

## John A. Burton

John Burton's stint of 13 years with FFPS, the last six of them in the new office of Executive Secretary, represents a notable stage in the Society's progress. His special genius was finding good new projects, and the Mountain Gorilla, Mediterranean Monk Seal and Scimitar-horned Oryx projects, all in the Society's overseas tradition, were all in greater or lesser degree his initiatives. He then turned to repairing the Society's relative neglect of conservation at home since the Seal Conservation Act was born at a meeting in its offices. The present thriving Bat and Herpetofauna projects were the result. His last major project for the Society, the appointment of a Botanical Conservation Officer, returned to the overseas field and produced a fine study of the illicit bulb trade from Turkey. This project benefited from John's other great strength, his expertise on international trade in endangered species. His position with the Society had already enabled him to launch IUCN/SSC's Traffic Group—few people now realize FFPS's close links with Traffic's beginnings.

We are all greatly in debt to John for all that he has done for FFPS over the years, and also, of course, to his wife Vivien, both for her staunch support of John and for all that she herself has done for the Society. For years she was the mainstay of the office, the one who knew everything and everybody, and latterly she has been running the trading company.

*Richard Fitter*

## Revised membership subscriptions

The FFPS last increased its membership subscriptions in 1982. In recent years we have resisted raising them again, despite the steadily rising costs of supporting our conservation activity and of producing *Oryx*. The Society's increased membership has helped boost our income to a certain extent, but recruiting members and providing them with a service costs money too.

At the Extraordinary General Meeting on 23 May the following new subscription rates were agreed: Standard Membership (receiving *Oryx*) £20.00; Associate Membership (not receiving *Oryx*) £10.00; Concessionary Membership (students, 246

senior citizens and unemployed) £12.00; Family Membership £25.00; Benefactor Membership (no change) £35.00; Life Membership (no change) £1000. They are effective from 1 October.

We hope you will continue to support us so that we can continue our essential conservation work. If you are a UK taxpayer you can increase the value of your subscription by 25 per cent (current rate of standard income tax) at no extra cost to you by signing a Deed of Covenant. There is a form in this issue of *Oryx*.

## GAYE and PAYE

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is keen to give away as much as he can in the form of tax concessions to charities. The Give As You Earn scheme now enables anyone on PAYE to make regular payments to a charity of his or her own choice, up to a maximum of £240 per annum completely free of tax. So if your highest rate of tax is 25p in the pound you could, for example, arrange to have £15 per month deducted from your wages, which would produce £20 per month for the Society. If part of your income is taxed at a higher rate, then £20 to the Society will cost even less.

If a scheme like this appeals to you we will happily supply full details, or you can get full details of the Payroll Giving Scheme from a local tax office or your employer. So far only 2000 employers run such schemes, but you can always ask yours to start one! Of course, if you can convince your spouse, father, mother, uncle, aunt, or your colleagues to join up then the gorillas, bats, monk seals, amphibians and reptiles will be particularly grateful.

*John Gooders*

## Oryx 100% Fund grants

At its Meeting on 15 June the FFPS Council agreed funding from the Oryx 100% Fund for the following projects.

**£500** for an investigation into the status, distribution and exploitation of the Madagascan side-necked turtle *Erymnochelys madagascariensis*. It is the only living member of its genus and is listed

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by IUCN as 'indeterminate'. Recent studies suggest that it is increasingly threatened by habitat destruction and the current management policy, which allows immature turtles to be captured for food.

**£500** to the Okomu Forest Project in Bendel State, Nigeria. At present several forms of exploitation are operating, most of them destructive to the ecosystem. This project hopes to show that sustained yield exploitation, collection of forest products, domestication of certain forest species and the use of natural lakes for fish farming are both ecologically and economically the best use of the land.

**£500** to the University College London Nigeria Expedition. The team will concentrate on conservation education, providing material and advice on how the Okomu Forest can be exploited at a sustainable level. Nigerian students will be closely involved and will be trained to carry on the work. The expedition members will also assist research to contribute to the Okomu Sanctuary Management Plan being drawn up by the Nigerian Conservation Foundation.

**£500** to assess the status and distribution of the giant fruit bat *Pteropus livingstonei*, with a view to creating a protected areas system and establishing a captive breeding population at the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust. The bat is endemic to the Comoro Islands in the Indian Ocean, but its distribution is uncertain and its population is estimated at only 100–200.

**£500** to the Gola Forest Project in Sierra Leone. Gola Forest is one of the seven most important remaining areas of the Upper Guinea Forest block, but parts are suffering from intensive logging and hunting. The team will assess the status and distribution of Red Data Book birds, concentrating on the white-breasted guineafowl *Agelastes meleagrides*, one of the most endangered birds in continental Africa.

**£300** for an evaluation of visitor attitudes to, and pressure on, Morrocoy National Park on the northern coast of Venezuela. The park, an extensive lagoon with mangroves, coral reefs and islands, is subject to heavy pressure from uncontrolled tourism. A survey will also set up permanent transects for future monitoring.

