

ORYX

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Notes and News

The Survival Service Commission of IUCN has set up a unit to study depleted species – something that is urgently needed, on the principle that prevention is better than cure. It is obviously more sensible to try to stop species becoming seriously endangered rather than be constantly conducting desperate last-minute rescue operations – which are invariably second-best and do not always succeed.

**Prevention is
better
than Salvage**

The Red Data Books published by IUCN have been remarkably successful in highlighting the problems and publicising the urgency for the endangered species; an Amber Data Book for depleted species could be equally useful. The head of the new unit will be Harry Goodwin, at present head of the Endangered Species Section of the US Bureau of Fish and Wildlife. The unit will collect population and trade statistics, work out priorities for field investigations, and make a start on determining cropping quotas for species of economic importance and collecting essential background information for legislation.

Two surveys, one of leopard and cheetah in north and west Africa, and another of the now seriously endangered Bengal tiger are among the first tasks of the recently formed Cat Group in the SSC. When the

**Cat Group
Sets
To Work**

International Fur Trade Federation last year agreed with IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) to recommend to its members a three-year moratorium on trade in these two species it was also agreed that the three-year period would be used to make surveys of their status. This will be paid for by IFTF and start in June. For the tiger, a survey in India, now being planned, will be financed by the Smithsonian Institution, and a German ethologist, financed by WWF, is already in the field studying the man-eating tiger problem in the Sunderbans in East Pakistan – a difficult terrain of mangrove swamp and tidal waters where tigers are believed to have

taken comparatively recently to man-eating because of the lack of other prey. In the whole of India the tiger population is now reckoned to be no more than about 1500 animals. All Indian states have now imposed a five-year ban on hunting, but poisoning, poaching (for skins – see page 19) and habitat destruction are a continuing threat.

As we go to press there is still no news that the British Government has agreed to the request of the British Fur Trade Association to ban the import of skins of leopard, cheetah, tiger, clouded and snow leopards, and giant and La Plata otters, following the International Fur Trade Federation agreement with IUCN reported in the last ORYX. That the Board of Trade has the power to impose such bans, despite earlier denials, has been tacitly admitted in their recent decision (under pressure) to ban the products of vicuña and before that of the Indian grey junglefowl. In the United States the Endangered Species Act empowers the Secretary of State to ban the import of all species in the IUCN Red Data Book *and their products*, even if they can be taken legally in their country of origin. British legislation comes out rather better on live animal imports. Under the Animals (Restriction of Importation) Act 1964, which FPS, in the person of our former secretary Colonel Boyle, did a great deal to get passed, certain groups of animals can only be imported with a specific licence issued on the advice of a committee. (At the present time this is chaired by Lord Cranbrook, and two other members and one former member of FPS Council also sit on it – Colonel Boyle, Richard Fitter and Sir Hugh Elliott.) These groups are primates, marsupials, Felidae (except the domestic cat), tapirs, rhinoceroses, tortoises and iguanid lizards.

The Lal Suhanra reserve in West Pakistan, which is a superb waterfowl sanctuary, is turning out to be far more valuable than anyone had foreseen, writes Christopher Savage, FPS correspondent there. In a recent exploratory visit the American ecologist Dr George Schaller and Mr Z.B. Mirza discovered that, because the forest plantation in the reserve had been protected from grazing by domestic stock, quite large 'waste' areas inside were covered with the natural desert climax vegetation, with thick stands of grasses and shrubs on the undulating sand dunes, all providing suitable habitat for the former plains animals, including large cats, if they were reintroduced. If water points were provided outside the sanctuary for the domestic stock and the grazing stopped, and the whole 200 square miles fenced in, the proposed national park could be rehabilitated

**Restoring
a Pakistan
Reserve**

within five to ten years. Members of the Pakistan Government are reported as 'enthusiastic'. The process of re-stocking the reserve has already begun with two gifts last year – ten blackbuck from Texas (where they are kept in large numbers by wealthy ranchers and are probably more numerous than on the Indian sub-continent) and a flock of 24 marbled teal from the Wildfowl Trust in England.

