

ORYX

VOL. VIII No. 2

AUGUST 1965

Notes and News

Reliable information from Mysore, in South India, confirms the alarming reports to which we have referred before in ORYX, of wild animals, particularly tigers and leopards, being deliberately poisoned and in considerable numbers. The poison most commonly used is the insecticide Folidol. The

Poison for Indian Tigers and Leopards

method the villagers use is to put small quantities in the carcasses of animals killed by tigers or leopards which are thus poisoned when they return to eat their kill. Two reports mention five tigers killed over the carcass of a cow near Shimoga, and four leopards—male, female and two cubs—at Santaveri in the Babadudan Hills. Folidol is said to be sold freely in the district with no permit or licence required. There are also reports of elephants being killed—one mentions a whole herd destroyed after eating jack fruit treated with Folidol—but these are not confirmed though bananas are more likely to be used. The Forest Department of Mysore has issued instruction to its staff to be on the watch for these practices, and hopes that with the newly passed Mysore Wild Animals and Wild Birds Preservation Act effective control will be easier. Another threat to the wildlife of the state is the reported scheme for the army to extract timber from the Jaggar Valley in the Mathodi Game Sanctuary. Not only are there the obvious dangers from soldiers in a game sanctuary, but the roads that will be made for the removal of the timber will certainly be used by poachers driving in jeeps to slaughter game at night.

Jordan is to have her first national park in the Azraq Desert, by a decree of King Hussein and the Government in May this year. This is one of the areas recommended by the scientific expedition to Jordan led by Mr Guy Mountfort in 1963 and described by him in ORYX, August, 1964. With technical

The First National Park in Jordan

advice from American AID and assurance of the necessary resources, work was begun immediately in consultation with the 1965 British Jordan Expedition, and it is hoped to open the Park in the spring of 1966. An international biological research station is being set up to work on

desert and wetland problems, as envisaged by the International Biological Programme, and this, it was hoped, might be the British contribution. The Azraq Desert covers a million acres, partly stony-surfaced limestone and partly black boundary basalt, with an oasis formed by copious springs and flood waters draining into it after the winter rains. Mr. Max Nicholson, Director General of the Nature Conservancy, who was a member of both the 1963 and 1965 expeditions to Jordan led by Mr. Mountfort, writing in *The Times*, says, "Azraq will be not merely the world's newest national park, but at least for a time the only working example on earth of the latest concepts and designs for a truly modern type of national park". Not only will it embody and test out the ideas for the conservation section of the IBP, but it is hoped that it will integrate local education, foreign tourism and wildlife conservation, and most important, give a lead throughout the Middle East and the Muslim world. As Mr. Mountfort showed in his article in *ORYX*, the wildlife of Jordan is disappearing fast, and this step comes none too soon.

The Ethiopian Government has set up a Wildlife Conservation Board under the chairmanship of the Vice-Minister for the Interior, and is planning a Wildlife Conservation Department, following the 1963

Ethiopia Tackles Conservation

UNESCO mission led by Sir Julian Huxley, a summary of whose report appeared in *ORYX*, August 1964. This spring three experts who went to Addis Ababa at the request of the Government to advise the new Board, produced detailed recommendations. They were Major Ian Grimwood, until recently Chief Game Warden of Kenya, Mr Leslie Brown, who has studied Ethiopia's rare mammals in the field, and Mr. P. Walshe, an educationist. The only possible basis for wildlife conservation in Ethiopia as in other African countries is a large tourist industry, but Ethiopia has special difficulties, for she lacks the spectacular herds of game that attract visitors to Kenya and Uganda. However, she has more to offer in antiquities and historical sites, and above all she has several unique species—walia ibex, mountain nyala, Simien fox and gelada baboon—and others she shares only with Somalia, such as the Somali wild ass. Unfortunately it is not yet practicable to set up sanctuaries for most of these. The three advisers recommended that three areas should be protected straightaway: the Simien escarpment, and the Matahara and Omo areas, together with a game reserve for the Somali wild ass if possible. A national park on the Simien escarpment would protect the walia ibex, now seriously threatened by poaching and believed to number no more than two or three hundred, and also cover part of the range of the baboon and the Simien fox. The Matahara game reserve, which is only five hours from Addis Ababa, has beisa oryx, greater and lesser kudu, and is the only sanctuary for Soemmerring's gazelle, and could quickly become a tourist attraction, while the Omo is one of the few areas with both large numbers and great variety of

