

## KENYA COLONY

A NOTE ON THE 1958 REPORT OF THE GAME  
POLICY COMMITTEE

By F. FRASER DARLING

The Game Policy Committee of Kenya was given the following terms of reference :—

1. To consider and make recommendations as to the policy to be adopted for the long-term preservation of game, having regard to the interests of human population in game areas and to the economic development of the country ;
2. In view of the urgency of a solution of the conflict in the Amboseli National Reserve between game and human interests which is rapidly reducing the value of this area as a game reserve, to make interim recommendations for the preservation of the game interest, having due regard to the considerations in (1) above ;
3. To consider the liaison between Parks and Game Department and to make recommendations for the strengthening of the Game Department and its preservational duties if this proves necessary ;
4. To consider existing Game Legislation and to recommend, if deemed necessary, a strengthening of the Game Laws.

The critical reader of this Report will think it good without being very good and perhaps not equal in content with the excellence of its drafting. The composition of the Committee was not such as could have given the greatest confidence in its recommendations for there was only one member (Mr. Mervyn Cowie, the writer of the minority report) who was actively practising wild-life conservation in the Territory and there was no member adequately scientifically qualified to help on this important aspect of land use.

Chapter II is a draft white paper of a game policy for Kenya, and extremely interesting. One sentence in the preamble says "the Government of Kenya is *determined* to take all practical steps to preserve game in the Colony, having regard to all legitimate human requirements". The italics were given by the Committee, so the reader is heartened and accepts the high moral sentiments under the heading of Objects of Game Policy. The statement of policy is then itemized on one side of the page and explained on the other. Responsibility is laid firmly on the Government for ensuring effective preservation ; the

Government will maintain a Game Department under a Game Warden who will be the principal technical officer to advise the Government on game policy; the whole or part of existing National Reserves will be designated Game Reserves; the Controlled-Area system is to be fully used and extended as an instrument of game management and control. The explanation of these items says the existing Game Department will need considerable strengthening both in numbers of competent officers, in composition and in resources; "Game preservation and control are in the long term impossible without full scientific knowledge and the Government intends, *as soon as funds permit*, to establish a permanent Game Research Unit." The italics this time are the reviewer's. This is the point where hope falters and one is in danger of growing cynical. We know what the attitude of "as soon as funds permit" means in the history of wild-life conservation in British colonial territories.

Further in the statement of policy, "the Government will, in the policies of all its Ministers and Departments, have regard to game interests"; and "the Government will set up a Standing Game Advisory Committee and give statutory recognition thereto, to advise the Minister on the carrying out of the Government's policy". This is highly gratifying and the only improvement might have been the statement that wild-life interests should be represented on all land-use policy councils because wild-life management is one of the proper uses of land in the Territory. Such a statement is, indeed, implied in the following chapter which deals with "the need to regard game preservation as one of the factors in determining the proper use of land". This is a courageous section which invokes as an example the Matthews and Ndoto Range in the Northern Frontier District: "Can it be said . . . that overgrazing . . . is ever in the best local interest? We think there is a strong prima facie case for exclusion of stock from the forested areas of these mountains and that the proper, and in fact only land use for such areas is as vital water catchment areas. That game would continue to exist would be incidental to this preservation."

A later section deals with transfer of responsibility for game preservation in the National Reserves from the Trustees of the Royal National Parks to the Game Department. The writer is not prepared to argue against this proposal, assuming the Game Department is to become technically competent and is assisted by its research unit, but it is surely a misconception of the responsibilities of the Trustees to recommend that they should

continue in the National Reserves to be concerned with the recreational aspects. The Trustees of the Royal National Parks of Kenya are, by definition, primarily responsible for the conservation of wild life. They are not caterers.

The splitting-up of responsibilities in National Reserves, and the emphasis thereby given to the fact that, in an area like Marsabit, there would be a very small area of Royal National Park, seems to the writer to add to the precariousness of game conservation, unless the Game Department and the Royal National Parks were completely hand-in-glove. That condition has not been manifest in the past, though one earnestly hopes it will be in the future. Mr. Cowie's minority report is mainly concerned with this point, and he questions the wisdom of what is probably a demoting of the National Reserves to Game Reserves status.

The Report shows an enlightened attitude towards the fuller use of the resources of scientific knowledge and research, in that liaison with the East African Agricultural and Forestry Organization (and the reviewer would suggest the parallel Veterinary Research Organization) and that there should be frequent contact and conference between the East African territories. This is urgently necessary.

The section dealing with the existing and proposed National Parks shows how tiny these areas are, except for the Tsavo. Whether they can fulfil their intended purpose remains to be seen. Where National Reserves are adjacent they have immense importance as conservation areas and should receive the most sympathetic treatment. A special section deals with the Amboseli National Reserve which is in Masai country, and is a fine example of the interplay of wild-life conservation with human ecology. This magnificent game area, which is one of the prime tourist attractions of Kenya, is in grave danger from overgrazing by Masai cattle and the denudation of the vegetation. The main use of the area to the Masai is its water. The Report is here at its best in its complete local knowledge and realization of what is possible and what is not. The Committee recommends piping the water from the Ol Tukai springs in Amboseli to points outside, so that the vegetation could regenerate and the area be used by game.

The Appendices to the Report include the historic Directive by H.E. the Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, to his Ministries and Departments, on the protection of wild life and the suppression of poaching. Its terse, direct message has undoubtedly altered for the better the climate for wild-life conservation in Kenya,

and may well have repercussions farther afield. That is one reason why the reviewer thinks this Report might have been a little stronger.

*Note.*—The Report of the Game Policy Committee is obtainable from the Government Printer, Nairobi. Price 5s.

## THE SURVIVAL SERVICE COMMISSION

[By C. L. BOYLE, Chairman

In August, 1949, the International Union for the Protection of Nature held a conference at Lake Success, U.S.A., under the good offices of UNESCO. The conference was attended by representatives from thirty-two countries and from all the continents. The first subject to be studied was education in nature protection. The second was ecology and this was divided into sections of which Section *f*, under the chairmanship of Mr. Harold J. Coolidge, was devoted to "Emergency Action for preserving vanishing species of flora and fauna". The deliberations of this section resulted in Resolution No. 15 of the main conference which reads: "That the International Union for the Protection of Nature should establish a 'Survival Service' for the assembling, evaluation, and dissemination of information on and the study of, all species of fauna and flora that appear to be threatened with extinction, in order to assist governments and appropriate agencies in assuring their survival."

Then follows a list of thirteen birds and fourteen mammals.

Thus was born the Survival Service Commission of what is now the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. It is but the latest of a series of international efforts for the preservation of wild life. Among others are the International Treaty for the Protection of Pacific Fur Seals, 1911, the Anglo-American Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds, 1916, the London African Convention, 1933, the International Whaling Convention, 1937, the Convention on Nature Protection and Wild Life Preservation in the Western Hemisphere, 1942. Treaties and conventions such as these do not arise spontaneously; they follow years of hard work, first by national societies and then by other bodies whose task it is to translate the work into the international sphere. There are committees for international wild life protection in Great Britain, the Netherlands and the United States of America. There is the International Committee for Bird Preservation. Finally there is the Union itself.