

The Fauna Preservation Society

AUGUST, 1955

EDITORIAL NOTES

International Union for the Protection of Nature.—The 5th General Assembly and the 6th Technical Meeting of the International Union for the Protection of Nature will be held at Edinburgh from 20th to 28th June, 1956. Only delegates appointed by constituent societies, of which the Fauna Preservation Society is one, may attend the Assembly, but members of such societies may attend the technical meetings as far as accommodation allows.

The subjects for discussion at the technical meetings are as follows :—

1. Management of nature reserves on the basis of modern scientific knowledge.

2. Biological effects of the recent spread of myxomatosis among rabbits.

3. Rehabilitation of areas biologically devastated by human disturbance.

4. Relationship of ecology to landscape planning.

Excursions of from two to five days between 29th June and 3rd July have been planned for participants. There is a choice of nine excursions, including visits to the Highlands and to the east and west coasts of Scotland.

Will all members of the Fauna Preservation Society who would like a preliminary notice of the meetings please apply to the Secretary. Papers for discussion at the meeting are invited and should also be sent to him. The notice gives the programme of the meetings and the cost of hotel accommodation and excursions.

International Nature Film Week.—During the I.U.P.N. Edinburgh week nature films will be shown daily. Will those who have such films and would lend them, please apply to the Secretary, Fauna Preservation Society, for the film entry form.

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Great Britain.—The Nature Conservancy has declared three new nature reserves in Wales:—

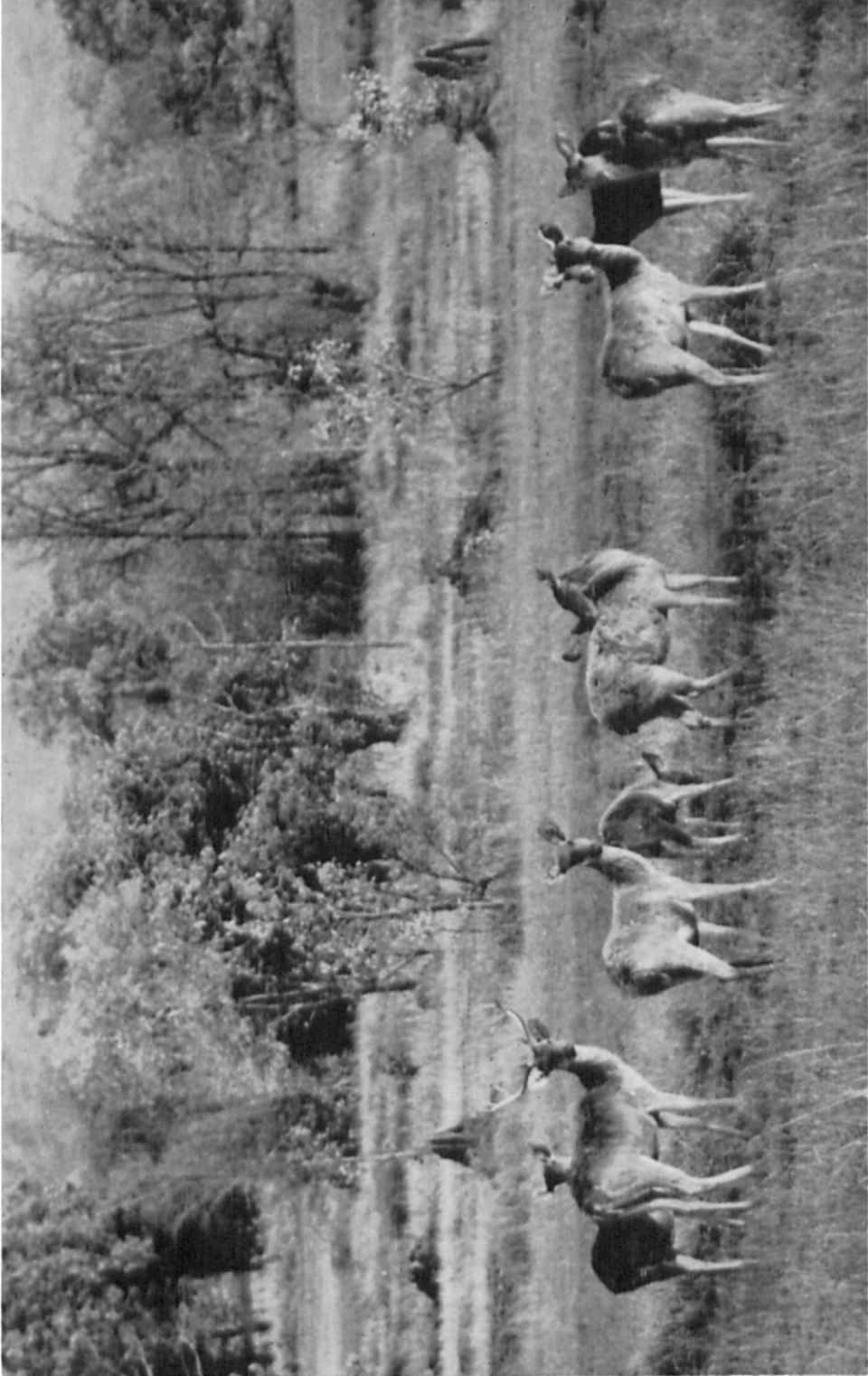
Cader Idris.—“The Chair of Arthur,” rich in legend and of geological importance, lies in the Snowdonia National Park. The reserve covers 969 acres of Ordovician volcanic lavas and igneous rocks interbedded with fossiliferous mudstones and slates. Rare plants characteristic of the arctic-alpine flora are found.