Progress in locating the main denning areas of polar bears in the Arctic, as a result of the intensive research initiated by the IUCN Polar Bear Group (now three years old) led to sparks in the Group's meeting last year at Morges. (The Group consists of two scientists from each of the five countries concerned.) The main denning areas discovered so far

**Plea for End
to Polar
Bear Hunting**

are in the USSR and Canada, with minor ones in Greenland and Spitzbergen. Very few were found in Alaska; and Kong Karls Land appears to be much less important than previously thought. But the USSR is the only country to protect polar bears absolutely. In Canada the Government has now authorised hunting (hitherto confined to Eskimos) for sport, while the Eskimos have taken to snowmobiles, which greatly increase their hunting capacity; in Alaska the ever-growing demand from wealthy US sportsmen, hunting from aeroplanes, has led to a big increase in both legal and illegal hunting; in Norway professional hunters and trappers, using set-guns (a baited box with a gun which discharges when the bear puts its nose in to investigate), and wintering parties such as meteorological crews, are not even restricted by the hunting regulations. We have heard of a case this last winter in which four men killed 70 polar bears on one island in the Spitzbergen group with set-guns. Why, demanded the Russian scientists, when the major known denning areas for both Alaska and Spitzbergen (Norway) are in the Soviet Arctic, should the USSR give complete protection to polar bears just to provide a larger crop for its neighbours to shoot from planes in so-called sport or with set-guns? A difficult question to answer. However, it was agreed that an appeal should go to the four governments that allow hunting urging them to impose a five-year ban. This was later endorsed by the Survival Service Commission and forwarded to the governments by IUCN. As a result the Norwegian Government banned free hunting and introduced a quota, and Alaska has limited the number of hunting permits. Another major discovery, achieved by the tagging of some 450 polar bears mainly by Canadian, Norwegian and United States scientists, is that there may be at least five separate polar bear populations, not just one large circumpolar one as was previously thought. The five are: Spitzbergen-Franz Joseph Land – east Greenland; the Hudson Bay region of Canada; the high Canadian Arctic; the high Canada-eastern Alaska region, and the western Alaska-eastern USSR region.

Very little has been known about the status of the Somali wild ass *Equus asinus somalicus* except that it was seriously endangered in both Somalia and Ethiopia. The largest herd was believed to be about 200 strong in the Danakil desert of Ethiopia. Last autumn Dr Hans Klingel spent three months in the Danakil, and from the air counted over 400, some in areas where they had not been seen recently, and including young animals of all ages.

**Wild Ass
Meat
for Medicine**

Nevertheless, their situation is not encouraging. They do not seem to be specialised to any particular type of habitat but move about and feed wherever there is sufficient grazing, and so they compete with the domestic stock of the Affar tribesmen, for whom numbers, not quality of cattle and camels represent wealth. Dr Klingel foresees that in the very near future the wild asses will be driven out. Another danger from the Affar people is that wild ass meat is regarded as a medicine for hepatitis and other diseases (it is prescribed in the Koran), and asses can be shot for this purpose on a permit from the Sultan. But the remoteness of the Danakil, and the fact that the Ethiopian Wildlife Department has neither staff nor equipment to enforce the protection laws, mean that permits are not always obtained, and, especially in the dry season, when the cattle produce little milk, the asses are shot for meat. Dr Klingel has tentatively suggested that a reserve (better still a national park) be created to protect the wild asses in the Tendaho region, and he returned to the Danakil in February for a dry-season check on the suitability of the area and to work out boundaries and management plans. His first survey was financed partly by the FPS/WWF Revolving Fund, together with the British National Appeal of WWF and the Frankfurt Zoological Society. In Somalia some 200 wild asses were reported in 1969 in the area between Las Anod and Bur Anod by a photographer, André Gunn, who accompanied the expedition which captured the five wild asses now in the Basel Zoo.

The siamang *Hylobates syndactylus*, a large black gibbon found only in the forests of Sumatra and western Malaysia, is seriously threatened by the destruction of its habitat. David Chivers, who has recently returned from a two-year field study in Malaysia of its ecology and behaviour, points out that both siamangs and the much smaller gibbons can adapt to selective logging in their forests – indeed the opening of the forest canopy encourages the growth of their preferred food trees, such as figs – but unfortunately clear felling is now the widespread and increasing practice. In 1960, he says, three-fifths of the 50,000 square miles of West Malaysia was forested; in the next ten years at least five per cent, and possibly as much as ten per cent of this was removed for timber or to clear the ground for cultivation, and this process is accelerating. His estimate of

**Clear Felling
Threatens
the Siamang**

**Somali
Wild Asses in the
Danakil Desert**
Hans Klingel

Below Siamang
David Chivers



the siamang population is between 40,000 and 60,000, based on his population structure and density figures in three study areas and on one-day calling counts of groups in about 100 localities – siamangs have an inflatable throat sac which they use to make loud spacing calls. But all these animals are restricted to the mountains, which means only about one-fifth of the present forest area. It is true that mountain forests are likely to be felled last, but tourist resorts are being developed on mountain-tops and the loggers and hunters are not far behind. The smaller gibbons too are endangered, especially the black-handed gibbon *H. agilis*, which occurs only in northern Malaya. In these circumstances it is vitally important that the Taman Negara National Park and the Krau Game Reserve be wholly and effectively protected, and that further extensive forest areas are set aside as national parks.

