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Notes and News

Lord Willingdon as President of the FPS spoke in the debate on the Antarctic Treaty Bill when it came up for second reading in the House of Lords on May 1st, and gave it the Society's wholehearted support.

Antarctic Wildlife Protection The Bill's purpose is to give effect to the agreed measures for the conservation of Antarctic flora and fauna agreed by the twelve Antarctic Treaty governments. Details of these measures were given in *ORYX*, April 1966, in an article by Dr Brian Roberts. In the debate Lord Willingdon pointed to the Treaty as a shining example of wildlife conservation being practised in time, not, as in so many parts of the world, after irretrievable damage had been done. The first lists of specially protected species and areas have been agreed and included in the Bill, and the twelve nations have also agreed on a voluntary system for the control of pelagic sealing south of 60°S, which it is hoped will stop the gap until a more formal agreement is achieved. The Bill received the Royal Assent on July 27.

At last the International Whaling Commission has been able to fix a quota that gives some hope that the stocks of Antarctic whales may start to build up again. The FPS was represented by the Hon.

Some Hope for the Whales Secretary and Mr Anthony Smith, a member of Council, at the 19th meeting of the Commission, held in London at the end of June, at which this satisfactory decision was taken. The 1967/68 quota was fixed at 3,200 blue whale units, compared with 3,500 for 1966/67, but a word of caution must be sounded, for under the curious rules of the Commission, any member country is allowed to denounce decisions made at the annual conference within 90 days, and it is believed that not all the whaling member countries were entirely happy with the decision. The actual catch in the 1966/67 season came to just 11 units more than the quota, but this masked a serious decline of more than 5000 sei whales since the previous season, counterbalanced by a small increase in the fin whale catch. The sei whale stocks have been severely reduced in the past three years as a result of the successive decimations of the humpback, blue and fin whale stocks, and are clearly reaching a low ebb. The Society's Hon. Secre-

tary underlined this point in his observations at the final meeting of the Commission, when he stressed the importance in future of managing the stocks of whales as species, and fixing species quotas, instead of adhering to the antiquated device of the blue whale unit, now more than 30 years old. The Commission was able to agree on a further ban on humpback killing in the North Pacific for the next three years, and on extending the present Antarctic ban on the killing of blue whales to the whole southern hemisphere, but once more failed to register agreement on either the International Observer Scheme or any arrangements for proper conservation of the North Pacific whale stocks as a whole. It is gratifying to note that both Peru and Chile have discontinued the catching of blue whales from their shore stations, that the British Falkland Islands land station is no longer being operated by the Japanese, and that South Africa continues to operate voluntary restrictions on its own land stations.

In a resolution passed at the end of last year the United Nations endorsed a resolution of the Economic and Social Council requiring the Secretary-General to make a survey of the present state of knowledge of

**UN to Survey
Marine
Resources**

the resources of the sea beyond the continental shelf, excluding fish, and of the techniques for exploiting these resources. The resolution also required him to undertake a comprehensive survey of activities in marine science and technology, including those relating to mineral resources development, and to make proposals, firstly, for an expansion of international co-operation to bring about a better understanding of the marine environment through science and the exploitation and development of marine resources, and, secondly, for initiating and strengthening marine education and training programmes.

It was depressing to find that the project for a military airfield on Aldabra, the coral atoll in the Indian Ocean with a remarkable fauna described by Roger Gaymer in *ORYX*, December 1966, had not been dropped in the government's revised defence plans

**Aldabra
Still
in Danger**

revealed in the recent White Paper. The Royal Society decided that the atoll is of such scientific importance that it has sent a research expedition to be there from August 1967 to March 1968, and proposes that a permanent research station should be established near the present settlement on West Island, with a resident warden and research staff and facilities for visiting scientists. All the conservation bodies remain unalterably opposed to the plan for the military airfield, which all agree would mean the certain extinction of some species and irreversible damage to the ecology of a unique island.

The scientific study of the rare Javan rhino in the Indonesian reserve of Ujung Kulon, its only remaining habitat, which was started by Dr

Jacques Verschuren, is being continued by Dr and Mrs Schenkel from Basel. The new boat, which was essential both for the scientists and for guarding the reserve, and which was donated from the FPS/WWF Revolving Fund, arrived at the beginning of the year and is in general use. The Revolving Fund was also responsible this year for supplying two Land Rovers to the Ceylon National Parks. These arrived in early August, eagerly awaited by the two American scientists who are carrying out the urgently needed survey of the Ceylon elephant, now an endangered species, in order to find out its needs for survival. Accounts of both these projects will appear in the next issue of ORYX.

