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Follow-up of the AETFAT Meeting at Uppsala in 1966 on “Conservation of vegetation in Africa South of the Sahara”

I. HEDBERG

Abstract

Hedberg, I. (1976). Follow-up of the AETFAT Meeting at Uppsala in 1966 on “Conservation of vegetation in Africa South of the Sahara”. *Boissiera* 24: 437-441.

The author, following up the AETFAT meeting at Uppsala in 1966, has sent out recommendation circulars concerning conservation of vegetation in Africa. In 1972-1974, 43 countries were consulted, 23 of which have provided more or less extensive reports.

Résumé

Hedberg, I. (1976). Suite donnée à la Réunion plénière de l'AETFAT (Uppsala, 1966) sur la “Conservation de la végétation de l'Afrique au Sud du Sahara”. *Boissiera* 24: 437-441. En anglais.

A la suite de la Réunion plénière de l'AETFAT tenue à Uppsala en 1966, l'auteur a envoyé des circulaires concernant les motions relatives à la conservation de la végétation. Sur 43 pays africains consultés en 1972-1974, 23 ont fourni des réponses plus ou moins complètes.

Since the flora and vegetation is gravely threatened in most parts of Africa, it was found desirable to chose “Conservation of vegetation in Africa South of the Sahara” as the main theme for the AETFAT meeting at Uppsala in 1966. A circular stressing the urgency of this matter and a list of sites in urgent need of protection as well as the Proceedings (*Acta Phytogeogr. Suec.* 54, Uppsala 1968) were later distributed to all governments concerned. At the next AETFAT meeting in Munich 1970 it was suggested that a follow-up should be made in order to see to what extent the AETFAT recommendations had been followed. It can not be taken for granted, however, that the recommendations given by AETFAT would *a priori* be considered as the most urgent or the most important ones by the governments or authorities concerned. Furthermore, it is also possible that concern about conservation of vegetation was enforced by the AETFAT Proceedings though not exactly reflected in the accomplishment of its recommendations. Hence a follow-up in a broader sense has been carried out in order to elucidate the present situation. To secure as much information as possible circulars and letters have been sent to all countries or territories concerned. The result of the enquiries has been condensed

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|---|-------|
| <i>Zone sahélienne</i> | | <i>East Africa</i> | |
| Mauritanie | | Ethiopia | x + |
| Mali | | Territoire français des Afars et des Issas | x + |
| Tchad et Sahel tchadien | x | Somali Rep. N. | |
| Sudan | x | Somali Rep. S. | |
| <i>West Tropical Africa</i> | | Uganda | |
| Sénégal | x + | Kenya | (x) |
| Guinée | | Tanzania | x + |
| Sierra Leone | | Socotra | |
| Liberia | x | <i>South Tropical Africa</i> | |
| Côte-d'Ivoire | | Angola | x ! |
| Ghana | x + | Botswana | x ! |
| Dahomey | | Rhodesia | x ! |
| Nigeria | x + | Zambia | x ! |
| Archipel du Cap Vert | | Malawi | |
| <i>Central Africa</i> | | Moçambique | x + |
| Rép. Centrafricaine | | <i>South Africa</i> | |
| Gabon | | Cape Province | (x) + |
| Congo | x | Transvaal | (x) + |
| Cameroun | | Natal | (x) + |
| Zaire | | Orange Free State | (x) + |
| Rwanda | x | South West Africa | (x) + |
| Burundi | x ! | Lesotho | |
| Fernando Po | | Swaziland | |
| Príncipe, S. Tomé, Annobon | | <i>Madagascar and the Mascarenes</i> | |
| | | Madagascar | (x) |
| | | Mauritius and Rodriguez | x ! |
| | | La Réunion | x ! |
| | | Seychelles | x ! |

Table 1. — Result of enquiries concerning conservation of vegetation.

x = a more or less extensive report received; (x) = a short comment received but further information necessary or highly desirable; + = one or more of the recommendations of AETFAT carried out; ! = implementation of some of the AETFAT recommendations in the near future or great concern expressed about conservation of vegetation.

in Table 1, and what has taken place from 1968 and onwards could be summarized as follows:

Tchad et Sahel tchadien: a national park was established in 1969. This is probably the area proposed by Mr. Gillet in 1966. Though it is reported as "réserve intégrale", it does apparently not conform with the definition of a National Park according to IUCN since bush fires are arranged to facilitate for the tourists to watch the big game.

