

The Fauna Preservation Society

EDITORIAL NOTES

Woburn Park Week.—The thanks of the Society are due to His Grace The Duke of Bedford, to his agent, Mrs. Osborne Samuel, and to the many helpers from the estate who contributed to making our Society's Week at Woburn Park a success. A further statement will be found under *The Society's Business*.

We have also to acknowledge the help given by the Press— the picture in *The Times* will have been seen by many members—and by the many other organizations who gave us publicity. Several visitors said that they came because they had received our pamphlet from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the spring number of *Bird Notes*.

True Life Films.—We have received from Mr. Walt Disney a letter expressing great interest and sympathy with our work and offering to lend us, for showing to members, his new series of wild life films made under the title of “ True Life Adventure Series ”.

Our Society is most grateful to Mr. Disney for his very kind offer, and arrangements are being made to take advantage of it.

The Aurochs.—We publish on pp. 117–122 an article by Herr Heinz Heck on his work in breeding-back the Aurochs. Herr Heck has carried out similar work in order to reproduce the extinct wild European horse, the Tarpan. Whether or not the results of this fascinating work may rightly be considered to have brought back the identical extinct animals is a matter for scientific pronouncement and beyond our competence.

Macquarie Island.—Readers will remember that the introduction of goats to Macquarie Island was commented upon in *Oryx*, 2. Through the kindness of Dr. G. C. L. Bertram we have now received the following report from Mr. Philip Law, who is in charge of the Australian Antarctic Division, which deals with the Meteorological Station on Macquarie Island:—

“ We placed some goats on Macquarie Island in 1948. They are confined to Wireless Hill and separated from the rest of the island by the isthmus on which the camp is situated. They cannot stray off the hill. We have been watching very

closely their effect upon the flora, and early this year asked the men at the island to begin killing them off. By the end of this year there will be none left."

India.—We are grateful to the Bombay Natural History Society for the following information from the Chief Conservator of Forests, United Provinces :—

"The Inner Circle of Nanda Devi has been declared a Sanctuary and is under the Commissioner of Kumaun Division. The area of the Sanctuary is 125 square miles and it comprises the catchment area of the Rishi Ganga above its junction with the Bagin Gal. The area is a natural sanctuary because it is surrounded on all sides by high peaks and mountains. As no shooting at all is permitted in the area it will be a sanctuary for all species of hill birds and animals. Entrance to the sanctuary is almost impossible except for a well-equipped expedition especially trained in mountaineering."

Singapore.—We note with pleasure the setting aside of some six Nature Reserves to preserve the indigenous fauna and flora of the Colony. These reserves total about 14 square miles and are to be administered by a Board of seven trustees.

Included are the two Forest Reserves of Pandan and Kranji, which are mangrove areas; they contain many species of orchids which, although they appear to have become extinct, may reappear in the process of regeneration of the mangrove.

South Africa.—We are gratified to learn from the Director of Information, South Africa House, of the recent progress of wild life conservation in South Africa. In the article published on pp. 149–152 reporting this progress, the need for the appointment of zoologists, botanists, and ecologists to the administration of National Parks is stressed. While not disputing the need for scientific advice in National Parks, we consider that there is a danger that the income of a National Park might be spent not on the welfare of the animals nor even the comfort of visitors but largely upon the upkeep of a top-heavy bureaucratic administration. We would stress the words of the architect of the Kruger National Park, Lieut.-Colonel J. Stevenson-Hamilton, "Keep it simple, keep it wild."

Dr. R. Bigalke, Director of the National Zoological Gardens, Pretoria, was kind enough to send us twenty copies of *Fauna and Flora*, an official publication of the Transvaal Provincial Administration. These were distributed at the February General Meeting of the Society and very much appreciated. The booklet

contains an historical introduction on Wild Life Conservation in South Africa, by Dr. Bigalke, followed by a description of the National Parks and Reserves. There is a good map.

Mr. Quentin Keynes, a Life Member of our Society, has recently toured South-West Africa in an attempt to discover the truth or otherwise of rumours of the Quagga. Unfortunately, his results confirm the reports of the inquiry reported in *S.P.F.E. Journal*, No. XXXIX, of April, 1940. There seems no hope of the continued existence of the Quagga.

We welcome the Natal Parks Game and Fish Preservation Board as a member of our Society.

New Zealand.—This number of *Oryx* contains the promised article from Mrs. Perrine Moncrieff upon the native birds of New Zealand. As a means of comparison there is also a review of Dr. K. A. Wodzicki's book on the introduced mammals.

