

REINTRODUCING WILDLIFE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The activities of mankind have great and negative impacts on the ecology various organisation and individuals in Nigeria do not know how to manage the country's resources or how to protect the flora and fauna. The loss of wildlife in Nigeria has not received the attention it did in the past. Wild animals have almost been wiped out in Nigeria, a country where, a few decades ago, varieties of animals could have been spotted. Many zoos in Nigeria have closed. The only surviving reserve in Nigeria, the Yankari Games Reserve, is almost fading in people's memories. Many countries cannot replicate what is found in Kenyan Serengeti National Park or Krugga National Park in South Africa, but can adopt the German model, which is loose wildlife colonies found in different parts of a country like Germany, for instance, has such centres. This article attempts to drive up interest in the reintroduction of wildlife in Nigeria. Materials for the essay were obtained from books, newspapers, and journal articles.

Key words: wildfire, habitat, ecology, colonialism, extinction, trophy hunting

Introduction

Animal conservation is not a new term. It involves the protection of flora and fauna. In clear terms, it is about the management of earthly resources in a manner that the vegetation does not suffer. In addition, it means kerbing the depopulation of animals of various types. Little attention has been paid to these issues. Even less attention is paid to wildlife protection in Nigeria. Zoos are established in modern society so that citizens can physically observe wild animals. Visitors to zoos are usually elated when they see these animals. Zoological experience teaches us that it is important to retain these creatures in our world. The animals can be found in the zoo, but they also have a natural habitat. That natural habitat can be taken care of. Because human dwellings have to expand, settlements can be created for wild animals. This information informs the existence of parks around the world. Popular parks in Africa include the Serengeti National Park in Kenya and the Krugga National Park in South Africa. Nigeria has few parks. However, they are insignificant, just as maintaining a zoo in Nigeria is becoming a bygone tradition (Tarimo 23-28). A combination of these creatures, humans, and the environment is known as ecology, which is the focus of this study.

Ecology is used to mean anything that is linked to the earth or soil. How we relate to our environment has been a subject of discussion recently. This has become unavoidable because of the discomfort we feel daily from the atmospheric conditions around us. Many people have taken up the fight in various ways to, address the situation. Some pick up flags, like Green Peace activists do, to draw attention to their message while simultaneously being involved different

activities. Some direct their attention to trains and vehicles that transport nuclear materials from one location to another. Some others relay their messages through write-ups. The political landscapes of some countries have changed recently given gains by parties who place environmental issues ahead of any other policy. Industries have responded with innovations in the power supply, lighting and fittings of vehicles. Among all this, there has been concern about the expansion of cities and encroachment on forest and, the effects on flora and fauna (Eden). It is the duty of everyone in society to ensure that a clean environment. An individual like Chevalier-Watts is concerned about this development. While engaging in a debate that involves Greenpeace organisation, Chevalier-Watts is prompted to mention the role of everybody in society in maintaining an environmentally friendly atmosphere. She states as follows:

In brief, environmental politics have, over the past several decades, become a key feature of many nations__ political landscapes __involving personal values, local public affairs, and state and national politics__, eliciting responses from governments, private entities, groups and individuals, either for the benefit or, opposing the safeguarding of the environment. (443-449)

Many countries have actually responded very well. Animal activities have returned to the waters and forests of such countries, for instance. This life has been generated as a result of the commitment of governments. Curiously, none of that is happening in West Africa or Nigeria. In Nigeria, people have developed an appetite for the flesh of animals known as bush meat, but the same people have not identified with the cause of how to protect these animals, how to replace the animals being decimated, or how to make the forests once more house the animals, even if partially. They have not sorted for ways to correct what may be the easiest ecological regeneration programme to engage in. It is not a fiction that, in advanced countries, growing animal populations in some places now almost constitute a menace. This is joyful new. In West Africa, people can follow in the same footsteps as advanced societies to recall animals that have long been lost, since these animals are not extinct but, are found in other parts of the world or in tropical zones. Why the people and the states shy away from this duty is puzzling. With a little sprinkle of some animals, some other states will see the advantages and will embrace the practise (Manager).

Extinction of Animals

Many animals in Nigeria have gone extinct. 5 decades ago, lions, antelopes, monkeys, and leopards roamed the forests of Nigeria. This part of the world has been depicted in storeys, discussions, and films as the kingdom of wild animals. It was negative and the impression sustained. This testifies to how the Europeans met parts of Africa. The African jungle in the Tanzan of Africa is disappearing. Before that, the animals were either taken away or killed off. What we have left are rodents, elephants, and a few monkeys. A few decades ago, monkeys swarmed bushes on Igbo land. It was sometimes scary to walk through those places alone. The monkeys and other creatures were deafeningly noisy. Their disappearance in a short time is perplexing. People probably did not see that coming. Older people describe how they encountered lions in the Savannah. There are communities where, to take a title, the candidate

enters the bush, comes out a few days later, and is said to have killed a leopard and is called Ogbuagu, meaning slayer of leopard. The feat is actually symbolic. There is in Igbo land the fundamental feeling rich young men have when they exhibit replicas of elephant tusks, signifying that they are oguenyi or killers of elephants. With the realities of our time, such sights should not give anyone pleasure. This is an indication of how misguided people are in society. It is simply not different from the contentment that comes from wearing animal skin clothes and footwear. However, the message is that it was a tradition that involved actual encounters (Sapp).

