

# ORYX

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## Notes and News

The FPS remains opposed to the practice of game slaughter as a method of tsetse control, as we explained in the last issue of ORYX, and the FPS Council has now given its support to a statement issued recently by IUCN, regretting the decision of the Rhodesian government to **FPS Supports** reintroduce game slaughter, and pointing out that it **IUCN on** cannot be regarded as "more than a temporary palliative **Tsetse Control** in an emergency, which might well have been avoided if sounder and less ephemeral methods of control could have been adopted in the past. No instance is known to IUCN where game elimination by itself has provided a complete and final answer to the problem". There is always a residue of tsetse ready to make a "come-back" when conditions become favourable. A valuable contribution to this problem is the comprehensive review by Dr. P. E. Glover, lately of the Kenya Veterinary Department, of recent knowledge about the relationship between tsetse fly and its vertebrate hosts throughout Africa. This is to be published shortly by the FPS for the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Dr. Glover points out that the fact that tsetse has increased in Rhodesia since the previous abandonment of game destruction (which was on a massive scale) shows the futility of the policy, quite apart from its wastefulness. It is not only wildlife that has been wasted, but land, for all too often land reclaimed has remained unused or been mis-used, with overgrazing and erosion as the result. Dr. Glover concludes that "there is no valid justification for using game destruction as a practical or lasting means of tsetse control particularly on new or future projects".

The most dangerous chemicals used as pesticides should be available on prescription only; farmers should be required to keep a "poisons book"; research into long-term ecological effects of chemicals should be expanded; pesticide "empties" (which of course are never quite empty) should be collected, labelling simplified, and a **Controlling the Dangerous Pesticides** monitoring system set up to observe the effects of agricultural chemicals on wildlife and the environment: these are the main recommendations in the Council for Nature's response to the Ministry of Agriculture's request for proposals. The Council emphasises the concern of naturalists for "the health of the

environment", pointing out that the latest research shows that British coastal waters now carry significant insecticide residues. There are reports that farmers are stockpiling dieldrin for sheep dips (banned after this year) while it is still available—clearly its use, not just its purchase, should be banned. According to a most disturbing announcement from the US Department of the Interior, traces of DDT were found last year in Antarctic penguins and seals. This is far from any area where pesticides are known to have been used. The pesticide residues were found in the fat and liver of six Adelie penguins and the blubber and liver of crab-eater seals.

The need for the zoos of the world to breed their own animals instead of drawing on the fast diminishing stocks of animals in the wild has been increasingly recognised since the symposium of zoo directors and conservationists in London last summer focused

**Zoo Must** attention on the problem. The USA already has a Wild  
**Breed Their** Animal Propagation Trust under the presidency of  
**Own Animals** William G. Conway, director of the New York Zoological Park, to promote the "preservation of animals through the use of captive management techniques". Its programme includes assembling and managing herds or flocks for breeding; research on relevant aspects such as nutrition, breeding and artificial insemination; the establishing of a "bank" system to facilitate the transfer of animals to and from propagation centres and zoos; and encouraging and advising local zoos on breeding. The experience of zoos like that at Basel, where 75 per cent of the animals displayed are breeding, shows what can be done. Dr. Lang, director at Basel, has made a list of forty-four species of common zoo animals in which, he considers, zoos could make themselves wholly self-supporting in five to ten years without making any further drain on the wild populations. They include leopard, tiger, sitatunga, pigmy hippo, gorilla, orang utan, chimpanzee, okapi, and spectacled bear. The Kenya Game Department reports that, while no zoo in the world is yet self-supporting in any African species, some zoos are paying more attention to breeding. They tend to import groups of animals for breeding rather than the single one or pair wanted for exhibition, and a surprising number of wealthy landowners, particularly in the USA, are ordering breeding groups of African animals to stock their estates.

A project to build a dam less than half a mile from the nesting sanctuary of the California condor, with a public road going right through the sanctuary, is being fought by conservationists in the USA, led by the National Audubon Society. Over the past fifteen years

**A Dam** the condors have been reduced to a total population of  
**Threatens the** about forty birds. The report on a recent two-year field  
**Condors** study is emphatic that this decline could be halted if illegal shooting could be stopped and the birds protected from human activity in the nesting area. The promoters of the Topatopa dam, however, envisage people from Los Angeles and other cities coming

for water-skiing, camping, picnicking, hiking, and riding at a rate of "2,000,000 visitor days per year", and fishermen at the rate of "240,000 visitor days per year", and "in fifty years the rate would triple". But the dam, says the National Audubon Society, would at best provide only a partial stop-gap remedy for California's water shortage, which raises doubts as to how far it is being promoted to improve water supplies (admittedly necessary), and how far to promote these ancillary and profitable schemes. In a statement, Carl W. Buchheister, president of the Society, suggests that California's engineers can solve their problem "without sacrificing one of the world's rarest, most spectacular, and most scientifically valuable birds". The Society's solution is to divert a portion of the vast flow of the Columbia River, which could be done without any effect on the people and resources of the river basin. But there might not be any water-skiing.

