

The Fauna Preservation Society

APRIL, 1959

EDITORIAL NOTES

“*Operation Noah*”.—The Society has launched a public appeal to save the animals marooned by the rising waters of the Zambesi at Kariba. On 19th March a press conference was held at the Over Seas League to hear Mr. Reay Smithers, Director of the National Museums of Southern Rhodesia, who had just flown from Kariba, describe the situation and the need for action. The following panel answered Press questions: The Marquess of Willingdon, President of the Society; Sir Landsborough Thomson, President of the Zoological Society of London; Captain C. R. S. Pitman; Lieut.-Colonel C. L. Boyle. Mr. James Fisher was in the chair.

There was a very interesting discussion and much press publicity followed. An article by Mr. Smithers appears on page 21.

The fund will provide and operate rescue units, which will be required until considerably after 1962, when the new lake is expected to reach its full 2,500 sq. miles. The composition of these units will vary with experience, but present plans for each unit are: a parent vessel with a hold for the animals; auxiliary boats with outboard engines; tentage, clothing and equipment for crews, rangers and scouts; anæsthetics for the animals; medical equipment and snake-bite outfit. Rescue work in Africa will be controlled by Lieut.-Colonel R. A. Critchley, D.S.O., M.C. Colonel Critchley is well known to our readers for his work in the preservation of the red lechwe on the Kafue flats. He is President of the Game Preservation and Hunting Association of Northern Rhodesia. At the time of writing £2,000 has been received. £10,000 is needed. Contributions should be sent to “*Operation Noah*”, The Fauna Preservation Society, c/o The Zoological Society of London, Regent’s Park, London, N.W. 1.

COUNCIL FOR NATURE.—With the help of a grant from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, the Council for Nature is forming a Conservation Corps to help in developing and maintaining nature reserves. Those interested in helping in this work

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should please write to Brigadier E. F. E. Armstrong, C.B.E., The Council for Nature, 41 Queen's Gate, London, S.W. 7.

ITALY.—Dr. A. M. Simonetta, of Florence University, informs us that the Italian Government and local authorities are likely to approve a plan which would practically mean the destruction of the Gran Paradiso National Park. It would entail diverting all the water from the glaciers through underground channels to a hydro-electric plant outside the park. The Commission for Nature Conservation of the National Council for Scientific Research was neither consulted nor informed, but opposition to the scheme, in so far as it would ruin the Gran Paradiso, is growing.

SPAIN.—On 24th December, 1958, *The Times* published a report of organized campaigns during the last four years against predators in Spain. Among the 100,000 mammals and birds killed were 36 martens, 1,051 wild cats, 55 lynxes, 380 badgers, 7,250 eagles and other birds of prey. Such indiscriminate slaughter can only lead to extermination of the rarer species, especially for instance of the southern race of the Spanish lynx, which is chiefly a lowland animal. Both the Imperial eagle, and the short-toed eagle, which lays only one egg, nest in easily accessible places and are especially vulnerable.

In Spain there is as yet little interest in the preservation of wild life, and the conservation laws are not enforced effectively. Every predator is believed to be an enemy.

The remedy, as usual, is education in conservation, but there is not much use, for instance, in showing nature films in large cities such as Madrid and Barcelona because, in Spain, townspeople seldom visit the country. The problem is to reach the peasants and land-owners. If this education were introduced into the curriculum of village schools, and articles on conservation appeared in the newspapers, the problem could be solved.

We learn from Sr. D. José A. Valverde, a zoologist of the Spanish Ministry of Education, who has worked hard to show the uselessness of this indiscriminate killing, that the new conservation law will remove both the lynx and the lammergeier from the list of vermin and will give the lammergeier complete protection for five years.

INDIA.—Disturbing reports come from Periya, the wild life sanctuary in Kerala, which is on the programme of nearly every visitor to southern India. We hear that since the recent death of the game warden, poaching has enormously increased

and that the main species are in danger of disappearing within a few years. Periya contains elephant, gaur, sambar and many other animals.

We welcome the formation of the Wild Life Preservation Society of Northern India, under the presidency of H.H. Maharaja Sir Pratap Singh of Nabha. The Society has already published the first number of its journal, *The Chital*. It contains an encouraging message from the Government of India, interesting articles on various aspects of wild life preservation, a Young People's Corner and a list of the eighty-two members whom the Society enrolled during the first four months of its existence. The honorary secretary is Shri J. N. Onial, P.F.S.(Retd.); its headquarters is at No. 1 New Survey Road, Dehra Dun, Uttar Pradesh.

THAILAND.—We welcome also the monthly journal of the Association for the Conservation of Wild Life in Thailand, of which Volume I, part 5, has reached us from Dr. Boonsong Lekagul. Written partly in Thai and partly in English it contains besides short articles, illustrated descriptions of some of the local mammals, birds, molluscs and butterflies.

