

# Oryx

The International Journal of Conservation

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The Society was founded in 1903 as the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, and subsequently named the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society. Fauna & Flora International is conserving the planet's threatened species and ecosystems – with the people and communities who depend on them.

Oryx - The International Journal of Conservation, is now published quarterly by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Fauna & Flora International. It is a leading scientific journal of biodiversity conservation, conservation policy and sustainable use, with a particular interest in material that has the potential to improve conservation management and practice.

The website, <http://www.oryxthejournal.org/>, plays a vital role in the journal's capacity-building work. Amongst the site's many attributes is a compendium of sources of free software for researchers and details of how to access Oryx at reduced rates or for free in developing countries. The website also includes extracts from Oryx issues 10, 25 and 50 years ago, and a gallery of research photographs that provide a fascinating insight into the places, species and people described in the journal.

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## CONSERVATION OF MALAYAN FAUNA BY THEODORE R. HUBBACK, F.Z.S.

The position regarding the proper preservation and protection of the Fauna of British Malaya at the end of 1925 cannot be considered a satisfactory one.

The articles which have been published from time to time in the *Journal* of the Fauna Society on this subject will have conveyed the fact to the readers of these journals that, although individual efforts have been made to try and put the work of Game Protection & Preservation in Malaya on a sound footing, and despite the incident of good Game Laws, very little financial assistance has been given by the Government of the Federated Malay States.

A deputation from this Society having stated a case to the Colonial Office pleading for a more vigorous administration of the Game Laws in the Federated Malay States, it is unnecessary to labour the point, but it may be of general interest to the members of the Society to have a short record of the position as it appears to the writer, who, as Honorary Game Warden of Pahang for over three years, and a resident of Malaya for thirty years, is conversant with the general and individual efforts that have been made during that time to save the larger Fauna from the extermination which is inevitable if no serious attempts are made at practical conservation.

### *Personnel.*

No provision was made in the Federal or State Estimates for 1925 for the payment of any Game Warden for any State in the Federated Malay States. In Perak and Selangor the honorary work of Game Wardens was undertaken by officials of the Museum Department; in Negri Sembilan, Mr. H. H. Banks, who holds several other Government appointments, was Honorary Game Warden; and in Pahang the writer was Honorary Game Warden, devoting all his time to the work.

Efforts have been made in Negri Sembilan and Pahang to obtain the services of persons interested in Game Conservation to act in the capacity of Deputy Game Wardens ; two such appointments were made in Pahang and one in Negri Sembilan : but up till September, 1925, no appointments of this nature had been made in Selangor or Perak. These appointments, owing to the other duties which had to be performed by the Honorary Deputy Game Wardens were of no value, and had no bearing on the effective administration of the Game Laws.

Native Game Rangers (Malays) were employed in the Federated Malay States, but the work, which is bound to be of an individual nature, is not the sort at which a Malay excels and much difficulty is experienced in finding and training suitable men.

NOTE.—A Game Warden for the Federated Malay States will, it is believed, shortly be appointed.

### *Game Reserves.*

The Large Game Reserves that have been constituted under the present Game Laws consist of four, one in Negri Sembilan and three in Pahang.

The Negri Sembilan Reserve known as the Seriting Game Reserve marches with the Sungei Lui Reserve in Pahang, making a compact block of about 130,000 acres of good and suitable country for the preservation of the large fauna which it holds. A reserve which is suitable for this purpose *if properly guarded*, automatically becomes a reserve and sanctuary for the lesser fauna.

The "Krau Game Reserve," in Pahang consists of an area of undulating and mountainous country which was specially selected as the most suitable available area in Pahang for the preservation of elephants, Rhinoceros *sumatrensis* and wild cattle (*Bos gaurus*). The finest strain of *seladang*, the local variety of *Bos gaurus* in Malaya, is located in the Krau Game Reserve, and this reserve should be, at no distant date, the most important refuge for this magnificent species of the genus *Bos*. The area of this reserve is about 135,000 acres.

