

# The Fauna Preservation Society

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

*Death of the President.*—We record with very great regret the death on 26th November, 1950, of our President, His Grace the Duke of Devonshire, K.G.

At the Council Meeting on 28th November 1950 the proceedings were opened by the Chairman with a reference to the grievous loss the Society had suffered by the death of its President. The Council then stood for a moment as a tribute to his memory.

The Duke of Devonshire became President of our Society on 9th October 1945 in succession to the Earl of Onslow. In spite of his very many other obligations and responsibilities, it was seldom indeed that the Duke was not in the Chair at Council and General Meetings. His great gift as a Chairman was obvious and appreciated.

The Duke's experience of public affairs and his great influence in official circles were always at our disposal. His knowledge and personal popularity often enabled our Society to make its voice heard when no other approach would have availed.

It will indeed be difficult to fill the place left vacant by the Duke of Devonshire.

*Australia.*—Since publication of *Oryx* No. 1 it has been a great pleasure to welcome as members of our Society the recently formed Fauna Protection Panel of New South Wales and the Animals and Birds Protection Board of Tasmania.

A visit to the Society's offices by Mr. E. J. Bryce, a Vice-President of the Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia, resulted in an interesting discussion, and a considerable part of this number of *Oryx* is devoted to Australian wild life preservation.

Two points of importance are being investigated. It appears that the Commonwealth Government has introduced goats to Macquarie Island, a small island lying off Tasmania, and a great sanctuary for sea birds. The reason for this introduction is unknown to us but it is doubtful if the introduction of the goat anywhere can be anything but a mistake, as no animal is more

destructive to vegetation. Warning might well have been taken from St. Helena, which was well wooded until, in 1513, the Portuguese introduced goats. Soon there was nothing to keep the soil cover and the island became barren. Besides the vegetation many interesting animals must have been destroyed.

Secondly the question of the mutton bird industry was put on the agenda of the Australian Fauna Conference but was referred to the Tasmania Fauna Board. The mutton bird of the Bass Strait, The Short-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*), has a most amazing migratory course. Leaving Tasmania it flies over the ocean along the east coast of Australia, New Caledonia, Japan, the Aleutian Islands, sweeps round California and returns across the South Pacific. The mature birds return either to their old burrows or to others nearby on the same island. The young do not necessarily return to the same island, but always to the same district.

*Southern Rhodesia.*—We have been sent a copy of the report sent by the Wild Life Protection Society of Southern Rhodesia to the second General Assembly of I.U.P.N. Extracts from it read as follows:—"The Colony of Southern Rhodesia has in general, with the exception of its blind insistence in the policy of game slaughter for the purpose of the eradication of the tsetse fly (*Glossina morsitans*) and its failure effectively to enforce the Game Laws of the Colony, adopted an enlightened attitude towards the protection of nature generally.

The Government's indiscriminate slaughter of game, which has been responsible for the ascertained deaths of over 420,000 wild animals during the period 1924 to 1949, has practically denuded the country of its native fauna. The number given does not by any means represent the total number of animals destroyed under the Government policy, as no allowance has been made for wounded animals. The Society has on its Executive scientists with unrivalled knowledge of the tsetse areas of the Colony; its contention is that the success of the policy of slaughter claimed by the Government entomologists, who introduced the policy and are responsible for carrying it out, is extravagant and is not supported by reliable evidence or based on scientific data. The Executive is confident that any unbiassed investigation would demonstrate the futility and economic unwisdom of the proceedings."

With this report we are in complete agreement.

We have heard from another source that the Africans employed in carrying out the annual destruction—twenty-four thousand, eight hundred, and seventy-one animals were actually

listed in 1949—are to a large extent unpaid, having to earn their keep from the proceeds of the animals they kill. Can anything be more productive of uncontrolled slaughter?

*West Africa.*—Concern has been expressed by some members about the monkey-drives reported from Sierra Leone.

Mr. A. F. MacKenzie, the Agricultural Officer, Sierra Leone, in a visit to the Secretary said that monkeys had increased greatly in Sierra Leone for reasons which seem uncertain. They are a great menace to the cocoa crop; to contend with them the monkey-drives are held for three days each year, in one district only. About three thousand monkeys are thus destroyed annually.

Mr. MacKenzie has promised a further report.

*U.S.A.*—*The Ivory-billed Woodpecker (Campephilus principalis).*—We congratulate the National Audubon Society of America on their action in securing a sanctuary for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. This woodpecker was feared to be extinct, but last winter was rediscovered in an area in the Apalachicola River region in north-west Florida which has now been made a 1,300 acre sanctuary. A resident warden has been appointed; for the time being at least no visitors will be allowed.

