

ORYX

Vol. XIII No. 3

February 1976

Notes and News

On January 1 the United Kingdom began to implement the 1973 Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, but without the formal ratification for which FPS, with other conservation organisations, had been pressing. Licences are now required to import all listed species, and a Scientific Authority for Animals has been appointed, of which the FPS Hon. Secretary, Richard Fitter, is a member, to consider applications. In addition, for many species export documents from the country of origin are now required, and there are controls on exports from the UK. But many made-up products of endangered animals – e.g. crocodile and lizard bags and vicuña cloth – are not controlled, and otter skins are omitted. In the next *Oryx* we hope to publish an account of the working of the Convention in the UK.

‘The Caribbean monk seal is extinct and probably has been since 1952 or shortly thereafter’, is the conclusion of Dr Karl W. Kenyon, after a most thorough aerial survey. Flying over all the seals’ former known habitats, and all likely similar habitats, he found either fishing boats and/or fishermen camped on shore, or the remains of abandoned camps. Monk seals lack fear, so they are easily approached on land, and fishermen notoriously kill seals whenever possible; so it is easy to see why there were no seals. Human pressure continues to increase, even in the most remote areas, so that, even if a few individual seals survive somewhere, it is impossible that there should be a viable population. The last reliable record of this monk seal was in 1952. The survey arose out of the SSC Seal Group meeting in 1972 and was made possible thanks to financial help from the US Office of Rare and Endangered Species and the Aircraft Division of the Fish and Wildlife Service. What has happened in the Caribbean, says Dr Kenyon, could also happen to the Hawaiian monk seal; on two Hawaiian islands, Midway and Kure, reductions in numbers are known to be due to human intrusion. If the lagoons and bays adjacent to the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge were to be opened to fishermen, as Hawaiian State officials

End of the Caribbean Monk Seal

are constantly urging that they should be, the Hawaiian monk seal could quickly go the way of the Caribbean.

The giant sable antelope *Hippotragus niger variani*, found only in Angola, is bound to become extinct unless human settlements in the Luando Reserve (which was created to protect this sable) and the Cangandala National Park are removed, say Richard D. and Runhild K. Estes in a valuable detailed report on their year-long behavioural and ecological study of the giant sable, published in the Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia 1974. The number of people is growing (there were over 18,000 in the Luando Reserve), and they threaten to destroy the sable habitat. The giant sable is a creature of light woodland and this is what is particularly threatened with the need of increasing numbers of people to clear land to grow food and cut wood for building and burning – there are no clearing, cutting or burning restrictions, despite ‘reserve’ and ‘national park’ status. The only hope is resettlement of people on land outside the reserves. But obviously the political situation in Angola makes it unlikely that any consideration can be given to the conservation of the giant sable in the near future.

**Settlement
Threatens the
Giant Sable**

The cheetah is clearly in danger of extinction in Africa, and urgent action is needed from all governments in whose territory it occurs. These are Norman Myers's conclusions published in *The Cheetah Acinonyx jubatus in Africa*, (IUCN, Morges, Switzerland), the report of a survey during which he visited 22 countries south of the Sahara, and which was partly financed by the International Fur Trade Federation. Compared with the leopard the cheetah has many disadvantages. Less adaptable to man, diurnal and not scavenging, with fewer prey species and prone to disease, its only advantage is that its skin is less highly valued; but because of its uncertain status even moderate poaching can seriously reduce numbers. The demand for live cheetahs for zoos and safari parks has led to ranchers in SW Africa and Rhodesia selling those on their farms whether they prey on domestic stock or not, and now the savanna grassland that is their natural habitat is being invaded and settled as a result of human population pressures. In South Africa the attitude has often been that a wild predator may one day attack someone's cow so it is only common sense to eliminate every predator. Norman Myers suggests 15,000 as a very rough approximation of total numbers – it could be over 20,000 or already well below 10,000 – but two-thirds of these are south of 15°S (roughly south of Angola and Zambia), and not more than 3000 are in national parks or reserves. His forecast is that by 1980 numbers could be nearer 7000 and that the decline would become even more critical. He does not hold out much hope for the species's survival unless a much wider acceptance can be achieved for the idea of