Sudan: the nine localities suggested by Dr. Ekhlas Bari have suffered more deterioration than improvement, mainly due to lack of funds to support conservation measures.

Sénégal: two national parks have been created since 1968. At least one of the areas, the national park of Casamance, was recommended at the AETFAT meeting. Furthermore a detailed conservation programme, apparently based almost entirely on the recommendations of AETFAT, has been elaborated, including a detailed budget. The programme was scheduled to be carried out from 1973 to 1977, but due to lack of funds it has not yet been initiated. UNESCO has been approached for assistance.

Liberia: three national parks have been ear-marked, but no project started because of lack of funds.

Ghana: three new national parks have been created and the area of Mole N.P. extended. The *Talbotiellia gentii* forest at Akosombo, which was amongst the AETFAT recommendations, is now a nature reserve.

Nigeria: of the eleven strict natural reserves established before 1968 four have been abandoned because of serious disturbances during the civil war. The rest are reported to be maintained in good conditions. A portion of the *Oban group of forests* is now protected as was recommended by AETFAT.

Congo: the areas suggested by AETFAT to be strict natural reserves are to a great extent devastated due to exploitation of various kinds.

Rwanda: the area of "Parc National Albert" has been reduced by *Pyrethrum* plantations and the bamboo zone is largely devastated because of grazing. The elimination of the tse-tse fly has meant settlement along the shores of the Nyabarongo Lakes, a portion of which was recommended for protection by AETFAT. A plan for encouraging farming along the shores has been put forward which calls for immediate action.

Burundi: action has been taken by the "Département des Eaux et Forêts" to stop the extension of tea plantations in order to protect threatened species. Steps have also been taken towards a more rigorous protection of the "Crête Zaïre-Nil". A national park in the Musinga area was proposed in 1973 and assistance asked for from the United Nations programme for development to create another national park along the river Ruvuki.

Ethiopia: several national parks have been established since 1969. At least some of them were suggested at the AETFAT meeting, viz. the Simien, Awash, and Omo River National Parks. They are primarily intended for the preservation of the fauna but if the protection is rigorous enough this means also protection of the flora in the relevant areas.

Territoire français des Afars et des Issas: the Dai forest, recommended for protection by AETFAT, is now partly protected. A project for protecting *Wissmannia carinensis* has been elaborated and IUCN has been approached for financial aid, but so far funds have not been available.

Somalia: no information has been received from Somalia but from Mr. Bally's paper (cp. p. 447) it is obvious that the situation is rather precarious. Steps have, however, been taken to protect the yebel nut (*Cordeauxia edulis*) and the last remnants of *Wissmannia carinensis*.

Tanzania: of the existing nine national parks four were established in 1968 and later. Of the proposals in the AETFAT Proceedings four have been acted upon: Mt. Meru is now part of the Arusha N.P., Kilimanjaro is a national park with representative parts of the forest placed under protection with National Park values, Rubondo Island is proposed to become a national park and Marang Forest is proposed to be included in the Lake Manyara N.P.

Angola: a considerable advance has been made in freeing the Quiçama N.P. from disturbing influence by the expropriation of all privately owned interests in the park, including a cattle ranch of over 25 000 head. Good progress is being made in the creation of strict Nature Reserves in the Maiombe Forest of Cabinda and the montane *Podocarpus* forests of the Angolan highlands.

Botswana: four national parks or game reserves (which in terms of management are equal) have been established after 1968.

