

# ORYX

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## Notes and News

The FPS has written to seven Ministers, all of whose departments under present regulations are concerned with some aspect of animal imports into Britain, expressing the Society's concern at the way the laws are enforced. The Society asks that the number of departments concerned should be reduced to two: the Department of the Environment should be responsible for all aspects except animal disease, which should be the concern of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Society also urges that the number of entry ports for any living wild animal should be severely limited; that all such ports should be properly equipped and have both an Animal Import Officer, concerned with law enforcement, and a Port Veterinary Officer with authority to recommend confiscation of any animal inadequately provided for; and that all containers should be labelled with full details, of which records should be kept.

### **FPS urges Changes for Live Imports**

The last European brown bears in the Alps, in the Italian province of Trento, are declining in numbers. They will disappear if the long-planned provincial park Brenta-Adamello is not established, says H. U. Roth in the *IUCN Bulletin*. His minimum estimate in 1969 was eight to ten animals. The culprit of course is man. Illegal killing 'mostly done "accidentally" on a hunt for chamois or roe deer', is believed to have accounted for an average of two bears a year in the last 30 years, enough to explain their decline, and now tourists are penetrating the bears' remote and difficult mountain habitat thanks to new roads and chair-lifts. The only other Italian population of brown bears is in the Abruzzo National Park in the Apennines; it is larger, but still under a hundred. A recent study of this population by Franco Zunino, the Park Naturalist, and Dr Stephen Herrero, published in *Biological Conservation*, July 1972, urged the vital importance of expanding

### **Troubles of Italy's Brown Bears**

the park's boundaries to include most of the area that the bears use intensively. Bears do not recognise park boundaries that are only lines on a map, and some of the habitat that is vital for them is outside the boundaries and threatened by human activities.

European brown bear, elk, bison and beaver, wild boar, red and roe deer, otter, wild cat, pine marten and blue hare are among the indigenous Scottish mammals being introduced on a 5000-acre

### **Restoring Wildlife in Scotland**

reserve on the Sleat Peninsula, in the Isle of Skye, by Major John Hills. The animals will be enclosed in areas of suitable habitat; wolves and lynx are not included because there is no suitable habitat for them. The board appointed to advise and supervise the scheme includes five members well known to FPS: our Chairman, Sir Peter Scott, Vice-President Sir Frank Fraser Darling, and Council members Dr Michael Crawford, Colonel Grant of Rothiemurchus and Roger Wheeler. Although open to the public and designed to be a tourist attraction, Major Hills is emphatic that Wild Heritage, as he has named the reserve, is neither a zoo nor a safari park; profits will be divided between a continuity fund for the reserve and other wildlife organisations.

In Europe the wolf is extinct in eleven countries, virtually extinct in three (Finland, Norway and Sweden), endangered in six (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain), and surviving with a viable, if low, population in three (Greece,

### **Outlook for Wolves in Europe**

Rumania and Yugoslavia), according to Professor Pimlott, Chairman of the now very active SSC Wolf Group. In the USSR wolves are still treated as a pest, and 15,000 a year have been killed in control operations in the last ten years; they are reported to be endangered in European but not Asian Russia. In Scandinavia wolves are protected but no longer breed—the total number is put at about 20—and the Swedish Society for the Conservation of Nature's Project Wolf has set up a gene bank using zoo animals of the Scandinavian race. Italy protects wolves; in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Poland bounties are still paid for dead wolves; in Spain wolves are game animals; in Portugal there is no protection, but there are signs that they may be recolonising some areas. Dr Pimlott, has discussed wolf protection in several European countries, and was surprised to find how, in Portugal and Italy, wolves live close to the villages, and even pass through them regularly, preying quite heavily on dogs in winter. People showed little fear of them. In Spain there is a sharp division between protectionists and those who believe that wolf damage to domestic stock is such that they must be exterminated, at least in some areas. Unfortunately all the

areas are close to the Portuguese frontier, so that this policy, if carried out, could seriously endanger the Portuguese population. In Italy, where wolves are believed to number about 100, the Italian WWF recently sponsored a survey in the Apennines; the resulting recommendations include restocking the Apennines with wild ungulates for, there as elsewhere, it is lack of wild prey that forces the wolves to prey on stock. 'Wolves, like all other wildlife, have a right to exist in a wild state', says the Wolf Group's manifesto, but the sentiment is not widely accepted: wolf conservationists are rare in Europe, says the Chairman, and creating public understanding and sympathy is a major task for the Group.

