

The Fauna Preservation Society

AUGUST 1963

EDITORIAL NOTES

Oryx, Volume VII, Nos. 2 and 3, are published here as a double number in order to include both Mr. E. P. Gee's report on the wild life of Nepal and Mrs. Barbara Harrisson's report on the preservation of the orang-utan. Both of these are required for the meetings of the Survival Service Commission at Nairobi in September this year, and for presentation to the Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature which follows the various Commissions' meetings.

There will be no further issue of *Oryx* in 1963.

FAUNA PRESERVATION SOCIETY DIAMOND JUBILEE.—The Fauna Preservation Society was founded, as the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, at a meeting held at the British Museum (Natural History) on the 11th December, 1903. The first resolution of that meeting reads as follows:—"Resolved that a Society be formed for encouraging the preservation of the fauna throughout the British Empire and that the principal officials in districts where game abounds to be invited to become honorary members of the Society."

GREAT BRITAIN.—*Birds.* In April, 1963, the Home Secretary made an order adding to the list of protected eggs those of the common birds which were removed in 1955 from the provisions of the Protection of Birds Act, 1954. They are: Blackbird, Chaffinch, Coot, Greenfinch, Black-headed Gull, Hedge-sparrow, Linnet, Moorhen, Robin, Skylark, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush and Wren. From 28th April it was illegal to take or destroy the eggs of these birds and fines of up to £5 could be imposed. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds immediately sent this order out to educational authorities, in the hope that pillaging of nests might be reduced, for it is most important to replace the terrible losses in common species which were caused by the extremely hard winter of 1962-63.

Protection of Deer. The Deer (England and Wales) Bill passed its final stages on 29th July and received the Royal Assent two days later.

BURMA.—Cheering news comes from Burma where U Tun Yin, a member of the Society, reports that the Revolutionary Government is greatly interested in the fate of wild life. A full-time game warden is to be appointed and the preservation of wild life is to be the concern of State, Divisional and District Security and Administrative Committees. Twelve new sanctuaries are planned and should be constituted by 1970. Thamin in reserves are increasing and now number 3,740.

According to a Forest Department estimate there are twenty-six Sumatran rhino in Burma, scattered in ones and twos throughout the country, with a small group in the Upper Chindwin. A suggestion for

concentrating these rhino in three centres has been put to the Chief Conservator of Forests by U. H. G. Hundley, Conservator of Forests.

JAPAN.—Following Dr. T. H. Bassett's recommendations after his visit to Japan (*vide Oryx*, VII, 1, p. 3), the Hyogo-Ken Education Board decided to build aviaries 27 yards in diameter and 17 yards high, for each pair of Japanese White Storks. They are convinced that the infertility of the storks is connected with the use of chemical sprays and that the heavy expenditure involved in ensuring that they do not eat contaminated food is justified.

KENYA.—*Captain A. T. A. Ritchie, O.B.E., M.C.* We have received the following note from Captain C. R. S. Pitman, the first Game Warden of Uganda, now a Vice-President of our Society:—

“ Archie Ritchie, who died early this year, was appointed game warden of Kenya in 1923 and retired in 1948. He was an imposing figure of great charm and striking personality. He was a first-rate observer with an expert knowledge not only of ‘ game ’ but—although few realized it—also of the lesser-known smaller mammals. He was a fluent speaker possessed of the priceless gift of delightful expression; but unfortunately he never committed to writing his unrivalled knowledge of the ways of the wild, knowledge which in those bygone days was so much easier to acquire than it now is.

In my opinion Ritchie was far and away the best of all the African game wardens. He was a very popular, able, shrewd and wise counsellor who laid the foundations for effective wild life management and who more than anyone else was responsible, throughout East Africa, for the introduction of model legislation.”

The article about game licensing systems which appears on page 88 is inspired by the game laws of Kenya, for the excellency of which Captain Ritchie was basically responsible. Nor should we forget the fine work in this field done by his successor, Captain K. F. T. Caldwell.

