

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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I heard that trading in skins, etc., with the inhabitants of the neighbouring states may be altogether ignored. I am of opinion, however, that a permanent European game warden is needed, with an adequate staff of watchers, whose duty it would be to study the fauna and get some idea as to the stock of wild life. This will no doubt entail a certain expense, part of which I think the three Sultans would be willing to meet. The balance I feel sure Government, if properly approached and the Game Department is not too extravagant in its demands, will find means of supplying.

New Reserve.—In connection with the questions of reserves the Committee will, I am sure, be gratified to learn that as the result of an interview I had with the Regent of Kedah, His Highness undertook to set aside a large area on the north-east boundary of his state as a refuge for wild life. Further, he undertook to watch and ward this area to the best of his ability, and promised that the matter should be put in hand with the least possible delay. For this very satisfactory decision the thanks of the Committee are due to the Acting Resident, Mr. Jones, who not only supported whole-heartedly my appeal, but urged the Regent to grant it.

Dealing with my mission as a whole I am, at a later date, submitting certain recommendations which if adopted would make game preservation in Malaya still more effective.

A REPORT ON FAUNA PRESERVATION IN BRITISH NORTH BORNEO.

By SIR THOMAS COMYN-PLATT.

I much regret not having visited Borneo, in view of your instructions, though I made every effort to do so. Nevertheless, I collected the necessary information as to fauna preservation—which can be thoroughly relied upon—from a late District Officer who had spent several years in the country, as also from a Resident, now in the service of the Malayan Government, and others, all of whom are keenly interested in wild life.

I should like to say at the outset that the Conservator of Forests in Borneo is mainly responsible for the preservation of fauna. In this he has the help of the District Officers, as also the police. In short there is a general pulling together ; a combined effort to make the game laws effective, and that with the most encouraging results.

I was unable to obtain a copy of the ordinance, but this can be had by applying to the Chartered Company, London.

Wild Life Preservation Ordinance.—From all accounts the ordinance now in force is as far reaching as can be hoped for in present circumstances. Anyhow, every effort is made to carry it out, for those responsible are fully alive to the importance of preservation and in addition are sportsmen in the best sense of the word. And here I may mention that the Resident—Mr. Jardine—is a very active preservationist.

According to one of my informants who, as I have said, was a resident in Borneo for several years, the game laws are far better administered there than in Malaya. And this despite the fact that there is no special Game Department. Arms and ammunition are difficult to obtain and licences very sparingly granted. The penalties and fines, too, for breaking the law are severe and well enforced, I have no reason to doubt this for I heard the same from many others.

As to the fauna and the various species, I find it a little difficult to speak with accuracy in view of one or two conflicting reports. And this is to be explained by the jungle conditions, the scarcity of roads, and the distances between the various settlements. Those I spoke to could only tell me of the particular districts they happened to know. Judging however, from the many statements and striking an average, I should say that wild life in Borneo had, so far, suffered very little at the hands of man.

In support of this contention I would remind the Committee that the native population is very small ; there are few Europeans, and that the aborigines—the Dyaks—only hunt to supply their family wants, which are as few as their numbers. It is, however, my opinion that the proclamation of a suitable area as a sanctuary would be a wise step.

And, again, the Customs Authorities are very much on the alert. The export of trophies, feathers, and live birds may be carried on, but the law is so rigorously enforced that it is not at all easy. Indeed, one of my informants went to far as to say that commercialization had been stopped altogether.

Status of Fauna and Orang-utan.—In this respect I made careful inquiries as to the Orang-utan. I have visited and stayed in many forests and jungles during my life, but I have never been able to understand how, in such dense surroundings, anyone is able to judge, except by contact, the amount of game in any given area. The virgin lands of Borneo—dense forest and thicker jungle—have scarcely been penetrated. Any statement therefore as to the amount of wild life to be found there should be accepted with caution.

As regards the Orang, I was told that it was practically extinct. That may be so, but at any rate it is now closely protected and the penalty for shooting or capture very severe.

Rare Shrew.—The pin-tailed shrew is another animal that is thought to be in danger, mainly I fancy because it is so rarely seen. But as its natural haunt is in the depths of the jungle it would be a mistake to conclude that the species is becoming extinct.

Rhinoceros.—As to *R. sumatrensis*, I understand there are still a few left. I can well believe its approaching extinction, for, as I have stated in another report, the Chinese will pay any price for the horn, which has a medicinal value. But realizing the great demand the Customs Authorities take every precaution to prevent the export. It is not easy.

Loris.—The slow loris is another animal that is believed to be near extinction mainly, I believe, for the reason that it is so easily caught. But it has to be remembered that the species is very numerous as also prolific. I was told therefore that they are in no danger at present.

The Curator of the Singapore Museum is a great authority on all such matters and would, I am sure, be only too ready to supply any further information as to other animals.

As in the case of Sarawak, I consider it all important that

the Secretary of the Fauna Society should interview the Resident—Mr. Jardine—when he is in England on leave; his advice and assistance would be invaluable.

In conclusion, though this report is brief, I am sure that nothing less than a stay of several months in the country would have added to the sum of my information.

FAUNA PROTECTION IN THE WEST INDIES.

REPORT OF A MISSION FOR THE S.P.F.E., 1936.

By CAPTAIN KEITH CALDWELL.

1. The following report on my recent visit to the British West Indies is written on the assumption that my function is to describe things as I saw them. The Executive Committee will doubtless decide what, if any, action should be taken on the contents.

2. No one is more conscious than myself of the manifold imperfections and shortcomings of this report. The impossibility of getting transport prevented my visiting a number of islands I had hoped to reach. Owing to conditions in the Mediterranean the whole weight of the 1936 tourist traffic fell on the West Indies. Neither shipping nor hotel accommodation was adequate to meet it. The shortage of hotel accommodation could have been overcome; the shipping difficulty was insuperable.

3. Whilst at Jamaica I received a letter from the Secretary asking me to make certain inquiries in the Bahamas. There was no hope of getting a passage in any ship, but I was offered accommodation three weeks ahead in a 'plane. The trip would have cost £100 and would have entailed a month's delay. Under the circumstances I did not attempt it, but was fortunately able to get a certain amount of information regarding the Bahamas. This will be given later in the report.

From Trinidad I made vain attempts to visit St. Kitts and Antigua, but the earliest possible accommodation I could get was "somewhere towards the end of June", and uncertain at that.