

ORYX

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Notes and News

Norman Myers's preliminary report, up to the end of March this year, on the status of leopard and cheetah in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) is that the leopard is probably holding its own in the African savannas in a remarkable way despite all the pressures on it, whereas the cheetah 'could well be in a fair degree of trouble already'. His reports on the leopard cover national parks and reserves but also some densely settled parts of Kenya, and he concludes that it is holding out even in places where, if the poaching pressure induced by high rewards had been nearly as effective as had been supposed, it could hardly have survived at all. The cheetah is not only already in trouble but he thinks is likely to be much more susceptible than the leopard to 'accelerating pressures in the future'. Rarely numerous even in undisturbed areas, it is harried by other large predators and scavengers, and suffers from high cub mortality through predators and possibly disease. Because it can kill only small prey, and is frequently robbed, it needs to kill more often than a leopard. Norman Myers's survey is financed by the International Fur Trade Federation as part of the 1970 agreement for a three-year voluntary ban on the use of these furs.

Cheetah in Trouble in East Africa

While trying to exterminate the feral goats on Pinta (Abingdon) Island, one of the northerly Galapagos islands, the National Park Service guards rediscovered the island's endemic tortoise *Testudo elephantopus abingdonii* which was believed to be extinct. One animal was seen, and tracks of two or three different animals were seen in different areas. If a female can be found it is intended to try breeding at the Charles Darwin Research Station, where seven of the eleven surviving subspecies are now being successfully bred. The problem of goat control in the islands is well illustrated by the experience on Pinta. Goats were only introduced on the island in the 1950s (by fishermen wanting a supply of meat) and within 15 years they had multiplied to an estimated 12-20,000; they have destroyed

'Extinct' Tortoise Found

large areas of vegetation right up to the summit, where there is a unique type of highland forest. Fortunately the destruction is recent and the soil cover not yet affected, so it is hoped the vegetation will recover.

The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away, is the impression one gets from the recent takeover bid in Britain by the Department of the Environment for the Nature Conservancy. What the FPS and other voluntary conservation bodies have been asking for is the restoration to the Conservancy of the degree of independence and direct access to a Minister which it had before it was sunk into the Natural Environment Research Council in 1965. This we seem to have got, although the exact degree of independence remains to be judged. But we have also been most insistent that at all costs the fruitful union between the Conservancy's executive and advisory conservation branch and its scientific research branch must be maintained, and this we have lost. For as at present planned, the Conservancy will lose all its research stations to NERC, even Monks Wood, headquarters of conservation research in Britain. Since everybody outside Government is united in believing that the secret of the Conservancy's high reputation throughout the world is just this close interconnection between the research and conservation branches, Jon Tinker may well be right to wonder, in the *New Scientist*, whether the Environment Secretary will not find he has bought a pig in a poke. At all events it is clear that the Conservancy will have to build up some research structure of its own again, and much the most economical way of doing this would be to allow it to keep Monks Wood. Of course, the official line is that the Conservancy will in future be the customer for research done in NERC's research stations acting as contractors. But in view of the bureaucratic tangle into which NERC and the Conservancy got themselves before, one must inevitably fear a lessening in the efficiency of the research effort when the two bodies actually come under different ministries.

Mexico has officially declared a gray whale refuge in the south of Sabastian Vizcaino Bay, on the Pacific side of Baja California. This is where the gray whales *Eschrichtius gibbosus* come to give birth to their young. The whales arrive from their summer feeding grounds in the Bering and Chukchi Seas between December and February – a journey of some 5000 miles – and depart in March and April. This is the western stock of the gray whale, which, in the 1930s, was approaching extinction thanks to overhunting. In 1947 stocks were estimated to be down to 250 (from 30,000 in the 1850s), but total protection led to a rapid recovery and by 1960 numbers were up again to about 6000. The eastern stock, migrating

**Give and Take
at the
Conservancy**

**Mexican
Refuge for
Gray Whale**

along the Chinese and Japanese coasts, is believed to have been virtually exterminated by Japanese whalers.

