

The Fauna Preservation Society

EDITORIAL NOTES

Mr. H. G. Maurice, C.B., Secretary of the Society, died on 12th May, 1950, to the great sorrow of his many friends.

The General Meeting on 5th June, 1950, was opened by the passing unanimously of the following resolution:—

“That this Society, in General Meeting, desires to record its profound regret at the death of Mr. Henry Maurice, and its lively appreciation of the invaluable services rendered to it by him as Secretary during the past fifteen years; and to tender to Mrs. Maurice and their son its sincere sympathy in their irreparable loss.”

An obituary notice of Mr. Maurice appears on page 49.

The New Journal Cover.—The design for the new cover of our *Journal* is the work of a life member of our Society, Miss Barbara Prescott. We hope that the design, so generously given, and the use of a convenient and attractive name will help to popularize our *Journal* and so forward the cause of wild life preservation.

Any suggestion for the improvement of the *Journal* will be welcomed. For instance, one member thinks that the articles assume too much knowledge of natural history and even of zoology to be of sufficient interest to many readers. He suggests that every *Journal* should have at least one article written upon a group of animals from a natural history standpoint, e.g. “The kinds of Zebras and their Present and Past Distribution”. Would other readers like articles of this nature?

If “Letters to the Editor” are forthcoming, a correspondence page will be started.

Articles are urgently sought, particularly articles showing what is being attempted to preserve wild life, where success is achieved and where a reverse is sustained. Authors will, on request, receive up to twenty-five reprints free of charge.

The Avocet returns to Britain.—Our frontispiece has been chosen to compliment the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds on their work in re-establishing one of our most beautiful species. It is not often that the results of protection can be

so clearly demonstrated but this time there is no doubt. The Avocet, once common, ceased to breed in England about 1840. It returned in 1947 to the R.S.P.B. Sanctuary at Minsmere and to Havergate Island, both in Suffolk. The R.S.P.B. promptly bought Havergate Island and have there, in spite of a plague of rats and the destruction of a sea wall by a storm, established a considerable colony. In 1949 seventeen pairs brought off at least thirty-one young. This year twenty-one pairs have reared at least forty young to the free-flying stage. We offer the Society our congratulations upon their magnificent achievement.

The Plumage Trade.—Last year we saw again the abominable fashion of wearing wild bird plumage in women's hats. Feathers were prevalent. A whole squashed Goldfinch was even seen on the hat of a lady lunching in the Zoological Gardens and a stuffed Robin on the hat of a traveller from Hampshire to London. British birds suffer somewhat, but the most popular feathers of course are those from birds of paradise and egrets, the latter called in the trade "Osprey" or "Aigrette".

It is to be hoped that the battles fought in England by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which owes its existence to the indignation aroused by the feather fashion, and by the Audubon Societies in America, will not have to be won all over again.

The trade in bird plumage reached enormous proportions. Between 1890 and 1929 plumage was imported into France to the weight of more than fifty thousand tons. In 1911 egret plumes were selling in London at eight pounds sterling per ounce, or for more than twice their weight in gold.

Fauna Preservation Exhibition.—Mr. Colin Matheson, Keeper of Zoology at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, has written asking our help in the formation of an exhibition of fauna preservation which he hopes to be able to stage in the Cardiff Museum next year. The exhibition is still "tentative", but if it does take place, as we earnestly hope it will, we shall of course give all the help in our power.

Among Mr. Matheson's suggestions as the means by which we could help him were the provision of large maps showing past and present range of rare species. We therefore appealed at the General Meeting in July for a helper and were immediately answered by Mr. J. I. Menzies, who most kindly offered his services for two months. Mr. Menzies started work in July on zebras and on the five existing species of rhinoceros.

India.—In April we received from the Bombay Natural History Society the draft Bombay State Wild Birds and Wild

Animals' Protection Act and were asked for our comments. Judge Ameer Ali and Captain Keith Caldwell were called into consultation, and certain additions and amendments were made and sent to Bombay.

We are informed that the final draft has now been approved, and that we shall be sent a copy of the Act as soon as it has been passed.

Elephant Catching and Training.—Those members who heard Major C. C. Wilson's lecture in March and saw his wonderful films of elephant capture and training in southern India, will be specially interested in Mr. E. P. Gee's article on pp. 16–22 about similar work in Assam, though they may not quite agree that the khedda method of catching elephants is the most successful. It depends, perhaps, upon what is meant by "successful", and possibly less upon the method itself than upon the care and humanity with which it is carried out.

