

The administration of the Branch Committee suffered a serious setback due to the untimely death of Dr G.B. Evans, the former Honorary Treasurer. His death not only robbed the Selangor Branch of a very able Treasurer, but the cause of nature conservation in this country also lost a staunch supporter. It was not until several months later that the Committee found a replacement as Hon. Treasurer in the person of Miss J.M. Lloyd, who kindly agreed to take on the duties of this office until the present Annual General Meeting.

As usual, the annual exhibition was held in the Muzium Negara, but response from members and organisations invited to participate was rather disappointing.

I should like to take this opportunity of expressing the thanks of the Selangor Branch to the Director of the Institute for Medical Research, to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya and to the Representative of the British Council for the use of their lecture halls and other facilities; to the Director of Museums for kind permission to use the Main Hall and other display facilities at the Muzium Negara in connection with the annual exhibition; and to the Branch's Hon. Auditor, Mr K. Roberts, who has always rendered excellent and valuable service to the Branch Committee. Our thanks also go to the State Forest Officer Selangor, the Chief Research Officer Kepong, and to other people who gave assistance of one kind or another. Finally, I would like to thank all members of the outgoing Committee for their unselfish and dedicated service, and for having given so much of their valuable time in the service of the Society.

Singapore Branch Presented by Mr A.S. Johnston, Chairman

During the past year our more obvious activities have continued on the usual basis of one indoor and one outdoor meeting a month, plus an exceptionally enjoyable annual satay party in December. It is not always easy to arrange as full a programme as this, but on the whole attendances have been satisfactory, and it would seem therefore that this frequency is justified. Members' suggestions for the programme are always welcome, especially when accompanied by practical offers of assistance.

An experiment during the year was an expedition starting in the small hours of the morning. Attendance was surprisingly good and it was a singularly successful expedition. As many of you will know, a number of our party came upon a herd of elephants — or rather nearly did, since they decided that they had better make a strategic and orderly withdrawal, as they were unsure how the elephants would react to a party of inexperienced intruders.

One of the highlights of the year was the Branch's exhibit at the Flower Show of the Singapore Gardening Society. A tremendous amount of work and enthusiasm was put into this project by Professor Rao and his helpers, most of them from the University. Everyone who saw the exhibit praised it highly. You may have heard that we were honoured with a visit from the President of the Republic to our exhibit.

The Committee met on numerous occasions during the year and in addition to keeping the indoor and outdoor meetings going, steady progress has been made in other directions. Additional Singapore Branch publications have been encouraged on freshwater vertebrates and snakes, on which Mr Eric Alfred is actively engaged. It was also decided to form a separate subcommittee to study problems related to establishing a marine nature reserve, regarding which I hope it may be possible to give you some positive news before long.

One major administrative achievement during the year has been the reorganisation of the list of Branch members, made possible by the hard work of our Hon. Secretary, Dr Gooding. However, in order to ensure that this work is not wasted, we must rely on members to keep us promptly informed of pertinent details, such as changes of address, resignations, changes in membership status, and so on. Unless we have the full co-operation of members on this we cannot hope to keep up-to-date.

Branch membership stands at 217, 20 less than this time last year when the figure was 237. The decline is partly accounted for by removing non paid-up members from the list. In fact the membership results for the past 12 months are satisfactory in that we had 90 joining members, compared with 46 official resignations for various reasons.

Sales of Professor Harrison's book, *An Introduction to Mammals of Singapore and Malaya* have continued at a satisfactory rate throughout the year.

As regards plans for the year ahead, these are of course the responsibility of the incoming Committee. However, my recommendations for their consideration would be a renewed membership drive with an initial target of one new member per existing member of the Branch, with the emphasis on recruitment of young members. I also hope that the project for a marine reserve will succeed and that we can make some more positive progress than we have in the past over conservation on Singapore Island itself. Time is running out and many species familiar to us today will not be known to our children unless we can evolve some practical plan for conservation. Some of you may be co-opted for this work during the year in order to help ease the considerable burden on the Branch Committee.

I should like to express my personal appreciation to Dr Gooding for the excellent job he has done, not only in sorting out the membership tangle but in many other respects. The idea of a periodical newsletter was his. In this you will have read, amongst other things, about a proposed new type of membership, about reporting direct to the office of the Main Branch in Kuala Lumpur on non-receipt of the *Journal*, about the Committee's views on sub-groups for birds, etc, and about a forthcoming meeting of zoologists to be held in Singapore. I should also like to express special appreciation to our Hon. Treasurer, Mrs Binning, and to my other colleagues on the Committee, all of whom have been a tower of strength throughout the year. Our thanks are also due once again to the University of Singapore for letting us have the use of lecture theatres and projectors, and last but certainly not least, to the Singapore Government for its continued financial support.

