

The Fauna Preservation Society

SEPTEMBER, 1961

EDITORIAL NOTES

THE AFRICAN SPECIAL PROJECT.—The Fauna Preservation Society regards A.S.P. 1960–1963, which has been undertaken by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, as the most farsighted and hopeful recent step towards the conservation of the wild life of Africa.

We are therefore devoting a considerable part of our capital resources to A.S.P. We have paid half the cost of Stage I and, for Stage II, are holding ourselves responsible for the fares and expenses of twelve African delegates to the Arusha Conference. These men will be in addition to delegates sent by the various governments concerned. They are young scientists whose interest and help will be essential to the success of the African Special Project.

Our president, the Marquess of Willingdon, and Captain C. R. S. Pitman, vice-president, will be our delegates to the conference. Mr. John Hillaby will be attending as an observer and our Public Relations Officer.

But Stages I and II are only preparatory. The success of A.S.P. depends upon Stage III; that is—implementation. For this stage we have undertaken to provide £1,000 for the first year and to consider favourably every year, for a maximum of five years, a further grant of £1,000, provided the rest of the £10,000 required each year can be obtained from other sources.

This number of *Oryx*, which would normally have been published in November, 1961, has been prepared especially early, for the Arusha Conference.

SOUTHERN RHODESIA.—The Natural Resources Board of Southern Rhodesia is conducting “Conservation Education Campaign 1961” under the direction of its Public Relations Officer, Mr. J. A. Pile. Its activities include national poster and slogan competitions both “open” and “for schools” which started in January. Ten thousand copies of the winning poster with the slogan “Conserve Wild Life—Don’t Destroy. Let’s Enjoy” are being distributed, together with 40,000 copies of a wild life colouring-in book for primary schools. Thirty thousand copies of a Snakes and Ladders are being distributed

by the Department of Native Education; players move their counters up the ladders for good conservation and down the snakes for bad. Brooke Bond, Ltd., are supplying coloured wall charts, picture cards and albums and also mobiles. Coca Cola are giving models of African wild life for bottle tops. There is also a national wild life photographic competition sponsored by the National Museum, National Parks Department and others. There are many other activities connected with press and broadcasting, publicity, films, slides and exhibitions. The Board has ordered and is distributing 5,000 copies of "Huxley in Africa", to which reference is made below.

We are glad to hear that Professor E. B. Edney, the head of the Zoological Department of the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, has organized a course of conservation in collaboration with the National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. This course, according to the *New Scientist*, is "designed specifically for those in a position to make the best use of it. The course is for rangers, wardens and officers of the departments of game, tsetse control, national parks and national resources, and for other non-graduate field workers in positions of authority."

"HUXLEY IN AFRICA."—Readers of the *Observer* will remember Sir Julian Huxley's accounts of his recent tour of Africa under the auspices of UNESCO. With the kind co-operation of the *Observer*, the three articles have been made into an illustrated booklet and are being given a wide distribution in Africa through the kindness of the Colonial Office and Commonwealth Relations Office.

SOUTH AFRICA.—We welcome the foundation of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology which is affiliated to the University of Cape Town and is being housed in one of the University's newest buildings, an extension to the Department of Zoology.

The Chairman of the Board of Control is Mrs. J. P. Mackie Niven, daughter of Sir Percy FitzPatrick, who was not only one of the pioneers of South Africa but the author of that great classic, *Jock of the Bushveld*.

Mrs. Niven, who is herself an able ornithologist, was Chairman of the first Pan-African Ornithological Congress held in Livingstone in July 1957.

The address of the Institute is the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, Amanzi, Uitenhage, Cape Province, South Africa. Membership of various classes is invited.

GORILLAS AND LEOPARD.—A disturbing report has come from

Mr. L. Baumgartel, Proprietor of the Travellers Rest, Kisoro, Western Uganda, who, ably helped by Game Guard Reuben, is a great protector of the gorillas of the Birunga volcanoes.

