

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1955.

*Presented by the Council to the Annual General Meeting,
17th April, 1956.*

Vice-Presidents.—The Society suffered the great loss of Mr. Alfred Ezra, O.B.E., who died at the age of 82, after having been a vice-president for seventeen years.

Sir T. Shenton Thomas, G.C.M.G., O.B.E., was elected a vice-president on the 4th April.

The Society's Activities.—Notable achievements during the year were the success of the two lectures by Mr. James Fisher at the Royal Festival Hall, in conjunction with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and Mr. Mervyn Cowie's lecture tour in England, Scotland and Wales. Mr. Cowie's report is given in full below. Among many other activities three call for special mention.

1. *Nyasaland.*—On 29th August, Mr. G. D. Hayes, Secretary of the Nyasaland Fauna Preservation Society, addressed Council on the proposal for a nature reserve or national park on the Nyika plateau, often mentioned in *Oryx*. As the project depends partly on the extent of the land requirements for afforestation of the Colonial Development Corporation, an interview with the Corporation was arranged for Mr. Hayes and the Secretary to discuss a memorandum prepared by the Society.

The Corporation have undertaken to inform the Society as soon as their requirements on the Nyika are definitely known and to co-operate in the formation of a reserve in so far as is consistent with their public obligations.

2. *Northern Rhodesia.*—The Society is particularly concerned for the preservation of the red lechwe, whose best hope for survival lies in making a permanent sanctuary at Lochinvar Ranch on the Kafue flats. So far discussions have not borne fruit, although the present owners are keeping the ranch as a game reserve. Mr. I. D. Malcolmson, an officer of the Society, will be visiting both Northern and Southern Rhodesia early in 1956. He will make a special visit to the ranch and will do everything he can to promote this project.

3. *Southern Rhodesia.*—The report mentioned in the August *Oryx*, of the independent commission on tsetse fly, set up by the Federal Government, was received in January, 1956. It did not recommend that the game slaughter policy should be stopped

immediately, but it did call for immediate action to set up adequate game reserves.

The Society has asked Mr. A. D. Fraser, Chief Game Warden, for his suggestions and hopes to be able to make an effective contribution to their success. It is hoped that Mr. Malcolmson, when he is in Southern Rhodesia, will be able to help in this matter also.

Accounts.—Members will notice that a reserve fund has now been established. This was made possible by a most generous donation of \$10,000 from the Society's vice-president, Dr. Van Name, to whom we are deeply grateful.

Meetings.—There were two ordinary general meetings, the Annual General Meeting and three meetings at the Royal Festival Hall.

There were four ordinary meetings of Council and a special meeting to hear Mr. M. H. Cowie's report of his lecture tour.

The Journal.—The usual three issues of *Oryx* were published.

International Conference.—The following delegates were appointed to the Fifth General Assembly of the International Union for the Protection of Nature to be held at Edinburgh in June, 1956: Captain Keith Caldwell, Miss Mary Huntly, Mr. Ian Menzies, Miss Frances Perry, The Secretary.

Kindred Societies.—Throughout the year the Society kept in touch with kindred societies in many parts of the world. The Society is represented by the Secretary on the British Section of the International Committee for Bird Preservation, the British Committee for International Nature Conservation, the Oil Pollution Committee, and the Survival Committee of the International Union for the Protection of Nature.

Covenants and Bankers' Orders.—The letter asking all ordinary members who did not already do so to pay their subscriptions under deed of covenant and by banker's order, resulted in 25 new deeds and many bankers' orders. This means an increased annual income of about £30 and considerable saving in office work and stationery. The Society is extremely grateful to the 249 members who, on 31st December, 1955, were paying subscriptions under Deed.

Acknowledgments.—The Council desires to express its thanks to Mr. Maurice Wilson for his painting of ibex for the Christmas card; to Mr. James Fisher and Mr. Roger Tory Peterson for two lectures at the Royal Festival Hall with Mr. Peterson's film "Wild America"; to Mr. Mervyn Cowie, Mr. Bernard Kunicki, Mr. Peter Scott, Mr. Desmond Hawkins, Mr. George Waterston, Mrs. Rosemary Russell and Mr. Bernard Slydel

for all they did to make Mr. Cowie's lecture tour a success; to those who lectured and showed films at general meetings; to contributors to *Oryza*, including Mr. Ian Menzies for his work on maps, and to many other helpers, not forgetting Mr. John Wood for his drawing for the programme of "Wild America". Special thanks are due to the Zoological Society of London for office accommodation and for the unstinted help given by the Society's staff throughout the year.

