

The Fauna Preservation Society

AUGUST, 1958

EDITORIAL NOTES

CAPTAIN K. F. T. CALDWELL.—By the death of Keith Caldwell in May our Society has lost a devoted helper and friend who for forty years expended himself in the cause of conservation, especially on behalf of the wild animals of Africa. After retiring from appointments in the Kenya and the Uganda game departments, Captain Caldwell continued to visit East Africa yearly and became universally known as a great authority on everything to do with wild life, especially perhaps game legislation.

“Game Preservation, its Aims and Objects”, Captain Caldwell’s first article in our Journal, appeared in July, 1924, and from then on he was a frequent contributor. Probably his best known writings are the reports on his African faunal surveys of 1947 and 1949, but he had also reported on his mission to the West Indies in 1936 and to India, Malaya and Java in 1938.

In 1922 Captain Caldwell became a member of our Council and, as the years went by, his advice was more and more sought, on almost every subject with which we had to deal. He was elected a vice-president in 1954.

The Society offers its heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Caldwell in her irreparable loss.

GREAT BRITAIN.—The Nature Conservancy has declared seven new nature reserves and additions to three others.

Gower Coast.—115 acres in the south-west corner of the Gower Peninsula in Glamorgan, includes Worm’s Head, an island at high tide, where many sea birds breed, and part of the magnificent stretch of limestone cliffs on the mainland. In the coastal Paviland caves one of the oldest ceremonial human burials was discovered. Animal bones from the Pleistocene age include horse, bear, ox, mammoth, woolly rhinoceros, wolf, Irish elk and reindeer.

Access is unrestricted. Application for permission to collect specimens may be made to the Nature Conservancy, c/o Department of Zoology, University of Swansea, Wales.

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Coed Tremadoc.—This reserve was noted in last *Oryx*. An extension of 8 acres has been made to preserve the soil of the cliff ledges and gullies. The humus is very unstable and trampling sets it moving very easily, providing evidence of how easily mountain and cliff are eroded by human activity.

Rusland Moss, 30 acres in Lancashire, is a raised bog which though partly drained and colonized by pine, birch and willow, still retains characteristic bog plants and animals. There are wild roe and red deer and a small heronry.

Application to visit the reserve should be made to the Nature Conservancy, Merlewood, Grange-over-Sands, Lancashire.

Hickling Broad, Norfolk, has about 700 acres of shallow water surrounded by reed-beds, fen, alder and grass marshes. The rich flora supports many notable insects including the swallow-tail butterfly. Marsh harriers, bearded tits and bitterns flourish. The coypu, a large South American rodent, widespread in the Broads, was first recorded in Hickling in 1950. By eating and breaking vegetation it increases open water; so far its influence seems to have been beneficial.

The use of the Broad for sailing and fishing is unaffected. Application to visit the sanctuary should be made to The Norfolk Naturalists' Trust, The Assembly House, Theatre Street, Norwich.

Bure Marshes, 734 acres, has been established to study the evolution and future of the Norfolk Broads. Many were man-made in the Middle Ages and many have lately become un-navigable. The wild life of the area will benefit, for experiments will be carried out only where the risk of disturbance is not serious. Further information from The Norfolk Naturalists' Trust.

Weeting Heath, 338 acres in Norfolk, protects Breckland Heath vegetation and fauna. Typical birds are stone curlew, woodlark and wheatear. Two rare spiders, *Oxyptila scabricula* and *Philodromus collinus* occur.

Thetford Heath, 225 acres in Suffolk, is another Breckland reserve but its ground has a stony broken surface. There are fine examples of fossil "stone stripes". During the nineteen-thirties parallel stripes of heather were first observed and these have now been shown to be connected with the ancient collection of flints in long parallel lines.

Application to visit Weeting or Thetford Heath should be made to The Nature Conservancy, Bishopsgate, Norwich.

