

The Fauna Preservation Society

APRIL, 1958

EDITORIAL NOTES

Lieutenant-Colonel J. Stevenson-Hamilton.—The death of Colonel Stevenson-Hamilton deprives our Society of one of its oldest members and Africa of her pioneer in wild life preservation. In 1902 he became warden of the Sabi Game Reserve and in 1946 relinquished his task in the same place, by then transformed into the Kruger National Park.

James Stevenson-Hamilton was born in 1867. In 1905 his name appears with those of Lord Cromer, Lord Kitchener and Theodore Roosevelt in our first list of members. It was published in the second issue of the *Journal of the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire*, as our Society was originally called. In the same number appears "Game Preservation in the Transvaal", the first article of many which Stevenson-Hamilton wrote for our *Journal*. His last was "The Kruger National Park", published in *Oryx* in August, 1952.

During the first world war Stevenson-Hamilton served in Gallipoli, Egypt and the Sudan. Since then he has often visited us in London, indeed in 1921 and again in 1927 he acted for a short time as honorary secretary. His life work is still an inspiration to all who struggle to save the wild life of Africa before it is too late.

International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.—The VIth General Assembly and 7th Technical Meeting will be held at Athens from 11th–19th September, 1958. Excursions, both during and after the Assembly, have been arranged. The last excursion finishes on the 23rd September.

The subjects for discussion at the Technical Meeting are :—

Introductory Symposium : The history of erosion and its effects on the decline of former civilizations—

Theme (i). Soil and Water Conservation.

Theme (ii). Education and Conservation.

Symposium : Rare animals and plants of the Mediterranean region.

Will members of the Fauna Preservation Society who would like further information and application forms, please write to the Secretary.

GREAT BRITAIN.—The Nature Conservancy has declared three new reserves and additions to another already existing.

Rodney Stoke, 65 acres, in Somerset, contains the best remaining example of a Mendip ashwood. Associated with the ash are wych-elm and maple. The autumn crocus is locally abundant. The fauna includes badger, buzzard and many molluscs. Applications for permits to enter this reserve may be made to the Nature Conservancy, Furzebrook Research Station, Wareham, Dorset.

Coed Tremadoc, 41 acres, is the third reserve within the Snowdonia National Park. The cliffs are of dolerite. The vegetation is very complex; the moss *Hedwigia integrifolia*, rare elsewhere, is common. Raven and peregrine falcon are found.

Craig Cerrig Gleisiad, 576 acres, in the Brecon Beacons National Park, has cliffs and gulleys which are strongholds of birds and rare arctic-alpine plants, such as purple saxifrage, globe flower, green spleenwort and lesser meadow rue.

Coed Rheidol in Cardiganshire. This reserve of precipitous ravines with humid, wooded slopes, now covers 54 acres.

Inquiries about entry into the last three reserves should be made to the Nature Conservancy, Y Fron, The Crescent, Upper Bangor, Caernarvonshire, Wales.

Red Deer in Scotland.—Eight years ago the Committee on Cruelty to Wild Animals appointed by the Government recommended that close seasons should be fixed for red deer.

Four years ago Mr. Kenneth Whitehead gave evidence on behalf of the Society before the Government Committee on Close Seasons for Deer in Scotland. The majority report of that Committee recommended the following close seasons:—

Stags—21st October to 20th June.

Hinds—16th February to 20th October.

On 5th December, 1957, the Earl of Haddington asked the Minister of State, Scottish Office, in the House of Lords, whether, as agreement had been reached between owners and occupiers of agricultural land and sporting interests, the Government would introduce legislation for the better control and protection of red deer in Scotland, including provision of a close season. Our President, the Marquess of Willingdon, followed this with a supplementary question, asking whether the Minister would “now use his good offices to bring this hitherto sad state of

affairs to a happy, humanitarian and much more satisfactory conclusion" ?

On 4th March, 1958, Sir D. Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland for what reasons a Bill for deer conservation and control had again been postponed, in spite of the submission by the Nature Conservancy in October, 1956, of an agreed plan.

To all this the Government's reply amounts to " The matter is still under consideration and no legislation can be expected during the present Session ".

Is it surprising the people are restive and resentful? What matters more, the deer continue to suffer.

