

ORYX

Vol. IX No. 4

May 1968

Notes and News

The FPS now has two places on the governing body of the Council for Nature, according to the revised constitution agreed by the Council's annual general meeting in April. In addition the Society is entitled to appoint one of its two representatives as a Vice-Chairman of the Council. Members of the FPS will be pleased at this recognition not only of the Society's seniority as the second-oldest national conservation society in Britain – the Royal Society

FPS and the Council for Nature

for the Protection of Birds is our senior by 14 years, and the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves our junior by nine – but at our growing importance as the only society concerned with the conservation of all British mammals. The Society took a leading part in the promotion of the Deer Act, 1963, and the 1965 symposium on predators that led to the publication of the booklet on predatory mammals last year; invited the Mammal Society, again through the Council for Nature, to make a survey of the otter (now being done), and is currently engaged, through the Council for Nature, in promoting the Seal Conservation Bill which has been introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Cranbrook.

At its meeting in January this year the FPS Council allocated sums totalling £4,185 for seven projects out of the Revolving Fund. This was possible because the World Wildlife Fund had repaid over £5,000 in respect of previous advances from the Fund. The sum of £1,050 went to the ecological survey of the aye-aye in Madagascar, described in *ORYX* April, 1967; £1,000 for the Manu reserve in Peru, described on page 248, £625 to train a Ghana game warden at Mweka College

Revolving Fund Projects

in Tanzania; a further £500 for the support of a scientist in the Ujung Kulon reserve in Indonesia, home of the last surviving Javan rhinos; £500 for wardens to guard (especially) tortoises in the Galapagos Islands; £280 towards the purchase of Cousin Island, and £230 for the transport of the rare Swinhoe's pheasants, bred by the Ornamental Pheasant Trust, to Taiwan for reintroduction in the wild. The Cousin Island item is in fact to buy six tortoises which were listed in the purchase price for the island at £280. They are believed to be the last of the indigenous Seychelles race

of the giant tortoise; it seemed an appropriate item for the FPS to buy. The FPS/WWF Revolving Fund is proving a most effective tool for getting conservation work done. In its first two years (up to December 1967) the FPS advanced £13,755 for eight really urgent projects; WWF repaid £10,836 and donations from FPS Members and others amounted to £3,138.

Among the allocations from the FPS/WWF Revolving Fund made by the FPS Council at its January meeting was one of £1,000 to Peru for the proposed Manu national park. This arrived at a most opportune moment,

**Peru Declares
a Reserve
in the Manu**

when the Peruvian Government was considering the status of the area. The Government has now declared the Manu a national reserve and appointed a commission to define the boundaries within a year. A guard post is to be set up which will be able to control all illegal entry. The Manu reserve, an area astonishingly rich in wildlife, was 'discovered' by Major Ian Grimwood when he was wildlife adviser to the Peruvian government (for the British Ministry of Overseas Development) in 1965-67. He describes it as 'of such outstanding interest that, if set aside as a national park, it would . . . provide an area of worldwide scientific importance which could also in the course of time become one of the major tourist attractions of the South American continent'. Wildlife is abundant in this 4,800-square-mile region of virgin forest, rising from 240 m. to the treeline at 3,400 m, and up over open grassland to above 4,000 m., much of it unexplored; it includes probably the last undisturbed populations of such rare animals as the giant otter and the black caiman. Deer, opossums, monkeys, anteaters, spectacled bears, pumas, jaguars and ocelots are numerous, and capybaras 'in family parties can be seen sunning themselves on the river banks in broad daylight'. But threats are materialising: from professional hunters, who, having eliminated the wildlife along the neighbouring rivers, have started to make inroads here; from timber concessionists looking for new areas; and from a new road that will bring workmen followed by colonists to within hunting reach. There is no time to be lost.

Methods used to control vampire bats in Central and South America where they are the cause of serious health and economic problems because they carry the fatal disease of rabies, are often indiscriminate and highly

**How Not to
Control
Vampire Bats**

destructive of useful and harmless species. Flame throwers and poison gas are among them, and dynamite to destroy the caves where the bats roost. In this way more than 700 caves in Brazil and the beautiful Chilibrillo caves in Panama have been destroyed. Moreover such operations are not always even effective. In a discussion on the problem at the IUCN Latin-American Regional Conference on Conservation of Renewable Natural Resources in Argentina earlier this year, Dr Villa Ramirez of Mexico described how, after one such exercise in mass destruction that killed some 60,000 bats, he found

only 30 days later than an estimated 60,000 new bats had come in to replace them. Moreover many vampire bats occur in quite inaccessible places such as old mines, tunnels and crevices in rocks, not to mention the five million square kilometres of Amazonian forest in Brazil alone. As Dr Greenhall, author of the article on page 263, remarked, investigations into the problem ought to have started 30 years ago, for the proper control of vampire bats clearly lies with biological control – techniques such as sterilisation, habitat management and the use of chemical attractants and repellents which are selective. FAO has now established a Research Centre near Mexico City, which it is hoped will start work this summer, where these methods will be studied and a proper ecological study made of the blood-sucking bats. For the function and place of the vampire bat in the ecosystem are still unknown, just as fifty years ago the function of predators was not understood.

