ORYX

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# Notes and News

**Protection for all Wildlife**

The trade in wild butterflies described in the article on page 479 highlights the need for a general protection bill for British wildlife. So far in Britain we have singled out and protected birds very adequately—all but a few specified pest and sport species are completely protected; with mammals, of which we have few, there is legislation for deer and seals, and since the beginning of this year the new badger protection law has been in force. But for amphibians and reptiles, almost all threatened—even the common frog has almost disappeared in many areas—and all invertebrates including butterflies, there is nothing, apart from such protection as nature-reserve status confers, though a private bill to protect amphibians and reptiles has been prepared. Wild plants are only protected by bye-laws, and in reserves, although a bill that was lost because of the General Election is being brought up again. For some time now a working party of the SPNR's Conservation Liaison Committee—on which the FPS Hon. Secretary sits—has been engaged on the drafting of a comprehensive bill, which is now being circulated for discussion. This would take over all existing legislation such as the Protection of Birds Act, the Deer Acts, the Conservation of Seals Act and the Badger Act; all rare and harmless animals and rare plants would be listed on schedules, some being given complete year-round protection, others (e.g. deer) during stated close seasons. The passing of the Badger Act showed how widespread is the support for wildlife protection now, and this comprehensive bill is urgently needed. It would enormously strengthen the hands of the naturalists' trusts and indeed every member of the community with an interest in protecting wildlife.

BLACK-FOOTED FERRET—one of the most endangered mammals in the world discussed in the article on page 436
*Luther Goldman, US Bureau of Sport Fisheries & Wildlife*

**Hunting Ban for Polar Bears**

An agreement for an almost total ban on polar bear hunting was signed in Oslo last November by Canada, Denmark (for Greenland), Norway (for Spitsbergen), the United States, and the USSR, the five nations that cover the range of the polar bear. This should substantially reduce the annual kill, estimated recently to have been between 800 and 1200. Exceptions to the ban include Eskimos and all local people using traditional methods; the ban may also be lifted for scientific and conservation reasons, but in these cases the skins may not be sold. Hunting by aircraft is prohibited. The treaty was originally proposed by the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group, and is based on a draft prepared by IUCN and the five governments. This is the first international agreement by Arctic nations to protect and conserve a common resource.

**Battle to Save the Elephants**

Ivory, like gold, is a good investment. It is in tremendous demand and the price has soared. The result in East Africa last year was elephant poaching on a scale that could have wiped out Kenya's elephants in ten years—a 'conservative estimate for Kenya', says Malcolm Macpherson in *International Wildlife,* was 12,000 killed in 1973; in Uganda elephant numbers were halved, while in Tanzania and Zaïre poachers killed elephants 'as fast as they could make poison arrows'. All four countries, and also Sudan and the Ivory Coast, banned elephant hunting—Tanzania banned all hunting and called in the militia to help the Game Department in a 'massive anti-poaching campaign'. Some argue that a hunting ban makes the situation worse in that the presence of professional hunters deters poachers; others that the hunters are in fact little help—they do not want to be involved and their reports tell little that the authorities do not already know. (Kenya lifted the ban in March this year.) Poaching on this vast scale, of course, was not only the villager at work; it involved organised mechanised gangs working in the national parks, and taking other species too—notably rhino, cheetah and leopard; in Tsavo East Park the Warden, David Sheldrick, said that rhinos there would be finished in four years if the poaching were not stopped. President Kenyatta ordered an all-out offensive and the famous elephant Ahmed with enormous tusks, in the Marsabit District, already protected by Presidential Decree, was given a continuous guard. (However, Ahmed has since died a natural death.) In the Tsavo helicopters were used to back up the combined National Park Field Forces and the Police Air Wing, and several rangers have been killed in gun-fights with armed gangs, according to *Africana.* The worst poaching has now been brought under

control—it is a battle that will never be completely won—and in Kenya at least, thanks to a near-military operation in the field, followed by prosecution and confiscation of trophies, 'the main export', says *Africana,* 'is finished'.