On 14th June, 1963, the annual meeting of the East African Wild Life Society in Nairobi was addressed by the Honourable Laurence Sagini, Minister for Lands, Game, Fisheries, Water and Natural Resources. The Minister stressed the importance of wild life in the national economy, promised to take severe measures to combat poaching and announced the creation of a nature reserve in the Shimba Hills, 20 miles south of Mombasa. The area contains one of the last herds of sable antelope in Kenya as well as elephant, buffalo and lion. A £2,000 grant from the Wild Life Society is expected by Kwale County Council for the administration of the Shimba Hills reserve.

The Society were delighted to know that wild life will be actively conserved, perhaps better than ever before. They hope to get more African members as a result of Mr. Sagini's speech.

The Chairman's report told of a scheme to use the Society's aircraft to train Game Department and National Parks officials as pilots. The Society's rescue team is to capture specimens of Hunter's antelope for transfer to Tsavo Park East. Its latest activities have been in the Lugari area where it has been capturing kob for removal to other parts of Kenya.

TSETSE FLY.—Mr. B. L. Mitchell, game biologist in Northern Rhodesia has, at our request, sent the following summary of his paper “A new aspect of bush fires in connection with the tsetse, *Glossina morsitans*”. *Kirkis* (1963), Vol. 3, published by the Federal Government Printer, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia.

Readers will know that the tsetse fly, *Glossina morsitans*, is the carrier of the cattle disease Nagana and that the attempt to control the fly by game destruction has been one of the most controversial of government policies in much of Africa. We had hoped it had received its death blow, but it seems very hard to kill.

“The wart hog is accepted as being the most important host animal of the tsetse, *G. morsitans*.”

Where an animal has a distinct season for breeding, it is so adapted that the birth of the young coincides with the period of the year offering the most favourable conditions. On the cool plateau of Northern Rhodesia the young wart hog are born in a short season July to early August, the coldest period of the year. This contrasts with their custom in the hot Luangwa and Zambesi valleys where the sows give birth to their young in October and November, which are the hottest months of the year and immediately precede the breaking of the rains. Some local ecological factor must account for this.

The food of wart hog consists entirely of the foliage of grasses, the rhizomes of grasses and a few sedges. On the plateau, at the time wart hog are farrowing, their food consists almost entirely of the rhizomes of the grass *Loudetia superba* supplemented by rhizomes of various *Hypanhemia* spp. These grasses are dominant on the plateau but are not dominant in the hot valleys.

Burning experiments carried out by the Forest Department of Northern Rhodesia for 25 years have shown that severe annual burning leads to the exclusion of woody vegetation and the dominance of the coarse fire-adapted grasses *Loudetia superba* and the *Hypanhemia*.

It is postulated that the increase in the intensity of burning which has taken place during the present century has created conditions favourable to an increase in the population of wart hog and a consequent increase in the density of *Glossina morsitans*. This could be a factor contributing to the spread of tsetse which has taken place during the last sixty years.”

Our comment on the above is that everywhere in Africa much of the grass burning is done in the interest of hunting and that most, if not all areas where game slaughter for tsetse control is carried out are burnt every year. So that an accompaniment of the game slaughter policy seems to be more wart hogs and more tsetse. Perhaps the killing at any rate of hartebeest in these operations will now stop, for as far as we know their blood has never been shown to be a food for tsetse flies.

UNITED STATES.—“Wildlife Survival Center.” *Animal Kingdom* of March–April, 1963, gives details of the New York Zoological Society’s plans for a wild life survival centre. The centre is to act as a repository for population fragments of endangered species and species of which there

are no wild living individuals, and is intended also to awaken interest in the plight of vanishing animals. It will consist almost entirely of breeding enclosures, rearing pens and research areas devoted to the propagation of endangered species and to research basic to their survival. Visitors will progress at the convenience of the animals; observers for the most part will be confined to hides with peepholes, to insure that the animals will not be disturbed. There will be birth announcements, special demonstrations, growth charts and explanatory drawings of research work.

Masked Bobwhite Quail. *Natural History* reports that the Bureau of Land Management have brought three pairs of *Colinus virginianus ridgwayi* from Sonora, in Mexico, and released them on a fenced reserve in Tucson, Arizona. This is presumably the third attempt to re-establish this bird in the south-western states, for in *Extinct and Vanishing Birds of the World* J. C. Greenway reports its introduction into Arizona and New Mexico in 1937 and again in 1950.