A captive breeding unit of Indian lions is being started at Wankaner, only 120 miles from the last surviving wild population in the Gir Forest Sanctuary in north-west India. The owner of Wankaner, Prince Yuvraj Digvijaysinh, has offered 3750 acres of land, which was once part of the lions' range, and the Mzuri Safari Club Foundation, in the USA, has given \$10,000 for making the enclosure. The Survival Service Commission, in approving the project, has urged that release sites in one part of the lions' former range should be prepared for, and it is hoped that one at least will be in Iran. (Less than 200 years ago the Asiatic lion ranged from India to Palestine.) At the same time the Gujarat State Government is taking steps to improve the lions' habitat in the Gir, and is conducting a phased removal of villagers and their cattle to allow the vegetation to recover and wild prey species such as deer to increase – hitherto the lions have been subsisting almost entirely on cattle. A new road, which will be patrolled, will mark the sanctuary boundary.

**Breeding
the
Indian Lion**

What could be a serious threat to the wildlife of both the Amboseli Game Reserve and the Nairobi National Park arises from the Government's development plans now being carried out in the Masai-occupied Kajiado District. This lies between Amboseli and the Nairobi park; it is an area to which many of the larger animals move at certain times of year, and acts as a wildlife reservoir for both reserves. The Kenya Government's 1970/74

**Farming v.
Wildlife
in Masailand**

Development Scheme plans to increase both farming productivity and the economic return from wildlife. To achieve the former in the Kajiado District, the ownership of 8150 square miles of pastoral lands is being changed from 'trust' to private, and the land is being parcelled out to individuals or groups of people who are the traditional users and who are being given title to it. For the wildlife this change is very significant, for private owners have the right to destroy all game on their land if they wish, and the temptation to do so will be great when, having borrowed money from the Government to improve their land and stock (which has to be paid back), the farmers find wild animals competing for the grazing, damaging their new fences, bringing in disease and preying on the stock. There are vast numbers of wild animals in the District – aerial censuses have shown well over 100,000 herbivores alone – and the loss of this wildlife could be catastrophic for the Amboseli and the Nairobi park, quite apart from the aesthetic and scientific loss, and directly affect Kenya's major export industry, wildlife tourism. The problem is being studied by the UNDP/FAO

Kenya Wildlife Management Project, set up in response to the Kenya Government's request for assistance to develop a wildlife programme. A five-year project has now started, to determine whether and where wildlife can compete economically with domestic livestock, and to produce a programme for its management and use. Sport hunting, wildlife viewing and commercial cropping for meat will all be investigated as possible profitable alternatives to farming in some areas. For many conservationists this may not seem the ideal solution, but the brutal fact is that, in situations such as this, the wildlife, if it is to survive at all, must pay its way. Nothing can stop the farming development in the Kajiado District, and the Kenya Government has shown its concern for the wildlife by asking for the UNDP/FAO project. Without some management scheme along these lines that will persuade the Masai that wildlife can sometimes be more profitable, in the Kajiado District it could be eliminated in the next ten years.

The crocodile population in the Victoria Nile, below the Murchison Falls in Uganda, one of the largest of this declining species, is decreasing. This is the conclusion of Dr Hugh Cott, following his fourth

**Sad Tale of
Murchison
Crocodiles**

survey made early this year – previous ones were in 1967, 1968 and 1969.* Counts for 1968, '69 and '72 showed, respectively, 182, 176 and 152 nests, and Dr Cott thinks that the decline may be even greater than the figures show because, with increased field experience, the number escaping detection would be smaller in 1972 than in earlier years. Counts both from a launch and from the air showed the same trend. An aerial count in 1967 gave an estimate of at least 700; another in 1968 gave 534; in 1969 two counts gave figures of 518 and 549; in 1972 the comparable count was 241. Dr Cott thinks poaching must still be a major cause of the decrease, although the destruction of the largest rookery in the park, now 'buried beneath an extensive embankment or rock and soil dumped in the course of an engineering feasibility exercise' (for the proposed hydroelectric station at the Falls, now abandoned) cannot have helped. But disturbance of the nesting animals is still the most serious problem and likely to get worse. The opening of new hotels and lodges means more, bigger and more powerful launches – and some now operating displace bow waves a foot high. Dr Cott has been able to show that crocodile eggs are very susceptible to damp and in a period of high rainfall, when the river is high, some nests are anyhow in danger of being waterlogged; the waves from a succession of launches could just make the danger a certainty. Dr Cott recommends that the close season be extended from November 15 to April 15, to cover display, courtship and mating activities, when freedom from disturbance is just as

