that, during the past year, no less than 16 persons have been killed by these animals in Toro alone. Under the game laws a peasant whose garden is being ravaged by elephants is not allowed to attempt to shoot them. He can only send to his chief, who is empowered to act in such cases, and is advised, in the meantime, to try to frighten the animals off by shouting and beating drums. The chief may take two or three days to reach the spot, and by the time he arrives on the scene the elephants are probably 30 or 40 miles off, and quite out of reach. The subject is one that bristles with difficulties, and while it would not be right to allow natives to kill elephants, save under exceptional circumstances, the fact remains that the animals are being protected to such a degree that they are devastating a populous and promising country.⁷⁰

These complaints and dozens like them over the next decade prodded Uganda's colonial authorities to establish the Elephant Control Department (later renamed the Game Department) in 1923 and to embark upon extensive culling campaigns inside the reserves.⁷¹ These efforts created the odd situation of having a game department that spent more of its time and money killing elephants than protecting them.

Yet another matter undermined all efforts to enforce colonial game laws and promote the establishment of protected areas: the tsetse fly problem.

At issue was whether the new game reserves were harboring tsetse flies and therefore promoting the spread of the disease trypanosomiasis. Trypanosomiasis is endemic in Africa and is better known as sleeping sickness when it infects humans and as *nagana* (a Zulu word) when it infects cattle. There are four organisms involved in the disease cycle: trypanosomes, which are flagellated protozoan blood parasites; wild animals, especially antelopes, buffaloes, warthogs, and bushpigs, which carry pathogenic trypanosomes in their bloodstreams but are immune to their effects; the tsetse fly (*Glossina*), a blood-sucking insect that feeds on large vertebrate animals; and a host, either a human being or a domestic animal. What made the tsetse fly central to this cycle was that it was the organism that transmitted trypanosomes from wild animals to people and domestic livestock through its bite. Different types of tsetse flies transmit different types of trypanosomes to different hosts, but only *Trypanosoma gambiense* and *Trypanosoma rhodesiense* are typically fatal to humans.⁷²

Scientists did not understand the trypanosome life cycle well in 1900, but local Africans, European settlers, and colonial scientists all knew from personal experience that outbreaks of trypanosomiasis in humans and livestock were linked in some way to the simultaneous presence of wild animals and tsetse flies. This knowledge made many of them reluctant to set aside special areas as parks and reserves, when they might only promote the spread of the fly and the disease. Sensitive to this concern, colonial administrators convoked a series of tsetse fly conferences (in 1907, 1920, 1925, 1933, 1935, and 1936) and sought the advice of prominent scientists, including David Bruce, Charles Francis Massy Swynnerton, Robert Koch, and R. H. T. P. Harris. Unfortunately, these efforts resulted only in contradictory opinions and a hodgepodge of policies. In some areas, the tried-and-true practice of indigenous Africans—burning undergrowth and thicket, the favored habitat of the tsetse—was successfully employed. More often, as in the Tanganyika Territory, human populations were forced to move out of tsetse-infested regions and were resettled elsewhere, following the principle of human-animal segregation. Some governments had success with the Harris fly trap, which (as the name implies) reduced tsetse fly numbers by luring them into traps, but this was a labor-intensive and costly approach to tsetse control. More far-fetched was the British-German Treaty on the Combat of Sleeping Sickness in East Africa (1908), which declared war on crocodiles and crocodile eggs on the grounds that they were the main vectors of disease transmission. All of these efforts, whether effective or not, had the same basic goal: to intercept at some point the three-way link between wild animals, the tsetse fly, and human settlements.⁷³

Many proposed a more draconian solution—the complete eradication of game from infected areas. “My honest conviction is that the presence and increase of game is entirely responsible for the presence and increase of tsetse, and that our game regulations are mainly, if not wholly, responsible for the increase of game,” Rev. George Prentice wrote to the acting governor of Nyasaland in 1910:

