



BULLETIN

Pfeffer + J. Harrison.

< Protégeons la Nature
Elle nous le rendra >

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EDITORIAL

II. — NATURE IS PROTECTED.

B. — NATURE RESERVES.

4. Managed Reserves and National Parks.

The last editorial described how strict nature reserves were set up and managed with the object of preserving areas where biotopes could be completely protected from any human influence, so as to enable living associations to evolve in absolute freedom. This policy of strict non-intervention may result in an increase in the number of certain plant or animal species and in the diminution in number of others — which is often considered regrettable from the human point of view, particularly by the tourist.

It was this feeling which lay behind the conception of national parks and managed reserves, where a certain degree of intervention is allowed for, precisely in order to facilitate the development of such species as man may consider desirable, to the disadvantage of those which he regards as undesirable.

In managed reserves, such intervention is scientifically planned and carried out, with the sole purpose of conditioning to some extent the evolution of a biotope, so as to « enrich » it (human interests still being the criterion), but the same rigid control is applied to the presence of human beings as in the strict reserves, where, it will be recalled, only keepers and duly authorized naturalists are allowed to circulate.

As for the national parks, it is obvious by definition that the whole or a major part will be devoted to the recreation, inspiration and education of the general public. Here, the aim is to present nature in its full glory. A certain degree of scientific intervention is, however, still necessary — (control of vegetation in tropical areas by means of firing, reduction of carnivorous animals so as to favour the development of grazing species, the provision of waterholes, shelters, salt-licks to attract the fauna, etc.). Such activities are undertaken for the benefit of tourists who can thus enjoy the sight of wild life. The management authorities welcome these visitors to the national parks, lodge them and provide them with guides, in accordance with extensive tourist programmes which involve a certain skill in planning in order to reconcile the vast influx of visitors, frequently undisciplined, with the fundamental principles of nature conservation.

JEAN-PAUL HARROY.

(Continued p. 2.)

The large mammals of Borneo. — Information on the situation in Borneo has come both in an account presented by Dr. J. Harrison of the Sarawak Museum to the Ninth Pacific Science Congress (Bangkok, 18-30 November 1957), and from Pierre Pfeffer, a young French zoologist, whose report will shortly appear in Terre et Vie (published by the « Société d'Acclimatation de France »). Pierre Pfeffer has just spent 21 months in Indonesia, mostly in the eastern and central areas of Borneo, with the Apokayan expedition. There, at the request of the I.U.C.N., he collected information on rare animals, particularly the orang-outang, the proboscis monkey, and the Asiatic rhinoceros. Both, his and Dr. Harrison's reports confirm what is unfortunately only too well known, that the last rhinoceros are still falling victim to prevailing beliefs and superstitions that set a price on the head of this giant and hasten its extermination — to the profit of the Chinese traders. Pierre Pfeffer gives an account of stories told him by the hunters of the nomadic tribes in the forests of Borneo which he visited. These hunters are ordered by the village chiefs to kill the rhinos (Sumatran Rhinoceros) which they hunt with razor-sharp lances as thick as a man's arm. They get very little reward. The horn is given to the chief in return for a little rice and the skin to the trader in exchange for some cloth, tobacco, salt or petrol... « And this », adds the writer, « is how and why the last rhinoceros die »! Pfeffer believes that the rhinos have been completely exterminated in the south-east, that is in the Barito valley, the most populous part of the island. There were still a few, last June, in the east of Borneo and he thinks that some probably still remain in the western hinterland and south-west of the island, which he did not visit. Dr. Harrison considers that only about 15 to 25 still survive in the whole island. For the most part these are isolated specimens, which rules out the possibility of breeding, at any rate in the British area (2 in Sarawak, 5 in North Borneo). Their days are numbered and the poachers will certainly get the last specimens unless drastic steps are taken in time.

On the other hand, the Indonesian authorities are giving effective protection to the fifty or so surviving one-horned Javan rhinoceros. In doing so they are continuing the work of Mr. Hoogerwerf, founder of the well known Udjung-Kulon reserve which shelters the Sondaicus, now the only Asiatic rhinoceros whose future is assured.

The orang-outangs of Borneo were once as numerous as the human inhabitants. Now, according to Dr. Harrison, only a few thousand remain, confined to one or two areas in the south-west of Sarawak and the north-east of North Borneo. In their case the main danger lies in the profits the animal trader can make from contraband sales. New regulations adopted by the veterinary service in Singapore, which is the main outlet for this trade should help to reinforce the other protective measures (see Bulletin, Vol. VI, No. 5, November 1957).

The proboscis monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*) does not seem to be particularly threatened. These animals are not hunted by the native population, who do not eat them. They live in troupes in large swamps, feeding on the flowers and leaves of the mangrove and Nipa palms which grow there. Pfeffer observed troupes of up to twenty and sometimes saw as many as fifty in one day.