"Wild" Horses. The same magazine reports the creation of a refuge for wild horses of nearly 700 square miles in the Nellis Air Force base in Nevada. Outside this refuge they will remain a source of controversy as they compete with domestic animals for grazing. In 1959 a law was passed forbidding the use of aeroplanes and motor vehicles in horse round-ups on federal lands but, since the law had no effect on state-owned lands, the slaughter of wild horses for pet food continued. The horses are derived from European stock introduced by Spaniards during and after the settlement of the West. Those ranging on the Nevada area are considered to be mixtures of Spanish mustangs, Indian ponies and domestic horses that have strayed or were abandoned by their owners. A single generation will change a domestic horse to a "wild" one.

AUSTRALIA.—A report from Queensland tells us that the grey kangaroo still inhabits many districts in very large numbers. Last October the State Fauna Officer and the Agricultural Department Biologist stated, after a two years survey, that there was no quantitative evidence that past and present practices had had a detrimental effect on kangaroo populations throughout the State and this in spite of the great numbers which had been killed. But they added that the grey kangaroo had to some extent been thinned out in south-eastern Queensland. In some districts platypus and echidna are plentiful; in certain districts koalas are increasing, but still rare.

From Victoria comes the welcome news of the formation of a Native Fauna Conservation Society. President, Professor A. J. Marshall, Department of Zoology and Comparative Physiology, Monash University. Hon. Secretary, Dr. M. B. Wanliss, 4 Beaumont Street, Vermont, Melbourne.

ANTARCTICA.—The *National Parks Magazine* of March, 1963, tells how the most southerly colony of the Adelie penguins at Cape Royds, in McMurdo Sound, has become endangered by visitors from a nearby American base who arrive in helicopters. The small colony of penguins has made its home on the doorstep of a hut of the Shackleton Antarctic Expedition and draws as many as twenty-five visitors a day. The penguins

take fright at the arrival of the noisy machines, scatter, and spill their eggs which are promptly devoured by skuas. Up to 1954 there were some 2,000 nests at the site, but since then the number has been reduced by half.

THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION.—Nineteen countries and four international organizations were represented at the fifteenth annual meeting in London during July of the International Whaling Commission. Delegates from the five countries engaged in Antarctic Whaling—Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the U.S.S.R. and the United Kingdom—came to an agreement which will be submitted to their governments for approval.

Under the agreement each Government will have the right to put one observer on each foreign whaling expedition which operates Antarctic pelagic whaling. The observers are to ensure that the provision of the International Whaling Convention and its schedules are obeyed.

Under the agreement the catching of blue whales will be prohibited except for an area between 40° and 55° S and between 0° and 80° E. The area in which there is no protection is one mainly inhabited by the pygmy blue whale. Complete protection will be accorded to the hump-backed whale in waters south of the Equator. This follows, to only a limited extent, the recommendation of a committee of scientists which, working with the Commission's Scientific Committee, recommended that no blue or humpback whales should be caught in the Antarctic for a number of years.

The permissible number of Blue whale units which may be taken is reduced from 15,000 to 10,000 (a Blue whale unit equals one blue whale, or 2 fin or 2½ humpbacks, or 6 sei whales) but this reduction, though welcome, must be considered in the light of the fact that only 11,300 units, out of the permissible 15,000, could be caught last season.

No consideration was given to the substitution of the electric for the explosive harpoon towards which so much work has been done, so far without success.

The Commission's purpose is to keep the world's whale populations at an economic level and the present agreement is a welcome step in that direction.

OPERATION ORYX.—"Edith," "Pat" and "Tomatum" started off on their journey to the United States on 20th May in tip-top condition. They left Isiolo only just in time, for five days later Somali secession riots broke out and the police had a battle in the area of the oryx holding pens. To avoid the danger of contracting foot and mouth disease at Isiolo airstrip, which was within an affected area, they were taken by lorry to Nanyuki at the base of Mount Kenya.