A management plan for the areas of scientific interest in the Killarney National Park is proposed by An Taisce, the National Trust for Ireland, in a memorandum to the Government. The Trust points out that Killarney is not only a major tourist attraction for its beauty, but scientifically the most important area in Ireland, and internationally famous for its fine oak and yew woods and associated plants, including some rare ferns and mosses, the arbutus (strawberry) trees, the red deer herds, believed to be descended from native stock, blanket bogs, and some rare plants such as the Kerry butterwort *Pinguicula grandiflora*. The Trust suggests a joint committee to ensure consideration for all interests in the management of the park—scientific, farming, forestry, and tourist—and would like to see the public interest in the scientifically important areas stimulated by publications, educational reserves, and nature trails. The major "weed" of the National Park is the rhododendron—not all tourists might regard it as such—and the Trust rightly urges its control.

The badger is now virtually extinct over a large part of the Netherlands, especially north of the Rhine, and even in its stronghold of South Limburg it is decreasing. This despite the fact that it has been protected by law since 1948. A survey by A. van Wijngaarden and J. van de Peppel, recently published by Brill of Leiden (8 guilders), estimates that some 200–300 pairs of badgers lived in the 271 sets known to have been occupied in 1958–59. Among the causes for their disappearance are destruction of the habitat by various means, pesticide residues, road traffic, and shooting, but the last is clearly the true and basic cause. The law protecting the badger in Holland seems to be a dead letter, completely ignored by the police, who apparently in some cases actually abet its infraction. The arguments put forward for persecuting the badger in Holland are just as stupid and ill-informed as those put forward in Britain by the surviving backward minority of badger haters. We even read that "one of the difficulties is that the trappers think the

Government authorise the trapping of badgers", just as in Britain few people seem to realise that the gassing of badgers is illegal. Unless Dutch protectionists can secure an enforcement of the law (and the authors do not seem very optimistic about this) the immediate establishment of a number of reserves, especially in South Limburg, seems to be the only hope of retaining the badger as a wild animal in the Netherlands.

Dutch conservationists have faced many difficult problems in the massive reclamation schemes on their coasts and estuaries, not the least being the official attitude to their interests. But last year, reports *Natuur en Landschap*, in negotiations with the authorities over the

**Conservation Wins Recognition** dunes at Voorne and the fixing of the demarcation line between the nature reserve and the heavy industries zone, "almost for the first time we were considered an equal partner in the discussion, and the claims of nature conservation received as much attention as those of industry." Moreover, the final decision recognised the outstanding natural value of the dunes. The sort of problem the Dutch face is the present demand of Rotterdam to dump mud dredged up from the docks on an area of mudflats which not only have an interesting flora and fauna, but are visited every winter by great flocks of geese. If the dumping is allowed the area will later become either farmland or an industrial site. Such estuaries are becoming increasingly scarce in Holland and it is hoped to save the mudflats. Only last year the nature reserve De Beer was destroyed to make way for an industrial area as part of the Europort scheme.

It is often assumed that draining land automatically makes it more valuable, but an American farmer-hunter, faced with the question whether he should drain a 37-acre marsh or not, worked out the economics of the matter and came down in favour of the ducks. Having calculated the income he would expect from the land after drainage, he offered a hunting lease for that sum and had no difficulty in finding takers, and when fur-trapping rights were added the income was doubled. This of course ignored any other advantages of keeping the marsh—scientific, conservationist, or aesthetic.

**The Ducks Paid** Game ranching and game management on private land in Southern Rhodesia have gone ahead at a remarkable rate, and a new industry can be said to have started, says the Director of National Parks in his 1963 report.

**Game Ranching in Rhodesia** In fact so busy were the research scientists in his department assessing wildlife populations for farmers who wanted to start ranching that they had little time for other research. A Game Ranchers' Association was formed and permits were given to crop up to 2,000,000 lb. of meat with a value estimated conservatively at £100,000. The two major problems are the marketing bottleneck, and how to get the necessary research done. The department wants to see a pilot meat-canning plant started; market research; studies of game movements, about which little is known, and research into game culling techniques. It is not without

interest that this move towards game ranching is in the country which has recently re-introduced game slaughter as a means of tsetse control. In neighbouring Zambia, formerly Northern Rhodesia, the Chief Game Officer's report describes two successful cropping experiments, one on elephants and one on black lechwe on the famous Lochinvar Ranch. Even more important is the development of a technique which makes it possible to dry and store the meat without deterioration for over a year.

