

Sir Peter Scott, CH: An obituary

Sir Peter Scott, who died on 29 August 1989, shortly before his 80th birthday, was closely and continuously associated with the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society for 28 years. From 1962 onwards he served successively as Council member, Chairman, Vice-President and President. His charisma and public relations flair made him a uniquely influential personality in both British and world conservation movements, and the Society owes him a great debt of gratitude for all the time and effort he devoted to our affairs.

How can one hope to encompass such a many-sided and polymathic personality as Peter Scott's? I can only offer my purely personal memories of a friend for more than 40 years under whose chairmanship I worked closely for 18 years. I encountered Peter first in late December 1939 through the memory of an old wildfowler named Park at Rockcliffe on the Solway, where I had gone to watch the wild geese. He told me how as soon as he saw Peter out on the marsh he exclaimed, 'I know who you are', so like was he to his explorer father. My first real meeting came just after the end of the war, on 16 August 1945, when out bird-watching on the North Kent marshes with Horace Alexander (who sadly died last September, aged 100) and we met Peter with Max Nicholson and Sir Cyril (later Lord) Hurcomb. I always remember Hurcomb's remark, as Peter went off to find us some tea at the High Halstow pub, that there were many advantages in being accompanied by the son of an explorer.

Later the same year, on 23 December, Phil Hollom and I went down to Gloucestershire, to see the two historic lesser white-fronted geese that Peter and local ornithologist Howard Davis had discovered a week before among the resident flock of white-fronts on the Dumbles, as the Severn-side marshes at Slimbridge are called. Peter's verification of this bird as the second reliable record for Britain helped to convince him that his brainchild, the Severn Wildfowl Trust (now the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust), should be located at the New Grounds, the very farm

whose muddy yard and tracks we had had to traverse in order to see our birds.

By then I had become Secretary to the official Wild Life Conservation Special Committee (WLCSC) (whose report recommended the creation of the Nature Conservancy) and I recollect Peter once consulting me about some detail connected with the new Trust. One day in March Peter drove me and Max Nicholson, who was a member of the WLCSC, to survey the Nene Washes for the Committee, and we also visited Borough Fen Decoy, soon to be run by the Severn Wildfowl Trust.

That September I moved to Burford to work for the *Countryman* and Maisie and I were able to pay frequent visits to Slimbridge to see the geese and watch the progress of the infant Trust. At this time the Director's house was in the old farmhouse, the building you pass on your right as you enter the former and now far from muddy farmyard. Among fellow enthusiasts often there was the well-known actor James Robertson Justice, who I remember once taking part in the capture of a trespasser who had just put a whole flock of geese up, and loudly chanting, 'Put him in the bull-pen!' This was the period when one of Peter's best inventions, the observation hide, was being developed. In one sense it grew out of the old Home Guard pillboxes to which we used to crawl behind the hedges and which gave us splendid views of the geese.

The memory camera focuses next on a most unlikely place, a Warsaw tram in June 1960. Peter had already started his long association with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and we were travelling back to our hotel from the meeting place of the IUCN General Assembly when our talk turned to our mutual interest in the Loch Ness Monster. As a direct result, I found myself joining with Peter, David James (a former FFPS Council member), Norman Collins and Constance Whyte (author of *More than a Legend*), in founding the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau, which aimed to collect information about Nessie sightings in the hope of plumbing the mystery of its identity. Peter played his usual active part in the investigations, helping to organize showings of

films to more or less sceptical scientists, and once taking his glider up to scan the surface of the loch. But he was a rigorous critic too and once when the Bureau members were reviewing films of alleged sightings of Nessie, he and I, the only ornithologists present, had to persuade our reluctant colleagues that the film they were looking at showed no more than a distant party of red-breasted mergansers, the young birds ruffling the surface as they scurried after their parents.

Next the scene changes to Belgrave Square in London in 1961, where Peter was attending the first meeting of the British National Appeal of the World Wildlife Fund. When he came out, he told us that his colleagues had just elected him chairman; such was his natural modesty that he seemed surprised that they had done so. Not long afterwards he encouraged me to produce for the BNA a small duplicated news-sheet that must have been the first periodical publication of what is now WWF-UK.