**Increase in Walia Ibex**

The walia ibex *Capra ibex walie*, which survives only in Ethiopia's Semien National Park, is increasing and even spreading outside the park, reports Leslie Brown, who visited Ethiopia in February on behalf of the African Wildlife Leadership Foundation. He estimated a total of up to 300 animals, with a high proportion of young; this compares very favourably with the estimate of between 150 and 200 in the census taken exactly two years before—see *Oryx*, May 1973, page 10. At that time poaching had been controlled on the higher ground but was still severe in the lowlands; now the building of four new guard posts, three of them in the lowlands, has enabled the guards to control the poaching. On the debit side cultivation within the park and destruction of the escarpment forest go on, and it is urgently necessary to get the people resettled outside on land that awaits them. The walia ibex is far from being out of danger, but the situation is a good deal more promising than anybody believed possible even two years ago.

**Project Tiger in Action**

India has been making considerable progress with Project Tiger, launched last year. After the selection of nine sanctuaries in different parts of the sub-continent, the Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi, who all along has taken a keen personal interest, insisted that each State must give an assurance in writing that a fairly large area inside each reserve will be free of all forest exploitation, a *sanctum sanctorum,* and every state complied. At the beginning of the year the Government paid up to the 1974 allocation from the Rs $4\frac{1}{2}$ crores (c. £$2\frac{1}{2}$ m.) it has promised to pay over the five years April 1974 to March 1979. WWF money is being used to supply each sanctuary with two jeeps —which are essential for guarding against poaching as well as for administration. The Project Director is K. S. Sankhala, working under a Steering Committee chaired by Dr Karan Singh, Chairman of the Indian Board for Wildlife and now Minister of Health. Nine field directors have been appointed from the Forest Service—one for each tiger reserve—see *Oryx* May 1973—and each has produced a management plan. In the Kanha tiger reserve, in central India, work on the plan is well under way. This magnificent reserve covers nearly 1500 sq. km. of contiguous reserve forest and in-

cludes the Kanha National Park, perhaps India's finest park, as its *sanctum sanctorum* (446 sq. km). The tiger population is put at 50, of which 37 are in the national park, where there are large numbers of prey species, notably spotted deer, as well as sambar, wild boar, gaur, chinkhara gazelle, and two endangered species—blackbuck and the only survivors of the southern race of the swamp deer or barasingha (both on the increase). The plan identifies and seeks to remove the limiting factors in building up the prey species for the tiger. Deliberate burning of the meadows (to get green shoots early in the year) has been stopped—this not only attracts unnaturally heavy and prolonged grazing by the deer and antelopes, but has encouraged fire-resistant grasses at the expense of more palatable ones. Dams are being built to help the wildlife over the dry period immediately before the monsoon. Guard posts are being increased, and six key posts and two flying squads will be equipped with wireless—this is especially important for efficient fire-fighting, where early detection and quick action are essential. Most important of all, a start has been made on moving some of the villages outside the park, to areas prepared, taking with them the domestic cattle which are a disturbance for the wildlife and deprive the deer and antelopes of valuable grazing. The future for the tiger in this well-run reserve is hopeful.

**The Disappearing Sirenians**

The dugong is a rare animal and, over most of its vast range, getting rarer; the three manatees are almost everywhere in grave danger of extinction unless protective legislation can be enforced. These are the conclusions of Dr Colin and Dr Kate Bertram in their survey, 'The Modern Sirenia', published by the Linaean Society's *Biological Journal*. All sirenians are useful and harmless; all have highly palatable flesh that is much in demand for meat. In any rational world all would be conserved and carefully harvested. But only in northern Australian waters can the authors speak of dugongs as being 'locally abundant' and in places 'plentiful', and there stocks are being harvested by aborigines; in Cairns and Yarraba they found half-a-dozen fishermen were regularly taking dugongs—one had taken 64 in a year—without any sign that stocks were being depleted. Dugongs have an enormous range—roughly bounded by the Red Sea and the East African coast, south to Mozambique, Australian coasts north of Perth and Brisbane, and the Philippines; their depletion is due very largely to human greed. In some areas, Sri Lanka (Ceylon) for example, dugongs are the victims of intensified sea fishing with modern equipment—more mechanised boats which can fish a greater area, more and larger nets which entangle and drown dugongs (and turtles and porpoises) because, being made of

