

ORYX

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Notes and News

For some time the FPS has felt the need to speed up the rescue work for animals in imminent danger of extinction. Together with the World Wildlife Fund (International) we can now announce the creation of a Revolving Fund for urgent conservation projects scheduled by WWF as of high priority.

Revolving Fund for Urgent Rescue Work FPS will put up to £5000 into this Fund, and WWF agrees to regard the repayment of 50 per cent. of the sums expended as first call on its un-

committed project money. The remainder will be repaid if and when WWF is able to do so. We hope that private donors will help to make the Revolving Fund revolve, so that urgent projects can be tackled quickly. If the repayment rate is satisfactory the FPS will consider enlarging its stake in the Revolving Fund. The first project selected for aid is an ecological survey of the Javan rhinoceros and its habitat. The Survival Service Commission of IUCN has arranged for the secondment of a Swiss scientist to make the survey, and the Revolving Fund will provide the £3,200 needed to buy a motor-boat which is essential for communications both with and within the Udjong Kulon reserve, the last remaining habitat of the Javan rhino. The boat will be placed at the disposal of the reserve authorities for the use, in the first place, of the research scientists, but will remain the property of the FPS. Javan rhinos are now reduced to about 40 animals, so there is no question of the urgency of the project.

The United States Secretary of the Interior, Stewart L. Udall, has given his support to the proposal for an inter-governmental conference to discuss action for threatened wildlife resources, and his Assistant Secretary, Dr Stanley A. Cain, was present at the preparatory meeting, called by the FPS, IUCN, and WWF, in London at the end of September. It is hoped that the conference will be held in the United Nations building in New York in 1967 or early

Conference on Action to Save Wildlife 1968. At the London preparatory meeting, with Mr Peter Scott in the chair, the broad lines for an agenda were worked out. The keynote of

the Conference is to be "action", and the emphasis on the value of wildlife as a renewable natural resource—economic (food and tourism), medical, scientific, cultural and educational. A steering committee is to start work immediately on preparing the ground, on which the FPS representatives will be Dr F. Fraser Darling, Captain C. R. S. Pitman and the Hon. Secretary, Richard Fitter. Individual endangered species were not discussed at the London meeting, apart from the whales which are greatly exercising all conservationists now. The FPS put forward a paper by John Gulland, one of the advisory Committee of four scientists set up by the International Whaling Commission, which elaborated the idea he put forward in an article in the last issue of *Oryx* (August, 1965), that the whale stocks of the world should be made the property of an International Whaling Authority, which, he suggests, should be the United Nations. With realistic quotas, the whale stocks could be built up to become a renewable resource, with great benefits to the world both in food and oil and financially. The profits could be used initially to compensate the whaling fleets of Russia, Japan and Norway, the only ones still in business. This project was strongly supported by many speakers, including Dr Fraser Darling, although it was emphasised that all possible steps must be taken in the interval before the conference to get the whaling nations to reduce their quotas to realistic levels, so that there should be some whales left to conserve.

With few exceptions, wildlife conservation in Latin American countries is somewhat in the doldrums. Comparatively little has been done recently to push the Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere, which came into force as long ago as 1942; Honduras, Panama and Paraguay have not even signed it, and six other countries including Chile have not ratified it. It was therefore high time for a new initiative, and credit goes to the Organisation of American States for promoting the Inter-American Specialised Conference to deal with Problems relating to the Conservation of Renewable Natural Resources in the Western Hemisphere, held at Mar del Plata, Argentina, on October 18-22, 1965. It was attended by Secretary Stewart Udall of the USA and Argentina's Secretary of Agriculture Mr Walter F. Kugler, and will give a fillip to action by the various governments. Other ministers were unfortunately prevented from attending by several postponements of the conference. The FPS was represented by its Hon. Secretary, Richard Fitter, the first time the Society has been specially represented at a wildlife conference in Latin America, a fact of which the South American delegates were most appreciative. Mr Fitter also acted as the British Government observer, and represented the World Wildlife Fund. Major Ian Grimwood, now wildlife adviser to the Peruvian Government, attended as a member of the Peruvian delegation.