From Nanyuki the oryx were flown to Nairobi in a Royal Air Force Beverley. Air Commodore J. C. Macdonald, Senior Air Officer, East Africa, piloted the aircraft and flew at low altitude to avoid upsetting the animals. Subsequently they travelled by British United Airways to London and thence by Pan American to New York. They were joined on the latter flight by "Caroline", the London Zoo's female oryx, and the four spent a month at the United States Animal Quarantine Station at Clifton, New Jersey. They were transferred to their permanent quarters

at the Phoenix Maytag Zoo, Arizona, on 24th June, by the 161st Air Transport Group, Arizona National Air Guard. William Meeker, curator of Mammals at the Phoenix Zoo, and a member of the Guard, made the journey and accompanied the animals from New Jersey to Arizona.

The oryx quarters consist of four stalls, each 8 by 12 feet, leading into outdoor runs 30 by 180 feet. In the runs there are some Palo Verde trees and creosote bushes; but all cactus, with the exception of some large saguaro cactus, have been removed. The spines on the saguaro cactus have been taken off up to a height where the animals cannot come into contact with them. The frontispiece shows the pens. To begin with each oryx is being kept in a separate enclosure.

An addition to the herd has been made by the gift of a female Arabian oryx to the Fauna Preservation Society from the Ruler of Kuwait, His Highness Shaikh Jabir Abdullah Al-Sabah. She has been kept in his private zoo for some time and been crossed with an African beisa oryx to produce a healthy crossbred male offspring. She is again pregnant by the same male. Her age is believed to be about four years. Arrangements for her transfer to the United States are being made by Major I. R. Grimwood, for whose continued help in "Operation Oryx" the Society is deeply indebted. Mr. Julian McKeand, once a Kenya game warden, collected her from Kuwait and she is now spending sixty days in the United States Department of Agriculture quarantine at Mombasa. We are most grateful to the Ruler of Kuwait for his generous gift and to the Royal Air Force for their help in moving this oryx from Kuwait to Kenya. Her name is "Salwa".

Wild Arabian oryx are reported in the Harasis area of Muscat and it is cheering to hear that the Sultan's orders for their protection are being strictly observed.

EUROPEAN BISON.—A summary of the state of the European Bison was given in *Oryx*, VI, 1, April, 1961, following the 1960 meeting in Poland of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

In this present number Professor Kazimierz Krysiak gives much information about the progress of the Polish herd since that date. We are now asked by Dr. Tadeusz Szczesny, Chief Conservator of Nature, to add that the Polish Ministry of Forestry and Woodworking Industries appreciates the importance of international co-operation in nature conservation and will assist any institution to start or extend its bison breeding centre, by furnishing bison from Polish reserves.

We have also had the following information from Mr. Vladimir Romanov, M.Sc., Director of the Byelorussian (U.S.S.R.) part of the Białowieza Forest Game Reserve.

In 1946 the Belovezhskaya Pushcha State Reserve received five bison and the same number three years later—altogether six bulls and four cows. This group was the basis for bison reproduction in the Byelorussian part of Białowieza Forest. On 1st January, 1963, the Byelorussian part of the forest held eighty-two bison (thirty-one bulls and fifty-one cows). In 1962 it had increased by twenty head. This means that the problem of