The remarkable symposium on British mammal predators, held in London in March 1965—remarkable because for the first time conservationists, sportsmen, foresters and landowners sat down together to discuss this highly controversial subject—has borne fruit in a useful, informative, practical and attractively produced booklet, *Predatory Mammals in Britain, A Code of Practice for their Management*.

This is the product of the working party appointed at the Symposium, which included representatives of the Fauna Preservation Society, Council for Nature, British Field Sports Society and Game Research Association—"rather as if the Federation of Pork Butchers had collaborated with the Vegetarian Society" is how *The Times* described it. The emphasis is very much on preventing damage from predators rather than their destruction, and clearly an agreed code from these four bodies is no mean achievement. For each of the twelve predators considered—badger, fox, hedgehog, mole, otter, polecat, pine marten, stoat, weasel, wild and feral cats and the introduced mink—there is a description of its habits, the need for control (or not) with method recommended, and methods of preventing damage, illustrated by excellent drawings by Robert Gillmor, one of which is reproduced below. The degree of co-operation that this booklet reveals is to be warmly welcomed. The FPS can claim the credit for originally suggesting the Symposium — the brain-child of our Hon. Secretary—which was ably organised by the Council for Nature who have published the booklet in association with the other three sponsors.



Otter

The one thing all the sponsors have in common is an interest in the survival of these animals (except the introduced mink), which all can see is threatened by the diminution of our countryside. This makes co-operation urgent. At the same time it has been made easier because of the field research that has been done in recent years. What is needed now is to get the books into the hands of all who live, work or play in the countryside. It can be obtained from the FPS, 5s or \$1 post paid.

The resignation of Colonel Jack Vincent as secretary of the Survival Service Commission of IUCN will be widely regretted by conservationists. His vigorous and determined attack on the numerous and often intractable problems of the SSC has certainly left its mark, and the long list of projects tackled in his four years of office is not without some remarkable successes achieved. But of its very nature much of the SSC's most successful work is done in quiet and insistent persuasion behind the scenes, keeping up the pressure with constant and informed reminders to governments and departments that somebody cares about the fate of their wildlife and is watching events, and in this he has been tireless. Last but far from least we are all in his debt for his compilation of the bird volume of IUCN's Red Data Book of Endangered Species, an invaluable source book and the foundation on which all future plans in that field will be laid.

Two new wildlife sanctuaries have been declared in the Himalayan state of Bhutan, one the Manas Sanctuary of 162 square miles, right on the Indian frontier and immediately adjoining the Indian sanctuary of the same name in Assam; the other called the Laya Wild Life Sanctuary, covering 500 square miles in the high Himalayas in the north of Bhutan. In the Bhutan Manas Sanctuary movement is still restricted for visitors, but Mr E. P. Gee, whose skilful and persistent work for conservation and the creation of sanctuaries is reflected in these latest achievements, reports that it is hoped soon that all visitors to the Assam sanctuary will be permitted to visit the Bhutan one also. The Assam Manas is another home for the great Indian rhino, and also for the rare golden langur monkey. The FPS party going to India will be visiting this interesting and very spectacular reserve.

The FPS sent £50 for a project to provide water for wildlife suffering in the drought early this year which brought famine to Bihar in north-east India. The aid that has gone to famine-stricken villages from all parts of the world does not of course cover wildlife, which includes bison, sambar, panther, cheetal and tiger. A group led by Mrs R. H. Wright, of Calcutta, formed a Save the Wild Life Fund and, with the full co-operation of the Forest Service, transported water to troughs and water holes over 100 square miles. They also intend to build several small dams to prevent the disaster happening again.

**Jack Vincent
and
the SSC**

**Two New
Sanctuaries
in Bhutan**

**Water for
Wildlife in
Bihar**

It is good news from Ceylon that both the Ruhuna and the Wilpattu national parks have been enlarged, the Ruhuna by the addition of the 157 square miles previously known as the Yala North Intermediate Zone, and the Wilpattu by the 27 square miles of the Wilpattu South Intermediate Zone. Another 300 square miles of forest has been promised for the Ruhuna, but has still to be demarcated, and a small village from which the villagers are reluctant to move is holding up the inclusion of the Yala East Intermediate Zone, although all shooting there has been prohibited. It is hoped that the Wilpattu West Sanctuary will soon be brought into the park, as this 83 square miles is the mainstay of the Wilpattu elephants.

