

The Fauna Preservation Society

APRIL 1963

EDITORIAL NOTES

We deeply regret the death, on 21st February last, of our vice-president, Mr. John Spedan Lewis. Mr. Lewis joined our Society in 1921, was appointed to the Executive Committee in 1925 and remained on it until 1938, when he became a vice-president.

As founder of the John Lewis Partnership, Mr. Spedan Lewis's services to the cause of partnership between employers and employed are known the world over, as are also his botanical and zoological interests. His knowledge and influence were always at the disposal of our Society and were of inestimable value.

GREAT BRITAIN.—National Nature Week will be held from 18th to 25th May, 1963. Full information is given in *News for Naturalists*, February, 1963, published by the Council for Nature. The Secretary, Fauna Preservation Society, will send members a free copy in exchange for an addressed envelope stamped 2½d. The *Bulletin* measures 8½ in. by 5½ in.

Protection of Deer. The Deer (England and Wales) Bill was given a second reading in the House of Commons on 8th February. It proposes close seasons for red, fallow, roe and sika deer, the prohibition of night shooting, and restrictions on the weapons to be used for killing deer.

This Bill, which is sponsored by the British Field Sports Society and the Universities' Federation for Animal Welfare, has the support of the Nature Conservancy, the National Farmers' Union and other bodies, including our Society. In giving our Society's advice on this Bill we owe much to that great expert on all matters concerned with deer—Mr. Kenneth Whitehead.

The progress of this Bill and its final provisions will be reported in *Oryx*.

Importation of Tortoises. The Sale of Reptiles (Restriction) Bill, also sponsored by UFAW, was presented for first reading in the House of Commons by Sir Hugh Linstead in the autumn of 1962. It was designed to prohibit the sale of any common tortoise the length of whose plastron or under-shell measures less than 4 inches. The Bill was withdrawn before second reading because the tortoise importers agreed voluntarily not to import tortoises under the required size. There should be no small tortoises of the species *Testudo hermanni* (Mediterranean Land Tortoise) or *Testudo graeca* (Greek Tortoise) for sale in Britain this year.

In 1959, 88 tons and in 1960, 80 tons of tortoises, mostly from Morocco, were imported into Great Britain, entirely for the pet trade. This means about 250,000 tortoises yearly. In 1961 Morocco reduced its export quota from 100 to 50 tons so in that year only 46 tons came to Great

Britain from Morocco, 9 tons came from Tunisia and 20 or 30 tons from the Balkans. All were either the Mediterranean Land Tortoise or the Greek Tortoise.

The collection of the tortoises in their home countries is unsatisfactory. Many are carelessly injured and callously abandoned. Conditions of packing and transport from Morocco to Britain are now good. From Tunisia they were deplorable but improved in 1962.

UFAW's effort to restrict the sale of small tortoises is based on the opinion, after a careful consideration of all the information obtainable, that only a very small percentage of tortoises survive their first year in Great Britain (apart from any other consideration, how otherwise could 250,000 tortoises yearly be absorbed? Ed.). The high mortality rate is due both to ignorance of the care of tortoises—the British climate is quite unsuitable for them—and the immaturity of the tortoises on importation.

SPAIN.—We congratulate the Spanish Government and the World Wildlife Fund on their timely efforts resulting in saving Coto Doñana, the richest in wild life of Europe's great nature reserves. It is part of the *marismas* region of the Guadalquivir delta and was for centuries the hunting estate of the Dukes of Medina Sidonia. A hunting lodge was built there for the Kings of Spain and this is still the only substantial habitation, many miles from the nearest road.

Breeding species of birds include grebes, bitterns, black and whiskered terns, moorhens, coots and crested coots, Kentish plovers, black-winged stilts, avocets, pratincoles, redshanks, lapwings, several species of ducks including garganey and marbled duck, azure-winged magpies, great spotted cuckoos, short-toed, lesser short-toed and calandra larks, purple gallinules, purple, night and squacco herons, cattle egrets. Fourteen species of birds of prey also breed here or within everyday range, including the imperial, short-toed and booted eagles. Flocks of up to a thousand or more flamingoes may be seen though they no longer make their nests on the Coto Doñana. There are herds of hundreds of red and fallow deer; thousands of wild boars; lynx, foxes, wild cats and mongooses keep down the rabbit population.

