

The Fauna Preservation Society

APRIL, 1962

EDITORIAL NOTES

SIR T. SHENTON THOMAS, G.C.M.G., O.B.E.—The loss of our Vice-President, Sir Shenton Thomas, who died on 15th January last, is a sad blow to our Society. His many services to the Commonwealth are well known. To our Council he was an invaluable adviser because of his knowledge of local conditions, especially in Africa. A case in point was his intervention a few years ago to preserve intact the Lengwe Reserve in Nyasaland, of which territory he had been a Governor.

DR. S. A. NEAVE, C.M.G., O.B.E.—We also deeply regret the death on 31st December, 1961, of Dr. Sheffield Neave, a member of our Council from 1944 to 1958. From 1942 to 1952 he was also Secretary of the Zoological Society of London, and in this capacity his services to our Society were unstinted. In particular our present Secretary gratefully remembers Dr. Neave's help in 1949 when he, himself, was appointed.

THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE.—On 23rd August, 1961, the Union lost a devoted servant by the death of its Assistant Secretary-General, Madame Marguerite Caram.

Liaison Officer.—Sir Hugh Elliott, Bt., O.B.E., has been appointed to IUCN Secretariat and posted to London as British Commonwealth Liaison Officer. He is particularly concerned with matters handled through official channels, including the Department of Technical Co-operation, but is in close touch with our Society. His office is at the Nature Conservancy.

GREAT BRITAIN.—The Council for Nature has arranged a holiday programme for amateur naturalists at its holiday and conference centre.

12th–19th and 19th–26th May. Two courses on the ecology of the Lake District.

21st–28th July. A musical week.

28th July–4th August and 25th August–1st September. Family holidays.

Details from Stanley Jeeves, Esq., Resident Manager, The Council for Nature, Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire.

The Scottish Field Studies Association has a comprehensive programme of courses of a week each at its Centre near Fortingall, Aberfeldy, Perthshire, and elsewhere in Scotland. There is also a noteworthy Hebridean Tour from 19th–26th April.

Details from SFSA, 179 West Regent Street, Glasgow, C. 2.

NATURE CONSERVATION IN AFRICA—A COURSE.—From 31st December, 1961, to 5th January, 1962, the Extra-Mural Department of the University of London held a course on conservation in Africa, in association with our Society and with the postgraduate conservation course held at University College.

Sixty-two paying members attended, though at least on one occasion more than eighty people were present. Although all the students happened to be in England at the time of the course—one could hardly expect men to come specially from Africa for five days—their native countries included Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Sudan, Kenya, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and Swaziland. They also covered a variety of occupations—veterinary, game department, forestry, medicine, zoology, education, law, agriculture, and also public and social administration.

The course was opened by Lord Hurcomb. A panel of distinguished lecturers covered many conservation problems in Africa. Among them were—the physical background, fresh water habitats, food chains and land-use, elephant and hippopotamus population problems, ecology in practice, and the preservation of endangered species.

The lectures were held in the Botany Department of University College and were of course followed by discussions. Between lectures, seminar groups were held to consider three subjects—Education, Tourism, Food.

Within these three subjects came the role of national parks and game reserves; how to persuade important officials that conservation of wild life was important; the difficulty of implementing a good land-use policy however desirable it might be scientifically; how to show that carefully controlled cropping of wild animals, which could continue indefinitely, was better than an orgy of poaching followed by extermination.

There were also visits to the Natural History Museum and the Zoo, and a film show at Shell Mex House—finally a sherry party with exhibits from the World Wildlife Fund and the Fauna Preservation Society.

On the instructions of Council, the thanks of the Society have been sent to Mr. D. Vanstone, Senior Assistant, University Extension Courses, and to Dr. P. J. Newbould, Botany Department, University College, for their arduous work in making the course the great success that it was.