nylon and similar fibres, they are too strong for the dugongs to break out. A marine sanctuary off the coast of Ceylon is urgently called for. In some Australian waters shark netting (for the protection of bathers) has similarly reduced dugong numbers, and females and young seem to be the most frequently caught. But the authors believe that, given 'careful effort', dugong stocks could be built up to the point where they could be rationally exploited. They suggest, too, that manatees, with species in West Africa, Amazonia, the Caribbean, and tropical Atlantic coasts of America, should be carefully investigated in the hope of finding some stocks that could be protected and built up again.

**Power Stations Help the Manatees**

One brighter spot for manatees is in Florida, where Dr Daniel Hartman, who has recently completed a year-long survey for WWF, reports that the status and distribution of the West Indian manatee *Trichechus manatus* appears to have changed little in the last 50 years; on the central west coast numbers may even be increasing. The total number in the USA he puts at between 800 and 1300. They occur without interruption on Florida's Atlantic coast as far north as southern Georgia, and a straggler has even been seen off South Carolina—the most northerly occurrence for 20 years. In the Miami region, because of heavy boat traffic, they appear to be decreasing and this he lists as the chief threat to their survival in the USA. While power boats and vandals account for the vast majority of manatee deaths, poaching and habitat destruction have also to be reckoned with. Dr Hartman's study revealed some of the warmwater refuges that are important winter sanctuaries for manatees. Of 25 such refuges only six were naturally warm; 19 were man-made, mostly by effluents from power stations. It is not often that power stations can be welcomed as beneficial to an endangered wild animal.

**Which Rare Species to Breed?**

Among the world's zoos that are seriously concerned about conserving wild stocks is the National Zoo in Washington, which has now acquired 4000 acres at Front Royal, Virginia, as a breeding farm. 'We can't go on taking more and more animals from the wild', says the Director, Theodore Reed. 'Unless we breed them in captivity, zoos won't have them. Moreover captive breeding can be important to the survival of some species'. Other zoos are being invited to join Front Royal in cooperative breeding projects, and two have agreed to place a number of their rarer animals in herds at the farm. To get maximum advantage of captive breeding of rare species in a venture such as

this, conservationists will have to draw up lists of the species they would like to see involved, which for mammals will draw on not only the red sheets in the new *Red Data Book* but also the amber sheets of species 'believed likely to move into the endangered category in the near future'. It is no good waiting to put a species on the list 'because there are still several thousand in the wild' and then finding later that there are too few left in the wild for it to be safe to capture any.

**Reserve for Sumatran Rhino**

The Gunung Leuser reserve in North Sumatra is the most likely place for the Sumatran rhino to survive and build up numbers, is the conclusion of Markus Borner, a Swiss zoologist who has been conducting a very thorough survey in extremely difficult mountainous jungle country for WWF. Moreover, this very inaccessible reserve needs no management for rhinos—other than keeping out all human disturbance. This, however, is essential. The rhinos are thinly scattered and numbers are small—he suggests a maximum of 40–50 animals, a density of one to 2000–2500 ha. In the Langhat Reserve to the east the trails suggested that there were very few rhinos at all; in other parts they are threatened by timber development or so thinly scattered over a huge area that they are unlikely to be able to breed. He found no evidence of Javan rhino at all.