Ceylon.—Mr. Gee's article was reprinted, with permission, from *Loris*, the Journal of the Ceylon Game and Fauna Protection Society. *Loris* also contained news of the passing by the House of Representatives of a Department of Wild Life. The staff allowed for consists of a Warden, an Assistant Warden, and 174 other personnel. Besides this the sum of Rs. 10,000 (£750) has been set aside for improvements in National Reserves and Rs. 12,160 (£900) for the acquisition of private land in the Katagamuwa Sanctuary. It must be remembered that Ceylon is an island only half the size of England. Her Government and people are to be congratulated upon their far-sighted and exemplary action.

It is interesting to remember that Dr. R. L. Spittel in a lecture to our Society in 1934, spoke of one of the objectives of the Ceylon Game and Fauna Protection Society as being the institution of a Wild Life Protection Department and ranked this objective as second only to "the enlistment of public sympathy". Dr. Spittel's interesting paper was reproduced in Part XXIV of our *Journal*. Surely therefore the establishment of the new Department must be in no small degree due to the work of our kindred Society. We therefore earnestly hope, for we hear it has not yet happened, that the new Department will consult the Ceylon Society, for there is no doubt that the Society, with its knowledge and experience, can be of the greatest help to the work of the new Department.

East Africa.—Captain Keith Caldwell has recently returned from yet another visit to East Africa where, if we cannot quite call him the Society's emissary, he has most certainly been

working in the Society's cause. It is hoped to publish in the next number a report of his tour.

While in Tanganyika Captain Caldwell was called into consultation during the drafting of the new game laws. A criticism of the new draft appears on page 24.

Nyasaland.—Correspondence has passed between our President and Sir Geoffrey Colby, the Governor of Nyasaland, about wild life conservation generally and about game reserves; in particular, our President suggested that the Mjeti Hill area in south Nyasaland might be considered for conversion into a game reserve or even into a national park.

The correspondence resulted in a visit to our office by Mr. John Borley, Director of Game and Tsetse Control, Nyasaland. Mr. Borley, who is a member of the Nyasaland Fauna Preservation Society and of our Society, kindly gave us the following information.

The Nyasaland Government considers that, owing to the present congestion of the territory and rapid rate of expansion of the population, the preservation of game is not possible for any length of time, except in reserves. Such reserves are, moreover, only practicable on a restricted scale and in areas unsuitable for cultivation. Nevertheless, while recognizing the probability of the eventual disappearance of game from the greater part of the territory as an inevitable result of the mere expansion of population, the Government has no intention of hastening that disappearance, except in the case of serious crop marauders. The plan is to promote, as far as possible, an ordered withdrawal of the game into the reserves.

There are, at present, four reserves of which the Tangadzi is tiny and merely nominal.

The Lengwe Reserve, although only 50 square miles and surrounded by cultivation, should be retained because it contains that rare antelope the Nyala. It has two African game guards.

The Kasungu Reserve of 800 square miles has four African game guards and is visited by the Game Control Officer at Lilongwe. The chief difficulty is poaching from across the Northern Rhodesian border. It contains Black Rhinoceros, Elephant, Zebra, and many antelopes. This reserve area offers possibilities from a tourist or national park point of view—it is the only game area through which a road could be run comparatively inexpensively.

The Kota Kota Reserve of 340 square miles has one European game control officer and four African game reserve guards. It is scarp country threatened by erosion and unsuitable for

development. From a tourist point of view it is a possibility for the man who is prepared to walk. A few short roads might be run into the area. Important animals are Elephant, Black Rhinoceros, Eland, Hartebeest, Roan, and Sable.

In discussing the existing reserves, their possibilities and their probable future, Mr. Borley made it clear he was expressing his personal opinion only and not making a statement of Government policy with respect to these particular areas.

Of the Mjeti Hill area, which it is thought might be made into a national park or game reserve, Mr. Borley was not able to give a personal opinion. He has undertaken to visit it on his return to Nyasaland and make a report.

Mr. Borley particularly emphasized that his Department in spite of its name, was not concerned merely with game control, but equally with game preservation.

South Africa.—On 6th February we received a copy of a proclamation protecting absolutely from capture or destruction all species of land tortoise in the Cape Province. The Wild Life Protection Society of South Africa, in sending us the proclamation, said that the new law had been passed just too late to prevent the dispatch of 2,200 tortoises to England, but asked us to see if we could persuade H.M. Board of Customs to prohibit the future import of these animals.

