

# The Fauna Preservation Society

## EDITORIAL NOTES

*Fiftieth Anniversary of the foundation of the Society.*—On 11th December, 1903, a meeting was held at the British Museum (Natural History), the following being present: Mr. E. N. Buxton (in the Chair), Messrs. Sydney Buxton, M.P., Oldfield Thomas, P. B. Van der Byl, M. de C. Findlay, Sutton Timmis, Rhys Williams, Colonel J. A. Patterson. 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 be invited to become honorary members of the Society.”

This marked the beginning of our Society. To commemorate our fiftieth anniversary we are arranging to hold on Saturday, 24th October, 1953, a joint meeting with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Full details will be issued.

*The International Union for the Protection of Nature.*—The third session of the General Assembly of I.U.P.N. was held in Caracas, Venezuela, from 3rd to 9th September, 1952.

The Assembly and the technical meetings which were also held aroused great interest in Venezuela and will no doubt result in increased interest in nature conservation in South America.

At the technical meetings the following were the subjects considered:—

The effect of fire on vegetation.

The preservation of wild life in semi-arid regions.

Hydro-electricity and the protection of nature.

The preservation of endemic zoological and botanical species in small islands, particularly in the Caribbean Sea area.

The raising of rare animals in semi-captivity outside their natural habitat.

Among the resolutions adopted was a very important one by Dr. Sunier (Netherlands) that the importation of animals illegally taken in their country of origin, should be prohibited in all other countries.

Delegates and observers from twenty-eight countries attended. The British Co-ordinating Committee for Nature Conservation.

was represented by Miss P. Barclay-Smith, who also acted as observer for Her Majesty's Government. Dr. Ch. J. Bernard and Mr. J. P. Harroy were re-elected respectively President and Secretary of the Union.

*Great Britain : Protection of Wild Birds.*—On 2nd December, 1952, the House of Lords debated for two and a half hours, on the motion of Viscount Templewood, the deplorable state of wild bird preservation laws in Great Britain ; for bird protection is dealt with in fifteen separate Acts of Parliament and in 250 different regulations. Despite this mass of legislation, protection for individual species can only be given by counties and not for the whole country. For example, should the hobby, which is a summer visitor to the south of England where it is protected, spread northwards it would immediately enter counties where it had no protection.

Long lists of protected birds are issued by County Councils, but the police, in whose hands responsibility for enforcement of the law rests although they are not ornithologists, cannot identify the birds. Very often the man with the gun, with less excuse, is equally ignorant. Prosecutions are therefore few and penalties light.

The futility of the present laws has long been thoroughly understood by all bird protection societies and by none better than the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the British Section of the International Committee for Bird Preservation. For years they have worked to produce reasonable and workable legislation. So far no Bill has been produced, in spite of the great labours of the Advisory Committee, under the Chairmanship of Lord Ilchester, who succeeded in the Chair our late President, Lord Onslow.

Now that the matter has been so thoroughly ventilated and the unanimity on all sides of the House made clear, is it too much to hope that a Government Bill will soon appear? It is indeed time.

*Deer in Scotland.*—Evidence on behalf of the Society has been given before the Deer (Close Seasons) Committee by Mr. G. Kenneth Whitehead, whose report we hope to publish in the next issue of *Oryx*. Two of Mr. Whitehead's photographs of red deer are shown in this number and a review of his book *Deer and their Management* is given on page 59. The Society is in favour of a close season for deer.

*Wild Life Protection Society of South Africa.*—During a recent visit to England, Mr. N. H. Gilfillan, President of the Wild Life Protection Society of South Africa, in consultation with our

President, Lord Willingdon, started a scheme to make the work of each society better known to the members of the other. As part of this scheme we have received a hundred copies of Vol. 2, No. 3, of *African Wild Life*, the magazine of the Wild Life Protection Society. As long as the supply lasts, these will be sent free, and post free, to members of the Fauna Preservation Society writing for them. With each magazine there is an application for membership form. A request for the magazine does not imply intention to join the Wild Life Protection Society but it is hoped that many of our members will consider doing so.

*The Addo Bush Elephants.*—The current newsletter of the Eastern Province Branch of the Wild Life Protection Society of South Africa contains information about the fencing of the Addo Bush, to ensure the survival of the small herd of elephants still remaining. An electric fence having failed, Ranger Armstrong designed another—"It was built of 12-ft. tram rails planted about six feet in the ground and about eight yards apart. A treated wooden pole, about 4 inches at the top, was planted between the rails to act as a dropper, so that rails and wooden posts alternated at four yard intervals. Three half-inch cables of about eleven tons breaking strain were pulled taut with a tractor and firmly fixed to the uprights.

