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Notes and News

The battle for Aldabra may have been won, but as the Government has specifically said that the proposal to build a staging post there may be revived at a later date this cannot be taken for granted. The main conservation argument was of course that Aldabra was the last unspoiled (and, until recently, unstudied) coral atoll in the Indian Ocean, an undisturbed ecosystem of great scientific interest. But another important point was the danger to aircraft of the huge frigate-bird colony on the island. Very relevant to this is a study by Dr. Harvey I. Fisher, published in *Condor*, December 1966, of the problem posed by the Laysan albatrosses breeding on Midway Island, the American naval air base in the Pacific. Even after twenty years the problem of bird-aircraft collisions on Midway has not been solved, despite the all-out and very costly efforts of the naval authorities and a slaughter that is sickening to read about: 1,371 chicks killed in April 1957; 26,000 clubbed to death January-March 1958; 10,000 nesting birds killed by bulldozers December 1959; 18,000 adults killed January 1964. And these figures do not include chicks left parentless to die, eggs destroyed or the many incidental kills. More than 50 per cent of Sand Island's surface has been paved, much of it to prevent the birds nesting, and the removal of sand-holding vegetation has allowed sand to invade the interior. And still the collisions occur. Although there have been no actual crashes, there have been near-misses; the danger is there, and the expense considerable, and no solution is in sight. Dr. Fisher believes that the frigate birds on Aldabra would be an even more serious problem, for a number of reasons: there are more of them, they are resident birds (the albatrosses are migratory and absent three months of the year from Midway), and other aspects of their behaviour pose greater problems. Moreover, jet planes, which would presumably use Aldabra, are more vulnerable to bird strikes; on Midway few jets have used the airfield. The fact that the Ministry of Defence is prepared to contemplate reviving the project for the Aldabra staging post suggests that they are prepared for even greater levels of slaughter than the Americans have achieved on Midway – all so far without making the airfield safe. Does the RAF know so much better?

The Cost of an Air Base

Rare Animals Bill for the USA

A bill to control the importation of endangered species of wildlife into the USA was introduced into Congress in the summer, by Representative John D. Dingell of Michigan, and has the enthusiastic support of all conservationists. If it is passed it will give the USA an Act similar to the British Act passed in 1964, which was promoted by the FPS and is proving a valuable tool in the control of traffic in endangered species. But obviously it is essential that all importing countries should have such an Act if the objects are to be achieved. The British Act works through a Government Committee, on which the FPS Hon. Secretary sits, which vets all applications from zoos, dealers and others to import any animal listed in the schedules to the Act. (A note on its annual report is on page 212.) In the same way the American bill seeks to give the Secretary of the Interior power to prohibit the importation, dead or alive, of any species or subspecies, or parts of them, which he considers to be threatened with extinction after consultation with the exporting country and, when appropriate, with IUCN*; exceptions for educational, zoological and scientific purposes would be allowed. The American bill also seeks to extend the present prohibition of inter-state traffic in illegally-taken wild mammals and birds to cover amphibians and reptiles and other categories; this would enable the states to stop the present very considerable traffic in the hides of poached alligators in the southern states. Hides taken illegally are smuggled into a neighbouring state from which shipment is not illegal. As a result of this widespread poaching and law evasion the American alligator has decreased to such an extent that it is now on the danger list. The inevitable vicious circle – increased poaching, fewer animals, increased prices for skins, more poaching – is now in full swing, and nothing but a well enforced legal prohibition can stop it. The price of alligator hide is now $6.50 per foot.

New Measures in Indonesia

Two notable successes have been scored recently in the efforts to stop some of the traffic in seriously endangered animals, one in an exporting country, Indonesia, and the other in an importing country, the USA. The Director of Forestry in Indonesia, Mr Hasan Basjarudin, has declared that exports of the three especially rare species, Javan and Sumatran rhinos and orang-utan, will only be allowed by special licence from the Minister of Agriculture, or the Director General of Forestry acting on his behalf, and will only be given for animals already in captivity. For other protected animals the government will fix export quotas, and licences to capture will be issued by the Director of Forestry on a carefully selected basis with preference given to applications endorsed by IUCN. No licences will be granted to dealers or for indiscriminate sale. Moreover, the advice of the Survival Service Commission of IUCN on rare species will be welcomed, and the Directorate of Forestry will send copies of export permits for any endangered