Publicity.—During 1955 a great effort was made to draw public attention to the Society and its work. As has already been mentioned, two meetings were held in the Royal Festival Hall in co-operation with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. On each occasion the Hall was filled to overflowing to hear Mr. James Fisher speak and to see Mr. Roger Tory Peterson's film "Wild America". These meetings were followed by a successful lecture tour by Mr. Mervyn Cowie, Director of the Royal National Parks of Kenya. At each of his fourteen lectures Mr. Cowie spoke most movingly of the need for immediate action if the wild life of Africa was to be preserved, and illustrated his talks by the film "Nature's Dominion", which was specially made for the tour and lent by its maker Mr. Kunicki. Mr. Cowie's report follows.

A LECTURE TOUR IN BRITAIN

By M. H. COWIE

Director, The Royal National Parks of Kenya

ORIGIN

The idea of trying to increase interest in East African wild life originated at a General Meeting of the Fauna Preservation Society which I addressed in November, 1954, and at which I contended that the problems of preservation were now becoming so great that the Fauna Preservation Society should undertake a campaign, designed essentially to focus attention on the urgency of a change of heart. The penalty for making such a suggestion was, of course, that I was asked, there and then, by the President, Secretary and members of the Council to consider showing a film and giving a lecture at the Festival Hall in London a year later. The idea developed into an extended lecture tour to include many provincial centres.

PLAN

The plan as it was originally conceived followed the pattern of the very successful lectures arranged at the Royal Festival Hall by the Fauna Preservation Society and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, working in conjunction. The Society (and I agreed) believed that the facts of wild life extermination in East Africa should, in like manner, be brought to the notice of as many people as possible.

APPROVAL

Authority for me to proceed to Britain and to charge the National Parks funds with the cost of a return passage was given by the Trustees of the Royal National Parks of Kenya.

FILM

It has been obvious to me for a number of years, and I am now more convinced than ever, that the wild animal can speak with more conviction and make a greater impression than any human word whether spoken or written. For this reason, and again with the approval of the Trustees under the heading of Overseas Projection Plan, I made use of a film taken by Mr. Bernard Kunicki in the Royal National Parks of Kenya, which was a first-class achievement in wild animal photography. I proceeded to London at the end of September, and spent the first few weeks huddled with Mr. Kunicki in a backroom off Sloane Square where, between us, we pieced the film sequences together in accordance with a prearranged theme, and then decided on a commentary. The theme I outlined in the beginning of 1955 was that the first part of the picture should depict the abundance of wild life as it used to be before the intervention of civilized man, at the same time touching on some of the hazards of existence imposed on these creatures by the harsh rules of nature. At that point there should be introduced the hazards of existence imposed by man and featuring the African poacher as the greatest destroyer of wild life. Finally, the film should lead to scenes of peace as they can still be found in certain national parks and reserves, displaying in particular spectacular animals such as Mohamed of Marsabit and Gertie of Amboseli, to indicate how, under a system of total protection, such amazing creatures can still survive.

The difficulties of putting such a film together and adding a synchronized commentary and music were far greater than I ever imagined, but I concluded from the start that it would

not be possible to undertake something like 20 lectures, each lasting 1½–2 hours, and hold the attention of an audience with a spontaneous commentary and address. On the good advice of Mr. Kunicki, I was convinced that music as a background to many of the scenes was essential, and that if my commentary was also included on the film strip, it would be the only way to get through this arduous programme of lectures. All credit must go to Mr. Kunicki for the amazing way in which he achieved such good results, because we found that the film studios in Wardour Street and the Kodak laboratories were so congested with work brought in by the expansion of commercial television, that it seemed almost impossible at one stage to get the film put together and to have prints made from it for projection. As a result of this anxiety and rush of work, sometimes going into the early hours of the morning, the commentary was far below standard, and did not describe in sufficient detail the animals which were projected on the screen. I found, however, that speaking into a microphone in a recording studio for something over four hours with hardly a break, was no easy matter. In the end, I had to be thankful that the film was done at all, and it was somewhat of a miracle that it was ready in time.