The Costa Rica Government has declared a small area on its Atlantic coast, part of the breeding ground of the endangered green turtle, as an absolute reserve. Only 250 acres in extent, surrounding and including the 500ft-high Cerro Boqué – a ‘mountain’ because it is the only high place in the 75 miles of Costa Rican shore – this could become the smallest national park in the world, for its importance is out of all proportion to its size. The reserve

**New Reserve
Protects
Green Turtle**

lies at the northern end of the 25-mile long shore that is now the only nesting beach for the green turtle on the American Caribbean coast, and adjoins the 12-mile stretch of turtle reserve already given by the government. Here the Caribbean Conservation Corporation has its research station in the charge of Professor Archie Carr, and included in the reserve is a further stretch of this vital beach. The Cerro Boqué, the hill which gives its name to the reserve, is still covered with its original natural forest and is the home of a troupe of the leaf-eating howler monkeys. The whole is a beautiful small example of lowland tropical fauna and flora of the Costa Rican coast as well as part of the last breeding ground of one of the endangered species of turtle.

The plight of the vicuña in South America is a classic case – what a depressing lot of classic cases there are! – of an immensely valuable natural resource being completely wasted. In the days of the Incas vicuña were conserved, sheared every four years for their exceedingly high quality wool and the stocks maintained. Today the vicuña is an endangered species in IUCN’s Red Book with poachers taking their annual toll. The main incentive for killing them is their wool, much

**Protecting
the
Vicuña**

of which goes to woollen firms in Scotland. One of the Peruvian delegates to the IUCN Latin-American conference this spring (autumn in Argentina where it was held), Señor Felipe Benavides, pleaded that western governments, especially Britain, should ban the import of vicuña wool, and this is a matter the FPS intends to take up. But a resolution passed at the

Conference pointed out that the initial step, the introduction of a system of export permits, must be taken by the countries where the vicuña occurs, and called on the governments of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru to get together to discuss vicuña protection and the problems of developing it as a recreational and economic resource. The Bolivian government, it is good to know, plans to establish a vicuña reserve like the one set up by the Peruvian government in the high Andes in 1966, and described in ORYX in August of that year.

In Chile there has been appreciable progress in wildlife conservation in recent years, with greater public awareness and recognition of the need for protection, according to our FPS correspondent there, Mr A. W.

**Conservation
Progress
in Chile**

Johnson. The latest government regulations of September 1966 imposed a total ban on the hunting and killing of twelve mammal species, including fur seal, Chilean sea otter *Lutra felina* vicuña, guanaco, chinchilla, pygmy and Chilean deer (the rare pudu and huemul) and the river otter. The pudu incidentally is being preserved on an island in Lago de Todos Santos in southern Chile; when one is captured, it is taken to the island and released there. All birds of prey, except the carancho carrion hawk, are fully protected, as are owls, 'guano birds' – cormorants, boobies (gannets), pelicans – rheas, flamingos, swans, herons, kingfishers, penguins, torrent ducks, the burrowing parakeet and the Chilean pigeon, and there is a close season for most other birds.

An imaginative and comprehensive plan for conserving wildlife and natural resources in Ecuador, including proposals for utilising the feral animals in the Galapagos Islands on a sustained yield basis, was put forward by the Ecuadorian delegate, Señor Pablo

**New Study
Proposed
in Galapagos**

Rosero, Director of Forests and responsible for the Department of Natural Resources, at the IUCN Latin American Conference in Argentina in April. The plan proposed four points for immediate action: legislation to promote conservation; the delimitation of national parks and reserves; and two proposals for research programmes, for which outside help would be needed: one the basic research necessary for sound scientific conservation, and the other to study the renewable terrestrial and marine resources of the Galapagos Islands, with a view to harvesting these for the benefit of the inhabitants where this could be done without jeopardising the integrity of the Galapagos Islands National Park. This last called for a team of three scientists, working in close collaboration with the Charles Darwin Research Station in the islands, to study especially the feral goat, pig and cow populations, and the tuna and lobster fisheries – lobster stocks have seriously declined in recent years. Out of this it is hoped to develop economically sound harvesting programmes (for meat and other products) integrated with the

aims and objects of the national park and the needs of the islanders. The feral animals are a permanent headache in Galapagos conservation – besides pigs, goats and cows which could usefully be harvested (and are quite haphazardly cropped by the inhabitants now), there are rats, cats, dogs and donkeys. The Charles Darwin Research Station has made considerable strides in eliminating goats from Barrington Island, and this task should be completed. But on most other islands it is generally agreed that elimination is impossible, and here a controlled harvesting programme, which could keep numbers down to tolerable levels, seems a sensible solution and would do much to enlist sympathy and support for the idea and practice of wildlife conservation among the islanders, for whom protein is the major food shortage.