First the wild life of the *marismas* was threatened by rice and wheat planting; then, with holidays on the Spanish coast becoming increasingly popular, by a coastal highway. In June 1961, the Spanish agricultural authorities decided to reclaim the vital and last remaining south-western end of the *marismas*, and the race to save something worth while became desperate.

The Fund's trustees resolved at their very first meeting in Switzerland to venture more than they could then afford in order to make a firm offer for some 16,000 acres of *marismas*, including the flamingo haunt, called Las Nuevas. After a combined appeal of the leading international bodies concerned, the matter was brought to the personal attention of General Franco, who instructed the official Patrimonio Forestal to acquire Las Nuevas at a cost of over £60,000 and to place it at the disposal, as a nature reserve of a newly-founded Patronato Estación Biologica del Guadalquivir

del Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas. This was done in the spring of 1962.

Soon afterwards the Coto Doñana itself was threatened. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, president of the World Wildlife Fund, appealed to General Franco and finally the most important habitats of the Coto Doñana were acquired for the Patronato Estación Biologica, bringing the reserve started at Las Nuevas up to 40,000 acres. The Spanish Government contributed more than £100,000 but a balance of £204,000 remained to complete the acquisition. A substantial part of this has been temporarily financed by an interest-free loan from Switzerland; most of the remainder had to be borrowed at interest, to be repaid over some five years. A generous contribution of £12,000 towards paying off this liability at the earliest possible moment has been made by Mr. R. A. Vestey, while another considerable gift has been received from the Netherlands.

The information given in "Saving the Coto Doñana", *The Times*, 27th February, 1963, is gratefully acknowledged.

SWEDEN.—The IUCN *Bulletin*, October–December, 1962, records that an area of 800 square miles on the Norwegian border in Lapland has been set aside as the Padjelanta National Park. Together with the adjoining national parks, Sarek and Stora Sjöfallet, it forms the largest protected wilderness area in Europe—about 2,000 square miles. The Lappish name, *Padjelanta*, means "the highlands". The low slate mountains and the limey soil have made an interesting country for geologists and botanists. Three alpine plants—*Arenaria humifusa*, *Potentilla hyperctica* and *Gentianella aurea*—are found nowhere else in Sweden. The fauna include wolverine, arctic fox, brown bear, golden eagle and alpine goose.

JAPAN.—The state of the Japanese white stork, *Ciconia ciconia boyciana*, was brought to world notice during the International Census of the White Stork carried out by the International Council for Bird Preservation in 1958. At that time Dr. Yamashina reported that only twenty-one remained. Now we have a report from Dr. T. H. Bassett whose article on the Japanese crane appears on page 34.

Dr. Bassett writes that in December, 1962, he visited Toyooka, in Honshu, to get first-hand information from the Stork Preservation Association. He was told that the last young stork reached the free-flying stage three years ago and was the only bird successfully reared that year. The Association have tried everything—including artificial nests on telegraph poles and feeding ponds. There are now only thirteen birds left.

Not only is the Preservation Society interested but also Yamashina Institute for Ornithology; indeed the local people of Toyooka are themselves filled with enthusiasm to preserve the storks. The trouble is that probably infertile eggs are being laid. Dr. Bassett has suggested analysis for chlorinated hydrocarbons and has sent the Society a copy of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (see page 42).

THAILAND.—We welcome *Conservation News Bulletin*, published by the Association for the Conservation of Wildlife of Thailand and sent to us

by Dr. Boonsong Lekagul, its honorary secretary. He is also secretary of the Regional Working Group on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in Tropical South-east Asia. It gives conservation information from all over the world.

Of Thailand we read that only a few remnants of the once abundant hog deer and Thailand brow-antlered deer (*Cervus eldi siamensis*) remain and that so many monkeys have been exported to U.S.A. to be killed for use in polio vaccines, that these have disappeared from many parts of the country.