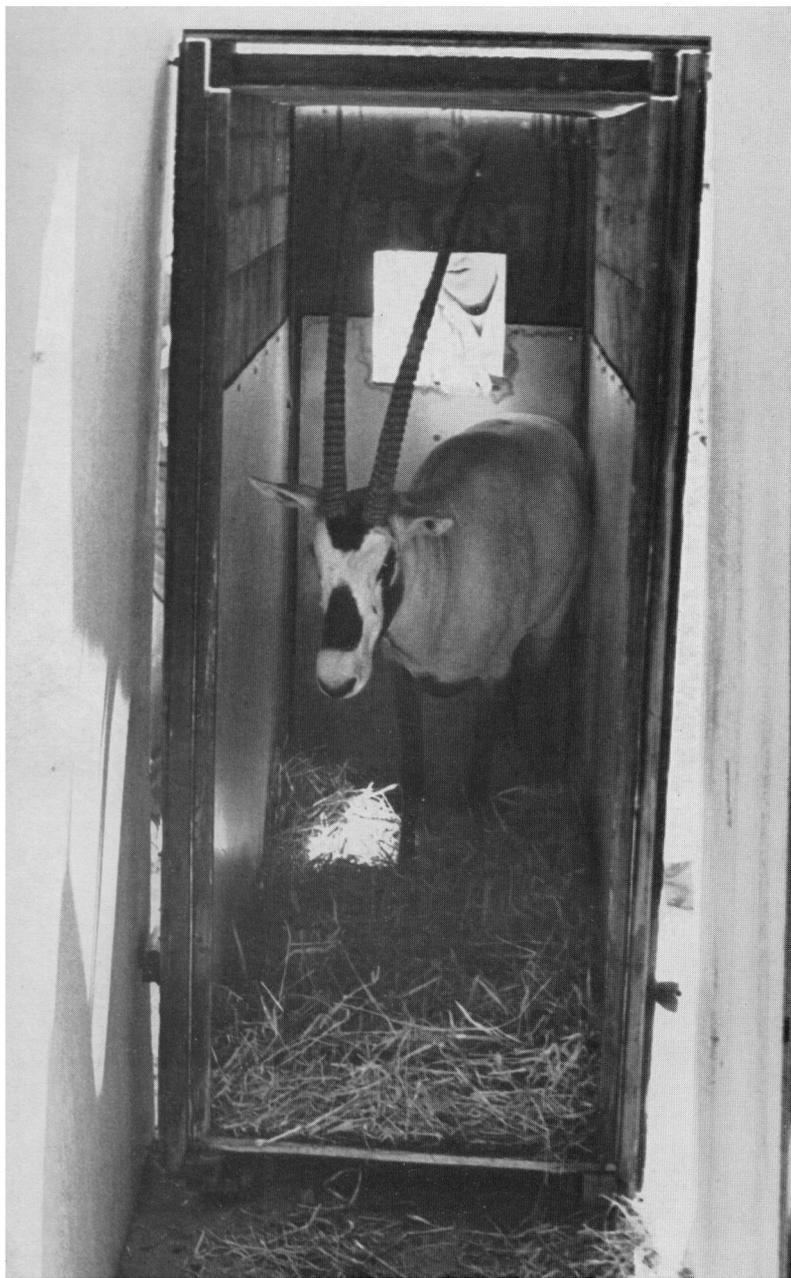


Photo : Larry Mishler

THE ARRIVAL OF TOMATUM

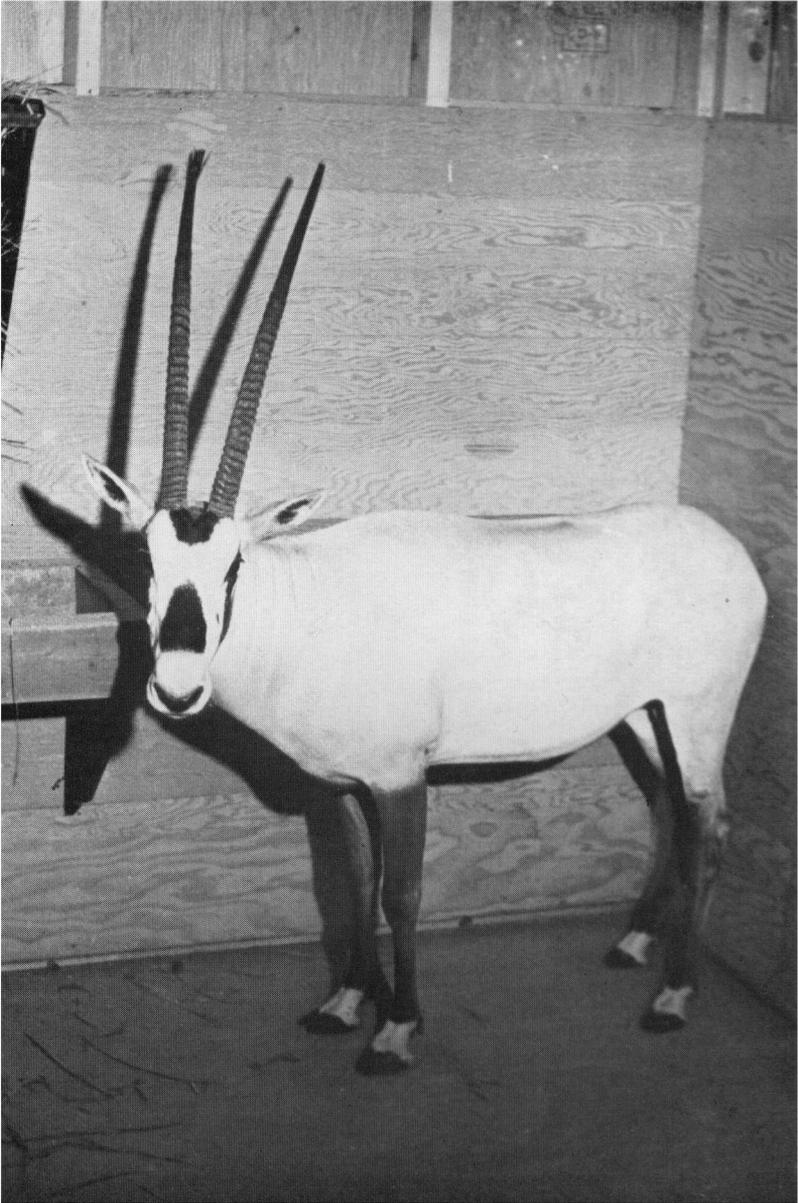


Photo : Larry Mishler.

TOMATIUM AT THE PHOENIX MAYTAG ZOO

increasing the bison population has practically been solved, for the annual increase has risen to twenty head and should continue to rise each year.

The rearing of free bison in a natural environment is now acquiring paramount importance. The free bison herd adds up to fifty-eight head. Most of them know nothing of cages, nor have they ever come in close contact with man. They can be called wild in the full sense of the word.

The greatest number of bison in existence are to be found in Poland and the Soviet Union. They are distributed in several places to avoid possible destruction through infectious diseases. Bison are now being bred in Poland in five reserves, the Białowieża Forest being the main one. In the Soviet Union they are distributed among seven nurseries and the same number of zoos. In recent years bison have been sent abroad from the forest and other nurseries, and they can now be found in almost every country of Europe.

There are three strains of pure-bred European bison—Belovezhskaya, Belovezhskaya-Caucasian and Ples. Those animals which have as their ancestors bison preserved in the natural conditions of the Białowieża Forest belong to the Belovezhskaya strain. Soviet breeders call them also plains-type bison, as distinct from the mountain-type animals, which belong to the Belovezhskaya-Caucasian strain and have as their ancestors bison of Caucasian origin that were brought to Białowieża Forest in 1907. From the standpoint of classification, there are no essential morphological differences between these two strains. It is intended to transfer the Belovezhskaya-Caucasian strain from the Białowieża Forest elsewhere in the near future.

