

# The Fauna Preservation Society

MARCH, 1955

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

*International Union for the Protection of Nature*—We congratulate Monsieur Jean-Paul Harroy on his appointment as governor of Ruanda Urundi in the Belgian Congo. This province includes the Parc National de la Kagera and the south-east corner of the Parc National Albert. Here, where the Congo meets Uganda, is the home of the mountain gorilla. It enjoys sanctuary on both sides of the boundary.

No successor to Monsieur Harroy as Secretary-General of the Union has yet been appointed.

A most important new activity is being launched by the Union. It is sending an American ecologist, Mr. Lee Merriam Talbot, on a four months' visit to south Asia. This is on behalf of the Survival Service which is concerned with the preservation of animals threatened with extermination.

Starting in April this year, Mr. Talbot will visit the Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, India, Burma and Indonesia. He will study the status and preservation of the Syrian and Nubian wild asses, the Arabian and the scimitar oryx, the lion in India and the three species of Asiatic rhinoceros. In the countries he visits Mr. Talbot will meet those concerned with nature conservation and will discuss with them means by which the Union can help them in their problems.

*Great Britain*.—Four new nature reserves have been declared by the Nature Conservancy.

Cwm Idwal, in the heart of the Snowdonia national park and the first nature reserve in Wales, has an area of 984 acres. Its volcanic rocks carry a flora dating from immediately after or perhaps even before the latest Ice Age. Green spleenwort, lloydia, purple saxifrage, water lobelia and quill-wort are found.

Blelham Bog an area of five acres, three and a half miles south-west of Ambleside, is a rare example of the development of sphagnum bog from wet willow woodland. Great sundew, white beak sedge and many interesting bog mosses are to be found, and also a very rare caddis fly, *Limnephilus xanthodes*.

Hartland Moor, an area of 178 acres in Dorset, is a habitat of the rare Dorset heath and other bog plants. Arne, nine acres, also in Dorset, shows the natural transition from dry woodland to salt marsh—a brackish tidal condition. It contains the royal fern, *Osmunda regalis*.

The Nature Conservancy has also declared an extension to Bridgewater Bay reserve in Somerset, by the inclusion of Steart Island, an area of thirty acres. It is the roosting place of hundreds of wild geese, mainly whitefronts and, with the rest of the reserve, is the only known British gathering place of moulting sheld duck.

Further information about these reserves may be obtained from The Nature Conservancy, 19 Belgrave Square, London, S.W. 1.

We are pleased to read in the annual report of the Council for the Promotion of Field Studies of the progress made during the past year and of the improvement in the Council's financial position. Total bookings at the four field centres, Dale Fort, Flatford Mill, Juniper Hall and Malham Tarn, amounted to 4,735 unit weeks. Courses were given in Geography, Botany, Biology, Ornithology and other subjects. Students came from the senior forms of schools, universities and the general public. Individual visitors are encouraged. The address of the Council, whose membership is open to all for an annual fee of 5s., is Balfour House, 119 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C. 2.

*Germany.*—We are pleased to hear that the destruction of moulting sheld duck, during bombing practice on Knechtsand reported in 1954, will this year be avoided. Discussions between the Secretary of State for Air and the Chairman of the British Section of the International Committee for Bird Preservation have resulted in agreement to use only practice bombs with no blast effect.

*Ceylon.*—We hear with great regret of the death of Mr. A. C. Tutein Nolthenius, who has worked unceasingly for the preservation of wild life in Ceylon.

His personality and drive were never more needed than now, when Ceylon's reputation as an example to Asiatic countries in proper nature conservation seems to be in jeopardy. We read in *Loris*, the journal of the Game and Fauna Protection Society, of the Government's proposal to plant a human population within the Wilpattu National Reserve. This follows reductions and eliminations in other reserves that have taken place in recent years. It is the sort of thing which will continue to happen when, as in Ceylon, all reserves including national parks, come

directly under a government department and can be altered and even abolished at the order of the Minister.

Mr. Nolthenius realized the necessity of an independent body between Government and the parks—the Board of Trustees of other countries—and in his favourable position as a member of the Ceylon parliament urged the formation of a National Trust to take over responsibility both for historic sites and nature reserves.

At a general meeting of our Society in 1950 Mr. Nolthenius showed his film “Wanagatha Ahlaya” (Love of the Wild) and afterwards most kindly gave a copy to the film library.

*India.*—All nature lovers in India and very many besides will be sorry to hear of the death of the Maharaj Rana of Dholpur. He had made of his State a true sanctuary for both bird and beast.

*Australia.*—Two new reserves have been established in New South Wales. The first, Cabbage Tree Island off Port Stephens, is dedicated to the great naturalist John Gould and receives his name. This is one of the very few known breeding places of Gould's Petrel, *Pterodroma leucoptera*, and the only breeding place of the typical race, *P. l. leucoptera*. The other race, *P. l. masafuerae*, breeds only in the Fiji Islands and Masafuera, Juan Fernandez.

The second reserve is an area of 665 acres on the Bulga-Comboyne plateau and has been given the aboriginal locality name of Boorganna. Here lyre birds, brush turkeys, fruit pigeons and the platypus are found.

The vigilance of honorary rangers has proved very effective in curbing destruction of wild life. Fortunately prosecutions are seldom necessary, but during the past year eighteen people were prosecuted under the Fauna Protection Act. In some cases heavy fines were imposed. A man was fined £50 for trapping protected birds and two men who illegally shot kangaroos were each fined £30.

In Western Australia the appointment of honorary wardens is proving its value. To mention a single instance, one warden reported that black swans and wild duck were being killed by crashing into high tension electric cable, newly erected across an established flight line. Aluminium discs treated with luminous paint were suspended on the cables, and no further casualties were reported.