To test the strength of the fence the ranger had placed a heap of oranges outside it near the feeding ground. The elephants reached through the fence and took as many oranges as possible, but a large number were beyond their reach. The two elephant bulls placed the front of their heads against two adjacent poles and tried to push them over, but the fence easily withstood all their heaving and pushing. Next they turned round and tried to sit on it; but they slipped off and landed on the ground in a somewhat undignified position. Their final effort was more like a circus performance. They reared up, placed their forefeet on the top cable, and endeavoured to ram the fence down. It must have been a great moment for the ranger as they turned and trundled off into the bush with their tails between their legs."

*The "Venus Ear" Shell.*—The same newsletter tells of fears for the venus ear shell (*Haliotis midae*).

"Of all South African marine shells, this is one of the best known and also one of the largest, attaining six to eight inches in length. The interior of the shell is beautifully nacreous, and the outer surface has strong corrugations which begin to form when the juveniles are a little over an inch in length. Adult specimens are usually encrusted with marine growths, causing

the shell to blend perfectly with its surroundings, thereby obtaining additional protection from enemies.

“The animal is edible, and is sought for by the Chinese, Malays, and other Oriental people resident in this country. In addition, it is in demand for use as bait by fishermen. Here we have the reason for obtaining for this mollusc protection from possible extinction. With the extension of roads round our coast, many places formerly more or less difficult of access are now easy to visit, and every year more of the shells are being taken.

“This species inhabits suitable localities on reefs below low tide mark, from East London to Jeffreys Bay. Its range probably extends much farther west towards the Cape Peninsula, and also northwards towards Natal. Unfortunately its rate of growth is not known, but it seems probable that the species takes years to attain the maximum size known. Being a species indigenous to South Africa, it would be a calamity from a scientific point of view should it become extinct.”

*Kenya—Lake Naivasha.*—The Game Warden of Kenya, Mr. William Hale, has been so very kind as to inform us of the rules governing wild fowl shooting on Lake Naivasha. The lake has been declared a Controlled Area under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance. Shooting is allowed only during two weeks in November and from 24th December until 31st March. Permits to shoot for more than four days in any thirty days within the period, are only issued exceptionally. A register of birds shot has to be rendered to the Game Warden.

Limitation of bags is not considered feasible or desirable, especially as the sale of game birds and game animals is prohibited. Most of the lake shore is privately owned and the owners are without exception keen on preserving the wild life. There is close co-operation between the Riparian Owners' Association and the Game Warden. Any visitor who shot wastefully would not come again.

The regulations, which could of course be altered if the situation demanded it, have the full support of the public and are, in the Game Warden's opinion, sufficient to preserve the wild life on Lake Naivasha.

*Uganda.*—The newly appointed Director of Uganda National Parks, Mr. K. de P. Beaton, has made a preliminary report to the Chairman of the Trustees. Speaking of a ten days' reconnaissance of the Queen Elizabeth National Parks he says :

“The Kazinga Channel with its wooded banks winds away to the east. To the north one looks across Katwe Bay to the foothills rising up to the peaks of the Ruwenzori Mountains

and to the west across Lake Edward to the blue hills of the Congo in the distance. Immediately below is a lightly wooded spit of land on which at most times of the day elephant, buffalo, hippo and other game can be seen grazing in the open. There is a wealth of bird life both terrestrial and aquatic on all sides.

“The area of the craters lying between Chapman’s road and the main road to the Congo will prove one of our biggest attractions. Here are probably more craters per square mile than in any other part of the world and each is different. Some hold emerald lakes, others grass and yet others are densely wooded with euphorbias and indigenous trees. It is possible that some hold troops of chimpanzees, while elephant, buffalo, hippo, waterbuck, bushbuck, reedbuck, wart-hog and baboons were seen. Lions are also in this area, as their spoor was seen at a waterhole, and no doubt leopards and other game are there also. A circular track built along the rims between these craters and threading its way through the whole area should prove a wonderful drive. From the high ground superb views are had over the lakes to the Ankole Hills and on a clear day even the volcanoes of the Congo near Lake Kivu can be seen far to the south. High above and to the north, the mountains rise steeply into swirling mists which enshroud their summits, opening now and then to reveal the snow peaks and glaciers in all their beauty.”

*Northern Rhodesia.*—That the Government and people of Northern Rhodesia have been concerned for the preservation of their wild life has been shown by the formation of the Kafue National Park, and such reserves as that in Luangwa Valley about which Mr. R. I. G. Attwell recently gave such an interesting talk to members. Outside the reserves things have not been going so well. In July and August, 1952, Mr. Bernard Carp, leader of a zoological expedition, found such wholesale slaughter of game in Barotseland that he considered that within fifteen years, except for elephant and buffalo, game there would be virtually non-existent. Similar conditions are reported from other parts of the country. Apart from any question of sentiment there is a grave threat to the native’s meat supply.