Rhodesia: the government has accepted the principle of a proposed Flora Conservation Act, which, however, is not yet available. A more effective protection of *Androstachys johnstonii*, which was recommended by AETFAT, seems to be under way.

Zambia: six national parks have been established since 1968. Two of them are specifically managed to conserve and favour the important plant communities within them, namely the Nyika Park and its montane forest, and the Mosi-O-Tunya Park around the Victoria Falls and its mist forest and the vegetation of the Gorge. There are about 50 botanical reserves in the country situated in areas where they have some sort of legal protection.

Moçambique: the Floresta Sagrada de Chirindzene is being proclaimed as a "réserve intégrale" and from the beginning of 1974 *Encephalartos* is being protected.

South Africa: at least some of the vegetation types proposed by AETFAT for conservation are now protected, e.g. Cape macchia and the succulent karoo in Cape Province, and at least one of the areas in the Orange Free State mentioned by Roberts, viz. Tussen-die-Riviere Game Farm. Efforts are being made to rectify the present lack of larger reserves in the conservation structure. Conservation legislation and the management of conservation areas seem in general to be good. The fact that there are still so many different vegetation types which lack any kind of protection poses, however, a serious problem.

Madagascar: the destruction of forests are now more intense than ever. Massive international assistance is needed.

Mauritius and Rodrigues: five new national reserves have been created since 1968. Two species are protected, viz. *Latania loddigesii* and *Pandanus vandermeerschii*. IUCN and WWF have been approached for funds but so far money has not been available.

Réunion: certain steps have been taken towards conservation of the vegetation and a plan for the nearest 15 years has been worked out.

Seychelles: a special administration unit concerned with conservation has been set up and also a National Park and Nature Conservation Commission. Some of the islands recommended by AETFAT for protection are proposed to become

national parks or reserves according to a statement by the government of the Seychelles on its conservation policy. This concerns e.g. the Silhouette Islands, Felicity Island, part of the Praslin Island, and part of the Mahé Island.

It should perhaps be mentioned that many of the national parks do not conform to national parks as defined by IUCN, since in spite of sometimes strong efforts human activities are going on inside the parks.

The actual situation compared to the situation eight years ago in regard to the conservation of vegetation in those countries or territories on which information has been received could thus be summarized as follows:

Deterioration has occurred in Sudan, Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, and Madagascar.

Status quo prevails in Tchad, Liberia, (Nigeria), Botswana, and Rhodesia.

Improvements are reported in Sénégal, Ghana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Territoire français des Afars et des Issas, Tanzania, Angola, Zambia, Moçambique, South Africa, Mauritius and Rodriguez, Réunion and Seychelles Islands.

As anticipated the information obtained concerns conservation of vegetation far more than conservation of individual species. In fact, concern about individual species is very rare in the reports received. Those species which occur within a national park or a similar reserve will be more or less protected by virtue of the legislation, and this may to some extent save threatened species. But for those occurring only in other habitats, the situation is in many cases precarious.

Obviously, conservationists in Africa are often working against immense difficulties. Staff shortage, lack of training, limited financial resources, and above all, lack of tradition, make conservation of nature very difficult. Protection of vegetation, where it occurs, seems so far to be in most cases associated with other kinds of protection, particularly of game animals, which form a potential source of income from tourism. It should go without saying that in order to save the animals their habitat must be protected. But it should also be made clear that conservation of vegetation is essential also for other reasons. Large areas of undisturbed or prudently managed vegetation may be of paramount importance, e.g. for soil conservation and water conservation in river catchments – especially on mountain slopes. Among the multitude of plants at present threatened by extinction through reckless exploitation, there are not only ancestors and relatives of cultivated plants, which are indispensable for future plant breeding, but also numerous medicinal plants and other largely unknown species of potential usefulness as food, soil binders, and material for technical products, etc. In order to save these plants and their genetic variability for the benefit of man it is imperative to set aside sufficiently large samples of the main vegetation types (ecosystems) in all parts of Africa as national parks or biosphere reserves.

