

## THE CONGO

The following notes are taken from a report issued by the Institute of the National Parks of the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, and except for the postscript, refer to the situation up to the end of 1960.

### *General Situation*

Communications became easier and staff difficulties at the various stations were avoided because salaries were paid and rations given out in the normal way. This was a period of transition for the Congo national parks and difficulties in adapting their administration to the new political régime were to be expected. The most encouraging feature of the period was the goodwill shown towards the parks by the new authorities, their understanding of the purpose of the parks and their desire to maintain them as before.

### KIVU PARK

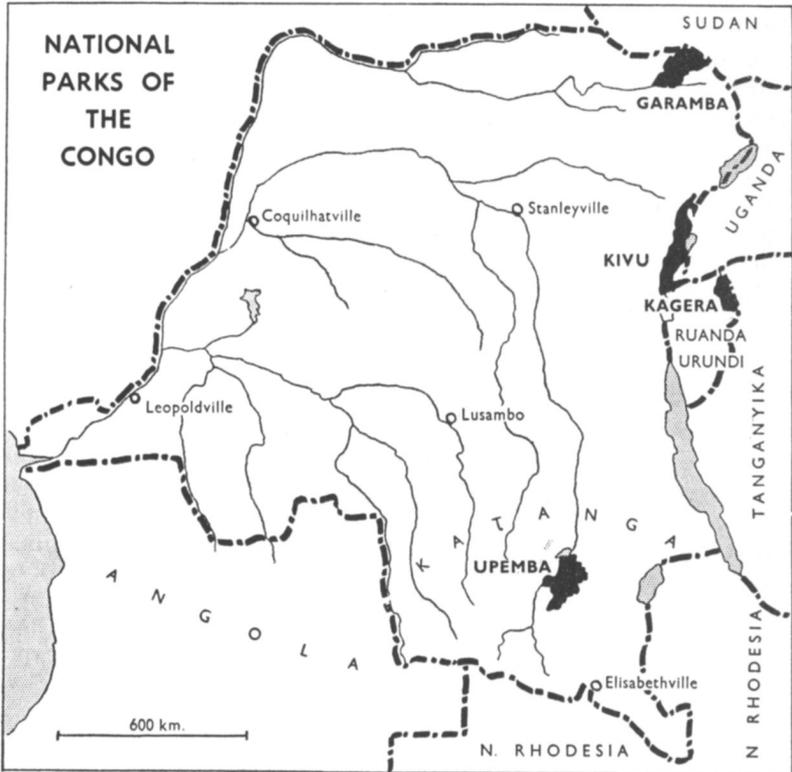
(Parc National Albert)

Circumstances compelled the European staff of this park to retire to Ruanda-Urundi, where they were unable to continue their work and so returned to Belgium. By mid-July the various posts were vacant, but on 1st August the Kivu Provincial Government appointed a Chief Conservator, Monsieur Anicet Mburanumwe, a young man, from the Butembo School of Agricultural Instructors. Monsieur Mburanumwe took the administration in hand at once, and sent all available reports and accounts to Brussels—no easy task at this juncture. The park guards remained loyal. Tourism as one would expect came to a full stop. A trickle of visitors—about thirty—was however recorded in October.

The Provincial Government wisely opposed claims of fishing rights and the occupation of park land: they decided to set up a Commission of Inquiry to examine the merits of each case.

### *Southern Sector*

As the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi are governed separately, the Ruanda part of the Kivu park, home of the mountain gorilla, now comes under the Conservator of the Kagera park. But since the Kagera is nearly 200 miles away, Ruandese guards have been specially engaged to control it and they will be put under the orders of an African assistant-conservator who will be stationed at Kisenyi.



Frequent incursions of Banyaruanda cattle into Congo territory were reported, and severe measures were taken to stop it. Trespassing cattle are seized and returned to their owners only on payment of a fine of 1,000 fr. per head. There were a few cases of poaching and in suppressing them the Chief Conservator was greatly helped by the local authorities.

