

ORYX

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Notes and News

The Zambian government has leased 2500 square miles along 60 miles of the Zambesi River in south-east Zambia to an American wildlife preservation society for a game sanctuary. The lease is for 25 years, starting in June 1972, at a peppercorn rent of one

**Rent-a-Park
in
Zambia**

dollar a year. The lessees are Wildlife Conservation International, whose president is A.H. 'Brick' Stange; associated with him is David Shepherd, the well known artist, who has for many years been a

determined campaigner for conservation in Zambia and recently, through the sale of his paintings, presented the country with a helicopter for anti-poaching patrols. Special legislation empowers WCI to establish its own management for the park, and its own game guards, for highly organised commercial poaching is a major problem which the authorities have so far found it impossible to control adequately. Limited tourist facilities will be provided and research projects encouraged. A large fund-raising operation has been launched in the USA to get the park started. This experiment in wildlife conservation will be watched with interest, for it could provide the pattern for similar schemes in other countries where the creation of national parks and their organisation have presented intractable problems.

Ceylon's two main national parks, Yala and Wilpattu, have both been substantially enlarged: Yala, on the south-east coast, by 238 square miles to make a total of 425 square miles, and Wilpattu, in the arid

**Ceylon
Enlarges
Parks**

north-west, by 195 square miles to 420. And it is hoped that both will be still further increased. The President of the Ceylon Wildlife Protection Society, Mr. T.W. Hoffmann, reports that they are pressing especially for the inclusion in Wilpattu of

the present Wilpattu West Sanctuary (84 square miles) which includes a stretch of the Portugal Bay coast and also, and most important, an area of the Bay itself in order to protect dugong among other species, as suggested by Drs. Colin and Kate Bertram in *Oryx* (December 1970). Ceylon has also created the first of a new type of reserve, a jungle corridor, covering 40 square miles in a long strip of dry-zone Crown

forest which will protect some rare birds and also benefit the elephants. This is between Tirikonamadu and Nelugula. Another new reserve is the Horton Plains Nature Reserve which protects a unique high plateau with climax-type grass-plains and montane forests — this too it is hoped will be extended — and a new sanctuary on the east coast, the Seruwila-Allai, includes a reservoir and an interesting lagoon coastline. Moreover, amendments to the Protection Ordinance have greatly improved the protection of sanctuaries, and give the Department of Wild Life Conservation powers to prohibit tree-cutting, removal of plants, building, path and road making on Crown land in any sanctuary, although there is a fair way to go before these new powers are properly used and enforced. Dugong, fishing cat, rusty spotted cat, Indian pangolin, leathery turtle and slender loris have been added to the list of fully protected species, and the dugong and turtles given additional protection in that territorial waters are now included. As animals, trophies and skins can only be exported 'for the promotion of scientific knowledge' this export trade has been practically killed. Ceylon is a relatively small country but it has as good a record as any in the world for wildlife conservation, and it keeps it up.

In Sumatra the effective stopping of orang-utan exports does not seem to have stopped the poaching, according to Dr. Fred Kurt, who spent some time there last year. One European ecologist, who has been working in the Loeser Reserve in northern Sumatra (where John MacKinnon has been continuing his orang-utan behaviour study) was building an orang-utan rehabilitation station for confiscated animals — of which there were 30 waiting in local police stations. This is being done with the support of the Netherlands WWF. Dr. Kurt points out that such a station is essential if the poaching is to be stopped; it will also supply a valuable centre for research and for training local scientists. It is still not known whether artificially reared orang-utans can survive unaided in the wild. An exciting possibility is that some rhino footprints seen in the Loeser reserve last year could have been those of Javan rhino — which has long been believed extinct everywhere except in the Udjong Kulon Reserve in western Java. Rhino poaching in the Loeser appears to have decreased, perhaps because the Indonesian authorities have found a practical way of dealing with the problem: two of the most active hunters are now working full time for the conservation programme and others are expecting to be taken on. But the huge timber concessions that continue to be granted in all parts of Indonesia are the biggest threat to all forms of wildlife and it is fast becoming a question of whether attempts should not be made to establish captive breeding populations of at least the Sumatran rhino before it is too late.