Two years later, at the Nairobi General Assembly of IUCN, Peter took over the chairmanship of the Union's Survival Service Commission, which deals with species conservation, and when he appointed me as a member of the SSC we began a close association that lasted until he retired 18 years later. Our first Commission meeting was at IUCN's new headquarters at Morges, Switzerland, on 28–30 November 1963. For the first few years the only regular attendants at our meetings, usually three times a year (with a gap while Peter was competing for the America's Cup), were Peter, James Fisher and myself (curiously enough a representative team from the BBC's *Nature Parliament*, then still in full swing). At this time we often felt we were the only active elements in the IUCN and problems of all kinds were liable to be referred to us for advice. Gradually Peter worked the SSC up, increasing its membership, inventing the Red Data Books (we used to jest about the Little Red Books of Chairman Scott), launching the specialist groups (now numbering 80, with 2300 members in 134 countries), and extending its scope first into invertebrates and eventually into plants. My recollection is that the

specialist groups began with one for the orang-utan, master-minded by Tom and Barbara Harrison. Meetings began to move out to other countries, first elsewhere in Europe and later all over the world. Today the Species Survival Commission (as it has now become) is a unique institution, and ranks as one of Peter's major achievements. Indeed the four cornerstones of Peter's conservation work, in the order in which he took them up, were the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, SSC, WWF and FFPS.

It was *en route* to one of the overseas meetings of the SSC, that, pursuing FFPS's interest in the Arabian oryx, we called at Qatar to see the Sheikh Qassim's fine captive herd. At the Sheikh's desert palace nearby Peter spotted some oleander hawk-moth larvae, and soon set us all to collecting some of them. He then managed not only to organize a supply of oleander foliage to feed them while we were at the subsequent meeting in New Delhi, but to persuade a friend to take them safely home to Slimbridge, where later we saw the magnificent moths that emerged, three generations of them. One of the fine paintings in his last exhibition at Cheltenham in September 1989 was of these Qatar oleander hawk-moths.

From a later meeting in India I remember another very characteristic incident. We were at the great Bharatpur bird reserve on a Sunday when it was full of local visitors. Peter approached one of these Indian families and chatted with them about the birds they were seeing and their country's wildlife.

In January 1964 I became Honorary Secretary of the FFPS, and 2 years later Peter succeeded Lord Willingdon as Chairman of Council. So began a close parallel association, which lasted until 1980, when Peter retired to become a Vice-President, while I also relinquished the Honorary Secretaryship and became Vice-Chairman. Two years later Peter was elected President and in 1984 I became Chairman. So during most of the 1960s, the whole of the 1970s and much of the 1980s Peter and I were working together on both SSC and FFPS.

It was during this period that we came to found the Falkland Islands Foundation. In

January 1979 Maisie and I were on New Island, negotiating (fruitlessly) for the acquisition of Ian Strange's half of the island, when Peter arrived on one of the *Lindblad Explorer's* Antarctic tours. As we walked back from the great penguin and albatross rookery, I remarked that we had often discussed the possibility of setting up a foundation for the Falkland Islands, similar to the Charles Darwin Foundation for the Galapagos. 'Why don't we do it now?', said Peter. So we sat down in Ian Strange's house and later on the *Explorer* and wrote out the document that led to the setting up in London a few weeks later of the Falkland Islands Foundation. This was another institution in which I paired Peter for several years, he as its first Chairman and I as its first Honorary Secretary.

Peter had, of course, a world reputation as a wildlife artist, and I was delighted when he agreed to illustrate the short history of the Society, which I wrote in 1978 under the title of *The Penitent Butchers*. This was one of the occasions when I witnessed just how much drawing and painting were second nature to him. At these times, when he was not actually chairing a committee, one could see that remarkable phenomenon, his ability to make pleasing and accurate drawings of birds and other animals while taking an active and informed part in the discussions.

Peter was a remarkably imaginative and efficient chairman, always on the ball, always wonderfully well informed. Above all his meetings were both a pleasurable and an educational experience, for rarely did he fail to bring out some unusual anecdote or feature of animal behaviour or distribution not known to most of those present, often including the experts. Most important too, he saw to it that these meetings laid plans for action and himself ensured that they were carried out. Indeed, Peter had that rarest of chairmanship qualities, the capacity to make the chaired believe they are taking part in a significant, almost a historic, occasion – and quite often they were.

Undoubtedly we shall not look upon his like again.

Richard Fitter.

The Oryx 100% Fund

Grants awarded

At its meeting on 6 September the FFPS Council approved funding for the following projects.

£650 for a study of the web-footed tenrec *Limnogale mergulus*, which is an endemic species with a very localized distribution in Madagascar. The main objectives are to discover where it still lives, to identify major threats to its survival, to determine whether it is necessary or feasible to establish a captive breeding programme, and to provide training for Malagache students and curators of the country's largest zoo. The investigations will also provide information for a forthcoming regional Insectivore Action Plan to be compiled by the IUCN/SSC Insectivore, Tree Shrew and Elephant Shrew Specialist Group. (Project no. 89/29/12).