*International Union for Conservation of Nature.

species to the SSC. In the USA, a large importer of animals, the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA), of which most of the larger zoos and many animal dealers are members, has passed what amounts to a complete self-denying ordinance on the most seriously endangered animals. This was a unanimous resolution that members will not seek to acquire wild-caught Javan or Sumatran rhinos or monkey-eating eagles, and that they will only take orang-utans, Galapagos and Aldabra tortoises and Zanzibar red colobus monkeys if legally captured and exported. Moreover, any member convicted of violating the wildlife protection laws of any other country will be disciplined by the Association. At the same time AAZPA considers that captive-breeding programmes offer the best course of action for rare species which cannot be adequately protected in the wild, unless they are so rare that it is unwise to take any at all. The species listed in the resolution all come into the last category. A committee was appointed to supervise the working of the resolution and to collect information on rare and endangered species, including facts about the trade in illegally caught or illegally exported animals, for circulation to members and others.

Success with Whooping Cranes

The captive breeding programme for the rare whooping crane has made a successful start. Most important, it has proved that taking the eggs from nests in the wild has not harmed the wild flock. Not only were four chicks successfully hatched at the US Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, but more young were reared by the wild flock on the breeding grounds in Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park than ever before since the breeding grounds were discovered in 1954. Last spring six eggs were taken from the wild flock, one from each of six nests, leaving one for the birds to hatch in the normal way – whoopers normally rear only one chick from the clutch of two – and flown to Patuxent. A photograph of one of the four chicks reared follows page 242. Now comes the news from the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, the whoopers' wintering ground, that 47 wild birds turned up in the autumn, an increase of four on the number that went north in the spring; and in fact the breeding season was even more successful than the figures suggest, for only 38 of the 47 birds were adults; nine were young birds of the year.

Rhino and Elephant Work in Kenya

In Kenya forty-one black rhinos have now been captured in settled areas where they were in danger and transported to the safety of national parks by the Kenya Game Department's Capture Unit under Dr John King. The rhinos were captured after being drug-darted from a hired helicopter, paid for by the East African Wildlife Society. The Society has also spent £4,500 on an aircraft to be used in survey work in the Tsavo National Park. The three-year research programme of the Tsavo Research Unit, directed by Dr. Richard Laws, is now under way in Tsavo East, where the damage

done by the vast number of elephants, now some 20,000, has caused such controversy and concern. It is hoped that the results of the research will be to give Kenya National Parks the necessary basis on which to draw up a conservation and management plan.

Wildlife will Pay Best

Kenya's Minister for Tourism and Wildlife, the Hon. S. O. Ayodo, said recently that his government was becoming more and more convinced that the high potential of animal protein from wildlife could be exploited on lands that would deteriorate from agricultural or other forms of land use. Speaking at a symposium in Nairobi on Wildlife Management and Land Use, he also said of tourism that no other industry could be so happily rooted in the scientific use of wildlife and at the same time so productive of revenue. Kenya's 1966 revenue from tourism, which depends largely on wildlife, was over £12 million, second only to coffee (£14m) and double the third export, tea (£6m); by 1970 the figure is expected to have doubled. Economists at this symposium pointed out that by developing this tourist potential, which in turn meant proper land-use planning and the development of wildlife schemes, East Africa could buy more food than it could ever hope to grow on the same land or pay for by other forms of development in the areas now reserved for wildlife. Nevertheless the clash between agriculture and wildlife persists, and where wildlife schemes are more profitable than agriculture it is not always easy to distribute the profits so as to compensate the people who are traditionally concerned with the land. Dr. Curry-Lindahl, who attended the symposium, considered the economists' support for the ecologists' arguments the most significant aspect of the meeting. As he says, their pronouncements on the value of wildlife as a national resource will carry much more wieght than the same statements coming from conservationists.

Will Zambia Save the Black Lechwe?