The government of Ghana has accepted the recommendations in the report on wildlife conservation made by George Cansdale for FAO. They include proposals for legislation, game reserves, and massive propaganda including the establishment of zoos where townfolk can see the wildlife of their country. Enforcement of the existing legislation is an urgent task, particularly the prohibition of large steel traps and night hunting, which "has almost certainly been the greatest factor in destroying game up to the size of a bushbuck". Ignorance of the laws is widespread—"it is doubtful whether one hunter in ten knows of the existence of the Wild Animals Protection Act". Three game reserves have already been established, of which the best is the Mole Reserve where the Chief Game Warden of Ghana, Mr. E. Asibey, who has taken the post-graduate conservation course at London University, is collecting the data necessary for sound management. It has now been found that when the boundaries of the reserve were originally drawn, important dry season grazing grounds and permanent watering places were omitted; fortunately it is not too late to rectify this and the boundaries are being re-aligned.

**Ghana  
Accepts the  
Proposals**

The exclusion of domestic livestock from a small new game reserve in Kenya, the 40-square-mile Samburu Uaso Nyiro reserve, "has had almost magical effects in restoring the vegetation." says the annual report of the Game Department, "and game has been quick to take advantage of this and of the absence of disturbance." The story from the Masai Amboseli reserve is less happy. When 7,000 head of cattle, 250 donkeys, and nearly 7,000 sheep and goats appeared in the inner swamp area, it was discovered that there had been a genuine misunderstanding: the Masai had only agreed to keep a small, almost valueless 30-square-mile area free of stock instead of the 200 square miles generally supposed. With cattle in all the swamps the wild animals could not get at water in the daytime, and the already sparse grazing, which would have lasted the game until the rains, was completely eaten by the domestic animals in a few days. The situation on farm settlements for Africans on the forest edge on Mount Kenya and the Aberdares is still difficult. With no game barriers, the game raids the farms; at the same time poaching continues to increase, and now gangs with dogs are going up through the forests to the moorland zone, with the result that the rare antelope, the bongo, which is particularly vulnerable to hunting with dogs, is threatened with extermination. Moreover, a number of innocent people have been attacked, and some killed, by wounded and infuriated animals. The attempt to capture and

**Contrasts  
in Kenya  
Reserves**

remove to a safe area Kenya's last herd of Thomas's kob, nearly 500 strong, before the farms where they occurred were taken over for African settlement, unfortunately failed, and most of the kob were killed within a few weeks of the settlers moving in.

Two new national parks were gazetted in Tanzania last year: the Ruaha and the Mikumi parks, in the southern central part of the country. The speciality of the Ruaha, covering 5,000 square miles, is the greater kudu,

**New Parks in Tanzania** and there are also many elephants, sable antelope, impala, rhino, and leopard. The smaller Mikumi park, 650 square miles, has a good range of game and bird species. Visitors are encouraged in both. Intended also for a national park is the Tarangire Game Reserve, but

this is to be kept as secluded as possible for serious students and research workers. Among those who have worked there is Dr. Hugh Lamprey, and papers by him in the two volumes of the new *East African Wildlife Journal*, reviewed on page 46, show the great richness of its wildlife. It is in effect the dry weather holding ground for a large proportion of the game of Masailand, the Tarangire River being one of the few that flows in the dry season.

The Canadian government has made new regulations to protect the breeding stocks of the harp and hood seals off the east coast of Canada, where last spring the enormous slaughter and alleged cruelty of the methods used in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, including

**Where Harp Seals Need Protection** skinning pups alive, raised widespread protests. Inhumane methods are now banned, some waste eliminated, the season shortened, and certain areas prohibited to hunting. Unfortunately, practically

nothing is done to protect the breeding stock of the harp seals. The regulations prohibit the killing of the adults at the breeding places. This is almost useless, because when the sealers are at the breeding places, they are busy killing the pups, and while that is going on the adults get away under the ice. Where the sealers kill these adults is in the moulting congregations, and it is here that protection is needed for them. Moreover, the closing date for killing at the end of April is too late to protect these adults; it should be mid-April at least. If adults could be fully protected and a percentage of pups (many of which die anyhow) taken, the breeding stocks would have a chance to recover.

The green turtle population of the western Indian Ocean has reached a dangerously low level, thanks largely to excessive killing, according to K. B. Newman, in a report on the Seychelles islands. He considers that the species needs complete protection for a number of

**Green Turtles in the Seychelles** years with some form of hatching control on certain islands, and an accurate check made on its status. Although there is no large-scale export of the turtles, a protein-hungry population eats as many as it can get.

The local Animals Protection Ordinance, which forbids the killing or

capture of females and turtles below a certain size, is enforced by the police on Mahé, the main island, but enforcement is impossible on the outlying islands (over 100 of them) scattered over 400,000 square miles of the Indian Ocean. If the turtles were to build up their numbers again the process would probably be repeated, for the semi-literate Creole population has no idea of the need for conservation, enforcement is difficult, the trade sees no necessity for control—there is, indeed, open animosity to any suggestion of “interference” on those islands leased by traders—and there is non-co-operation between island-owners and local government.