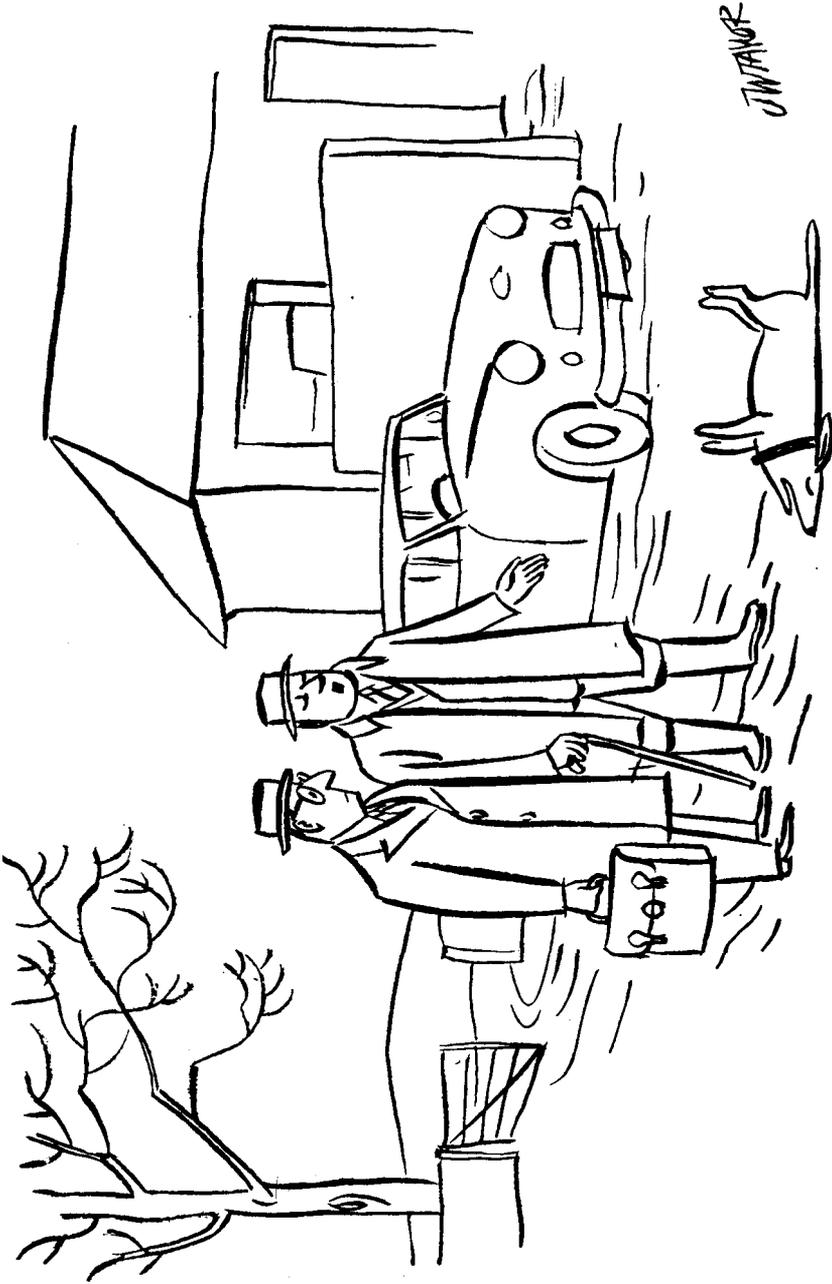
The third strain, Ples, is fewest in number. These bison, brought to Pshina in the sixties of last century, were reared there in park conditions in isolation from other bison. They are somewhat smaller in size than the bison of the other two strains.

LEATHERY TURTLE.—The *Malayan Nature Journal* of April, 1963, reports on the results of the Malayan hatchery programme. In 1962, 54 per cent of the eggs planted hatched out, as compared with 44 per cent in 1961. In 1961 there were considerable losses of hatchlings through over-long confinement in containers on the shore, so in 1962 releases were made at least twice a week. Unfortunately a new danger has arisen: crowds of visitors came to see the turtles and some disturbed and tormented them cruelly.

Oryx, VI, 2 and 6, have details of the Malaya scheme.

From the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire came an interesting report of Leathery Turtles off the coasts of Senegal. Fifty-two hatchlings were counted in 1963 at a nesting site on the beach of Pointe de Sangomar to the west of the Saloum river.

CANADA GOOSE.—The *National Parks Magazine* of May, 1963, reports that the Giant Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis maxima*) which for over thirty years was thought to be extinct, has been rediscovered in Rochester, Minnesota. The huge goose, which weighs from 15 to 19 lb., was found by Dr. Harold Hanson of the Illinois Natural History Survey.



“This is the dog that bit the cat that killed the rat that ate the malt that came from the grain that Jack sprayed.”

[Reproduce] by permission of PUNCH.