I hold that those who are responsible for the game laws are responsible for the presence of tsetse, and that the victims of trypanosomiasis are martyrs to the foolish policy of game protection. Any official, high or low, or any member of the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire, who, in the face of known facts, asserts the contrary may prove the sincerity of his assertion by allowing us to experiment upon him with our local forms of tsetse. Until he does so, either his sincerity or his courage is open to question. But perhaps nothing is to be gained by going over past policy. What concerns us is the future and the present. There is a danger that from former statements that “there’s no increase of tsetse,” “there’s no increase of game,” and other equally stupid and childish assertions, we move to the opposite extreme and say “the infested area is too extensive,” “the sacrifice of game would be too great.” *No matter what the size of the tsetse-infested area, it must be tackled now. No matter what the sacrifice of game, it must be made now.* Slackness, delay, vacillation in the past have already produced disastrous results. Further delay would be criminal.⁷⁴

The eminent British entomologist David Bruce concurred. “My advice is to clear out the game,” he told the Interdepartmental Committee on Sleeping Sickness (a British investigatory team) in 1914, when asked what policy he thought the Colonial Office should follow in tsetse regions: “It would be quite as reasonable to allow mad dogs to run about English villages and towns under the protection of the law as to allow this poisonous big game to run about in the fly country of Nyasaland.”⁷⁵ Following this advice, the governments of Southern Rhodesia and Natal (two regions where resentment toward the parks and nature reserves was high anyway) undertook massive animal-eradication campaigns over the next several decades, which resulted in the slaughter of perhaps three-quarters of a million wild animals.⁷⁶

The tsetse fly question put the Fauna Society on the defensive almost from its creation. Although game-eradication policies did not violate the

letter of the 1900 convention (Article III permitted eradication programs as long as they were “desirable for important administrative reasons”), they violated the spirit of the convention and called into question the appropriateness of game reserves and national parks. Edward North Buxton, the Fauna Society’s first president, acknowledged to the Colonial Office in 1905 that “the tsetse fly disappears” in regions “where game has been totally destroyed,” but he pointed out that “the danger of tsetse fly” was being invoked to justify the “wholesale destruction of game” even in areas where there was no problem:

Now I do not think that is fair; it is as if you took a dozen men, one of whom you know had committed a crime, and put them all in prison. Who knows which species of animals are the “hosts” of the bacillus which is carried by the tsetse fly? It seems to me unjust that you should bring them all in guilty before you know, and kill them all because some of them may harbour the bacillus. Science has not yet arrived at the point that you can justly condemn all species; and we deprecate its being used as an excuse for the destruction of game generally—because all the species are held, without proper investigation, to be responsible for the continuance of horse-sickness.⁷⁷

A few years later, Buxton again wrote to the Colonial Office:

The game is spread over the country, but the fly—*Glossina morsitans*—is confined to very limited areas. It is not the case that the fly follows the game in their migrations, except for very short distances. These observers tell me that there is no general and obvious connection between the various species of big game and the fly, except that the latter are blood-suckers. The fly has been found plentiful in districts where the observers have seen no game, and there are large areas where game is abundant and there is no fly. The question which, as it seems to us, remains to be proved is by what species the trypanosome of nagana is really nurtured—if it can maintain existence in the blood of all, or only a few, or only one? If by all warm-blooded creatures, there is no proof that even the destruction of big game would meet the case. The infinitely more numerous small mammals, reptiles, and birds might continue to serve as the hosts of the trypanosome, and the larger animals might have been extinguished in vain.⁷⁸

The Fauna Society had to deal with other park-related problems as well. An ideal game reserve, as defined by the 1900 London Convention, had to be large enough to incorporate the migratory patterns of the herds and have sufficient water holes, salt, and food for the migrating herds. The rough-and-tumble of colonial affairs, however, made it impossible even to remotely approach this ideal anywhere in Africa and most especially in the southern region. President Paul Kruger of the Transvaal, for instance, declared the area around the Pongola River a game reserve in the 1890s because it was malaria-infected and sparsely populated by whites *and* because it was situated along a disputed border with Great Britain (Kruger thought he could use the reserve as a bargaining chip in his negotiations with the British). Pongola was never rich in game in the first place, and the game that did roam there had been largely depleted by its game warden and by soldiers during the Anglo-Boer War. The reserve was even deproclaimed and reproclaimed several times before it finally ceased to exist in 1921.⁷⁹ The Sabi Reserve, also in Transvaal, had a far more fortunate fate: it became Kruger National Park in 1926, the second protected area in Africa to get the park designation. But for the first two decades of its existence, Sabi's first game warden (James Stevenson-Hamilton) spent most of his time doing battle with farmers who wanted to graze domestic cattle in its borders, with mining companies interested in the region's resources, with the builders of the Selati Railroad, and with soldiers (during the Anglo-Boer War and World War I) involved in guerrilla warfare.⁸⁰ Similar problems beset park wardens elsewhere.