**The
Declining
Cheetah**

conserving cheetahs 'as part of mankind's patrimony'. His specific recommendations include absolute protection and an investigation into ways of integrating cheetah conservation with other land uses, such as large-scale ranching; the restoration of depleted prey species, notably in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa; recognition by the fur trade of the need to accept fully all protective legislation (demand for cheetah fur has declined markedly in the USA but increased in western Europe); and the development of some organisation for endangered species, similar to the World Heritage Trust, to harness the interest and support of people outside Africa to save the cheetah.

The Sudan Government has passed new laws to protect its Red Sea coral reefs, which are among the richest in the world. Fishing with underwater guns is now prohibited, as is all collecting of fish, coral and shells. It is also prohibited to drop any refuse into the sea on or near the coast in the areas frequented by fish. 'Aqua-tourism' is developing fast in Sudan; weekly flights into Port Sudan bring tourists armed with diving gear and underwater cameras; a Sudanese-Italian tourist village has been built at Arus, north of Port Sudan, and there are plans for more such developments. However, the new laws should ensure that this particular coast does not go the way of overfished and polluted areas, such as the Mediterranean.

**Sudan
Protects Red
Sea Coral**

Poaching by organised commercial poachers is a major problem today, especially in Africa. Ivory is the big, but not only, target. It is easy to argue that, in order to deprive the poacher of his market, no sales of trophies or goods made from wildlife skins or horns should be permitted. Why such a view is quite untenable is explained by the Director of Tanzania's National Parks, Derek Bryceson MP, and his wife Jane Goodall, Director of the Gombe Stream Research Centre, in an article in

**A New Look
in
Tanzania**

Africana. Tanzania is a poor country in the ordinary sense but immensely rich in wildlife, and today the people are proud of their nine national parks (soon to be eleven) – which they formerly regarded as playgrounds for foreigners from which they were excluded. But wildlife must be seen to contribute if this support and pride is to continue. Tourism is one obvious support, but so far quite inadequate – in only two parks (Serengeti and Lake Manyara) does it bring in more than the running costs, although efforts are being made to increase it. Controlled cropping schemes, which mean good meat for local people, could be an important contribution. The authors envisage this being organised by appointing a hunter in each community village, acting under the supervision of a zoologist who can ensure that all cropping is done for the benefit of the herds. To utilise the cropped animals fully skins and horns must be used too, as must the trophies of other legally destroyed animals – the crop-raiding elephant for example. Tanzania now has the beginnings of what is intended to be a very strict control system to ensure that this trade in trophies and wildlife goods brings no benefit to the poacher. Such articles,

including those bought by the tourist leaving the country, require certificates at every stage, and administration is being tightened up – in December 1974 75 members of the Tanzanian Game Division were dismissed for being involved in illegal trophy dealings. The authors believe that the new generation of staff in the national parks, many trained at the Mweka College of African Wildlife Management, take a pride in the wildlife, and in studying and preserving both it and the parks, that will ensure their loyalty.

Lion cropping in South Africa's Kruger National Park has been much criticised. In an article in *African Wildlife* Dr G. L. Smuts, of the National Parks Board, explains why it was done. Between 1969 and 1974 there was a

**Lion
Cropping in
the Kruger**

marked decrease in the numbers of wildebeest and zebra – from 14,000 to 5000 of the former, and from 13,000 to 6000 of the latter – despite healthy breeding rates for both species, and no signs of either emigration or disease. It was decided to test predation by removing 60 per cent of the lions and hyaenas from one small area and 60 per cent of hyaenas only from another, with two areas as controls. Monthly counts showed an increase in zebra foals where both lions and hyaenas had been cropped but wildebeest remained unchanged, it is thought because older animals were also being preyed upon. The status of both species in the areas is now being examined. Stomach contents of 22 lions cropped (the rest had empty stomachs) showed that eleven had fed on wildebeest and four on zebra. Hyaenas had fed mainly on impala; 22 out of 120 had fed on wildebeest and 16 on zebra. The author's explanation for the declines in wildebeest and zebras is that predation has increased due to changed conditions. Four years of increased rainfall has replaced short grass with tall grasses, which are excellent for many species, such as buffalo, warthog, kudu, giraffe (which have increased), but not favoured by wildebeest and zebra, and provide very good cover for stalking lions and hyaenas. The cropping was part of an experiment which it is not intended to continue, although it might be reconsidered if zebra and wildebeest numbers reach a critical low level.

