

ORYX

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Notes and News

The FPS is organising for its members a guided two-week tour of East African game parks in Kenya and Tanganyika, with an optional third week either to the Uganda parks or to the coast at Malindi. The party will leave

London airport on January 31st, 1966, travelling on a regular East African Airways flight and return on February 14th, or, for those who take the extra time, on February 20th. The itinerary has been carefully planned to give a round tour covering the best of the parks and reserves, and will allow time for unhurried journeys with ample opportunities for photography and quiet watching of wildlife. The optional week at Malindi, on the Indian Ocean, will provide excellent bathing and opportunities for surf riding, underwater swimming and fishing. The Society is arranging for the party to be accompanied by wardens and other experts in African wildlife to explain, comment, identify and advise and generally ensure that the tour is made as rewarding as possible. Many friends of the Society in East Africa have expressed their interest in helping and meeting the members of the party, among them Colonel Mervyn Cowie, John Owen, and F. X. Katete, directors of the national parks in Kenya, Tanganyika, and Uganda; J. H. Fosbrooke, conservator of the Ngorongoro; John Williams, curator of birds at the Cornydon Museum, Nairobi, and Leslie Brown, naturalist and authority on East African wildlife. The cost of the basic tour (fourteen days) will be about £320. A leaflet giving full details will be sent to all members early in the New Year.

The symposium on British mammals and their conservation, organised by the FPS and the Council for Nature and announced in the last issue of ORYX, is to be held in London on March 25th, under the chairmanship of

Lord Porchester, President of the Game Research Association. Mr. E. M. Nicholson, Director-General of the Nature Conservancy, will sum up the discussions. Those invited will include conservationists and sportsmen, naturalists, farmers, foresters, and gamekeepers, the first time representatives of such diverse interests have come together to consider mammals. Now that the role of predatory mammals in the countryside is beginning to be understood, it is widely felt not only that

conservation measures are overdue, but that the climate of public opinion is favourable. Reports of the destruction of badgers in particular, and demands for their protection continue to come into the FPS office.

One of the finest wildlife reserves in Europe, the Coto Donaña at the mouth of the Guadalquivir river in southern Spain, has now been officially established. Bought by the World Wildlife Fund, aided by a substantial contribution from the Spanish Government and smaller ones from other bodies, including the British Ornithologists' Union, the reserve is under the direction of the Spanish biologist and ornithologist, Dr. J. A. Valverde, who will also direct the research station established by the Spanish Government in Seville. Half the Palacio, the substantial hunting lodge of the reserve's former owners, the Gonzalez family, has been bought as well to supply accommodation and laboratories. The FPS has given £25 to start a library. The reserve, which is a breeding place for many rare European birds and other animals, and a wintering place for migratory geese, ducks and other waterfowl, comprises several more or less clearly defined habitats: the marismas (marshes), flooded in winter and spring; the grassland; a large area of more or less dense scrub, with cork oaks in which the birds of prey nest; the pinewoods—stone pines *Pinus pinea*; and the sand dunes, some 300 feet high and the highest in Europe. The seashore is outside the reserve. In the scrub and marshes are many fresh-water lagoons. Birds of prey are numerous—eagles, vultures, kites, hawks, harriers—outstanding being the huge Spanish imperial eagle, and the mammals include another great rarity, the Spanish lynx. Until the necessary building and preparatory work has been done only research workers can be given permits to visit the Coto Donaña, but it is hoped that later there will be arrangements for other visitors.

Full details of the Rhodesian Government's plans for eliminating tsetse flies by "controlled shooting of game" were received by the Society too late to prepare the review of the problem promised in the last issue of *ORYX*, and

**Tsetse
Control in
Rhodesia**

it will appear in a later issue. The present plan in Rhodesia is to control the preferred host species of the tsetse flies—elephant, buffalo, kudu, bushbuck, warthog and wild pig (none of them rare)—in order to create game and cattle free corridors in certain areas from which the flies are apparently spreading and infecting domestic cattle. These areas do not include any formally declared national park or game reserve, but do include the Gona-re-Zhou in the south-east corner of Rhodesia, which has been set aside as an area in which wild animals can find sanctuary. The Society remains opposed to the slaughter of animals as a means of tsetse control. It has never proved to be effective in the long term except in areas subsequently cultivated, and it contravenes all the accepted scientific rules of conservation. The elimination of tsetse by killing game or bush clearing cannot be justified unless the cleared land is subsequently settled by human populations pursuing agricultural activities, and in sufficient density to prevent the re-entry of both game and fly, which the shooting of game has never yet achieved.