£500 towards a study to determine the distribution limits and habitat preferences of the small spotted cat *Felis nigripes* in order to ensure adequate conservation action. It is the only felid entirely restricted to the southern Africa subregion and practically nothing is known about it in the wild. Listed in the *South Africa Red Data Book*, the species is probably being adversely affected by increasingly sophisticated animal control methods aimed at caracal and black-backed jackal. (Project no. 89/28/11).

£500 to the Sea Turtle Protection Campaign run by the Maltese conservation organization Zghazagh Ghall-Ambjent, which FFPS has assisted in the past. This time the funds will go towards work connected with preparing and presenting draft legislation to protect turtles and cetaceans in Maltese waters, as well as towards the purchase and protection of a sandy beach in an effort to restore suitable conditions for the loggerhead turtle *Caretta caretta*, which had bred there in the past. (Project no. 89/34/14).

£300 to the University of Bristol Gran Sabana Expedition. This team of five will attempt to assess the distribution and abundance of the great anteater *Myrmecophaga tri-*

dactyla, giant armadillo *Priodontes giganteus*, giant otter *Pteronura brasiliensis*, jaguar *Panthera onca* and ocelot *Felis pardalis* in the Canaima National Park in Venezuela. They will assess the effectiveness of the park for the conservation of these species and hope to contribute information useful to future management. (Project no. 89/31/13).

Reports received

The following reports were received recently from recipients of Oryx 100% Fund grants.

The vegetation of Christmas Island, Indian Ocean (Project no. 86/62/18). The main objective of David Du Puy's research on Christmas Island was to provide the basis for an ecological account of the vegetation for inclusion in the Flora of the island, which is now in press. His work on the islands also included assessments of the importance of the forest to birds of both land and sea, and an examination of human impact, particularly of the extensive phosphate mining, which has involved clearing native forests.

His 28-page report has sections on the geography, topography and geology, on the climate, and a description of the vegetation, which includes a rich dense rain forest on the deep soils of the plateau. An Appendix listing the island's habitats and their floral components is included and there is a list of 16 plant endemic species, two of which are believed extinct. He draws attention to the unusual nature of the island's forests in that they have a very sparse ground layer and an unexpected species composition. This is due to the vast number of endemic, largely vegetarian red land crabs, which are famous for their spectacular annual migration to the sea for spawning. The few seedlings that escape the attention of the crabs face less competition from other plants and flourish; in this way species that are normally rare or restricted to inhospitable environments in other forests are important in the Christmas Island flora.

With mining closing down and extensions to the national park planned the future for the island's plants and animals looks brighter, but

as Du Puy pointed out (*Oryx*, 23, 186), most of the nesting sites of Abbott's booby and Christmas Island frigate bird are outside the park and important mangroves are unprotected. Du Puy recommends that the closing operations should be strictly supervised to make sure that further forest clearance to extract more phosphate-rich soil does not take place to finance the closure. The mined areas also should be restored by covering them with the heaped low-phosphate soil and reafforested.

Alternative income is needed for the island and Du Puy discusses the potential for tourism. The scenery is beautiful, the forests open and free of danger and there are interesting plants orchids, palms, cycads, ferns and hoyas to see. Additional attractions are the birds, the crabs and the coral reefs. Plans for a large hotel and casino complex have been approved, but these facilities are not designed to encourage tourism based on the natural environment, which could be lucrative and could also help ensure that the island retains its scientific interest.

David Du Puy has sent a report on the vegetation of the island and the important areas for conservation to the main body concerned with conservation on the islands, the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, to assist in the decisions concerning the future of the island's forests and wild species.

Project Dominica 1988 (Project no. 87/42/21). Dominica, the most rugged and mountainous of the Caribbean islands still has large areas covered in rain forest, but there is increasing conflict between agricultural production and forest conservation. Forest land is being cleared indiscriminately for agriculture, often in areas unsuitable for sustained agricultural use, sometimes on steep slopes and right up to the edge of river banks. With the need for solutions to the current land-use problems, a team, including social scientists and agroforesters, from the universities of North Wales, Bangor and Sussex, Brighton carried out an investigation into the potential of agroforestry on the island of Dominica in the Caribbean for 3 months in 1988.