A WILDEBEEST FALLS PREY *Norman Myers*



The Barbary macaque *Macacus sylvanus* survives only in Morocco and Algeria, apart from the famous colony on Gibraltar managed (and partly fed) by the British Army. Formerly they ranged over southern Europe, even north of the Pyrénées, and there were still a few in Spain at the end of the 19th century. Today three-quarters of the wild animals are in Morocco, where they occur in three main regions – the Rif, the High and the Middle Atlas. Only in the last are they at all numerous; probably two-thirds of the total population and certainly their highest density occurs in the mixed cedar forests there. Elsewhere they are in small and widely separated pockets. In a survey made last year, to which FPS contributed with an Oryx 100% Fund grant, David Taub reckoned total numbers as down to between about 12,000 and 20,000, but he is sure that both numbers and habitat are still decreasing, and present threats, especially commercial logging, are such as to put them in danger of extinction before the end of the century. He recommends that Morocco (like Algeria) should declare the macaque a protected species and that all trade in them should stop – at least one American animal dealer lists them, and they are only on Appendix II of the new International Trade Convention (in danger from unrestricted trade); Morocco (although not Algeria) permits their export and open sale. The species should also be listed as endangered in the Red Data Book. Both for the sake of the apes and in the national interest it is urgent to control the commercial timber felling, and national parks and wildlife reserves are an urgent need. This last is fortunately now the subject of an FAO enquiry, and David Taub is acting as adviser on the wildlife aspects, for which the FPS has made him another Oryx 100% Fund grant.

A new reserve for vicuñas has been declared in Bolivia, on a private farm 4000 m. up in the Andes (13,000 ft.) and only two hours' drive from La Paz. The owner had planted 7000 acres of alfalfa to feed his Friesian cows, and found that vicuñas were coming in to feed on this. He did not disturb them and the numbers increased, until by December 1974, when he informed the Wildlife Department, there were 300. With the co-operation of the farmer, Jorge Rodriguez Balanza, who provides a guard, the area has been declared a fauna reserve, and it is hoped to add 50,000 hectares on contiguous land to the reserve, which would enable the vicuña to expand still more. Bolivia's main vicuña population is in the Ulla Ulla National Reserve, created in 1972, where there are now about 700 animals – compared with 150 in 1969. Bolivia is taking an increasing interest in conserving her wildlife, and has reorganised the Wildlife Department, which includes also national parks, hunting and fishing. The national parks are being critically examined with a view to being upgraded to UN standards. In December 1974 Bolivia signed the International Convention on Trade in Endangered Species, and it was hoped would ratify before the end of 1975. A census has been made

**New Vicuña
Reserve
in Bolivia**

of non-human primates which shows good numbers of marmosets and tamarins, but that spider and howler monkeys, *Ateles* and *Alouatta*, were down to critically low numbers.

There are few places where manatees can be described as 'plentiful', but that is the word most people used in Belize (former British Honduras) when Dr Colin and Dr Kate Bertram were making enquiries in January 1974. In a report jointly with John Charnock-Wilson, published by the Belize Audubon Society, they say that 'almost everyone asked in Belize had seen a manatee', sometimes daily, and that they occur all along the coasts, especially in or near river mouths. Many people spoke of having eaten manatee meat when they were younger, but said they 'don't bother with it now'. Although numbers have declined over a long period, opinion in Belize was that in recent years they have varied little, and as they are not apparently any longer taken in large numbers for food they may be increasing. The sirenians are the only large mammals today which feed on aquatic vegetation, and the large network of inland waterways behind the Belize coast and in Guyana's sugar estates both ensure its habitat and, as these all need weed clearance, demonstrate its great value.

