

The Fauna Preservation Society

EDITORIAL NOTES

Sir William Gowers.—On 7th October, 1954, through the death of Sir William Gowers, the Society lost one of its finest supporters.

During more than thirty years' service in central and west Africa, Sir William acquired great knowledge of the large animals of the continent and realized that without protection their fate was sealed. In 1932 he joined the Society and was forthwith elected to the Executive Committee. Thereafter he regularly attended Council and General Meetings, often taking the chair. His advice based on great experience and clear thinking was always of the utmost value to the Society, on all matters whether faunal or administrative. In 1945 he became a vice-president.

Dr. Hugo Salomon.—We regret to hear of the death, in Argentina, of Dr. Hugo Salomon, the pioneer of nature protection in South America. He was widely travelled and wrote much on nature protection in many countries. Two of his articles, "The Protection of Wild Life in East Asia" and "The Protection of Wild Life in Africa" were published by the Society as "Occasional Papers".

Oryx, Volume II.—This number completes Volume II of *Oryx* and includes an index. Volume I is sold out, but more could be assembled if copies of Vol. I, Nos. 1 and 5 were available. These, and indeed any back numbers of *Oryx*, will be gratefully acknowledged.

Kenya.—In the Tsavo National Park, between Nairobi and Mombasa, lie the Mzima pools. Rain water from the Chyulu hills, thirty miles away, seeps through volcanic ash and collects on an impervious stratum. It emerges from beneath a shelf of lava at the rate of fifty million gallons a day and, in a crescent of springs, converges on the Top Pool. The water next flows over shallow rapids into the Long Pool. Soon it disappears underground, eventually to join the Tsavo river four miles nearer Mombasa.

In dry weather the pools are used by elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, lion and other animals inhabiting that part of the

national park. For generations hippopotamus have lived in them. In the Top Pool they are a constant delight to visitors for there they can be seen from above swimming with escorts of fish in the crystal clear water. But the Long Pool is essential to the hippopotamus, for in its shallows and on its shelving fringe grows the vegetation, which both feeds the adults and makes a perfect nursery for the young.

It can be imagined with what consternation the Trustees of the Kenya National Parks received, in 1952, the information that water from the Mzima pools was required by the city of Mombasa. Moreover, that part of the requisite installation was a dam at the east end of the Long Pool; this dam, by raising the water level, would destroy the vegetation and thus ruin the hippopotamus habitat. A complete deadlock occurred. The Government's advisers held to their view that the dam was the only practicable method of procuring the water for Mombasa. The Trustees had to admit that, as no time had been allowed for other possibilities to be considered adequately, the water would have to come from Mzima, but, having taken the expert advice of Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners, they contended that the water could be taken without the dam and without damaging the natural environment.

This was no local matter only. The whole principle of national parks was at stake; for in national parks the interests of wild life must be paramount. The question assumed great importance; in fact the forceful public indignation expressed in the press and elsewhere was, to the Trustees, a most encouraging sign of the interest taken in national parks. A question asked in the House of Commons by Colonel R. S. Clarke, a member of Council of the Fauna Preservation Society, received a sympathetic reply.

Faced with so much public opinion the Kenya Government obtained a joint report from Sir Alexander Gibb and the technical departments of Government. This report, which was accepted, provided for the water for Mombasa to be drawn above the head of the springs, so that there should be no alteration with the level of the Long Pool.

This decision has not only established the fact that the general public have rights and interests in national parks, but has confirmed the principle that a national park is not an area to be at one moment set aside for complete protection, and at the next endangered by claims for the use of its natural resources.

It is now possible to say something about the effect of the Mau Mau terrorist campaign on the wild life of Kenya.

The Mount Kenya and Aberdare national parks, both in the mountain zones, have been closed. The animals in these parks, and in the surrounding forest areas, have suffered badly, both from the terrorists and from the steps taken against them. The effect on the whole ecology of the forest has been disastrous. "Treetops," the wonderful tree-house from which so many animals have been seen and photographed, has been destroyed. The other national parks, and the animals outside the national parks, have hardly been affected by Mau Mau.

Uganda.—The outstanding event of 1954 was the official opening in April of the Queen Elizabeth National Park by Her Majesty. Accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, the Queen went through the Kazinga Channel by launch and saw many of the animals for whose protection the park has been established. Captain Keith Caldwell represented the Society at the opening ceremony.

The great work of conservation in this park and in the Murchison park continues, but news from the national parks of Uganda has been overshadowed by the sudden death of the Director, Mr. K. de P. Beaton.

Nyasaland.—The work in the Mijeti continues. Early in September Mr. G. D. Hayes, Secretary of the Nyasaland F.P.S., took a party to improve the water supply of the Miwawa water-hole. A mere mud hole has now been turned into a pool, fifty yards long, forty-five feet wide and two feet deep. While at Miwawa the party saw kudu, bush-buck, duiker, lion, hyaena and the spoor of elephant. There was a herd of thirty-six eland with twelve young and one of eighteen sable including five young. A large sable bull walked past only seven yards from the party.