TANGANYIKA.—On 10th January, 1959, Mr. Michael Grzimek was killed in Tanganyika at the age of twenty-four when the aeroplane he was flying collided with a vulture. He had just completed a year's investigation into the wild life of the Serengeti and, in particular, into the routes and numbers of its migratory animals. He and his father, Dr. Bernhard Grzimek, flew day by day in their small private aeroplane, covering step by step the huge area of the Serengeti, photographing and recording the wild animal populations throughout every period of the year. Their detailed study will have particular value in showing to what extent previous ideas on the migration routes of the animals should be revised and therefore whether the new Serengeti National Park includes sufficient of the migratory area to preserve the herds, the very purpose for which the Park is designed.

As early as May, 1958, the Grzimeks' observations suggested that the easterly game movements extended far over the Park's boundaries into the Conservation Unit. This makes it all the more important that the preservation of wild life should keep its proper place as one of the great human interests which the Unit is intended to conserve.

To the general public, Michael Grzimek is best known for his film "No Room for Wild Animals", based on his father's

book of the same title. It is a privilege to record that the entire proceeds from this film were devoted to the Serengeti investigations. In accordance with a wish he expressed just before his death, Michael Grzimek is buried on the rim of the Ngorongoro Crater. A boulder placed over his grave will bear the following words: "He gave all he possessed including his life for the wild animals of Africa." He leaves a wife and three-year-old son.

The Board of Trustees has opened a memorial fund for Michael Grzimek. Donations should be sent to the Director, Tanganyika National Parks, Private Bag, Arusha, Tanganyika, and cheques crossed "Memorial Fund". Suggestions as to the form the memorial should take are invited.

UGANDA.—The article on page 16 shows the importance of the work being done on the growth-rate of the African buffalo by Dr. A. M. Harthoorn, Makerere College, Uganda. His preliminary report supports the conclusion that the right way to provide meat in much of Africa is by the proper utilization of the wild game animals.

We note that the present annual value of wild buffalo meat in Uganda is about £116,000 and that this could immediately be raised to £580,000 without depleting the herds. But much hangs on the progress of Dr. Harthoorn's investigations, which depend in turn on the provision of a weighbridge. The total cost of this would be £415—a small sum one would think if its purchase might help in the economical provision of hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of meat.

NORTHERN NIGERIA.—In the latter part of September, 1958, several members called attention to reports in Nigerian and London newspapers that plans were being made to combine military training on the Mambilla plateau with big game hunting. It was said that a party of three officers and sixty men, with twelve Land Rovers, were to spend a week in pursuit of lions which had been ravaging herds of cattle. A reward of £20 was offered by the Administration for each lion killed, though presumably the soldiers were not eligible for this. On seeing these reports, the Society wrote to the Northern Nigerian Government asking, that if this organized assault on wild animals was unavoidable the use of firearms should be restricted to the simple rifle; also that no killing of antelopes should be allowed, because this group of animals was already greatly depleted in the area.

In January, 1959, a full answer from the Northern Nigeria Government disclosed that the purpose of the exercise, which by

then was finished, had been long-range military reconnaissance and radio communication. Quite incidental to the exercise was the fact that the people of Mambilla, who graze 160,000 cattle in the area, had asked that the military should destroy the lions attacking their stock. In the event, though a search for lions was made, none were seen. Reedbuck, duiker, hartebeest and cob were seen but not shot; the only animals killed were five warthog and one hyena. The people of Mambilla saw soldiers for the first time since the Germans left in 1915.

U.S.A.—The January number of *Nature Magazine*, the journal of the American Nature Association, contains an article “Uncontrollable Control”, describing the effects of that terrible poison sodium fluoroacetate, or Compound 1080, and commenting on its distribution by the United States Fish and Wild Life Service.

We are told that to Compound 1080 there is no antidote. It is a direct, indiscriminate, painful killer of all wild life and a secondary killer of domestic stock and of man. It is widely used in the United States to-day in so-called predator control. In 1957 and 1958 during an attack on mice in Washington, Oregon and Northern California, thousands of geese, pheasants and other creatures were killed. Similar destruction of wild life goes on wherever Compound 1080 is used. Every request for an impartial investigation is avoided because poisoning is a well paid occupation, dipping deep into public funds for its sustenance, and the manufacture of poison is big business. The truth about Compound 1080 is deliberately concealed by public servants with a personal financial interest in the poison's continued use.

So much for the article. Does the American Nature Association disclaim responsibility for its author's opinions—a usual precaution over controversial matters? On the contrary, the editor writes that the author has performed a valuable public service and that every statement is carefully documented.

This should not be the end of it. We look to America for instruction in wild life management, and we believe that methods practised there are fit to be followed in other countries. Here is a direct accusation of dishonesty in wild life management against a Service devoted to that purpose. We look for an answer as authoritative as the article we have quoted, or the abolition of Compound 1080.