

AFRICAN SPECIAL PROJECT

STAGE TWO—THE ARUSHA CONFERENCE

By JOHN HILLABY

The International Wildlife Conference, held at Arusha in Tanganyika from 5th to 12th September, 1961, has been justly described as the most important gathering of conservationists and ecologists ever held in Africa. Members of the Fauna Preservation Society can take satisfaction from the fact that their Society contributed a very great deal to its success. The Society made a very substantial grant towards the cost of African Special Project, Stage 1, the survey which preceded the conference, and also provided funds to enable twelve Africans to attend the conference and one of the post-conference tours. Furthermore, the Society was well represented at all the sessions of the conference by members of a delegation led by its President, the Marquess of Willingdon. What characterized the Arusha discussions as a whole was a sense of unity of purpose in the common effort to conserve the wildlife of Africa. On some points of detail there was conflict of opinion vigorously expressed. The merits and dangers of the regular cropping or harvesting of wild animals was a notable example. Conference was divided between the advantages in theory and the snags in practice, especially the snag of setting up adequate marketing facilities, but on this debatable point, as in others, it was significant that everyone was united in the importance of game *management*, an expression in common use throughout the week.

The background to the conference was related in the last issue of *Oryx*, Vol. VI, No. 3. In brief it was that the African Special Project, 1960–1963, was launched in June, 1960, at the General Assembly in Warsaw of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Stage 1 consisted of a visit by Mr. G. G. Watterson, the Secretary-General of the IUCN, to sixteen countries in West, Central, and East Africa to discuss the principles and practice of conservation with African leaders. Stage 2 was the Arusha Conference or, as it was officially described, a Symposium of Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in Modern African States, organized by the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa (CCTA) in collaboration with the IUCN and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). Stage 3 will be the putting into effect of the results of the previous stages.

If any doubts about the need for the conference existed, they were promptly dispelled in the minds of delegates who travelled south by road from Nairobi towards Arusha. In that season of extreme drought they saw that much of the landscape was utterly desolate and rapidly becoming a dust-bowl. At Longido, south of the border, it was noticed that even larks alighting on the ground raised a little puff of dust and lean cattle stumbled about in a perpetual cloud of dry soil particles as they searched for a mouthful of grass. Skeletons of beasts, wild and domesticated, were commonplace and the bird most in evidence was the vulture. Nevertheless, there were people in Arusha, hotel keepers and the like, who asked

what conservation was and why it had brought so many distinguished visitors into the town. One delegate seized on a homely illustration by pointing to the dust-devils which raced across the plain and said that if nothing was done to stop them there would soon be no coffee plantations on the slopes of Mount Meru, the extinct volcano which towers above the town. This point went home.

There were about 130 members of the conference, from many countries of the world. They included some forty Africans, among them the Chairman, Chief Fundikira, Minister of Legal Affairs for Tanganyika, a man of outstanding charm, personality, and knowledge. It was due to Chief Fundikira, more than anyone else, that affairs moved as smoothly as they did. Among others present were Mr. E. M. Nicholson, Director-General of the Nature Conservancy of Great Britain, Sir Julian Huxley, Professor W. H. Pearsall, and Dr. F. F. Darling, Vice-President of the Conservation Foundation of New York.

The papers for study and discussion covered a wide variety of technical subjects such as the present role of natural resources and the possibilities of increasing them, the African habitat and its flora and fauna, contemporary trends in research, conservation and development, and human and sociological factors including the merits and demerits of tourism. But it was noticeable that, when debate strayed into the realms of idealized theory, the subject was usually brought back into perspective by the salty comments and practical observations of the game department and parks administrators whose views throughout the discussions were of outstanding value.

Several delegates expressed surprise that relatively little was said at Arusha about tsetse control measures, especially the utterly deplorable practice of shooting out game to establish—very temporarily—fly-free belts of country. This was partly due to the fact that, apart from Uganda, the practice has been largely abandoned and also because representatives of at least one delegation had been told by their officials to say nothing whatsoever about the subject. In a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Fraser Darling, the Uganda Tsetse Control Directorate agreed that operations in that country should be wound up in twelve months' time and that they should not be extended beyond present bounds. The Society will continue to watch the situation closely.

What soon emerged from the general discussions was that although the principles of conservation can be expressed simply, it is almost impossible to generalize about the details of wildlife management. The prime preoccupation of the conservationist is with the maintenance of the habitat and everything it represents, but governments are mostly concerned with people or, to put it another way, the politician is the most important factor in land-use. Management, nevertheless, must be subject to a number of simple but enormously important concepts of conservation. One of the first is that the care of the habitat, that is to say the place where plants and animals live, is more important than anything else. Without adequate soil, water, and vegetation cover everything else fails also. Another proposition is that nowadays the habitat is not something that can be left to nature. Even wild lands often require management to preserve their

wilderness character. Yet another proposition is that both plant and animal populations normally produce surpluses which, in theory at least, can be harvested without damage to the basic breeding stock. It is also on the way to being established that in arid or marginal countries it is usually more profitable to manage wild animals than domestic stock. It is known, too, that the potential productivity of land of this kind depends to a very great extent on variety so that ideally many species should co-exist side by side and everything available be used.