The Ivory-bill is the largest woodpecker in North America, slightly longer than a crow. In 1831 Audubon nicknamed it "Van Dyke" because of the pleasing contrast of its ebony, white and scarlet plumage. Indians are said to have collected the woodpeckers' top-knots for ornaments, selling the bills to tribes who had never seen the birds. This woodpecker decreased rapidly with the cutting of the virgin hardwood forests of the river bottoms where it lived, feeding largely on wood borers found in dying and recently dead trees.

It is reported that there is widespread interest and co-operation by local people in the sanctuary area and every prospect of making the project a success.

*The Alaskan Brown Bear and the Bald-headed Eagle.*—Other news from the U.S.A. is not so encouraging. Dr. Willard G. Van Name has been calling attention to the danger threatening two animals in Alaska, the immense Brown Bear (*Ursus middendorffi*), and the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), the national emblem of the United States.

Writing in the American press Dr. Van Name deplors that with the passing of the Alaskan statehood bill the fate of both animals is being handed over to the State of Alaska without any adequate provision being made for their protection. "In all Alaska's 586,400 square miles" writes Dr. Van Name, "not

one acre is to be a safe refuge for these bears, the largest of American land mammals." Regarding the Bald Eagle he writes " There is danger that the bill to extend the law that now protects our national emblem, the Bald Eagle, in all the forty-eight states, to make it include Alaska also, may fail of passage. The bill is most important in order to put an end to the entirely inexcusable bounty of \$2 each by which the Alaskans are exterminating this harmless and inoffensive bird. It is only in the coastal region of Southern Alaska that the eagle has survived in any considerable numbers. In the United States proper it is steadily diminishing. Protection for it seems to have come too late."

We hopefully await news from our Vice-President Dr. Van Name, that his valiant efforts to save these animals are bearing fruit.

*New Zealand.*—Interesting reports, information from which will be published in *Oryx* No. 3, have been received from New Zealand. A book by K. A. Wodzicki entitled " Introduced Mammals of New Zealand " will be reviewed and we hope to receive another article from Mrs. Perrine Moneriff. Her last article, " The Destruction of an Avian Paradise," was published in the *Journal*, Part XLIX, June, 1944.

*Game Wardens.*—The following Game Wardens have either retired recently or are on the point of doing so. All of them have given very many years' work to the cause of wild life preservation and are old and faithful members of our Society. We hope to see much of them during their retirement and to gain by their experience and advice.

*Kenya.* Captain A. T. A. Ritchie, O.B.E., M.C.

Mr. W. H. Hale has been selected to fill the appointment.

*Tanganyika.* Captain M. S. S. Moore, V.C.

Mr. G. H. S. Swynnerton has been selected to fill the appointment.

*Uganda.* Captain C. R. S. Pitman, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

The Acting Game Warden is Major B. G. Kinloch, M.C.

*Jungle Tales of a Grandfather.*—A member has recently made her grandson a Life Member of the Society. This is the excuse, if any be needed, for starting a short series of stories for younger readers. *Jungle Tales of a Grandfather* are contributed by Mr. P. M. Lushington, now eighty-seven years of age, at one time Conservator of Forests, Madras.

*The International Union for the Protection of Nature.*—We include in this number a short extract from notes given to us by Dr. G. F. Herbert Smith on the work performed by the

Second General Assembly of I.U.P.N. Dr. Herbert Smith led the British Delegation. We offer him our congratulations upon his election as a Vice-President of the Union.

*Fauna Preservation Exhibition.*—The preparation of maps by Mr. J. I. Menzies for the proposed Exhibition at Cardiff Museum this year, referred to in *Oryx* No. 1, is progressing. The following are now ready:—

The World. Some extinct species and their past ranges.

Zebras. Past and present ranges of Burchell's, Grevy's, and the Mountain Zebra.

The White Rhinoceros. Past and present ranges.

The Black Rhinoceros. Past and present ranges.

The Great Indian and the Sumatran Rhinoceros. Past and present ranges.

The Javan Rhinoceros (*R. sondaicus*). Past and present ranges.

*Festival of Britain.*—His Grace the Duke of Bedford has graciously consented to open Woburn Park to the public for a week in conjunction with our Society during the Festival of Britain. The Fauna Preservation Society's Week will be from 28th May to 2nd June. Woburn is famous for its animals especially for its many kinds of deer, including the only herd of Père David's deer.

Admission will be by ticket obtainable at the gate of Woburn Park during that week, adults 2s. 6d., children 1s. On Saturday, 2nd June, it is hoped to run a special bus from London for F.P.S. members. Further details of the week will be sent later to all members of the Society.

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## THE CAT

By PROFESSOR F. E. ZEUNER

Among the domestic pets kept in the towns of England, the cat probably tops the list so far as numbers go. But unlike other domesticated animals its association with man has been relatively short and, in spite of the mouse-catching propensities of some breeds, domestication was in this case only in part guided by economic considerations.

The domestic cat belongs to the genus *Felis* in the narrowest sense, which has its chief representative in the Wild Cat (*Felis silvestris* Schreber), a species that has become extinct in many