Their fieldwork consisted of: interviews

with farmers in an attempt to understand the social, economic and environmental factors determining land-use; and specific surveys to examine current extension work in agriculture and forestry and to determine its suitability as a channel for promoting agroforestry. The 90-page report gives a detailed description of Dominica's agricultural history and discusses the findings from the survey in depth, listing the factors encouraging the adoption of agroforestry practices and those currently constraining it. The team concludes that given the socio-economic and environmental conditions, agroforestry is a major option for any future land-use policy, but that its successful implementation will involve many social and administrative changes. There is long list of recommendations, which includes ways to improve agricultural practices, to incorporate shrubs and trees into agricultural plantings and to provide better marketing facilities and land tenure arrangements.

University College London Nigeria Expedition 1988 (Project no. 88/36/17). A team from University College London was in Nigeria between early July and late September 1988 together with five students from the University of Benin. They worked in the 72-sq-km Okomu Wildlife Sanctuary, which was gazetted in 1986 and protects rain-forest species, particularly the red-bellied guenon *Cercopithecus erythrogaster*, which is found only in southern Nigeria. The sanctuary is in the heart of a government forest reserve, but the Forestry Department's lack of resources has led to a low level of control over the area and extensive areas of forest around the sanctuary have been lost or degraded. The sanctuary itself is being successfully protected, with all logging and hunting having ceased.

The expedition had five main tasks, identified by Lee White, who was working as a project consultant for the Nigerian Conservation Foundation: promoting conservation and gaining support for the sanctuary on a local level by giving illustrated talks; carrying out a tree survey in the Okomu forest and comparing the results with those of a 1947/8 survey; censusing the small mammals; conducting an amphibian

survey and a soil survey. The expedition's work received nationwide publicity due to the team's participation in a national conference on conservation education and the Nigerian students were a great asset in the conservation education aspect of the project as well as gaining a rare opportunity to carry out fieldwork, for which there are scarce financial resources.

Scientific papers are being prepared on various aspects of the expedition's work, but the authors of the report say that the most significant achievement of the expedition is that the University of Benin students have launched a conservation club to voice concern for the environment.

Display on Threatened Molluscs of the World (Project no. 89/12/5). Oryx 100% funding helped finance the preparation of a display entitled 'Why Save a Snail'. It briefly covers the ecological and economic value of molluscs, threats to them and conservation efforts under way (the Bern Convention, snail conservation initiatives in New Zealand, efforts to prevent introductions of alien species, captive breeding of the freshwater pearl mussel in Scotland, the Marine Conservation Society's campaign to control the shell trade, and giant clam farming). The display includes a brief description of FFPS and information on the mollusc projects that it has supported.

The exhibit was first used at the 10th International Malacological Congress in Tubingen, West Germany in August 1989 and attracted a great deal of interest, as well as donations to the FFPS, earmarked for mollusc conservation projects. The display was enhanced by specimens and shell objects loaned by the National Museum of Wales and now museums in Manchester, Belfast and Glasgow have expressed interest in taking the display. Anyone else interested in borrowing the exhibit should contact the FFPS office for further details.

Progress for bulb conservation through trade involvement

Following the widespread publicity on the damaging effects of the trade in wild-collected

bulbs, the Society's consultant botanist, Mike Read, and Flora Committee chairman, Dr Barry Thomas, recently attended a 2-day meeting in the Netherlands at the invitation of high-ranking representatives of the Dutch horticultural trade. Also present from Washington DC were representatives of TRAFFIC (US) and the Natural Resources Defense Council. The meeting laid the foundations for a continuing dialogue with the trade and produced some positive commitments.

First, the labelling on packages of bulbs exported from the Netherlands (through which most wild-collected bulbs are routed) is to be improved to indicate to the customer whether the plants have been truly artificially propagated or not. Second, imports of snowdrops (*Galanthus* spp.) from Turkey are to be closely monitored to establish exactly which species are being collected. Up to now rare and restricted species have been collected – probably inadvertently – along with commoner and more widespread species.

Finally, the meeting, at which over a dozen Dutch trade and research organizations were present, agreed to endorse a new FFPS venture, the Indigenous Propagation Project. This project, for which the Society is currently seeking financial assistance, is designed to promote the artificial propagation of indigenous Turkish bulb species on a small-scale rural basis.