It is said that red kangaroos are being slaughtered in parts of New South Wales at the rate of 200,000 a week to supply the trade in pet food and cheap meat for export. As Professor A. J. Marshall, of Monash University,

**Kangaroo  
Slaughter for  
Pet Food**

points out, no species can stand that rate of slaughter. The figures, he suggests, may be exaggerated, but there is no doubt that very large numbers are being killed; the shooters are now taking smaller animals on which they would not have wasted a bullet a few years ago, and

kangaroos are seriously decreased in numbers. This is borne out by a three-year study by H. J. Frith, of the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation), between 1960 and 1963, which showed that the population density fell sharply during that period. “There is little doubt that a drastic decline occurred,” says his report, and it was not due to heavy *natural* mortality; there was no mass exodus of kangaroos, and no “crash”. But there was an enormous increase in shooting for skins and for the new meat trade. In 1959, in Queensland alone, 584,000 red kangaroo skins were marketed, compared with 90,000 the previous year, and this figure included only a part of those killed for meat and none of those killed in pest control operations. So far the Australian government has refused to put even a temporary embargo on the export of kangaroo meat which would give zoologists time to discover how much damage is being done to the species.

Dr. E. H. M. Ealey, working for CSIRO, went to north-west Australia, 1,000 miles north of Perth, to find out why, on land where sheep once flourished, there are to-day few sheep but a great many kangaroos, and why the vegetation has deteriorated from nutritious

**Wild Animals  
versus  
Domestic**

plants for sheep to unpalatable ones. The sheep die; kangaroos flourish; why? He describes his study in *Walkabout*. He found that the kangaroos had several advantages: they grow fat on the poor food; given

shade they can do without water (the annual rainfall averages 9 to 12 inches, temperatures soar to 120° F. in the shade); they reproduce quickly; and because of occasional heavy mortality their numbers fluctuate considerably thus giving the pasture periods to recover which sheep did not do. In other words the kangaroos were in balance with the habitat; the sheep were not. The main causes for the deficiency of nutritious plants were the management practices of the farmers themselves, especially the practice of burning during sheep mustering when nutritious plants carried seed;

overstocking, and concentration of sheep in the same paddocks for years. Incidentally, Dr. Ealey tells the origin of the name kangaroo. When Captain Cook asked the aborigines the name of the animal they replied, "Canguru," meaning "What are you talking about?"

Visiting the island of Martinique in the West Indies in quest of a snake—which he failed to find—Dr. Herndon G. Dowling, curator of reptiles in the New York Zoo, was struck by the apparent absence of native animal life, with few species of small birds, and no large birds at all. But, "mornings and evenings, along the roadside brush and hedgerows, small boys could be seen searching the trees and bushes. Armed with small-bore rifles, alone or in groups of three to five, the boys were scouring the countryside for any bird, no matter how small, that might be added to the dinner pot." Martinique, as he puts it, suffers from a "prevalence of people". There are 290,000 in 385 square miles. Even in the very steep and rugged mountains the native wildlife "seemed virtually gone", the forests silent and still. The area where the endemic Martinique trembler was thought to survive he found cultivated with sugarcane and thick with people. But the peninsula where the white-breasted thrasher is thought to survive was still relatively wild and suitable for a reserve.

**Why  
Martinique  
Lacks Wild  
Birds**

A landowner in the home counties encouraged a friend to form a shooting syndicate on his land and rear pheasants, hoping in this way to reduce the numbers of armed trespassers and foxes, also rabbits and pigeons. With the first two he succeeded, but not with the others.

**The Result of Killing All Predators** "Rabbits and rats are now increasing at an alarming rate and the various people who used to shoot my pigeons seem now to have disappeared." Moreover, a neighbour reports that two pairs of barn owls have disappeared from his buildings, and the little owls that used to forage for mice behind his plough have also not turned up. The landowner is inclined to think he was better off before. "I have pretty well decided," he concludes, "to get rid of the syndicate." The trouble is, of course, the syndicate's attitude to so-called "vermin"; this is what happens when all predators are destroyed. An account of the discussions on the role of mammal predators in the British countryside, at the Symposium in March organised by the FPS and the Council for Nature, will appear in the next issue of ORYX.

## THE LEOPARD COATS

ONCE in a moment of great generosity  
 God has shown to me  
 A leopard running free.  
 How, from that moment, could he expect of me,  
 Born without his tolerance, calmly to see  
 All those women, those bloody awful women,  
 Dressed up in leopard skins and sitting down to tea?

By Vernon Bartlett, quoted from the *New Statesman* by kind permission.