The 1933 London Conference and the Apartheid Solution

In 1930, the Fauna Society sent R. W. G. Hingston to Africa on a fact-finding mission to determine how to address interrelated problems of ivory smuggling, animal cullings, and tsetse fly infestations. He concluded that the 1900 London Convention was functioning like bad "brakes" on the "destructive machinery" of colonial conservation and that, as a result, "African fauna is steadily failing before the forces of destruction brought to bear against it."⁸¹ There were, he argued, four main causes of the destruction. The first cause was the spread of cultivation, which put farmers in increasing conflict with wild animals. "Man, once he cultivates an acre of soil, will not tolerate wild animals in his vicinity," he argued. The second cause was the trade in tusks, skins, and hides, which required the killing of the animals to obtain the products. The third cause was the hunting practices of indigenous Africans, who employed "methods that are wholesale and indiscriminating in their

destructiveness.” The fourth cause was the tsetse fly menace, which made so many colonists hostile to game protection.⁸²

“How can this complex problem be dealt with in such a way as to lend some hope of preserving the species far into the future?” he asked rhetorically. “There would appear to be only one way. The human life and the wild life must be separated permanently and completely.” As long as humans and animals were forced to live side by side, he argued, there would be demands to exterminate the local wildlife: “In one place the complaint will be that the crops are ruined, in another that the wild life kills domesticated stock, in another that it terrorizes the district, in another that it spreads disease.” He concluded that the only solution to these problems was to separate humans and animals into “two completely distinct compartments.” For animals to survive in modern Africa, he declared, they “must be segregated in a sanctuary.”⁸³

Hingston proposed the immediate establishment of a network of permanent nature parks large enough to offer genuine long-term protection to the whole gamut of the continent’s animals. He noted:

The weak point about the reserve is its insecurity and want of permanency. It is brought into existence by a Proclamation in the local Government *Gazette*, provided that the Secretary of State agrees. It can be removed by the same easy means. Should at any time a demand arise for a portion or the whole of a game reserve to be allocated to some other purpose, as for instance, agricultural development, it is not easy for even the Home Government to resist the demand and in practice it is not always resisted. In point of fact the game reserves of Africa are from time to time contracted, abolished, or altered in some way by this type of legislation. It is only a matter of time before a public demand will arise for the reserves or some portion of them to be thrown open, and there is no guarantee that any game reserve in Africa will last over an extended period.⁸⁴

A policy of animal segregation, he argued further, would help wean Africans from the “primitiveness” of subsistence hunting and thus allow Europeans to teach them “the meat-securing methods which are practiced by more cultured races,” namely, the “keeping and breeding of domestic animals such as cattle, pigs, goats, sheep, fowls and ducks.”⁸⁵

Nudged by the Fauna Society, the British government asked its Economic Advisory Council in 1931 to explore the possibility of a new interna-

tional accord that would focus on making nature parks a permanent part of the African landscape. At Britain's urging, the International Congress for the Protection of Nature, which held its third (and final) meeting in Paris in July 1931, endorsed a revision of the 1900 London Convention. Then, in 1932, the British government established the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference for the Protection of the Fauna and Flora of Africa. It consisted of representatives from the Foreign, Colonial, and Dominion offices; the Fauna Society; the British Natural History Museum; Kew Gardens; the London Zoological Society; and the Economic Advisory Council, under the chairmanship of the Earl of Onslow. Its Draft Second Report served as the basis for the Convention Relative to the Preservation of Flora and Fauna in Their Natural State in 1933 (hereafter the 1933 London Convention).⁸⁶

The Draft Second Report relied heavily on Hingston's analysis, though the authors put less blame on indigenous black populations and more on the colonial settlements for causing most of the disruptions. "The danger to any species of wild animal arising out of indiscriminate killing for sport or profit needs no emphasis," the introduction noted. "The increase of population also and the spread of cultivation and settlement, assisted by modern methods of irrigation and modern sanitary and medical knowledge, must lead in time to the disappearance of wild life from many areas in which it is now found." The committee saw two interlocking dangers to the viability of wildlife populations—"on the one hand the destruction of animals by hunters, often for commercial purposes, on the other the advance of settlement and the gradually changing character of the country." Agricultural and industrial developments in Africa were proceeding at a slow but steady pace, the report noted, and eventually, their combined impact would be felt throughout the continent: "In urging the need of protection of the wild life in Africa, we are not advocating a policy which is in any way inconsistent with the future destiny of the country. We call rather for the exercise of prudence and foresight in the conservation of an important part of its natural resources."⁸⁷