This improvident destruction of animals is made possible by the ease with which firearms may be obtained. The African Affairs Report, 1951, shows that more than forty-seven thousand firearms are in the hands of Africans and, as any holder of an arms licence may, for 2s. 6d., take out a game licence, it is hardly surprising that the animals are being exterminated.

The situation was brought to world attention on 9th November, 1952, by a broadcast from Lusaka by Mrs. Michael Lafone. This broadcast coincided with the formation of the Game Preservation and Hunting Association of Northern Rhodesia, whose object briefly is to enlist the sympathy of the whole community in the task of preserving the wild life of the country, together with the promotion of reasonable and controlled shooting. The Chairman of the Lusaka branch of the new association is Lieut.-Col. R. A. Critchley, D.S.O., M.C.

In order to discover the attitude of the British Government towards all this, our President, Lord Willingdon, on 21st January, 1953, asked two questions in the House of Lords. The first concerned the great number of firearms in the hands of Africans, the second the steps being taken to preserve wild life. In a supplementary question, Lord Winster asked whether five-eighths of the country was not under tsetse fly—where of course cattle cannot live—so that the only meat for the native was game meat. Questions were also put by Lord Ogmores and Lord Faringdon.

Lord Lloyd, in the course of several replies for the Government, agreed that 47,366 guns were held by Africans and said that over 40,000 were muzzle loaders, the main use of which was ceremonial. He said that the Northern Rhodesia Government were perfectly content and, so far, Her Majesty's Government were content to believe that there was no danger of complete elimination or indeed of serious elimination of game. He stressed that both Governments would regard the extermination of the game as a tragedy and added that there were definite signs that public opinion in Northern Rhodesia was swinging round in favour of more stringent control.

Indignant comment on the Government's replies comes from a well-informed source in Northern Rhodesia. While admitting that some of the 40,000 muzzle loaders in the hands of Africans are occasionally used for ceremonial, our correspondent says that the man who owns a gun has it for one real purpose, to kill animals; he can get unlimited powder on his arms licence. It is fantastic to say that sufficient steps are taken to guarantee the continued existence of the fauna as a meat supply. Outside the reserves it has largely already vanished. Even in the reserves, with so many arms available, the future is not secure, for an army of guards would be needed for each of them; their very remoteness is often a danger.

Our correspondent points out how rapidly an area can be denuded of animals by the extensive use of firearms, whereas

animal populations could withstand the natives' ancient tribal methods of hunting.

*Australia.*—We are very interested to hear from the Fauna Protection Panel of New South Wales that about 2,000 honorary rangers have been appointed under the Fauna Protection Act of 1948. The work of these rangers is of course voluntary but they have considerable legal powers including search of premises, seizure of weapons and even power of arrest. In practice it has seldom been found necessary to exercise these powers, for a warning has proved effective. To keep rangers informed of the panel's work a quarterly bulletin is issued.

Surveys are being conducted into the distribution of the Australian bustard and the brush turkey, two species which have been greatly reduced owing to settlement, shooting and foxes.

Under the Fauna Protection Act of New South Wales any species requiring special protection may be declared "rare fauna" with a maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment for killing or capture, or a fine of £50 or both. The following have already been so proclaimed: koala, platypus, spiny ant-eater, southern whip-tail wallaby, two species of lyre bird, lowan or mallee fowl, brush turkey and the Australian bustard.

Preservation of wild life in Australia is dealt with on a State not a Commonwealth basis, but the need for co-ordination is laid bare by a legal decision reported in *Australian Wild Life*, the journal of the Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia. New South Wales sought to prevent the through passage of skins of kangaroos killed during the open season in Queensland—New South Wales had no such open season. The High Court of Australia ruled, in effect, that the New South Wales Fauna Protection Act, in so far as it attempted to hinder commerce between different states, contravened the Commonwealth Constitution.

Thus is conservation made easy.

The journal reports also that the Wild Life Section of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization though destined ultimately to carry out wild life conservation, will, in its early years, concentrate on the rabbit problem. A dreary prospect.

*Gift by Dr. Van Name.*—Early in the New Year we received from Dr. Willard Van Name a cheque for \$2,000. It is difficult to find words to express our gratitude to our Vice-President for his repeated gifts, but we do thank him once more for his unstinted generosity.

In the letter accompanying his gift Dr. Van Name said :  
“ My being able to make this and other donations is due to my great interest in the African fauna and to my realization that the Fauna Preservation Society is actually accomplishing important work in saving it.” For these words of encouragement we are most grateful and trust that we deserve them and may continue to do so.

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