

The Fauna Preservation Society

MAY, 1956

EDITORIAL NOTES

India.—At a recent meeting of the Indian Board for Wild Life it was recommended that the Chakia forest should become the second home of the Gir lions and that five or six lions should be sent there. The Chakia forest, a compact, well protected reserve in the eastern Uttar Pradesh, was suggested by the U.P. Government for this purpose.

The Musk Deer.—Many members will remember the article on the musk deer which Mr. Colin Matheson contributed to our journal, No. LXI, March, 1950. The musk deer has a wide range, but Mr. Matheson came to the conclusion that over much of it it was on the road to extinction. Last November however a statement appeared in a trade magazine that there was no fear of a shortage of musk pods as musk deer were very numerous. This called for investigation and Mr. E. P. Gee has kindly obtained information from the hill tracts north of Assam, near the Tibet border. We learn that the musk deer is still fairly plentiful in the Mishmi Hills, but rarer westwards towards Bhutan. Musk deer are killed by tribal peoples for their meat and skins as well as for their pods and no doubt it is mainly the inaccessibility of their terrain which saves them from extermination. The best hope for the musk deer seems to lie in the perfection of artificial substitutes, which already to some extent take the place of natural musks.

The Orang-utan.—The orang-utan inhabits only Borneo and Sumatra and is protected under Indonesian law ; no orang can be exported legally without a permit. But illegal traffic has become so serious that the Indonesian authorities, especially Mr. A. Hoogerwerf, whose article on nature protection in Indonesia appeared in *Oryx* in 1953, have become alarmed for the animal's survival.

One of the markets for oranges has been Singapore and the International Union for the Protection of Nature asked our Society to see whether anything could be done to put an end to illegal traffic through that port. Our inquiries showed that though the import, without a permit, of oranges into Singapore was banned, there was no such prohibition on export. We have

now been informed that permits to export oranges will no longer be given unless evidence is produced of official permission for each orang's export from its country of origin. We are also told that the price of oranges in Singapore has dropped enormously.

So far so good but, as Dr. F. J. Appelman, Director of the Rotterdam Zoo, who is prominent in the battle to preserve wild animals, writes, there are many other ports through which the trade in orang-utans will continue.

The Kruger National Park.—Mr. E. R. Hewitt Ivy has vigorously proclaimed in the South African press that large and undisclosed numbers of lions and other carnivores are being destroyed in the Kruger National Park and that uncontrolled or improperly controlled burning is taking place—both to the great detriment of the Park.

These allegations ought to be answered. We suggest that there should be no destruction of carnivores or other animals until scientific investigation has shown it to be necessary. Why does not the National Parks Board of Trustees publish annually in its report accurate statistics of animals killed? Experiments on veld burning are now in hand, but only after years have elapsed can it be possible to base a policy of burning on knowledge rather than guesswork. Yet, during the past season, very large areas were again burned. Was this done on purpose or is it true that the fires came from outside the Park and could not be extinguished?

British Somaliland.—In a letter "Large-Size Vermin" in the *Daily Telegraph* of 18th August, 1955, Mr. Yusef Ahamed asked to be informed on methods of destruction of mammals and birds as pests. Regarding birds he asked, "Can anyone advise us how to poison these? We would like to see them become extinct."

Although from its naïvety it seemed a little doubtful whether this letter should be taken seriously, we made appropriate inquiries and the Colonial Office have kindly sent the following information. Contrary to the impression that might have been gained from Yusef Ahamed's letter, lion, leopard and cheetah are not classified as vermin in Somaliland. Jackals, hyena, wart-hog, wild cat and baboon are so classified, in an attempt to keep their numbers at a certain level. Stock Inspectors no longer carry poison on trek as a routine and no poisoning party is sent out unless there is a confirmed complaint of animals classified as vermin under the Fauna Conservation Ordinance of 1955 or of a lion doing damage.

Mr. J. M. Watson, the Fauna Conservation Officer, also very kindly wrote. He is a member of our Society.

The Belgian Congo.—The Travel Agencies of the Belgian Congo have issued invitations to an International Hunting Contest, with prizes for the best trophies in the form of cups, medals and diplomas. Needless to say this stupid and harmful competition has not received the approval of the National Parks Institute, whose director, and our vice-president, Dr. V. Van Straelen, has vigorously opposed it, but without success. Protests have also been made in the *Deutsche Jäger Zeitung* and in Swiss and Austrian journals.

Sacred Dogs.—A recent number of the *Folia Scientifica Africae Centralis*, the bulletin of the Institute for Scientific Research in Central Africa, gives information, received from Dr. D. Biebuyek, about the hunting dogs of the Nyanga tribe in the Kivu.

Each dog is sacred, personifies a cultural hero and is a symbol of piety towards the tribal ancestors. It is also a hunter with a hunter's full rights and a comrade of man and of the spirits.

Such a dog has the status of a man. About it is gathered a hunting group composed of the dog's owner and his family, a guide and several hunters. The group has a ritual connected with the life cycle of the dog. This ritual includes ceremonies of ablution and tabus, special rules governing the distribution of the first animals killed, ritual meals, benedictions, offerings and invocations to the spirits of the volcanoes.