animals, and could become a national park on the usual East African lines. Unfortunately it is only accessible by air and its development is a long-term project. A sanctuary for the mountain nyala is envisaged, but first a survey to select the area must be made.

The Survival Service Commission of IUCN at its meeting in Morges, Switzerland in June, decided to take immediate steps to save the Mesopotamian fallow deer, about which Hubert Pepper wrote in *ORYX*, December 1964. There are thought to be

**Help for
Mesopotamian
Fallow Deer**

not more than 200 of the deer left in the wild, all in one area in Iran which is likely to be progressively deforested and developed for agriculture. In addition, there are two pure bred does in Herr Georg von Opel's zoo at Kronberg in Germany, to which the Iranian Government has now added a buck, thus giving the nucleus of a breeding herd. In Iran the government is itself taking measures to save the deer, and seven animals have been removed to a more suitable area in the north of the country where, however, although in a paddock, they are in some danger from tigers and leopards. SSC plans to join with Herr von Opel in securing the agreement of the Iranian Government to sending some additional deer to Kronberg to strengthen this captive breeding herd.

An optimistic report on the Przewalski wild horse from Dr. Dashdorj of Ulan Bator University, in Mongolia, was presented recently to a scientific meeting of the Zoological Society of London by the Hon. Ivor

Montagu. The wild horse survives in only one mountain area in south-west Mongolia, on the Chinese frontier, which the animals cross at certain times of year. This is the Takhin Shar-nuru, the

**News of
the Wild Horses
in Mongolia**
Yellow Wild Horse mountain chain, an area of mountainous semi-desert. The horse has not been seen by zoologists since 1955, when it was seen by Dr. Dashdorj and Professor Dondogin Tsevigmid, now Mongolian ambassador in Peking, but between 1958 and 1963 Mongolian hunters have several times, usually in autumn, seen what they distinguish as 3-4 separate herds of not more than 7-8 animals, each led by a stallion. More often they see solitary stallions, which have been driven out by the herd leader. The horses are strictly protected, with a penalty of five years imprisonment and a fine. But the best hope for their survival is that they inhabit a region the nomad Mongolian herdsmen do not visit, and that is almost certainly unvisited by the Chinese too. For once new techniques are helping to protect an animal, for the development of modern methods of animal husbandry (shelter, winter fodder, etc.) is halting the expansion of nomads into this wild area. Mr. Montagu added that, despite Dr. Dashdorj's optimism for the horse, the threat of severe weather to a species so reduced in numbers is grave; the winter of 1963/4 had been very severe and caused grave losses among Mongolian domestic livestock.

At the 2nd International Symposium on the horse, which met in Berlin earlier this year, a resolution was passed urging the owners of captive animals to step up their breeding programmes. Other resolutions were that the USSR should be asked to create a reserve for the horse, and that the Governments of Mongolia and China be asked to do everything possible to protect the horse in the wild. A photograph of the wild horses in the Russian Askaniya Nova Zoopark appeared in *ORYX*, April 1964. There are more Przewalski wild horses in captivity than in the wild.