The Association for the Conservation of Wildlife has strongly protested to the Committee administering the new game law, against the shooting of mother animals in order to sell their babies to animal dealers. This practice is illegal in Thailand but still goes on in the deep jungle. Often both mother and baby are killed or badly wounded; only occasionally do hunters get the baby alive and unhurt. Most of the baby gibbons sold in the market are obtained in this manner.

KARIBA RESCUE.—We have sent £895 3s. 1d. to Southern Rhodesia to help with what may be the final stages of the animal rescue work at Kariba lake. £500 of this is the second gift from the RSPCA for this purpose, the first being £1,000 when our Kariba Appeal was opened in 1959. The remainder is the balance of our Kariba account at the end of 1962.

The rescue team led by Mr. Rupert Fothergill (see *Oryx*, V, 6, pp. 355–57, including Mr. Punch's poem by Richard Osborne), was in a desperate position with new islands forming and hundreds of animals to be rescued but without sufficient equipment to carry out the operation properly.

An achievement of the Southern Rhodesian rescue team is described on page 22 of this number.

TANGANYIKA.—In his *Bulletin* for 14th January, Mr. H. A. Fosbrooke, Conservator of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, invited bookings for his new Youth Hostel at the Crater. It will take groups of up to twenty-four in a dormitory fitted with bunks, with a room for the party supervisor. Basic needs, such as lighting, cooking stoves, beds and mattresses will be provided.

The fire break which was ploughed round the eastern wall of the Crater last year has proved very effective and is helping towards the restoration of the woody vegetation which should ultimately bring about reversion to forest.

UNITED STATES.—The *National Parks Magazine* of October, 1962, tells of the final approval by Congress of a bill authorizing a National Seashore at Point Reyes on the beautiful Pacific Ocean side of Marin County, California, some 35 miles north of San Francisco. This is the second such unit in the park system: the first was Cape Cod, in Massachusetts.

But a very different story comes from the same magazine for January, 1963, describing as a barbaric assault on an environment, the poisoning of 524 miles of the Green River in Utah, Wyoming and Colorado. The

purpose was to eliminate native fish in order to stock the Flaming Gorge Reservoir, north of the Dinosaur National Monument, with exotics like rainbow trout and kokanee salmon, for the benefit of motorboat fishermen.

"The kill with rotenone took place about 4th September, 1962. Despite repeated warnings by scientists, and denials by the Fish and Wildlife Service that the poison would descend into the Monument, extensive and severe destruction of aquatic life occurred throughout all this great distance, including the entire length of the river through the Monument. Unique and rare species of North American fishes which have been seriously endangered include the Colorado River squawfish, the humpback chub, a form of the bluehead sucker, and the humpback sucker.

Originating with the Utah and Wyoming State Game Commission, this project moved forward through the Fish and Wildlife Service and was submitted to Congress in the Interior Department budget; the appropriation was made to the Bureau of Reclamation, transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service, and thence to the States for expenditure under contract.

Let us hope that the Green River disaster will bring repentance in many quarters: among sports fishermen, who should have known better; among tackle and boat manufacturers, not to speak of the chemical companies, who might look to their public relations; in the National Park Service, for its weakness and incompetence; and above all in the Fish and Wildlife Service, which has been derelict in its duty to conserve and protect the natural wildlife resources of America.

This is not a trivial problem of mere administration; nor a blunder to be patched up by reducing the dose and spilling permanganate on the next go-around. The way to treat these poisoning programmes on the rivers and lakes of America is to eradicate them."

AUSTRALIA.—We hear from Mr. John Calaby, author of *Australia's Threatened Mammals*, *vide Oryx*, V, 6, that another animal has reappeared after having been "absent" for many years and thought to be possibly extinct. It is *Antechinus flavipes leucogaster*, the south-western race of the yellow-footed marsupial mouse. Other races of this animal are not endangered.

Short-necked Tortoise.—In January, 1962, devastating fires occurred in the area inhabited by this rare tortoise but there is no evidence that its numbers were thereby reduced. Only one shell was found in the burnt area and that appeared to have been from an animal that had long been dead. But the tortoise is always difficult to find as it seeks shelter in pools and covers itself in mud or silt.