Protecting the endemic animals from feral domestic ones is a major part of conservation in the Galapagos Islands. Now the National Park wardens are building walls to protect individual giant-tortoise

**Battle with  
Galapagos,  
Pigs**

nests from wild pigs. The walls prevent the pigs from rooting out the eggs and are removed when the young hatch. The result of doing this on Santa Cruz last year was the most successful hatching season yet known for Santa Cruz tortoises—115 nests were protected and nearly 700 young hatched. Similar walls were successful on Cerro Azul, on Isabela, but on San Cristobal, where the culprits are not pigs but feral dogs, the walls were no protection. The few eggs left by the dogs were taken to be incubated artificially but only one young hatched. The wardens now plan to use wire netting to keep off the dogs. Efforts to eliminate the feral domestic animals on the most important islands continue, but the terrain is often extremely difficult and the populations can build up with incredible rapidity. Goats introduced on Pinta Island in 1958 had increased by 1971 to *at least* 20,000.

The Corcovado Drainage Basin, in the Osa Peninsula on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, covering over 100 square miles and almost untouched by human settlement, comprises a complex variety of

**Development  
Threat in  
Costa Rica**

tropical ecosystems teeming with wildlife. It has only survived so long because yellow fever prevented settlement. Inevitably it is now threatened, and the Costa Rican National Park Service is making efforts to conserve the whole basin. With upland and lowland forests, palm forest swamp, freshwater marsh bordering the large Lake Corcovado, beaches, rivers and estuaries, there is a great variety of tree and bird species and over 100 mammals—tapir, caiman, crocodile, four sea turtles (ridley, Pacific green, hawksbill and leatherback), five species of monkey, two of deer, six cats, including jaguar, ocelot and puma, two peccaries, and fifty-four bats. Nearly half the area is publicly

owned, but a North American development company is the major owner of the rest and is already building roads.

Fifteen professors of the National University's Institute of Sciences in Colombia have signed a petition requesting the USA to add four caiman species to its List of Endangered Species, thus banning their import into the USA. They are the black

**Colombians  
ask for Ban  
on Caimans**

*Melanosuchus niger*, spectacled *Caiman crocodylus*, dwarf *Paleosuchus paleobrosus* and smooth-fronted *P. trigonatus*, of which the most persecuted and most depleted is the spectacled caiman. In 1970 Colombia exported 599,397 caiman skins; in 1972, 375,520 were exported between January and September alone. This was possible through a loophole in the laws which allowed exports through Leticia, a large port on the Amazon; now this has been closed, but 'the existence of markets favours smuggling', and the signatories believe that, without controls by the importing countries, controls by the exporting ones are bound to be evaded.

That monk seals should be given priority in seal restoration programmes was the conclusion of the SSC Seal Specialists' meeting in August 1972, the Proceedings of which are now published by

**Plan to  
Save a  
Monk Seal**

IUCN. Of the three species, the Caribbean *Monachus tropicalis* is almost certainly extinct—the last recorded date of the last known colony is 1952. The Hawaiian *M. schauinslandi*, believed to number between 700 and 1000 animals, breeds on five atolls in the National Wildlife Refuge and is well protected by the US Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, although some populations have declined, probably due to human interference. The Mediterranean *M. monachus* survives only in small scattered populations in the Mediterranean and off the Atlantic coast of Morocco, and also suffers severely from human interference, both by fishermen and tourists. Dr Valverde, Director of the Coto Donaña Research Station, has a plan to transport monk seals from the Spanish Moroccan colonies to caves on the coast of Mediterranean Spain and make the nearest coastal city custodians of the seals. Dr Sergeant, of Canada's Fisheries Research Board, suggests this principle of appealing to local or national pride might be extended to other seal species: the USSR could be asked to manage the White Sea herd of harp seals, Norway the west Icelandic herds of harp and hood seals, Canada the Gulf and Front herds of harps and hoods—'then the world could see which nation can best manage its "home" stocks.' Most cheering line in the whole report of the meeting comes in a survey, by Dr R. M. Laws, of the seals of the southern hemisphere: 'As regards the

Antarctic seals there is currently no cause for concern'. For this we have to thank the Antarctic Treaty.

A remarkable discovery in the vast Gunung Loeser reserve, in northern Sumatra, is that the unexplored centre of the reserve is not high mountains as had been thought, but consists of a huge rift

**Discovery  
in  
Sumatra**

valley, 100 km long, running from north to south. This is important because the larger mammals, which include the endangered Sumatran rhino, do not go above about 5000 ft, and it had been assumed that their habitat was limited to the western and southern boundaries of the reserve where there is human settlement. The rift valley, which was discovered by Markus Borner, a young Swiss zoologist working on the WWF Sumatran rhino project, is much more favourable for the rhinos; it includes primary forest, to which some scientists say they restrict themselves (others disagree), is uninhabited (by humans) and not hunted. As well as 'a good rhino population', Markus Borner reports abundant rusa deer, serow, wild boar, siamang and leaf monkeys, barking deer and some elephants; tiger tracks he saw once, and orang utans were 'abundant' in places.