**Complicated Conservation Problem**

The wildlife of Siberut, one of the four Mentawai Islands off the west coast of Sumatra, is in danger partly from timber felling (which may however be phased out), but much more because the native people are hunters and need meat. Unfortunately, easiest to hunt are the monkeys and gibbons, which include three *Red Data Book* species, the Mentawai Island gibbon *Hylobates klossii* the pig-tailed langur *Simias concolor* (both on red sheets), and the Mentawai leaf monkey *Presbytis potenziana,* also the pig-tailed macaque *Macaca nemastrina pagensis*. The situation urgently calls for a reserve that would be a hunting-free zone, and a suggestion for this has been prepared and presented to IUCN by Ronald Tilson, who is studying the monkeys. But to be effective, he is insistent that the scheme for a reserve must be tied in with a plan to improve the people's food, and particularly their protein supply. A former missionary in the Mentawais, Dr Helmut Buchholz, has produced just this; he wants to help the islanders to improve and increase their domestic pigs and chickens, train them in fishing techniques, and establish and run fish farms. (They are said to prefer fish to meat.) Dr Buchholz and his wife lived eight years in the islands, speak the Mentawai

language, and are loved and trusted by the people, according to a recent visitor to Siberut, Robin Hanbury-Tenison who writes in the *Geographical Magazine.* He too believes that the reserve will only be respected if the people are helped to find other food. He does not expect to be able to stop all hunting, which is part of the Mentawai culture, and the Mentawai men have made it clear that, if no other food is available, any wildlife reserve that prohibited hunting would be intolerable and every animal in it would be hunted out—all of which suggests that only a combined approach can hope to save the Mentawai monkeys and gibbons.

**Gorilla Hunters Now Guides**

Less than ten years ago the mountain gorillas in what is now the Kahuzi–Biéga National Park, in Zaïre, were so heavily hunted by the pygmies that the young were being exterminated and the adults becoming aggressive and dangerous. A census showed a total population of about 150. The Park Conservator, Adrien De Schryver, describes in *Léopard,* journal of the Zaïre Institut National pour la Conservation de la Nature, how the hunting was finally stopped with the creation of the national park in 1970 and the appointment of the former hunters as guides to the visitors. The gorillas co-operated with an exceptionally high number of births and quickly realised that man was no longer an enemy. Tourism was encouraged—the only convincing argument for a national park in an overpopulated country, says the author, and since 1972 visitors have been able to watch and photograph two gorilla families which allow them to approach within about fifteen feet. It is these gorillas that the FPS party will see in the Rwanda/Zaïre tour this summer.

**Persecution of a Zebra**

Hartmann's zebra, which is found only in south-west Africa, is believed to number as few as 8000, having been only 20 years ago something between 50,000 and 70,000 in its central concentration area. No other large mammal in southern Africa has been so ruthlessly persecuted in the period, says Eugene Joubert in his report on the habitat preference, distribution and status of this zebra, published in *Madoqua.* His investigation was part of a research project launched by the Nature Reservation Division in 1969 in order to frame a policy that would both ensure the survival of the zebra and satisfy the farmers. For it is the zebra's collision with farming interests that has brought it down; because it competes with domestic stock for grazing, especially in dry years, and occasionally damages fences, it is a 'problem animal', and farmers have ignored its status (since 1933) as Specially Protected Game.

**New Reserves in the Falklands**

The FPS acted as negotiator with our Consultant Ian Strange in the Falkland Islands in the purchase last year of some small islands by the SPNR (Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves). The FPS will help the SPNR in the management of the islands. Six islands were bought—Saddle, Ship, Cliffknob, Beef, North, and Coffin—all near New Island, the most westerly in the archipelago, and Landsend Bluff, a small part of New Island itself, the rest of which is protected as a wildlife reserve by its owners; in addition the Twins, two small islands off Carcass Island, in the north-west, were given to the SPNR. These new reserves will protect fur seal, sealion, and also elephant seal for which the Twins are one of the main breeding areas. Three penguins—rockhopper, gentoo and Magellan—black browed albatross, and Johnny rook—the striated caracara—breed in the new reserves. Most important, on all these islands the natural vegetation, dominated by tussac grass, is still intact. The tussac is the most important habitat in the islands for birds and for some mammals; its destruction by domestic stock on many islands has led to erosion and loss of nest sites, notably for the Magellan penguins. The purchase of these reserves was made possible by the generosity of Christopher Cadbury, FPS Council member and President of the SPNR. The wildlife in the Falklands is under pressure not only from within—see Ian Strange's article in *Oryx*, January 1972—but also from without, and the creation of reserves is important. The Falklands may be windswept, bare, and bleak, but the wildlife is already attracting the modern tourist.

