



HIMALAYAN RED BEAR

Photo—L. J. Johns

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Till such time as these and other efforts of our's to gain financial support to increase and improve our services bear fruit, we have to fall back upon ourselves, and our members. If we can double our membership, and circulation of 'Cheetal', and if members would make a note to send in their subscriptions in time each year, much improvement is possible without outside assistance.

Editorial Notes

An Indian Wild Life Fund

While on this sore subject of funds for wild life work for our Society, it might not be out of place to examine the whole complex of funds needed for the wild life and conservation effort all over India.

It has been advocated by eminent wild life workers, generally amateurs with little experience of actual administration, be it said, that the establishment of National Parks and Sanctuaries and the provision of hotel and other facilities at these places, would convert them into tourist attractions, and thus raise revenues from this source, to offset any expenditure on the facilities, and provide additional resources for aid to conservation work elsewhere. It does not work out so simple in practice. For one thing, if the central sanctum sanctorum of a Sanctuary or Park is kept undisturbed from all forest-exploitation, the loss of revenues can be substantial. Then, too, if we discount the aesthetic and non-material value of wild life, as do these advocates of the 'tourist revenue' approach, then we have to contend with the lack of co-ordination between State Governments and the Centre, on the one hand, and between Government Departments with overlapping interests in wild life and tourism, on the other. The result of this lack of co-ordination is felt in the lack of a concerted approach or policy, and this is where the 'tourist revenue' approach loses much of its undoubted validity, for if co-ordination were possible, there would not be this trouble in the first place.

We fail to see how we are going to compensate the loss of revenues to the forest departments of States, or apportion earnings from tourism, or write off certain losses or expenses incurred in having efficient wild life departments, against an overall gain to the country of foreign-exchange; foreign-exchange, that bug-bear that is held up as 'the plum' or reward for efficient management of wild life. We are very much afraid that we have to fall back upon the need for a concerted approach at Countrywide-level, rather than a fragmentary

advocacy of minor revenue-earning ideas only, though these are without doubt useful, and must form part of the overall policy.

Which brings us to the idea mooted elsewhere by Mr. M.D. Chaturvedi, (the 'Great' Chaturvedi, for those who might confuse with namesakes!), that certain channels should be tapped for collecting resources for wild life work. We agree with his suggestions, and would suggest other sources, too, but we feel it would be still preferable to co-ordinate States' efforts into a National Policy, as was envisaged by the Indian Board for Wild Life, and to create a resources-pool under an autonomous body, like the Indian Board for Wild Life. This proposed 'Indian Wild Life Fund' could then undertake all the work of publication, field research and advisory functions so urgently needed. It is almost sure that States will use the facilities which such a 'Fund' may be able to provide.

Apart from the sources suggested elsewhere, we would here suggest an 'appeal' to individuals and business houses, to be made by the authority of this 'Fund'. Revenues and earnings from licences on 'sporting arms', import duty on arms and ammunition, shooting and fishing permits, 'Gate Earnings' at zoos and sanctuaries, fines, confiscations, wild life week collections, sale of animals and birds, and export of wild life products, are the other major sources of possible finance for such an 'Indian Wild Life Fund'.

MR. PETER SCOTT'S SUGGESTIONS FOR THE GHANA: APPLICABILITY ELSEWHERE—

We publish elsewhere an excellent report by the renowned Peter Scott, on visit to the Keoladeo Ghana at Bharatpur. We were struck, reading it, by the topicality and applicability of his suggestions for improvement, to almost every sanctuary or National Park in India. It seems that wild life management and the management of Parks and Sanctuaries is not a 'science' just in name, but carries genuine scientific validity, or how else would Mr. Scott's remarks be valid elsewhere, too.

He advocates a three-square-mile strict preserve within the Ghana, where no form of disturbance or shooting is to be permitted. Such a stipulation, after the much discussed and widely-accepted concept of the *sanctum sanctorum* would benefit many other sanctuaries of India, where human interference penetrates deep into the interior, beginning on the periphery.

Sound range management, a word almost new to the wild life lexicon in India, can be seen to be crushingly needed in Parks like that at Hazaribagh, and in areas of the Rajaji Sanctuary, where over-grazing and excessive lopping by 'gujars', have created a situation where there is hardly any difference between the sanctuary and the surrounding areas, as wild life follows feeding opportunity, and not sanctuary boundary-pillars!

Peter Scott's remarks on the Observation Posts at Bharatpur are acutely valid elsewhere, where these OPs stand out like scars and eye-scars from miles around, and animals wouldn't think of straying anywhere near these concrete pill-boxes with 'hats'! The OPs must be camouflaged, surely a common-sense necessity, and the approaches to them concealed by artificial growth where necessary.

Then, equally, there seems little point in building rest houses and tourist-lodges near shops and habitation within sanctuaries, rather than in secluded spots where visitors might hope to get glimpses of wild life from their own verandahs and windows.

Additional facilities and arrangements should be made for school-parties and field-study groups, and the wardens and staff posted at Sanctuaries and Parks should, in the slack season, undertake field research work, or even compilation of data for their superior staff. At present, even the maintenance of diaries and field-records is chancy and inadequate. Dr. George Schaller, the eminent wild life ecologist who spent a year in India recently doing a study of cheetal deer, never moved in the forest without a battery of cameras and the inevitable pencil-and-diary, in which he recorded as he saw. A trait that might seem eccentric, but expresses the scientific approach par excellence, without which Sanctuaries alone can do little.

* * * *

Wild Life Transplants and Breeding Stock:

Elsewhere, we publish Mr. E.P. Gee's resolute rejection of the desirability of introducing the Indian Rhinoceros (*R. unicornis*) into one or two places other than its present restricted habitat in Assam and Bengal. Though we agree with Mr. Gee's views as to the difficulties and problems such a transplanting of rhinos would face, we cannot but express some doubt as to the finality of such a verdict for several reasons.

'There are more things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamed of in our' Ecology, as Hamlet said; an epidemic might wipe out the rhino population of Kaziranga, where the largest pocket of this animal exists. Floods yearly devastate the Kaziranga, grassland, and even as we write, the rhinoceros and other animals there have taken refuge in the neighboring Mikir (and North Cachar?) hills and other high ground. It is only too probable that these annual visitations reduce the rhino population all unknown to the best wild life observers of Assam. Some casualties, are, indeed, reported. Apart from which, political considerations alone should persuade us of the wisdom of introducing the rhinoceros elsewhere.

As for the difficulties and problems of breeding successfully the rhino which might be introduced, say, into Uttar Pradesh's eastern districts, these are only to be expected.

Given adequate scientific planning, there is no reason why such a colony would not flourish and breed, initially under controlled conditions. After all, even orang-outans and oryx have been successfully 'colonised' elsewhere than in their native habitat. Rhinoceros flourished in other parts of India not much over a century ago, and their chances of survival in colonies are better by far.

We are not advocating the introduction of exotic species at all; but we do feel that keeping rhinoceros restricted to their present habitat would be to much like storing all eggs in one basket, and not desirable at all.

* * * * *

Lions in U.P.

Encouraging news has been received from Mirzapur. Three lions were seen by observers (not forest officers) in the month of July and August. We are now sure that lions leave the district in some seasons but return during rains. Thus the experiment of finding a second home for the lions in India is successful.



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