

Sir William Collins CBE

Billy Collins, who died last September, served on the FPS Council from 1970 until he retired by rotation in June 1976. He was above all a publisher, Chairman of the thriving and influential firm whose name he bore, but the cause of wildlife conservation was very near his heart, and as a publisher he was able to (and did) promote its aims with astonishing success. By popularising wildlife and the need to conserve it, especially through such bestsellers as the Elsa books, he did as much as any of his contemporaries to forward the cause, and made his firm the outstanding one in the wildlife field. His enthusiasm was a joy to experience, and unlike so many other enthusiasms it was backed by great pertinacity, business sense and drive. One of his major monuments is the New Naturalist series, which has attained its diamond jubilee – the latest, on British birds of prey, was no. 60. It was appropriate that Billy should have died in harness, on the morrow of the Frankfurt Book Fair, vigorous and hard at it to the end.

R.F.

Tom Harrisson DSO OBE

Tom Harrisson, who was killed last year with his wife Christine in a road accident in Thailand, was one of the buccaneers of wildlife conservation, as of life itself. Such men are worth their weight in turtles and tamaraws, to mention two of his main conservation successes. His interest in wildlife began early. While still at school at Harrow, Middlesex, he wrote, jointly with his brother W.R.D. Harrisson and others, an account of the birds of the district. His interest in and connections with South-east Asia began as a member of the Oxford University Expedition to Borneo in 1932. After an interlude in Britain in which he founded the unique social research institution called Mass Observation, he returned to Borneo as a major in the British Army in 1944.

In 1947 he became Curator of the old established Sarawak Museum and later assisted in the foundation of the Brunei Museum. Here, alongside his manifold anthropological and archaeological activities, he found time to study the wildlife, notably the edible swiftlets and other birds and the green turtles. Even after his retirement in 1969 he continued his involvement both as a consultant who visited Brunei annually and as a professor in Cornell University's South-east Asia Programme. Almost his first publication after his appointment at Kuching was a paper on the large mammals of Borneo in the *Malayan Nature Journal* in 1949, followed by another in *Oryx* in 1955 on 'Borneo Fauna Anxieties'.

It was the green turtle rookeries on the islands of Satang and Talang-Talang, off Sarawak, that first engaged his practical activity for wildlife conservation. From about 1948 he developed a pioneer turtle conservation scheme, the first of its kind, in which all eggs were collected under supervision, a proportion of them re-buried in sheltered areas for hatching and the babies raised in tanks until they could be returned to the sea, away from the predators close to the shore, the whole operation being paid for by marketing other eggs. This early turtle work was important in several ways: it gave control of the islands and produced exact records of three breeding beaches; the tagging showed that *Chelonia mydas*, the green turtle, only returns to lay every three to five years, and that individuals come to the same beach every time, up to five



Tom Harrisson with a young captive tamaraw in the Philippines *Timothy Green*

times in a season; and information on hatching re-planted eggs and the raising of young was accumulated and some 20 papers published, mostly in the *Sarawak Museum Journal*. The whole scheme was made possible by the fact that the Turtle Islands had been set up as a trust before World War II by Rajah Charles Vyner Brooke.

Tom's wider involvement in wildlife conservation in South-east Asia began with his appointment to the Survival Service Commission (SSC) of IUCN. He became Chairman of the SSC's Orang-utan Specialist Group—he had contributed a chapter on conservation to his wife Barbara's book *Orang-utan* (1962) which first drew widespread attention to the plight of the species. Together they devised the Orang-utan Recovery Scheme (OURS), which rescued illegally imported orang-utans seized by the authorities, a scheme paid for by zoos which had no guarantee that they would receive an orang-utan, although in fact all contributors did eventually get one. OURS resolved the doubts of certain countries which were reluctant to seize these animals because they had no means of disposing of them, and so was an important factor in helping to suppress orang-utan smuggling. He also acted as first vice-chairman and later co-chairman of the SSC's Marine Turtle Group, and played an active and often beneficially critical part in the Group's meetings. His work for this Group culminated in his extremely able chairing of a meeting at Miami, Florida, in November 1974, at which a special working party evaluated the turtle breeding operations of Mariculture Ltd on Grand Cayman.