Abbott's booby *Sula abbotti*, the large gannet that nests only on the Australian-owned Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean, has decreased still more in the six years between Dr Bryan Nelson's first survey in 1968 (*Oryx*, Sept 1968, page 320) and his latest visit in 1974.

Boobies v. **Phosphates** During this time an important nesting area has been destroyed for phosphate mining. Phosphate is the island's great resource and almost the sole occupation, and is only expected to last another twenty years. As there is a world shortage of phosphate the pressure is considerable and the rate of extraction has been increased. However, there is still a viable booby population, and the 1974 report of the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation makes several proposals for conserving it. One of the most important was implemented last year with the appointment of a Conservation Officer, and a three-man group has been to the island and drawn up a management plan (not yet published). The 1974 Report recommended that certain vital areas of forest be preserved, for the birds are extremely reluctant to change their nesting sites; they hang around on the edge of clear-felled areas despite all the noise and dust raised by mining operations, showing no tendency to move into 'safe' areas. However, they will take advantage of quite small surviving groups of their favoured trees, though the viability of such stands is questionable. Some success has been achieved with replanting mined areas, and the Committee recommended that such planting should be stepped up and the tree nursery expanded to increase supplies. If all the recommendations in the report were carried out the

ABBOTT'S BOOBIES
Bryan Nelson



booby's future could be regarded as hopeful, especially as these included vesting the ultimate control over land use in the Administration (rather than the British Phosphate Commissioners) and a management plan that would provide for secure wildlife reserves. But already mining is going on, although with some safeguards, in one of the important areas recommended for protection.

About a hundred Sumatran tigers are being killed every year in the island, according to Markus Borner in a report to WWF. He estimates the total tiger population in Sumatra at about 800, about half in the centre, the rest scattered; only a few of the latter are inside nature reserves. The Sumatran tiger has had full legal protection since 1972, but the law is not enforced. Villagers, soldiers, police and foreigners all hunt tigers, and skins are easily available in most towns and in the department stores of Djakarta and Singapore. The high price of a skin – over US\$1000 – encourages trapping, which is very difficult to stop. Dr Borner would like to see, among other things, a large tiger sanctuary in central Sumatra, and compensation paid to owners of livestock killed by tigers. But, he says, if hunting cannot be stopped soon the Sumatran tiger will be exterminated in a few years.

**Sumatran
Tigers
are Dwindling**

Over the last ten years ecological monitoring has become an important tool for land-use management in Kenya, using a combination of ground sampling and systematic aerial reconnaissance, to which has now been added the use of space satellites. Information collected on, for example, numbers and movements of wild animals, domestic stock, climate, changes in land use, provides the necessary data, and the Government has made it plain that it includes wildlife in land use even outside the parks and reserves.

**New Look at
Wildlife
in Kenya**

In a Government statement presented at the IUCN Conference in Zaïre these developments are described and also the new policy of integrating wildlife with other land uses; but it emphasises that wild life must 'pay its way'. National parks and reserves, which now cover 5 per cent of Kenya, will be maintained and even increased – they are the main support of the tourist industry which in 1973 brought in £K24·3 million in foreign exchange.

But wildlife 'has an important role, even in the approximately 15 per cent of land most suitable for agriculture'; on the 80 per cent where rainfall is both low (less than 750 mm. a year) and erratic, wildlife must be utilised as a resource, either alone or in combination with domestic stock. To get the necessary information a new Rangeland Ecological Monitoring Unit has been established (with Canadian aid for the first four years) which will monitor the numbers, distribution and seasonal movements of both livestock and about 15 wild herbivore species, as well as climate, land-use changes and other relevant factors. From the results national policies and plans will be determined.