THE UNIVERSITIES FEDERATION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE.—UFAW's Report, July, 1960–June, 1961, gives us the usual clear record of a fine year's work. Of special interest to our Society are comments on the poison 1080, sodium fluoro-acetate, which *Oryx* criticized in April, 1959, as "that terrible poison, a direct, indiscriminate, painful killer of all wild life and a secondary killer of domestic stock and of man". Some authorities have contested this view, alleging that 1080 is humane. To them UFAW replies: "It is true that the animal affected by the poison dies in convulsions and that during these convulsions it is unconscious. But it is also true that the animal is fully conscious until the convulsions start and also between them. Moreover, before the onset of convulsions there is a period of varying duration during which it is frightened and grossly distressed and also hyper-sensitive, so that normally innocuous sensations of touch become painful."

UFAW, together with the RSPCA, is associated with the Animals (Cruel Poisons) Bill, which was introduced into the House of Lords by the Earl of Cranbrook on 30th January, 1962, and given a second reading. This Bill would, as regards poisons, implement the Report of the Committee on Cruelty to Wild Animals, published by H.M. Stationery Office in June, 1951, Cmd. 8266—the Scott Henderson Report.

In a review of *The Path Through Penguin City*, by H. R. Lillie, *Oryx* (August, 1955) described the brutality of the explosive harpoon in whaling and asked: "Must this terror go on?" Apparently "Yes", for UFAW tells us that their continuous efforts, since 1947, to substitute the electric for the explosive harpoon have come to nothing.

THE MANIPUR DEER.—We are pleased to hear that the Manipur Administration has put into effect Mr. Gee's recommendation (*vide Oryx*, VI, 2, p. 115) that an enclosure should be built on the verge of the Keibul Lamjao sanctuary and that a few of the deer should be kept in it. This is necessary owing to the extreme difficulty of seeing the deer in their thick, reedy habitat.

SOUTH VIETNAM.—We are pleased to learn that a national commission for nature protection has been set up in South Vietnam. The chairman of the commission who is also the Director of Waters and Forests, is responsible for the application of the Commission's programmes. These include wild life protection, soil conservation, nature education, and the creation and organization of reserves and national parks.

RUANDA-URUNDI.—We are grieved to learn from Dr. Victor van Straelen that, on 10th January, 1962, M. Guy de Leyn, Conservator of the Kagera National Park, was murdered in his house at Gabiro by terrorists of the Tutsi tribe.

TANGANYIKA.—The Annual Report of the Game Division for 1960, received in January this year, mentions that after complaints about leopards near the township of Mwanza, a special trap was made and no less than five leopards caught. The point is that they were not killed, but transported to the Serengeti National Park under the direction of the game ranger, and there released.

NORTHERN RHODESIA.—On 20th April, 1950, the Government of Northern Rhodesia proclaimed the Kafue National Park, to general satisfaction. But somebody soon discovered that part of the Park was in native trust land, and the legal status of the Kafue as a national park had gone. Ten years of badgering were needed to put this right, but on 15th September, 1961, the status of the Kafue as a legal national park was fixed by Proclamation.

During 1961 the Game Preservation and Hunting Association carried out valuable educational work for school children within the park, with field expeditions, lectures, and films. An essay by one of the visitors appears on another page. There were seven parties containing ninety children altogether; but only one of these parties was of African children

and only one of coloured children. Why? Because the week at the Camp costs £10, which includes transporting the children to the camp and back, 600 miles altogether. Although the Government paid £300 towards the lecturer's salary, they would pay nothing towards the cost of transport and one cannot altogether avoid the impression that the Government of Northern Rhodesia is behind other Governments of Central and East Africa in practical appreciation of the value of nature conservation. The disastrous 40 per cent cut in the staff of the Game Department—which was enforced in 1958—has never been made up and the split between the Game Department and Tsetse Control, which worked so smoothly under one head, remains.

SOUTHERN RHODESIA.—The Annual Report for 1960 of the Department of Wild Life Conservation of Southern Rhodesia gives news of the Matusiadona and Chizarira reserves. These were set up to receive animals displaced by the rising waters of the Zambesi, when the Kariba dam was closed in November, 1958.