Liberian mongoose captured

Mark Taylor, who in 1988 led an expedition to Liberia to seek the Liberian mongoose *Liberiictis kuhni* with some help from the Oryx 100% Fund, succeeded in finding only one animal, which had been shot by a hunter for food (*Oryx* 23, 118). In 1989 he tried again using live traps. Although he caught many vertebrates, less than 0.5 per cent were viverrids. Local hunters also helped with the traps, but they were no more successful. During this second expedition Mark Taylor distributed several hundred brochures, depicting the Liberian mongoose, Gambian mongoose, slender mongoose, kusimanse, forest genet and

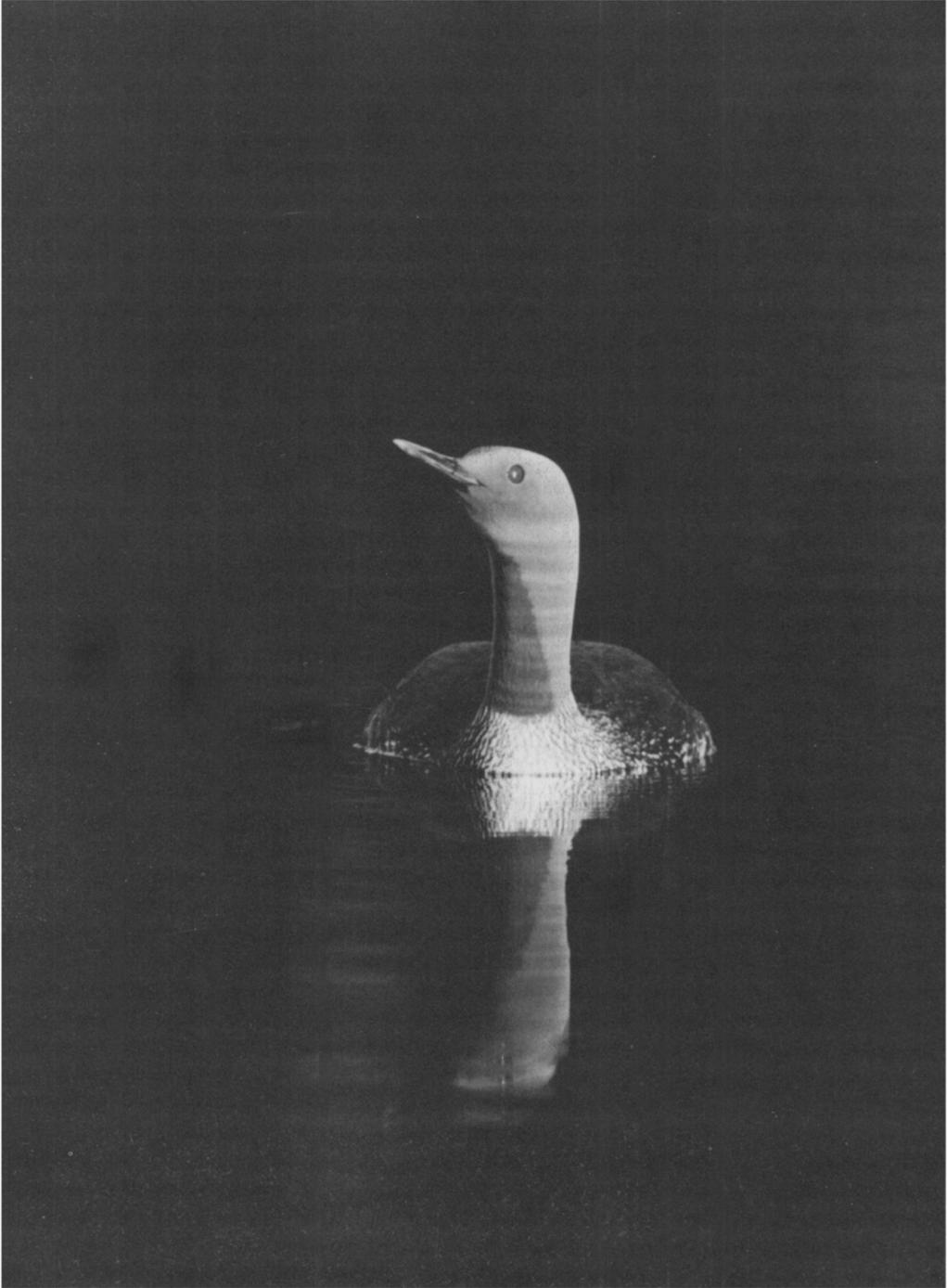
African linsang, to forestry staff, villagers and hunters. Subsequent discussions with local people suggested that the Liberian mongoose is uncommon, but one villager who had seen the brochure snared a single live Liberian mongoose in February in the Gbi National Forest. The mongoose is now in Metro Toronto Zoo. One aim of the expedition – to catch two pairs for captive breeding – was thus unfulfilled, but now that something is known about the species's habitat requirements, Mark Taylor has recommended to Wildlife Officials of the Liberian Forestry Department Authority that hunting restrictions be enforced in the Gbi National Forest.