The shelter at Kabara, near the grave of Carl Akeley, which Mr. G. B. Schaller had used for his observations on the mountain gorilla, has been destroyed—it is suspected by Ruanda shepherds.

### *Centre Sectors*

Administration of these sectors was difficult since the staff appointed proved unreliable: two assistant conservators in succession had to be dismissed.

People from neighbouring Uganda tried to turn the situation to their advantage and indulged in extensive poaching. Several motor boats were seized on Lake Edward and 24 arrests made on one single occasion.

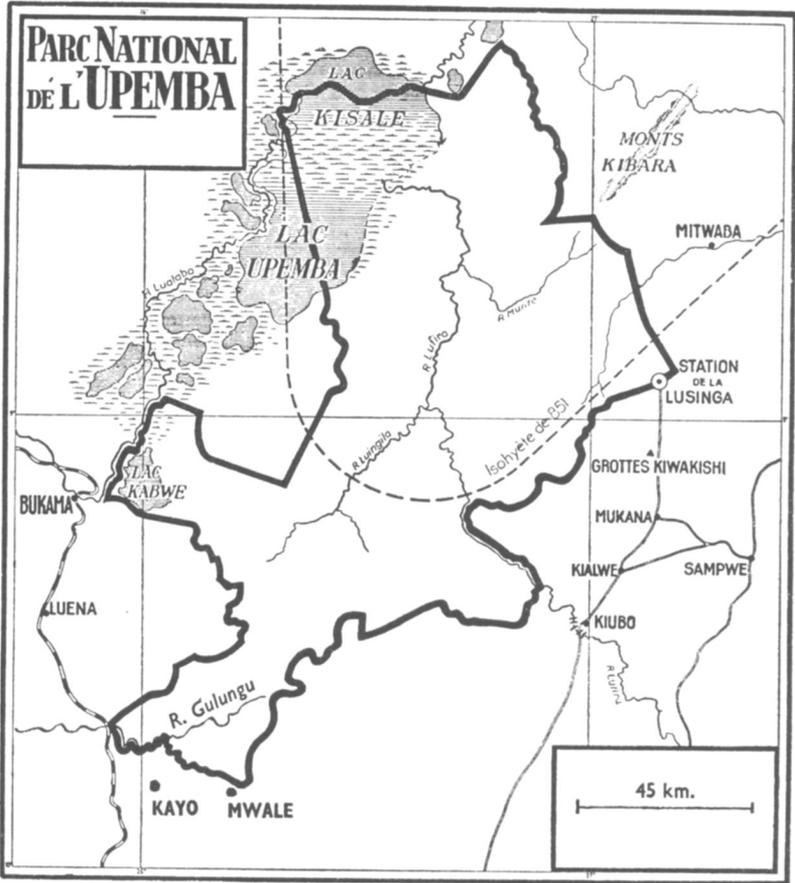
A serious incident occurred in the Ishasha region where large groups of poachers had been reported five times. A patrol of eight guards encountered 21 poachers from Uganda who had just killed two buffaloes and two hippos. When the patrols tried to arrest the offenders they were attacked and in the course of the fight which ensued one guard was killed and another seriously injured.

Another guard lost his life in November, in the Kibirizi sector: he was killed by a wounded buffalo, which had been wounded by poachers. The passivity of the large mammals of the plain of Ruindi-Rutshuru had previously been proverbial: there was never an incident such as this, despite constant traffic on the road which crosses the plain and the road leading to the co-operative fisheries on Lake Edward.

From time to time one still meets people who come to settle and hunt in the Kivu park, believing that all national parks were abolished when the Congo became independent. Such infractions are severely dealt with by the Provincial Government and the local authorities. The people who returned to Kamande in July and set up a large village were soon obliged to move out again.

### *Northern Sector*

The northern sectors of the Kivu park, and especially the Semliki plain and Lake Edward, suffered most from the political situation, for here poaching was intense, despite all that the



staff could do to stamp it out. Until October, the clerk of the Kasindi station, Monsieur Marc Shintone, worked unaided as Assistant Conservator: he was vigorously supported in his efforts by the local administration.