In Matusiadona, elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, eland, sable, roan, greater kudu, waterbuck, zebra, and other animals are now common. In fact Matusiadona is already becoming an important sanctuary. Three tourist camps are being developed.

The situation in Chizarira is not so good, for poaching is still prevalent and an increase in control is needed. Nevertheless wild life populations are increasing and many young animals can be seen.

THE ADDO BUSH ELEPHANTS.—In March, 1953, *Oryx* reported the completion of the Armstrong Fence, designed and built by Ranger Armstrong to enclose and save the last remaining elephants of the Addo Bush, near Port Elizabeth. Only seventeen elephants then remained. *African Wild Life* tells us that these have increased to thirty. Moreover, the Eastern Province Branch of the Wild Life Protection Society of South Africa, has taken the fence down, dug an 11-ft. moat around the elephant park, and re-erected the fence at the bottom of it. The improvement in the appearance is remarkable.

The Addo Park also contains a pair of black rhinoceroses brought from East Africa, and awaits hippopotamuses which are to be brought from the Kruger National Park. In the Addo Park are also buffaloes, eland, kudu, springbuck, red hartebeest, oribi, and many other indigenous animals of the area.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.—We learn from *National Parks Magazine* of the progress of the plan to preserve the Florida Key Deer, *Odocoileus virginianus clavium*, the smallest American deer, which had been steadily disappearing together with its habitat, until by 1951 only about thirty-two remained.

In 1954 the National Key Deer Refuge was established on 282 acres of land. Gifts and purchases have since enlarged the refuge to 6,932 acres, the latest being 167 acres given by the North American Wildlife Foundation.

There are now more than 200 Florida Key Deer

The same magazine reports that Judge Russell E. Train of Washington D.C. has formed the African Wildlife Leadership Foundation, to send African students to study conservation in American colleges. They hope thus to overcome the apathy of many Africans towards their natural heritage and towards desperately needed tourist money. The first student, Malande Olindo from Kenya, will study biology and wildlife conservation at Central Missouri State College.

COSTA RICA.—The Minister of Agriculture and Livestock in Costa Rica has informed us that the Government has started a programme for the preservation of fauna and for the establishment of reserves to protect habitats.

A particularly interesting possibility is the establishment of a Forest Reserve or National Park in Cabo Blanco at the southerly tip of the Nicoya peninsula. This is perhaps the last home of the Miriki (*Ateles geoffroyi frontatus*) an interesting subspecies of Geoffroy's spider monkey.

A new hunting law has been worked out also, in collaboration with the National Association of Hunters and Fishermen. It replaces the old law which was ineffective, and includes provisions for the conservation of wild life.

AUSTRALIA.—We congratulate the Fauna Protection Panel of New South Wales on their two new red and black placards and handbills. They read as follows, with supporting detail: "Stop Senseless Slaughter. Conserve Wildlife." "Invest in the Future of Australia. Conserve Wildlife."

Leadbeater's Possum.—Mr. J. H. Calaby sends further news of *Gymnobelideus leadbeateri* whose rediscovery after fifty years was reported with an illustration in *Oryx*, VI, 2.

There is quite a thriving and completely protected colony living in very dense vegetation in a watershed reserve.

The Thylacine.—Mr. N. R. Laird, Honorary Secretary of the Tasmanian Thylacine Research Group, sends still further confirmation of the continued existence of the Thylacine. In August, 1961, two fishermen at Sandy Cape, 50 miles north of Macquarie Heads, trapped an animal whose description tallied completely with that of a thylacine. It escaped, but a blood sample brought back by Mr. C. B. Mollison, of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, was examined scientifically. Thylacine hair was found in the blood.

Dr. Laird kindly sent us also a photograph of a plaster cast of a footprint of a juvenile thylacine taken in a river district of the north-west coast of Tasmania. He says that the thylacine undoubtedly survives in small numbers in widely separated districts but adds that there is no room for optimism about the species increasing or maintaining its numbers without special consideration of the problems involved.

