

As usual, the man who does the job gets very little. An up-country African who poaches a leopard (at considerable risk) may get no more than 20s. (£1), but the receiver may get £50 or £80 a skin for running a consignment through, and the price in London or New York may be £100 or very much more. At least one of the top furriers in London finds the prices too high for his customers. The Americans are the biggest buyers, followed by Britain, France, Italy, and Germany and considerable numbers also go to Yugoslavia, Russia, and even China. Illicit trading in leopard skins is now reckoned to be the most profitable and skilfully organised racket in East Africa. The lorry carrying 300 skins which was recently captured was not considered exceptional. Somalia used to be the centre of the trade; now Addis Ababa is also an important centre, and large numbers of skins pass through Isiolo in the Northern Frontier Province of Kenya hidden under goat skins or bananas on lorries, or under sacks on a pack-train of camels.

In Africa the serious reduction in numbers of the leopard is already being felt in agricultural areas. Leopards are the chief predator on such crop-raiding animals as the baboon and bush pig, and when these reach plague proportions, as has already happened in some parts, the African farmer and smallholder receives a practical lesson in the importance of predators in general and the leopard in particular.

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