

The Fauna Preservation Society

MAY, 1960

EDITORIAL NOTES

VICE-PRESIDENTS.—We welcome Mr. Fairfield Osborn and Lord Hurcomb as vice-presidents of the Society.

GREAT BRITAIN.—We published our last notes on British nature reserves in August, 1958. Since then the Nature Conservancy has declared the following new nature reserves and additions.

Matley and Denny of 2,580 acres includes Denny bog, a fine example of valley bog with a central alderwood strip. The area contains a number of rare plants such as sundew, bladderwort and bog pimpernel. The reserve contains some of the best entomological sites in the New Forest.

Mark Ash of 226 acres is a secluded woodland containing both roe and fallow deer.

Bramshaw of 525 acres contains a wealth of naturally regenerating trees which has led to mixed stands of oak and beech. Holly is abundant in the shrub understorey and stands of alder occur. Small water courses drain the plateau gravels.

The above three reserves are in the New Forest, Hampshire, where game preservation since the Saxon era has created a tract of land of outstanding scientific and general interest, in all branches of natural history. The reserves are established by agreement with the Forestry Commission.

Beacon Hill, 13 acres, in Hampshire shows the vegetational transition from chalk-grassland through chalk-scrub to beech-wood.

Morden Bog, in Dorset. An extension which brings this reserve up to 367 acres, consists of a fine example of acid peat bog with rare plants and insects. (*Vide, Oryx*, III, 6.)

Wybunbury Moss, in Cheshire, has been enlarged to 27 acres. It is a sphagnum peat bog with its centre floating on water. (*Vide, Oryx*, III, 3.)

Blean Wood, Kent. An extension of 5 acres has been made to this reserve. It is an example of coppiced woodland, especially interesting as the habitat of the heath fritillary. (*Vide, Oryx*, II, 2.)

Coed Camlyn, 57 acres, in Merioneth, has a characteristic "moist" ground flora. Sessile oak is the dominant tree, but there is also birch, hazel, holly and ash.

Craig-y-Cilau, 157 acres, is the best known of the botanically interesting carboniferous limestone outcrops in Breconshire. It contains many rare trees and plants, including the lesser white-beam (*Scorbus minima*), the Alpine enchanter's night-shade and the angular Solomon's seal. The caves within the reserve contain features of great scientific interest in the form of selenite crystals and calcite formations.

Newborough Warren and *Ynys-Llanddwyn*, in Anglesey, has been extended to cover 1,392 acres and stretches about two miles along the coast. It is of great ecological, physiographic and ornithological interest. (*Vide, Oryx*, III, 2, and III, 6.)

Skomer Island, 722 acres, off the coast of Pembrokeshire, is noted for its colonies of Manx shearwaters, puffins, guillemots and razorbills. The Skomer vole is peculiar to the island and there is a strong colony of the Atlantic grey seal.

The Rhinogs, consists of 991 acres of rugged and wild country in Merioneth. Its ecological and physiographic features have no counterpart in the rest of Wales or in England. Its mammals include pine martens, and a flock of wild goats thought to be of domestic origin.

Coed Dolgarrog, 170 acres, in Caernarvon, is of special interest because of the variety of underlying rocks and the clarity with which their effects on the vegetation are displayed. Within the reserve are the Ardda alder woods occupying a gently sloping upland valley, thickly covered with glacial drift.

Coed Gorswen, 33 acres in Caernarvon, is a good example of lowland oak wood. The ground flora is typical of rather base-rich soils with such species as sanicle, slender false-brome, broad helleborine, skull cap and, very locally, yellow archangel.

Allt Rhyd-Y-Groes, in Carmarthenshire, consists of 46 acres of oak woodland which overlies shales of the Silurian Age. The drier, more eroded slopes are covered with sweet vernal grass, with mosses at the lower levels and sheep's fescue higher up the slope.

Blackcliff and Wyndcliff Forest.—200 acres in Tintern Forest, Monmouthshire, on the carboniferous limestone of the Wye valley. It is of outstanding botanical interest. The steep slopes are finely wooded with ash, wych elm, beech, small-leaved lime, yew, oak, cherry, whitebeam and service tree, together with shrubs including dogwood, guelder rose and spurge laurel.

Haaf Gruney is a small uninhabited island of 44 acres, between Fetlar and Unst, off the coast of Scotland. Storm petrels nest in the debris of the deserted chromate mines. Black guillemots and fulmars also breed.

Kirkconnell Flow, 383 acres, four miles due south of Dumfries, lies on a remnant of the estuarine peat moss which once covered much of the low ground west of the river Nith. The conservation of the Flow helps to fill in an important gap in the range of habitats in the Scottish nature reserves. There is much of zoological interest, particularly in the invertebrate animals.