The Zambian Government recently intervened to save the red lechwe antelope on the Kafue flats, with the purchase of the Lochinvar ranch, reported in the last issue of ORYX, and it is to be hoped that this conservation-minded government will now step in and save the black lechwe, which is endemic to Zambia, by declaring a Black Lechwe Reserve in the Bangweulu swamps. This is the only way of stamping out the poaching that has been the main factor in reducing the numbers of the antelope from about 1,000,000 at the turn of the century to 16,000 in 1959 and something like 8,000 in 1966–67, according to Lieut-Col. Critchley, President of the Zambia Wildlife Society (of which President Kaunda is Patron). Col. Critchley recently took part in an aerial survey of the 2,000 square miles of swamp, using the aircraft which was partly bought with money from the FPS/WWF Revolving Fund. Eight thousand lechwe is a pitiful, even absurdly small number for this vast area, to which the lechwe are specially adapted, and which is practically going to waste because there

are so few animals to graze it. If poaching could be controlled and the herds built up again, cropping for meat that is badly needed in Zambia could put this valuable resource to good use. At present a force of six game guards patrols 2,000 square miles of swamp; Col. Critchley suggests that 50 are needed together with suitable – this means air – transport; in addition to all the obvious advantages, flying patrols, particularly by helicopter, frighten poachers. A local headmaster told Col. Critchley that poached lechwe meat was widely eaten due to the shortage of protein, and also because fish from Lake Bangweulu were not sold locally at the low Government-controlled price but smuggled out by night to areas where higher prices could be obtained. A topsy-turvy situation indeed.

Tailoring the Job to the Hippo

Translocation as a conservation weapon is now being so widely used that it is becoming almost a matter of course. But every animal has its special difficulties. Nick Carter, writing in *Africana*, describes the problems of moving hippos which had become so numerous in certain rivers in the Kruger National Park that there was serious overcrowding in the drought conditions that prevailed; also the animals were seriously overgrazing the riverine vegetation. The danger of bilharzia precluded the captors going into the water after the animals once they had been drug-darted, and they found that a helicopter scared all the other hippos in a pool into precipitate flight. Finally they hit on the idea of using an enormous road grader, a six-wheeler giant belonging to the Parks Engineering Section, which could go safely into the pools and get out again, and provide a secure platform from which several men could manoeuvre the necessary ropes, poles, nets, etc. But their difficulties were not ended. The drug M99, which has proved so remarkably successful with other species, notably rhino, proved to have one overlooked hazard: the drugged hippo becomes so relaxed that the muscular mechanism which closes the nostrils on contact with water did not work, the hippos inhaled a quantity of water, and two of the first five captured died. The alternative Sernylan, however, had no such effect, and the remainder of the quota of ten were safely secured. They were sent to other parks and reserves from which hippos had long disappeared.

Results of Killing "Vermin"

An account of some alarming operations against predators in South West Africa is given in the June issue of *African Wildlife* by W. H. Zur Strassen. For many years the government, under pressure from sheep farmers, has paid bounties or levies for the killing of so-called vermin, and many animals have been killed that did nothing worse than dig holes in fields or under the jackal-proof fences enclosing the sheep. Silver foxes, bat-eared foxes, aardwolf and antbear, which feed on rodents, termites and other insects, have been destroyed with predictable results; the rodents and insects have got the upper hand and this in turn has seriously affected the pastures. In 19 months in 1965–66, returns from

15 magistrates' offices showed the destruction of (and bounties paid on) 22,242 jackals, 160 hyaenas, 156 wild dogs, 824 caracals and 39 leopards. The effect on the jackals has been near extermination in the area. Moreover, several magistrates admitted to an inability to identify some of the species from the tails and ears produced. "Large numbers of sheep and lambs are killed by vermin each year", is the author's conclusion, "but this total is not a tithe of the number that starve through lack of pasture consumed by rodents."

Plight of Wild Buffalo in India

Wild buffaloes are declining and in serious danger of being exterminated in the one remaining area in peninsular India where they are found, the former princely state of Bastar and adjacent areas of Orissa and Maharashtra, in eastern central India. (They are of course still found in Assam, in the Kaziranga and Manas sanctuaries.) This is the conclusion of a survey by J. C. Daniel, Curator of the Bombay Natural History Society, and B. R. Grubh made after the State Government of Madhya Pradesh had approached the Bombay Natural History Society for advice about the declining buffalo. The causes are, not unexpectedly, competition for grazing with domestic cattle, poaching in an area whose remoteness makes policing almost impossible, and contagious diseases spread by domestic cattle, and to these must now be added the opening up of a backward region with an iron-ore project and a railway. Increasing cultivation inevitably means increased numbers of crop-protection guns and demands that crop-damaging animals like buffaloes be reduced. The State Government's suggestion that the buffalo be removed to the Kanha National Park has too many practical difficulties, but the proposal to create a sanctuary for the buffalo is welcomed provided the proposed area is enlarged to include the animals' summer range. The authors also propose another sanctuary in Orissa, in the neighbourhood of the new Balimela Dam. But above all they stress the importance of adequate numbers of game guards to stop the poaching.