If birds can be used as indicators of what is happening to an environment, the changes in the birds of Chiangmai, in northern Thailand, are an unhappy omen. Anthony Cheke spent two years

**Towards  
a Silent  
Spring**

there in 1969–71, and, being struck by the lack of birds, devised a simple study using a questionnaire based on 75 bird species which he sent to older interested residents. At the same time he compared his own observations with those of H. G. Deignan, author of *The Birds of Thailand*, who lived in the city during the 1930s. His results showed fairly conclusively that of the 37 commoner non-passerine species all had decreased except one, and of 38 passerines all except eleven. Vultures, described by Deignan as 'common', had gone completely, probably as a result of a big poisoning campaign to eliminate stray dogs, using strychnine-baited meat. The effect on the dogs was temporary (they are again abundant), but on the vultures it was total. Three birds that eat fish—the black and Brahminy kites and the jungle crow—all formerly very common—had become very rare, no doubt as a result of the local practice of killing fish (for food) by dumping massive doses of DDT and other insecticides in the rivers. Water birds, including two kingfishers, could have been affected by run-off of the heavily used pesticide from the fields. He notes that Thai tobacco imports were recently banned in Denmark because the DDT content was so high.

Flamingos, although they still exist in impressive numbers, are actually among the more vulnerable of birds, thanks to their concentration in so few breeding places. It was therefore a most valuable idea for the International Council for Bird Preservation and its three co-sponsors to hold an international flamingo symposium at the Wildfowl Trust's headquarters at Slimbridge, in Gloucestershire, last July. Fifty flamingo specialists from 14 countries attended. The symposium had three main aims, to produce a monograph of present knowledge of flamingo biology, to ascertain the conservation measures needed to protect the wild birds, and to encourage and help world zoos to produce their own stocks. Only 35 of the world's thousand zoos have succeeded in rearing flamingos (at Slimbridge, where colonies of all six forms are kept, five have laid eggs and four reared young). In consequence only 850 of the many thousands of flamingos exhibited to the public have been reared in captivity. Since only fairly large groups of flamingos have a chance of breeding, small zoos should not keep flamingos at all, unless they are prepared to specialise and enable breeding to take place.

Last year Ethiopian dealers in wild skins were given the opportunity to become registered dealers and have their stocks stamped and registered; subsequently acquired skins could then be seized as illegal—which most traders probably believed would never happen. However, in September the Finance Police raided premises in Addis Ababa and seized 7000 colobus, two dozen leopard, 10 dozen serval and smaller quantities of otter and antelope skins, some of which are seen opposite. Leslie Brown, after his Ethiopian tour early last year on behalf of WWF, reported on the improved efficiency in wildlife affairs, particularly the administrative side, and the excellent work being done by the new General Manager, Ato Ashome Ashine. 'The situation seems much more favourable', are his concluding words—the most cheerful we have heard from Ethiopia for a long time. The Imperial Government is taking more interest in wildlife development both as a national asset and a tourist attraction. There are enormous problems in the parks, but considerable funds, notably from the World Bank, are available. The Bale Mountains National Park, vital for the endemic mountain nyala, has not yet been gazetted, the Awash has been gazetted with meaningless boundaries and must be re-gazetted; the Wildlife Conservation regulations of 1972 seriously weakened the powers to enforce the law. But in most parks he found at least no serious wildlife deterioration, though a great deal needs to be done in providing guards and adequate transport to control poaching, and



Leopard, serval, colobus monkeys and other skins confiscated in Ethiopia  
*Melvin Bolton*

the report on the Gambella area (page 306) shows what is happening in one bad area.

Conservation of Nature, Wildlife and Genetic Resources comes fifth in the priority order for funds in the programme set by UNEP's Governing Council (United Nations Environment Programme) in June last year, with an appropriation of half-a-million dollars for the first year. The Director, Maurice Strong, is authorised to provide secretariat services for implementing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species,

**Aid from  
UNEP  
for Wildlife**

and to assist in preparing other international conventions in the environmental field. The Council, whose headquarters are in Nairobi, is setting up a monitoring system for pollutants liable to affect weather and climate, and for persistent widely distributed substances liable to accumulate in living organisms and move through ecological systems. For its first five years the Environment Programme will be able to spend at least \$100 million which has already been subscribed by governments.