The Draft Second Report emphasized that the primary purpose of the 1933 London Convention ought to be the "concentration of fauna in specially constituted sanctuaries." Much of Africa consisted of thinly settled regions where the local populace depended on agriculture and stock raising and where wild animals were often perceived as a nuisance, the report noted: "The harm done by marauding elephants and other animals to crops in many areas is only too evident. Indeed, in some British territories, the existing Game Departments had their origin in organizations the object of which

was primarily the protection of crops of the natives from damage done by elephants and other wild animals.” Domestic animals were also subject to diseases such as rinderpest and trypanosomiasis, wherein the “proximity of wild animals” to the domestic herds often accelerated the infection rates. “In many parts of Africa,” the report added, “there is no graver problem affecting human welfare than the tsetse problem. Large areas of country which might be put to profitable use for grazing have had to be abandoned owing to tsetse infestation.” Echoing Hingston, the report called for a system based on human-animal apartheid: “A final solution of the difficulties which arise from the intermingling of wild animals with native settlements can only be provided by the establishment of permanent and semi-permanent sanctuaries in which the animals can be effectually segregated.”⁸⁸

Preparations for the 1933 conference were so thorough that little discussion occurred at the meeting itself, and the plenipotentiaries of the Union of South Africa, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Egypt, Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan signed a final text that was nearly identical to the recommendations enumerated in the Draft Second Report. The prologue reiterated the principal goals of the 1900 London Convention but prioritized them differently. The main goal now was the establishment of “national parks, strict natural reserves, and other reserves within which the hunting, killing or capturing of fauna, and the collection or destruction of flora shall be limited or prohibited.” Relegated to second place was the “institution of regulations concerning the hunting, killing and capturing of fauna outside such areas” and the “regulation of the traffic in trophies.” Lowest on the list of priorities was the “prohibition of certain methods of and weapons for the hunting, killing and capturing of fauna.”⁸⁹

Article 1 declared that the convention would cover “all the territories (that is, metropolitan territories, colonies, overseas territories, or territories under suzerainty, protection or mandate) of any Contracting Government which are situated in the continent of Africa, including Madagascar and Zanzibar,” and “any other territory in respect of which a Contracting Government shall have assumed all the obligations of the present Convention.”⁹⁰ This made its geographic reach much more extensive than that of the 1900 treaty, which had not covered the territory north of the twentieth parallel or the large islands off the east coast of Africa.

Article 2 spelled out in detail what was meant by the terms *national park* and *strict natural reserve*. It defined a national park as an area “placed under public control” by a competent legislature, so long as it was set aside for the “propagation, protection and preservation of wild animal life and wild vegetation” or “for the preservation of objects of esthetic, geological,

prehistoric, archaeological, or other scientific interest for the benefit, advantage, and enjoyment of the general public.” A strict natural reserve, by contrast, was any area where hunting, fishing, forestry, agriculture, mining, and drilling were forbidden, as were any activities that in any way disturbed the flora and fauna within the confines of the protected area. Although there were some possibilities for overlap in this terminology, nature tourism was generally perceived as the defining feature of a park, whereas habitat and species protection was the defining feature of a strict natural reserve. No hunting was permitted in either area, except as authorized by the presiding authorities (game wardens, colonial governments, and so forth) for purposes of culling or animal control.⁹¹

Articles 3 through 7 obligated the participating governments to establish parks or strict natural reserves within two years of the treaty’s ratification. To accomplish this task, the governments were supposed to “control” (though not necessarily exclude) all “white and native settlements in national parks” so as to reduce the possibility of damaging the natural fauna and flora. They were also encouraged to establish “intermediate zones” around the parks and reserves in which the “hunting, killing and capturing of animals may take place under the control of the authorities of the park or reserve.” They were further urged to choose sites “sufficient in extent to cover, so far as possible, the migrations of the fauna preserved therein” and also to preserve a “sufficient degree of forest country.” Finally, they were encouraged to work with neighboring countries in the establishment of transnational parks.⁹²