*See *Oryx* Sept 1968, Dec 1969, May 1970.

important as during nesting and hatching times. At this time (which unfortunately is the peak of the tourist season) breeding grounds should be out of bounds to all launches; in addition, of course, launch crews should be in no doubt that harrying crocodiles is prohibited and tourists told the reasons for the restrictions. The FPS has supplied the Uganda National Parks with a special leaflet explaining this, in three languages, and we have evidence that this is effective in that several visitors, having read the leaflet, have written to tell us what happened on their launch trip. There does seem to be less disturbance now from launches going close in to the nesting beaches (to get good photographs). Dr Cott records that egg losses due to predation were much lower in 1972 than in 1969 and 1968, and the improvement was very noticeable on several rookeries that were formerly much disturbed by launches, which of course drive the crocodiles away, giving the monitors, baboons, marabou storks and other predators their chance.

The Queensland hairy-nosed wombat *Lasiorhinus barnardi*, whose entire known population is confined to one six-square-mile area in the north-east of the State, has been given additional protection with the declaration of a national park enclosing most of its territory. Thanks to sympathetic landowners and tenants, the wombat's numbers are believed to have decreased only slightly since it was first described in 1939, but as no studies have been made numbers are not known and the very restricted habitat anyhow means that it must be considered rare. In the last *Oryx*, May 1972, we reported the creation of a special reserve to protect another hairy-nosed wombat, *L. latifrons* in South Australia.

Turtle farming, if it could be successfully practised, is an obvious way of helping to save the world's endangered turtles – and it is urgent that this should be tackled – as well as providing excellent protein. But so far there has been little success. One of the best known schemes, Mariculture Ltd, in Grand Cayman in the British West Indies, has had considerable success in rearing turtles but only from eggs taken from the wild – so far something like 100,000 have been taken. True farming, of course, involves captive turtles providing their own eggs. In a report to FAO on marine turtle resources in the South Pacific Dr H.F. Hirth recommends a full scale study of turtle grass pastures – he suggests it be done in Fiji – to find out what makes good turtle feeding pasture, what zooplankton (which is what the green turtle hatchling feeds on) is there, how much the turtles eat, etc. – all at present unknown. There are thousands of hectares of turtle grass pasture around the world which could be utilised by mariculturists, he writes, if only they had these basic facts.

**Protecting a
Hairy-nosed
Wombat**

**Facts Needed
for Turtle
Farming**

Annual General Meeting

The Society was greatly honoured by the presence of the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Rt Hon Peter Walker MP, as the speaker at our Annual General meeting on June 29, which drew the largest attendance ever – some 350 members and friends. The President, the Marquess of Willingdon, took the chair, and our Chairman of Council, Peter Scott, Vice-Chairman, Lord Craigton, and Hon Secretary, Richard Fitter, also spoke.

Mr Walker stressed the importance which HM Government attached to the conservation and rehabilitation of the environment. Britain could fairly claim to be a leader in this field. In London alone, the cleaner atmosphere and cleaner river, the results of recent legislation, had brought us a great increase in winter sunshine, as well as the return of several kinds of birds to the parks and fish to the Thames. He confidently looked forward to the time when MPs would be able to fish from the terrace of the House of Commons.

The meeting passed unanimously a resolution urging the Government to ban completely the import of baleen whale products, in view of the fact that these are used not for human but for pet food and other inessential purposes, and that the International Whaling Commission had appeared to be likely to turn down the American proposal for a ten-year moratorium on commercial whaling.

