

ORYX

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Notes and News

The FPS Revolving Fund for urgent conservation projects, announced in the last issue of *ORYX*, began to revolve immediately with an anonymous gift of £2500; other gifts we have received total £222, of which £193 was earmarked for the Persian fallow

**£2722
for the
Revolving Fund**

deer project. For all these contributions the Society is immensely grateful. The idea behind the Revolving Fund is to enable quick action to be taken, particularly where an animal is in danger of extinction—speed is often the most important ingredient for success. The Society has put up £5000 to start the Fund, and the World Wildlife Fund has agreed to repay money spent on its approved projects as soon as it has uncommitted money available. In addition we hope for more direct gifts such as we have already received to enable more projects to be tackled. The first money went to the Javan and Sumatran rhinos and the Mesopotamian fallow deer, all WWF projects. New projects under consideration include the Manipur brow-antlered deer, which was thought to be extinct until in 1951 it was re-discovered near the Logtak Lake, in Manipur State which lies between Assam and Burma. The first move will be a fact-finding survey to be made by Mr. E. P. Gee this spring.

Faced with the certain extinction of the Persian fallow deer in a few years time if no action is taken, the Iranian Game Department plans to capture as many as possible and transfer them to a reserve on the

**FPS Help
for Persian
Fallow Deer**

Caspian Sea, near Sari. The total numbers of this deer are now reduced to about 40, and their habitat, two areas of dense riverine scrub bordering the Dez and Karkeh rivers in south-west Kuzestan, is rapidly shrinking due to overgrazing by domestic animals and destruction by firewood gatherers. In 1964 the Game Department caught four animals, and in 1965 two; for the 1966 expedition they asked the FPS to send a veterinary surgeon experienced in the use of immobilising and tranquillising drugs, and, as the first call on our newly established Revolving Fund, the Society sent Mr. Michael Woodford, who was veterinary officer to Operation Oryx. The expedition tried first with 1600 m. of nylon net and a cross bow firing a

syringe dart, but unfortunately the bush was too thick and therefore the range too short to use the cross bow safely. Attempts to net the deer were then tried, but had not proved successful when torrential rain caused the rivers to burst their banks, inundating the flood plain with three to four feet of water, and forcing the expedition to escape by boat. Two weeks later, when they were about to resume the capture attempts, further heavy rain turned the whole area into a swamp again. As the fallow deer drop their fawns in March and April the Game Department had reluctantly to postpone further capture attempts until next year. An account of the Persian fallow deer, by Hubert J. Pepper, appeared in *ORYX*, December 1964.

A sheep-breeding farm in the middle of the Kashmir stag sanctuary was discovered by Mr. E. P. Gee when he visited the stags' winter range early last year. Writing in the *Wildlife Bulletin*, Mr Gee says the stags' numbers are thought to be about 175, and their chances of survival are seriously impaired by this farm with over 1000 sheep ranging far and wide in the summer months, competing with the deer for food, in addition to the disturbance caused by men with dogs, goats and guns. The Forest Department has given orders that the sheep must not graze inside the sanctuary, but Mr. Gee thinks that this will be difficult to enforce. "The only remedy is for the sheep-breeding farm to be removed." The *Wildlife Bulletin* is the first number of the Indian Wildlife Board's new journal, for which there will be a warm welcome.

A Threat to the Kashmir Stag

Representatives of all the countries of south-east Asia except Burma and Cambodia attended the IUCN conference on Conservation in Tropical South-East Asia in Bangkok last December, and there were valuable discussions and interchanges of ideas between them and conservationists from Europe, the USA and Australia. The conference was organised by Dr. Harold Coolidge and Dr. and Mrs. Lee M. Talbot as the second stage of the South-East Asia Project of IUCN.

