

# Oryx

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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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famous bluish purple tint yet lingers. Its origin seems doubtful; thus the label reads:—

Hippotragus leucophæus Pall;  
Delegorgue. Afrique Australe

but Cornwallis Harris says (*Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*, p. 93, footnote): “for the last forty years not an individual has been heard of in Southern Africa; and the only spoils of the animal extant are lodged in the museum of Paris, whither they are supposed to have been brought from the collection of the Stadtholder of Holland.” If this be so, the animal may be the male example seen by Levaillant at Amsterdam, where it had been preserved in excellent condition for fifteen years. Delegorgue, whose name appears on the label, did not travel in Africa until 1838–1844; the blaauwbok had then been long extinct, though he may have purchased and brought home an old skin. The beast has at any rate been set up from a hide and not from a measured carcass; the taxidermy is of the first half of the last century, for the worker has given his subject the elongated neck of a deer instead of the flat neck and high withers which we now know to characterize all hippotragine antelopes.

In Temminck’s day the Leyden Museum contained the skeleton of a very old male, and if this still exists it must be the only skeleton in the world. The late Sir Harry Johnston informed the writer that horns of the blaauwbok have been discovered in the ancient Strandlooper or Bushman deposits in South Africa.

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## WILD LIFE IN MALAYA.

By RICHARD PAGE

It is an unfortunate fact that in Malaya, where there is the greatest need for some action to preserve wild life, the authorities seem most reluctant to make any move. There are species in this country which are unique and are yet allowed to remain within sight of extinction without a finger being raised by those in authority. To take one instance—

the one-horned Javan Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros Sondaicus*). This animal is confined to a few examples in Java and a few in Lower Perak. There are said to be some in Sumatra. It is doubtful if it has ever crossed the main range of Malaya into Pahang and the east side of the Peninsula. To-day, it is very nearly extinct and it is far from certain that any action could save it now. There are other animals of which much the same may be said. Before referring to them in detail, I wish to contrast the position of this country with the great and ever increasing public interest in wild life that is in evidence all over the civilized world by the establishment of national parks and game reserves, such as the Yellowstone and other big parks in the United States and the Kruger National Park and other big game reserves in Africa.

The international conference held in London last year is also an indication of this increasing interest. More striking still is the immense mass of legislation which has been passed in the United States and in every English dominion and colony except Malaya since the year 1920. This is particularly evident in Canada and South and Central Africa.

It would be interesting to obtain figures of profit made by the Kruger National Park in South Africa, as the total must be very substantial. The special attraction of these national parks is that animals become so tame that it is possible to obtain photographs of them under all possible conditions, even to the extent of a woman photographing lions at play. This tameness is common wherever protection is introduced, and is clearly visible at Whipsnade after a very few years of the existence of the Zoo. It is equally striking among the most timid species of wild duck at the late Earl Grey's seat at Falloden and the bird sanctuaries on the Norfolk Broads. Even in London the wildest of the geese on the Essex coast (the Bernicle) will feed out of the hands of children on the Serpentine during the winter.

Malaya is far behind every dominion, colony, or protectorate where the British flag is flown both in protective legislation and actual administration of what law there is. Even in Sumatra the law as to the exportation of wild animals is

thoroughly enforced, and this in itself should be a lesson to Malaya.

One uses the term "Malaya" advisedly because the Colony of the Straits Settlements is almost as interested as the Federated Malay States and even the Unfederated Malay States. It seems certain that there will some day be a hegemony which will include, say, Trengganu, Singapore, and British North Borneo, but apart from that, if a national park in Pahang became of real international interest, the Colony ports would inevitably benefit thereby. Even if the F.M.S. pleads intense poverty, it would be legitimate to apply the Colony finance, possibly in the shape of an ear-marked loan, for the common benefit. Incidentally, the Colony has just made a striking gesture in connection with a sum of \$500,000—given to the Home Government, and its financial position is the envy of many.

The trouble with regard to conservation of wild life in Malaya arises from the apathy of the Governments concerned, and this apathy is largely due to ignorance. For this ignorance there is no excuse whatever. It cannot be claimed that the authorities are groping in the dark, trying to wrestle with a problem of which they know little or nothing, while no one possessing the necessary expert knowledge comes forward to lend a helping hand. There is a mass of information available, including draft laws, in the report of the Wild Life Commission which was set up in 1930. Mr. Hubback is without doubt the greatest authority on the wild life of this country, and in 1929 he went to England and represented to the Colonial Office and to the Society for the Protection of the Fauna of the Empire the urgent necessity for some action if the fauna of Malaya was to be saved. The result of these recommendations was the appointment of Mr. Hubback as a Commissioner to inquire into the whole subject throughout Malaya. The work of inquiry by the Commission was commenced in Malaya in August, 1930, Mr. G. Hawkins, a high official of the Federated Malay States, being associated with Mr. Hubback as Assessor. The entire territory of Malaya was covered and evidence taken

at sixty-four sessions. Three volumes recording the work of the Commission were printed, volume ii, which contained the recommendations, being published in August, 1932, the first volume having been issued the previous month. An "Abstract of the Report and Recommendations" of the Commission was published in the *Journal* of the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire, Part XIX, published in May, 1933, and this abstract was issued as an occasional paper and widely distributed.