The FPS warmly welcomed the setting up at the beginning of the year of a Commission of Inquiry into the St. Lucia Lake in Zululand. For years conservationists have been pressing for an ecological survey of the area and proper planning before any further development of industries, forestry, settlement, and agriculture is allowed to damage it irreparably. A Game Reserve since 1897, it is a wonderfully rich area, consisting of a vast tidal lake system, 60 miles long, with a wealth of fish, breeding colonies of flamingos, pelicans, spoonbills, herons, egrets, ibises, many non-colonial nesting birds, crocodiles and hippos. The delicate balance of nature is governed by the salinity of the water which determines the fish and crustacean populations, and is in turn governed by the tides of the sea, from which the lake is separated by high, tree-covered sand dunes, and the fresh water of the inflowing rivers. In its terms of reference the Commission is required to investigate the alleged threat to the survival of animal and plant life and make recommendations ; to find out what factors are making the water gradually saltier and why ; and to suggest practical measures to eliminate or limit such factors, taking into account all the interests of the region including nature conservation.

News from the newly independent Malawi, formerly Nyasaland, is that "the Government is very interested in wildlife preservation", and the Prime Minister, Dr. Banda, recently showed this interest in a most practical way. Soon after independence, all the water holes in the Lengwe reserve dried up, and a herd of some eighty buffalo and three elephants tried to break out. They were driven back by the surrounding cultivators. The matter was brought to the notice of Dr. Banda, who ordered that a bore-hole should be sunk immediately and the water piped to the nearest water-hole. Within a couple of weeks the bore-hole was producing 1,300 gallons an hour, and the water is being piped 300 yards to the water-hole. Nyala have been seen there, on one occasion a mixed herd of seventeen, and the buffalo and elephants have not tried another break-out. Conservationists are hoping that the Nyika plateau will be declared a national park, and recently Dr. Banda, despite the political upsets at the time, gave up the time to fly over it.

A reserve for coral fish on the Kenya coast has been immediately successful in restoring the dwindling numbers of fish, according to the Kenya Fisheries Report for 1963. Watamu, south of Malindi, had been a favourite ground for spear-fishermen, and the fish population had decreased alarmingly. Moreover the few fish that remained were extremely shy. But within the remarkably short time of two years after the creation of the reserve, not only had the fish increased considerably in both numbers and variety, but they had become so tame it was possible to feed them by hand. A second reserve, the Malindi Coral Gardens, has been made four miles south of Malindi. These brilliantly coloured fish swimming among the coral gardens are an immense tourist attraction, and it is hoped

**Inquiry Into
Threats to
St. Lucia Lake**

**Dr. Banda
Ensures Water
for a Reserve**

**Coral Fish
Recover in a
Reserve**

to have further reserves both north and south of Mombasa to ensure that all the main tourist centres have a reserve nearby. Those not prepared for the excitements of underwater swimming can observe the fish more comfortably from glass-bottomed boats.

The Wild Animal Orphanage started in the Nairobi National Park in the autumn of 1963 at the time of the IUCN meetings in Nairobi, is proving highly successful, and promises to be self-supporting, says the Kenya

**A Popular
Orphanage
in Nairobi**

National Parks Report for 1963. The objects are to save waifs and strays, which would otherwise die, to provide a centre for research, including studies in behaviour, food and diseases, which it is hoped will link up with a projected Field Research Station of the University College of Nairobi, and to help in a programme of conservation education. In the first four months over 30,000 people visited the Orphanage, many of them school children, so that it is already playing its part in interesting young Africans in their wildlife and its conservation. During the year agreement was reached, through the personal intervention of Mr. Stewart Udall, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, to create a national park to protect the Shimba Hills near Mombasa, with the help, it is hoped, of American funds.

An intensive study of all rare and endangered forms of wildlife in the U.S.A. from the ne-ne goose in Hawaii to the polar bear in the Arctic, is to be made by a scientific team in the Fish and Wildlife Service, directed by

**New Wildlife
Study in U.S.**

Daniel H. Janzen. The study is directed "at halting the further disappearance of endangered wildlife", says Stewart L. Udall, Secretary of the Interior. "We hope that with man's aid and understanding the long list of threatened species can be narrowed." On the list to be investigated are thirty-five birds, sixteen mammals, six fish and three reptiles. Between thirty-five and forty birds and mammals have become extinct in the U.S.A. and Puerto Rico (including sixteen birds in Hawaii) in the last 150 years, nearly half of them since 1900.

The proposal to take eggs from the nests of the whooping cranes starting next spring in order to hatch them artificially and establish a captive breeding stock is opposed by the National Audubon Society in the U.S.A.

**Two Views on
Helping the
Whooping
Crane**

The idea, proposed by the U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the Canadian Wildlife Service (both countries are involved because the birds breed in Canada and winter in Texas), involves using helicopters to get to the birds' breeding ground in the muskeg wilderness of Wood Buffalo Park in northern Alberta. The disturbance that this would involve, says Carl Buchheister, president of the Audubon Society in a letter to the Bureau, could cause the cranes to abandon this remote breeding ground, "the safest and most favourable available to them," and it is "highly unlikely that the birds would or could successfully re-nest the same season". He advocates better use of the seven whooping cranes at the New Orleans Zoo for breeding experiments. The

wild whooping cranes, the only wild flock in the world, have built up their numbers slowly from fourteen in 1939 to thirty-two in the spring of 1964. Eight eggs were laid by a whooping crane in New Orleans Zoo this year, but only two hatched, and both chicks died. The Canadian Audubon Society, on the other hand, supports the proposal. They point out that although the cranes have increased in numbers between 1939 and 1964, there has in fact been a drop of two since 1949. They also consider that the fourteen-year breeding experiment in the New Orleans Zoo must be considered to have failed. Moreover, they say, the cranes face so many hazards, from bad weather, gunners, pesticides, power cables on their 2,500-mile migration journeys, and the possibility of severe weather at their breeding time, that the flock might suddenly be decimated in such a way that it could not recover. Clearly if the aims of the programme could be achieved—the establishment over a period of years of a breeding stock of twenty-five birds, the young of which would be released into the wild—conservationists could feel much happier about the future of the whooping crane.