A Fillip to South American Conservation

A new approach to predator control by the United States government is signalled with the replacement of the Division of Predator and Rodent Control by a new Division of Wildlife Services. In doing this the Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall has accepted the report of the Leopold Committee (summarised *ORYX*, December 1964, 326) and tackled the problem of predator control with, as he puts it, "an ecological approach based upon the husbandry of all wildlife", including the so-called "pests"—"the species which, at certain times and places, are either misplaced by land use or concentrated in such numbers as to be regarded as pests". In future all US predator control must be not only effective and efficient but the *minimum* required to meet demonstrated needs, which was one of the main points made by the Leopold Committee; there will also be greater emphasis on research to find more specific controls for pest species, and on the collection of data on pest damage. Only a week after this announcement the Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Dr Stanley A. Cain, signed an order stopping a poison programme against prairie dogs in South Dakota until biologists from the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife had made certain that there were no black-footed ferrets using their holes. This ferret, about which an article appeared in the last issue of *ORYX* (August, 1965) with a photograph, is one of America's rarest mammals; it preys on prairie dogs and is believed to breed in their burrows, so that a poison campaign against the prairie dogs could also destroy the ferrets.

The battle of the Everglades in Florida is a striking illustration of the fact that no conservation battle is ever finally won. Established 15 years ago as a National Park, this huge area of marsh and swamp, with a wonderfully rich fauna and flora, seemed safe; today it is "dying of thirst". Its existence depends on water flowing in from the north, as it had always done until in 1948, following a hurricane-driven flood in South Florida the previous year, Congress approved a project for the Army Corps of Engineers to control future flood water. But what started as flood control has now become an irrigation and drainage project. At a cost of some \$381 million (so far) the water that is vital to the Everglades has been diverted into a vast system of drainage canals and dikes. There is no shortage of water, in fact there is an abundance; the engineers have wasted large quantities by diverting it into the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, and there is more collected in large "conservation" areas, but it is not allowed to be run into the park until an almost impossibly high level has been achieved. Under great pressure, with the park drying up and the wildlife being decimated, one flood gate was opened this year—*one inch for one week*. A secondary danger is the suggestion to get water to the park via the agricultural areas, which have been heavily dosed with pesticides; this could obviously do untold damage. The National

Audubon Society has now published its action proposals to rescue the Everglades from the disaster that not merely threatens but has actually begun. They demand an assured flow of 250,000 acre feet of water a year into the park, the average flow before the gates were closed; a permanent engineering solution; a Watchdog Committee to include national as well as local representatives, and above all a research programme. "Congress must be willing," says Carl Buchheister, the Society's President, "to finance research adequately, if not so lavishly, as it has financed the near destruction of the Everglades National Park by the Corps of Engineers."

To find out whether forest fires were a cause of the steep decline in the numbers of barren-ground caribou in Northern Canada, the Canadian Wildlife Service made a study of a key wintering area in north Saskatchewan. In his report on the study George

**Forest Fires
and the
Caribou**

Wilby Scotter points out that the area burned in forest fires had more than trebled in the last 100 years. Lichens, which are the preferred winter food of the caribou, may take a century or more to recover their former abundance after a fire, and some are only rarely found in forests less than 30 years old. He concludes that, while it is not possible from this study to determine the extent to which forest fires have influenced the decline of the caribou, "if the effect of fire on plant productivity, plant succession and growth rates of 'reindeer lichens' are similar throughout the winter range, then there would be little doubt that forest fires have been one of the principal causes of the decline." Moreover, whatever the reason for the decline, the present winter range, of which vast areas have been destroyed by fire, will restrict caribou numbers for at least some decades.

At the international conference on the polar bear, held in Alaska in September, delegates from Canada, Denmark, Norway, the USSR, and the USA agreed unanimously that polar bears, which roam widely

**Protecting
the
Polar Bear**

throughout the Arctic basin, must be considered an international circumpolar resource, but that, until enough scientific research has been done to provide the basis for more precise management policy, each nation should take all necessary conservation action for itself.