Within three days, in February 1961, Reuben found two dead gorillas on the slopes of Mount Muhavura. Both were killed by a leopard which Reuben three times surprised over its prey. The first victim, a youngish male gorilla, had been taken by surprise, the leopard jumping at him while he was still in his nest. They rolled down the hill together for about 50 yards, then the leopard left the dead body lying and killed a red duiker which happened to be near. The duiker was still breathing when Reuben came to the spot. The second gorilla, a young female, was found half eaten, all intestines and sexual organs were missing, but rump, arms, head and shoulders untouched.

This is believed to be the first time that the killing of gorillas by a leopard has been proved. The leopard, it seems, goes first for the groin, for both bodies showed the same injuries, which doctors maintain would result in almost instant death.

In September 1960 Mr. Baumgartel and Reuben had found a gorilla skeleton with some remnants of putrid flesh still on it. At first they thought that the animal had died a natural death and the corpse eaten by a hyaena, but they now think that this gorilla also had been a victim of the same killer.

The surviving members of the gorilla troop—four females and one infant—escaped down into the Ruanda side of the Birunga area and the leopard spoor indicated that he had followed them. Mr. Baumgartel feared for these unprotected females and their child, but to his relief they returned some weeks later with another troop they had joined in Ruanda, now forming a new unit of one very powerful silverback male, eight females and two infants. This troop is the only one now known in the whole area and has been seen repeatedly very high up on Muhavura. Mr. Baumgartel has been trying for months to shoot or trap the gorilla-killer, but it has never reappeared on the Uganda side.

In the past Mr. Baumgartel knew of thirty-nine individual gorillas which wandered freely between Uganda and Ruanda, but he has seen no sign of such movement for almost a year. It is therefore quite possible that the family of eleven is the only gorilla troop left on both sides.

Captain C. R. S. Pitman, asked to comment on the above, said that though it seems likely that we have here a leopard which has taken to gorilla killing, it is possible that in gorilla country leopards quite often kill young gorillas. This would

explain the failure in the past of the gorilla population in the Birunga volcanoes to increase in numbers.

WHITE RHINOCEROS.—Last December the Congolese authorities gave permission to Mr. H. Demmer of Nairobi to capture eight white rhinoceroses in the Garamba National Park. Dr. Van Straelen of the Belgian National Parks Institute, and Dr. Grzimek of the Frankfurt Zoological Gardens made strong protests and we were happy to hear from Dr. Van Straelen that this permit has now been suspended. Nevertheless we heard in March that a number of white rhinoceros horns had been imported into Uganda in transit from the Congo.

The Acting Game Warden of Uganda tells us (28th March, 1961) how the remains of twenty-seven white rhinoceroses killed by poachers were found in West Madi District. Of these, eight or ten had been killed in the past two months. He is organizing an anti-poaching team to check the present alarming rate of slaughter and twenty rhino are being moved into the Murchison Falls National Park. An article describing the move appears on page 184.

White rhino, being easier to kill, suffer more from poachers than black. The areas in which they are found are readily accessible, and the animals are usually fairly concentrated.

THE TSETSE FLY.—At last there are signs of success in the struggle in which our Society and many others have been engaged against game slaughter as a means of tsetse control. On 27th July, 1961, we were informed by the Wild Life Protection Society of Rhodesia, with full authority, that, in Southern Rhodesia, game destruction as a means of tsetse control had been completely abandoned, except in one specific area. In that area, which is being cleared of game before fencing and spraying, a maximum of 200 animals will be killed.

This is a tremendous thing, for as our readers will know, more than half a million wild animals have been killed in tsetse control in Southern Rhodesia since 1932.

The outlook in Uganda is less sure, for in spite of what was taken to be a firm assurance, game slaughter in tsetse control was renewed in Bunyoro in February 1961.

Many protests have followed and on 9th August, 1961, Mr. E. G. Juer, from Uganda, came to tell us that the slaughter policy had been suspended for two months pending an enquiry into its necessity.

Surely we can now look forward to the end of this loathsome policy.