PRESS AND PUBLICITY

The Fauna Preservation Society appointed Mrs. Rosemary Russell to be in charge of the lecture arrangements and publicity, and they could have made no better choice for she is a person of great experience and ability. Mrs. Russell handled the arrangements for the lecture at the Festival Hall, including publicity through the Press and by posters, and also planned and arranged lectures in the provinces, not only finding a suitable hall but persuading someone of eminence to preside and others to take care of local publicity, bookings, projection of the film, and everything connected with it. She in turn employed Mr. Slydel as a Press agent, who, with his valuable links in Fleet Street, arranged excellent Press publicity, although, of course, as always happens in these matters, some of the editors ran away in flights of imagination and printed very garbled and inaccurate articles. I consistently endeavoured to promote the wild animal as the hero of the campaign, but the Press were equally determined to create a personality as a representative of the wild animal. It is perhaps for this reason that some papers published stupid comments, referring to me as patrolling the jungle day

and night and speaking fifty native dialects, presumably looking either like Tarzan or Clark Gable!

Another tribute I wish to pay Mrs. Russell, in addition to the efficient way in which she handled all arrangements, was for her valuable contacts with the B.B.C. She was able to arrange with Mr. Desmond Hawkins, who was at that time in charge of the Western Region based on Bristol, for me to do two half-hour television programmes with Mr. Peter Scott, which, with the support of Press publicity, ensured the financial success of the Festival Hall lecture, and consequently also of others that followed.

B.B.C.

I found the B.B.C., especially in the Western Region, very ready to give the greatest possible assistance to the case which I endeavoured to present.

The Western Region was very impressed with Mr. Kunicki's film and they arranged these two half-hour television broadcasts in a feature entitled "Look", introduced by Peter Scott. The fame and popularity of Peter Scott himself as a television star, in addition to all his other attributes, was in itself a factor of the very greatest importance, and I cannot overstate my admiration for his achievements on behalf of birds, and for his very powerful although modest willingness to support the plea for saving wild life in Africa.

After recording a talk for the Scottish Region, I concluded my endeavours in Britain with a very warm feeling towards the B.B.C. for the valuable, helpful, and courteous reception they gave me.

FESTIVAL HALL

From the moment I arrived in London I obtained almost daily bulletins on the progress of the bookings, and when only 200 seats had been reserved I began to wonder whether it would be a fiasco. As time went on and the impact of the Press and the B.B.C. was felt, bookings increased rapidly to a point where on the day before the actual show, under 100 seats were left. On the day in question the Hall was full with people standing, and others turned away. In my opinion, this audience was attracted by the fascination of seeing pictures of wild animals. They were not perhaps very concerned with their future.

The ordeal was frightening, and I was most uncertain as to how the film would be received, but after the first reel I soon felt

convinced that the animal, as usual, had won the day. I was introduced by Lord Willingdon, President of the Fauna Preservation Society, and I endeavoured to present the case for preservation and for supporting the Society. Although I regard the Festival Hall as an architectural horror, I must concede that it is equally an architectural miracle, for the acoustics are so good that there is no problem in making some 3,000 people hear every word that is said on the stage.

On the advice of James Fisher and others, I used a microphone during my talk, which at one stage became a nightmare, as for some extraordinary reason, I formed the impression that the amplifier system had broken down. This was only one of the hallucinations which confronted me in facing such an audience. At an important stage in my talk when I began to feel that I was perhaps attracting some sympathy and interest, and the audience was rigid and silent, I could easily have heard a pin drop. Just at that moment a waitress blundered with a tray full of plates and glasses, and some 3,000 people had to know who had dropped it, where it had been dropped, what was broken, who was going to pick it up, and whether there was any chance of another tray dropping. Trays presumably have been dropped in every part of the world for many years, but on this occasion almost every person in the audience seemed to concentrate full attention on the great calamity of half a dozen broken plates. In spite of this, however, it seemed that the film and the lecture were well accepted.

