

# The Fauna Preservation Society

AUGUST, 1961

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

**OIL POLLUTION.**—There are two items of good news. Poland has ratified the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea by Oil, bringing the number of countries which have done so up to thirteen. The United States, from whom we have long hoped for the next move towards clean seas, has now voted in the Senate to ratify.

**ISRAEL.**—“The foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines” now live in a wooded park which dominates Jerusalem. Here a biblical Zoo, started by Dr. Aaron Schulov of the Hebraic University, contains more than 700 mammals, birds, reptiles and fish, each labelled with a quotation from the Bible to justify its inclusion.

It all started when Dr. Schulov kept monkeys, an eagle, a vulture, a leopard and a hyaena in a courtyard in the centre of Jerusalem. Children were delighted, the neighbours less so; they did not like the smell, and the high-pitched laugh of the hyaena troubled their sleep.

This news came to us from UNESCO through *Science et Nature*, May 1961.

**UNITED STATES.**—The *National Parks Magazine* for October 1960 and May 1961 tells us of *Pennkamp Coral Reef Preserve*, 75 sq. miles in extent, which lies on the Atlantic side of the Florida Keys. It is the first totally underseas park, with fragments of shallow reefs breaking the surface only at low tide.

The reefs consist of stag, elkhorn, tree and brain corals and harbour a profusion of fish: queen triggers, French angels, green parrots, surgeons, sergeant-majors and bar-jacks. Commercial coral and shell collecting is prohibited as well as tropical fish collecting and spear fishing. The Preserve thus provides a breeding ground for reef life that had been seriously depleted by the novelty trade.

NEW ZEALAND.—We are sorry to hear from Mrs. Perrine Moncrieff that four of the five kakapos, which were taken from Fiordland, South Island, to Mount Bruce, Wairarapa, North Island, in an attempt to breed them in captivity, have died.

*The Southland Times*, in an editorial of 20th April, 1961, severely criticizes the whole costly operation on the ground that its only justification was to preserve a species nearing extermination, and that it must have been impossible to reproduce the kakapo environment on a North Island farm. "If artificial rearing of Fiordland birds is to be attempted, it should be in the area to which they belong. The Government could have had as much land as it wished in Fiordland for nothing."

On the other hand, it is only fair to mention that the Government have bought the 500 acre Mount Bruce station as a wild life sanctuary from Mr. E. Welch, with whose help another very rare bird, the takahe, has been bred in captivity.

The kakapo, *Strigops habroptilus*, is an almost flightless night-loving parrot, possibly extinct in North Island. Of it, James C. Greenway, Jnr., writes in *Extinct and Vanishing Birds of the World*, "it appears to be particularly sensitive to interference."

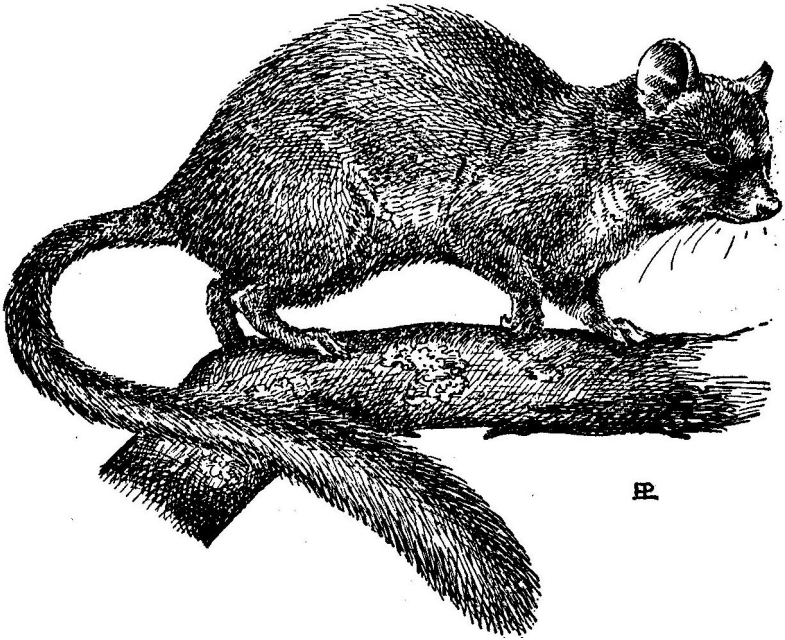
The takahe, *Notornis hochstetteri*, is a large rail, which was rediscovered in South Island in 1948, after being unheard of for a century.

MANATEE.—A note on the use of manatees for clearing weed from waterways in British Guiana appeared in *Oryx* VI, 1. We now hear from the Minister of Natural Resources of that country that the Government proposes to provide adequate legislation for the protection of the manatee.

REDISCOVERED.—Very welcome news has reached us from Mr. J. H. Calaby, a member of the Survival Service Commission. It tells of the discovery in the Cumberland Valley, Victoria, Australia, of a colony of Leadbeater's Possum, *Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*, by Mr. Eric Wilkinson, a member of the museum staff of the National Museum, Melbourne. Except for bones from caves, Leadbeater's Possum was known from five specimens only. It was last heard of fifty years ago.

Leadbeater's Possum is about 7 inches long, excluding the tail which is slightly longer and bushy. It much resembles *Petaurus breviceps*, the Sugar Glider, but has no flying membrane. Its colour is brownish grey above with a dark brown stripe down the length of its back. For further information see C. W.

Brazenor (1932)—A re-examination of *Gymnobelideus leadbeateri* McCoy, *Aust. Zoologist*, 7 (2), pp. 106–9, fig. The illustration below is by Dr. Earl L. Poole and reproduced from F. Harper—*Extinct and Vanishing Mammals of the Old World*, by kind permission of the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection.



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LEADBEATER'S POSSUM.