A bird-of-prey rescue scheme is being worked in Devon by Dr. Leonard Hurrell with the Devon Trust for Nature Conservation. Because birds of prey have decreased so seriously in recent years the

**Scheme for
Injured
Birds of Prey**

numbers injured on roads and in other ways assume greater importance. Under this scheme, which was started by Dr. Hurrell, who lives in Plymouth, anyone finding an injured bird of prey in an area bounded by Tavistock, Two Bridges, Buckfastleigh and Kingsbridge, is asked to get it to Dr. Hurrell as quickly as possible. If it is not too seriously injured Dr. Hurrell keeps it as long as treatment is necessary and then sends it to one of five "convalescent homes" run by other volunteers. The scheme is working well, and the Trust hopes to expand it to a wider area when more volunteers can be found.

Analysis of 61 eggs from 46 different nests of raptors—peregrine merlin, golden eagle, buzzard and kestrel—and corvids—raven, carrion and hooded crow, rook and magpie, in 1963, showed that not one

**Pesticides
in Land and
Sea Birds**

was free from organo-chlorine residues. These results, says Dr. D. A. Ratcliffe, of the Nature Conservancy, in a paper in *British Birds*, support the idea that contamination of the environment is general in Great Britain. The raptors were the more heavily contaminated, especially the peregrine, which has suffered serious decline almost everywhere, with 13.8 parts per million, as against the highest in the corvids, the raven with 2.1 ppm, and the carrion crow, which appears to be unaffected by pesticides, with 0.8 ppm. The corvids being partly vegetarian may form only the first link in a food chain; the peregrine is at the end. The same trend was shown in a small series of sea birds' eggs. The kittiwakes, plankton feeders, showed the lowest residues (0.3 ppm); herring gulls, which are omnivorous, 0.9; auks, which eat small fish, 3.5; and finally shags, large fish eaters, 7.8. The breeding success of both the golden eagle (which showed 2.6 ppm) and the buzzard (2.5) has dropped markedly in areas where the two species eat much sheep carrion. A ban on the use of dieldrin in sheep-dips comes into force at the end of 1965, but there are still widespread reports of stock-piling by sheep farmers, so it is feared that no early improvement in the situation can be expected for these birds.

A fourth Arabian oryx calf was born on May 6 to the international herd at Phoenix Zoo, Arizona, the second calf to be owned by the FPS which now owns six of the 13 animals. Like the first FPS calf it was born to Edith, one of the original oryx captured in the FPS expedition, and the father is again Tomatum, also of the original trio. Three more Arabian oryx have recently become available and efforts are being made to secure them for the

Another Arabian Oryx Calf

World Herd. Two of them were received in exchange by the Dutch animal dealer Franz van den Brink from the Riyadh Zoo, source of the four adult animals presented to the World Wildlife Fund and now at Phoenix. The FPS naturally regrets that this exchange means that only one female, an old one, remains at Riyadh, which thus virtually ceases to have a potential breeding stock. The Society also deprecates strongly the idea that these two animals should be offered to the world's zoos at a very high price—£11,000 has been mentioned—if only because it would be disastrous if the idea got around that such sums could be realised by capturing some of those remaining in the wild. We hope that Mr. van den Brink will consider donating these animals either to the World Herd at Phoenix or to be the foundation stock of a second World Herd elsewhere; the World Wildlife Fund has offered to pay the transport costs already incurred should he do so. The third animal now available is a female calf, captured in Oman by a private expedition reported in *Animals* for June 22. This was to be a regimental mascot, but there is reason to hope that wiser counsels will prevail and that it too may find its way to Phoenix. Eventually, of course, we hope to restore a population of Arabian oryx to the wild from the herd at Phoenix and it may well be that the new national park in Jordan, mentioned on page 75, will prove to be the most suitable place to make this experiment.