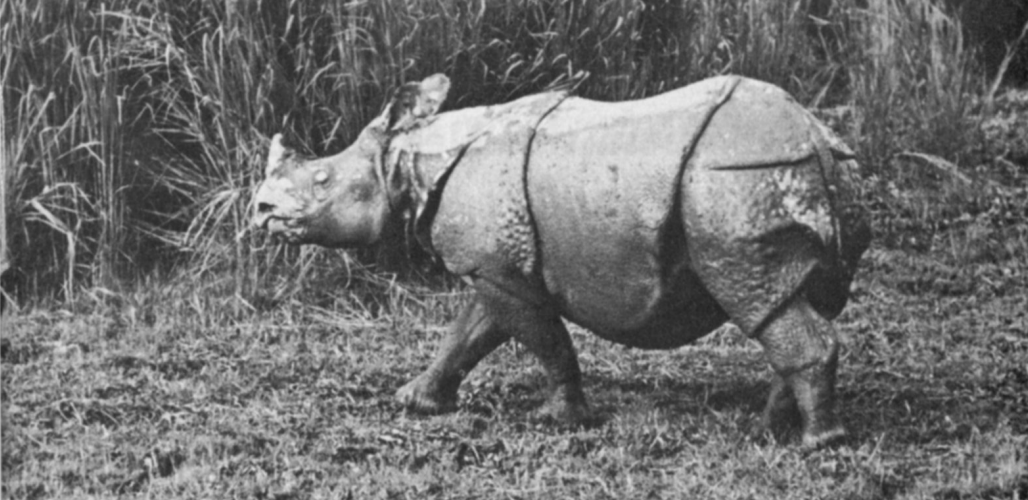
All the officers were re-elected, and the three new names proposed for election to Council approved: Lt Col C.L. Boyle, Lord Medway and Roger Wheeler, in place of Sir Henry Abel Smith, Lady Medway and Anthony Smith who retired by rotation. Eight Vice-Presidents were also re-elected: Syed W. Ameer Ali, Professor J.G. Baer, Mervyn Cowie, Lord Hurcomb, Sir Julian Huxley, Captain C.R.S. Pitman, Sir Landsborough Thomson and Lord Zuckerman.

The Annual Report and Accounts (see *Oryx*, May 1972) were approved.

The meeting concluded with an excellent BBC conservation film, *Europe, a Continent Fit to Live in*, introduced by its producer Richard Brock, after which a wine and cheese supper was served.

Turtle Protection in Sri Lanka

The Government of Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) has given total protection to all turtles, their nests, eggs and young, both on land and in the water, and declared a new national park. The leathery turtle was already fully protected; the four additional species are the green, hawksbill, and two loggerheads, the olive-backed and the giant brown-red. This is a particularly remarkable move as both turtle meat and eggs are regularly eaten by some people. Also added to the fully protected list are the palm civet and the star tortoise and several endemic small mammals – bats, shrews and rats. The new national park of 119 square miles is Uda Welawe, in the south-east of the island.



Oryx 100% Fund

The great Indian rhino, shown above in a photograph by the late E.P. Gee, is one of the endangered animals aided by a recent grant (see below) from the Oryx 100% Fund. Since the Council's decision to contribute a matching sum for all gifts (up to £5000) out of the Society's funds, £1432 has been received, which means that £2684 was available for distribution. Grants approved include:

£500 to the Malawi Fauna Preservation Society who, thanks to a grant from the Frankfurt Zoological Society, have been able to buy a much-needed aeroplane for census work and poacher control, but could not manage the insurance;

£500 to IUCN for the revised edition of the *Red Data Book* on mammals, the indispensable source book for conservation of endangered mammals, to be published shortly;

£300 to A.F.G. Groom and A. Laurie to continue work on the mountain gorilla in Rwanda with Dian Fossey (see the *May Oryx*);

£250 to John Blower for poacher control in Nepal, to protect especially the great Indian rhino;

£250 to Dr R.W. Tindle for a study of the effects of increasing tourism on the breeding of the magnificent frigate bird and the flamingo in the Galapagos;

£200 to Jack Frazier for work on green and hawksbill turtles in the Seychelles and western Indian Ocean in order to develop a conservation programme;

£100 to Sr Lobao Tello towards an expedition to investigate the status of several endangered large mammals in Mozambique – including tsessebe, roan, cheetah and bat-eared fox – in order to suggest appropriate conservation measures to the Government.