Cors Tregaron, 1,500 acres, consisting of three bogs, is the best actively growing raised bog area in England or Wales. The River Teifi which flows through it enters the bog polluted with lead but leaves it clean. Raised bogs are lens-shaped accumulations of acid sphagnum peat, often stacked in a late-glacial lake-basin. On the retreat of the ice from the valley of Teifi, a bar of moraine was left blocking the valley above Tregaron village. Over the filled-in basin of the resulting lake, the three bogs grew up, each with a gently dome-shaped profile. The centre of the western bog is about 10 feet higher than the dry ground at its western edge and about 25 feet above the river to the east.

Newborough Warren and Ynys Llanddwyn.—Newborough Warren, in Anglesey is one of the largest and biologically richest expanses of dunes in western Britain. The major encroachments of sand occurred between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. The present dune system apparently dates from Tudor times since when, according to local records, marram grass has been planted on the extending sand dunes in attempts to stabilize the area. Good dune succession is shown on a large scale, including shifting dunes, salix dunes and marsh, and fixed dunes. The extensive “slacks” or damp dune hollows are occupied by communities of creeping willow and are rich in other plant life. It is one of the earliest sites occupied by man on Anglesey, probably between 7,000 and 5,000 B.C.

The Island—*Ynys Llanddwyn*, 61 acres, is the seaward extension of a ridge of ancient volcanic rocks which traverse the dunes in a north to west direction. It has a varied flora, including bloody cranesbill, golden samphire, and sea spleenwort. It once had one of the most important colonies of terns and other sea-birds in Wales, but this has dwindled very seriously; one of the objects of the reserve is to enable it to recover. During migration many rare birds visit the island and the nearby estuary of the Cefni.

A warden is being appointed for the reserve.



[Photo : E. P. Gee

INDIAN SWAMP DEER

In the Kanha Wild Life Sanctuary, now a National Park.

For further information about these reserves application should be made to :—

The Conservation Officer, Wales,
The Nature Conservancy,
c/o School of Agriculture,
University College of North Wales,
Memorial Buildings,
Bangor, Carns.

India.—We are pleased to hear from Mr. E. P. Gee that the Government of Madhya Pradesh has passed a national parks act and, under it, has turned the Kanha Wild Life Sanctuary, formerly the Banjar Valley Reserve, into a national park. The park, which is 180 miles north-east of Nagpur and 2,000 feet above sea-level, has an area of 99 square miles. It is best known for its Indian swamp deer (barasingha), but there are also tiger, leopard, gaur, chital, blackbuck, sambar, and barking deer.

Mr. Gee sends good news also of the great Indian rhinoceros. In April, 1954, he visited the Jaldapara sanctuary in Bengal and estimated that there were about thirty rhinoceroses present. This corrects the figure ten given in *Oryx*, Vol. II, No. 3.

Including an estimate of forty-eight for Nepal, there are believed to be about 440 great Indian rhinoceroses alive in the world to-day. Great credit for the improved situation is due to the Indian Board for Wild Life.

The 1953–54 Report of the Bombay Department of Wild Life Preservation has now been issued. The department, acting under the Bombay Animals and Wild Birds Protection Act of 1951, has classified game animals and birds into: small game, big game, and special big game, and has laid down fees for game licences. Except for game birds, hyænas, and wolves, a maximum of one animal on each licence has been temporarily fixed. Licence holders may not sell the flesh of any game shot. There is rather a long list of “vermin” which receive no protection, including, surely mistakenly, “all birds of prey (excluding vultures),” but apart from “vermin” and “game”, all animals and birds receive complete protection. Although many rare animals and birds have been classified as game, a close period for the whole year has been given to all these.