A 'Save the Lion Marmoset' campaign has been started by an American zoologist, Russell Mittermeier, to get funds quickly for a reserve and for the IUCN captive breeding project for these beautiful and highly endangered Brazilian primates. John Perry described the plight of the three species of *Leontideus* in the May 1971 *Oryx*: the golden lion marmoset *L. rosalia*, the golden-headed *L. chrysomelas*, and the golden-rumped *L. chrysopygus*, the first with fewer than 400 left in the wild, and their habitat about to be destroyed by road-building – Brazilian experts believe it will be extinct within two years if nothing is done to save it; the second down to under 500 in the wild, and the third down to about 100. An 8000-acre reserve is planned, but the land has to be expropriated which will take time, and time is not on the side of the marmosets. In order to be certain that there are still some animals left to put in the reserve when it is created, the emergency plan is to build special cages at the Conservation Institute, in the Tijuca National Park near Rio, once part of the golden lion marmoset's natural habitat, where animals removed from the areas to be destroyed can be held temporarily, and which could also serve as breeding cages, although captive breeding has proved difficult. But in a desperate situation everything possible must be tried, and the FPS will be happy to forward any gifts for this project through the *Oryx* 100% Fund.

**Save the
Lion
Marmoset**

In Sierra Leone the small grey vervet monkey no longer leads a hunted life because of the near disappearance of its natural predator, the leopard; it is proliferating at an alarming rate, invading cultivated fields and seriously menacing crops. This was reported at an FAO conference in Rome by Sierra Leone's Chief Conservator of Forests, Mr. Joshua S. Sawyerr. There was little doubt, he said, that the disappearance of leopards and other felines, due to excessive hunting and population pressures on the land, was mainly responsible for the monkey invasion. The poorest villagers now had guns; 'they have killed so many leopards that you have to travel many miles from the capital, deep into the forest to see one'. And leopards were not the only victims. 'Due to the absence of hunting regulations, our country is now being stripped of its most precious fauna', he said. 'Local hunters look for rare specimens, which they sell to zoos, laboratories and rich amateurs who will pay high prices for them. Consequently, some of these rare species are now almost extinct. Such is the case with the cheetah, the picathartes – a rare bald-headed bird which will fetch £100 in Europe – and the bongo, which can fetch up to £4000. This is a lot of money for our villagers, who will spend days and nights on end beating the forest and setting their traps in the hope of hitting the jackpot'. Big offers were made by zoos and circuses for

**Results of
Killing
Leopards**

baby chimpanzees which were more docile and easily trained than adults, which often died in captivity. 'But to get to the baby, hunters have first to kill the whole family.' Local hunters are the real problem; living in remote places they are hard to control. 'We are not bothered by the hunter from abroad, who does it for sport, shoots one elephant, for which he will pay in hard currency, and then goes away. It is our own people who are the danger.'

Two populations of the very rare Morelet's crocodile in Mexico, investigated during recent field work in the state of Veracruz, proved to be remarkably healthy. These were in the Rio Papaloapan and in Lago de Catemaco, where, according to Dr. Howard W. Campbell, there is now little hunting for crocodile. Throughout the state he found evidence that hunting pressures had been reduced in the last year as a result of better enforcement of the protection laws, and all hunters agreed that it was difficult to sell hides — a very different state of affairs from June 1970, he says, when hunting and selling were carried on quite openly. Morelet's crocodile rates a red sheet in the Red Data Book — indicating that it is in danger of extinction — and WWF is supporting a captive breeding project in Mexico.

Papua — New Guinea must be one of the very few countries that still contain some of the most important wilderness areas left in the world, with an unrivalled fauna rich in endemic species, where undisturbed habitat is still dominant and probably no species is endangered. This description comes from Dr Schulze-Westrum's report on his 1970 survey of the wildlife situation there for WWF. Nevertheless, there is no cause for complacency, for, although there are plans for national parks, there is no large conservation area or national park in 'a land area that would stretch from London to Istanbul and from Hamburg to Milan'; the small reserves are not really adequate, while traditional land uses are rapidly giving way to commercial exploitation of natural resources, notably by mining and timber felling, with the usual lack of care for the environment, and some endemic species, notably birds of paradise and wallabies, have been seriously affected. But the indigenous people, despite a low cultural level, are instinctive conservationists — he quotes the example of villagers in an area near Port Moresby who traditionally collected sea-birds' eggs on the offshore islands, but never more than 80 per cent, until new settlers in the Port Moresby area joined in, when all the eggs were taken and the birds disappeared. Similarly, a village headman resisted instruction for his villagers in the use of larger fishing nets because he feared that the catching of more and smaller fish would lead

to depleted stocks and hunger in future years. One threat to some of the wildlife comes from introduced species, which seems to be given little consideration. The marine toad *Bufo marinus* has spread in a quite spectacular way, having no natural predators; but they are a threat to the species on which they prey. In 1959 in one area Dr. Schulze-Westrum found small geckos and skinks were very common; seven years later not one was to be seen, but every spot where they had been found was occupied by toads – ‘in dozens and dozens’. Introduced fish, such as carp and trout, have led to the destruction of native fish. Deer, pig and goats have also been introduced, and he particularly urges that the effect of the pigs on crocodiles and turtles should be investigated.