One point of management unanimously agreed was that all cubs and females with cubs should be protected at all times. The five nations are considering ways of achieving the prompt exchange of information by means of an international polar bear data sheet, and it was suggested that the International Union for Conservation of Nature should be invited to co-ordinate this. The conference discussions made it clear that, while the polar bear is not in immediate danger of extinction, there is no room for complacency, a view that is borne out by Mr C. R. Harrington, one of the Canadian delegates, in an article on page 169.

The threat of a power station at the Murchison Falls, in the Uganda National Park to which they give their name, has roused widespread protests. At the Falls the River Nile flows through a rocky gorge only 19 ft. wide and makes its spectacular leap of 130 ft. Even if the power station is put underground, as is suggested, there will still be power lines, staff and administrative buildings and disturbance of the wildlife, but worst of all the flow of the Nile may be reduced, by being diverted through tunnels, until little flows over the Falls. The Director of the National Parks, Mr F. X. Katete, has stressed that it is not the power station that is opposed, but this particular site. The National Parks have a powerful economic argument in their favour, in that destruction of the falls could well mean a serious loss in tourist revenue, and the tourist trade is one of the main revenue earners in Uganda.

Aircraft are now an essential tool for the efficient running of the East African national parks, and the East African Wildlife Society has given £2,500 to the Kenya National Parks towards the cost of a third aircraft to be stationed in the Aberdare National Park and also used in the Northern Frontier Region. The first two aeroplanes, which are stationed in the Tsavo, and which it was thought could be loaned to other parks as needed, can in fact never be spared. David Sheldrick, Senior Warden of the Tsavo, reports that after years of failing to cope with bush fires on the ground he has now been able to get the upper hand of them with the aeroplane. Moreover, with aerial reconnaissance, he has discovered (and recovered) enough poached ivory in his area to pay for the running costs of the plane.

The legend of "elephant cemeteries" persists in many parts of Africa, and Dr Jacques Verschuren suggests that the origin of them could perhaps be the *masukas*, some of which he has studied in the Albert National Park, in the Congo, and which he describes in *La Terre et la Vie*. The *masukas* are places where from time to time discharges of volcanic gases occur, usually at night, and the remains of large numbers of animals killed by them have been found. The gas is carbon dioxide, and experiments have proved that it is rapidly lethal even to birds and bats which fly into the pockets. The fact that the gases are only discharged intermittently makes them more lethal; if the discharges were continuous animals would soon learn to avoid the places. In the nine *masukas* that Dr Verschuren studied, between 1957 and 1961, were found the remains of 245 large mammals, including 33 carnivores (lions, hyenas, leopards, etc.), 20 hippos, 14 buffaloes, 22 antelopes of various kinds

and 38 elephants, and as there are certainly many other *masukas* the effect on animal populations, particularly the elephants which are relatively not numerous in these lava plains, may be considerable.

The United Nations Special Fund has made a grant of \$468,300 to the Mweka College of African Wildlife Management, in Tanzania, to be used over a period of five years. This will enable the college, which has already proved its value in training

Special Fund Grant for Mweka Africans in wildlife management, to increase its staff, and improve its facilities, and also provide Fellowships in wildlife management for nine or ten students in the University College of Nairobi. The College now has 34 students from eight different African countries—Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zambia, Sierra Leone and Cameroon, and enquiries for places are now coming from Asia, from Ceylon, India and Sabah.

The Game Department in Zambia recently conducted a campaign against the poachers of red lechwe on the Kafue Flats, using both aircraft and boats very effectively in an area of 1,000 square miles of

Effects of Poaching on Lechwe Herds water, grass and reeds, where police and poachers alike were struggling through water often up to their waists. The aircraft was used to spot the poachers' camps, and the boats put parties ashore to arrest the men. Poachers in Zambia are reckoned to slaughter 200,000 animals a year, and the Nile crocodiles of the Kafue National Park have been decimated. At the same time Zambian parks have the same problems of overpopulation of some species and the need to crop them, and it is difficult to get it across to the people that the cropping is done scientifically after careful surveys of the herds, whereas the poachers take the first animal they see—which may be a pregnant female, a female with calf or the calf itself. The result, says *Black Lechwe*, can be seen on the Kafue Flats where some herds of red lechwe are now 90 per cent. male. "They look very impressive in their thousands; in actual fact their value as breeding herds is only a fraction of their actual numbers."