Other breaches of the law concerned trespassing in closed areas of the park, and the reinstalment of fisheries on the Semliki and Lake Edward in unauthorized places, such as the picturesque tourist site at Ishango. Measures were taken to prevent the deterioration of this lovely place.

In this sector a buffalo killed one guard and severely injured another.

#### GARAMBA PARK

The Conservator, Monsieur A. Ory, and his assistant, Monsieur F. Miesse, remained at their posts in the face of considerable difficulties: their firmness unquestionably saved the Garamba park from invasion by neighbouring peoples. Luckily the Conservator was able to thwart the manoeuvres of certain members of his staff who tried to get rid of him. He is on good terms with both local and provincial authorities.

The guards remained loyal to their work and to the aims of the Institute, and the administration and supervision of the park proceeded in the normal way. No outbreak of poaching was reported. In any case the time of the year was not suitable for poaching because the high grass made visibility difficult.

#### UPEMBA PARK

The Conservator and his assistant have continued their work without interruption. The Assistant responsible for the southern sector returned to Belgium but was immediately replaced.

#### *Northern Sector*

The Katanga authorities, and particularly the President, are very favourably disposed towards this park and have repeatedly expressed their determination to maintain it, with the boundaries as fixed by the 1957 Commission. In spite of these assertions the political situation has favoured return to the park of the human population. Even before the change-over in government people were moving back, but now this movement has increased to alarming proportions. Human occupation would destroy the vegetation and the fauna for ever. The northern part of the park up to the Lufira river and the Lake Upemba region is affected most. The guards cannot do anything to curb such offences in the present chaotic state of the country.

Ever since the creation of the Upemba park there have been constant disputes with Kayumba tribesmen, despite many concessions made in their favour. On 28th September they attacked the central station at Lusinga sparing nothing—the lodgings of the Congolese staff were the object of their fury just as much as those of Europeans. What would not burn was pillaged. Happily no lives were lost, since orders for evacuation were given at the last minute. Damage was considerable and the station was not re-occupied till a month later. It is a slow business getting the place back into working order. The Katanga government gave orders for an inquiry and the damage is being assessed.

The Munte river bridge, which was being rebuilt, was destroyed, and so was the Lufira river ferry.

The Upemba park no longer receives financial support from the Central Government. The Conservator was able to obtain funds from the Katanga government and help from the Mining Union of Upper Katanga and the Katanga Special Committee. The Touring Club of Katanga provided funds for the completion of the Munte tourist circuit.