PESTICIDES.—The following is quoted from a letter to *The Times* from Dr. W. H. Thorpe, F.R.S., Chairman of the British Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation :—

“ We can be very glad of the promise of the Minister of Agriculture, given in the House of Commons last week, that the whole question of the effect of pesticides on wild life will now be reviewed in the light of the latest evidence. Reading the discussion in both the Lords and Commons show, however, that there is still widespread misapprehension on the salient fact. This is that chlorinated hydrocarbons, especially aldrin, dieldrin, chlordane, lindane, etc., differ from all other substances widely used as insecticides here in that they persist in the soil for years after application, accumulating in insects, worms, etc., which thus become poisoned bait for birds. Thus what is put on our gardens to-day may, though seemingly innocuous, cause serious harm to birds and other wild life in years to come.”

The cartoon from *Punch* in this issue of *Oryx* draws attention to the same problem.

The *National Parks Magazine* reports the establishment in Maryland of the Biochemistry-Wildlife laboratory of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, for the study of pesticide-animal relationships and wildlife diseases. These fields of research have assumed new dimensions in the conservation of natural resources, because of their implications for human health and well-being. It is the first time since the widespread use of pesticides in agriculture that a research laboratory has been created in the United States expressly to determine ways in which chemicals may be used without sacrificing wild life. Research on diseases of wild animals will include those transmitted from animal to man.

OIL POLLUTION.—The Bill to enable the United Kingdom to accept the amendments of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea by Oil, 1954, and otherwise to extend the Oil in Navigable Waters Act, 1955, has passed all stages in the House of Commons, and received the Second Reading in the House of Lords on 28th June, 1963.

At the Third Reading in the House of Commons on the 17th May, the Government spokesman stated :—

“ I should also like to acknowledge the consistent help and support which we have received in this matter from the Hon. Member for Cardiff South-East (Mr. Callaghan) and from the Co-ordinating Advisory Committee on Oil Pollution of the Sea over which he so ably presides. I can truthfully say that Her Majesty's Government are grateful for the work of this organization.”

He later made the following important statement :—

“ The ultimate objective of this country remains the total prohibition of the discharge of oil into the sea by any ship or vessel in any part of the world.”

The Fauna Preservation Society is represented on the Co-ordinating Advisory Committee on Oil Pollution of the Sea by its Secretary.

Although twenty-two States have now become parties to the 1954 Convention, a great deal of propaganda is still necessary to induce more governments to accept the amendments to the Convention and to reach the ultimate objective of total prohibition of the discharge of waste oil into the sea.

CONSERVATION ANTHOLOGY.—Mrs. Diana Spearman wishes to thank the very many members who have kindly sent her most helpful suggestions and contributions for her Anthology (*vide Oryx*, VII, 1, p. 41). She hopes they will forgive her for not answering each one individually.

BRITISH NATIONAL NATURE WEEK, 18th–25th May, was very successful. Over 46,000 people attended *The Observer* Wildlife Exhibition in London. The Nature Conservancy mounted a British scene from Suffolk to the Western Isles with foreground vegetation out of which came the songs of appropriate birds. This and the demonstrations of wild flowers, small mammals and the techniques of bird photography given throughout the exhibition attracted large and appreciative audiences. The B.B.C. cinema showing nature films was so popular that a supplementary cinema had to be opened. On Wednesday the Duke of Edinburgh, Patron of the Council for Nature, visited each stand.

Exhibitions in provincial towns, of which there were some 200, each had attendances of several thousand people.

The introduction of nature trails in many parts of the country proved very successful. With one exception these trails were mounted for the first time and achieved attendances ranging from a few hundred to 2,000 people. The introduction of this new method of helping the public to enjoy nature has aroused such interest that the Council for Nature will be holding a meeting of those responsible for the 50 nature trails to exchange experiences and improve techniques of presentation.

Most local activities included at least one special event for children and many school parties visited the various exhibitions. The Children's Clubs of Rank Theatres, Ltd., put on special programmes of wild life films and displayed posters and leaflets on conservation.

The reporting by the Press, by the B.B.C. and Independent Television was on an almost unprecedented scale for an activity of a voluntary body and the accuracy and sympathetic attitude of the reports did much to ensure the success of the Week.

RETIREMENT OF THE SECRETARY.—The Secretary of the Society and Editor of *Oryx* will retire at the end of 1963. The British naturalist Mr. R. S. R. Fitter will become Secretary, and Mrs. Fitter, Editor of *Oryx*.