His profound knowledge of and insight into the wildlife conservation problems of South-east Asia were the mainstay of the SSC's impact on this area. Perhaps his most notable single achievement here was his visit to the Philippines with the late Charles Lindbergh in 1969. This most effective two-man team, each operating at a different level within the Philippines establishment, was asked by the SSC to ensure the conservation of the highly endangered tamaraw *Anoa mindorensis* and monkey-eating eagle *Pithecophaga jeffreyi*. They succeeded in erecting a locally based and officially supported conservation structure for these two species, which still stands intact in a situation where few other species, endangered or otherwise, are safeguarded.

Tom's importance to the SSC was recognised by his selection as a member of the Commission's Alert Group, renamed Steering Committee in 1975. In 1969 he made a special analysis of the SSC's work and functions that proved influential for future developments, as was his long, penetrating and constructive review of the revised Mammal volume of the Red Data Book in

Oryx, February 1974, in the course of which he characteristically pointed out that western scientists often claim to have 'discovered' information well known to the local inhabitants whom nobody had asked.

There was nobody like Tom Harrison for blowing away cobwebs, sweeping away outworn rules, and penetrating behind bureaucratic verbiage and obstructions – he had after all been a (most unorthodox) Government servant himself. Indeed perhaps his greatest value to the conservation movement was his readiness to speak his mind, however unpalatable his views might be.

R.F.

Erica Critchley

When Erica Critchley died last September President Kaunda wrote in her book of memory: 'To the memory of one who loved Zambia so much; she cared for human and natural resources. Let what she stood for not be forgotten by Zambia – especially its youth'. Her ashes were scattered from a Zambian Air Force helicopter over her old farm and the Blue Lagoon National Park which was her home and which owes its existence as a park to her and her husband Ronnie. Together in 1952 they founded what is now the Wildlife Conservation Society of Zambia, she serving as Secretary for 20 years while Ronnie was President, both retiring in 1972 to become Honorary Life Presidents. The Society's achievements – Operation Noah, school camps and Chongolo Clubs, *Black Lechwe* magazine and not least the profound influence on government thinking and attitudes to wildlife, owed much to their immense drive and initiative. Erica was a forthright and fearless champion. Ian Grimwood, who was in the Game and Tsetse Control Department, writes that, in the days before Northern Rhodesia became independent as Zambia, 'her outspoken criticism of government apathy towards wildlife acted as a magnificent goad and greatly helped the Department to introduce several very necessary reforms. On the constructive side it was she who appreciated the need for vocal and well informed public opinion'.

David Shepherd, the wildlife artist who has done some of his best work in (and in aid of) Zambia, writes:

'The loss to Africa's wildlife is beyond measure. She was one of those rare people to whom one could really apply the overused word "dedicated" – indeed she was fanatical – but above all Erica was a very real and colourful character, and the hospitality with which she and Ronnie rewarded those who made the long and dusty journey to Blue Lagoon is something their legion of friends will never forget – in that cool haven, surrounded on all sides by the vast wilderness of the Kafue Flats, where the great herds of lechwe come right up to the house in times of flood, and there was the strong possibility of a tame baby hippo in the bathroom, or a leopard cub sharing the rug with their great Dane. She and Ronnie fought an almost single-handed crusade against the poachers who threatened their wild animals – woe betide any poacher who fell into Erica's hands! She would write explosive letters, rousing the all too apathetic or uninterested officials into action – making enemies perhaps, but also friends. Most important of all, however, is the work done by Erica and Ronnie for the Chongolo Clubs – preaching conservation of wildlife and the environment to the children. This really matters.

'Animals came first to Erica and she undoubtedly did great work in establishing the great conservation awareness which now manifests itself in Zambia – inspired by President Kaunda himself.'