We were able to follow to some extent the history of the imported tortoises, whose fate became the concern of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Some of them reached the Curator of Reptiles at the Zoo, sent by purchasers who found that their tortoises were dying of starvation. South African tortoises do not make good pets in England; they cannot stand the climate.

The Board of Customs, when approached, informed us that they did not, on their own initiative, prohibit any importations, but merely acted as agents for other departments. We discovered also that there is no automatic reciprocating action between exporting and importing countries.

While other means of approach were being considered, further correspondence with South Africa led us to decide with them to defer the matter until the Wild Life Protection Ordinance, 1950, should be passed by the Cape Provincial Council. When this has happened and we know exactly what animals are prohibited from exportation, we shall attempt to obtain the prohibition of their import into this country.

Northern Rhodesia.—We publish on pp. 15–16 an article upon the newly established Kafue National Park (pronounced Kafuee).

For the information from which this article is built up we are indebted to the Colonial Office, who very kindly gave the Society immediate notification of the new Park, and to Mr. T. G. C. Vaughan-Jones, the Director of Game and Tsetse Control, Northern Rhodesia, who sent an account of the fauna. Mr. Vaughan-Jones added, "This note is not intended to be scientifically specific or complete, but should be read just as giving a general picture."

Southern Rhodesia.—The destruction of wild life in Southern Rhodesia in tsetse fly control operations has long been a matter of grave concern to members of our Society—and far beyond the bounds of our Society to nature-lovers throughout the informed civilized world. In November last therefore our President wrote to the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia to try to enlist his sympathy in the cause of conservation. Our President's letter and the Prime Minister's reply are published on pp. 34–40.

We have to admit that the destruction of the larger game animals may in some cases be the only economically possible method of elimination of the particular tsetse fly *Glossina morsitans*; and that therefore, as long as the materialistic outlook prevails so much as to be by far the chief criterion, the annual killing of thousands of beautiful animals will continue. The "Review of the Tsetse Fly Situation in Southern Rhodesia, 1948", the latest information published as far as we know, gives the number of animals destroyed in that year in these operations as 22,160. These include 3,863 Kudu, 1,062 Sable Antelope, 1,943 Impala, 4,935 Duiker. The preamble to the list of animals says "the policy of sparing the smaller antelope, which seems to have no adverse effect on tsetse fly operations, continues". Why then should nearly 5,000 Duiker be destroyed?

We see in the Prime Minister's letter that the native hunters are well controlled, shoot only where instructed to do so, and that those found shooting outside their allotted area are punished. Southern Rhodesia seems more fortunate than other parts of Africa in the susceptibility to discipline of her indigenous human inhabitants.

The Exmoor Pony.—In *Journal* LIII were published an article by Miss Mary Etherington on the Exmoor Pony and a letter from Mrs. Nancy Deed about the native pony breeds of Britain and the National Pony Society.

Miss Etherington is well known for her investigations into the history and zoology of the Exmoor Pony and for her efforts to prove that a native British horse is the backbone of our

stock. She has been working recently at the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College, Edinburgh, where she has been very greatly helped and whence she has sent us the following note on the Exmoor Pony by Professor T. Grahame of the Department of Anatomy.

“It seems probable that the Exmoor Pony is the living representative of a prehistoric horse which formerly roamed Britain, and this probability is strengthened by the similarity which exists between the skeletal material of authentic specimens of the breed, and fossils and bones which have been collected in the department of anatomy at the College.

“This work is being carried through under difficulties as very little time and money are available, but it has been undertaken on account of the interesting possibilities the material presents.

“The Exmoor Pony shows distinct features that distinguish it from all other breeds and these features appear to have survived from the European primitive horse stock.

“It is evident from the fauna that inhabits Exmoor to-day that it has possibly been retained in this isolated area from very early times.

“There are certain characteristics found in the sheep, cattle, and ponies which are particular to these animals.”

THE WALRUS

By COLIN MATHESON, M.A., B.Sc.

(National Museum of Wales.)

The Walrus is confined to the northern circumpolar regions, its range northward apparently extending to the limit of perpetual ice. Now rare in Iceland, *Odobenus rosmarus* is stated to be still not unfamiliar in Hudson Bay, Davis Strait, and Baffin Bay north to Ellesmere Land, the coasts of Greenland, Spitsbergen, Novaia Zemlia, and the western part of the north coast of Siberia; in all of which regions, however, persecution has greatly diminished its numbers. The species does not extend along the far eastern part of the north Siberian coast, and Walrus are not met with again until the north-eastern extremity of Siberia