Lions and elephants in national parks bring tourists who bring money – this is the basic argument that western conservationists use to persuade African countries to conserve their wildlife. To these affluent countries

**The African
View
of Wildlife**

the economic argument appears to be the overriding and unanswerable one. But perhaps Africans think differently? An anthropologist who has been working in Uganda is certain that they do. Dr Mary Jean Aerni describes in *Africana* for last

October how she came to realise this; to ignore it, she says, will bring disaster. When Uganda became a British protectorate, in 1890, the people were roughly divided into pastoralists (cattle-keepers) and hunter-cultivators, as they had been for thousands of years. The hunters lived on the wildlife; hunting was part of their culture and the way the young men proved their courage. Because they were predators these people were ardent preservationists. But the British decided to make cattle ownership the economic mainstay of society, and large areas had to be cleared of tsetse fly to make room for cattle. This was done by killing off the wildlife. Since 1947 more than 100,000 head of game have been killed for this reason, and increasingly the wildlife has come to survive only in the national parks – where hunters are poachers. The people are as eager to acquire cows as Europeans to acquire cars – but for prestige, for brideprice or ceremonial offerings, not food; they prefer to eat game meat they have hunted themselves. To the African the establishment of the parks, by Europeans for Europeans (Murchison Falls and Queen Elizabeth both date from 1952) coincided with the destruction of the game outside for tsetse control. To them the parks are not national treasures or wildlife sanctuaries; they are an intrusion on traditional hunting grounds for the benefit of foreign safari tourism, with which they have little or no contact. And they are not interested in foreign exchange balances. Thus, says Dr Aerni, the economic carrot is actively harmful. The conservation appeal should be changed to emphasise the bond between man and his heritage, which is what the

wild animals are, and not just 'tourist bait'. The implications of all this she leaves to the administrators, but it does suggest that perhaps we conservationists should be taking a good hard look at our methods. Ten years ago the economic argument seemed the only hope for saving wildlife, and we jumped on the bandwagon with sighs of relief that such an apparently fool-proof argument could be used to coincide with a world tourist boom. But the saving of their wildlife rests with the African peoples, and in the long run it is they who will decide how it shall be done.

Swayne's hartebeest *Alcelaphus buselaphus swaynei*, extinct outside Ethiopia, is seriously endangered there – it rates a red sheet in the Red Book, which in 1967 put numbers in the region of 200; there are probably fewer now. Melvin Bolton, a British ecologist working in Ethiopia for the Ministry of Overseas Development, in visits to their main concentration in the Nachisar Plains, east of the Rift Valley lakes Abaya and Chamo, counted 78

**Two
Endangered
Hartebeests**

and doubted if there could be more than 100. It is proposed to make a wildlife reserve in the plains, the only place where their future might be assured. Of the 78 animals he saw, only seven were calves, which may be due to shooting or to disease (cattle mortality is high in the area), but he believes that a good viable population could be built up if information could be obtained about the animal's requirements and the conditions necessary for breeding success. This he hopes to do this year and the FPS has made a grant of £80 to help him with his ecological study of this hartebeest. Another small FPS grant will help him also to study the Tora hartebeest *A.b. tora*, about which there is hardly any information except that it is rare. It may then be possible to suggest measures that the Ethiopian Wildlife Department might take for its conservation.

The Nairobi National Park is to be extended to 200 square miles (from its present 45) by the purchase of 100,000 acres from the County Council at the price of £1 an acre. This will make this immensely valuable park a much more viable unit, allowing for the seasonal movements of antelopes, zebras, giraffes and cats within the park boundaries where they can be protected. Kenya National Parks hope to raise the money by persuading supporters and friends to 'buy' so many acres for the park – Dr Grzimek immediately promised them the money for 20,000 acres. If any FPS member would like to help in this way we shall be glad to forward even gifts much smaller than Dr Grzimek's to the Kenya National Parks.

**Who'll Buy
an Acre
for Nairobi?**

National Parks of the World

The original text of the *United Nations List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves*, edited by Jean-Paul Harroy, and published in French in 1967, has been revised, supplemented and brought up to date in the English translation by Sir Hugh Elliott. In the process it has grown from 550 pages to nearly 700, of which 80 are black-and-white photographs not in the original edition – most of them giving a very good idea of the immense variety of habitat these parks are conserving. Countries are taken in alphabetical order, their national parks and reserves listed in order of size, and information given, in standard form and order, on their status, staff, budget, tourism facilities, fauna, flora and endangered species; a useful feature is the inclusion of reserves that might be expected to be in the list, but are not, together with a brief account of their facilities and the reasons for their exclusion. The ten United Kingdom national parks are an example of these; they do not satisfy the criteria, whereas 22 national nature reserves do. A weighty (2¾lb) and encyclopaedic volume, it is an indispensable reference work for anyone in the conservation field. The FPS office can supply copies (it is published by Hayez, Brussels) price £8 plus 24p postage in the UK.