**£300** to assist in research for a butterfly farm on the Shipstern Wildlife Reserve in Belize. The reserve was set up to demonstrate that commercial exploitation of wilderness areas need not destroy them. Its first commercial project is to export live butterfly pupae to butterfly houses in the UK, and the researchers will compile lists of large moths suitable for display and identify infections present in the butterflies at the farm.

**£300** to an Oxford University Expedition to Woodlark Island, Papua New Guinea, to study the endemic Woodlark Island cuscus *Phalanger lullulae*, which is vulnerable to disturbance from commercial logging and proposed mining operations. The team will attempt to determine its population size and behavioural ecology, identify the best areas for reserves, and involve local people as much as possible in a conservation plan.

**£300** to the University of Bristol Expedition to the Tioman Archipelago, Malaysia, to undertake a multi-disciplinary study encompassing faunal inventories of two islands and a herpetological and vegetation survey of the mountain, Gunung Kajang. While on the mountain members hope to locate two species of *Rafflesia*, whose abundance is unknown, and the slow loris *Nycticebus coucang insularis*, which has not been seen on Pulau Tioman for over 30 years.

**£250** for a study of the volcano rabbit *Romerolagus diazi*, which is endemic to pine/bunch grass habitat in two volcanic areas south and south-east of Mexico City. The populations are declining because of overgrazing and burning of the habitat. The study is part of a conservation project started in 1983 and will identify the species's habitat requirements, assess its social behaviour and produce educational material.

**£250** for a survey of agroforestry systems and forms of shifting cultivation in Dominica. The effects of these kinds of land use on the rural population and the rain forest will be evaluated, and alternative forms of exploitation will be investigated. A booklet promoting small-scale agroforestry in the region will be produced, and it is hoped that this will help towards protecting forest habitat for many species, particularly the imperial parrot *Amazona imperialis* and red-necked parrot *A. arausiaca*.

**£200** to the University of East Anglia St Vincent Whistling Warbler Expedition. Working closely with St Vincent government authorities, the team will study the endemic whistling warbler *Catheropeza bishopi*, investigating distribution, status and behaviour, and identifying the most appropriate areas for a reserve.

### Bat Project news

The partnership set up in 1987 between the Nature Conservancy Council, the Vincent Wildlife Trust and the FFPS was renewed in April for a further year. As well as the important task of co-ordinating and maintaining liaison with the UK's 70 or so local bat groups, a major thrust is being made to persuade the building trade and associated industries to consider the effects their activities have on bats and to adapt their practices to ensure they do as little damage as possible. The main problems are building work and renovations that might exclude or entomb bats, timber treatment using highly toxic chemicals fatal to bats, and cavity-wall insulation.

Among the many publications relating to bats that the FFPS produced last year was a booklet, *Bats in Houses*, which highlighted the importance of buildings as bat roosts, the kinds of situations used for access and roosting, and the ways in which buildings might be improved for bats. Other publications produced in 1987 were described in the Annual Report.

At the end of March, Joan Tait left the Project. She had spent two years as Assistant Bat Conservation Officer, concentrating on educational and publicity aspects of the work. Her replacement, George Bemment, joined the FFPS staff in June.

### Desert tortoise conservation

The FFPS Herpetofauna Programme continues to support the conservation of the desert tortoise *Gopherus agassizii* in south-western USA. The staff herpetologist, Tom Langton, has made three visits to California during the last 18 months and has helped to initiate new fund-raising and public awareness campaigns, as well as habitat conservation measures under the aus-



*Bats in Houses* is available from the FFPS, 83 North Street, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 1ZA, price 60p.

pices of the Desert Tortoise Lifeline Fund. The advisory board of this Fund assists the long-running efforts of the award-winning, non-profit organization, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC).

A full-time Executive Director was appointed in June 1987 and since then he has obtained pledges of considerable sums including US\$100,000 from the California Environmental License Plate Fund. An armed ranger has been appointed to work in the Desert Tortoise Natural Area, a 91-sq-km tortoise stronghold in the Mojave Desert. The FFPS now has strong links with the DTPC, the Bureau of Land Management and many other bodies and individuals concerned with the desert tortoise, and looks forward to helping with continuing progress.

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(LEFT) (From left to right) Lee Durrell, Gerald Durrell and Don Reid, Project Officer for the Madagascar Tortoise Recovery Programme, by an information board, which was sponsored by the FFPS, in the tortoise nursery in the tortoise village at Gonfaron (*Tom Langton*). (RIGHT) (From left to right) Lee Durrell, Gerald Durrell and Ian Swingland with a Hermann's tortoise in the tortoise village (*Tom Langton*).

## Salamander success

The tunnels installed by FFPS Inc. in co-operation with Massachusetts Audubon Society and ACO Polymer Company Inc. (see *Oryx* 22, 132–133) at Amherst, Massachusetts, USA, have proved successful in their first year. On the first night of the spring migration 85 per cent of spotted salamanders *Ambystoma maculatum* active that night went through the tunnel.