He also reports on another langur monkey of the Colobidae family which is not in any special danger but which nevertheless presents a curious problem. This monkey is peculiar in that it frequently suffers from gall bladder trouble or « stones » as they are commonly called. These stones, which are about the size of a large pea and are hard and greenish in colour, are much sought after by the Chinese for medicinal purposes; ground up and dissolved in hot water, they are used in the treatment of fevers, and their bitter taste, similar to that of quinine, probably gives them their reputation. Proportionately these stones are even more costly than the horn of the rhinoceros, and as the hunters cannot always be sure of hitting on a monkey with gall disease a great slaughter sometimes results. Fortunately in the Haut-Bahau areas, where they are abundant, these monkeys are perfectly healthy, possibly on account of a different diet, and so their lives are spared.

S.O.S. Kiwi. — The kiwi is the only survivor of a group of primitive orders of flightless birds which included the now extinct moa. It has become a national symbol in New Zealand, and the Wildlife Branch of the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs has published a pamphlet intended to warn hunters, farmers and trappers of the dangers threatening the future of this bird. Of these dangers the two principally stressed are the increase in the reclamation of the scrubland which is the bird's habitat, and the trapping involved in the campaign to exterminate the opossum, an introduced species which has become a serious menace. The pamphlet gives detailed instructions on ways of setting opossum traps to which kiwis will not fall victim. It also asks that hunting and farm dogs shall be controlled and not allowed to hunt the birds; that specific areas where they are known to be should be saved from clearing or burning and that any injured birds found should be looked after.

Oil. — An oil company which had been given a concession in the moose reserve of Kenai (Alaska) has just made a rich strike. The oilmen and the conservationists are now in conflict: the former maintain that controlled exploitation will do no harm to the moose population and the latter insist on the principle of the inviolability of reserves.

WHERE NATURE IS THREATENED

The polar bear. — The Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of the Interior is anxious to obtain current and accurate information regarding the status of the polar bear. A preliminary survey was undertaken by the Service in the spring of 1957 because of the great increase in recent years of the private hunting of the polar bear with the use of aircraft. The resulting report recommends that legislation be enacted to control polar bear hunting by United States nationals even outside territorial waters; that females accompanied by cubs should be protected; that permits should be limited to one animal per hunter; that a more adequate census and further study of the ecology and life history of the polar bear should be undertaken; and finally, that international cooperation should be sought as the only effective safeguard for this animal with a circumpolar range. request has been received by the I.U.C.N. and sent on to the interested members of the Union's Commission for Arctic Fauna.

In the Pacific. — The resolutions adopted by the Conservation Division of the Ninth Pacific Science Congress reflect the concern felt in this part of the world at the progressive disappearance of those natural features which give to each country its own particular character. The establishment of National Parks and the legal control of hunting is called for in Thailand, host country to the Congress. Another resolution transmits a request to the governments of Sarawak, Brunei, North Borneo and Indonesia to coordinate and enforce by concerted action the legislation protecting the orang-outang. The attention of all the countries of South-East Asia is drawn to the urgent need to safeguard the valuable plant cover on which the land's fertility depends and to the importance of setting up reserves for this purpose and educating people to appreciate the value of wild life resources. New Caledonia is asked to help towards the protection of the rare plant species threatened by the hydro-electric scheme involving the flooding of the Plaine des Lacs by undertaking to make part of the habitat into a reserve. The authorities of Alaska are urged to take steps to ensure the careful control of the hunting of polar bears with the use of aircraft. Finally the Congress expresses its satisfaction at the initiative taken by Unesco and the International Union for Conservation of Nature in measures to protect the rare fauna of the Galapagos Islands.

Singapore. — *Derniers Refuges*, the atlas of the world's nature reserves recently published by the Union (Elsevier), compliments the authorities of Singapore on their foresight in setting aside 10,000 acres as reserves representative of the indigenous tropical flora of this overpopulated island. The Padan reserve, the last remaining unexploited tidal mangrove area in the island, is now threatened by a proposal to clear the swamp for the establishment of prawn ponds. The Singapore Nature Reserves Board is vigorously opposing this encroachment on land legally reserved. Moreover, observations have shown that success in the breeding of prawns depends partly on the continued existence of neighbouring mangroves which provide the shelter required for their development.

WHERE NATURE IS PROTECTED

New Reserves. — By a decree of the 10th of September, 1957, the sacred wood of Sidi el Messhom, 25 miles from Fez on the Taza road in Morocco, has been declared a reserve. This will protect the special species of dwarf palms which grow there, as well as the indigenous fauna. The introduction of all exotic species is strictly forbidden.

Also in Morocco the spotted hyena has been classed amongst protected species, together with the gazelle and the deer. The hunting of mouflon is no longer allowed except in the case of individual hunters.

The bontebok. — The first scientific description of this magnificent antelope (*Damaliscus pygargus* PALL.) was given by the naturalist Pallas in 1766. The great herds, frequently referred to by early travellers in Cape Province (South Africa) were ruthlessly hunted and the species certainly owes its survival to the foresight of a few private landowners who, as early as the 1830s, gave them protection on their estates. One such landowner took the strict preservation of his herd so seriously that he even refused a hunting permit to Queen Victoria's son. In 1930 the farm Quarrie Bos, 17 miles south of Bredasdorp, was acquired by the Union Government for the purpose of preserving the