It is not necessary to refer in greater detail to the report which has been already dealt with in your *Journal*, except in one case where later on I refer to some figures quoted by you. Suffice it to say that there was overwhelming evidence given by the educated public in Malaya favouring the establishment of better methods for the preservation of our fauna, and for a co-ordinated policy of conservation to enable this to be done. The findings of the Commission were made public in September, 1932. To date, May, 1934, absolutely nothing has been done to implement any of the vital recommendations contained in the Report!

It is true that the Governments of the Federated Malay States, the Straits Settlements, and Trengganu have appointed Mr. Hubback as Honorary Chief Game Warden for those territories, but he has no Statutory duties, and a perusal of the Federated Malay States and the Straits Settlements estimates fails to divulge that any money has been given to him to spend. Mr. Hubback has also been appointed by the Resident of each of the Federated Malay States as a State Game Warden with the Statutory duties of that appointment, but with no legal power whatsoever of co-ordinating the work of conservation even throughout the Federated Malay States. All Mr. Hubback's appointments are honorary ones.

In the Federated Malay States, as the published estimates disclose, provision in 1934 for Game Wardens and their work is approximately 35 per cent less than what was voted in 1933, so Mr. Hubback seems to have taken over a losing, if not a lost battle, for the saving of Malaya's wild life.

Here are the figures showing the amounts voted for Game Wardens in 1933 and 1934 :—

	1933.	1934.	Decrease.
Perak . . . .	\$18,977-00	\$13,761-00	\$5,216-00
Selangor . . . .	1,900-00	1,600-00	300-00
Negri Sembilan . . . .	4,050-00	2,130-00	1,920-00
Pahang . . . .	19,248-00	11,390-00	7,858-00
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	\$44,175-00	\$28,881-00	\$15,294-00

The Perak provision for 1934 includes an amount of \$900-00 contribution by the Straits Settlements Government, for the conservation of Wild Life in the Dindings, and, \$2,000-00 contribution to the Plus Valley Elephant Damage Protection Society.

The recommendations for meeting the cost of the work of conservation from the revenue derived because of the incidence of wild life appear to have been side-tracked. This constructive proposal is, I believe, the only hope for proper conservation in Malaya. So long as the provision for a service of this sort is left to the idiosyncrasies of ephemeral Government officers, so long will there be inadequate provision for the carrying on of the work, especially when the word "economy" is brought forward. It is not possible to visualize a properly organized service under the present arrangements for financing it, and thus the work can never hope to become either efficient or useful.

An inefficient service for the conservation of wild life means ultimate disaster, because you cannot neglect this service and hope for a continuation of the *status quo*, much less any improvement in the position. The wild life will gradually fade away. In the *Abstract of the Wild Life Commission Report* already referred to, figures are given at the end showing approximately the revenue derived from Wild-Life resources in Malaya, which disclose that, although the revenue from these resources increased from \$123,532-00 in 1928 to \$187,509-00 in 1930, the money voted for expenditure was only increased by about six per cent, and a profit of \$60,606-00 in 1928 was increased to a profit of \$120,791-00 in 1930, which went to the general revenue.

No further figures appear to be available, as no Game Wardens' reports are published. A few lines are given to the subject in the Annual Reports of the Residents, but they mostly refer to killings and not to acts of or for conservation.

The recommendation for the constitution of a great National Park for Malaya in mountainous country in the States of Pahang, Trengganu, and Kelantan is still "under consideration". This proposal was put forward over six years ago. It has been fully discussed and definite boundaries suggested in the Report of the Wild Life Commission. But nothing is done! Here are a few more significant facts:—

People no longer take out licences to shoot big game in Perak, Selangor, or Negri Sembilan.

In Perak no deer licences were taken out last year by Europeans.

In Perak there is only one place, in a very large State, where there is what might be called a definite herd of seladang, and that is in the Game Reserve at Sungkai. There are seladang in Upper Perak, but they have been poached almost out of existence.

In two of the districts of Perak there is no protection at all afforded to sambur deer. It is claimed that there are none or very few in those districts, so protection is superfluous!

In Selangor, except for the Bernam River area and along the foot-hills of the main range, big game has practically vanished.

In Negri Sembilan, except for the mountainous districts, the condition is much the same. The rescission of the Seriting Game Reserve in 1929 was the death knell for the seladang in that portion of Negri Sembilan. There are none elsewhere in Negri Sembilan in sufficient numbers to enable them to breed or thrive.

