

# The Fauna Preservation Society

NOVEMBER, 1960

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

### GREAT BRITAIN

*Council for Nature.*—We are pleased to learn that the Ministry of Education is making a grant of £2,500 in the year 1960–61 to enable the Council for Nature to expand the work of its Conservation Corps. The grant follows the recognition in the Albemarle Report of the value of the Corps in the development of youth training in this country, and further grants of up to £3,000 per annum are promised for the succeeding two years.

The new grant will enable the Corps to extend its work considerably. Mr. Bruce Ing, a young naturalist with experience of youth work, has been appointed as assistant organizer. He will be responsible for increasing the number of weekend working parties and drawing in volunteers from youth clubs.

*The University of London* will again be holding in 1961 a course for its Certificate of Proficiency in Natural History. The course is open to any person interested in the study of living things in their natural habitats. For further information apply immediately to the Secretary, Natural History Certificate Course, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, University of London, Senate House, London, W.C. 1.

*Lead Poisoning in Wildfowl.*—Seven per cent of a sample of British mallard and shoveler, but hardly any wigeon and no teal, were found to have eaten lead pellets, according to a paper by P. J. S. Olney in the latest annual report of the Wildfowl Trust. It is estimated that between three-fifths and four-fifths of any adult mallards which eat a single pellet will die of lead poisoning. These are spent pellets from wildfowlers' guns that fall into the mud and are eaten by the feeding birds.

**PORTUGAL.**—A strong plea for conservation of the St. Vincent-Sagres promontory appears in the July *Bulletin* of the Portuguese League for Nature Protection. This extreme south-west tip of Portugal has been in the news lately because of the commemoration of the fifth centenary of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator. It is an area of particular interest for its flora

and botanical associations, its invertebrate fauna, and bird life. There is a resident colony of the chough (*Coracia pyrrhocorax*); several birds of prey are either resident or winter visitors, and vast numbers of migrants, especially passerines, pass through.

The area is menaced by the depredations of goats and pigs, the burning of ground cover and the operations of bird-catchers at migration time. Now plots of land are for sale and some houses have already been built. It is an all too familiar picture, but there is still time for authority to save a unique and valuable natural site by establishing a strict reserve under proper supervision. Surely this would be a worthy monument to the explorer-prince.

INDIA.—Shri Salim Ali, an ornithologist of world-wide reputation and joint editor of the *Journal* of the Bombay Natural History Society, has written to express gratification for the tribute paid to that Society in “A Look at Threatened Species”, published in the last *Oryx*. He wishes to make it widely known that the strongest voice within his Society was that of Lieut.-Col. R. W. Burton, I.A. (Retd.), and adds: “It was largely Burton’s missionary zeal for conservation which made the Bombay Natural History Society take up the cause in good earnest; and it was because of his and the Society’s ceaseless demand for action—through the Press, radio, lectures and the *Journal*—that the Government of India constituted the Indian Board for Wild Life.”

We would like to add our own tribute to the *Journal* itself. The first number appeared in January, 1886 (not 1902 as in the Report), giving it nearly seventy-five years of unbroken publication.

*Asiatic Rhinoceros*.—In a letter to the Society, Mr. W. F. H. Ansell refers to the distribution of the Great Indian and Javan rhinoceroses, discussed in the last *Oryx*. Mr. Ansell points out that the evidence tends to show that these closely related species never occupied the same areas, for the “former distribution—questionable”, shown in the map on page 189 for the Great Indian rhinoceros, is really the same as the mainland “former distribution, c. 1850” shown on page 207 for the Javan rhinoceros.

Suggestions of the occurrence of the Great Indian rhinoceros in Burma and to the south-east are not authenticated by specimens but depend on early records. They must surely refer to the Javan rhinoceros. It seems reasonable to suppose that the habits and habitats of the two species were too similar to allow them

to live in the same area. In the small area of overlap the Great Indian rhinoceros was evidently the more successful and indeed still survives there, though in reduced numbers and range.

**ALBATROSSES ON MIDWAY ISLAND.**—At the 12th International Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation in Tokyo, Mr. R. H. Pough, representing the Wilson Ornithological Society, U.S.A., stated that the albatrosses on Midway had been a serious hazard to aircraft though, during all the years the United States Navy had operated on the island, there had been no fatal accident. The military authorities, however, decided that the only way to get rid of the birds over the runway was to wipe out the whole population. Before the authorities had been committed to this course, the United States Section of I.C.B.P. organized a protest in which it was assisted by other National Sections. These protests from other countries were of great value as they brought the matter to the attention of top officials who otherwise might not have had cognizance of it. The result of this widespread protest was that an expensive campaign was undertaken to eliminate the sand dunes which created air currents and encouraged the birds to soar over the runways. This had been unexpectedly successful and the number of birds soaring over the runways had been reduced by about 85 per cent, which was not too great a hazard.