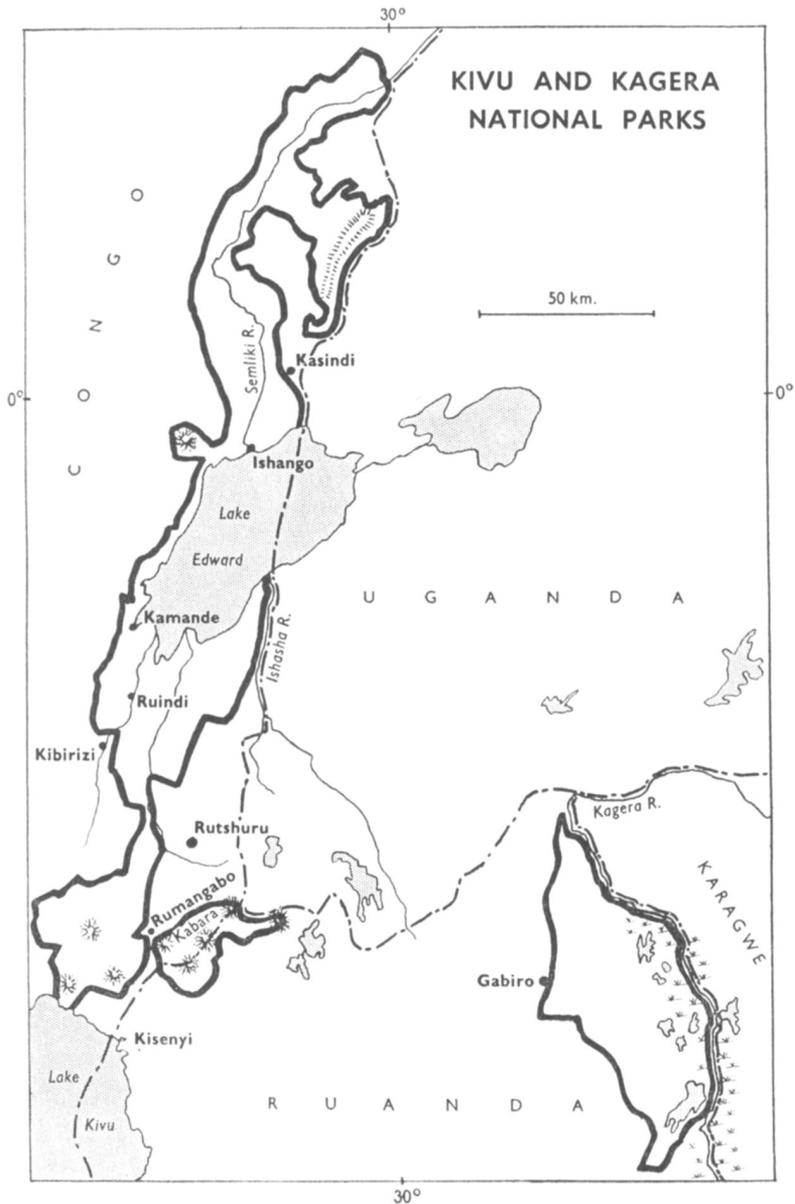
### *Southern Sector*

The situation is much better here. Supervision has been almost normal in spite of some difficulty in moving from place to place. The presence of members of opposing political factions among the guards did not help matters.

Few breaches of the law were reported. The Mwale track had to be blocked to prevent movement towards the interior of the park. The Gulungu tourist route has been partially opened. Building of the rest house at the new station of Kayo has been continued, but progress is slow for it is difficult to get the necessary materials which must at present be paid for in cash.

### KAGERA PARK

Though under separate administration, Ruanda-Urundi is not sheltered from the political upheavals of the Congo and respect for authority has been weakened in her people. In consequence, poaching has become common in several parts of the Kagera National Park. Bands of poachers, at times numbering more than 50, attack the patrols which are forced to retreat before overwhelming numbers. Banyambo and other tribesmen from Karagwe (in Tanganyika) continually trespass usually coming to fish and kill crocodiles. Several of their camps on the little islands of the Kagera swamps were found and destroyed.



Building at the Gabiro station is very nearly completed, but here and elsewhere work has been slowed down to free the Assistant Conservator, Monsieur D. Philippet, for more urgent duties.

In July, the Conservator, Monsieur G. de Leyn, noticed elephants in the park. They must have come from Tanganyika, crossing the Kagera river at some favourable spot. As no trace of them was found subsequently, they presumably, returned to their usual territory.

### *Postscript*

On 20th February we were informed that Monsieur Jean Renzaho, park warden of the Ishango-Mutsora sector of the Parc National Albert—the old name seems to be retained—had visited the Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda, and reported that the PNA was being maintained as usual and the rangers were all on duty. Monsieur Bonaventure Mbula is now the director of the PNA, with Monsieur Anicet Mburanumwe as the sous-directeur.

A later report (up the the middle of March, 1961) has been received from M. Jacques Verschuren, who has recently returned temporarily to Brussels. He reports that though there has been an outbreak of poaching in the Parc National Albert, it is being more severely dealt with than under the Belgians. The most serious problem is money. The Leopoldville Government, which has no resources, no longer gives credits for Kivu and Orientale Provinces. The Belgian Government no longer subsidises the activities of the National Parks Institute of Africa. There are still funds to pay the salaries of workers in the PNA for April, 1961, but there will be nothing left for May. As soon as they are no longer paid, personnel will stop work and pay themselves in kind by trafficking in game meat.

In Katanga, which is autonomous, a new institution, "The Katanga National Parks and Natural Reserves Institute," has been formed and is properly financed. The situation in the Upemba National Park is satisfactory.