The Wild Cat.—Professor Zeuner's article in *Oryx* 2 aroused much interest and we have received the following comment from one of our members, Captain W. E. Johns, of Grantown-on-Spey :—

“ There is no fear of the Scottish Wild Cats becoming extinct. They flourish in the new forestry plantations which for years are impenetrable jungles. One on my land covers 1,000 acres and it is impossible to get into it. From tracks on snow I know that it provides sanctuary for every wild beast of Scotland. Domestic cats go astray constantly. In three generations, no matter what colour they may be, they are back to tabby ; and in four generations they are practically ‘ wild ’. The true ‘ wild ’ is not uncommon.”

Red Deer.—On 13th June the Earl of Haddington asked in the House of Lords whether the Government were aware of the increase of deer poaching in the Highlands of Scotland by unscrupulous gangs for profit, resulting in much wanton suffering to the animals. The noble Earl suggested that poaching acts should be amended to include deer as “ game ”, that there should be a close season for deer, and that a licence to sell venison should be made compulsory.

Lord Saltoun asked whether the Government were aware that the herds of deer were assaulted with tommy guns and animals sent away to die with bullets in kidneys or liver, and whether such cruelty did not deserve immediate action by the Government.

In his answers the Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works (Lord Morrison), admitted that there was some killing

and wounding of deer by night poachers, and that assaults with tommy guns had been reported by one Chief Constable to be somewhat widespread and by others as only occasional. Lord Morrison said that the Report of the Committee on Cruelty to Wild Animals had been received and would be published, probably before the end of the month, and added that all the points raised were covered, including that regarding the sale of venison.

The Marquess of Willingdon, President of our Society, then asked whether the Government were aware that the same opportunities for deer poaching and cruelty existed in England as in Scotland, and whether the Report soon to be published would cover both countries.

Lord Morrison replied that the Committee on Cruelty to Wild Animals was a joint committee for England and Scotland, and that the Report would deal with both countries.

Our President's question was perhaps inspired by reports which have been reaching our Society about the Red Deer on Exmoor.

The reports come, roughly speaking, from two sources and are contradictory. The one complains that, owing to the high price of venison, poaching is flagrant and conducted mercilessly with snares and shot guns; even the newly born fawns, it is said, are sought because their spotted skins fetch £5 in the market. Wounded and crippled deer are often to be seen. Besides the cruelty involved in all this, we are told that the deer are rapidly decreasing—an almost inescapable conclusion if the reports we have received are not exaggerated.

Our other source of information, while agreeing that there is poaching, states that it has not reached anything like the proportions complained of, that in fact it would not be possible for it to do so because of the impossibility of removing the carcass of a deer in country with the comparatively thick human population of Exmoor; that the deer population is not decreasing, not at least to any noticeable extent.

Further information is necessary, and our Society would be grateful for reports from members.

Note.

The Report of the Committee on Cruelty to Wild Animals, H.M. Stationery Office, Cmd. 8226, was published on 27th June. It is a hundred page book of great value to those interested in British mammals. Among the general recommendations is one

that all wild animals should be brought under the Protection of Animals Acts. Field sports should continue.

Regarding Red Deer: Hunting should continue as a valuable means of control. If it were stopped the deer would be destroyed, as a pest, by means involving more suffering than does hunting. All snaring of deer should be prohibited. Deer should be brought within the poaching acts of 1828, 1844, and 1862. In Scotland a close season should be imposed to include the sale of venison.

The Red Deer population of Exmoor before the war was about 2,000; it is now about 600. Strict control is necessary to keep numbers within the feeding capacity of the land, but there may be some truth in the suggestion that the damage done by Red Deer on Exmoor is greatly exaggerated.

THE BREEDING-BACK OF THE AUROCHS

By HEINZ HECK, Director of the Tierpark Hellabrunn, Munich
(Translated by Miss Winifred Felce)

Every lover of nature regrets that man has exterminated so many kinds of animals or that these have lost their means of living and become extinct through changes brought about on the earth's surface to meet Man's increasing needs.

Happily, however, there exist two methods of breeding, which we will call "new-breeding" and "breeding-back", which put tools into our hands for resurrecting extinct species. In "breeding-back" the aim is to direct the race back to a common ancestor; in "new-breeding" the process is directed forwards. Let us consider an example of the latter. The African steppe zebras¹ used to extend from Cape Colony northwards through the East African plains to the mountainous country of Abyssinia. Over this wide area of distribution the steppe zebras developed into a number of varieties with different striping. Thus, the steppe zebras of the Cape, the Quaggas, showed zebra striping only on the neck and the head and were otherwise of uniform colouring; further north were zebras that had few stripes on their bodies, then came some with the body more pronouncedly striped but with light, unstriped legs, and finally the most northerly representative of the steppe zebras, heavily striped

¹ "Steppe zebra" is a term coined by Heinz Heck to denote the horse-like zebras—Quagga, Burchell's, Chapman's, Boehm's, Grant's—now (with the exception of the extinct Quagga) generally known as Burchell's Zebra.—*Translator's note.*