**Grizzly Tale in Yellowstone**

Even in the early days of the Yellowstone, the world's first national park created in 1872, relations between humans and bears, both black and grizzly, were creating problems. Bears early discovered that the humans' garbage dumps were easy sources of good food, and the people loved watching them. The result was injuries to humans and some deaths. In the 1930s and 1940s there were injuries to one visitor in every 800,000. But as the number of visitors leaped up (from $5\frac{1}{2}$ million in the 1940s to $13\frac{1}{2}$ million in the 1950s) so did the casualties, and by the 1960s injuries were one to every half-million visitors. With large numbers of bears concentrated on the park roads and camp grounds, the animals were becoming semi-tame; as one park director put it, 'we are confronted with the problem of re-establishing a wholly wild population'. The authorities' efforts to control the situation included efficient removal of garbage, education of visitors (who were frequently very foolhardy), a prohibition on feeding bears, and the removal of 'spoiled' bears either by transporting them from the

FUR SEALS IN THE FALKLANDS. The long grass at the top of the cliffs is the all-important tussac. *Ian Strange*

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camp grounds to back areas, sending them to zoos, or, in the last resort shooting— in 1968 59 grizzly bears were dealt with in one of these ways; in 1970 the figure was 70, of which 60 were transplanted successfully; this was out of a park population believed to be under 300. In 1969 the park authorities decided to close all garbage dumps immediately, despite objections that the bears should be allowed time to develop new feeding habits. Incinerators replaced the last rubbish dumps. Immediately, the numbers of injuries to humans were significantly reduced and the number of bears that had to be removed or killed dropped from 70 in 1970, to 39, 26, and 8 in the subsequent three years. No grizzlies died in the park in 1973, and no human was injured. Recounting this story in *Endangered Wildlife,* published by the Defenders of Wildlife, Aubrey Stephen Johnston sums up: the National Park Service has restored *Ursus arctos horribilis* to a natural state, free-roaming and independent of man's food.

## FPS Consultants

Four new names have been added to the list of FPS Overseas Consultants (see *Oryx*, October 1973, page 184, and February 1974, page 307):

Ecuador: Fernando I. Ortiz-Crespo
Swaziland: T. E. Reilly
Mongolian People's Republic: Professor Anadurin Dashdorzh
Professor Dondogin Tsevegmid

We deeply regret to announce the death of Dr Desmond Vesey-Fitzgerald, our Consultant in Tanzania.

The Society now has 95 correspondents in 64 countries.

### Krakatau Today

Ninety years ago the volcano on Krakatau Island, between Sumatra and Java, blew up with devastating results that included the destruction of every living thing on the island. 'Yet today', reports the 1973 British University Zoological Expedition to Indonesia, led by Dr Gerald Lincoln, whose members spent five days there,

> 'Krakatau is covered in dense tropical forest stretching from sea level to the very top of the volcanic cone. The woods are alive with animal life including birds, bats, rats, lizards, snakes, crabs, spiders, butterflies, snails and millions of ants. All these living things are relatively new arrivals to the island; studies so far show that most have arrived from Sumatra to the north due to the direction of the prevailing winds and currents. Krakatau has provided scientists with a model oceanic island on which to study colonisation from across the sea'.

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**Details of FPS Autumn meetings will be sent to members in September.**