Knocking Hoe, 22 acres in Bedfordshire, preserves a type of close-grazed chalk downland turf which has probably remained undisturbed by cultivation throughout historic times, but which

is rapidly disappearing in this country. Application to visit may be made to The Nature Conservancy, 19 Belgrave Square, London, S.W. 1.

Rodney Stoke, in Somerset. This reserve was noted in last *Oryx*. Two small additions have increased its area to 86 acres.

Bridgewater Bay.—See *Oryx*, II, 5, and III, 1. This reserve has been reduced by 14 acres to meet the requirements of the new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point, but Fenning Island has been added to it. The total area is about 6,000 acres.

THE OTTER.—A member, commenting on *The Natural History of the Otter*, reviewed in our last number, refers to the statement that a sudden change of circumstances could quite rapidly bring the otter to the verge of extinction. "One such change," he says, "is already upon us, that is the policy of some River Boards of clearing banks of rivers and tidying them up to look more like canal banks. All trees and shrubs are removed and I believe it is the policy of the Ministry of Agriculture (under whom the Boards act) to slope off the banks and grass them. If this happens to all rivers as it has already happened to some, there will be no places left for otters to lie up or to rear their young."

The Natural History of the Otter was, on publication, submitted by Dr. Boje Benzon to the Prime Minister of Denmark. Within a fortnight the otter was legally protected in Denmark and Danish territorial waters from March 1st to July 31st, for the years 1958–1967. Fish hatcheries are exempt and special exemptions may be made where damage by otters is proved.

A quick result indeed.

THE GREY SEAL.—We hear that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food proposes to introduce an Order amending the Grey Seals Protection Act of 1932, and thus authorize the killing of a number of grey seal calves at the Farne Islands during November and December, the normal close season. The reason for this proposal is the damage caused by seals to salmon and salmon nets on the Northumberland coast and in the Tweed estuary.

The Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle-upon-Tyne have asked the Minister to postpone his decision. They have urged that to kill one seal in the Tweed estuary is of more certain value to fishing interests than to kill fifty or more calves on the Farne Islands.

We support the local society's view. The effective way to protect the fishing is to shoot the seals where they do damage, not to spoil the Farne Islands colony of the rare grey seal.

CEYLON.—Mr. C. E. Norris, secretary of the Wild Life Protection Society of Ceylon, writes that the Ceylon Government has formed a committee to investigate wild life preservation, especially the preservation of the elephant. He has himself been appointed to serve on it. This is good news, for recent reports about the elephant, so closely identified with Ceylon's past, have shown a great reduction in numbers : in fact extermination may be in sight.

A scheme properly to relate Ceylon's expanding population and increased demand for food with the conservation of her forests and wild life is needed and would be an excellent opportunity for international aid ; for whatever may be the immediate result of developments which neglect conservation, the final result is ruin.

NEW SOUTH WALES.—We have heard with very great regret of the sudden death of Mr. E. J. Griffiths, Chief Guardian of Fauna since 1949. He was largely responsible for the great number of societies which have been formed to protect flora and fauna and for the six reserves which are now established in the State.

As readers will know, Mr. Griffiths was our chief informant on fauna matters in New South Wales. His successor, Mr. A. A. Strom, has promised to keep up the connection.

STEVENSON-HAMILTON MEMORIAL.—The Wild Life Protection Society of South Africa has launched an appeal to build and equip in the Kruger National Park, a wild life library in memory of the late Lieutenant-Colonel Stevenson-Hamilton, warden for forty years. Subscriptions should be sent to : The Stevenson-Hamilton Library Fund, P.O. Box 1398, Johannesburg.

A tribute to Stevenson-Hamilton, a member of our society for fifty-three years and a vice-president since 1945, appeared in the last *Oryx*.

HONOUR FOR BIRD PROTECTION.—We congratulate Miss Phyllis Barclay-Smith, Secretary of the International Committee for Bird Preservation, on receiving the M.B.E. "For services to the preservation of bird life."