Hunter's antelope, the hirola *Damaliscus hunteri*, which occurs only in the dry bush and grassland between the Tana and Juba rivers on the Kenya-Somali border and was believed to be endangered with not more than 1500 animals, is now known to number some 13,000 in Kenya alone, although there is movement across the frontier. This has been discovered using Kenya's new ecological monitoring techniques. To protect the hirola Kenya has gazetted the Arawali Game Reserve (540 sq. km.), and it will also be protected in the Boni Forest Game Reserve, which is shortly to be gazetted. Ten new game reserves have recently been gazetted in Kenya, including the Tana River Primate Reserve (175 sq. km.) to protect the Tana red colobus and crested mangabey, whose plight was described by Kathleen Homewood in *Oryx*, April 1975. All these reserves, says a Government statement, have been established at the request of local people who have come to appreciate the benefits of game reserves, to the point where 'the Government is now regularly bombarded with suggestions for new reserve areas'.

Islands where native, often endemic, animals and plants are being rapidly destroyed by alien species, introduced by man, are all too common and sometimes the island itself is being destroyed by resulting erosion. Round Island off Mauritius is a striking example. A 374-acre dome-like island, with five endemic reptiles (two snakes and five lizards), and numerous ground-nesting birds, including the Trinidad petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* (which has only one other nesting site in the world), its natural vegetation of palm thicket has been almost destroyed by introduced goats and rabbits, and the whole island is severely eroded and getting worse. Fortunately, the Mauritius Government is alerted and measures are being taken to try to get rid of both goats and rabbits. Another island with similar problems is Raoul Island, the largest of the Kermadec Islands (in the South Pacific, north-east of New Zealand) and a Fauna and Flora Reserve since 1934. Writing in *Forest and Bird* G. E. Coster of the New Zealand Wildlife Service describes how goats, cats, brown rats and native rats have combined to destroy nearly all the sea-bird colonies – fortunately all nest in small numbers on other islands of the group. In addition introduced plants not favoured by the goats (as many of the endemics are) are driving out the

**Kenyan
Demand New
Reserves**

**What Aliens
can do
on Islands**



ROUND ISLAND – bare rabbit-grazed slopes on which a few rather poor palms survive *Richard Fitter*

native plants. One introduced plant may even be causing the spread of feral cats into otherwise inaccessible areas. This is an aroid lily *Alocasia macrorrhiza* which has very large circular leaves, the base of which may hold up to half-a-cup of water. There are very few natural drinking places on the island, yet cats, which need to drink regularly, are often found at considerable distances away from them. It is suspected that they are in fact getting their drink from the lily, with the result that no part of the island is safe from them. The New Zealand Wildlife Service's efforts to get rid of these alien predators are proving difficult and expensive. In 1954 after 1422 goats had been shot it was estimated 400 remained, but in 1966 numbers were put at over 3000. Two more expeditions accounted for nearly 2000, and 121 cats have also been accounted for. In 1974 another 712 goats and 33 cats were accounted for, but this expedition was able to report not only that the numbers of both predators were much reduced, but that native plants were regenerating well.

Turtle nesting in Galapagos was generally sparse in 1975, reports Peter Pritchard, who made his survey in February, usually the peak nesting month. Moreover the figures suggested that nesting had been decreasing for several

**Turtle
Decrease in
Galapagos**

seasons, at least in certain areas. All nests are of the East Pacific green turtle *Chelonia mydas agassizi*, known in the islands as the black turtle. Dr Pritchard points out that turtle nesting numbers always vary greatly from year to year, that his samples are not statistically significant, and that both tide conditions and rain have considerable effect – heavy rain such as occurred in 1972 and 1975 deters tortoises from coming to land. On the other hand a higher percentage of turtles nesting on any beach are likely to be recorded on nights of sparse nesting. He suggests that an increase in tourists visiting beaches could have had an effect – it seems even more likely to have contributed to a decline in turtles basking on shore in the daytime – and the depredations of the Japanese refrigerator ship which collected large numbers of turtles in 1972–73, could have had a long-lasting effect on the Galapagos populations.