OTHER CENTRES

Similar lectures were also arranged in the following places: Leicester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Birmingham, Newcastle, Bristol, Bridgewater, Norwich, Exeter, Cardiff, York.

At each centre I was met and escorted and each lecture was well supported. It was difficult for me to realize that each audience was different from the previous one, and the danger was to become thoroughly bored with my set piece, or to grow weary of British Railways in which I spent so many hours.

It is not easy for me to assess the reactions of the people, as, of course, there are always a few nice folk who come forward to pay tributes, but it seemed to me that those who attended these functions were convinced of the need for a change of heart in wild life policy, and were also convinced that it was a matter of concern to the people of Britain.

FAUNA PRESERVATION SOCIETY

I wish to acknowledge the very fine support of Lord Willingdon (President), Lieut.-Colonel Boyle (Secretary), Mr. Ian Malcolmson (Treasurer), and Miss Clarke (Assistant Secretary), in all arrangements for this campaign. It was a bold venture by this Society to trust in the success of a film they had not seen, and on the way in which I might be able to present it. This confidence was at times quite alarming, although most encouraging, but it made me feel that the standard must in consequence be very high to justify such confidence.

Colonel Boyle spared no pains in attending to any detail, and ensured that I was given all possible support. Before leaving London I attended a meeting of the Council of the Society called to analyse results and to profit by mistakes. The President and members were very generous in their acknowledgments, and paid tribute to the success of the tour, which, amongst other things, resulted in an increase of 60 members.

Finally, I would like warmly to acknowledge Captain Caldwell's fine support and encouragement, especially in Aberdeen, where he shared the platform with Lady Tweedsmuir and added great conviction to the lecture.

INTERVIEW WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES

Shortly after the tour, introduced and accompanied by Mr. Peter Scott, I had an hour's discussion with Mr. Alan Lennox-Boyd, the Colonial Secretary. I endeavoured to present the problems of preservation in a more pointed manner than had been possible in public lectures. He seemed convinced that unless there is a change of policy, wild life in Africa will not have any reasonable chance of survival, and he assured me of his personal interest and willing support within the limits of his portfolio.

I acknowledged, as one naturally should, that there is no reason on earth why the Colonial Secretary should accept my assessment of the game situation in Kenya, and for that reason I suggested that he be advised by some impartial expert. With this view he agreed, and I put forward the name of Mr. Fraser Darling, or, failing him, a nominee of the Fauna Preservation Society, to be sent on a quick survey of the game position in East Africa. Mr. Lennox-Boyd explained that he could not in his position appoint such a Commissioner, but he undertook to write to the Governors of each of the three East African territories suggesting that such a survey should be made, and that it should be done by a scientist free of political or

racial considerations. I believe that this would be most valuable as we have not so far had a skilled assessment of the game situation.

The Colonial Secretary was very willing to meet a delegation from the Fauna Preservation Society at any time, but believed it might be better to do so a little later and perhaps have a joint discussion with Lord Hume so as to examine the problem from an East and Central African aspect.

I wish to pay tribute to Mr. Dawson of the Colonial Office, with whom I spent a considerable portion of the morning before interviewing Mr. Lennox-Boyd, for a very excellent and forthright brief which he put before the Colonial Secretary as a result of my discussions with him.

CONCLUSIONS

It would be futile to accept the argument that in this atomic age the natural scene is doomed, and I am convinced that the people of Britain, once they can be interested in this East African problem, however remote it may seem from their daily lives, will influence the decisions of Colonial Governments, as they have done throughout the years. In my view, the response I received, especially in the provinces, was most encouraging, and I believe that there are many people who have time to consider, and would like to consider, what is happening to wild life in East Africa. A lecture is intimate and personal, and no doubt convinces those present, but the fifteen thousand people I spoke to represent only an insignificant proportion of the general public. I am more convinced than ever that it is the power of the film, especially when put across the television network, that can change opinion to-day. The Press has some effect but far less than is generally imagined, and in any future endeavour to win the support of people in Britain for the preservation of wild life in Africa, I hold that television is the most important and effective method of achievement.