

the birds of paradise ; and one urging the greatest care in the use of chemical pesticides within national parks and nature reserves. The next meeting of IUCN will be held in Switzerland in 1966.

KENYA PLEDGE TO CONSERVATION

During the IUCN Conference in Nairobi, the Government of Kenya issued this statement, which was widely welcomed, pledging itself to the conservation of the country's natural resources and wildlife :

“ The natural resources of this country—its wildlife which offers such an attraction to visitors from all over the world, the beautiful places in which these animals live, the mighty forests which guard the water catchment areas so vital to the survival of man and beast—are a priceless heritage for the future. The Government of Kenya, fully realizing the value of its natural resources, pledges itself to conserve them for posterity with all the means at its disposal. We are confident of the co-operation of the other Governments of East Africa in this important task but, at present, we are unable, unaided, to provide the specialist staff and money which are necessary. We therefore invite other nations, and lovers of nature throughout the world, to assist us in honouring this solemn pledge.”

The statement was signed by Mr. Kenyatta as Prime Minister, as well as by the Ministers of Natural Resources, and of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism.

Fifty Thousand Leopards to Make Coats and Handbags

THE present fashion for leopardskin coats, hats, and handbags is seriously depleting leopard stocks in East Africa and threatening its future as a wild animal there. The fashion has led to the development of a huge illicit trade in leopard skins based on a highly organised network of poaching and smuggling. The only hope of stopping this abominable trade seems to be to knock the bottom out of the market by killing the demand. The Fauna Preservation Society has written to all the leading fashion writers in this country stating the facts about the leopard situation, and also to the chairman and members of the Incorporated Society of London Fashion Designers asking for their help in discouraging the fashion.

A full-sized leopardskin coat takes from five to seven skins, and it is estimated that 50,000 skins a year are being sent from East Africa alone to supply the trade. Of these only about 500 animals are killed legally, by licensed shooting, or by game wardens on control work. The rest are poached, by methods usually involving cruelty. Nooses and large box traps baited with meat are commonly used, involving the slow death of the leopard in the sun, or perhaps spearing when it is near death ; spring-jawed traps are less widely used because they tend to spoil the skin ; baits are doped with poison, including cattle dip, and the animals die in agony.

As usual, the man who does the job gets very little. An up-country African who poaches a leopard (at considerable risk) may get no more than 20s. (£1), but the receiver may get £50 or £80 a skin for running a consignment through, and the price in London or New York may be £100 or very much more. At least one of the top furriers in London finds the prices too high for his customers. The Americans are the biggest buyers, followed by Britain, France, Italy, and Germany and considerable numbers also go to Yugoslavia, Russia, and even China. Illicit trading in leopard skins is now reckoned to be the most profitable and skilfully organised racket in East Africa. The lorry carrying 300 skins which was recently captured was not considered exceptional. Somalia used to be the centre of the trade; now Addis Ababa is also an important centre, and large numbers of skins pass through Isiolo in the Northern Frontier Province of Kenya hidden under goat skins or bananas on lorries, or under sacks on a pack-train of camels.

In Africa the serious reduction in numbers of the leopard is already being felt in agricultural areas. Leopards are the chief predator on such crop-raiding animals as the baboon and bush pig, and when these reach plague proportions, as has already happened in some parts, the African farmer and smallholder receives a practical lesson in the importance of predators in general and the leopard in particular.

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