

# ORYX

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## Notes and News

On July 17th, the Animals (Restriction of Importation) Bill received the Royal Assent, after a smooth passage through both Houses of Parliament. The Bill, which was promoted by the FPS, restricts the import into Britain of certain families of animals which contain rare species such as the Galapagos giant tortoise and the orang-utan, except under licence from the Secretary of State for Education and Science. An Advisory Committee is set up to advise him on the working of the Act and the addition or deletion of animals from the schedule. Until the Committee has met and reported it will be difficult to assess the full impact of the new Act. When it has done so we shall publish a full summary of the Act and an assessment of its value in the fight to save rare species. The Society's especial thanks are due to Miss Harvie Anderson, M.P., who adopted the Bill and ably piloted it through the House of Commons, to Lord Hanworth, who conducted it through the House of Lords, to Mr. David James, M.P., for much parliamentary aid, to Lt. Col. C. L. Boyle, our former secretary, whose indefatigable efforts converted a resolution at the Warsaw Conference of IUCN in 1960 into this useful concrete measure, and not least to the civil servants who have worked so helpfully behind the scenes to iron out the technical, legal and administrative snags to make the Act possible.

Now that all birds of prey are protected in Britain, and that there is much wider recognition of the importance of maintaining a balanced population of them in the countryside, the FPS considers that the time has come to direct public attention to the position of our native predatory mammals. As the first step, the Society, jointly with the Council for Nature and supported by the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, is organising in London, in the spring of 1965, a symposium on the role of terrestrial mammal predators in the countryside and their conservation, with special reference to the badger. Gamekeepers, farmers, foresters and anglers, as well as naturalists and conservationists, will be invited, the first time that people with such diverse views as to the value of the badger, otter, fox, wild cat, stoat, weasel, pine marten, polecat

### **Symposium on Predatory Mammals**

and hedgehog in the natural and applied ecosystems of the countryside have been brought together. The need for a better understanding of the role of that attractive and beneficial animal the badger, in particular, is constantly being brought to our attention in the FPS office. A member in Suffolk, Miss Norah Burke, reports that between April and June of this year, seven badger sets near her were gassed, five of them completely destroyed. The gassing of badgers is illegal, as are both the use of gin traps and the putting down of poisoned food, methods of predator control which she believes are being used in her district. From Cornwall comes an account of how a farmer dynamited a badger set, killing nine badgers; he then admitted that he was still losing hens, so "it must have been a fox after all".

The FPS is one of the wildlife conservation bodies that will have offices in the new Wolfson Centre for Nature Conservation, to be built alongside the offices of the Zoological Society of London, which was announced by Sir Landsborough Thomson at the Zoos and Conservation Symposium in June. The World Wildlife Fund for Nature and the Council for Nature will also move into the Conservation Centre, which has been made possible by a grant of £100,000 to the Zoological Society by the Wolfson Foundation. The advantages of all bodies working together in this field being housed together are obviously great; with the new links that are being forged between zoos and the conservation movement, and the important part that zoos can play in conservation, no more suitable headquarters could be found.

Four years ago, when the county naturalists' trusts held their first conference at Skegness, only ten such trusts existed, all in England. Last June, when they met in York for their third conference, there was a naturalists' trust for every English county but two, for all Welsh counties, and one for Scotland as a whole; Somerset is planning a trust, leaving only Rutland without. Among problems discussed at York were the conservation of three important types of habitat, marshes, woodland and chalk grassland. The last two were both tackled by setting up continuing bodies to pursue, jointly with other interests concerned, the manifold problems uncovered during the conference. Conserving the chalk grassland of southern and eastern England, with its specialised and beautiful flora and butterfly fauna, is perhaps the most urgent single task that faces the trusts. With the virtual end of grazing, first by sheep and since 1954 by rabbits also, hawthorn and other scrub has grown up so rapidly that, if urgent action is not taken, future generations may never know the feel of springy downland turf under their feet. What is needed is grazing, and one of the first tasks of the new chalk grassland committee will be to look into the possibility of establishing mobile sheep flocks for this purpose, as has already been done by the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves at Dancers End in Buckinghamshire. But before grazing can be effective, much scrub must be cut. This has been the main task for the past five

**Saving  
Our Chalk  
Grassland**

years of the Conservation Corps, both the national corps of the Council of Nature, built up and led by Brigadier Armstrong, and the local corps run by several of the trusts, notably in Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Gloucestershire and Kent.