The Short-necked Tortoise.—Among animals threatened with extermination is *Pseudemydura umbrina*, the short-necked tortoise.

The short-necked tortoise is a highly adapted animal which has had a remarkably vague scientific history. For over a hundred years it was

known only from the one specimen in the Vienna Natural History Museum—the collection details of which were limited to its cryptic label “Nova Hollandia Jun.”. Who collected it, and when, is not known but it reached the Museum in 1839 and it is surmised that its collector was Dr. L. Preiss, who was working in Western Australia about that time. It was not recognized as a new species until described by Siebenrock in 1907, and its locale remained a mystery until 1953 when two specimens came to the notice of scientists. They were both found at Bullsbrook, about 25 miles north of Perth. More have since been found there, but it seems that the entire population is limited to three small swamps in one privately-owned paddock. The tortoise is believed to be completely carnivorous and to feed on tadpoles and other animal life of shallow, ephemeral pools which form over a short period during the winter. Apparently the creature aestivates underground in “crabholes” throughout the summer, when the pools dry up completely. The crabholes form in a peculiar type of soil which occurs on the coastal plain adjacent to the Darling scarp. It consists of consolidated sand dunes overlying clay deposits. Most of this habitat has been cleared on account of its suitability for vineyards and because of the quality of its clay for brickmaking. Other apparently similar country remains, but despite careful search, the short-necked tortoise has not been found outside an area of a few hundred acres.

In April, 1961, a public appeal was made by the Conservation Trust Fund of Western Australia for money to protect the tortoise's environment and for research into its requirements for survival. The Government of Western Australia contributed £1,000 to this appeal and also agreed to compensate the owners of the tortoise land by giving them Crown Land elsewhere.

We are indebted to Mr. A. J. Fraser, Chief Warden of Fauna, Western Australia, for the above information.

The Noisy Scrub-bird.—We hear through Dr. D. L. Serventy that the noisy scrub-bird, *Atrichornis clamosus*, has been found again, after being thought extinct for more than seventy years. The finder is Mr. H. O. Webster, an Albany naturalist who, after hearing the bird's resounding voice, saw it in thick scrub near King George Sound. Later he and Dr. Serventy made tape recordings.

Because it possesses only two pairs of vocal muscles, instead of the seven usual in “song birds”, *Atrichornis* is regarded as primitive. Although a very accomplished mimic which sings all day, it is very secretive, runs with great speed and agility, and is loath to fly. It is the most famous of Australian birds thought to be extinct, so much so that a monument has been erected at the site of its discovery in 1842—to *Atrichornis* and to Gould's collector, John Gilbert, who discovered it.

There are a number of birds in this newly found colony. Now, as the *Sydney Morning Herald* says, it is the duty of the authorities to follow the example of New Zealand when the *Notornis* was re-discovered and to take every possible step to ensure the noisy scrub-bird's survival also.

The Eyrean Grass Wren.—The Bird Observers Club, Melbourne, announced in September, 1961, that naturalists visiting the Macumba

river north of Lake Eyre had seen three Eyrean grass wrens, *Amtornis goyderi*, one no more than 2 feet away, and had found a nest containing two small young. No specimens were taken.

This bird is known only from the few original examples—the type specimen was collected on 18th December, 1874—but its close relative, *Amtornis modestus*, is well known from the western and southern shores of Lake Eyre.

NEW ZEALAND.—Following the death of the kakapos taken into captivity (*vide Oryx*, August, 1961), the Minister of the Interior has announced that no more kakapos will be captured, at least not until a clearer picture of their habits and food in the wild has been obtained.

Forest and Bird, the journal of the Wild Life Protection Society of New Zealand, in printing the IUCN resolution on the export and import of endangered species (*vide Oryx*, V, 6, p. 376), reports that the New Zealand Government has decreed that native birds shall not be exported without sound reasons and an inquiry into each specific case. Also mentioned are prosecutions in the Bay of Plenty area, for breaking the export law.