The great preoccupation of the Nyanga hunter is to preserve his dog from injury and from the anger and curses of men and spirits. He cares for it by magical therapeutic measures; he protects it from danger by dedicating it to a spirit and by covering it with amulets.

The dog must also be protected against destructive forces such as sorcery, the malevolence of spirits of deceased relatives and the rivalry of anger of the spirits of the volcanoes. To react effectively against these destructive forces, the hunter consults various oracles, among them those of the spirit "Mphaca", of the chicken, of bones and of "Kinyee".

If the oracle indicates that the cause of evil is a malediction against the dog, it must be neutralized by a benediction pronounced by the person responsible. During a ritual repast he must, among other things, give the dog a ball of cooked banana flour and a piece of meat.

If the malediction comes from the spirit of a dead relative injured by failure to make regular offerings, this fault must be repaired by a generous offering, ritual repasts or even by the consecration of a second dog.

The surest way to protect the dog is to consecrate it to one of the spirits of the volcanoes after a dream in which the spirit manifests itself, especially if the command of the spirit has not been carried out and some evil has ensued. The various family groups among the Nyanga have each their traditional and inherited spirits.

The Whooping Crane.—It is no longer news that twenty adult whooping cranes and eight young appeared last autumn at their Aransas refuge in Texas, a happy contrast to the 1954 figure of twenty-one adults only, but a new possibility has now appeared.

Every year, largely owing to wide and favourable publicity, there are many unreliable reports of whooping cranes on migration but usually these can readily be proved mistaken. We now hear from the Canadian Wildlife Service that, in 1955, various apparently competent people reported whooping cranes which could not be reconciled with the crane's known numbers and movements. These reports make it at least possible that an unknown flock of whooping cranes may exist, nesting in some unknown northern area and wintering somewhere in the vicinity of the Gulf of Mexico. If this turns out to be true it will give new hope for the whooping crane's ultimate survival and restoration.

Another hopeful portent for the whooping crane is a new regulation that no aeroplanes may fly lower than 2000 ft. over its nesting area. Would that a similar regulation protected from disturbance the brent goose at its wintering grounds in England on the Essex coast.

New South Wales.—The Fauna Protection Panel and the Lands Department are working in co-operation to provide refuges for birds in closely settled areas, particularly in wheat-growing districts where bushland is especially threatened. When Crown land is disposed of the Department will try to ensure the reservation every few miles of 20 to 40 acres containing green timber.

Two new reserves are coming under control of the Panel. One is sixty square miles of swampy heathland plateau in the Barren Grounds area near Saddleback mountain. It is rich in bird life. The other is in the Jervis Bay area which is being rapidly developed.

The Panel has made recommendations for other reserves and looks forward to the time when there will be reserves throughout the State so as to preserve the fauna typical of each region.

Ostriches and Camels.—Perhaps after all the ostrich does hide its head in the sand, or at least *on* the sand, when danger



Photos: H. B. D. Kettlewell
Typical and black Peppered Moths on tree-trunk in an industrial area.



Typical and black Peppered Moths on lichenized trunk in pollution-free wood.

threatens. In *African Wild Life*, Mr. R. F. Newton tells us that once, when he wanted to drive sixty wild ostriches from the target area of an artillery range in Kenya, he fired a shell to burst 400 yards from them. The ostriches remained standing but all laid their heads upon the ground.

Whether or not we may now accept head-hiding as normal ostrich behaviour, there is no doubt that the old story of the camel storing water, either in his hump, or in one of his several stomachs, is incorrect for Mr. C. L. Boltz, writing in *Discovery*, shows that the camel does not store water at all. He simply does not lose it. The camel's kidneys excrete very little water and his body temperature can rise from 93° F. to 104° F. without harm and without the beast sweating. Above 104°, when even the camel begins to sweat, the water comes not from the blood but from the body tissues and the creature's metabolism can still continue more or less normally.

Moths and Air Pollution.—*Discovery* also tells us (in an article by Dr. H. B. D. Kettlewell last December) of the extraordinary effect of industrialization on British moths. During the last hundred years the wings of many species living in industrial centres have been changing from light and complicated patterns to dark or black forms. Due to the prevailing wind, which carries the pollution, being from the west, these melanistic forms are found far to the east of each industrial centre.

The change in colour is not due to physical changes in the moth, directly caused by pollution, but to the survival value of pigmentation under changed conditions. White forms of the moths depend for their survival upon their invisibility during the day as they rest on lichen covered tree trunks. When pollution kills the lichen, black forms of the moth supplant the white. This was demonstrated by releasing both white and black forms of the peppered moth in Birmingham and in a Dorset wood. In Birmingham insectivorous birds took twice as many white moths as black; in Dorset they took three times as many black as white.

Dr. Kettlewell describes the extraordinarily quick evolution of these "industrial melanics" as the most striking evolutionary change ever witnessed in any living animal or plant.