Some officials believed that it was becoming too much of a security risk and too expensive to look after these products and therefore they should be destroyed. Others thought that some of these items such as rhino skin should be sold to the local people who use it for religious purposes, earning money to help conserve endangered species in Nepal. Still other conservationists commented that many of these trophies ought to be distributed to museums and schools to educate the general public on wildlife matters.

Finally, on 22 March 1998 at Tikauli, the Nepal government authorities burnt most of these trophies, but not the potentially very valuable horns.

Photot: Esmond Martin

The former Assistant Warden of Chitwan National Park in Nepal examines various rhinoceros products at the Parks' Headquarters at Kasara.

Source: Esmond Bradley Martin, c/o WWF PO Box 62440, Nairobi, Kenya

POURQUOI UNE STRATEGIE DE GESTION POUR LES ELEPHANTS D'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST?

Les plus importantes populations d'éléphants en Afrique de l'ouest partagent des habitats situés à la lisière des limites des frontières des Etats de l'aire de répartition. Dans ce contexte, aucun Etat ne dispose de sa propre population d'éléphants si on tient compte des mouvements transfrontaliers des pachydermes. De même, aucun Etat ne peut individuellement asseoir une politique efficace de gestion à long terme de ses éléphants et parvenir à des résultats escomptés sans associer l'engagement manifeste et la dérermination de ses voisins. Les éléphants évoluant à l'intérieur des frontières d'un pays peuvent éventuellement bénéfcier d'une protection suffisamment efficace, mais lorsqu'ils franchissent les limites territororiales de ce pays, cette protection devient caduque. Ceci compte tenu de la diversité des textes réglemenraires en la rnatière, de leur degré d'application, des différences d'approches de gestion auxquels s'ajoute la culture des peuples. Certains pensent qu'il suffit d'une protection et d'un aménagement appropriés pour immobiliser les éléphants dans une aire donnée. Cet approche peut paraître réaliste, mais elle n'est pas suffisante car de nombreux autres facteurs influent sur le mouvement des éléphants. C'est pourquoi, le

contexte de l'Afrique de l'Ouest nécessite une approche globale de gestion des éléphants à l'échelle sous - régionale, approche qui ne peur être développée qu'à travers un concept de base comme la strarégie de gestion. Un tel concept, élargi à la gestion des resources naturelles à l'échelle des pays de la Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, pourrair avoir des effets bénéfiques.

Source: Lamine Sébogo, GSEAf Yaoundé, BP 5506, Cameroun

TSAVO -THE LEGACY

The Tsavo controversy, it seems, will never die. Thirty years on and we see it surface yet again (Waithaka, 1997). In one review of *Elephants* (Spinage, 1994), I was criticised for nor including the politics of the Tsavo controversy in a text which was essentially biological (Woodroffe, *1995).* Unfortunately, the controversy has been misrepresented from the beginning, and Woodroffe was seemingly as ignorant of the real facts as other commentators have been. Laws (1969) divided the Tsavo ecosystem into ten apparently more or less discrete elephant ranges, which he thought might constitute clans of more or less distinct sub-populations. The proposal was then formulated to take a sample of 300 elephants from eight of these areas, making a total sample of 2,400, or roughly ten percent of the estimated total population. The sub-samples would then be compared to determine which areas, in terms of health, rate of growth, and reproductive fitness of the elephants, represented the optimum stocking density. In those areas where the sub-populations exceeded the proposed density, the recommendation would be to reduce the sub-populations to the perceived optimum density. Thus, no target had been set indicating the number of elephants which might be necessary to cull to reduce the population. After taking samples of 300 each in the Tsavo Park north of the Galana River, and in the Mkomazi Game Reserve in Tanzania, which is within the Tsavo ecosystem, further scientific sampling, nor population culling, was halted. Whether the plan would have had the desired effect had it been implemented in its entirety is a moot point. The elephant is a spatially mobile animal if the need arises and would probably have continued to clump in preferred areas, thus reducing densities which were considered optimum elsewhere; or might have left the disturbed areas where culling was instituted, elevating densities elsewhere. To be successful, Law's proposal required that a clan system did indeed operate. Subsequent study, such as that of Leuthold and Sale (1973) on the movement of elephants within Tsavo, did not disprove Law's hypothesis, as the area had been affected by a catastrophic drought. As one observer put it, studying the elephants after the drought was like studying the movement of people in London after the World War II blitz, and then claiming this to be the normal pattern.

Waithaka (1997) quotes Botkin in his list of references but does nor refer to him in the text. Botkin was quoted as an authority on the Tsavo elephant problem elsewhere (Pimbert and Pretty, 1997). Supporting management intervention, Botkin made but *a* short visit to the areas and referred only to the popular book *The Tsavo Story* (Sheldrick, 1973), which he highlighted as an example of an outdated belief in the organisation of the natural world based upon mythical premises (Botkin, 1990). Botkin's views apart and as informative as Sheldrick's book is, it is misleading to suggest that the policy of management adopted by the warden of Tsavo East National Park was one of non-interference. On the contrary, it was interference on a massive scale, which probably contributed to the elephant problem in the first place. This interference was the construction of the Aruba dam in 1953, which provided a large, permanent water source in an area otherwise subject to seasonal and periodic aridity, sucking in elephants as permanent, year-round residents.

Further interference in another sense, which ended catastrophically, was an attempt to excavate the seasonal water hole at Mudanda Rock to provide another permanent water source. This was frustrated by the plug being removed from the waterhole, which then failed to hold any water at all. It is clear that there was *a* deliberate attempt to manipulate nature in Tsavo from the outset.

But, whereas drought and poachers removed the perceived threat to the stability of the Tsavo ecosystem caused by an overpopulation of elephants, the damage caused by the controversy following the decision by the authorities to halt research and abandon management initiatives, has proved lasting, discrediting the science of wildlife management in Kenya. In opting for a policy of "letting Nature rake her course", the authorities made