Turtles and Seals in Turkey

A report on the green turtle in Turkish waters, by Igal Sela, an Israeli scientist, says that these turtles will have been exterminated in 10–15 years if the present overfishing continues. This is what happened on the Israeli coast before the last war: whereas between 1920 and 1930 there were 20–30,000 now there is no fishing and very few ever come to lay. In one of the main Turkish fishing towns, Yamortalik, the people said that five years ago they had caught 1,300 turtles in a year, but the number has diminished every year and last season produced only 360. Mr. Sela suggests that the lagoons of southern Turkey would be very suitable for a commercial hatching and rearing programme, which would enable a harvest to be taken every year without affecting the wild populations. He also investigated the status of the very rare Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus*, and found that it still occurs at two points on the Mediterranean coast and near Sinops on the

Black Sea, and was still being shot by fishermen. The survival of the species, he says, depends on the declaration of the breeding caves as nature reserves, strict protection, and the compensation of fishermen for damage done by the seals to their nets.

Green Turtles in Arabia

On the South Arabian coast Professor Harold F. Hirth has been studying the green turtle for FAO, and his tagging programme, using metal clips attached to the turtles' foreflippers has brought some returns, described in the *IUCN Bulletin*. One turtle in a few months had travelled 480 miles, and another had gone 1,500 miles to the east coast of Africa. The meat of these turtles is not eaten locally but fetches high prices in London, New York and Hamburg; properly exploited they could be a valuable source of revenue. At present the nesting grounds are exposed to dogs, which roam the beaches in packs, killing the females and destroying large numbers of eggs, while the fishermen destroy the females before they have laid. Professor Hirth believes that it should be possible in time to start green turtle culture in fenced areas along the coast.

Monkeys and Research

The ever-increasing use of monkeys and other non-human primates for research is one of the biggest drains on these animals in the wild. One scientist in 1965 put the annual consumption at a quarter of a million, taken almost entirely from the wild, and this takes no account of animals killed in capture or transport. It is almost certainly greater than can be made good by natural increase, as Dr. Clifford Jolly points out in a paper on the Cercopithecoidea and their use as laboratory animals*; laboratories will certainly be up against a shortage within a decade if present practices continue. From Dr. Boonsong in Thailand we learn that the Thai government has restricted monkey exports to 700 head a month, and is trying to stop the smuggling, but, as he says, "the animal dealers have many tricks". Dr. Jolly suggests three steps that should be taken immediately. First, the use of primates where it is not necessary should be stopped; second, the multiple use of research animals should be organised – e.g. corpses that would be useful to anatomists are often destroyed; third, research workers should start a hard search for an alternative to monkeys in the production of polio vaccine. Captive breeding, which seems the obvious answer, is in fact difficult in the case of monkeys because of their very slow breeding rate and late age of maturity, which make the proceedings very costly, but Dr. Jolly suggests that the cropping of monkeys in the wild, in the same way that other animals are cropped for meat, would have many advantages. One obvious rationalisation is that crop-raiding monkeys, at present shot as "vermin" should be captured for export. Dr. Jolly quotes the situation in Uganda in 1964

*Introduction to the Cercopithecoidea with Notes on their Use as Laboratory Animals, by Clifford J. Jolly, Symposia of the Zoological Society of London, No. 17, 1966. Academic Press.

when 3,319 monkeys were killed by the Game Department alone – many more would be killed by farmers – while in the same period 4,000 monkeys (mostly of one of the species killed as vermin) were exported for laboratory use. The monkeys killed and wasted represented a loss of about £35,000 revenue. In Kenya there is co-ordination between the Game Department and an American research foundation, but this seems to be exceptional, and the wastage all over Africa must be enormous. Such a scheme would call for research and organisation, and a revision of the official attitude to monkeys, but it could turn a pest into an economic asset.