The Gunong Tahan Game Reserve is the latest addition to the Game Reserves in Pahang and is a large area of country of about 360,000 acres in a very wild and entirely unopened up part of Malaya. All the species of the large Malayan Fauna are to be found there with the exception of the *Rhinoceros sondaicus*, a species which does not, and probably never did, exist in Pahang. It must be apparent to anyone with any knowledge of game conservation that the proper administration of these reserves calls for an organisation based on something more permanent than the service of honorary officers.

The rules for the administration of these reserves place them practically under the jurisdiction of the Game Wardens, and the entrances and exits to the reserves are controlled by the law. Game Reserves to serve the purposes for which they have been made must be properly patrolled and a vigorous and intelligent policy is absolutely necessary to achieve the end in view. Such work is entirely outside the possibilities of the service that can be given by Honorary Officials whose real duties probably take up all their time. You cannot conserve game in your spare time. It is not a recreation : it is extremely hard work.

### *Administration.*

The general administration of the game laws, control of all game licences, the checking of the activities of poachers—no small item in Malaya—the investigation of complaints of damage to cultivation by wild game, all come within the scope of a Game Warden's duties.

I think that it is unnecessary to emphasise the fact that Game Preservation in Malaya must be a live question, provided that it is really intended to make it effective : the laws are adequate ; the game is still there ; the economic position does not prohibit the preservation of the Fauna ; and one may presume that the Government by passing up-to-date laws on the subject are anxious to protect and preserve their wild animals and birds.

But the service required for Game Preservation is no different to the service required for any other work and should be paid for in the same way. It appears to be the duty of a Government which has placed Game Laws on its statutes, to provide

the funds to enable such laws to be administered with efficiency.

The Game Law of 1921 was amended in 1923 and further amendments having been found necessary an entirely new act has been drafted and will probably become Law early in 1926.

The new law will, it is hoped, embody several new sections which will tend to give better preservation to the game. The shooting of deer at night, with the aid of a lamp, a cruel practice, will be made an offence ; the use of large steel traps will be prohibited ; the Game Wardens will have more power and better control to enable them to deal with cases of damage to cultivation by protected game. The setting of certain kinds of traps for catching game birds will be punishable under the new law and the dealing in rhinoceros horns—a common practice in Chinese medicine shops—will be made an offence except under licence. It is hoped that under the new law it will be made impossible for any person to export trophies taken from game without a certificate from the Game Warden. Some working arrangement between the Game Wardens and the Customs Officials will have to be evolved to make this regulation efficient.

These improvements to the existing law will tend to assist in the creation of a proper policy of Game Conservation ; how can they be enforced without a Game Department ?

To properly administer the Game Laws of the Federated Malay States, it is necessary to appoint a Federal Game Warden or Game Commissioner with at least one white assistant, preferably two. The Federal Game Warden should be given full powers to administer the Game Laws in the Federated Malay States, and, if the Unfederated Malay States of Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu and Johore would agree to seek the advice of the Federal Game Warden on the general question of Game Preservation, it would be possible to consolidate the Game Laws throughout Malaya. Such consolidation and co-operation should prove of the very greatest benefit to the cause of the Conservation of the Fauna of the Malay Peninsula.

The writer became aware at the beginning of 1925 that a small trade was being carried on by Malays and Chinese in one of the Malay States on the East Coast in live wild pheasants which were being trapped for the Singapore market. There was

no law to prevent such trade in this Malayan State, and there was no way to prevent every jungle pheasant being trapped without let or hindrance for commercial purposes. The Argus Pheasant, one of the most beautifully plumaged birds in the world was once widely distributed throughout the Malay Peninsula, but this bird which is extremely easily trapped, has become a marketable commodity and although trapping is illegal in the Federated Malay States and Johore it is not so elsewhere. Much harm may be done to this species of pheasant if the trade is allowed to continue.