Articles 8 through 10 and the annexes addressed the topic that had dominated the 1900 conference: hunting. Article 8 left much of the earlier hunting regimen intact, especially licensing requirements, but it spelled out in far greater detail the species that were to receive protection and divided them into two groups: Class A, which included animals whose protection was a matter of “special urgency and importance,” and Class B, which included animals that could only be killed with a game license but whose preservation did not require “rigorous protection.” The “vermin” category completely disappeared, a major advancement from the 1900 treaty. Article 8 was also slightly more favorable toward hunting by indigenous peoples: “No hunting or other rights already possessed by native chiefs or tribes or any other persons or bodies, by treaty, concession, or specific agreement, or by administrative permission . . . are to be considered as being in any way prejudiced by the provisions of the preceding paragraph.”⁹³

Article 9 broached a topic not handled in the earlier convention: the taking of “trophies,” defined as “any animal, dead or alive, mentioned in the Annex to the Convention, or anything part of or produced from any

such animal when dead, or the eggs, egg-shells, nests or plumage of any bird so mentioned.” Importantly, it also declared that all “found” elephant and rhinoceros tusks (old tusks picked up from the ground rather than from freshly killed animals) belonged to the government and not to the individuals who found them. The delegates added this article because over the preceding three decades, many customs officials allowed hunters to transport freshly killed animals across borders under the pretext that they were “trophies” or “found tusks.” Article 10 made it illegal for hunters to shoot from motor vehicles and aircraft or to use either to cause herds to stampede. It also reiterated the previous ban on the use of poison or explosives for killing fish and the use of nets, pits, snares, and poisoned weapons for hunting animals—yet another sign that traditional methods were still largely viewed as primitive and cruel.⁹⁴

The conference was brief, lasting only from October 31 to November 8, and there were no topics that caused heated debate. Changes to the Draft Second Report were minimal, and all were designed to strengthen the treaty rather than water it down. At the request of Belgium, the concept of “strict natural preserve” was added to Article 2, which not only enhanced the preservationist thrust of the treaty but also provided an alternative to the Anglo-American notion that protected areas should pay for themselves through tourism. Article 7 was enhanced with four new sections (5 through 8). The first three granted extra protection to Africa’s forested areas and indigenous tree species, and the fourth encouraged the “domestication of wild animals susceptible of economic utilization.” Articles 9, 11, 12, and 19 were also slightly expanded, reworded, or altered. The only major task that fell to the conference participants was to compile the annex (which had not been prepared in advance) and determine which species required which level of protection. This task, too, proved uncontroversial.⁹⁵

The 1933 London Convention officially went into force in January 1936, after being ratified by Egypt, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Sudan, the Union of South Africa, Portugal, and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. At the time of ratification, however, the Belgian government inserted a “reservation” that diluted the effectiveness of the treaty: “Elephants shall not be considered in the Belgian Congo or in Ruanda-Urundi as being included among the animals mentioned in Class B, but shall be understood to be included in Class A (elephants each tusk of which does not weigh more than 5 kilogrammes).”⁹⁶ In less bureaucratic language, this meant that the Belgian-controlled regions would continue to outlaw trade in immature ivory (tusks under five kilograms) but would not accept the new restrictions on mature ivory (tusks over five kilograms).

For the rest of the 1930s, the British government tried to extend the terms of the African Convention to the Asian region. The Economic Advisory Council once again asked the Earl of Onslow to preside over the new Fauna and Flora of Asia Committee (later renamed the Committee for the Protection of the Fauna and Flora of Asia, Australia, and New Zealand), which was all but identical in representation to the earlier Preparatory Committee that had prepared the 1933 London Convention. Initially, a majority on the committee assumed the 1933 London Convention could simply be extended to include Asia with some minor adjustments in terminology, but after listening to the arguments for a new treaty, they decided to start from scratch. “Certainly the adoption by foreign Asiatic Governments of measures to prevent smuggling from Africa of trophies (notably rhinoceros horns) is essential to the effective working of the African Convention,” Simon Harcourt-Smith, the most outspoken advocate of a new treaty, argued: “Nevertheless in such countries as Siam and to a very much greater degree French Indo-China there is a real and pressing need for internal legislation if certain rare species of fauna are to be preserved from extinction, and I venture to suggest that no effective action will be taken by either of the Governments concerned if they are merely invited to accede to the whole or part of the Africa Convention.”⁹⁷ Unfortunately, the committee spent the next several years composing a new text and trying to settle on the proper geographic boundaries for the new treaty, and before the Conference for the Protection of the Fauna and Flora of Africa and Asia could commence as planned on November 7, 1939, the outbreak of World War II forced its abrupt cancellation.⁹⁸ Plans to hold the conference after the war never materialized, in no small part because the colonial powers found themselves on the losing side of national independence movements in both Asia and Africa.