It is doubtful whether very many governments would give their whole-hearted suzerainty to precepts of this kind, but at least one group of distinguished African leaders expressed their unqualified belief in the necessity for land-management. The Prime Minister of Tanganyika, Mr. J. K. Nyerere, with two of his Ministerial colleagues, communicated to the meeting the "Arusha Manifesto" which was welcomed by Sir Julian Huxley as a "landmark for Africa". It read:—

"The survival of our wildlife is a matter of grave concern to all of us in Africa. These wild creatures amid the wild places they inhabit are not only important as a source of wonder and inspiration, but are an integral part of our natural resources and of our future livelihood and well-being. In accepting the trusteeship of our wildlife we solemnly declare that we will do everything in our power to make sure that our children's grandchildren will be able to enjoy this rich and precious inheritance. The conservation of wildlife and wild places calls for specialist knowledge, trained manpower, and money and we look to other nations to co-operate in this important task the success or failure of which not only affects the continent of Africa but the rest of the world as well."

Most satisfactory declarations of policy were also made on behalf of the Congo, Dahomey, the Sudan, and other countries. In its final resolutions the conference confirmed "the earnest desire of modern African states to continue and actively expand the efforts already made in the field of wildlife management", and the fact that "these countries recognize their responsibilities and the rightful place of wildlife management in land use planning". So much for the discussions.

Among the reserves visited by delegates during and after the week's discussions were Amboseli, the Manyara, the Ngorongoro, and the Serengeti Plains, the Mara and the worn-out country between Narok and the Aberdares. Other delegates visited Uganda where, apart from the deplorable situation in respect of measures against the tsetse fly, they were impressed by the high degree of co-operation existing between the game department, park administrators, and those responsible for African affairs. Elsewhere, particularly in Kenya, there were abundant signs that wardens were trying to overcome appalling local difficulties and it was obvious that they were succeeding to a limited degree—despite a serious lack of ministerial support.

Amboseli, now a Masai game reserve, was certainly a sad sight. The grazing was almost non-existent; wrecked trees provided some cover for elephant and rhino which have been conditioned by visitors to the

point of unnatural docility. The lack of tracks across the dusty lake bed encourages visitors to drive vehicles where they will, with the result that erosion grows steadily worse. The Ngorongoro Crater was described by Captain C. R. S. Pitman who, strange to say, was visiting it for the first time as a "bitter disappointment". There were relatively few ungulates to be seen but the Masai and their herds were everywhere in evidence. As the conference delegates stood on the Crater wall and were being told that the rhino has been virtually poached out of existence, more pastoralists from a distant part of Masailand were seen moving in with about a thousand cattle and goats.

The position on the south-eastern fringe of the Serengeti to-day is that about 3,000 sq. miles of the Crater Highlands and part of the plains have been made into a Conservation Unit administered by representatives of the Masai and Tanganyika Veterinary, Forest, Water Development, and Irrigation and Game Departments. How well it will function remains to be seen. But what will happen to both the plains and the Crater forests if the land is not carefully managed, and soon, was evident from what delegates saw near the Masai Administrative Headquarters beyond Narok. The Masai have grazed and burnt the countryside so often that scarcely one tree of a formerly vast cedar forest remains. It is an appalling object lesson of Man's stupidity and folly.

In his closing remarks to the conference, Lord Willingdon said: "Our Society has dipped somewhat extensively into its accumulated funds . . . because our members believe that this is probably our last chance to help in this critical situation."

STAGE THREE

ASP Stage 3 began on 27th January, 1962, at a meeting of IUCN in Morges, Switzerland. The working team, Mr. P. R. Hill and Mr. T. Riney, under the joint sponsorship of IUCN and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, will of course spend most of their time in Africa, but will return to Morges periodically for consultation and instruction.

During 1962 the team will visit those African countries which invite them to do so, in order to advise on wildlife policies and especially to help integrate such policies into the general conservation programmes. The team will be concerned not only with wild animals, but with wild plants, and not only with scientific questions, but with cultural and economic matters also.

The Governments of Senegal, Dahomey, and Chad having already asked for visits, the team left for Dakar on 10th February last.

Inquiries about ASP 3 have come from many other countries, from Nigeria and Ethiopia south to Bechuanaland, and a programme for the continuation of the team's work is being prepared.

The cost of keeping Mr. Riney and Mr. Hill in the field is being borne, for one year at least, by FAO, but there are many other expenses in connection with their work which will not be covered by FAO. Towards these the Fauna Preservation Society and others will be contributing.