

Beira in Ethiopia



'The paucity of large wild animals in south-east Ethiopia is depressing', writes Melvin Bolton reporting on a survey he made there, including Ogaden, last year, 'but it comes as a consolation to find that dibatag and beira, found elsewhere only in Somalia, still survive'. Although they are not threatened with imminent extermination by habitat destruction, which is all too often the case in Ethiopia, their numbers are being kept down by hunting, which means that their future is far from assured. The beira *Dorcatragus megalotis*, like a large dik dik with very large ears, was last recorded in Ethiopia in 1899 (when seven were shot) in the Marmar Mountains south-east of Ayshi and close to the Somali border at the western end. Here in 1970 Melvin Bolton saw seven – the only place where he did see them – in an area of bare volcanic rock with loose rubble and scree where the sparse vegetation was well grazed by sheep and goats. He is confident that, while they are probably found in other areas, their Ethiopian population must be small and, from what is known of them, large numbers in any area are unlikely. But so little is known about the animal, which is in the *Red Data Book*, that it is not even known whether a population could be increased by the creation of a reserve and the exclusion of domestic stock.

Dibatag or Clarke's gazelle were more often seen, all in eastern Ogaden, but they too are persecuted by hunting and very shy. Control of shooting is the key to the conservation of both animals, but even when the long awaited protection legislation is enacted in Ethiopia, it will be useless without enforcement, which will require the full cooperation of both military and police. Melvin Bolton was working on a grant from the Overseas Development Administration of the British Foreign Office, but it was a grant of £100 from the FPS that enabled him to make this survey; our grant paid for the petrol.

New Senegal National Park

A new national park in Senegal is the Lower Casamance park in Isarth, almost on the frontier with Portuguese Guinea, consisting mainly of secondary forest, with Guinea savanna and mangrove.