The total protection of the fauna and flora of the Antarctic is one of the recommendations agreed by the representatives of the twelve nations engaged in the Antarctic Treaty negotiations at their meeting last June.

Conservation in the Antarctic The entire area (south of latitude 60°), they recommended, should be treated as a Special Conservation Area, and places of outstanding scientific interest should be listed as Specially Protected Areas, with special restrictions, including the prohibition of all vehicles.

Similarly, there should be a list of Specially Protected Species. Particularly important, in view of the colonial habits of some Antarctic species, such as seals and penguins, is the recommendation that harmful interference with the normal living conditions of any native mammal or bird should be kept to the minimum, for example allowing dogs to run free or helicopters or aircraft to disturb the colonies. The nations concerned are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the U.S.S.R., the United Kingdom and the U.S.A.

During 1964 the Nature Conservancy has declared five important new nature reserves, two in Wales, two in Scotland and one in England. Outstanding among the three new Welsh reserves is SNOWDON (Y

New Nature Reserves in Britain WYDDFA), including about half of the mountain itself, which is the highest in Britain south of the Highlands. It is hoped to include the other half in a later declaration. The Snowdon range is particularly noted for its rich variety of arctic-alpine plants, including *Lloydia serotina*,

which grows nowhere else nearer to Snowdonia than the Alps. In South Wales there is now a new national nature reserve at WHITEFORD, a remote stretch of saltmarsh at the north-west tip of the Gower peninsula in Glamorgan. The Burry estuary here is an important winter haunt of wildfowl. The Conservancy has also declared extensions to two of its other Welsh reserves, Cors Tregaron, Cardiganshire, better known as

Tregaron Bog, and Allt Rhyd-y-Groes, Carmarthenshire, to which has been added 107 acres of valley oakwood, where pied flycatchers and other woodland birds breed. LOCH LEVEN, Kinross-shire, the larger of the two new Scottish national nature reserves, is the most important single freshwater site in the British Isles for breeding and migratory wildfowl, besides being widely famous for its trout fishing. The loch is a staging post on autumn migration for thousands of grey geese, mainly pink-feet but some greylags, and a wintering place for many thousands of duck. Gadwall are among the more interesting breeding species. MEALL NAN TARMACHAN, in the Breadalbane hills north of Loch Tay, Perthshire, shares some of the rich alpine flora for which its neighbour Ben Lawers is famous. LINDISFARNE, Northumberland, immediately takes its place as one of the most important nature reserves in England. Besides the sand dunes of Holy Island, a large area of adjoining sand and mudflats between the island and the mainland and in Budle Bay is included within its boundaries. This too is a most important wintering ground for wildfowl in winter, including whooper swans, grey and brent geese and many wigeon. The light-bellied form of the brent goose is regular nowhere else in Great Britain.

Some interesting facts on visitors' behaviour in the Kruger National Park in South Africa are given in *Koedoe*, in a study made by K. Babich as a result of complaints. At certain observation posts the animals were watched by one scientist, the humans by another. Offences included speeding, getting out of cars—one lady was 50 yards from hers with lions near—leaving the road, and hooting (usually at lions). Lions seemed to provoke the worst behaviour, including throwing oranges at them, turning wirelasses on very loud, whistling and shouting, parking in a cluster of cars close to them and even so close to a kill that the lions left it. One elderly lady lay flat on the ground to photograph flowers—"an excellent target for a hungry predator," as the observer remarked.

**Throwing
Oranges at
the Lions**

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In six months the Chief Conservator of Forests in Kerala, in India, came across the carcasses of thirty-eight elephants, mostly the victims of poisoning by pesticides, some of festered gunshot wounds. With the destruction of their habitat, the elephants feed on cultivated plantations which are sprayed with pesticides to keep them away. Banana clusters similarly sprayed had been left along elephant walks; the elephants were dead at the nearest water-hole to which they had rushed to drink. In Mysore pesticides are accounting for tigers and panthers, and the jungle cats "seem to have been wiped out from the non-sanctuary areas", according to *Animal Citizen*. New wildlife sanctuaries are being created in these states, notably a 40-square mile one in Kerala, around the new lake of the Parambikulam Dam, with "jeepable" roads and watch towers to facilitate the task of the guards.

**Pesticides
Kill
Elephants**

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