Discussion and Action at Bangkok

For two years previously Dr. and Mrs. Talbot had travelled the region, assessing the problems and advising on conservation measures—one result of their work was the impressive (and depressing) report on the Philippines reviewed in *ORYX*, December 1965, although it was encouraging at Bangkok to find the Philippine delegates so aware of their difficulties and determined to tackle them; since the Conference we have received the welcome news that the new Philippine President has withdrawn permits for commercial logging in the national parks. The urgency of the situation in south-east Asia is all too familiar: widespread destruction of forest and slaughter of wildlife, shifting cultivation, erosion, overgrazing, uncontrolled hunting, and public ignorance and apathy. More than thirty resolutions were passed calling for specific action which, delegates insisted, would greatly strengthen

their case for demanding action from their own governments. At the same time immediate and specific steps were taken to help save some animals in imminent danger of extinction, notably the Javan and Sumatran rhinos, the monkey-eating eagle and the tamarau of the Philippines, and the orang utan. On all these the Hon. Secretary of the FPS was able to have direct discussions with the representatives of the countries concerned and IUCN delegates and make plans for action which are now being put into effect in collaboration with the Survival Service Commission.

In the first half of this year three eminent conservationists are retiring, all men of outstanding achievement in this field. In Kenya Colonel Mervyn Cowie has retired as Director of National Parks, of which

Three Conservationists Retire

he was the virtual creator; his initiative and drive led to the founding of the first park, just outside Nairobi, immediately after the war, and ever since he has been a leader of the wildlife conservation movement in East Africa. Kenya is fortunate that he has such an able successor in Mr. Perez Olindo. In Britain, in March, an era came to an end at the Nature Conservancy with the retirement of its omnipresent and indefatigably vigorous Director General, Max Nicholson. Coming to the Conservancy in 1952, when it was still only at the end of its beginning, he has made it an established force both at home and abroad, and ensured that Britain now leads the world in at least one field, research into the conservation of wildlife as a renewable natural resource. We welcome his successor, Dr. Duncan Poore, one of the foremost of the new generation of ecologists. In a few weeks time Tom Harrisson, who has for nearly twenty years been Curator of the Sarawak Museum, and a driving force in conservation in South East Asia, with a special interest in turtles and orang-utans, also goes into a well earned "retirement". To their friends it is impossible to imagine any of these three men "retired" in any meaningful sense. They are certain to go on working as hard as before in some other part of the boundless conservation field.

The number of wild whooping cranes, one of the world's rarest and most vulnerable birds, continues to increase slowly. The 44 birds that turned up at their wintering grounds in Texas at the end of last

Slow Increase for Whooping Cranes

year was the largest since record-keeping began in 1938, when there were only 14. The present flock comprises 36 adults (a decrease of 6) and eight young. Only one of the missing adults can be accounted for; it was killed probably as a result of striking a power line in western Kansas on its migration flight. A total of 44 is a very precarious number especially for a bird that is so vulnerable because of its size and its long migration flight—from Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park, where it breeds, to the Texas Gulf coast. But the fact that they are increasing at all shows what

publicity and active conservation can do. An even larger bird, also a North American species, the trumpeter swan, has increased its numbers from fewer than 100 in the early 1930's to nearly 1000 today as a result of conservation measures—which, as Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall has pointed out, is a heartening indication that other endangered species might be saved. When the numbers were at their lowest the Fish and Wildlife Service established a 40,000-acre reserve for the swan, the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, in south-west Montana, which included a wilderness marsh of 15,000 acres. From here birds have been taken to start new populations in other refuges.

The presidents of four conservation bodies in the USA recently issued a vigorous protest against the action of five well known New York stores in selling the skins of endangered animals, and urged Americans to "refrain from buying" from such stores. The goods

The Effects of Fashion listed are polar bear rugs, tiger coats and rugs, Brazilian jaguar coats, and African lion and cheetah rugs. In Zambia there is great concern at the number of crocodiles and leopards being poached, which the Game and Fisheries Department attributes to the inflated price paid for the skins by overseas buyers which makes the poaching highly profitable. The Department's report points out that these two predators control several serious pests, notably baboon in the case of leopard, and barbel and other fish predators in the case of crocodile. In parts of Africa where leopards have been seriously depleted in numbers, baboons have done enormous damage to crops. Such can be the serious effects of these thoughtless and irresponsible fashions for animal skins. There is, of course, a perfectly legitimate trade in animal skins taken in controlled cropping schemes and legally exported. Once a skin becomes fashionable, however, demand exceeds supply, prices go up, poaching becomes profitable—and one more animal is on the list of endangered species.