Loch Druidibeg, 2,577 acres, lying in the northern part of the island of South Uist, is the most important British breeding ground of the greylag goose. The loch shore is broken up into innumerable bays and inlets by small peat or boulder-covered peninsulas. There is a rich aquatic flora in the shallows.

The purchase of this reserve is designed to ensure the conservation of the area as far as possible, in spite of the Hebridean guided missile range in the southern part of the island.

Clairinsh, is a 15 acre island in Loch Lomond. It carries one of the very few oakwoods remaining in Scotland, in which mixed age composition has been largely retained and regeneration has continued naturally. The reserve is set up in association with the Scottish Society for the Protection of Wild Birds.

Hermaness.—This fine seabird sanctuary in Unst Shetlands, has been enlarged to 2,383 acres. It is guarded under arrangements with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. (*Vide, Oryx*, III, 3.)

Craigellachie, 642 acres in Inverness, contains birchwoods, with shrubs, herbs and mosses characteristic of birch areas of Speyside, and moorlands reaching up to over 1,600 feet. It is of exceptional biological interest, especially for its moths, which include the Rannoch sprawler, the Kentish glory and the great brocade.

Sands of Forvie, 1,774 acres on the coast of Aberdeenshire, consists of a broad foreshore backed by a line of dunes, behind which are slacks passing inland to dune, heath and permanent rough pastures. There is a large nesting population of eiders and there are also shovellers, shelduck, red grouse, little terns, common terns, sandwich terns and fulmars. Among the dunes there are prehistoric sites of the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age, with flat stone circles, a flat ring cairn and kitchen middens.

For further information :—

Reserves in England and Wales.—Apply: The Nature Conservancy, 19 Belgrave Square, London, S.W. 1, England.

Reserves in Scotland.—Apply: The Nature Conservancy, 12 Hope Terrace, Edinburgh 9, Scotland.

PORTUGAL.—In the December number of the *Journal of the Portuguese League for the Protection of Nature*, Senor C. N. Taveres gives new information about the reserves in Angola, which Senor Newton da Silva described in *Oryx*, Vol. I, 6. Three reserves, Quinçâma, Cameia and Mocamedes have become national parks, the last now named Porto Alexandre.

The journal contains other interesting articles including a defence of the lynx, now in imminent danger of extinction in Portugal, where unfortunately it is still listed as vermin.

UGANDA.—The latest report of the Uganda National Parks shows that commercial poaching and snares have increased, in spite of constant patrolling by an increased ranger force and gives some interesting notes on wild life. A visitor filmed a whale-headed stork for three days running. On the third day the stork walked slowly up to within five yards of the visitor's car and stayed there for fifteen minutes before returning to the swamp.

An elephant carried around her dead calf for many days, holding it between her jaw and shoulder, putting it down when she needed to feed or to drink. Afterwards she picked up the

body with her tusks and walked on, carrying it between her lower jaw and shoulder. The other elephants in her group always waited anxiously for her.

Snares and commercial poaching are increasing in spite of constant patrolling by increased staff. The reduction in the number of crocodiles is especially noticeable for the large crocodile concentrations in the Nile between Paraa and Fort Magungu no longer exist. We learn from another source that a common method of poachers in Africa is to shoot a hippopotamus some little way outside a reserve and, some days later when crocodiles have been attracted from the reserve, to kill them at leisure.

NYASALAND.—In March, we received from Mr. G. D. Hayes, Secretary of the Nyasaland Fauna Preservation Society, a report by Mr. Oliver Cary, of the Game Department, upon an anthropoid ape (the “ufwiti” or ghost) which has been frequently seen in the area of Nkhata Bay. Mr. Cary considered the animal to be a chimpanzee and this was confirmed by Mr. R. G. Willan, Director of Forestry and Chairman of the Nyasaland Fauna Preservation Society.

A chimpanzee near the coast of Lake Nyasa is a strange thing, for the chimpanzees’ nearest known territory is near Moba, on the west side of Lake Tanganyika, 430 miles north-west of Nkhata Bay. (Schouteden, 1944.)

Too late for publication, we received a full report from Mr. B. L. Mitchell, game biologist, who was sent by the Rhodes-Livingstone Museum to investigate the matter. This report is headed: “Notes on a new primate from Nyasaland”, by B. L. Mitchell and C. S. Holliday. It is accompanied by good photographs of the chimpanzee taken by Brother T. C. Goodwin.

The possibility that the chimpanzee is an escape from captivity or has been deliberately released has, of course, been considered and extensive inquiries have been made without result. We await more information with great interest, but one good thing we can record at once—the Nyasaland Government, on the advice of the Game Department, immediately rushed through the necessary legislation to put all apes on the fully protected list.