The Red Kangaroo in Danger

Since 1959 the combination of drought and a rapidly growing meat industry has reduced the red kangaroo in central Australia and western New South Wales to less than half its numbers; in some areas, according to a report from CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation), it has been virtually wiped out. In 1965–66 shooters accounted for about 2,000,000 animals; some $2,000,000 worth of meat was exported and the local market was at least as big. The scientists believe that shooting on this scale, when combined with the effects of the drought, could eliminate the red kangaroo in these states altogether. A useful eight-page publication of the Australian Conservation Foundation, *Conservation of Kangaroos*, states the situation succinctly, pointing out that kangaroos are very efficient in locating suitable forage, and that far from being destructive graziers they are particularly well adapted to marginal conditions while at the same time causing the minimum of permanent damage to the vegetation, in marked contrast to sheep and cattle, especially in arid regions. The CSIRO report says that it is now known that sheep and kangaroos can be run together on the same grazing without seriously competing with each other, so perhaps the authorities can now be persuaded to bring the kangaroo meat industry under control. A long-term policy of conserving the arid and semi-arid grazing lands of Australia is bound to involve a reduction in domestic stocks, but compensation for the loss of their meat and products could be found in the utilisation of kangaroos on a sustained yield basis.

Another Marsupial Survives

Another Australian marsupial thought to be extinct was re-discovered in May this year when Mr. M. K. Morecombe, a well-known natural history photographer in Western Australia, found a small carnivorous marsupial called the dibbler *Antechinus apicalis* which had not been seen for 83 years. Found on the south coast of Western Australia, opposite the Bald Island fauna reserve and about 30 miles east of Albany, it appears to be quite common there, but being entirely nocturnal has escaped notice. It feeds on insects in the flowers of low-growing species of banksia and spends the day invisible under the ground litter. The Fisheries and Fauna Department, says Mr. Shugg, the Fauna Officer, hopes to create a temporary reserve for the dibbler, and Dr. Ride, Director of the Western Australian Museum, is trying to establish its range so that a permanent

reserve can be set aside for it. The region appears to be faunistically very rich, and also contains the rare ground parrot *Pezoporus wallicus*. A photograph of the dibbler follows page 184. Mr. Shugg also reports that 10,000 acres has now been added to the area already set aside as a reserve for the noisy scrub-bird, described in ORYX, August 1966, bringing the total area reserved to 11,460 acres. At the same time the Division of Wildlife Research of the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation) has a research programme which should throw light on the bird's requirements and facilitate their conservation. Forty pairs are thought to be breeding.

Wallaby Discovery in New Zealand

In New Zealand a wallaby believed to be extinct since 1932 was rediscovered last year on Kawau, a 5,000-acre island about 30 miles north of Auckland. This is *Macropus parma*, which had gone unnoticed because it had been confused with another species on the island. Although fairly plentiful, its position is precarious, because the island is shared by several private owners, and at least half is to be planted with pines. The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research is encouraging the export of some of these wallabies to responsible organisations prepared to start captive breeding colonies.

Caribou Transfers in Hudson Bay

The Canadian Wildlife Service has this year transferred 51 caribou from one island in Hudson Bay to another where they had been exterminated, almost certainly as a result of overhunting. With the aid of a helicopter, animals on Coats Island were drug-darted and immobilised from the air and then flown to Southampton Island, which like Coats is in the northern part of Hudson Bay, and has a similar climate, landscape and vegetation. The transfer was made at the request of the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, It was enthusiastically supported by the Eskimos on Southampton Island who contributed some of their Community Development Fund towards the cost of the operation, because, like the Indians, they still depend on the caribou for food and clothing. Presumably care will be taken this time to see that the harvest is controlled.

Who Cares if it is the Last?

On page 189 we reprint from *The New Yorker* an article on "Fun Furs", the latest craze to threaten some of our rarer animals, particularly the spotted cats. From a member in the United States we have also received a furrier's advertisement from *Harper's Bazaar*, with a horrifying list of 88 kinds of fur coat that can be supplied (no prices given). They include Brazilian ocelot, sea otter, Somali and Kenya leopards, Somali cheetah, and Himalayan snow leopard, with a note at the bottom: "Unfortunately a Himalayan snow leopard perfect enough to become a Max Bogen fur hasn't been sighted in over two years. But you can be sure that when the right one comes along, it'll end up at Max Bogen." It would be a brave conservationist who would say he was wrong.