

## Annual General Meeting

Lord Greenwood PC was the chief speaker and Lord Willingdon, President, took the chair at the Society's annual general meeting on June 13th, which was as usual packed to the doors (and overflowing). Other speakers were the Chairman, Sir Peter Scott; Vice-chairman, Lord Craigton; Hon. Treasurer, Ian Malcolmson; and Hon. Secretary, Richard Fitter.

All the Society's officers were re-elected and three new Council members were elected: Dr Michael Brambell, Jeffery Boswall and Philip Wayre, in place of the retiring members, Sir Berkeley Gage, David James, Mrs Diana Spearman and Dr E. Barton Worthington. The President thanked them warmly for their services. He also praised the staff for their excellent and untiring work throughout the year. The Annual Report and Accounts were approved, and the President especially thanked the Zoological Society who provide us with offices and many facilities.

Two excellent BBC films on Ethiopian wildlife were shown with a commentary by the producer, Jeffery Boswall, and a wine and cheese supper was served. By courtesy of the Zoological Society many members enjoyed a walk round the zoo, the meeting having been arranged on one of their open nights for members—this year a very warm and pleasant one.

### Lord Greenwood

In his speech Lord Greenwood, who is a director of the Commonwealth Development Corporation, commented on the change in the public attitude to conservation in the last ten years. Before that it was thought eccentric to take up parliamentary time to discuss clean air and water, or badger protection. Now the whole world was conscious of the problems. He certainly had never thought twenty years ago that he would live to see the day when there were over 60 species of fish in the Thames. He paid special tribute to Lord Craigton's influential All-Party Parliamentary Conservation Committee, which holds monthly meetings at which specialists speak on conservation problems to interested MPs.

Congratulating the Society on achieving its 70th birthday in December, Lord Greenwood emphasised how its remit had widened from a primarily British Empire, and especially African, one to cover the whole world, not least the British Isles. The first volume of the Society's *Journal*, which did not become *Oryx* until 1950, dealt with problems in the Sudan, British East Africa, South Africa, the Uganda Protectorate, British Central Africa, Egypt and the Somaliland Protectorate. By way of contrast, the current (May) issue of *Oryx* covered the five main continents, featuring Tasmania and Queensland; India, Nepal and Tibet; Sudan, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Zambia and Botswana; Sardinia and Scotland, as well as the United States, Mexico and most of Latin America. Every week our office in the zoo deals with letters and enquiries from all over the world. In a typical week in May letters went to 24 countries on five continents.

The threats to the wildlife of the world have immeasurably

increased since the Society's early days. Not only direct killing by sportsmen and poachers, but a vast development of habitat destruction, and the rapid disappearance of the forests and wetlands of the world are perhaps the gravest threat to wildlife everywhere today.

Though the years the Society had repeatedly drawn attention to these threats. But it had been more than just a watchdog. It had initiated investigations of its own. There was Operation Oryx, when the Society sent an expedition to southern Arabia, with World Wildlife Fund aid, to help save the rare Arabian oryx from extermination by hunters. Enough animals were caught to establish a breeding stock in captivity, in the hope of being able eventually to return some to the wild. The Society now owns eleven oryx, eight male and three female, part of the World Herd of 39 now located at Phoenix Zoo in Arizona and at San Diego Zoo in California. Operation Noah, largely financed by the FPS, rescued thousands of animals from the rising flood waters of Lake Kariba in what was then Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia.

The Society has worked for the establishment and protection of national parks in many parts of the world. The survey of the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania by one of Britain's leading ecologists, the late Prof. W. H. Pearsall, FRS, was sponsored and largely financed by the Society, and resulted in the establishment of this large and important sanctuary for plains game—especially zebra, gazelle and wildebeest. In 1971 the Society, together with WWF, provided the fencing that enabled The Gambia to declare its first nature reserve, the Abuko Reserve, and has recently contributed towards further surveys in various parks.

The Society has actively supported and promoted a number of important Bills in the British Parliament, including the Deer Act of 1963, which for the first time created a close season for deer in England and Wales, and the Animals (Restriction of Importation) Act 1964, which controls endangered species imports into Britain. We helped to procure bans on the importation into Britain of vicuña wool, spotted cat skins and baleen whale products. The Society is greatly concerned with the whole question of trade in endangered species, and Richard Fitter, our Hon. Secretary, played an active part at the Washington Conference on the international convention to control such trade, where he represented IUCN.

The Society's Oryx 100% Fund is the only readily available source of small grants for emergency wildlife conservation operations in any part of the world, and the World Wildlife Fund relies on us to fill this particular gap. This year we have already (June) paid out £6324, benefiting the West African manatee, vicuña, great Indian rhino, Sumatran rhino, mountain gorilla, Indian lion, southern fur seal, black vulture, rockhopper penguin and other sea birds, Galapagos tortoise, green turtle and leathery turtle, in Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Falkland Islands, Galapagos Islands, India, the Mascarene Islands (better known as Mauritius, Madagascar and Réunion), Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sarawak, Spain, Sudan and Sumatra: a dozen species in 14 countries in six months.