## New UK toad tunnel

As part of the continuing FFPS 'Toads on Roads' campaign, the UK's second toad tunnel was opened in March near Stamford Bridge, Humberside. Thousands of toads have been killed here each year as they crossed the Fangfoss minor road one mile south of Stamford Bridge. Pressure from local naturalists resulted in two toad tunnels being installed by Humberside County Council Technical Services Department, with support from ACO Polymer Products Ltd and the Society.

## Tortoise village opens

On 28 May Gerald and Lee Durrell, FFPS Vice-President and Council Member, respectively, formally opened a juvenile tortoise hatchery at the 'tortoise village' headquarters of the Station d'Observation et de Protection des Tortues des Maures. (See *Herpetofauna News*, 11, April 1988.) On a weekend of fierce Provencal storms, FFPS news

the clouds broke and in brilliant sunshine over 600 local people and some from further afield visited the village, and considerable amounts were donated towards the project. The village will soon be completed, and is the culmination of three years' development, partly using FFPS funds to help it become self-supporting.

The village will act as a central focus for the numerous challenges facing the conservation of tortoises and their habitats in the South of France.

FFPS would like to pass on particular thanks to John Osbourne of Osbourne's of Rendham, Suffolk, for his kind loan of vehicles to the project.

*Tom Langton*

## Success with Mallorcan midwife toads

In 1985 a grant from the *Oryx* 100% Fund helped Simon Tonge from Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust to travel to Mallorca to collect some Mallorcan midwife toads *Alytes muletensis* for a captive breeding programme (*Oryx*, 20, 74–78). He captured four adults and four tadpoles and, although one tadpole died very soon and one adult did not make it through the first winter, the remaining six flourished in captivity.

Disappointingly no breeding occurred and it was feared that all the toads were male—the species is very hard to sex accurately. Then, in 1987, Joan Mayol, who lives in Mallorca, brought over a further 12 tadpoles. Eight matured into healthy adults and, in the hope that some would be the urgently needed females, they were introduced





A male midwife toad *Alytes muletensis* with a clutch of eggs, 2–3 days old, at Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust (*Quentin Bloxam*).

to the original colony early this year. Success was achieved. At least three of the new toads have proved to be females and on 16 May one male was seen carrying a clutch of eggs. By 20 July nine clutches had been produced and so far 49 tadpoles have hatched; and there is still one more clutch to go.

The reptile section at Jersey is delighted. Now there is the possibility of expanding the captive breeding programme to other collections and also the opportunity to return some young toads to Mallorca if the authorities there wish.

## FFPS Equipment Appeal

The Society is most grateful to all members who responded to the equipment appeal in the April issue of *Oryx*. We received a marvelous selection of extremely useful items including binoculars, cameras, screens, projectors, cassette and tape recorders, a telescope and an aneroid barometer. Several items have already found their way overseas and the others will be passed on as the appropriate need arises. Thank you particularly to those who responded anonymously.

## Members' meetings

Details of London meetings, held at the Zoological Society of London's meeting rooms, are given in the insert in this issue of *Oryx*.

Some local group meetings are listed below; 250

others are also being arranged, but full details were not available when going to press. For information about additional meetings please write to the address given for each group, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

## Bristol and the West of England Group

24 November, 7.30 p.m. at Bristol Zoo. Dr Roger Jones will give a talk illustrated with slides and film entitled 'Exploring the Atlantic Ocean'. Tickets £3.00, including a wine and cheese buffet.

Ian Redmond, c/o BBC Wildlife Magazine, Broadcasting House, Whiteladies Road, Bristol BS8 2LR.

## Cambridge Group

21 October. 'How to Grow a Tropical Forest', with Dr Jeremy Cherfas, scientist, author and broadcaster.

\*25 November (with Cambridge Natural History Society). 'An Evening with David Shepherd'. David Shepherd, artist and conservationist will speak. (Presented in association with the David Shepherd Conservation Foundation for Wildlife and the Environment.)

17 February 1989 (with Cambridge Natural History Society and Cambridge Wildlife Trust). 'Lead and Swans—the Real Story' with Dr Jane Sears and Dr Chris Spray, scientists from Oxford University and Anglia Water, respectively.

5 May 1989. 'One for All and All for One' or 'Meerkats United' with Dr David MacDonald of Oxford University.

Meetings are held at the Department of Zoology, New Museums Site, Downing Street, Cambridge, and start at 6.00 p.m. with a buffet supper with wine (cost £3.00 only by pre-booked ticket, available from Dr Sandy Harcourt, LARG, Department of Zoology, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EJ). Talks start at 7.30 p.m., at which attendance is free.

\*Talk starts at 7.00 p.m.

## Oxford Group

David MacDonald, Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS.

## North-West Group

Nick Ellerton, Chester Zoo, Caughall Road, Upton, Chester CH2 1LH.

## Edinburgh Group

24 November. A joint meeting with the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. Professor Paul Racey, University of Aberdeen, will talk on 'Bats at Home and Abroad' at 7.30 p.m. in the Lecture Theatre, Education Centre, Edinburgh Zoo. Cost 40p including coffee.

Mrs Ingrid Stewart, Edinburgh Zoo, Murrayfield, Edinburgh EH12 6TS.

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