A fifth Arabian oryx calf born in the captive herd at Phoenix Zoo, Arizona, last September is, like the four previous ones, a male. The parents are Caroline, owned by the London Zoo, and Tomatum, one of the three animals captured in Operation Oryx.

Fifth Male Arabian Oryx Calf As this is Caroline's second calf it belongs to the FPS as owners of the father. The Society now owns three adult animals and two calves, the fourth adult belonging to the Society having unfortunately died last summer. This was the animal given by the Sultan of Kuwait at the time of Operation Oryx. The run of male calves in the herd is unfortunate. But the pair of Arabian oryx acquired by the Dutch

animal dealer, Mr Franz van den Brink, about which we wrote in the last issue of *ORYX* (August 1965, 79), has produced a female calf, and conservationists have great hopes that Mr van den Brink will make these three animals the nucleus of a new breeding herd on the same lines as the one in Arizona. The Survival Service Commission of IUCN, in discussing the possibility of returning Arabian oryx to the wild at its last meeting, was strongly of the opinion that there should be four or five independent captive herds in different parts of the world before the return operation is attempted, and this is also the view of the FPS Council.

Following a visit early in 1964 to the southern deserts of Oman, in Arabia, in search of Arabian oryx, Mr M. Loyd estimated the number of animals in that area at between 100 and 400. This was

Hunting Arabian Oryx by Camel

based on his own observations and on information from the Harasis tribesmen. In August that year, Captain Longdon, who was serving in the Sultan's armed forces, saw a total of 17 oryxes in four groups: 4, 3, 2, and 2. Writing in the *East African Wildlife Journal*, volume 3, Mr Loyd says that the main threat to the survival of the oryx in the wild comes less from armed hunting parties than from the bedu tribesmen, who hunt them persistently and skilfully. The Sultan has forbidden the shooting of oryx from vehicles (the practice which was doing so much damage at the time of Operation Oryx), but not from camels which would be unenforceable, and his edict is respected. But all bedu carry firearms, and the quality of the Harasis tribes' rifles has improved greatly since employment by the oil company brought money. He heard of five oryx being shot by the tribesmen in the first three months of 1964. Mr Loyd was accompanied on his journey by a bedu who described his method of hunting oryx. Having got downwind of the animal, he dismounts from his camel, unsaddles it and walks behind it toward the oryx, keeping in step with the camel's hindlegs; when the oryx is within range he shoots it along the camel's flanks.

Some encouraging news from south-east Asia is reported by Dr Boonsong Lekagul, of Thailand, a member of the Survival Service Commission of IUCN, in *Conservation News* of which he is editor.

New Wildlife Refuges in Cambodia

In Cambodia five wildlife refuges have been set up under the *Service des Eaux et Forêts*, one of which is designed especially to protect the rare wild cattle of Cambodia, the kouprey. This is the Koulen Prom Tep Refuge of nearly 1½ million hectares in the north-east. As well as kouprey the refuge harbours elephants, gaur, banteng, buffalo, brow-antlered deer, hog-deer, tigers and leopards. "Properly managed," says Dr Boonsong, "it would be the richest game reserve in south-east Asia." In Indonesia, Mr Hasan Basjarudin, Director of Forestry, has organised a Division of Nature

Conservation and Wildlife Management in the Forest Department, and to secure the necessary training for the staff an Academy of Nature Conservation has been established at Bogor within the Agricultural Academy. The first graduates from a conservation course at the Forestry School in Bogor are now working in field conservation posts, and there are plans to establish a National Council on Nature Conservation.