In 1652, when the Dutch first established a toehold on the Cape of Good Hope, lions and elephants roamed free, and Europeans found themselves largely confined to isolated ports along the African coastline. Three hundred years later, Europeans moved freely throughout the continent, whereas wild animals found themselves increasingly contained within the boundaries of nature parks and game reserves. This massive transformation occurred almost entirely during the half century that separated the Berlin Conference and the 1933 London Convention.

Apartheid was, in many ways, the logical outcome of Europe’s political and economic priorities. Wherever the Europeans established themselves in Africa—in the southern regions first and then elsewhere—they simultaneously

exploited the animal resources around them and carved out tracts of land for cultivation and pasture. These dual endeavors could not be sustained forever, for they led to both a steep decline in animal numbers and an ever-quickenening reduction in animal habitat. For the first two centuries, the damage remained confined to a handful of regions, but the technological-scientific revolution of the mid-nineteenth century spread the disruptions throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa. Elephants, rhinos, hippos, and many other large mammals were now easier to kill, thanks to a new generation of high-powered rifles and accurate scopes. Railroads opened up previously isolated areas for exploitation, settlement, and cultivation. The demand for tusks, skins, feathers, eggs, and many other animal products stimulated a commodities trade that reached around the globe, both for “legitimate” (government-sanctioned) and “illegitimate” (fenced and smuggled) products. The thirst for gold, diamonds, rubber, coffee, and bananas played a role as well. As Europeans became more aware of Africa’s natural resources and as they extracted these resources from the continent as if there were no tomorrow, they increasingly disrupted the ecosystems that had maintained a vast array of animals for thousands of years.

Racism too played a role in the apartheid solution. The colonists took European culture and values with them to Africa, and they judged African societies largely on the basis of how closely they approximated (or were willing to adopt) those same standards. Europeans had long ago eradicated or confined so-called vermin in their own countries in order to make room for cultivation and cities. They had enacted game laws and created hunting preserves and protected areas in order to maximize the annual “game crop.” They had hired wardens to catch and punish poachers. They had, insofar as possible, isolated their towns and villages from wild animals. The idea that societies could (or even should) strive to coexist with animals ran counter to the sensibilities they took with them to Africa, as well as to their political and economic interests in Africa. Had they looked at the world differently, they might well have carved out vast territories for indigenous Africans and indigenous animals that preserved landscapes from the European impact instead of creating nature parks and game reserves that catered mostly to white hunters and tourists. The establishment of mega-zoos was a peculiar solution to a specific problem that could have been solved differently only if the colonists had been of a different mind-set.

The haphazard way that Africa was carved up between 1885 and 1900 was significant as well. A hegemonic power on the continent might have been more willing to set aside for special protection larger chunks of territory in a greater variety of settings, perhaps even leaving intact terri-

tories that belonged to some of the larger and more powerful indigenous groups. A hegemonic power certainly would have been in a better position to create uniform game laws, control the flow of trade, and suppress smuggling. But Africa was carved up in the same way that Europe had been sliced and resliced over the centuries: by war, diplomacy, and sheer happenstance. The homespun rivalries of the British, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish spilled over to the colonial arena, sometimes more virulently than in Europe, but so did a proclivity to cooperate and compromise with neighboring powers. The number of agreements these powers reached during this period—on everything from free trade to nature conservation—is a testimony to their ability to promote their own interests through collective means. They shared an interest in suppressing indigenous hunting traditions and practices. They shared an interest in making sure African blacks did not have access to modern weaponry. And they shared an interest in maintaining a plentiful supply of game animals. It was only when individual greed far outstripped common restraint—as was almost always the case with ivory—that the cooperative impulse seriously faltered.