£100 to the 1972 Cambridge Galapagos survey for work on the giant tortoises;

£100 to the Malayan Game Department for continuation of the siamang survey by David Chivers.

There are many more projects awaiting their chance. Our coffers need constant replenishing. Please send all gifts for the 100% Fund to the Hon. Secretary – every gift up to £5000 will be doubled by the Society. For the effectiveness of one grant see page 418.

Whales: the Next Step?

by Richard Fitter

Few people really believed that the 24th meeting of the International Whaling Commission, held in London in June, would fully accept the proposal for a moratorium on commercial whaling passed with an overwhelming vote (51-3) at the UN Stockholm Conference. But many did hope they would go further than they did. The reasonable compromise would have been a nil quota for Antarctic fin whales, the one stock universally admitted to be below maximum sustained yield. But all that the United States delegation managed to secure – and it must be presumed to have pressed for the moratorium in London as it did at Stockholm – were rather lower quotas than might otherwise have prevailed. The entrenched tradition of commercial whaling in Russia and Japan was evidently once more too powerful, and one more chance of building up the stocks was missed. Nevertheless, one must recognise the achievements of the 24th meeting, even if, as always, they were too little and too late: the blue whale unit abolished, a complete ban on five threatened species confirmed, and the independent observer scheme at last implemented. The actual quotas agreed were:

Antarctic: fin whales 1950; sei and Bryde's whales, 5000. Calculated in blue whale units (now abandoned) this would amount to 1808 units for fin and sei, compared with the 1971/72 quota of 2300. For minke whales the quota is 5000; last year there was no limit.

North Pacific: fin 650 (1046 last year); sei and Bryde's 3000 (3768); sperm, 6000 males, 4000 females (10,841).

Southern hemisphere: sperm, 8000 males, 5000 females (no effective quota in previous years).

But it is very much a case of where do we go from here. A substantial majority of the nations of the world have intimated to two large and wealthy ones that they must stop being so greedy and help to build up stocks so that all the nations of the world can share in the protein and fat output of an enlarged stock of whales. Russia and Japan may be able to stall for a year or two longer, but they can hardly flout world opinion indefinitely. The conservationists, however, must also learn sense, and not base their case on the supposed imminent extinction of the blue whale, one of the five species which has been protected and has actually increased (see the *May Oryx*, page 301). This would have been the right line in 1952, but in 1972 it is counter-productive, merely leading the whale men to despise conservationists as ignorant.

Some more constructive line is necessary. Why, for instance, should the United Nations not buy or lease the whaling fleets from Russia and Japan, build up the stocks on advice from scientists who have not got whale men breathing down their necks, and run the whale fisheries of the world in the way the United States has for many years run the Pribilof fur seals? This seems the only real hope that whales will survive into the 21st century as a significant resource for hungry mankind. Meantime, there is something that we in Britain can do – may already

have done by the time these words appear: ban the import of whale products. This has already been done by the United States, and we in Britain should follow suit, especially since most of the whale meat imported appears to be used in the manufacture of pet foods, an inessential use if ever there was one. The Association of Pet-Food Manufacturers has already banned the use of whale meat for its members, but does not cover the entire trade. At its annual general meeting in June the FPS passed with acclamation a resolution urging the Government to ban baleen whale product imports, and the Society is also looking into the sperm whale oil situation. As soon as we are satisfied that there are adequate substitutes for the uses to which it is put in this country — lubricating and other industrial uses, as well as hair oil and similar luxuries — we shall ask for this too to be banned.