Animal Imports to the UK

In its fifth annual report, the Advisory Committee on the Animals (Restriction of Importation) Act 1964, whose chairman is FPS Council member Lord Cranbrook, drew attention to the cruelty and wastefulness which can be involved in the capture and transport of many animals, and to the unsatisfactory conditions under which some animals are kept after they arrive in Britain. The Committee is precluded from taking any action on purely humanitarian grounds because its terms of reference confine it to the control of the import of endangered species; it is up to UFAW, the RSPCA and other animal welfare societies to take action to improve a situation which was recently highlighted by the death of a tiger at London Airport. Turning to its main business, the Committee records that during 1969 the United Kingdom imported 12,234 primates (all monkeys except for 437 marmosets and tamarins, 59 apes and 34 lemurs), 31 marsupials, 180,940 tortoises and 1,087 iguanas. The great majority of the monkeys were imported for scientific research, so that if the efforts of FRAME to promote methods of research not involving live animals were crowned with success, the greater part of this unhappy trade would disappear. The great majority of the apes imported (46) were chimpanzees, the rest comprising eight gibbons, four gorillas and one orang-utan.

Indian Rhino in Nepal

The Nepal Government has agreed that the Chitawan Sanctuary, the only sanctuary in Nepal for the great Indian rhinoceros, should be made a national park and all grazing prohibited. This should go a long way to arresting the serious and rapid decline in the rhino population now believed to have sunk to as low as 80 animals, largely due, as the Caughley report showed, to the destruction of the habitat, (see ORYX May 1970, p. 212). The Survival Service Commission has asked Nepal not to permit any more rhino captures, and the world's zoos have been asked not to buy or accept rhinos from Nepal.

The Nepal Government has also banned the shooting of tigers, and the import and export of tiger and leopard skins from March 1, 1971. This is particularly helpful as Nepal was an outlet for poached skins from India.

Galapagos Fur Seals Increase

A report that the Galapagos fur seals have increased considerably in recent years comes from Julian Fitter, who lives in the islands and sails among them a great deal. He writes, 'In the last year I have seen quite large numbers of fur seals mainly in places which are rarely visited, such as the south, west and north coasts of Fernandina, and all round Isabela and Marchena; they are also on James, Santa Cruz, Tower, Hood and Seymour. I would say that there are probably at least between two and three thousand, and possibly as many as five.' At the beginning of this century they were believed to be extinct; in 1906 a collector secured one specimen. Even in the 1930s they were only found on one very small island.

Arabian Oryx Exchange

Another female Arabian oryx was born last October at the Phoenix Zoo, bringing the herd to 25:- 14 males and 11 females. The higher proportion of female calves born in the last two years has improved the balance of the herd a little. The Los Angeles Zoo, which has a high proportion of females (seven out of eight animals) proposed to our President, Lord Willington, when he visited the Zoo last winter, that the FPS should exchange one of its male animals for a Los Angeles female, a proposition both the FPS and the Phoenix Zoo are glad to accept; it will have the great advantage of mixing the stock.

Songs of the Whales

Roger Payne's long playing record, *Songs of the Humpback Whale*, like the goggles and schnorkel of the underwater swimmer, opens up a wonderful new world – though why should one have imagined that whales would be silent? This splendid record reveals how varied and beautiful are their songs and calls, and an explanatory illustrated book accompanying it describes (in English and Japanese) the outlook for the world's whales, their history, how the recordings were obtained, and much more. Record and book are obtainable from the FPS office, £4.50, postage included.

Working Groups for Birds

ICBP (International Council for Bird Preservation) has set up two working groups, one on birds of prey and one on bustards, with a third promised for flamingos, as the first steps in a new policy of establishing working groups for threatened species. These will work in with the Survival Service Commission, which already has a number of specialist groups for mammals, and should make for much better co-operation and integration in the battle to save endangered species.

Sayings of Conservation Year

Two Ministry of Agriculture spokesmen were questioned last December by the *Observer* about the continued sale of the Ministry booklet, *Chemicals for the Gardener*, which advocates DDT. One said, 'The booklet is out-of-date but there is a demand for it', and the other 'that the booklet facilitated the DDT ban since it encouraged gardeners to use the pesticide and thus hastened the time when stocks would be exhausted. The pesticide could then be banned for gardens'.