The apartheid solution was not uppermost in the minds of Hermann von Wissmann, Lord Salisbury, and the dozens of other statesmen, big-game hunters, and scientists who dreamed up the 1900 London Convention. Their experience with game laws and nature reserves in Europe simply did not prepare them for the problems they would face in Africa. What worked in Brandenburg-Prussia (Wissmann's birthplace) or Hertfordshire (Lord Salisbury's birthplace) did not necessarily work well in Africa: European game wardens had to deal with plenty of poachers but not with trypanosomiasis, elephant rampages, ivory poachers, skin dealers, man-killing lions, and colonial rebellions. The need for the 1933 London Convention became increasingly apparent over time, as the colonial governments grappled with the implications of their hunting and conservation policies. Conservationists were surprised at the ferocity of the resistance to the new hunting regimen, and they feared for the long-term prospects of animal protection in light of this resistance. Strict separation between people and animals seemed like a logical long-range solution.

For all its problems, the 1933 London Convention did much to conserve Africa's wildlife in the face of relentless development and demographic growth. The British version of a protected area—a nature park that sustains itself economically on tourism—has proven quite successful in the former East African colonies of Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, where Serengeti, Kilimanjaro, and many other parks draw millions of tourists to

visit each year, though the artificiality of these entities is hard to miss. The Belgium version of a strict natural reserve—in which tourism is kept to a minimum or prohibited entirely—has been more problematic. On the positive side, it offers a more “natural” setting for the protected animals, but on the negative side, it offers fewer opportunities for revenue production and therefore fewer incentives to hire game wardens, leaving the regions more vulnerable to poachers and smugglers.

There was much speculation as to whether the parks and reserves would survive the African decolonization process in the 1960s and 1970s. Concerns began to subside in 1964 when Julius Nyerere, soon to be Tanzania’s first president, issued the Arusha Manifesto, in which he pledged to uphold the integrity of the park system and to promote nature conservation in postcolonial Africa. Fears were further laid to rest when major African leaders met in Algiers in 1968 and signed the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, which largely reaffirmed the 1933 London Convention. By the late 1960s, Africa’s nature parks and reserves had become so famous around the world—and such a valuable source of tourist revenues—that it seemed folly to destroy them.

Time Line of African Animal Protection

- 1884 Chancellor Otto von Bismarck of Germany convoked Berlin Conference, attended by fourteen European countries. The conference addressed Belgium's claim to the Congo basin and laid down the rules for further African colonization, setting off the "scramble for Africa" that lasted until 1900.
- 1889 King Leopold II of Belgium convoked the Brussels Conference, which restricted the type of firearms and ammunition that could be sold to black Africans between the twentieth parallel north and twentieth parallel south and sanctioned the introduction of colonial gun licenses and big-game hunting restrictions.
- 1892 The Congo Basin Convention was signed by the Congo Free State (King Leopold II's personal fiefdom), France, and Portugal in Brussels to regulate export duties on elephant tusks in Central Africa.
- 1896 Hermann von Wissmann promulgated the German East African Game Ordinance, which served as a model for colonial game laws elsewhere in Africa and also as the basis for international agreements.
- 1900 The Convention for the Preservation of Wild Animals, Birds, and Fish in Africa (the 1900 London Convention) was signed in London in May 1900. Though never ratified, it led to greater uniformity in the regulation of Africa's migratory animals.
- 1902 The Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire was established in Great Britain.
- 1909 The First International Congress for the Protection of Nature was held in Paris.
- 1923 The Second International Congress for the Protection of Nature was held in Paris.
- 1931 The Third (and final) International Congress for the Protection of Nature was held in Paris.
- 1933 The Convention Relative to the Preservation of Flora and Fauna in Their Natural State (the 1933 London Convention) was held in London in November 1933.
- 1934 The International Office for the Protection of Nature was established. It did not survive the impact of World War II.
- 1948 The International Union for the Protection of Nature, headquartered in Morges, Switzerland, was created. It became the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in 1956 and the World Conservation Union in 1991.
- 1967 The Arusha Manifesto was declared by Julius Nyerere, who would soon become the first president of Tanzania. It established the framework for nature protection in postcolonial Africa.
- 1968 The African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources was signed in Algiers. It reiterated and expanded the terms of the 1933 London Convention.
- 1973 The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) was signed in Washington, D.C. It helped to halt the trade in wild animal products, including elephant tusks and rhino horns.
- 1979 The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals was signed in Bonn (the Bonn Convention). It became first treaty of importance to protect migratory animals worldwide.