A station to experiment and research into the practical details of restoring and managing wildlife on farmland in Victoria, Australia, has been started by the Fisheries and Wildlife Department. This is the Serendip Wildlife Research Station, 40 miles west of

**Wildlife
for Australian
Farmland**

Melbourne, in sheep and wheat country on the edge of the Western District plains. "Farmland in Victoria is not a hospitable place for wildlife," writes M. C. Downes, Superintendent of the Game Management, Fisheries and Wildlife Department, in *Victoria's Resources*. When the land was first farmed most of the wildlife was destroyed, not pushed back into remoter areas as many people think. The aim is to make Serendip "a demonstration area" to show farmers how it is possible to grow game and other wildlife without loss of production; and Serendip is working out and demonstrating the practical details of providing good wildlife habitat along with the farming. He instances the Cape Barren goose, the magpie goose and the bustard as three rare birds of which self-reproducing populations could be built up on farmland and the surplus transferred to game refuges, and points out that for the early settlers in Victoria these birds provided substantial food resources. "Numerous unoccupied habitat niches are to be found on a well-managed farm. The possibility of restoring some of our unique wildlife to them is one of the more exciting prospects in conservation today." The Station has started by developing and planting round Serendip's 60-acre lake to provide breeding and feeding grounds, especially for ducks, and a flock of magpie geese, once common in the state but now virtually extinct, is building up.

If pesticides are so deadly to wildlife why are so few corpses found? is a question that is often asked. An interesting commentary in this is quoted by Dr A. Dunbavin Butcher, Director of the Fisheries and

**How Easy is it
to Find
the Corpses?** Wildlife Department in Victoria, Australia, in a paper on "The Effect on Fauna of Poisons Used in Vermin Control." An 80-acre field of wheat standing nine inches high was "salted" with dead

sparrows and crows, and 30 men were then set to find the corpses. It took them a whole day to cover the area, and even then they only found 50 per cent. of the small birds. Dr Butcher comments that since protected animals would be generally less numerous than sparrows or crows, the difficulties in producing corpses would be correspondingly greater. Moreover where a population is a

sparse one the toxic chemicals may reduce it below a critical level, and unfortunately in Australia sparse populations are to some extent characteristic of the native fauna. He also asks, "Why should wildlife authorities be requested to produce carcasses?", for to concentrate on the lethal effects of chemicals is to ignore completely the sub-lethal effects, which may affect the animal's vigour, behaviour, growth and ability to reproduce—the last has already been seen in the birds of prey in Britain, notably the peregrine and golden eagle. What is vitally necessary is ecological research into the long-term effects of toxic chemicals particularly in respect of these sub-lethal effects.

Five wildlife sanctuaries have been declared in the Falkland Islands since the passing of the Wild Animals and Birds Protection Ordinance in October, 1964. The Ordinance protects all species (except certain scheduled ones), provides for the setting aside of

Sanctuaries in the Falklands

sanctuaries, prohibits certain methods of killing the scheduled species (on cruelty grounds) and provides for a licence system for taking albatross and penguin eggs. Future regulations can now be made by Order in Council. The five sanctuaries are all islands, and are mainly for the protection of albatrosses and penguins: Kidney, Cochon and Low Islands, the Twins and Beauchene Island. Kidney Island is near the capital, and by a special Nature Reserve Ordinance it is declared a special reserve to protect the flora and fauna with special provisions for study and research. On Beauchene Island it is hoped that the fur seals, which have been wiped out, will build up again. Among seals, the leopard seals are not protected, but they are reasonably common.

Great Britain's 112th national nature reserve has been established by the Nature Conservancy with the purchase of 1,216 acres of sand dunes on the Lancashire coast. The Ainsdale Dunes National Nature

Sand Dunes Reserve in Britain

Reserve includes foreshore, dunes, moist slacks and a stretch of planted pinewood, with an interesting and varied fauna and flora, although disturbance in recent years has unfortunately driven away the breeding colonies of seabirds. Scientific research in the reserve should provide much needed information on the requirements for managing fragile dune habitats, which are extremely susceptible to erosion. The establishment of the reserve is also a useful contribution to the National Trust's Enterprise Neptune to save our fast diminishing stretches of undeveloped coastline.

MISS CLARKE'S RETIREMENT

Members of the FPS will learn with regret of the retirement at the end of 1965 of Miss Kathleen Clarke, the Assistant Secretary, who has been with the Society for 36 years. As one member has said, "To many of us Miss Clarke has *been* the Society." To mark their great appreciation of Miss Clarke's long and valued service, the Council wish to make a presentation to her, and invite donations of up to £5 from any members who would like to contribute, to be sent to the Hon. Secretary, by February 28, 1966.