The price of jaguar and ocelot pelts in the Amazon region in Brazil is going down, writes Russell Mittermeier, who has recently returned from there. The animals are still hunted, but whereas a good ocelot pelt used to fetch 240 cruzeiros (\$45) in Manaus, today the price is less than half, about 100 cruzeiros. Nevertheless, he says, slaughter continues, for even at reduced prices hunting spotted cats is an easier way for Indians and cabodos (mixed Indian and white) along the rivers to get a living than by long tedious hours collecting rubber at 2.50 cruzeiros a kilo. Methods used include traps like that in the photographs, made of saplings and vines, set along a trail at intervals of 50-100 metres. A sloth or agouti carcass is dragged along the trail between the traps and bait with a trip wire put inside; the jaguars and ocelots follow the trail to the bait and when they touch it the trip wire closes the door. The hunter can then shoot the animal

**Prices for
Jaguar Pelts
Go Down**



through the head without leaving unsightly holes in the pelt. Mr. Mittermeier adds that some Brazilian conservationists do not believe jaguars and ocelots are endangered in the Amazon region. Whenever a cattle ranch is started jaguars appear in considerable numbers and have to be hunted if the ranch is to continue, but whether this is because of the suddenly increased food supply improving breeding conditions or because the cats are attracted from long distances is not known.

The first marine national park in Mozambique was declared last year. The Bazaruto Maritime National Park includes two islands with a five-kilometre marine zone round each. A survey of the coast is being made to select other areas for national parks. One species especially needing protection is the dugong, which is decreasing – though still to be found in fair numbers, according to Ken Tinley, ecologist in the Gorongosa reserve. (See note on

page 239). The Gorongosa reserve has now been quadrupled in size, as mentioned by Sir Archibald James in the last issue of *Oryx*, from 3770 sq. km. to 8700*, and will include all the perennial water catchment areas. Gorongosa Mountain, the main catchment area, which is largely covered by rain forest, with small areas of montane grassland and rock outcrops, is still in a completely undisturbed state. Another new national park is planned due east of Gorongosa to include the moist-forest areas on the coast, with equatorial rain forest and extensive, rich mangrove forest. Ken Tinley lists six large mammals as endangered in Mozambique: Johnston's wildebeest, tsessebe, roan, cheetah, black rhino and giraffe, with wild dog and ostrich as rare. Of these only black rhino occur in any reserve – there are about 10 in the Gorongosa Reserve. But a new park is planned in the arid savanna zone between the Save and Limpopo rivers, to include examples of all arid savanna systems, and all the endangered species except the wildebeest would, with some re-introductions, be protected here.

When in 1967 and 1968 the Canadian Wildlife Service made aerial surveys of the barren ground caribou and produced an estimate of 385,000 for the four main populations on the mainland, this was compared with the 1955 aerial surveys and appeared to show an increase of about 50 per cent in those twelve years, which naturally brought additional pressure on the Northwest Territories Game Management Service to relax its restrictions on hunting. The hunters won the day, and in 1968 commercial exploitation of the herds was again allowed. Now G.R. Parker in a paper published by the Canadian Wildlife Service, *Trends in the*

*The area of the Gorongosa reserve was unfortunately printed wrongly in the article on the Gorongosa in the September 1971 issue of *Oryx* through no fault of the author, Sir Archibald James, to whom we apologise.

Population of Barren-ground Caribou of Mainland Canada, shows that the two sets of population figures were not directly comparable, and that when adjustments have been made the 1955 figure should be 390,500, which is higher than the 1967/68 estimate. If 'accurate totals are less important than the trend of the populations' the revised figures offer no justification for allowing commercial exploitation.