At the 1965 Polar Bear Conference in Alaska the delegates of the five nations in whose territories polar bears occur – USSR, USA, Canada, Norway and Denmark – agreed to ask IUCN to co-ordinate information on polar bears. Following this up, in January this year IUCN held a meeting of ten polar bear specialists, representing these five countries, at its headquarters in Morges to discuss the problems, especially the urgent need to get a co-ordinated circum-polar research programme going.

A New Polar Bear Group

The meeting proved highly successful. Agreement was reached on a research plan, and a Polar Bear Group was formed to work under the aegis of the Survival Service Commission of IUCN, whose secretary, Dr Colin Holloway, will also act as the Group's secretary. The first Chairman is Dr S. M. Uspensky of the Soviet Union. The Group's task will be to expedite the collection of data as a basis for the future management and conservation of the polar bear. The objects are to provide a forum for the exchange of experience and data, to ascertain the scientific problems and geographical regions in which international research is desirable, to determine priorities for international research and deploy research effort in the most efficient and economical manner, and to stimulate national and international interest in polar bear research. A newsletter will be published and it is hoped to build up a library on the polar bear at Morges.

A new hazard for wildlife that has developed rapidly in recent years in the USA and Canada is the snowmobile – ski-doo, autoboggan are other descriptive names – a mechanised vehicle for use on snow which is being used increasingly for hunting. Introduced as a winter recreation, it has become a status symbol (much cheaper than a boat), but used for hunting it can be a serious disturbance – and perhaps worse – to wildlife in the wilderness. Often two or three machines are used for combined tracking and pursuit, with walkie-talkie sets for communication; sometimes aircraft are used to guide the hunters in the snowmobile – and also to worry and confuse the quarry; sometimes the vehicle is used to drive game, such as deer towards a party of hunters. To cope with this sort of illegal hunting the Wildlife Branch

The Ski-doo in the Wilderness

in Manitoba is having to make expensive aircraft and helicopter patrols. The Director, Mr G. W. Malaher, says it is not known whether the snow vehicles have actually increased the number of kills, but they are undoubtedly a serious disturbance to the game as well as to hunters on foot.

With monotonous regularity does one read in J. Juan Spillett's reports on his six-month survey of wildlife sanctuaries in northern India and southern Nepal that 'the major problem is illegal grazing of domestic livestock'.

**Livestock
v.
Wildlife**

Only in Corbett National Park is he able to write that the Forest Department has 'made very good progress' towards prohibiting all grazing of domestic animals. But in Sariska, Keoladeo Ghana, Jaldapara, in Nepal and even in the finest sanctuary of them all, Kaziranga, in Assam, the 'cancerous disease' of overgrazing is spreading. The reports are published in the *Journal* of the Bombay Natural History Society, Vol. 63, No. 3. In Kaziranga Spillett estimated that about four to five thousand head of livestock were being grazed, and where the domestic animals were grazing there were few if any wild ungulates, and certainly no rhinos. Moreover the livestock bring in diseases and parasites which may prove fatal to wild populations – as is believed to have happened with the swamp deer in Kanha National Park – and the humans accompanying the domestic animals bring additional disturbance that may prove intolerable to some wildlife – this may be the indirect cause of the high mortality among rhinos due to injuries in fighting; female rhinos will abandon their young if too much disturbed and courting animals may fail to mate. Too much domestic livestock is one of India's major problems. The average yield from India's milch cows is less than one litre per cow a day – and it is for this that the destruction of India's forests and sanctuaries is going on.

The outlook for the great Indian rhino is probably more favourable than for many years past, Juan Spillett concludes; nevertheless there are threats even in the main sanctuaries which could become disastrous:

**Status of the
Great
Indian Rhino**

from poaching, human encroachment and the inevitable overgrazing by domestic animals. For the few rhinos outside the sanctuaries he sees no future at all. Kaziranga, with at least 400 rhinos in its 166 square miles, holds more than half the world's estimated population of 680. Other sizeable populations include 40 in the Laokhowa reserve, also in Assam, threatened by severe overgrazing and disturbance, 50 in Jaldapara in north-west Bengal, apparently thriving despite severe overgrazing and disturbance, and about 15 in Manas. In Nepal the estimate is fewer than 100, and here King Mahendra has taken steps to protect them, as described in *ORyx*, December 1966, and a Wildlife Management Division of over 100 rhino guards has been established. In Kaziranga a two-day census showed, in addition to the rhinos, a large number of wild elephants (375), 'at least 550' buffalo, under 20 each of gaur and tigers, not more than a dozen leopards but probably at least 30 bears, possibly including the Malayan sun bear.