BELGIAN CONGO.—At the last meeting in Brussels of the National Parks Institute of the Belgian Congo, Mr. H. J. Coolidge, an American member, spoke words of more than local importance. He deplored the ignorance about national parks all the way down from senior statesmen of the United Nations to village level and welcomed the development of popular, elementary school handbooks about the animal and plant life in the parks of the Belgian Congo. He said that education and propaganda should be especially active among African tribes living in close proximity to the parks, and should explain to these Africans the value of national parks to their people in the future.

In commenting on the recent excision of about 14 square miles from the Albert National Park for grazing, Mr. Coolidge suggested that a scientific team should study the situation on park boundaries. This team should include a social anthropologist, an agriculturalist with special knowledge of grazing problems and a geographer, or land-use specialist; its reports would help the Institute to resist future pressure on parks boundaries.

Commenting on the scientific programmes of the Institute, he said that he would like to see greater emphasis on ecological studies of the larger mammals, such as lion, elephant and buffalo.

Finally Mr. Coolidge expressed the hope that, at its forthcoming meeting in Athens, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature would follow the lead of the International Directorate of the Congo Parks and set up an International Commission for National Parks. This Commission would, on request, help new nations with their park problems and further the exchange of park staff on a world-wide basis.

We hope that something of real value will result from Mr. Coolidge's suggestions, especially that of an international

commission for national parks. The Belgians have always realized the great value of international advice and influence in national parks by appointing prominent foreigners to their directorate. Readers will remember that our president, Lord Willingdon, is a member of the Belgian Congo National Parks Commission and the Commission's Chairman, Dr. Van Straelen, a vice-president of our Society.

NATAL.—We are glad to hear from Colonel J. Vincent, director of Wild Life Conservation, that press reports of a campaign of extermination against crocodiles in Natal reserves are false. It is proposed only to exercise a modicum of control over any large crocodiles, which appear in close proximity to certain camping sites. Not all newspapers used the crocodile scare as a stunt. The *Natal Sunday Tribune* bluntly and courageously declared it to be an attempt, with political motives, to abolish the reserves and substitute human settlements.

THE ZAMBESI.—Nature lovers and especially those who last year attended the Ornithological Congress at Livingstone, will be shocked to learn that the Victoria Falls Trust has decided to allow speedboats with unsilenced outboard engines to be used on the Zambesi, during a great part of every week, for a trial period of three months. The noise is said to be appalling.

The ban which, until last December, rested on these hydroplanes, except during and immediately before regattas, has been lifted to allow regular practice, and thus to encourage local competition at the regattas. Those of us who loved the beautiful quiet reaches of the Zambesi will wonder how the Trustees can consider such a desecration or indeed reconcile it with their duties which, by law, are :—

- (a) To preserve the natural beauty, aspect, features and animal and plant life of the area.
- (b) To encourage and control the provision of facilities for persons visiting the area.

Sea Otters.—Readers of the last *Oryx* will remember Mr. Karl Kenyon's account of the work of the United States Fish and Wild Life Service in bringing the sea otter back from the verge of extermination. Part of this work included the study of sea otters in captivity and in this great difficulties were encountered. Mr. Kenyon now writes : " We had encouraging results in part of our work this winter on Amchitka. We were able to hold otters there indefinitely in excellent condition, by constructing a large swimming pool with a surrounding platform which gave the animals free access to the water for feeding, and to the land

for drying and resting. However, we experienced many violent storms and working conditions were quite strenuous.”

New South Wales.—We are glad to read in the *Bulletin for Rangers* of the dedication of a new faunal reserve of 44 square miles. It is at Nadgee in the far south-eastern corner of New South Wales. From Cape Howe it extends up the coast to the Merrika River; its western boundary is a State Forest and its southern boundary is the Victoria border.

Within this reserve there are rivers, lagoons and lakes; there are open forests and extensive heathlands. In a relatively primitive condition, the Nadgee area is rich in fauna. Lyrebirds and bellbirds are particularly numerous; ground parrots have been seen here in greater numbers than anywhere else in this State.

The dedication of a Faunal Reserve can be revoked only by Act of Parliament.

Congress of Zoology.—This year is both the centenary of the reading of the Darwin-Wallace paper propounding Evolution by Natural Selection and the bicentenary of the issue of the 10th edition of Linné's *Systema Naturae*. These events are commemorated at the XVth International Congress of Zoology which will be held in London from 16th–23rd July, 1958, under the Presidency of Sir Gavin de Beer, Director of the British Museum (Natural History).

Members of the Society who would like further details, with a view to attending the Congress, should write to:—

The Registrar,
XVth International Congress of Zoology,
c/o British Museum (Natural History),
London, S.W. 7.