Periodically there is criticism of the game departments in Africa and elsewhere that hunting even under careful control is allowed. Recently there has been criticism of this sort about shooting rhinos in East Africa. Most visitors to Africa only see rhinos in the game parks from the comfortable safety of a

Two Views About Rhino Hunting

safari car, but the African villager has another tale to tell. In Kenya, for example, 90 per cent. of the rhinos are outside the parks and reserves, and heartily disliked and feared by the villagers. Scores of humans and probably hundreds of domestic animals are killed by them every year, and the rhinos' understandable habit of lurking round the water holes makes them a serious hazard for the women who draw supplies. The result is a constant demand to have the rhino exterminated, a demand which can only be countered on economic grounds. In Kenya it is reckoned that every rhino shot by sportsmen brings at least £1000 to the country, and in those areas where rhino are most numerous the

Game Department has persuaded the local County Council to use the fees received from licensed hunters to pay compensation for those killed or injured by game. In many areas these funds are paying out more than they receive. Another criticism is that there are far greater restrictions on live trapping of animals than on shooting. But killing one rhino is much less damaging for both rhinos and other wildlife in the area than trapping. The trapper causes far more disturbance than the hunter, and for every rhino captured alive several may die. (This of course is the risk taken in transferring animals from an unsafe area to a safe one, but then the penalty of leaving them in the unsafe one is that all may die). "The effects of the capture of one rhino calf exceeds those of the killing of a dozen mature animals in the same area", says one experienced warden.

Dr. Kaunda, President of Zambia, who has frequently shown how much importance he attaches to wildlife conservation, has accepted the invitation of the Wildlife Conservation Society of Zambia to become its Patron, and the Minister of Finance has joined the Society. According to *Black Lechwe*, the Society's journal, poaching in Zambia is on such a scale as to be a serious danger to some species. The real culprits are the men who drive

Zambia's President for Patron

out from the towns and hand out firearms and ammunition to the villagers, offering 30s. for a lechwe and £8 for a buffalo. The selling prices in Lusaka and the Copperbelt towns are respectively £7 10s. and £80. The Society, whose annual grant from the Government was doubled last year from £500 to £1000 has allocated the whole sum for one year to education in wildlife conservation. One of its most successful ventures in this field is the Tree Tops School Camp in the Kafue National Park, which is enormously popular for school parties. With the aid of a £12,000 grant from the Beit Trust a camp for student teachers in the Luangwa Valley has been built and should open this year.

An amphibious vehicle is to be presented to the Uganda National Parks to help in the battle against crocodile poachers on the Nile. This is Dr. Grzimek's ingenious solution of the problem, writes Mr.

To Combat the Crocodile Poachers

Katete, Director of the Parks, in his quarterly Bulletin. The crocodile poachers give the rangers a great deal of trouble and are extremely difficult to catch, as they travel by canoe and take to the water at the first sign of the rangers. The amphibious vehicle will at least enable the rangers to take to the water too. In addition, the patrols are to be supplied with wireless presented by American AID. From America too comes the money for a new venture in Uganda, a conservation education centre at Paraa, in the Murchison Falls park, presented by the Wildlife Leadership Foundation. The centre will consist of lecture hall, dormitories and a

museum/exhibition hall for school parties and other groups. Once again an elephant has been giving trouble at Paraa by being too friendly. The Kali bull, as he was called, one evening stood so close to the dining room window while guests were at dinner—"for all the world like a child gazing into a sweet shop"—that he broke three windows with his small tusks and looked like coming in. He had to be driven away with a broom.

When the boundaries of the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania were drawn in 1959, little was known about the animals' migrations, with the result that parts of the game migration routes were left outside, providing a splendid hunting ground for poachers. The most serious of these omissions is to the north-west of the park, the Ikoma area through which the herds pass in the dry months of August and September. Recently, says the Tanzania National Parks Report, scattered huts have been appearing in Ikorongo area, and an aerial survey counted over 200 within a mile of the park's boundary; the little cultivation suggested that the owners were living by poaching. When President Nyerere visited the Serengeti he was told about this, and immediately promised full support in getting the area evacuated and closed to this sporadic settlement, both because of its threat to the wildlife migrations and also because it runs counter to the government's "villagisation policy", which is to concentrate settlement in villages so that schools, medical services, etc., can be provided. The President instructed the local authorities to work out, in collaboration with the National Parks, a scheme to re-settle these people. The government department agreed to appoint an officer to carry out the operation and the Frankfurt Zoological Society and the World Wildlife Fund in America came to the rescue of the National Parks by providing the money. The Director of the National Parks in Tanzania, Mr. John Owen, writes, "The importance of this new development to the future security of the Serengeti herds cannot be over-estimated. Once the area has been cleared by Government order it will be easy to prevent re-encroachment; infractions of the order can be spotted at an early stage".