One of the most forceful arguments for preserving wild animals in countries like Africa is their value as meat, but few really workman-like and economic schemes have yet got under way. The Zambia Game

Zambia Crops Wildlife for Meat Department, however, has embarked on a carefully planned scheme of cropping for meat which should not only provide large quantities but also protect the badly overgrazed areas in the Luangwa Valley.

The pilot scheme, started last year, is to crop two hippo, two elephants and 12 buffalo per day, using a Cap-Chur gun humane killer which brings instant death without disturbing the herds. The carcasses are taken immediately by tractor and trailer and boat to a newly built abattoir where the meat is prepared and boned, cooled and deep frozen, loaded into refrigerated trucks and taken for sale to

the towns of the Copperbelt, where it is sold at 3d. a lb. cheaper than the cheapest beef. The Game Department is also planning to farm semi-domesticated game animals on poor range land, and eland, impala, puku and other antelopes are being studied by a Canadian biologist for use as meat producers in dry tsetse-infested areas. If this can provide an alternative to game slaughter and insecticide spraying it will be doubly welcome.

The remarkable growth of the naturalists' trusts in Britain is revealed in some figures issued by the County Naturalists' Trusts' Committee of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves. In 1960 there were only eight naturalists' trusts; by the end of 1965 there was one for every county except Rutland, including one for the whole of Scotland, with more than 20,000 members between them. The trusts now protect more than 20,000 acres of land of importance to wildlife, with more than 230 reserves, ranging in size from the $\frac{1}{4}$ -acre of Badgeworth, in Gloucestershire, protecting a rare buttercup, to the 1215 acres of Hickling Broad in Norfolk with its wealth of water birds and other animals and plants. One technique of the trust movement is to protect important sites by agreements with the landowners, but in the last four years the trusts have also bought 2400 acres at a cost of £86,700, of which they raised £67,400 themselves. The World Wildlife Fund contributed £13,300 and the SPNR's Pilgrim Fund £6000.

An interesting study which shows how a predator benefits its prey is that of the timber wolves and the moose on Isle Royale, a 210-square-mile island national park in Lake Superior in the USA, described by L. David Mech in the *National Parks Magazine*.

Wolves are Good for the Moose Before 1949, when there were no wolves on the island, the numbers of moose fluctuated considerably. At one time in the mid-1930's there were between one and three thousand, too many for the grazing, so that many starved to death. The cycle repeated itself, and in 1949 there was a second period of starvation. That winter, however, a pack of timber wolves crossed the 15-mile stretch of ice from Canada, and have stayed ever since. The result has been that both the moose and the grazing are now in excellent condition. The wolves prey exclusively on the moose in winter, and partly in summer, but mostly they take the sick and weak and the young; of 58 moose killed by wolves that were found during the author's three-year study, not one was between one and six years old. In winter the wolves kill a moose about every three days, but the healthy adults are usually a match for the wolf pack. The survey has also shown that the Isle Royale moose are among the most productive on the continent, and no other herd has such a high proportion of

twin calves. Over a period of 15 years the wolves have not reduced the moose numbers, and their annual kill of moose is not greater than the total estimated birth rate. The part that predators play in the balance of wildlife populations is today widely recognised, but unfortunately not everywhere. In Russia, a country in other respects so forward in conservation, the slaughter of predators is still carried on. A recent news item said that in the last three years 28,000 wolves, jackals, wolverines, lynxes and wild cats had been destroyed, and "large quantities of harmful birds have been destroyed".