In Pahang there is, in certain localities, a fair showing of big game, and with careful and wise conservation, the proper constitution of the Game Reserves, and the establishment of a National Park, this wild life can be saved. But

it cannot be done and will not be done by the present methods, and unless the Governments of Malaya are prepared to progress on such lines as those advocated in the Wild Life Commission Report, the large fauna of Malaya is doomed to extermination within a few decades. (There is nothing new in the protests that I have made here. They have been made repeatedly in letters to the local newspapers and by certain of the newspapers themselves, notably the *Straits Times*.) The backwardness of the country in the matter of wild life preservation and the inevitable results of continued slackness have been stressed with extreme vigour, but the administration remains impervious to criticism. I can think of only one course that is left to us now, and in that the assistance of your Society would be of the utmost value. If the protests of such local persons as are interested are to be entirely disregarded, we should press for an independent opinion from a fully qualified expert sent out to Malaya by the Colonial Office. I have mentioned the almost certain extinction of the rhinoceros *sondaicus*. Other animals that are in danger include :—

The Seladang. A variety of the *Bos Gaurus* of India and Burma, but exclusive to Malaya. This animal is decreasing and, for reasons given later, when the decrease reaches a certain point it becomes a geometrical decrease.

The Serow. A goat-like antelope found in the north and east of the Peninsula at an elevation of three or four thousand feet. This is one of the well-known game animals of the Lower Himalayas, and so far as is known it only occurs sparsely in Northern India, the Shan States, and the North of the Malay Peninsula. This animal is in urgent need of protection.

The Tapir. This animal is absolutely exclusive to Malaya. It would not be correct to say that it is at present in imminent danger, but in so far as it is exclusive to the Malay Peninsula it is worthy of careful protection.

There are many other animals such as elephants which are in need of protection, and a number of birds such as the Argus pheasants which are supposed to be protected



but in fact are not. Incidentally, the outcry about damage done by the elephants and the seladang is almost too ridiculous for comment. Wherever man uses God's earth to grow things, God's animals will take some share unless man protects himself. In England he protects his strawberries against blackbirds with nets and his crops with scarecrows or other devices!

The people of the present generation are trustees for the generations of the future, and the legislation in other countries shows that there are dawns of conscience among some of the present day trustees, though there is little evidence of it here. The late Mr. Leopold Rothschild, who died some years ago, stated that upwards of one hundred different species of animals and birds throughout the world had become extinct during the nineteenth century. Now you cannot leave protection until the seladang are reduced to a few small herds and the rhinoceros sondaicus to a few breeding pairs. It is a rule of nature, like protective colouring, that animals sufficiently harried will not reproduce their species. I do not know why this is so, but it is a fact, and a very great deal of difficulty was met with in the United States in preserving the last few bison from extinction. Action must be taken before the animals are driven to this state. By way of constructive criticism it is suggested that what is wanted in addition to a completely independent and highly qualified expert, approved by the Fauna Society, and nominated by the Colonial Office, is drastic legislation. The two essential points of such legislation are:—

1. That it should be made thoroughly unprofitable to commercialize game. (If the rhinoceros in the Malayan market is worth \$4,000, it is childish to fine the killer \$250).

2. The onus of proof should always be on the man in possession of the dead game or dead trophy. (This provision has worked marvellous results among goldfinches in England in the last few years.)

*Finance.*—A grant must be made to put the drastic legislation into real working order. Patrols must be installed

and properly paid. If the fees for licences to be issued to carry firearms be carried to the credit of wild life, with possibly a small tax on cartridges, it is at least possible that the wild life fund would show a profit from the beginning, and it most certainly would if wild life preservation became a definite policy in Malaya. Surplus should be carried to a capital reserve fund for wild life purposes until the reserve fund reached a certain figure, and thereafter the surpluses might be carried to general revenue.

*The National Park.*—It is regarded as absolutely essential that the scheme of a national park as outlined by Mr. Hubback should be carried into effect at once. The lease should be in the name of a trustee or trustees of such part of Pahang, Trengganu, and Kelantan as would fall within the boundaries, the lease to be for 50 years at a peppercorn rent. The area in question should be surrounded with a wide rentice marking it all clearly from the surrounding countries. These rentices would involve a considerable initial cost, but very little would be required for upkeep. The park should be adequately patrolled by competent men (probably Sakais would be suitable) and the penalty for killing anything in the national park without a game warden's licence should be sufficiently severe to be a complete deterrent. The Game Warden should have absolute control within its boundaries.

Generally speaking, the ultimate health resort of Malaya will be Gunong Padang east of Gunong Tahan and not the rocks of the Cameron Highlands. Gunong Tahan was the original site selected in Sir Arthur Young's time—20 years ago. A few years hence aviation will make this site absolutely suitable and a considerable part of it is actually included in Mr. Hubback's national park. Let us preserve the wild life in the national park and await the day when public opinion will want a mountain health resort on flat land, good soil, and the real amenities of life.

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