Two pleasing developments have occurred in the campaign to save the tortoise. The first is the decision of the owners of part of the swamp in which they live (*vide Oryx*, VI, 4, p. 207) to sell 27 acres to the "Save the Tortoise Fund" and this at £10 an acre, one-quarter of the current price. The second development, obtained through the co-operation of government departments, the local authority and surrounding farmers, is the cancellation of a public road which would have bisected the southern swamp and reduced the habitat.

At the onset of the winter rains and for some weeks afterwards, Fisheries

department staff and volunteers searched for short-necked tortoises in similar country outside the reserves but the twelve they found were either on or very close to them. Eight were on or near the northern or Twin Swamp area, four were within a stone's throw of the southern reserve. Each of the latter animals was marked with durable red paint on its carapace and all future animals found will also be marked.

Only one apparently aestivating tortoise has ever been found, discovered in a damp hole under a clump of sedge, and it is not known whether this kind of habitat is normal for aestivation. Many of the crab-holes in the southern reserve are 3 or 4 feet deep and it is impossible to search them without serious disturbance. Nothing has been seen of the short-necked tortoise during the summer 1962-63 (northern hemisphere winter). Further searches will be made at the onset of the next winter rains to try to delimit its distribution.

The Government of Western Australia has put a complete ban on the collecting of this rare tortoise for a period of two years.

We are indebted to Mr. A. J. Fraser, Chief Warden of Fauna, Western Australia, for the above information.

NEW ZEALAND.—*Forefront* for March, 1963, gives us the following information about two animals introduced into New Zealand. Hedgehogs introduced from Europe in about 1855 may be developing changes in their dentition. Of six New Zealand hedgehogs sent to Professor K. Herter of Berlin, one was found to have no second incisors in its lower jaw but lower premolars larger than normal; a second had stunted first and second premolars on the right side of its upper jaw; the third lacked a second incisor on the right side of its lower jaw and the eye tooth on that side was pushed forward. The abnormalities were apparently congenital. No such abnormalities were found in some thirty hedgehogs examined from northern Europe.

Starlings, not usually welcome colonizers of new countries, have been encouraged by Mr. O. Bjerring on his farm in Waihi. He has found them a wonderful ally against insect pasture pests and has provided extensive nesting sites for them along the walls of a barn. Mr. Bjerring does not use weed killers or insecticides for he considers them detrimental to his pastures.

GREAT INDIAN RHINOCEROS.—The situation of the Great Indian Rhinoceros in Nepal still gives ground for anxiety so we arranged for Mr. E. P. Gee to make a second visit to Nepal in March, 1963. Mr. R. G. M. Willan, the Chief Conservator of Forests, has promised him every possible assistance. Mr. Gee will be visiting England this summer and we hope to arrange for a general meeting to welcome him and hear his report.

ORANG-UTAN.—Mrs. Barbara Harrison started her study on the orang-utan last July with a four weeks' tour in North Borneo. She concluded that oranges do not repopulate and make nests in logged-over areas though they are occasionally seen there: a forest remains unsuitable

for them for roughly eighty years after logging. To ensure a population of about 300 orangs a large sanctuary of at least 600 square miles is needed. This area should be chosen where a wild population exists, if an area can be chosen where there are wild Sumatran rhinoceroses, so much the better.

Meanwhile it is encouraging to hear from Mr. Marvin L. Jones that American zoos are being asked by the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums' census to provide exact dates of arrival of orangs and other endangered species so that a check may be kept on them. He adds that of twenty-four orangs which went through Holland last year, all from Bangkok, the majority died before leaving that country.

OPERATION ORYX.—Readers will be glad to hear that the Society's three oryx in Kenya are in good condition. The younger bull, "Tomatum", mated with "Edith" last December and a calf is hoped for next August. By that time the oryx should be at Papago Park, Phoenix, Arizona, under the care of Mr. Robert H. Mattlin, Director of the Arizona Zoological Society. The climate of Arizona is comparable with that of their normal range. Initially they will be kept under carefully controlled zoo conditions since this is essential for the safe breeding in captivity of oryx. Funds for their transport to the United States will be provided by the Shikar-Safari Club of America whose President, Mr. Maurice A. Machris, is keen to devote part of the Club's funds to conservation work. The Zoological Society of London has most generously agreed to allow its female Arabian oryx to join the breeding nucleus in Arizona.