The red lechwe of the Kafue Flats in Zambia, which have been seriously and damagingly depleted by poachers, as reported in the last issue of Oryx, are an outstandingly good example of an animal adapted to use a specialised habitat. The importance

**The Lechwe
and
the Floods**

of these antelopes for their habitat, if full use is to be made of it, is pointed out by L. D. E. F. Vesey-Fitzgerald in a paper on the grasslands of the Flats and the grazing pattern of the lechwe in the latest issue of *The Puku*. The Kafue Flats lechwe are able to feed in water up to 50 cm. deep, and can therefore make almost round-the-year use of the Flats which are flooded regularly every year. Because the water meadow grasses grow in rising flood water the stems are flaccid and collapse when the water subsides, and here again the lechwe are specially adapted to graze such pasture. In the late dry season, which is the critical time, when many other animals move into the Flats to graze, there is ample grazing for all, and the lechwe's use of the meadows in the flood time may actually benefit these animals, even domestic cattle. The lechwe herds, he concludes, constitute a natural resource of national importance which can be profitably developed by conservation.

Members of the IUDZG (International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens) have agreed not to buy or trade in monkey-eating eagles, and also to use their influence to discourage the capture,

**Zoos and the
Monkey-eating
Eagle**

export and trade in these eagles until the wild population is secure. This great bird of prey of the Philippines is in grave danger of becoming extinct, and the process is being hurried on, not only by illegal capture and export for zoos, but also because of a ridiculous fashion in south-east Asia for having a stuffed monkey-eating eagle as an ornament for the home. And the bigger the specimen the more prized it is. Pets are another status symbol, and young eagles are taken from the nest to be sold for this trade, while the hunter who kills an eagle still acquires great prestige. At the Bangkok conference in December, Professor Rabor of the Philippines put the eagle population at only 40-50 pairs on two islands, Mindanao and Luzon. He suggested that a possible reason for its precarious survival in Luzon was the presence of head-hunting tribes

in the mountains which discourages hunters and eagle collectors—an unusual ally for conservationists in the 1960's. The IUDZG's resolution is a useful step in saving the monkey-eating eagle, but unfortunately the Union only covers the non-profit-making zoos. A similar decision from the commercial zoos would be very welcome, but they have no organisation through which to act in such matters. The resolution of the Symposium on Zoos and Conservation in London in June 1964, calling for the development of an international organisation of zoos, has not yet been implemented.

In Nigeria four large animals are now extinct—the black rhino, dama and dorcas gazelles and giant eland; 11 other large birds and mammals are threatened with extinction, and 21 others are severely depleted in numbers. Of the larger mammals only bushbuck,

**Wildlife is
Killed—Except
Elephants**

duikers, baboons and some monkeys are at all common. These are the conclusions of Dr. George A. Petrides, published in his advisory report on *Wildlife and National Parks in Nigeria* for IUCN and the American Committee for International Wildlife Protection. Comparison with conditions in the two neighbouring countries of Cameroun and Dahomey, and the records of earlier abundance of Nigerian wildlife, suggest that the wildlife potential of the country is much higher. Destruction of habitats and "continual, severe and generally unregulated hunting" are the main reasons for these losses. In some districts "bushmeat" comprises as much as 90 per cent. of all meat consumed, and shooting is indiscriminate and continual, day and night, throughout the year. Dr. Petrides believes that even today, given effective legislation to control hunting, with enforcement, numbers could be built up again to make the wildlife a renewable resource for meat. The establishment of forest and game reserves and national parks is essential, and he recommends eight national parks, one for each of the major vegetation zones, of which one would be the present Yankari Game Reserve, supplemented by smaller reserves and natural areas. There is one exception to the Nigerian decline in wildlife numbers—the elephant. Laws affecting other species are ignored, but those protecting elephants are enforced, and elephants are to be found in some numbers in suitable habitat—"evidence," as Dr. Petrides says, "that when hunting is controlled even animals which reproduce slowly can survive".

Corrections

We much regret that the statement in *ORYX*, August 1965, that Mr. F. A. Burden, MP, had attempted to introduce a bill to legalise the gassing of badgers was not correct. We are glad to publish this correction knowing that Mr. Burden's only interest is to protect the badger as much as possible.

The address of Captain J. E. Edwards, who is willing to lecture on behalf of the FPS, is 42 Berrylands Road, Surbiton, Surrey.