A second male Arabian oryx calf was born on May 22nd, at Phoenix Zoo, Arizona, where it is hoped to build up a herd for eventual return to the wild. The nucleus of the herd are the three animals captured in Operation

**Another  
Oryx Calf**

Oryx in 1962 and owned by the FPS, to one of which a calf was born last October, as we reported in the April issue of ORYX. The mother of the latest calf is Caroline, loaned to the herd by the London Zoo; the father is Tomatum, one of the animals captured in Operation Oryx. An account of the herd and the latest additions to it by Major Grimwood is on page 223.

An "essential minimum" of measures that should be taken to protect birds of prey in every country where they are not already adequately protected was listed by the Working Conference on birds of prey, at Caen in April, organised by the International Council for Bird Preservation with the support of the Conseil International de la Chasse, and attended by scientists, conservationists, sportsmen, falconers, foresters and agriculturists from eleven countries. The conference found

**To save the  
Birds of Prey**

conclusive evidence of a serious decline in the numbers of birds of prey in western Europe. The suggested measures included: that no birds of prey should be placed on lists of so-called "harmful" species; the birds of prey, and certainly the rare species, should be protected throughout the year, or at least during the breeding season and migration; that pole-traps, rewards for the killing of birds of prey, and trade in their eggs be prohibited; and that educational measures be taken in schools, sporting and farming circles. The recommendations on toxic chemicals are set out on page 214.

Congratulations to the Devon River Board for suspending the payment of bounties on the beaks of cormorants. In the past seven years the Board has spent over £250 of public money in bounties on the beaks of 1,167 "cormorants". But the Devon Bird Watching and

**Fifty Otters  
Killed for  
Rat Damage**

Preservation Society has pointed out to the Board, not only that the payment of bounties is now agreed among scientists to be a grossly inefficient form of control, but that, as no cormorants were known to be nesting in Devon, the chances were that the bounties were being paid on the beaks of shags, which have been proved to be harmless to fishing interests. Another river board, in Dorset, was recently bombarded by protests when the press announced that fifty otters had been killed on the grounds that they were damaging the banks of the River Stour at Wareham. The FPS wrote to the board pointing out that it would be very remarkable if the Dorset otters had developed habits unknown in otters anywhere else in Europe, and protesting against action taken so hastily and on mistaken

grounds. It is now thought that the holes in the banks were more likely to be the work of rats, and the board is at present engaged in formulating a new policy with the guidance of the Nature Conservancy.

The serious plight of the kingfisher in central Europe was one of the subjects discussed at the 8th Conference of the European Continental Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation in Northern Ireland from June 1st to 6th. This was attributable not

**The Decrease in Kingfishers** only to recent hard winters, but also to pollution of water by oil and other substances, killing of the birds at fish hatcheries, destruction of natural river banks, which deprived the birds of nesting sites, disturbance by week-enders in the countryside, and perhaps also pesticide residues accumulating in the fish. Among the more than sixty delegates were three from Hungary for the first time since the war. Pesticide residues are now serious in several parts of Europe as well as Britain, and local decreases in kestrels, sparrow-hawks, red-backed shrikes, swallows and yellowhammers are believed to be due to their direct or indirect effects. But comparatively few European countries are yet following the British lead in analysing bird corpses to discover the content of pesticide residues (only Norway and Sweden), or banning the most dangerous of the organochlorine poisons (Sweden, Switzerland).

Three major oil companies have agreed on a really effective way of reducing oil pollution of the sea. Shell, British Petroleum and Esso have instructed their fleets not to pump the oil they wash from their empty tanks overboard, even well out to sea, but to send it ashore with the next cargo. Experiments have shown that the system works, and it has become feasible because since last July the

**Oil Fleets Stop Sea Pollution** Suez Canal Authority has changed the regulation whereby a ship carrying only a small residue of oil paid the dues for a fully loaded one ; now only a 5 per cent premium is charged. Other major oil companies are studying the plan. As about 80 per cent of the oil carried by sea in the non-Communist world is for the major oil companies, and 80 per cent of this goes in ships owned or chartered by them, the new measures should make a significant difference to pollution and the consequent destruction of sea birds.

