

What of the Sudan Game Migration?

SINCE the 1963 UNESCO Mission led by Sir Julian Huxley reported on wildlife conservation in Ethiopia, summarised in *ORYX* (August, 1964), Ethiopia has taken steps to establish a game department with a warden posted in the Maji area of the south west. This should give opportunities of studying the immense and very little known game migration on the Sudan border. Not many people have had the good fortune to witness the fabulous phenomenon of this vast migration, partly because of the remoteness of this corner of the continent (which includes the famous "Ilemi Triangle" of territory unadministered even in the days of the British "Raj", lying between the frontiers of Kenya, Ethiopia and the Sudan), and partly because it is a nearly waterless wilderness of thorn-bush in the dry season and a quagmire of slippery cotton soil in the rains. But in the variety of its larger mammals the region is as rich as the Okavango of Bechuanaland, and may equal, if not exceed, in numbers the famous game movements of the Serengeti. Little has been published about the migration—an account by Cave and Cruikshank in "Sudan Notes and Records" (1940, Vol. 23, p. 341) was the last—and since independence in 1954 there has been nothing.

The migration begins during the month of May when the swamps of the Upper Nile rise, and there is a general movement of animals south-east towards the arid Kenya border. The predominant species are white-eared cob, tiang, and Mongalla gazelle. Zebra, Grant's gazelle, lesser eland and buffalo also move in considerable numbers. Some oryx and smaller numbers of giraffe, waterbuck, and roan antelope go along with the main body, which is of course flanked by lion and the smaller predators. Other rarer game, such as the lesser kudu, occurs in the neighbourhood, but does not take part in the migration. From raised ground I have watched cob resting, like goats in herds, and so numerous that they reached across the entire landscape. Tiang likewise could literally be said to darken the horizon. The usual formations are in long lines, especially with tiang. Cave and Cruikshank estimated one column of cob as 44,000; another column, ten abreast, passed continuously from sunrise to sunset and could not be estimated.

The animals used to have little to fear from the local Tapsa nomadic herdsmen, who barely penetrated so far east with their herds, and were, in any case, not hunters. Marauding tribesmen from the Abyssinian foothills have always been the bugbear with which the administration had to deal. But the days of relatively stable rule have gone and armed deserters and dissident tribesmen of that disturbed province of the Sudan may have further threatened to disrupt the animals. It is to be hoped that air reconnaissance, increasingly employed in East Africa and elsewhere, will be used in these plains 100 miles east of Maji; there is little doubt that neigh-

bouring governments would welcome it. Ethiopian border police patrols in cooperation with the game authorities could report on the extent of armed raiding parties, and ultimately make ground observation from camp in the neighbourhood of Kathangor hill—the best vantage point on the Sudan side of the border.

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NEW MOVES IN INDIA

FOR some time it has been apparent that wildlife preservation in India has not been as successful as was expected when the Indian Board for Wild Life was constituted in 1952, and in April this year the Planning Commission invited a number of leading conservationists (including the writer) from different parts of India to New Delhi to discuss the situation. Their four main recommendations were:

1. Adequate funds must be made available in the Fourth Plan for the effective conservation of wildlife, and, to give impetus to the programme, the schemes envisaged should be centrally sponsored.
2. Policy decisions should be taken on some matters of all-India concern such as uniform legislation; export of wildlife and wildlife products; issue of gun licences and restrictions of manufacture, import and sale of certain types of ammunition; problems concerning tribal and rural welfare *vis-a-vis* wildlife preservation in and near the forests; and patterns for sanctuaries and national parks.
3. A separate Wild Life Division should be constituted in the Ministry of Food & Agriculture, and a Wild Life Circle in each State; and the Standing Committee of the Indian Board for Wild Life should be re-constituted into a smaller body to act not only as the Executive of the IBWL but also as the Technical Advisory Committee to the proposed Wild Life Division.
4. Steps should be taken to improve education and publicity throughout India in wildlife conservation; and an expert scientific inventory of India's wildlife resources including national parks, sanctuaries and equivalent reserves should be made by competent ecologists.

These decisions were endorsed at a meeting in June of the Indian Board for Wild Life, which also made four other important recommendations:

1. That an advanced course on wildlife management be instituted at the Forest Colleges at Dehra Dun.
2. That the manufacture, import and sale of shot gun cartridges of LG and SG type be banned.
3. That the possession and use of harmful insecticides be rigidly controlled and that the matter receive the earnest attention of the Ministry concerned.
4. That India become a full member of IUCN.

It is to be hoped that the Government of India will now accept the recommendations and take the necessary steps to implement them, so that wildlife may receive a higher priority than hitherto.

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