The exportation from any Malayan port of live wild birds for the Singapore or any other market should be made illegal. Fireback pheasant, Rufusback pheasant, as well as the Argus pheasant were being trapped for this trade.

Only a thorough understanding between the Federated and Unfederated States in the Malay Peninsula can adequately deal with the question of Game Conservation in Malaya. To borrow a metaphor from Cecil Rhodes :—" You cannot hope to achieve anything by adopting the policy of the parish pump."

### *Future of the Fauna of Malaya.*

It appears to the writer after an intimate connection with the Game Laws of Malaya and some knowledge of Malayan game that the future of the larger Fauna of Malaya if no organisation is set up to protect them is a precarious one. The Game Reserves alone will not save the Fauna.

The Seladang will be the first to go of the larger fauna—they are practically extinct in Selangor now—and the elephant and Rhinoceros sumatrensis will disappear except in the more remote mountain ranges, but probably will be in such small numbers that they will have great difficulty in holding their own. The Rhinoceros sumatrensis has been terribly persecuted by poachers during the last two or three decades and in many remote districts which used to be their haunts they have disappeared, although the country has in no way been opened up or the resources developed. The disappearance of the rhinoceros has been entirely due to poaching.

The Rhinoceros sondaicus (the lesser one-horned or Java rhinoceros), described by Sir Sidney Harmer as probably the rarest large mammal in the world to-day, has been known to exist in the State of Perak for years, where there are still a few specimens left. Due to an apparent lack of interest no attempt has been made to ascertain the exact whereabouts or numbers of those left, and no practical steps have been taken to protect this extremely rare mammal.

A Rhinoceros sondaicus was poached in Lower Perak within the last two years.

In a letter that the writer addressed to the Chairman of the Fauna Society which was published in the last number of the *Journal* it was advocated that a conference on the subject of Game Conservation might be convened between Malaya and Burma with an invitation to Siam to join. Since that letter was published the writer has been in communication with the Chief Conservator of Forests of Burma, who is a member of the Fauna Society. It has been proposed to appoint a Game Warden for Burma. Conditions regarding the status of Wild Game in Malaya, Burma and Siam are not dissimilar, and the writer is convinced that much good would accrue from a conference between those interested in the protection of the Fauna of these three countries. The difficulty appears to be in finding a *modus operandi* to bring such a conference about. There is no central authority in Malaya, such as a Federal Game Warden, or Game Commissioner, who could commence negotiations with Burma for such a conference. It appears that such a conference might be convened through the Colonial and India Offices, if representations could be made to them by the Fauna Society which would convince them that such a conference would prove of value to the cause of Game Conservation. There should not be any difficulty in approaching Siam through the Foreign Office if it was decided that Malaya and Burma should confer on this subject.

The objects of such a conference would be to compare the Game Laws ; to ascertain what steps were taken in the respective countries to enforce them ; to discuss generally the policy necessary to provide some method of setting aside areas as

*permanent sanctuaries* for the Game of the countries interested ; and to report to the respective Governments what steps should be taken jointly to give special protection to any rare species of game.

For instance, to revert again to the Rhinoceros sondaicus, Lower Tenasserim in Lower Burma was the home *par excellence* of this animal. The State of Perak and probably the State of Kedah still contain some specimens, as well as that portion of Siam adjacent to the Lower Tenasserim Boundary. A vigorous policy to prevent this mammal from extermination is necessary, and similar steps might be taken in all three countries. Such matters could well come before a conference on Game Preservation.

The writer feels confident that the High Commissioner of the Federated Malay State (the Governor of the Straits Settlements) and the Governor of Burma, would, if approached through the proper channels, be willing to agree to a conference as suggested, a conference which would be able to record the opinion of Game Conservators who are anxious to see the Fauna of Malaya, Burma and Siam adequately protected to enable them to keep their place in the sun.