

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON NATIONAL PARKS

June 1960 - September 1963

This Commission, which serves the IUCN Executive Board in an advisory capacity, assembles authoritative information on parks and reserves, offers technical assistance to countries upon request, and raises funds for its own activities. These have over the years included surveys of parks and wildlife by Oliver Milton and Richard Estes in Burma, similar work by Milton in Malaya, assistance in conservation education matters by George Ruhle in Indonesia and Thailand. Plans are now being developed for an eighteen month survey of parks and wildlife in six Southeast Asia countries by Dr. and Mrs. Lee Talbot, which will begin in November of 1963.

The primary activity of the Commission since the last Assembly has been in implementing the resolution of the Athens Assembly concerning an international conference on national parks. By invitation of the IUCN, and co-sponsorship of UNESCO, FAO, U. S. National Park Service and the Natural Resources Council of America, the First World Conference on National Parks was held in Seattle, Washington, U.S.A. from 30 June to 7 July 1962. The Conference also had the cooperation of the Seattle World's Fair where the opening session was held on 2 July. 144 delegates and observers from 63 countries, including 19 African, 15 Latin American, and 12 Asian attended, as well as 121 delegates and observers from the United States.

The Conference program included five sessions which dealt with Purposes, principles and policies of national parks; Scientific, economic and cultural values of national parks and equivalent reserves; Optimum use of national parks and equivalent reserves; Administration of national parks and equivalent reserves; and International coordination of national park and reserve programs. Papers were presented in each of these sessions by a panel of experts. Time was allowed for discussion of the papers between the panelists and vice chairmen of each session, as well as for open forum discussion by delegates from the floor. Simultaneous interpretation in Spanish and French permitted all delegates to enter into the discussions.

The whole subject of parks and reserves was raised to a high level of international consideration, and the concern that many of the countries have for the conservation of these areas was indicated in the recommendations adopted by the Conference. Some of these are already being acted upon by governments. Opportunities for helping newly developing countries with technical assistance, and in their planning for parks are now opening up.

Following the Seattle meeting many foreign delegates visited the Olympic, Yellowstone, and Grand Teton National Parks. Members of the National Park Service staff acted as hosts for the group, showing them the practical application of subjects discussed at the Conference.

Mr. Alexander Adams, former President of The Nature Conservancy, has edited the material for the proceedings volume, which will be published by

the U. S. National Park Service. It is hoped that this will be available before the end of 1963. Discussions are also being held with UNESCO about that organization publishing the French and Spanish version.

A number of recommendations from the Conference have had action taken on them. An important one called for the establishment of a Committee on Park System Planning, and this committee has been appointed, a grant received from Resources For The Future for its work, and William J. Hart, a specialist in this field, has been employed to study the feasibility of establishing an international service for park system planning. Brief surveys have already been made in Turkey, Colombia, Costa Rica, and additional ones are planned for Africa and Korea. A review and evaluation of Mr. Hart's findings and recommendations will be made at the time of the Nairobi Assembly, and it is hoped that a plan can be developed to make this activity a permanent form of international technical aid.

Since the first of the year (1963) the Commission has been fortunate in having Jean-Paul Harroy serve as Vice Chairman and his help on follow-up activities on the recommendations of the First World Conference on National Parks, as well as the U. N. World List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves. Mr. Harroy has been verifying and re-checking the information in this List with a view to classifying the areas in comparable categories and determining the extent of the enforcement of the laws for their protection. He has also been working closely with the Council of Europe, as well as other international organizations concerned with park matters.

The Commission has continued to maintain a small office at 2000 P Street, N.W. in Washington, D. C. under the direction of its Secretary, Fred M. Packard. It was here that the information, which had been gathered by the United Nations Secretariat for the World List, was compiled. The List, which is in very preliminary form, was brought out in two parts with appropriate cooperation from UNESCO and FAO, and was the principal reference document for the First World Conference on National Parks. Another important report that has been issued by the Commission is that on The Southern Tip of the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica, which was prepared by Waldemar Albertin on a survey made by a group from the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences in Turrialba, Costa Rica. The report contains a wide range of useful information that will be helpful to the organizations that are considering raising funds to help save some of this virgin area for a permanent park or reserve.

Dr. Enrique Beltran and Dr. F. C. Lehmann, members of the Commission, have been concerned with follow-up activities from the Parks Conference on matters relating to their area. Dr. Maria Buchinger has also worked closely with the Commission on these too.

The Commission was invited to participate in the Workshop on Conservation Education for Specialists of African Countries at the Nairobi Assembly, and a paper was prepared on the International Significance of National Parks in Conservation Education. This paper is in three parts with the Chairman covering general aspects, the Vice Chairman covering the World List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves, and William J. Hart on planning park systems.

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The Commission has also worked closely with the Ecology Commission and the Survival Service Commission, and is developing plans for participation in certain aspects of the International Biological Program. These will be discussed at the Nairobi Assembly.

In conclusion, it is evident from the success of the First World Conference on National Parks that there is an increasing recognition of the need for technical aid in the field of national parks and equivalent reserves. This was demonstrated by the splendid resolution adopted by the UNESCO General Assembly and later by the U. N. General Assembly on the subject of conservation and economic planning. With the help of this resolution, along with those adopted by the Arusha Conference and the Seattle Conference, an awakening is taking place with regard to taking action to strengthen parks and reserves and saving endangered species, particularly in many of the newly developing countries of Africa and Asia.

Our Commission has the task of helping to carry out the U. N. Resolution and implementing the results of the Seattle Conference in every possible way. This can only be done with the active assistance of governments, as well as international agencies such as FAO and UNESCO.

20 August 1963

Harold J. Coolidge  
Chairman

Members of Commission:

Jean-Paul Harroy, Vice Chairman, Belgium  
Fred M. Packard, Secretary, U.S.A.  
Enrique Beltran, Mexico  
Dusit Banijsatana, Thailand  
John R. B. Coleman, Canada  
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Mirghani M. Medani, Sudan  
Theodore Monod, France  
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