December 1967 brought three changes in the World Herd of Arabian Oryx at Phoenix Zoo, Arizona. On December 1st a male calf was born to Lucy and Pat, but survived only 36 hours. On the 16th the female calf born to Cuneo and Riyadh in the previous January died a still unexplained death. Two days later the FPS's Edith gave birth to a healthy female calf by the Society's Pat, which being her fourth calf belongs to the FPS under the rules agreed when the World Herd was set up. On March 8th Cuneo produced her second calf, a male, which also belongs to the FPS because its father was Pat. The total numbers in the World Herd are now 17, of which six are females and nine belong to the FPS.* At the same time two female calves have been born to the Arabian oryx pair bought last year by the Los Angeles Zoo, making a splendid start for the second oryx herd on North American soil.

Calves for Captive Arabian Oryx

The principle that all mammals and birds should be protected except those specifically exempted has been accepted by the Swedish Government, following the recommendations of the Swedish Society for the Conserva-

New Protection Law in Sweden

tion of Nature. (Previously no species had been protected unless specifically mentioned.) This has considerably increased the number of protected species. Totally protected now are the wolf, Arctic fox, otter (except in fish breeding ponds), all birds of prey (except four in the winter months), all owls, all geese except three, and most waders. Badgers and wolverines, formerly not protected, now have partial protection, and seals have total local protection on the west coast. Bounties are abolished for partially protected animals, like the wolverine, but not for seals in the Baltic.

*As we go to press we learn of the birth of another female calf at Phoenix, bringing the herd up to 18.

World List of National Parks

Liste des Nations Unies des Parcs Nationaux et Réserves Analogues. IUCN, Morges, Switzerland, \$13.50, or Hayez, 112 Rue de Louvain, Brussels 1, 675 Belgian francs.

Compiled by Professor Jean-Paul Harroy, President of IUCN's National Parks Commission, this immensely valuable volume of 550 pages, bound in good stiff paper covers, listing the national parks and equivalent reserves in 136 countries, has been compiled on three strict criteria laid down by the Union: legal protection, a minimum area (500 hectares) and adequate personnel and funds to enforce the protection. On these criteria the British list of accepted reserves (74) is second only to that of the USA (287) even though all ten of the British national parks are excluded, for reasons carefully explained. Other high totals are Australia 72, USSR 51, Canada 47, Indonesia 41, Poland 34, South Africa and Madagascar 31 each, Bulgaria 30. Each entry is illustrated with a map and gives a description of the area and the reasons for its inclusion; the reasons for rejecting others are also given. An English version of this invaluable reference book is being prepared, and a full appreciation of this will be published in ORYX.

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Beavers in Scandinavia and the USSR

THREE papers on the beaver in Sweden, in Norway and in the Soviet Union, two in English and the last in Russian, each with summaries in the other language, are published in *Acta Theriologica*, Vol. XII, 1–3, (Bialowieza, Poland). Dr Kai Curry-Lindahl describes how the beaver, having become extinct in Sweden about 1871, has built up a thriving population on the basis of reintroductions from Norway between 1922 and 1940; a census in 1961–63 produced a count of 2,206. They are fully protected and the only serious threat to them comes from hydroelectric developments. In Norway, described by Dr S. Myrberget, numbers are estimated at between 5,000 and 10,000, mostly in the south. But the population is expanding, due, ironically enough, to invasions from Sweden. Though regarded as a pest to forestry the number destroyed is too small to affect the population. In the Soviet Union the beaver population had sunk to about 900 in the 1920s, but with protection increased to some 40,000 in 1964.

Overhunting of Seals

DETAILS of the survey of common seals in the Wash, made by UFAW (the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare) in 1966–67, and aided by a grant from the FPS, are published in a report, *Sealing in UK and Canadian Waters* (UFAW, 12s 6d), which was presented and discussed at a symposium organised by UFAW last January that brought together conservationists and seal hunters. The report shows that the present overhunting both on the Wash and in the Shetlands is seriously reducing the breeding stocks. The Seal Conservation Bill, prepared by the Council for Nature and the FPS and introduced in the House of Lords by Lord Cranbrook, seeks to prohibit the killing of either common or grey seal except under licence and also states the weapons that may be used to kill seals.

Conditions of Transport and Importation of Live Birds. ICBP, British Museum (Natural History), London SW7, 6s.

This report of an informal one-day conference in January 1967, organised by the International Council for Bird Protection, and attended by representatives of bird importers, the pet trade, falconers, air line companies, government departments, the RSPCA and protectionists including the FPS, (which contributed to the publication of the report), pinpoints the urgent need to get the recommendations of the British Standards Institution on the carriage of live animals by air adopted in all countries.