Some of Botswana's difficulties in conserving wildlife were forcefully put by two members of the Wildlife Department, A. Campbell and G. Child, in a paper read to the Sarcus symposium on Nature Conservation as a form of Land Use, in September 1971, and now published in its *Proceedings* (see page 379). Botswana has four frontiers, the longest with South-west Africa, where cheetah are classed as 'vermin' and no permit of origin

**Difficulty  
with the  
Neighbours**

is needed for a skin. But cheetah and leopard skins command high prices, so it is worth the risk for the dishonest dealer to smuggle such skins out of Botswana. The Chobe National Park has a common boundary with South Africa's populous Caprivi Strip 'where there appear to be no restrictions on the trade in game goods'. The authors point out that Botswana's lechwe population

along part of the Chobe declined from an estimated 3000 in 1962 to a dangerously low 'under 200' in 1969, and the hippo population almost disappeared. Protective legislation in Botswana has recently been considerably tightened up, but its effectiveness is seriously diminished if a neighbouring country practises no, or few, restrictions on hunting and dealing in wildlife trophies.

The small and only surviving population of the barasingha, the southern swamp deer *Cervus duvauceli branderi*, in India's Kanha National Park, has doubled its numbers since 1969—from about 70 to between 130 and 140. A factor that has at least contributed to this improvement is the Government's removal of a village from inside the park and settlement of the people outside.

**Effect of  
Removing a  
Village**

In his study of these deer, a WWF project, Claude Martin found that when the monsoon broke and the animals dispersed from the Kanha meadow (the short-grass meadow where they can get water even in the dry season) a considerable number in 1972 moved to the site of the village of Sonph, and five of the six fawns born that year were born there. What were formerly the villagers' rice fields and cattle-grazing grounds have been taken over by a fairly high grass cover, intermediate between the short grass of the Kanha meadow and the high grass of other meadows, which seems to suit the barasingha in the breeding season. This is unlikely to have been the sole reason for the increase in numbers, but Mr Martin suggests it could have had a decisive effect.

Something survives of the formerly spectacular wildlife in Illubabor Province, in south-west Ethiopia, and the magnificent forest and savannas, but the rate of destruction is such that quick action to conserve them is needed if they are to be saved.

**Hunting  
to  
Destroy**

Two reports by a Warden in the Ethiopian Organisation for Wildlife Conservation, Fred Duckworth, describe the situation, which in the last three or four years, with the introduction of many much more sophisticated weapons, has deteriorated rapidly. The law is that no person may hunt without a licence, but there is no control, and the local police have been inactive in applying the brake on the killing by villagers. Reports from missionaries and others suggest that wild animal numbers have been halved in two years. This is the area from which come a large number of colobus monkey and leopard skins for Ethiopia's notorious illegal trade. In the Gambella area of the province the report describes 'a slaughter on a scale unprecedented in Ethiopia'. The local governors are worried but powerless. The hunting season lasts six to seven months, and the piles of bones in old camping sites, racks of meat drying in used sites, skins stretched out to dry, tell their own tale. For the



Nile lechwe *Kobus megaceros* (left) and white-eared kob *Kobus k. leucotis*, two antelopes that are being seriously overhunted in south-west Ethiopia  
F. Duckworth

spectacular white-eared kob migration, when thousands of these antelopes migrate into Ethiopia along the Sudan border, whole villages move into the hunting area, and the ensuing slaughter is undoubtedly the cause of their serious depletion. Crocodiles, too, are hunted mercilessly and the skins exported through the Sudan. The upsurge in hunting is partly the result of the complete lack of game wardens to enforce the law, partly because guns and ammunition are easily acquired at prices the hunters can afford now that they have established markets for the skins and meat\*. The report estimates that each village or hunting camp (and there are well over a hundred) kills at least two animals a day during the hunting season, which adds up to the astonishing figure of at least 36,000 animals killed in a dry season. Nevertheless, the wildlife, though depleted, survives, and five years of complete protection could reverse the situation. Developed as a national park/game reserve/controlled hunting area complex, the Gambella could equal East Africa's now overcrowded parks, and contribute to raising the living standards of the local people. But if nothing is done, says the author, two or three more hunting seasons will see the situation 'deteriorated beyond recovery'.

### FPS Consultants

Four new overseas consultants have been appointed since the list was published in the October 1973 issue of *Oryx*. They are:

M. J. P. Jenkins	Surinam
Professor J. R. Santos Jr.	Portugal
Luis Varona	Cuba
Anthony Ziegler	Botswana

\* A game warden was to be posted to Gambella in January. *Editor*.