HUNTER'S HARTEBEEST.—News has reached us that Hunter's hartebeest, or hirola (*Damaliscus hunteri*), which has a very restricted range along the border of Kenya and Somalia, is threatened by a large-scale development project in the Tana River basin in Kenya. An estimate made by the Kenya Game Department puts the numbers of the hirola at about 1,000. They have brought to the notice of their government the fact that much of the potentially irrigable area overlaps the hirola's territory and are making a special population and ecological study to ascertain whether a reserve east of the line Higlet-Ijara would be suitable.

LEATHERY TURTLE.—Following the example of Malaya (*vide Oryx*, VI, pp. 125 and 335), but on a smaller scale, a hatchery for eggs of the leathery turtle was started in Ceylon in 1962. A site was chosen in the Ruhuna National Park and 150 eggs were laid down. An inquiry conducted by the Wild Life Department the previous year had revealed a general decline in the numbers of this turtle due to egg-collecting and slaughter for meat. Proposals for protective legislation for the leathery turtle and the dugong in Ceylon are now being studied.

CARIBOU.—Readers will remember Dr. A. W. F. Banfield's article "The Plight of the Barren-ground Caribou" in *Oryx*, IV, 1, April, 1957. *The Beaver* quoted in the above article, sounded yet another warning (Winter Number, 1962). In 1957 the danger was ruthless and most wasteful over-exploitation by man. Now a more subtle danger is added.

Dr. William O. Pruitt, Jnr., who co-operated with the Canadian Wildlife Service in a study of barren-ground caribou, writes that not only Canadian caribou but also those of Alaska, northern Scandinavia and northern U.S.S.R. are heavily contaminated with radioactive material "of which Strontium-90 and Cesium-137 appear to be the primary contaminants. The source of these radio-nuclides is undoubtedly atmospheric nuclear explosions".

The most important caribou foods are lichens and sedges and these two plants are more susceptible to contamination than any others. A lichen (a combination of a fungus and an alga) gets its nutrients from dust and other wind-blown material: it is indeed a natural collector of fall-out—until 1945, harmless fall-out.

In the United States the level of contamination in caribou bones so far tested was in the order of 100 to 200 strontium units, many times the level set as "safe" for man. Contamination in Swedish reindeer reached 250 times that of beef for the same region.

Turning now to man, we find that although facts are scanty, such as there are indicate that all people who eat much caribou or reindeer meat have higher whole body radiation counts than those that do not. "Tests for Strontium-90 in a few Alaskans showed that new bone was being formed which had about four times the average United States concentration. Measurements of a few Swedish Lapps showed that they had Cesium-137 concentrations thirty to forty times as high as the average of the control group from southern Sweden. What the levels of contamination are in relation to details of diet and food-habits and how these levels affect the genetic and somatic attributes of the plants, animals and men concerned is not known."

"Behind all the reassuring announcements and news releases about nuclear explosions since the beginning of the Atomic Age there has lurked the spectre of the time when the so-called 'safe limits' would be exceeded. It is clear that for a great area of the earth's surface that time has now come. The tundra and taiga which now contain such ecologically important 'hot spots' comprise about one-fifth of the land area of the northern hemisphere."

FOR SALE

EXHIBITION CARDS.—Sets of eleven cards, each 8 in. by 9½ in., picturing rare Asiatic animals, giving information about them and with maps showing their past and present distribution, are for sale by the Society at 3s. per set, post free. The pictures and maps are reproduced—with permission and grateful acknowledgments—from the original drawings by Mr. Gene M. Christman, Staff Illustrator of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, for Mr. Lee Merriam Talbot's "A Look at Threatened Species" (*vide Oryx*, Vol. V, 4).

CHRISTMAS CARDS, 1963. The Christmas cards in full colour of the oryx "Tomatum" brought from Arabia by "Operation Oryx" are now on sale, reduced to 8s. a dozen (dozens only), post free, with envelopes. Details of an alternative card in black and white will be given in the next *Oryx*.