**UGANDA.**—Our readers will remember that a year ago the Society made a grant of £200 towards the work of Dr. A. H. Harthoorn and Mr. J. A. Lock of Makerere College, Uganda.

They have now told us about the investigations into the technique of immobilizing wild animals, which the grant helped them to carry out, and of the advantages which can result from this work.

**Kob Antelope.**—The proper dose of the most suitable agent was found and thirteen kob were moved three hundred and twenty miles to the Mweru game reserve. The movement of three hundred more kob is planned.

**Black Rhinoceros.**—The value of this investigation is shown in the article on the safe movement of four rhinoceroses at Kariba. Another rhinoceros movement is in view, to save the rhinoceroses living at Makindu from being shot, when the bush in which they are living is cleared away.

**Rothschild's Giraffe.**—In Kenya this giraffe lives entirely on farm and ranch land. A trial has been carried out and their movement to safer areas is planned.

**African Elephant.**—If elephants are to be preserved, their

movements must be known and to do this individuals must be immobilized and marked. The correct technique has been worked out.

*Hippopotamus*.—Similar work to that on the elephant has been done. It is especially important in relation to the Uganda scheme for cropping the hippopotamus.

*African Buffalo*.—A technique for immobilizing the African wild buffalo has been worked out, and three buffalo were vaccinated against rinderpest, a disease of cattle to which buffalo are very susceptible.

ARGENTINA.—We greatly regret to hear of the death of Dr. Angel Cabrera, a zoologist of international repute and the author of many books and papers on zoology and palaeontology. He was one of the greatest protectors of wild life in South America and a very active member of the Fauna Protection Commission presided over by the late Dr. Hugo Salomon, whose many connections with our Society will be remembered by our older members.

AUSTRALIA.—Mr. F. N. Ratcliffe, Officer-in-Charge of the Wildlife Survey Section of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, and member of the Survival Service Commission of I.U.C.N., writes of greatly increased interest in nature conservation, and sends us two items of good news.

Firstly, he quotes Dr. Eric Guiler of the University of Tasmania who for some years has been collecting and checking information about the thylacine, the Tasmanian wolf or tiger, whose continued existence has been doubted. Reported sightings of the animal by reliable people have increased of late and there have been indications of resumed sheep-killing by thylacines. Dr. Guiler himself has obtained irrefutable evidence, in the form of footprints, of the thylacine's presence.

The Wildlife Survey has shown that the whip-tailed wallaby or pretty-face (*Wallabia elegans*)—doubts about the survival of which in New South Wales were expressed in *Oryx* in 1956—is doing well in the hilly country in the north-east of the State. Mr. John Calaby, who has been carrying out a faunal survey in the region, has written: "One day we sat on a cliff overlooking a cleared ridge sloping down from a higher and forested ridge, watching the roos come out of the forest and move off down the ridge to graze. There were about 80 whiptails, 3 grey kangaroos, and 12 wallaroos."

NEW ZEALAND.—Westland, New Zealand's ninth national park, was gazetted on 29th March, 1960. With an area of 328 square miles, it extends from the coast to the main divide on the Southern Alps and takes in the Franz Joseph and Fox glaciers, Lake Matheson, Lake Mapourika and the Copland Pass.

A GOOD EXAMPLE.—A member is most kindly distributing at his own expense two hundred copies of our new pamphlet "Can you imagine a world without wild creatures?" and two hundred copies of "Life in the shadow of the Dodo", by John Hillaby, reprinted from *The Guardian* of 7th June, 1960.

Will other members willing to do likewise please write to the Secretary for pamphlets and reprints, stating how many of each they can use.

*Oryx*, Volume V, Binding and Index.—This number of *Oryx* completes Volume V. The index and preliminary pages necessary for binding may be had free of charge from the Fauna Preservation Society, on request.

Members who wish their loose numbers to be bound and indexed should send them with 16s., the cost of binding, to Stephen Austin and Sons, Ltd., Caxton Hill, Ware Road, Hertford, Hertfordshire, England.

MR. A. S. VERNAY.—We learn with great regret of the death on 25th October of Mr. Arthur Vernay, who led many zoological expeditions in Asia and Africa. Although he went to the United States as a young man and became a trustee of the American Museum of Natural History, he retained his British nationality.

During his latter years Arthur Vernay lived in the Bahamas and took a leading part in the formation of the Society for Protection of the Flamingo in the Bahamas. He was a life member of our Society.

#### A TIE FOR THE SOCIETY

The F.P.S. tie will be on sale from 1st December, 1960. It is made of navy-blue terylene with the oryx head in white at intervals of two inches. The head is copied from the cover of our *Journal* and is three-quarters of an inch long, including the horns.

Order your ties now from C. H. Munday, Ltd., Club Colour House, 7 Irving Street, Leicester Square, London, W.C. 2. Price 18s. each. Please do not order direct from the Society.

The Society benefits by a percentage of each sale.