**Ceylon
Parks
Enlarged**

When Algeria became independent in 1962 there were 13 national parks in the country, covering 274 square kilometres, but recent reports suggest that they are all so badly managed that they do not qualify as such at all, says David J. Dickinson in the IUCN Bulletin. The parks are controlled by the Ministry of Agriculture's Department of Forests, but with no money allotted to them, no biologists, only four trained forest officers and most of the forest guard houses destroyed or abandoned since the Algerian war, little can be done. Illegal wood-cutting has reduced several tree species disastrously, and grazing by domestic animals has prevented regeneration. Barbary stag and mouflon have been hunted; addax are estimated to number only about 55 animals and white oryx *O. algazel* and dama gazelle are equally reduced. Until recently the Ministry of Tourism were issuing hunting permits and advertising safari hunts for some of the rarer species—500 dinars (under £30) to shoot a mouflon, 200 (about £11) for a gazelle. But we are assured by the Minister that an order of September 2, 1966, now forbids all hunting of rare species—Barbary stag, mouflon and all species of gazelle and antelope — and that the pamphlets advertising such hunting have been withdrawn.

**Algeria Stops
Hunts for
Rare Species**

The Zambia Government's purchase of the Lochinvar ranch, 101,077 acres on the south bank of the Kafue River, gives real hope for the red lechwe, whose numbers have decreased so disastrously in the past 30 years, as described in the April issue of ORYX, page 6.

**Government
Saves the
Red Lechwe**

It is hoped that this will be the first step in the creation of a Lechwe National Park, as envisaged in Zambia's Four-Year Development Plan, to cover a large area of the Kafue Flats on both banks of the river. Two-fifths of the Lochinvar ranch (42,000 acres) lies within the Kafue Flats, the area where the lechwe live, which is flooded every year from December to June. The lechwe are specially adapted for this habitat; they are able to make full round-the-year use of it because they can feed in water up to 50 cm deep and also graze the grasses even when they

become flaccid and collapse as the flood water subsides. In fact lechwe on the Kafue Flats are one of the perfect examples of the value of conserving a specialised habitat and its wildlife. Once the poacher-decimated herds have been allowed to build up again, and more especially to restore the balance between old and young and between the sexes—not long ago it was estimated that 90 per cent of the surviving herds were males—the lechwe will become a resource of great importance, supplying much-needed meat for Zambians. And when a new lodge has been built as is planned, the area will become a major tourist attraction, both for the game and the wealth of bird life.

The Frankfurt Zoological Society has given £2000, collected through Dr Grzimek's television programmes, to equip the Kidepo National Park in Uganda with portable long-range radio transmitters to help the rangers in their fight against poachers. The Kidepo, the latest of Uganda's parks, created after independence, is on the Sudan border, where political conditions are very disturbed and poaching considerable. The Frankfurt Society has also sent DM50,000 to the Tanzanian National Parks to build a youth hostel in the Mikumi National Park and so encourage young people to get to know their wildlife. There can be few zoological societies in the world that can equal Frankfurt's record for conservation. In the four years since Dr Grzimek started the "Help for Threatened Animals" Fund over DM900,000 has been collected and spent on conservation projects in Germany, Africa, Madagascar, Canada and elsewhere through the World Wildlife Fund.

Ghana may at one time have lagged behind some other African states in wildlife conservation, but she is now making determined and encouraging progress. Dr E. B. Worthington, Scientific Director of the IBP (International Biological Programme) describes his visit to the Mole Game Reserve in February this year as "a complete eye-opener," and the reserve as a potential national park of great promise. A great deal has been done in the way of road-building and the erection of camps, and, even more important, several villages inhabited largely by hunters have been removed from the centre of the reserve. With these gone, says Dr Worthington, the prospects for this 900-square-mile reserve are bright, and the game stocks should get a chance to build up again; already there are good numbers of antelopes, buffalos, elephant, lion and other species, all showing signs of becoming accustomed to both human beings and their cars. With proper management, especially poaching control, Mole could become a real tourist attraction in five years, and in ten years it should be possible to start cropping for meat. The other potential national park in Ghana is the proposed Volta Reserve, 500 square miles of country on the west side of the huge new lake formed by the damming of the Volta River,

which was described by George Cansdale in *ORYX*, April 1965, together with four large islands. The area has not yet been demarcated or declared, and having been heavily overhunted for years is now almost denuded of wildlife; but it could be restocked from a relatively well-stocked reserve to the west. Dr Worthington strongly recommends that this should be done, using the new techniques in land management, in the control and use of fire to improve the vegetation, and also in the immobilisation and translocation of animals. Like the Mole reserve the Volta area could, in time, make a substantial contribution to the meat supply. Even in the present denuded state of the countryside, George Cansdale estimated the bushmeat taken at some £10 million a year, and with proper management this could be multiplied three or four times—which would be in everyone's interest, including the hunters'. An appeal for help with simple equipment for the park rangers from Mr E. O. A. Asibey, Ghana's Chief Game and Wildlife Officer, to whom much of the credit for Ghana's progress is due, is on page 79.