THE WHOOPING CRANE.—On 7th February we heard from Dr. Richard Pough that thirty-eight whooping cranes, including five young birds, were wintering in the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas coast. This is the highest number since 1938, when records began. Then there were only fourteen.

There are also seven whooping cranes in captivity.

RHINOCEROS HORN.—We are delighted to hear from Mr. E. P. Gee that following the recommendation of the Indian Board for Wild Life, the Government of India has prohibited the importation of rhinoceros products from Nepal, chiefly rhinoceros horn.

Some progress towards the suppression of the traffic in horn, which is such a threat to all species of rhinoceros, has been effected in Zanzibar—previously a convenient market for horn illegally exported from Kenya. The importer has now to show that the horn has been legally exported from the country of origin and he has to be in possession of documents of ownership.

A recent and tragic example of the effect of this traffic is the killing by poachers of the world-famous rhinoceros Gertie which lived in Amboseli Reserve, Kenya.

“OPERATION ORYX”.—Following the killing of Arabian oryx in the Eastern Aden Protectorate in December, 1960 (see *Oryx*, VI, 1, page 5), the Society considered the possibility of forming an oryx reserve in Arabia. The difficulty of maintaining such a reserve was found to be very great and it was decided that the only hope of preserving the Arabian oryx was to breed some of them in captivity, with the hope of eventually re-establishing this oryx as a wild animal in some part of its original habitat. Isiolo, in the Northern Province of Kenya, was chosen as the first

step in this experiment and the Aden Government kindly granted permission for an expedition to be sent to the Protectorate in order to capture a few oryx.

As plans took shape many volunteers applied to join the expedition, among them Major I. R. Grimwood, Chief Game Warden, Kenya, who was chosen as leader. His deputy in Arabia is M. A. Crouch, the man who, knowing the desperate local situation, had suggested an immediate rescue operation. Other members of the expedition include a veterinary surgeon, M. H. Woodford, Captain G. A. Shepherd of the Aden Protectorate Levies, P. W. J. Whitehead of Ker and Downey Safaris, Kenya, D. R. M. Stewart, Biologist to the Kenya Game Department, and C. K. Gracie, who will pilot a Piper Cruiser spotter aircraft kindly lent by the East African Wild Life Society.

Our Public Relations Officer, John Hillaby, obtained financial help for "Operation Oryx" from the *Daily Mail* group of newspapers. A grant has been promised by the World Wildlife Fund. On 22nd March, Major Grimwood and Mr. Gracie left Kenya for Aden taking the Piper Cruiser with them. They will complete all preliminary arrangements for the expedition. The full party will set out from Mukalla (49° E., 14° 30' N.) on 21st April, 1962, and go north to Sanau (51° E., 18° N.) by road, a distance of 500 miles. From Sanau they will search for oryx for a maximum of six weeks, helped by the spotter aircraft. If successful the captured oryx will be flown by chartered aircraft to Isiolo where special pens have been prepared by the Kenya Game Department.

The urgency of this operation was emphasized by a report from the British Agency, Mukalla, telling of a raid from Qatar in December, 1961, when sixteen more oryx were killed. No man knows how many oryx still remain in all Arabia, but there can only be very few now.

CONGO.—We read in the *National Parks Magazine* of January, 1962, that the American Conservation Association—a charitable, educational and scientific foundation of New York City, supported by Laurence S. Rockefeller and members of the Rockefeller family—has earmarked an emergency grant of \$10,000 to pay the staff of the Congo national parks. No funds for keeping employees at their posts have been forthcoming from the Congo government yet, and the United Nations has been unable to assist in a programme for preserving the animal population and vegetation of the parks.

Monsieur Paul Pierret who has been working at Niangara station on the border of the Garamba National Park, visited our Society and told us that Belgium and Germany have also made contributions.

ITALY.—A reserve of 130 acres for the study of natural science, to be known as the Natural Integral Reserve of Poggio Tre Cancelli, has been created in Tuscany. It consists of virgin mountain scrub and is surrounded by a buffer zone. This is the first step in a plan to preserve a series of typical wild habitats in Italy.