Marine turtles are preyed on by a large variety of animals, but the depredations of man and his domestic animals, especially the dog, are so thorough and numerous as to make the effects of predation by all natural enemies almost negligible, says the report of a survey conducted by the Natal Parks Board into the turtle breeding grounds in Tongaland. The survey, which was made because of reports of increased killings, discovered that the giant leatherback turtle *Dermochelys coriacea* was breeding in Tongaland, the first record for the South African coast; this huge turtle, up to 8 ft. long and up to half a ton in weight, is one of the species

**Leatherbacks
Breeding in
Natal**

facing extinction, the estimated breeding pairs in all the world being about 1000—in Malaya, Costa Rica, occasionally North America and probably West Africa. Loggerheads were numerous but there were neither hawksbill nor green turtles. Until recently the native people were afraid of the turtles and would not handle them, but some seem to have got over the fear and started the killing, which is thought likely to spread. The men wait until the turtle is well up the beach, cut off the head, remove the meat and leave the plastron and empty carapace behind. The leatherbacks are of course preferred because of their greater size. Dogs dig up the nests, destroying over a hundred eggs every time they do so. The report recommends an area be set aside for a sanctuary to be patrolled by a warden when the turtles are there, with all uncontrolled dogs removed and the evacuation of the dunes in the area of all human inhabitants—which would also have the effect of protecting the dune forest from destruction. And in the breeding season tourists would be excluded.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FPS

THE President, the Marquess of Willingdon, took the Chair at the Annual General Meeting of the Society, held on May 6th in the new lecture hall of the Zoological Society of London. Lord Willingdon said that while he was happy to remain as President of the Society, he wished to resign the office of Chairman of Council, and that Mr. Peter Scott had agreed to succeed him. The Society's gratitude to Lord Willingdon for his 15 years' service as Chairman and many other services was expressed by the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Ian Malcolmson, who also welcomed the new Chairman.

The President and the Hon. Treasurer were re-elected; and the new Council members were confirmed: Mr. Aubrey Buxton, Sir Dudley Forwood and Major Bruce Kinloch, co-opted during the year, and Lt. Col. C. L. Boyle, Dr. F. Fraser Darling, Mr. James Fisher, Major W. N. Scott and Dr. W. H. Thorpe, elected this year. The President expressed the Society's thanks to the retiring members: Lt. Col. G. A. E. Gibbs, Mr. D. James, Mr. T. D. Rosevear, Major C. W. Hume, and Mr. G. Mountfort.

Mr. Fitter, Hon. Secretary, reported that the FPS had recently been active on behalf of the Antarctic whales, which were in serious danger due to overhunting. He and Major Ian Grimwood had represented the Society at the meeting of the International Whaling Commission in London in May at which a small but insufficient reduction in quotas had been achieved, and the Society would continue to press for more realistic quotas. He also reported that the Society's plans for an East African tour in February 1966 had proved so popular that the original tour had been doubled and both tours were fully booked.

Following the business of the meeting, the new Chairman, Mr. Peter Scott, gave a talk about wildfowl conservation and showed a film of the Wildfowl Trust.

National Parks for Ulster

An Amenity Lands Act has been passed in Northern Ireland which is the equivalent of the British National Parks Act. It sets up an Ulster Country-side Committee to perform the function of our National Parks Commission, and gives the Minister of Development power to create national parks and nature reserves.