

The Fauna Preservation Society

EDITORIAL NOTES

Great Britain.—Two new reserves have been declared by the Nature Conservancy.

Bridgewater Bay, in Somerset, includes the Huntspill river and sea wall area of 300 acres, and 6,000 acres of tidal mud flats. Steart Island, which until the end of the eighteenth century was part of the mainland, will be added next year.

The mud flats form a sanctuary area on which waders and wild-fowl, including geese, can feed and roost undisturbed. The flats at the mouth of the river Parrett are the only gathering ground for moulting sheld duck in Great Britain, for the rest of the British sheld duck migrate to moult on the east side of the North Sea.

Castor Hanglands, in Northamptonshire, consists of about 12½ acres of mixed woodlands and 93 acres of rough grassland and bushes. The area is particularly well known for butterflies such as the black hairstreak, the large tortoiseshell, and the chequered skipper.

Further information about these reserves may be obtained from the Nature Conservancy, 19 Belgrave Square, London, S.W. 1.

Norway.—The Press Bulletin (Norway), 15th May, 1954, under "Safari in the Arctic", mentioned that Consul Odd Berg, of Tromsø, was again taking big-game hunters to Spitzbergen in his ketch *Havella*. It was stated that *Havella* would be on the look out for polar bears, walrus, and seal, and that last year one party killed fourteen polar bears in a fortnight.

As readers will remember, *vide Oryx*, 2, 2, this question arose last summer also when Captain John Giaever, of the Norsk Polarinstitut most kindly replied very fully to our inquiries. He then told us that the Norwegian government had decided that no Norwegian vessel should be allowed to hunt walrus in any waters. He now writes that he has taken steps to inform Consul Odd Berg of this rule.

Of the polar bear, Captain Giaever writes that the shooting of fourteen bears in one trip would be absolutely exceptional and that he does not think there is any threat to the bear population in Spitzbergen, which seems to be quite a big one. Whether the

polar bear should be shot at all during the summer, when the skin is practically valueless, is another matter.

South Africa.—We are glad to hear from Mr. Jack Niven of the improvement of wild life protection in Cape Province. He writes that most divisions have cut the hunting season, put eagles on the protected list, and made the use of .22 rifles illegal. The birth of a calf brings the number of Addo Bush elephants to twenty-one.

The Western Province branch of the Wild Life Protection Society of South Africa has in hand a project for the re-establishment of elephants in the Knysna forest, which otherwise will certainly die out. With the approval of the Cape government and of the National Parks Board of Southern Rhodesia, a few young elephants from the Wankie game reserve will be introduced. A careful preliminary survey has been made.

Australia.—The current issue of *Australian Wild Life* mentions a visit made in January, 1953, to Philip Island Sanctuary, Victoria, by Mr. A. A. Strom. Mr. Strom, who was at that time honorary secretary of the Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia, reported that the penguin and mutton bird rookeries were in a pathetic condition. Tents had in one place been pitched right over the nesting burrows; at least fifty people were firmly encamped and many more arrived in buses to see the birds return to their nests at night.

The editor's comment should be noted by all those who are responsible for nature reserves.

“It is not possible to have the two things at once—a wild life sanctuary and a popular tourist resort, deliberately advertised to attract the curious mass rather than those whose prime object would be the permanent preservation of the wild creatures in their natural environment.”

The same journal reports that the National Park Trust of New South Wales has agreed to erect fireplaces at popular picnic resorts in the National Park. This should help in the prevention of the bush fires which have so often ravaged the area.

We welcome the publication in Western Australia of the first number of a bulletin for honorary wardens. There are 146 honorary wardens and they are required to submit quarterly reports on the state of fauna in their districts.

The latest reports seem to show a tendency for rare marsupials to increase, and may even herald a return to some measure of abundance. The short-tailed wallaby or quokka, and the banded anteater or numbat, are specially mentioned.

Oil Pollution.—There was a very good response from our members, not only in money but in letters of encouragement, to the appeal in *Oryx* for support for the Oil Pollution Campaign. Ten guineas was also sent from the Society's funds.

The unofficial conference on oil pollution held last year was followed this year by a conference, called by the British Government, in which thirty-two countries were represented by delegates and ten by observers; thus 95 per cent of the world's tonnage was covered.

Among the many points on which agreement for a convention was secured were the following:—

- (i) Zones in which tankers should be forbidden to discharge oil or oily mixtures into the sea. These zones which are to come into force as soon as the convention itself does so, are based generally on a distance of 50 miles from shore. But with the deplorable exception of the coast of Norway, the zone around the North Sea coast is 100 miles. The Atlantic zone has a base from the coast of Brittany to the Faroe Islands and reaches a point 900 miles west of Ireland.
- (ii) Prohibited zones for ships other than tankers. These are also based on a 50-mile limit, but do not come into force until three years after the convention does so. The Atlantic zone does not include the large triangle jutting westwards from the United Kingdom, mentioned above for tankers. This is unfortunate, for it is oil from ships other than tankers which causes most of the damage to sea birds.
- (iii) The provision, within three years of the convention coming into force, of facilities at main ports for the disposal of oily wastes.

Up to 1st July, 1954, twelve countries had signed the agreement. More will undoubtedly do so. Ratification should follow after appropriate legislation has been introduced.

Besides agreeing on the convention, the conference passed eight resolutions for submission to their governments. Among other things these drew attention to the need to stop entirely the discharge of oil into the sea and to the desirability of installing separators in ships. The conference also recommended that within three years a further conference should be held to review the working of the new arrangements.

The terms of the convention are only the minimum for which the organizers of the Oil Pollution Campaign had hoped. They

are nevertheless a real step forward, for this is the first time that any effective international agreement on oil pollution has been reached.

The results of the conference were considered at the meeting during May, 1954, at Scans, in Switzerland, of the International Committee for Bird Protection. There it was agreed that the national sections of the Committee should take immediate action to urge their governments to ratify and enforce the convention, to keep a record of oil pollution on their coasts, to keep to the forefront the need for a further conference and, in many other ways, to work towards the complete solution of the problem.

There is no question but that the only real solution is the total prohibition of the discharge of oil into the sea. This is quite a practicable matter for it can be accomplished by the provision at ports of reception facilities for waste oil, and their compulsory use, and by the installation of separators in certain ships. The total end of oil discharge is the aim of the Oil Pollution Campaign and money is still needed to forward its work.