The failure of the only flock of wild whooping cranes to build up their numbers despite all the care and publicity lavished on them—only 43 are known to survive—has decided the Canadian Wildlife Service and

Experiment with Whooping Cranes

the US Fish and Wildlife Service to start a captive breeding programme. Six eggs were taken from as many nests—whoopers lay two eggs but normally only rear one chick, and one egg was left in each of the six nests—and flown to the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center where five chicks hatched successfully. The project, which follows six years of intensive study of the problems of rearing the related sandhill cranes, is a co-operative one because the cranes breed in Canada and winter in Texas.

Some good news from Western Australia is the discovery that the numbers of short-necked tortoises are not so dangerously low as had been thought. The tortoises survive only in the two reserves set aside

Short-necked Tortoise Discoveries

for them, and it was feared that numbers might be as low as 40 or less, but our FPS correspondent, Mr Harry Shugg, Fauna Officer in Western Australia, reports that a Ph.D. student from Western Australian University, Mr A. Burbidge, and other workers have discovered that there are probably two to three hundred tortoises in one of the reserves alone. The research done in this reserve has revealed some other interesting facts. One is that these tortoises unlike the ones in the smaller reserve, burrow under the ground litter in the summer, and this, if it is deep enough, protects them from the heat. But this also means that any burning of the litter, whether accidental or controlled, can be disastrous to the tortoise, and unfortunately some burning is necessary because of the fire hazard in the reserve to surrounding farmers. However, the researchers have discovered that carefully controlled burns in the spring could reduce the

fire hazard without depriving the tortoises of their essential cover. They have also found as a result of attaching small radios to some of the tortoises, that some were going out of the reserve to aestivate. To get these areas into the reserve the Department has bought another 34 acres of swamp and some higher land, and the total area now reserved for the tortoises is 540 acres. As a result of all this work, says Mr Shugg, "sufficient is now known about the short-necked tortoise and its habitat to make us reasonably confident that it has a future in this world."

"The number of rhinos in Malaysia is small, and man is posing an ever-increasing threat to the animal's existence," is the not unexpected conclusion of David L. Strickland's report on the Ecology of the Rhinos in

Malaysia published in the *Malayan Nature Journal*.
Report on Rhinos in Malaysia But like Mr J. A. Hislop, whose paper on the subject read at the IUCN Conference in Bangkok in 1965 was published in *ORYX*, December 1966, he believes that

there are still areas where rhinos exist unknown or at least in larger numbers than is known. Mr Strickland spent ten months in Malaysia on this study of the Sumatran rhino *Didermoceros sumatrensis*—the Javan rhino is believed to be extinct there now—a project that was partly financed by the joint Revolving Fund of the FPS and WWF. Most of the time he spent in the Sungei Dusun Game Reserve, created to protect the rhino, where he frequently saw the tracks of three animals and was able to map out their territories, which overlapped considerably, although he was never able to see the animals himself. (One animal was seen by a member of his party.) He regards the creation of the reserve as "a step in the right direction," but urges that it should be both properly managed and guarded. Such simple lures as the creation of artificial salt licks, wallows and feeding areas by controlled felling of trees to encourage secondary growth for the rhino to browse might very well keep the rhinos in this unfenced reserve. He points out that unfortunately there is no tourist potential in Sungei Dusun, with its dirty canal, old secondary forest, miles of swamp and very few animals to be seen. On the other hand, the area in northern Perak marked on Mr Hislop's map in *ORYX* where he was able to confirm the existence of at least three rhinos, is one of the most attractive areas he visited in Malaysia. The animals there get some protection from the fact that it is a forest reserve, and Mr Strickland recommends that it should have the added protection of being made a game reserve as well, which he thinks could well be done, for there is great interest and enthusiasm in the Perak Game Department. If the money were forthcoming a search for rhinos might well be rewarding, but in the meantime the most important thing is for the Malaysian government and the various states to protect adequately the rhinos that are known by ensuring efficiently guarded game and forest reserves.