Sapp discusses the impact of these past times and, reveals thus,

The middle 1900s, especially the 1970s and 80s, were rough for elephants in Africa. Elephants were hunted by Europeans and Americans to perilous levels and extirpated from many areas. This was both for sport and ivory. As elephants gained protection due to their decreasing numbers and demand for ivory decreased in many parts of the world, the number of African savanna elephants rebounded slightly. Elephants have been in decline again since the early 2000s. Although they are still endangered and at risk of extinction, some people in Southern Africa complain of —too many elephants because of conflict with humans over space and resources. People in these places need income, food, and water security.

Fish in rivers and streams have suffered the same fate. The number of fish in the market has dwindled. Not long ago, fish of different species were on sale. People went to streams to fish. The story has changed today. Fishes from the high seas now come in trickles, as the government has either connived with foreign fishing companies to empty the Nigerian waters of sea creatures or does not have the equipment to apprehend foreign, especially Chinese, trawlers that plunder the seas for fishes at night. The fish sustain the population as a food type. Fish meat contains proteins that are helpful to the human body. Their absence in our diet is dangerous. Therefore, they should not disappear. They also help to balance the ecosystem.

Reasons for the Depletion of Wild Animals

People have always depended on animal flesh to survive. They hunted the animals down, therefore As human populations grew, the population of wild animals decreased. Human habitations have expanded, leading to the shrinking of the space left for the animals. As the animals could not compete with humans, they succumbed to various methods used by human beings to win the battle for space. Deforestation is another factor that scaled down the presence of the animals. Some animals require well-fortified vegetation to survive. As this was denied to them, and given how they became exposed, they tried to migrate away from the threats they faced. However, they did not survive the relocation. People in the past kept domestic livestock like goats, fowls, sheep, and pigs. The culture was wound down, making people go in search of wild animals.

Governments failed to plan. The governments should have developed policies that would have prevented this sad development from happening. The transition from traditional to colonial methods has been tragic, as it was faulty. Nigerian communities did not learn modern ways of guiding against the construction of wildlife parks. In addition, the colonists introduced the habit of mocking people in wooded areas, calling them bush people. Communities in Nigeria also endeavoured to disassociate themselves from that. They embarked upon various civilising methods. The prominent one has been trimming the vegetation in their areas. They have to remove the burden of being regarded as people from bush areas. Roads and houses were also built by individuals and governments, following the paths set by the European colonisers.

Wars have caused the killing of wildlife in West Africa. Igbo land was not spared in the 1960s during the Biafra war. Nigerian and Biafran troops fought in almost every space in Igbo land in one of the most intense conflicts in human history. The wildlife took a huge blow as a result. Decades after the war, the various governments in Nigeria have not made the devastation a topic of discussion. This shows the attitude of the government and people in the country. While we refer to the number of people who lost their lives, we must also know that wild animals were displaced. By doing so, we will also address that situation.

Many communities have experienced such experiences. It happened in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Latin America, and Europe. How have these societies addressed this situation? Some have recorded some success. One such country is Germany. Given industrialisation and the many wars Germany experienced, the waters of the country were polluted. Aquatic life was affected. What the country did was to clean up the waters in a tasking process. People could not fish before. It has changed. They now fish. This was made possible because different fish types that were lacking in the waters were reintroduced. It is impossible for foreign trawlers to steal fish at night in German waters, unlike what befell Somalia decades ago, for instance. Therefore, the country has a firm grip on its marine resources (Voigt 215-217).

German forests were not spared during these crises. industrialisation has also taken its toll on the country's vegetation. The country has gone to work, trying as much as it can to reverse the conditions. Reforestation is gradually occurring. Areas are designated for urban dwellings, farming, and as reserved areas. When trees are cut, they are accounted for in such a way that not much is lost. They are replaced. There is a head count of trees. People do not just fall trees like they do in Nigeria. Laws guide these acts. Today, Germany has reactivated many bushes and forests. Famed forests still stand in their places with dignity. In equal measure, animals were reintroduced into the forests. The forests where the animals now reside are fenced in such a way that their movements are restricted. Motorists and pedestrians see the signs *“Beware of Wild Animals.”* They are indeed pleasant signs. Fortunately, the number of wild animals is on the increase. To curb any excess, hunters are permitted on given days to go in and hunt down a specific number of animals. The hunters are accompanied by their hunting dogs. It is indeed delightful. This is the same for the bush pigs served in bars. Heads of bush pigs and the like are hung at the entrances or rooms of bars, thus re-enacting old traditions. This is a gain for everyone. Unlike in Nigeria, where ethnic considerations influence government policies, in

Germany, game reserves are spread throughout the country. They are small and need not be as large as Serengeti Park or Krugga Park (217-218).