U.S.A.—On 31st October, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania celebrated its twentieth anniversary. In 1934 a private committee bought two square miles of the Kittating Ridge, to stop the slaughter of thousands of the hawks and eagles which crossed there on autumn migration. In spite of local prejudice and threats of physical violence, Doctor and Mrs. Maurice Broun have since guarded this sanctuary, which has become internationally famous for its contributions to ornithology and its splendid educational work. The anniversary will be marked by the opening of a new educational centre on the mountain.

We would like also to congratulate the Save-the-Redwoods League on the success of their long campaign to save sequoia trees in Calaveras South Grove, California. The grove, together

with adjoining stands of sugar and ponderosa pines, will be established as a state park.

The preservation of these trees has been assured by the gift of a million dollars from John D. Rockefeller Jr. This, matched by a like amount from the state, together with other gifts from individuals and organizations, has made possible the purchase of the 2,155 acres concerned at a cost of \$2,800,000.

West Indies.—Mr. Arthur Vernay, Chairman of the Society for the Protection of the Flamingo in the Bahamas, writes that the year has been a very successful one. About five thousand chicks were hatched at Inagua and over four thousand of them survived the bad weather and torrential rains. Fifty-two young flamingos were moved by aeroplane to Nassau to try to establish a colony there. This experiment, which shows signs of being successful, has caused considerable excitement in Nassau and the Bahamians are awakening to the importance of conservation.

It is indeed well that the efforts of the Bahamas society are being so successful—there are now eighteen to twenty thousand flamingos at Inagua—for the Society guards the only large remaining group of flamingos in the Caribbean area. It is reported that, this year, the colony at La Orchila in Venezuela has been a disappointment, in fact not a single flamingo has appeared.

Australia.—This year the biennial conference on Australian fauna was held at Melbourne. Delegates were present from Western Australia, Northern Territory, New South Wales and Tasmania.

The controversial question of cormorants was raised by Victoria, in which state five species are to be found. Although over a thousand cormorant stomachs had been examined, no definite conclusions were reached. Though cormorants undoubtedly consumed a number of edible fish, the anglers' main charge was that they ate trout and this did not seem to be borne out by the investigation. In some areas cormorants lived almost exclusively on yabbies, small soft crustaceans related to the hermit crab. The River Commissioners spent large sums yearly on maintenance of river banks damaged by yabbies.

It is twenty-five years since there has been an open season for opossums in New South Wales. When there were open seasons complaints were made by bee-keepers on the ground that opossums loved mistletoe which was destroying forest trees. Fewer trees meant less blossom and less honey for bees. From a forestry point of view the opossum is desirable where mistletoe

is beginning to get a hold. In Victoria the opossum is considered a pest.

There are now about ten thousand koalas in Victoria. In many parts of the state it was nearly extinct but no less than fifty areas have been restocked from the sanctuary on Phillip Island. When koalas are being moved stops are made at all schools on the route, so that the work of rehabilitation may be explained to the children.

On Phillip Island, following myxomatosis among the rabbits, the penguins and mutton birds (short-tailed shearwaters) are being attacked by foxes.

The problem of the protection of the wedge-tailed eagle may also become complicated by the elimination of the rabbit, for efforts to protect the eagle have to some extent relied upon its usefulness as a rabbit killer, compared with the harm it does in taking a few lambs—possibly weakly ones at that. Much of the other small ground fauna on which the eagle used to live is extinct.

In Tasmania, where it is uncommon, the case against the wedge-tailed eagle is regarded as not-proven. In fact the request for its protection came from the Grazier's Association, on the ground that the little damage it did should be borne for the sake of retaining such a magnificent bird. But in Victoria a grazier offered £5 per head for wedge-tailed eagles and strung twenty of them on a fence, wing tip to wing tip. On the other hand, other graziers in the same area took the opposite view.

A difficulty experienced by the fauna conservation authorities both in Victoria and New South Wales is that whereas they have absolute control over fauna, they have no control over the habitat in which the fauna lives. An ideal area may be declared a sanctuary, but if it is a lake the owner can drain it, if a forest he can cut down the trees, if grassland he can plough it up. Thus the value of a place as a sanctuary can be utterly destroyed at the owner's whim.

Wild Goats of Crete.—Readers will remember that, in May, 1952, Mr. Hugh Farmar visited Crete to suggest ways of protecting the wild goat of Crete, called locally agrimia (singular: agrimi).

Since Mr. Farmar's visit wardens to protect the agrimi have been appointed, but only on a temporary basis—two from April to June, 1953, and two from November, 1953, to June, 1954. Each appointment lapsed with the ending of the financial year, on 30th June. Unconfirmed news has reached us of the reappointment of wardens in October, 1954.

The above information comes from M. Jacques Santorinéos, Secretary of the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature, which has been working very hard to protect the agrimi. The Hellenic Society is aware that temporary wardens are unsatisfactory and is striving to have the appointments made permanent. In the meantime the local authorities of Crete are concentrating on maintaining the wild goats in the Islands of Theodorou and Aghioi Pantes; a third small reserve is about to be started on Dia. But the animals on these islands will of course be in a semi-domesticated state.

In a future number of *Oryx* we hope to publish an article by Mr. Santorinéos covering the whole subject.