The Council of the Northwest Territories of Canada last autumn removed the protection of the grizzly bear by an amendment to their Game Ordinance permitting anyone with a general hunting licence to shoot barren-ground and mountain grizzlies on sight, except

**Free for All Among the Grizzlies** in three game reserves, with no restrictions as to season, number, sex, age, or location. This was the result of representations by trappers that the bears threatened their camps and their families. The Canadian Wildlife

Service regard it as "a retrogressive step". The Council says that the number of bears killed will be closely watched, and if too many are shot action will be taken, but as the amendment removes the provision that

all bears killed must be reported to game officers, it is not clear how they will know. There is a strong case for a research programme into the population and distribution of the barren-ground and mountain grizzlies, and in the meantime all conservationists hope that the amendment will be repealed. Estimates of the slow-breeding barren-ground grizzly population suggest that there are well under 1,000 individuals.

For some months conservationists have been worried by reports that the Government of Southern Rhodesia intended to reintroduce the policy of game slaughter to control tsetse fly. The FPS has been in touch with informed observers and workers there to find out the **Tsetse Control facts and try to assess the true dangers of this policy.**  
**and Game** As we go to press, we have received news that the  
**Slaughter** Government has decided to control warthog, bushpig, kudu and bushbuck. While deeply regretting that circumstances have impelled the Southern Rhodesian Government to this course, the FPS does not wish to be unconstructive, and we are urgently investigating alternative policies. In the next issue of *ORYX* we hope to publish an up-to-date survey of the tsetse fly control problem in general and the Southern Rhodesia problem in particular.

American zoos have been recommended, by the chairman of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums's Conservation of Wildlife Committee, William G. Conway, not to buy monkey-eating eagles, which are in serious danger of extinction in the Philippines. **Eagles on the T.V. Set** Three Filipino dealers are exporting the eagles to zoos and museums at a rate that will doom the birds if it goes on. Unfortunately, not enough is known to make breeding of the eagles in captivity a possible solution.

Dillon Ripley, President of ICBP, discussing the situation at the recent London symposium on conservation in zoos, said that one trouble is that a stuffed monkey-eating eagle on the television set has become a status symbol in Filipino homes.

The Elsa Wild Animal Appeal was launched—or perhaps it should be said re-launched—in London in June by its founder, Mrs. Joy Adamson, author of the books on the lioness Elsa, which have now sold three million copies and been translated into twenty-one languages. Mrs. Adamson, wife of a Kenya game warden, made over the royalties to a company called Elsa, Ltd., from which a great part of the money went into a Trust for animals. To secure an income while the royalties built up the capital, she started the Elsa Appeal in 1962 with lecture tours in Britain, Scandinavia and the U.S.A., and in the autumn of 1963 the Appeal was registered as a British charity with the name of the Elsa Wild Animal Appeal. The funds, administered from Britain, will be spent in Kenya with the advice of the Game Department, and in consultation with the World Wildlife Fund and IUCN. In due course it is hoped to use some

of the money in other countries. The particular aims of the Appeal are the conservation of wildlife, the prevention of cruelty to wildlife, and the promotion of education in ecology and conservation. At present the Appeal is concentrating largely on helping the development of the voluntary tribal reserves, such as those of the Meru, Masai, Duruma and Samburu, but it also finances a team to rescue endangered animals, and pays for a warden to control the activities of professional trappers.

In January of this year Lord Soulbury visited Ceylon, of which he is a former Governor-General, on behalf of the World Wildlife Fund, and found the wildlife situation serious, with the usual story of population pressure, misuse of land, forest destruction, encroachment on reserves and the killing of animals in defence of crops. The Draft Amendment Bill waiting to be introduced into Parliament when he arrived, and described by Mr. C. E. Norris, president of the Wild Life