The German mould is successful because the populace is not hungry. The other sources of meat are simply sufficient. Still, some people want to go into the wild and shoot and kill animals as hobbies or for trophies. If the laws were lax, they would kill more than they may even need, especially to make more money. Were there to be corrupt practise, government officials would connive with the hunters to engage in unpleasant practises. If the government permitted certain laws and considerations in planning, the state would sabotage the efforts of some groups in the country. These are some factors that work against and may still work against attempts to raise populations of wildlife in Nigeria.

Sapp raises the issue of the efforts of the British government to prevent the importation of items from wildlife in Africa and elsewhere to Britain. The depopulation of wild animals in Nigeria and other countries can be traced to the demand in countries in Europe and Asia. This is what Sapp remarks,

In December, the British government announced a plan to ban the import of hunting trophies into the UK. The proposal has received popular support, but there is a vocal contingent that claims the ban will do more harm than good for both people and animals. Though the ban would be for all trophy hunted items, the most vocal dissent has come from those who are particularly interested in hunting in Africa, especially elephants. I support the ban, but it must be accompanied by money and a plan for infrastructure development by other means.

Many countries should follow the British example.

Sapp rightly points out that Africa, and especially southern Africa remains the source of these trophy items. According to her,

Trophy hunting of elephants primarily occurs in the countries of southern Africa—Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. These also are places that suffer from the long-lasting effects of colonialism and marginalisation of local people, often with harsh living environments and few natural resources that result in widespread poverty.

On the other hand, the Nigerian government recently applied a measure that is very common in East and Southern African countries, which is burning seized wildlife trophies. In a report, Museum gives an account of this action by the Nigerian central government:

In a groundbreaking move, Nigeria has publicly destroyed tonnes of seized wildlife products, including pangolin scales and leopard, python, and crocodile skins. The public display echoes similar

events in Kenya and elsewhere on the continent and marks Nigeria's renewed commitment to combat wildlife trafficking and safeguarding the nation's biodiversity.

Some commentators find fault with the burning of seized wildlife trophies like elephant tusks. They think it is a tragic contribution to the already devastated environment. Some others salute the step, saying records show that the action discourages poaching for animals like elephants. Some argue that since the roots of the illegal trade in the tusks and the actual quantity reported are inaccurate, burning might be a futile exercise. Underwood et al. clarified this situation below by saying that the

The use of seizures data to provide a reliable picture of illegal ivory trade activity has often been dismissed, for example, because of the obvious biases inherent in the data. However, it is intuitively clear that seizures data hold *some* information about illegal trade; therefore rather than ignoring the data altogether, we attempt to identify the sources of bias and account for them in the data analysis. Because ETIS contains reported records of illegal ivory seizures, bias arises from two principal sources. First, not all illegal ivory transactions within a country are seized; the proportion that is seized and, the *seizure rate* are unknown. Second, not all seizures made by law enforcement bodies are reported to ETIS; the proportion that is reported, the *reporting rate*, is unknown. (Underwood).

The appetite for these trophies can still be controlled without setting tonnes of ivory tusks ablaze. More policing is simply required where the need arises.

Conclusion

It is baffling how the animals in Nigeria's forests have simply disappeared. The Biafran war accounted for what happened in east central Nigeria. Generally, in the country, the attitude of the various governments towards wildlife protection and the habit of turning most of the animals into meat have led to the extinction of the animals. Deforestation in the form of the felling of trees and the expansion of urban areas have contributed in no small way to this problem. Another problem in the political system being practised in Nigeria is that the government at the centre has put itself in charge of every aspect of the people's lives. It is very glaring how corrupt, weak, vindictive, and inaccessible the government is. Under this system, everything that is connected to the improvement of the lives of the people collapses.

It is still not too late to begin repopulating some regions with animals. A good sum of money should be made available by state governments to fund them. Personnel can be trained to take charge. State governments can understudy regions of the world where wildlife conservation in the European model is practiced. Wildlife subjects should be introduced in the high school curriculum. Programmes in the field should be established in various parts of Nigeria. The mini

parks should be fenced to prevent animals from escaping from the enclosures. Motorists around these areas should be dully warned when they are in such zones. When these things are done, the benefits of regeneration of the country will begin to be enjoyed. Patience should be the watchword.

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