The grey seals on the Farne Islands, off the Northumberland coast, have increased so fast that there is now serious overcrowding on their breeding grounds. In 1970 there were 1956 calves born, compared with 658 in 1952; the total population is about 7000, including nearly 2000 breeding cows. In a report to the National Trust, owners of the islands, Dr Nigel Bonner, of the NERC Seal Research Unit, and Mrs Grace Hickling, the well known Northumberland naturalist, describe the 'scene of squalor' on the breeding grounds, with dead and starving calves, the latter often covered with purulent wounds inflicted by aggressive cows. Once a calf loses contact with its mother it starves. All calf mortality over 8-9 per cent is calculated to be the result of overcrowding, and the Farnes rate is 21.1. (This is about the same as on undisturbed North Rona, although in the Orkneys where seals are culled it is only 4.4 per cent). Even more serious potentially is the increasing erosion of the 'relatively fragile soil cap' on the islands, which affects the breeding birds, especially puffins which are themselves already threatened by pesticide residues. To preserve the habitat and avoid a seal population crash Dr Bonner and Mrs Hickling suggest a management plan that includes a reduction of the colony, over a three-year period, to 1000 breeding females. This would be achieved by shooting 1000 cows (and accompanying calves) together with some bulls to maintain the sex ratio. The National Trust has accepted the recommendations, and the FPS Council has supported them. Britain has a special responsibility for the grey seal *Halichoerus grypus*, a comparatively local species of the North Atlantic and the Baltic, in that at least three-quarters of the world population, estimated at 45,000, is found in the British waters.

The latest threat to the badger in Britain is the demand for pelts from fashion houses for use in trimming hats. A small trade, no doubt, but it could be putting extra pressure on badgers in areas where pressure was already high, and it could grow. Added to all the other pressures it could be serious. For it does seem that all the known forms of badger killing and persecution are increasing. The Mammal Society badger survey is likely to show more gassing of sets — illegal, by inference at least (but has anyone ever heard of a prosecution?); more deaths on the railways (increased electrification) and the roads (increase in speed, weight and numbers of

**Seal Crisis
on
the Farnes**

**Badger
Killing in
Britain**

vehicles); more snaring (routine on some big estates) and digging, not only for pelts but for sport and for cubs to be sold as pets. Both snaring and digging often lead to much cruelty. All these factors were listed by Dr Ernest Neal as affecting badger numbers severely as long ago as the 1965 London symposium on predatory mammals, reported in *Oryx* (April 1965). But while they are obviously affecting badger numbers adversely in some counties, in others badgers are numerous, and it cannot be claimed that, overall, they are in danger. Where they are common they could become so numerous that the slight damage they occasionally do – usually they do none and are actively beneficial – would increase and lead to quite legitimate demands for control. So badgers cannot be just given blanket protection. However, in a general wildlife protection bill which the SPNR, with the assistance of the FPS, is actively considering, the badger would certainly be covered. And is there any justification for allowing anyone to keep badgers as pets?

Just when it looked as though the sea otters off the Californian coast might be increasing to the point when they could be considered reasonably safe – having been at one time believed extinct – comes

Fishermen	news that some abalone fishermen have been
v.	illegally shooting them, because they regard them
Sea Otters	as competitors, and the population has gone down.
	The fishermen blame the otters for the decrease in
	the numbers of the red abalone, the shellfish

which is a prized delicacy for Californians, and also eaten by the otters; scientists point out that abalone are decreasing in other places where there are no otters, and suggest overfishing as the cause. Describing the situation, *Natural History* reports that one fisherman boasted of killing 50 otters. The population in May 1970 was estimated at 1200-1500 – the highest in a century; following a census in February 1971 the estimate was down to about 1000. The scientists point out that the otters do the abalone more good than harm by keeping the kelp ecosystem stable, and that they anyhow prefer sea urchins, which, when allowed to multiply uncontrolled, do considerable damage by cutting the kelp at the roots so that it washes ashore. Sea otters used to keep down the urchins, so keeping the kelp healthy for the abalone and other sea life. The Californian Fish and Game Department wants to remove some of the otters to another stretch of coast, both because of the fishermen and for fear of a disaster from oil spill or disease, but an experimental transplant showed that they are not easily moved, and also that they have a homing instinct – five of 17 released got back to the starting point within five months. Research into the culture of abalone is going on, and meanwhile *Natural History* suggests that the taking of wild abalone should be stopped to allow their numbers to build up again, and only allowed to re-start on a sustained yield basis. The otters should be left alone, and protection enforced.