CONSERVATION REPORTS

p p. 49-50, 2 p's.

188. Sumatran Rhinoceros (Plates 9-11)

Lord Medway reported that a significant event during the year was the publication of Mr David L. Strickland's report on the ecology of the rhinoceros in Malaya (*Malayan Nature Journal*, Vol. 20, Parts 1 and 2).

During his 10 months in the country from September 1965 to June 1966 inclusive, Mr Strickland spent much time in the Sungei Dusun Game Reserve, Selangor. He was able to demonstrate that at least three full-grown rhinoceroses live in this Reserve, and confirmed that its boundaries were satisfactorily placed except in the northwest corner, where an extension of approximately half a mile is essential in order to enclose the rhinos' normal range of movement. His investigation of the feeding habits of the Sungei Dusun rhinos yielded a comprehensive list of food plants, and has shown that a major part of their natural

diet consists of the leaves and shoots of young trees and shrubs characteristic of disturbed or regenerating forest. From this it is clear that suitable feeding areas could be provided indefinitely within the Sungei Dusun Game Reserve by regular selective felling and/or forest clearance, which should be included in any future management programme.

In addition to the creation of feeding areas, Mr Strickland recommended that artificial wallows and salt licks should be used to attract the rhinoceroses to specific locations. Together with the filling in of peripheral wallows, such alterations to the habitat could function as a relatively inexpensive method of containing the rhinoceroses in central parts of the Reserve, within the patrolling range of resident game rangers.

We believe that, with the help of practical management methods such as these, the Sungei Dusun Reserve can support indefinitely a greater number of rhinoceroses than those now living in it. The future survival of these animals depends on two interrelated factors. Immediately, they require protection from poachers. In the long term, however, they can only be protected by a change in attitude among the public. Protection is the duty of the Game Department, but in educating the general public to attitudes of conservation, each and every member of the Nature Society can play a part.

Batu Caves

Dr P.R. Wycherley reported that the Society and the Batu Caves Protection Association have continued to bring to the attention of the public the threat to Batu Caves by blasting. A possible new threat has arisen. A firm wishes to operate a smelter to recover lead from old accumulator batteries. The MNS and the BCPA feel that there can be no logical objection to various industrial activities on the land already quarried or mined in the neighbourhood, especially while blasting continues in the near vicinity, but in this case there is risk of noxious fumes polluting the air to the discomfort of tourists and possible destruction of cave animals and vegetation. We cannot assess how serious this risk is but, if it is real, then such activities should be located elsewhere than in the immediate vicinity of Batu Caves or other landscape features of interest to tourists or sheltering wildlife.

Whereas the main risk to the structure as a whole is quarrying, the beauty of the dark cave and its wildlife is damaged by vandalism, including painting on the marble, breaking stalactites and killing animals, including the over-collection of large toads and rare spiders by naturalists. Eventually education may eradicate such selfish behaviour, meanwhile some control over egress may be necessary.



Mohamed Khan

PLATE 9. The Sumatran rhinoceros *Didermoceros sumatrensis* is one of the world's rarest animals, seriously endangered throughout its range. In Malaya it is thought that only 20 animals are left, found in isolated widely separated groups. However, if Malaya can provide its remaining rhinoceroses with secure, well guarded reserves encompassing sufficient suitable habitat, it may be possible to save the species from extinction. The photograph shows a Sumatran rhinoceros in Ulu Selama, Perak.



Lord Medway

PLATE 10. The only reserve in the world that is specifically designated for the Sumatran rhinoceros is the Sungei Dusun Game Reserve, Selangor, where at least three animals are known to exist. The photograph shows a fresh footprint (hind foot superimposed on fore foot). The diameter of the Malaysian 20 cent coin beside the footprint is 23.5 mm.



Lord Medway

PLATE 11. Characteristic sight in the Sungei Dusun Game Reserve. The trunk of a tree is stained with mud where a rhinoceros has rubbed itself after wallowing. The Sumatran rhinoceros is the smallest of all the rhinoceroses, and its small size is clearly indicated by the height of the mark on the tree.