**Endangered  
Animals  
in Ceylon** Protection Society of Ceylon, as going "a long way to satisfy the critics of the old Ordinance", had unfortunately not reached its turn when Parliament was prorogued until July, and it has not been introduced as we go to press. Being non-political and non-contentious it is not expected to have a difficult passage. The animals most seriously threatened are the elephant, leopard and dugong. Reliable estimates put the elephants at fewer than 1,000, with a good deal of killing in defence of crops when the animals migrate during the dry season; the new Ordinance will proclaim jungle corridors on their migration routes. It will also prohibit unlicensed shooting of leopards, hitherto treated as vermin, and prohibit all shooting at waterholes and the laying of poisoned bait, both common practices. The export of leopard skins is prohibited, but considerable supplies seemed to be available. The dugong, which only survives on the north-west coast and possibly in uninhabited estuaries on the east, is in the most serious danger owing to its palatability. It is quite unprotected, and unfortunately, it is still to be decided whether, as a sea-living mammal, it comes under the jurisdiction of the Wild Life or the Fisheries Department.

The dearth of grazing in Somalia is now such, that it is not unusual to see truckloads of goats and sheep being rushed to an area where rain has fallen to take advantage of the little fresh grass, writes a Swiss botanist, Peter Bally, in the IUCN Bulletin. In such circumstances, wild

**Creating  
New Deserts  
in Somalia** animals have little chance of survival. In the fourteen years 1943-57 that he was visiting the country regularly he saw an appallingly rapid degradation of soil and vegetation. Where seventy years ago travellers in British Somalia described the pleasant park-like country, inhabited by herds of elephant, hartebeest, wild ass, and rhino, there is now "a grim wasteland without cover or water in which no elephant could possibly exist". This is the disastrous result of increased domestic herds, occupation by man of the scarce watering places, and lack of cover and shade due to ruthless cutting down of trees and bushes in a country with a much lower rainfall

than the neighbouring Kenya. The Somali wild ass, hunted from jeeps and landrovers, is on the verge of extinction, and Swayne's hartebeest, once exceedingly common, has gone.

The system of open seasons for kangaroos in New South Wales was last year replaced by a licensing system, thanks to hard campaigning by conservationists and some heated controversy in the press about the slaughter of kangaroos. The system of open seasons, by which one or more of the five species could be killed for periods up to twelve months over an entire Pasture Protection District, had come to be regarded as a regular event and even as a right, not only by farmers and landowners whose crops suffered damage and who wanted to exterminate "the pest", but also commercial interests, especially the kangaroo meat trade, and sporting shooters, the last inevitably including irresponsible types who shot at anything, including protected birds and mammals. Most landowners, says the report of the Fauna Protection Panel, believe that conservation is nothing but sentiment, and "find the suggestion that wild animals as a basis for research are actually of value to agriculture too ridiculous for words". The licensing system reduces the kangaroo populations where necessary, puts the responsibility on the landowner, and not only reduces the activities of the casual shooter but also gives the Field Officers of the Fauna Panel much useful information about population distribution and fluctuations.

**Relief  
for the  
Kangaroos**

Conservationists were rather startled to learn that President Sukarno had presented a pair of Komodo dragons to Mr. Robert Kennedy when he recently visited Indonesia. The Komodo dragon is described by the Survival Service Commission as "threatened with extermination", with a total population of not more than 300. But the FPS has been assured by the Director of the Indonesian Forest Service, Mr. Hasan Basjaroedin, that the Komodo dragon's numbers are increasing; he puts the numbers at the end of 1962 at 400-500. In 1963 a number of juveniles were seen, including ten to twenty at one place.

**Report on  
the Komodo  
Dragon**

### Frank Simon Collier

The death occurred on February 6th, 1964, of Frank Simon Collier, C.M.G., C.B.E., a valued member of the Society's Council from 1953 to 1957. A Forest Officer in Nigeria, then Chief Conservator, he became Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and travelled widely. His work and intense interest in animals and birds gave him a knowledge of the larger West African fauna which remains unequalled. A remarkable visual memory and a natural facility with pencil and brush enabled him to record, delightfully and vividly, the birds and beasts which gave him such pleasure. In Nigeria his efforts to create a workable set of wildlife conservation laws unfortunately came to nothing, but it strikes the keynote of his life's work. His value to the Council lay both in his wide acquaintance with the world fauna and his quick recognition of what was practicable.

D. R. ROSEVEAR.