Certain areas where animals were once abundant, but which have now been almost denuded of wild life, have been completely closed to shooting. Dandeli Park, in North Kanara, an area of about 80 square miles, is to become a sanctuary.

It is appropriate to close this note on India with an expression of sorrow at the death of Colonel Jim Corbett. For many

years a member of the Society, Corbett's zeal for wild life preservation was unsurpassed. His great knowledge and love of the Indian jungle are manifest in his fine books, *Man Eaters of Kumaon* and *The Man-eating Leopard of Rudraprayag*.

Northern Rhodesia.—Lieut.-Colonel R. A. Critchley, president of the Game Preservation and Hunting Association, has emphasized the importance of preserving the red lechwe on Lochinvar ranch, about which Mr. Ansell wrote in our last number. He reports that 4,000 Africans took part last year in a "chila" in an adjoining native reserve and that some 3,000 lechwe were killed. Lorries were used to round up the game.

If there were sufficient lechwe to withstand the effect of such an onslaught, sympathy might be felt for the view that the African is herein doing no more than the European does when he kills and eats domestic animals. But since 1934 the lechwe on the flats have declined from 250,000 to 25,000, and Colonel Critchley rightly considers that not more than 2,000 should be taken yearly for food. This would provide an adequate meat supply for the local population; though it might restrict profit, for much meat is sold on the railway line and probably a large amount of biltong reaches the Copperbelt.

Lochinvar is a refuge for other animals than the lechwe. There are large herds of buffalo, roan antelope, eland, zebra, and wildebeeste. Impala, kudu, tsessebe, oribi, reedbuck, bushbuck, hippopotamus, pig, silver jackal, cheetah, and lion are found also.

The ranch would make a good national park. An interesting tour of Northern Rhodesia could then include Lochinvar, the Kafue national park, the Sumbu reserve on Lake Tanganyika, and the contrasting scenes of the Copperbelt. Lochinvar would also be a great week-end attraction for the people of Lusaka which, by air, is less than an hour away.

We welcome the first issue of the *Newsletter* of the Game Preservation and Hunting Association.

Southern Rhodesia.—Probably no subject has caused our Society more anxiety than the destruction of thousands of wild animals yearly in tsetse fly control in Southern Rhodesia. In no cause we have taken up have we felt so frustrated. Now we learn that the Federal Government has set up an independent commission to advise the Southern Rhodesia Government on its trypanosomiasis and tsetse fly problems. We look forward to the findings of this commission with hope and confidence. Its members are: Chairman, Sir Eric Thomas, C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C., a retired Judge of the High Court;

Professor T. H. Davey, O.B.E., M.D., D.T.M., Professor of Tropical Hygiene in the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine ; Mr. W. J. Potts, M.A., until 1952 chief entomologist, East African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Research and Reclamation Organization.

Nyasaland.—Readers will remember that our Society has been supporting the Fauna Preservation Society of Nyasaland by paying the wages of Biton Balandow, the game guard of the Mijeti non-shooting area. By appointing the guard, increasing the water supply, and otherwise “working up” the Mijeti, the Nyasaland Society hoped to show that it was an area worthy of being set aside for wild life preservation.

We are glad to hear from Mr. G. D. Hayes that the effort has been successful and the work very well worth while, for, on the 25th March last the Mijeti was declared an official game reserve.

Gold Coast.—The Gold Coast Government has now appointed a game warden. He is Mr. A. R. Chadwick, formerly of the Department of Agriculture. We trust that this appointment will mean a period of preservation for Gold Coast animals, not forgetting the extremely interesting small mammals of the tropical rain forest.

Madagascar.—The International Union for the Protection of Nature is supporting the protests of naturalists and Malagasy hunters against the destruction of the fauna of Madagascar. Poaching is rife, as much by European hunters and collectors as by the local population. Extensive clearing of forests is destroying the habitats essential for the animals' survival. Lemurs are especially menaced.

Western Australia.—Mr. A. J. Fraser, the Chief Warden of Fauna, reports in his bulletin for honorary wardens, that the improvement in the state of marsupials continues. Brush wallabies, rat kangaroos, and others are increasing under protection. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the Australian bustard, whose decline is a tragedy. Propaganda in the Press, over the air, and by distribution of posters seems to have had little effect, at least in the northern part of the State. The Chief Warden asks for reports on the attitude of local people in all districts where the bustard occurs.

There seems to be little justification for the hostility of farmers towards the wedge-tailed eagle. During the last quarter not one of the wardens reported it to be a pest.

Four large reserves for flora and fauna have been proclaimed—Cape Arid, 1,550 square miles ; Bremer Bay, 950 square miles ;

Parker Range, 800 square miles, and Murchison River, 600 square miles.

Canada.—Mr. Winston Mair, Chief of the Canadian Wildlife Service, has very kindly answered most fully our inquiries about wolf slaughter, which subject has been given a good deal of publicity in the English Press. The destruction programme was associated with an outbreak of rabies, in which hundreds of farm animals were also destroyed and over a hundred persons took the Pasteur treatment.

In his article in *Oryx* II, 5, Dr. Fraser Darling drew attention to the dangers to which indiscriminate wolf slaughter might expose the caribou, and it is interesting to hear of the experiments which the Canadian Wildlife Service has been conducting on the winter range of a caribou herd. The survival success of a herd protected by wolf control is being compared with that of a nearby herd which receives no such protection.

For a number of years biologists have deplored the payment of bounties to control predatory animals. Mr. A. W. F. Banfield tells us that the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan stopped bounties on coyotes some time ago and bounties on wolves on 30th November last. The provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario are also considering this step.

The Whooping Crane.—Last winter only twenty-one whooping cranes reached their Texas refuge and there were no young birds. This year at a secret site in Buffalo Park 3 pairs of adults have been found and they are rearing 4 young birds,

This is some reward for the unremitting care and vigilance which the Canadian Wildlife Service and its Chief, Mr. Winston Mair, are giving to the preservation of this bird. We can still hope that the whooping crane may be dragged back from among the "fossils of tomorrow".

The Tarpan.—The history of the wild horses of Europe is still as obscure as ever. Recently G. Nobis (1955), in a paper on the origin of domesticated horses has put forward the view that the tarpan, i.e. the European wild horse which became extinct in the Russian steppes in 1851, did not exist and that all fossil remains referred to it really belong to the Mongolian wild horse, *Equus przewalskii*. This view is not in accord with that of all other workers. Dr. Lundholm, of Uppsala, for instance, holds the view that the tarpan was a real wild horse with certain cranial characteristics, and his view is held by others, such as Professor F. E. Zeuner, Professor of Environmental Archæology, University of London. The evidence regarding the tarpan is partly historical and partly osteological, though unfortunately

the osteological material is very scanty and exclusively in Russian museums.

It had been noted for some time that most of the prehistoric drawings of horses resembled the Mongolian horse, and it may be that this has strongly influenced Dr. Nobis in his views. The external appearance of the horse is, however, very much influenced by the coat of hair and would, in any case, be a function of climatic conditions. Professor Zeuner holds that the Western European horses of the Old Stone Age are ecotypes adapted to a cold climate, and that the tarpans which became extinct in Russia in the last century are the descendants of this stock. He hopes to contribute an article on the tarpan problem to *Oryx* in the near future.

In recent years the tarpan question has been in the news because of the experiments carried out by Dr. Heck, the director of the Zoological Gardens in Munich, whose article, "The Breeding-back of the Tarpan," appeared in *Oryx* I, No. 7. Dr. Heck, by the selection of suitable stock, succeeded in producing animals closely resembling in stature and coloration the descriptions that have survived of the tarpan. The scientific significance of these experiments has been criticized in Germany though it is evident that such "bred-back" animals can be no more than an approximation to the wild type; they cannot be identical with it from the genetical point of view and it is unlikely that their breeders would claim as much as this. Nevertheless such animals are useful and interesting as they demonstrate the phenotype of an extinct ancestor.

The Bawean Deer, Cervus kuhli.—We are very glad to hear that the expedition to Bawean Island, north of Java, found that the Bawean deer still existed. Mr. A. Hoogerwerf, Head of the Indonesian Department of Nature Protection and Wild Life Management, is convinced that the measures imposed to protect this deer will be properly enforced.

The Chinese Sika.—Mr. Richard Glover wishes to draw attention to a mistake in his article on Chinese sika deer. The Shansi sika, *Cervus nippon grassianus* Heude, was wrongly described as hardly spotted at any season. This is true in winter only. In summer *grassianus* is a fine rufous colour studded with white spots and has a dark median dorsal line (*Proc. Zool. Soc.*, 1917, p. 18).

Dr. Willard G. Van Name.—We have yet again to thank our most generous vice-president, Dr. Van Name, for a large donation to our funds. In April we received from him a cheque for no less than \$10,000 (£3,577).