After Stockholm

Stockholm 1972 are a place and a date likely to ring for many years down the corridors. For there seems little doubt that something started there that will not be allowed to stop. Anybody who thought that, by allowing a lot of hot air to be ventilated at Stockholm last June, the head of steam behind the environmental lobby would be exhausted, is likely to be in for a disappointment. For two important things happened at Stockholm, much more important than any of the formal speeches or resolutions. A large number of governments — and no fewer than 114 were represented — were forced to address themselves to problems which they would much rather have continued to pretend did not exist. They have had to commit themselves in writing to acknowledging that such problems as population policy and pollution do exist, and they will not now be allowed to sweep them under the carpet again. The second important thing that happened was the arrival, from all over the world, of many thousands of private individuals who had no hope of taking part in the main conference, but wished to bear witness by their presence and by discussion among themselves that they thought the conference subjects were of vital importance, not only, in the grandiose phrase, to the future of mankind, but also to themselves, and ordinary people like themselves, here and now.

There were in fact six or more conferences going on at once in the same city. UNCHE itself (the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment) was only the tip of the iceberg, and just as the part of the iceberg that you can see is the least dangerous, so the submerged five-sixths of the conference effort at Stockholm may well prove to be the most dangerous to the hopes of those who thought that, once the nonsense of UNCHE was over, they could get back to the old political and bureaucratic games that have brought us all to such a sorry pass. The fact that some of the subsidiary conferences appeared to be chaotic and ineffective does not mean that those who attended them did not return to their own countries determined to prevent their governments putting the lid back on Pandora's box. In fact here at last was an intergovernmental conference about something that everybody could understand and about which everybody wanted to have their say.

Nor can it be gainsaid that the actual achievements of UNCHE itself were considerable. To get 114 countries, give or take a few grouches here and there, to agree to the Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment was no mean feat. Considering that diversity has always been as important a feature of human advancement as conformity – no wonder schizophrenia is such a common complaint – some of the agreed points, platitudes though most of them are, might easily have fallen foul of prickly national susceptibilities. It is a tribute to the genuine existence of an international, or at least an inter-governmental, public opinion that, for instance, the second principle could read. 'The natural resources of the earth, including the air, water, land, flora and fauna, and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems, must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations.' And principle no. 4: 'Man has a special responsibility to safeguard and wisely manage the heritage of wildlife and its habitat which are now gravely imperilled by a combination of adverse factors. Nature conservation, including wildlife, must therefore receive importance in planning for economic developments'.

These two principles alone – and no. 4, the need for expert advice *before* developments are planned, is something we have been fighting for for twenty years or more – greatly strengthen the conservation movement from IUCN downwards. It will be our own fault if we do not use them to press our own governments relentlessly. Ultimately, governments can only act if public opinion is behind them – even in dictatorships of the right and left.

So many million words have been written before, during and after Stockholm, that anybody might be forgiven for abandoning the attempt to find out what it was all about. Before you do this, read just two things: the brilliant summary in the Pelican paperback, *Only One Earth* by Barbara Ward and René Dubos, and the reports, commissioned in Britain by the Secretary of State for the Environment, from four working parties. These were on the human habitat: *How do You Want to Live?* (Chairman: Lady Dartmouth), £1.80; natural resources: *Sinews for Survival* (Chairman: Ralph Verney); pollution: *Nuisance or Nemesis?* (Chairman: Sir Eric Ashby); and organisations and youth: *50 Million Volunteers* (Chairman: Dennistoun Stevenson), £1 each. All HMSO.

Richard Fitter

Assistants Wanted in Nigeria

Dr Sylvia Sikes, consultant zoologist in the Nigerian Ministry of Natural Resources, needs 'two able, athletic young men with a keen sense of adventure, unlimited practical ability and initiative and some knowledge of large aquatic mammals' to help with her manatee research project in the Benue River; no salary. Enquiries to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Benue Plateau State Manatee Conservation Project, PMB 50, Jos, Nigeria, marking the letter for the attention of Dr S. Sikes.

Antarctic Reserve

The Antarctic island of Bouvetøya and the adjacent territorial waters were declared a nature reserve by a Norwegian royal decree of December 1971.