Source: *Mustelid and Viverrid Conservation, the Newsletter of the IUCN/SSC Mustelid and Viverrid Specialist Group*. No. 1, August 1989.

FFPS joins Dependent Territories forum

The FFPS has become a supporting member of the NGO Forum for the UK Dependent Territories. This has been set up to promote conservation in these lands, whose needs were identified in the report *Fragments of Paradise*. The British Government welcomed the publication of the report and the formation of the forum and it is now the latter's task to build on this co-operative start and generate some positive conservation initiatives. Dialogue with the government will be maintained primarily through the Maritime, Aviation and Environment Department of the Foreign Office.

It is particularly appropriate for FFPS to give support to these initiatives since the Society has been concerned with the protection of species in British overseas territories since its formation in 1903 as the Society for Preservation of Wild Fauna of the Empire. Most recently, through its Oryx 100% Fund, FFPS has supported plant conservation work in St Helena and conservation activities in the Turks and Caicos. Enquiries about the Forum should be made to: Sara Oldfield, Co-ordinator, UK Dependent Territories-NGO Forum, 22 Mandene Gardens, Great Gransden, Nr Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 3AP, UK.



A red-throated diver on a pond in Vaala province, Finland. This photograph, originally in colour, was taken by Jouni Ruuskanen and won him the title of Wildlife Photographer of the Year 1989 (see page 60).

Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition 1989

The title, Wildlife Photographer of the Year 1989, was won by Jouni Ruuskanen of Finland, who received the bronze ibis award at the Natural History Museum in London on 23 November. He also wins a holiday for two in Dominica, courtesy of Traveller's Tree and BWIA International Airline. The competition was again organized by Natural History Museum and BBC WILDLIFE magazine in association with FFPS. The exhibition of winning and commended photographs is on display at the museum until 31 January 1990 and afterwards may be seen at the following venues in the UK:

Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery, 21 January – 25 February;
 Zoological Museum, Tring, 5 – 25 February;
 Nature in Art, Wallsworth House, Sandhurst, Glos., 4 March – 8 April;
 Cliffe Castle Museum, Keighley, York, 4 March – 8 April;
 South Cleveland Heritage Centre, Boosbeck, Saltburn, 15 April – 20 May;
 Pontefract Museum, Pontefract, 15 April – 20 May.

Another way to help FFPS's conservation work

If you save regularly with a building society why not consider using some of your income to create a donation to the FFPS? The Ecology Building Society, founded in 1981 to provide a means of finance for purchasing ecologically-sound properties, provides a way of doing this through its conservation bonds (minimum investment £1000, maximum £10,000). The investment is for 1 year and the interest is added on at the end of this, when you can choose to withdraw your bond or reinvest for a further year. From the interest 0.5% will be remitted to the conservation organization of your choice. At the current rate of interest (10%, 1 October 1989) this would mean that for every £10,000 invested the FFPS could receive £5.00. Further details are available

from The Ecology Building Society, 18 Station Road, Cross Hills, Nr Keighley, West Yorkshire BD20 7EH.

Members' meetings

Details of London meetings, held at the Zoological Society of London's meetings rooms, are given in the insert in this issue of *Oryx*.

Some local group meetings are listed below; others are also being arranged, but full details were not available when going to press. For information about additional meetings please write to the address given for each group, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Bristol and the West of England Group

Ian Redmond, c/o BBC Wildlife Magazine, Broadcasting House, Whiteladies Road, Bristol BS8 2LR.

Cambridge Group

22 February 1990. 'The Enchanted Canopy' with Andrew Mitchell. A special Ethiopian meal will be served at 6.00 pm, £4.50, pre-booked tickets only. The talk is free and starts at 7.30 pm at the Department of Zoology, Downing Street, Cambridge. Tickets are available from Dr C. Harcourt, 70 Victoria Road, Cambridge CB4 3DU.

Edinburgh Group

Roger Wheeler, Edinburgh Zoo, Murrayfield, Edinburgh EH12 6TS.

North-West Group

Nick Ellerton, Chester Zoo, Caughall Road, Upton, Chester CH2 1LH.

Oxford Group

David McDonald, Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS.