



Kingfisher

News and Comment about
Wildlife Conservation from
Home and Abroad.

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*News and Comment about
Wildlife and Conservation
at Home and Abroad*

Edited by Richard Fitter

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Our Ecological Niche

KINGFISHER is an independent news record and commentary over the whole field of wildlife and its conservation, both at home and abroad. Most existing wildlife journals speak mainly for the bodies which publish them; KINGFISHER has no axe to grind except an urgent desire to promote the conservation of wildlife and other natural resources throughout the world. Apart from *Oryx*, journal of the Fauna Preservation Society, no journal or newsletter surveys wildlife conservation as a whole, in all parts of the world, and *Oryx* appears only three times a year and consists largely of original papers. KINGFISHER will appear nine times a year, at intervals of five or six weeks, and will consist mainly of straight news, with comment added where this is needed to explain its significance. Any views expressed are our own, and do not necessarily represent those of any organisation with which the Editor may happen to be connected. KINGFISHER will sift and bring to its readers' attention the most significant items

from the flood of news about the world's wildlife, which goes largely unreported in the press, and will give especial prominence to the newsworthy activities of both voluntary and official bodies working in the field of conservation. We shall also assess or review a limited number of books of especial significance to wildlife conservation.

Why Kingfisher?

We have chosen the kingfisher as our emblem because it is both beautiful and threatened. Even in Britain it has been hard hit by a succession of severe winters, and is still scarce in most parts of the country. Doubtless it will recover here, as it has always done after hard winters in the past, but

on the Continent the outlook is less happy. At the VIIIth European Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation, held in Northern Ireland last June, delegates from eleven European countries reported that the kingfisher was now a rare or very rare bird. The catastrophic winter of 1962/63 destroyed almost the entire kingfisher population of Germany, Switzerland and much of Central Europe. This disaster followed a period when kingfishers were already decreasing because of three factors: destruction of their breeding sites, holes in the banks of rivers and streams, by the "improvements" of river authorities; the decrease of the birds' food supply due to pollution; and disturbance of once quiet breeding haunts by people seeking recreation from the towns. Within the lifetime of most of us alive today the kingfisher could become a rare bird in Western and Central Europe, and people may have to travel hundreds of miles to see it.

Pesticide Safeguards Proposed

The Council for Nature received excellent publicity, including a mention on the B.B.C. news bulletin, for the suggestions for the safer use of pesticides, announced in its new bulletin *Habitat* early in February. These proposals were made in response to an invitation from the Ministry of Agriculture's Advisory Committee on Pesticides. They include the limitation of the sales of the more

lethal pesticides by making them available only on prescription and with the use of poison books, the organised collection of pesticide "empties", restrictions on imported pesticides, simplified labelling, and more research into the long-term ecological effects of the widespread use of pesticides, including a national monitoring system to warn the authorities of any significant changes in the environment. The Council is particularly worried at widespread reports that farmers are evading the restrictions on dieldrin sheep dips, which will be banned after 1965, by stock-piling them while they can still be bought legally, and suggests that it may be necessary to make it an offence to use a pesticide after its sale has been banned.

Ministry's Mistake

It has recently been found that the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries made a serious error in drafting the order that lifted protection from the Farne Islands grey seals so that the control experiment could take place last December. Instead of suspending the close season only for the minimum period necessary, which would have been a week or so, they abolished it for a whole year. Fortunately the Scottish Office adopted a different procedure in the Orkneys. The Minister of Agriculture recently told a questioner in the House of Commons that he had no powers either to vary or to revoke the

faulty order made by his predecessor, but that it still remained an offence for any unauthorised person to kill grey seals on the Farnes. On the other hand, the defective order has prevented the National Trust from prosecuting, under the Grey Seals Act, a man who trespassed on the Farnes and removed a number of seal pups shortly before the culling experiment last year.

This incident will increase the dissatisfaction of the various conservation bodies, led by the Council for Nature, which made representations to the Ministry against the Farnes grey seal cull last year, on the grounds that the evidence of the damage done to fisheries by the seals was inadequate. Though some, largely hypothetical, figures were supplied at the time, the Council, in the first issue of *Habitat*, notes with interest that the Scottish Fisheries Department is still appealing for evidence of damage done by grey seals to marine fisheries other than salmon. Few people other than fishermen, and apparently also fisheries scientists, are yet satisfied that further evidence that seals eat fish, which is already well known, will prove that serious damage is being done to the interests of the fishermen. It cannot surely be maintained that every fish eaten by a seal would otherwise have been caught by a fisherman, and until we have reliable estimates of the total fish stocks in the North Sea, and their trends, we cannot possibly say

what effect the seals are having on them. And even if the catches of fish were declining, this would be much more likely to be due to overfishing by human fishermen, not by seals.

Imports of Rare Animals

On January 16 the Animals (Restriction of Importation) Act, 1964 came into force in the United Kingdom. This means that certain especially rare animals, mainly apes and monkeys, rhinoceroses and Australian marsupials, may not in future be imported without a licence. Licences are issued by the Board of Trade (Import Licensing Branch, Hillgate House, Old Bailey, London, E.C.4) with the advice of a committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Cranbrook, which has been set up by the Department of Education and Science. The Act was a Private Member's Bill, promoted by the Fauna Preservation Society and piloted through the House of Commons by Miss Harvie Anderson, M.P. for East Renfrewshire. The full effect of the Act will not become apparent until the main animal importing season begins in the spring.

Wildlife Exhibition in 1966

The Council for Nature announces that its second Wildlife Exhibition will be held in the Alexandra Palace in North London from April 21 to May 1, 1966. *The Observer* has again agreed to sponsor the Exhibition, whose theme will be "Living with

Nature", and more than twice as much space will be available as in the 1963 Exhibition at Westminster. It is also hoped that there will be many more live animals and plants on view than in 1963.

Prizes for Wildlife Tapes

Five first prizes of £25 each were awarded by the B.B.C. and the Council for Nature in the various sections of their joint competition for tapes of wildlife subjects: E. Cunningham of Berkhamsted, Herts, muntjac deer; M. Sinclair of Shetland, whimbrel; L. Shove of Exeter, pied flycatcher; A. G. Field of Redditch, dawn chorus of doves; and J. Skeel of Kent, marsh frog. The winning entries were broadcast in December.

Large Gift to London Zoo

The Zoological Society of London has received a donation of £50,000 towards the rebuilding of the Regent's Park Zoo from Charles Clore, the financier and industrialist.

Good Whooping Crane News

A record number of whooping cranes, one of the world's rarest birds, arrived last autumn at their wintering grounds, the Aransas Wildlife Refuge in Texas, from their breeding grounds in Wood Buffalo Park, Northern Canada. No fewer than ten of the 41 birds were young of the year, and both the overall total and the number of young are the highest since recording began at Aransas 25

years ago. There are another eight birds in captivity, bringing the world population to 49. Last spring only 32 cranes left Aransas for the north.

Threat to the California Condor

Barely 40 California condors, second largest bird in the world judging by weight, survive in the wild. They are threatened, even in their sanctuary in the remote sierras, the Los Padres National Forest in California, by irresponsible shooting, by secondary poisoning from pesticides—two have been killed by the poison 1080 used against ground predators—and by disturbance of their nesting sites by human intrusion. One man walking within sight of their eyrie can make a pair desert. Hence the extreme danger to the California condor of the proposed Topatopa Dam, which apparently requires a public road to be made through the heart of the condors' innermost sanctuary. The National Audubon Society has warned that this project may be fatal to the bird's chance of survival. Conservationists everywhere will wish them well in their efforts to divert this dam to a location less dangerous to the future welfare of one of the world's rarest and most magnificent birds.

Killing Game for Tsetse Control

By resuming the slaughter of selected wild animals—warthog, bushpig, kudu and bushbuck—in certain areas where tsetse fly

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has recently been increasing, Southern Rhodesia has reopened the old argument about the killing of game as a method of tsetse control. The blood-sucking tsetse flies carry the organisms of trypanosomiasis, a group of diseases which includes both human sleeping sickness and nagana in cattle, and their control is certainly a vital human and economic interest. The reason killing animals, mostly ungulates such as antelopes and pigs, as a control measure is that, when the flies feed on them, these animals become reservoirs for the trypanosomes, and so can infect both man and cattle.

However, Dr. P. E. Glover, lately of the Kenya Veterinary Department, has recently reviewed the whole problem, and come to the conclusion that "there is no valid justification for game destruction as a practical and lasting means of tsetse control, particularly in new or future projects". He also points out that it is futile to clear game from an area, unless it is going to be farmed scientifically by stocking it with numbers of cattle adjusted to the carrying capacity of the area. What usually happens after tsetse control operations in Africa is that the land is either left unfarmed or is overstocked with cattle, resulting in overgrazing and eventual destruction of the habitat. The International Union for Conservation of Nature has commended Dr. Glover's conclusions in its latest *Bulletin*.

Protection of Seals

The Canadian Government has recently made regulations to protect the breeding stock of the harp and hood seals off the east coast of Canada, both by shortening the open season and by prohibiting altogether the taking of seals in certain areas. Seals must also be killed humanely; in particular skinning them alive, killing them with inadequate clubs, and catching them with baited fishing lines are all now prohibited. This action follows a widespread outcry, both domestic and international, at the events during last spring's seal fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, when such inhumane practices as skinning young seals alive were widely reported, and conservationists warned that the excessive number of seals killed each year was causing the population to plunge steeply towards extinction. Unfortunately many informed conservationists still fear that the new regulations do not go far enough and will not in fact succeed in conserving the valuable natural resource constituted by the breeding stocks of these two seals.

Norway and the Soviet Union have agreed to suspend hunting of the Greenland seal for five years. This action too followed reports that the seal stocks of the Barents and White Seas were decreasing catastrophically.

Another British Bat

It is only ten years since Michael

Blackmore announced the discovery of a new British bat, the mouse-eared bat *Myotis myotis*, in caves in Dorset, to which county it still seems to be confined. Now a second new species of bat has been found in Dorset, the grey long-eared bat *Plecotus austriacus*, which is so like our common long-eared bat *P. auritus* that its existence throughout Europe was overlooked until about six years ago. The grey long-eared bat was first found to be a British bat when the collections at the British Museum (Natural History) were re-examined and a specimen taken in Hampshire in the 1870's was discovered. While the paper reporting this find in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* was in the press, a colony of living specimens of the new bat was discovered by R. E. Stebbings in the roof of the Nature Conservancy's Furzebrook Research Station near Wareham. The grey long-eared bat is larger than the common species and much less brown in colour, parts of its fur being almost black.

Irish Sparrowhawk Decline

Until about six years ago, according to Arnold Benington in *The Countryman* (Winter 1964/65), there were numerous sparrowhawks in Co. Down, Northern Ireland, with 25 pairs occupying about a quarter of the area of the county. Then they started to decrease, and by 1963 only seven pairs were left in this area.

Fortunately in 1964 the number went up to 11 again. There seems little doubt that the decrease was due to secondary poisoning by pesticides, the hawks having acquired a lethal dose of pesticide by eating many small birds which individually contained sublethal doses. An infertile egg taken from a sparrowhawk's nest in Northern Ireland last year contained five different poisons: DDT, DDE, TDE, heptachlor epoxide and dieldrin.

What Herring Gulls Eat

Alarm has long been expressed at the vast increases in herring gulls, both in Western Europe and in North America, for herring gulls are voracious birds that prey on the eggs and young of terns and other attractive sea-birds. A paper by Dr. M. P. Harris in the January *Ibis*, journal of the British Ornithologists' Union, shows, what many people had long suspected, that in the winter herring gulls feed largely on fish waste and other garbage discarded by man. It is becoming increasingly plain that the only way of curbing the plague of herring gulls is either to enforce the destruction by burning or otherwise of all edible offals and refuse or, more sensibly, to compost it all.

New Society for Young People

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has just launched the Young Ornithologists' Club, for all young people up to the age of 18 interested in birds. The

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Club replaces the Junior Bird Recorders' Club, which used to exclude boys and girls under the age of 12. The new Club's journal *Bird Life* replaces the *Junior Bird Watcher*. Further particulars from the Education Officer, R.S.P.B., The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire.

The Brigadier Retires

All who have worked with the Council for Nature's Conservation Corps will regret the news that Brigadier E. F. E. Armstrong, the Corp's Organiser since it began in 1959, retired in January. He is succeeded by his deputy, Major Judge, but his retirement seems likely to be an active one, for he will in fact continue, as Deputy Organiser, to help with the administration of the Corps and to take charge of parties in the field. The Conservation Corps was created, with the aid of a grant from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, to encourage community service among young people by enabling them to undertake maintenance work in nature reserves, thus combining invigorating outdoor occupation with education in the principles of conservation. Tasks are of two kinds, weekend ones, mainly in the Home Counties, and residential ones further afield for a week or more. In 1964, for instance, there were residential tasks on Skomer Island off the Pembrokeshire coast, at Branton Burrows in North Devon, and in the Cairngorms in Inverness-shire. Many

school parties undertake these tasks as self-organising groups. Several county naturalists' trusts also run their own local corps. Particulars of tasks available for 1965, and the addresses of county naturalists' trusts, may be had from the Council for Nature, 41 Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7.

New Deer Control Society

The Eden Valley Deer Control Society, founded last summer in Cumberland, is one of six similar societies affiliated to the British Deer Society. Their aim is to ensure that the control of wild deer which are troubling farmers is carried out both humanely and according to the best principles of conservation, in co-operation with local landowners. Far too many deer in Britain carry shot from the shot-guns of irate farmers, who have shot at them from too great a distance to kill. The first rule in conserving a deer herd is to remove the inferior animals first, so that the stock is improved. This can only be done through careful planning by people thoroughly familiar with the deer in their district. Other deer control societies exist in Ashdown Forest (Sussex), East and West Sussex, the Poole area of Dorset and the Cotswolds.

Deer Survey in Essex

The Essex Field Club has launched a survey of the wild deer of south-western Essex, an area which holds the ancient herd

of dark fallow deer in Epping Forest, and other herds in Hatfield Forest and the Brentwood district. Record cards may be had from the Organiser, Donald Chapman, Passmore Edwards Museum, Romford Road, London, E.15. On the recommendation of the Council for Nature, the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust has made a grant of £100 to enable the Club to secure the services of Dr. J. M. Watson, of West Ham College of Technology, as Scientific Director of the Survey. Particulars of this Carnegie grant scheme may be had from the Council for Nature, 41 Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7.

Puma at Large

An escaped puma or North American mountain lion has been at large for two years on the borders of Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex, and is being keenly watched for by naturalists in those counties. Being of a very retiring nature and of nocturnal habits, it is rarely seen. There is some evidence that it has been feeding on roe deer in the Surrey Weald, and the Editor of *Deer News*, journal of the British Deer Society, comments that this is probably the first time that adult British deer have fallen victim to a large mammal predator since the wolf became extinct in Scotland in 1743.

The Shuttlecock Teal

In its January *Bulletin* the Wildfowl Trust describes the curious

activities of a drake teal, which was first ringed by the Trust at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, on March 3, 1963; then caught by General Wainwright at Abberton, Essex, in November; recaptured at Slimbridge on April 27, 1964; and finally caught once more at Abberton on October 20 last.

Being Kind to Cranes

In chronicling in the December issue of *British Birds* the story of the remarkable invasion of cranes in the South of England in the autumn of 1963, when some 500 birds may have been present, D. D. Harber records one most satisfactory feature: "There is no evidence that any of these very large and conspicuous birds were shot while in this country. In fact, they do not appear to have been molested in any way except, perhaps, by some over-eager field ornithologists".

Fate of Spanish Salmon

A piece of reindeer bone carved in the shape of a salmon, found in the famous Altamira cave and now in the museum at nearby Santillana del Mar in northern Spain, is the earliest record of a salmon anywhere in the world. Even a hundred years ago none of the rivers of the Atlantic coast of Spain were well stocked with salmon. Yet today, according to Anthony Netboy in the January *Salmon and Trout Magazine*, there are only seven salmon rivers of any consequence in the whole of Spain, and four of these may

well hold no more salmon in four or five years time. In Spain dams for electric power and other industrial installations have taken precedence over the preservation of salmon as a valuable natural resource. For the salmon could have been saved if fish passes had been built at the dams, so that the salmon could ascend to their spawning grounds as they do in the Scottish hydroelectric schemes.

o Predators to the Rescue

The French Minister of Agriculture has complained that the harmful effects of drought in France have been aggravated by the destructive activities of too many rodents, rats, mice and voles. Yet all over France both birds and beasts of prey, which should be killing these rodents, are themselves being killed under an out-of-date law, and lists of these "harmful animals" are proudly gibbeted by hunters' societies in the local press.

New European Park

It is proposed to extend the German national park of Pfälzerwald, created in the Palatinate in 1959, into the French departments of Moselle and Bas-Rhin, so as to make a European park. The first Western European national park was recently declared in Luxemburg and Germany.

Watch for these Waders

All dunlins trapped on migration last autumn at Ledsjär Bird Station in Sweden were marked

with a blue-green colour on the white undersides of their wings and body. To help this migration study, anybody who sees a dunlin coloured in this way—and northern dunlins are abundant on our coasts in winter—is asked to report the details to Med. Kand. Jan W. Mascher, Lästmakaregatan 4A, Uppsala, Sweden. About 100 ringed plovers were also colour-marked in South Sweden last year, this time with various combinations of colour rings. Anybody seeing one of these should report the details to Göran Roos, Ljunbergsgatan 9B, Halmstad, Sweden.

Long Distance Traveller

A lesser black-backed gull, killed when it collided with an aircraft at Aden, bore a ring showing that it had been ringed as a nestling at Danaflut, Sweden, 3,500 miles away, 18 months before.

Death of an Elephant

At Rakwana in Ceylon an elephant was found dead with a board studded with large nails embedded in its foot. According to *Loris*, journal of the Wild Life Protection Society of Ceylon, the board must have been laid in the path with the deliberate object of killing the elephant. Yet the Ceylon elephant is one of the rarest animals in the world, listed as in danger of extinction in the Red Data Book of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Almost certainly fewer than 1500 still survive.

Oryxes to Saudi Arabia

In return for the help of the Saudi Arabian Royal Family in supplying two pairs of the rare Arabian oryxes to the World Herd belonging to the Fauna Preservation Society and the World Wildlife Fund at Phoenix, Arizona (see p. 16), the Kenya Game Department recently sent two beisa oryxes and two Burchell's zebras to the municipal zoo at Riyadh.

Durrell to Sierra Leone

Gerald Durrell, Director of the Jersey Zoo, sailed from Liverpool on January 15 on an expedition to Sierra Leone, accompanied by a B.B.C. T.V. team, in the hope of catching rare animals to breed at his zoo, which specialises in breeding animals in danger of extinction. He is particularly seeking a pair of pigmy hippos.

Leopards or Baboons?

It is estimated that the ravages of baboons are destroying up to 40 per cent of the total maize crop in some parts of Southern Rhodesia, according to the latest annual report of the S.R. Natural Resources Board. Further south a correspondent in Transvaal writes to *African Wild Life* that the persecution of leopards there is leading to a big build-up of baboons and wonders how soon their attacks on crops and stock will make farmers understand that leopards, which prey on baboons, have some value. The leopard is steadily decreasing all

over Africa, largely due to a frivolous fashion in North America and Western Europe for wearing the skins of spotted cats. It may seem extraordinary that the decisions of a few fashion designers in Paris and elsewhere can lead to the destruction of crops by baboons throughout Africa, but this is what happens when the balance of nature is unthinkingly upset by the removal of predators.

Island of Dancing Eyes

Crescent Island, in Lake Naivasha in Kenya's Rift Valley, which was threatened by development, is to be declared a wildlife sanctuary. According to John Williams of the Coryndon Museum in Nairobi, the leading expert on East African birds, nearly one-twentieth of the world's total of 8,554 bird species have been seen on this one small strip of land. The island is known to many as "the island of dancing eyes" because of the large number of spring hares whose shining eyes bob up and down in the glare of car headlights at night.

To Arizona for Springboks?

American sportsmen who fear that the wild animals of Africa and Asia may soon become extinct have started a programme of stocking the arid plains of the south-western United States with Barbary sheep, ibex, kudu and springboks. The Shikar-Safari Club suggests that if a programme already under way reaches its

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logical conclusion, hunters may go on safaris in Arizona and New Mexico instead of Africa. Already in twelve years 52 Barbary sheep brought from North Africa (where they are becoming rare) have increased to 2000 in New Mexico. Siberian ibex, together with greater kudu and gemsbok from South Africa have now also been imported into New Mexico, and some springboks are order.

Red in Tooth and Claw

Nearly a million and a half campers visit the Yosemite National Park in the United States every year, and parts of the park, according to the *National Parks Magazine*, seem in danger of becoming cities rather than wilderness areas. A growing burden of the park rangers is the policing of the camp sites, where there is an increasing tide of lawlessness. More than 900 people were arrested in Yosemite in 1963 for offences ranging from reckless driving to murder.

Parks or Car Parks?

Over nine million tourists swarm into Washington, D.C., every year, and there is a constant demand to turn some of the city's smaller parks into parking lots for their cars. Secretary of the Interior Udall has countered with a plan to provide parking lots on the outskirts and convey the visitors into the centre by minibus. The National Parks Association suggests this is a

plan that might help to rid other cities of the tyranny of the motor car. And what about Oxford, England, for that matter?

Pheasants in the Cold

The problems of introducing and establishing animals and birds in new countries, which may have a quite different climate from their native land, are well illustrated by the recent fate of introduced game birds in western Canada during the coldest winter for 30 years. Hundreds of thousands of imported pheasants and partridges, representing some 60 per cent of the local naturalised stocks of these game birds, are estimated to have starved to death in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Thousands more starving birds were seen close to roads and near grain elevators, and were being preyed on by hawks and owls. The ban on the shooting of hawks and owls was, therefore, temporarily lifted, but was soon reimposed after protests from conservationists.

Pick up that Film

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has discovered that one cause of the death of animals in roadside zoos is eating polaroid film negative thrown down by visitors. All users of this type of film are strongly urged to take away any surplus film, and not throw it down where it may be picked up by a domestic pet or wild animal.

Homing Penguins

In November 40 penguins were flown several thousand miles from Mirny, the Russian centre of Antarctic exploration, to the United States MacMurdo Antarctic Station. There they have been ringed, and an American biologist is going to Mirny to check whether and when they return home.

Rare Petrel Protected

A scenic reserve of 269 acres is to be created near Barrytown, Westland, in New Zealand's South Island, to protect the breeding grounds of the black petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*, one of New Zealand's rarer breeding birds, which nests only in this area of broken bush-clad country.

A Poor Season for Kites

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds reports that the Welsh kites had a poor season. Though 18 pairs of kites were known and all but one of these made nests, only seven young birds were reared. At least three of the nesting trees were climbed after the eggs hatched, and in each case the young kites disappeared. It is feared that they were taken, but all inquiries have failed to trace their subsequent history.

Royal Wildlife

A team of 28 naturalists, led by the amateur botanist David McClintock, have been surveying the wild animals and both the wild and cultivated plants of the

grounds of Buckingham Palace since 1960. The results have just been published in the *Proceedings and Transactions* of the old-established (1872) South London Entomological and Natural History Society (14 Rochester Row, S.W.1; £1). The team reported 21 kinds of wild bird breeding in the Palace grounds, frogs, toads, several fishes, 343 kinds of butterfly and moth, including two new to the British Isles, 87 beetles, 57 spiders, many other invertebrates, and several hundred wild plants, among them liverworts, mosses, fungi, algae and even a couple of lichens, which are rare in London because of the smoke. Such unlikely plants as hartstongue fern, lords and ladies, dog violet and tufted vetch were found hanging on in odd corners where they had managed to elude the sharp eyes of the weeding gardeners; the fern was under drain covers on the west terrace. The whole volume is very well worth the attention of town-bound naturalists, as showing how much of real interest can be discovered even in the most unpromising places.

Wildfowl Conservation in Europe

The *Proceedings*, edited by J. J. Swift, of the First European Meeting on Wildfowl Conservation, held at St. Andrews, Scotland, in October 1963, have just been published by the Nature Conservancy (19 Belgrave Square, London, S.W.1; 24s.) in collabora-

tion with the International Wildfowl Research Bureau. The volume contains many valuable papers on the status and conservation of wildfowl, i.e., ducks, geese and swans, in all parts of Europe, including Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Roumania.

Census of European Bison

A complete census of European bison on January 1, 1965, has been made by Dr. Erna Mohr of Hamburg. She reports that there are now some 1055-1065 of these fine beasts, which so nearly became extinct in the two world wars, the great majority of them behind the Iron Curtain; Germany has the largest stock in the West. In England there are now six European bison, five at the London Zoo and one at Woburn Park, Bedfordshire.

The City of Eriboll?

There seems to be a certain lack of realism in the proposal for a new city at Loch Eriboll, in the bleak far north-west of Sutherland, based on the exploitation of the potash in the local shale. The idea comes from the Master of Lauderdale and is outlined in the January issue of *Scottish Forestry*. Even if there is a splendid deep anchorage in the loch, and a £1 million pipe-line could be constructed to the rail-head at Lairg, 50 miles away (assuming its reprieve from Dr. Beeching's axe is maintained), enormous sums would also have to be spent on roads. For this is an area where

even the A roads may still be single tracks with passing places. The suggestion of much reafforestation is a good one, and should be carried out regardless of any new city, but the idea that "very large areas of rolling countryside in the north and north-west could be fertilised and reseeded as a national investment" will astonish those familiar with the rocky Sutherland hills and call up visions of the groundnuts scheme. While large-scale reseedling and fertilisation may well be practicable south of the Great Glen, the harsh climate and thin soils of the north-west are unlikely to allow such a good return on capital investment as red deer, and perhaps reindeer, could already give, if only sheep farmers would stop depleting the fertility of the soil by overstocking it with sheep.

When Elephants Remember

When three elephants out of a group of 30 were shot as a control measure on the flanks of Mount Elgon in Kenya, the survivors reacted in a most remarkable way, according to the *East African Wildlife Journal*. They repeatedly tried to lift their dead companions, and "pawed at the dead with their forefeet in a frenzied effort to move them. . . . Presently, a large cow advanced to where one of the elephants lay, and knelt beside it, placing her tusks under its belly. She then tried to stand, her body tensed with the tremendous effort. Sud-

denly there was a loud crack and her right tusk snapped off at the root, describing an arc through the air and landing about 30 feet away." The herd then stampeded off, but returned three more times to try and move the dead elephants, till at last an old bull, evidently their leader, after apparently trying to communicate with the recumbent forms, gave a loud trumpet and the herd finally moved off.

Duck and Goose Conservation

More than 10,000 mallard were released into the wild in 1963 by the Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, commonly known as WAGBI, according to their latest annual report. These ducks were all ringed, and although the great majority stayed in Great Britain, some were recovered overseas, in various parts of western Europe. The longest journey reported was of 1,200 miles from Lincolnshire to Finland. WAGBI has now started a similar scheme for gadwall, in Leicestershire, and its attempt to establish the greylag goose as a wild breeding species in the Lake District resulted in three wild nests there in 1963. A stock of greylags maintained by the Lytham Wildfowlers Association on the Lancashire coast was wantonly destroyed by vandals in reprisal for the Association's praiseworthy efforts to uphold the wild bird protection laws and prevent shooting out of season.

New Wildlife Film

A new 34-minute colour film, *Wild Wings*, has just been made by British Transport Films for the Wildfowl Trust. Photographed by Patrick Carey and John Buxton, directed by Patrick Carey and John Taylor, produced by Edgar Anstey and narrated by Peter Scott, it deals with the scientific and conservation work of the Wildfowl Trust, both at Slimbridge and elsewhere. The film is available on free loan from British Transport Films, 25 Savile Row, London, W.1.

Cinnabars to the Rescue

An experiment in biological control is to be carried out on Port Meadow at Oxford this year by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists' Trust. Port Meadow is almost unique in Britain in being grassland that is known never to have been ploughed since Domesday Book, and so is vastly important to ecologists. The Oxford City Corporation, to whom it belongs, have been much troubled with ragwort, which poisons the cattle that still graze the meadow. Last year they spent £1,620 on trying to control it by conventional methods, and this year the use of herbicides, which would have been disastrous to the composition of the natural vegetation, was threatened. To avert this the Trust has offered to use nature's own control methods, the black and yellow caterpillars of the

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cinnabar moth, which can destroy ragwort. Members of the Trust will bring caterpillars to Port Meadow from all over the three counties. This method of ragwort control has already been successfully applied in New Zealand.

Without Comment

A group of hunters drove up to the gate of a game farm in West Virginia, where a number of white-tailed deer are housed for public display. They shot the captive deer from their parked car and then drove off in a great roar of laughter. (*The National Humane Review*.)

Personalia

John Coleman-Cooke, South-Western Regional Representative on the Executive Committee of the Council for Nature, has become Hon. Secretary of the Council on the resignation on account of pressure of work of J. E. Lousley.

The new Field Studies Secretary of the Association of School Natural History Societies is A. L. Leah, Humphrey Perkins School, Barrow-upon-Soar, Loughborough, Leicestershire.

Major Bruce Kinloch, lately Director of the Game Department in Tanganyika, has recently taken up the post of Secretary of the British Field Sports Society. Together with Sir Dudley Forwood and Aubrey Buxton, he has also been co-opted on to the Council

of the Fauna Preservation Society.

Major Ian Grimwood has retired as Chief Game Warden of Kenya, and has just completed a wildlife survey in Ethiopia on behalf of Unesco. He will shortly go to Peru, at the invitation of the Peruvian Government, to carry out a long-term wildlife survey there.

Professor Antoon de Vos, who has been spending a year studying wildlife resource problems in Rhodesia, has become Professor of Resources Development at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

Obituary

We record with deep regret the untimely death in a motor accident on December 10 of Paul Holmes, O.B.E., Warden of the Field Studies Council's Malham Tarn Field Centre in Yorkshire since 1948. He was also a member of both the Committee for England of the Nature Conservancy and the Yorkshire Dales National Parks Committee, and had been President of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union. The conservation movement in Britain has suddenly found itself deprived of a personality of great wisdom and integrity, and deep knowledge and experience.

A few days after the death of Paul Holmes the Field Studies Council suffered a second severe blow in the sudden death in his office in London of its Secretary, Walter Tinker.

Who's Who in Conservation—1

The FAUNA PRESERVATION SOCIETY was founded in 1903 as the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire, and has always taken a special interest in the conservation of the larger animals of the Commonwealth. Today it covers the conservation of wildlife all over the world, including, of course, the British Isles. The F.P.S. does not, however, overlap with such specialist bodies as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Among the principal recent achievements of the F.P.S. have been Operation Oryx, Operation Noah, the Pearsall Survey of the Serengeti Plains in Tanganyika and the Gee Survey of the great Indian rhino in Nepal. Operation Oryx was an expedition to Southern Arabia in 1962, led by Major Ian Grimwood, then Chief Game Warden of Kenya, to capture a breeding stock of the rare Arabian oryx, a handsome desert antelope which is being hunted to extinction by wealthy sheikhs in fast armed cars. The expedition, grant-aided by the World Wildlife Fund, caught three oryxes which, with one donated to the Society by the Ruler of Kuwait, one loaned by the London Zoo and four presented to the World Wildlife Fund by the King of Saudi Arabia, are at present located at the zoo at Phoenix, Arizona, where the climate is not unlike that of Arabia. Already three calves

have been born, one to the F.P.S.'s oryx Edith, and three more are expected in 1965.

The Survey of the Serengeti Plains by Professor W. H. Pearsall, F.R.S. one of Britain's leading ecologists, who died only last October, was a path-breaking intensive study of the feeding habits of the wildebeest, gazelle, zebra and many other grazing animals of this vitally important area. It was financed by the F.P.S. and resulted in the establishment in its present form of the Serengeti National Park. Operation Noah, also largely financed by the F.P.S., rescued thousands of animals from the rising waters of Lake Kariba in Rhodesia.

The F.P.S. actively promotes legislation on wildlife conservation, and recently, for instance, sponsored the Animals (Restriction of Importation) Act, 1964 (see p. 2), and co-sponsored the Deer Act, 1963, which for the first time created a close season for wild deer in England and Wales.

The Society is recognised as an international organisation by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and works closely both with the Union, and with the World Wildlife Fund.

Oryx, the Society's journal, appears three times a year and is the leading world journal on wildlife conservation. Address: c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, N.W.1; annual subscription £2, including *Oryx*.