

# CHEETAL

A Journal of

Wild Life Preservation Society of India



VOL. 5

APRIL, 1963

No. 2

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5. "Forests and Their voiceless denizens"—"Their" covers Only the wild life in the forests but not all wild life wherever found.

6. "Wanton and wasteful destruction"—Any destruction which is not wanton and wasteful would appear to be permitted, which is not correct. "Unnecessary" would be a better word.

### III. Suggestions for amendment

"I give my solemn pledge to protect our country's wild life and its forests from unnecessary destruction".

E.R.C. Davidar.

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## Wild Life is Threatened

By

E.P. GEE

In spite of our preoccupation with international crises and other such important matters, we should not lose sight of some urgent changes which are taking place in India. Only by careful planning now can our natural resources such as forests and wild life be preserved for future generations.

As far as wild life is concerned there is a 'state of emergency' in the world. European and North American countries, which are more experienced and knowledgeable in nature conservation, are alarmed at the rate of growth of human population and consequent shrinking of forests and wild places, with resultant decrease in wild life everywhere.

That is why Britain, Switzerland, the U.S.A. and other countries have launched their national appeals for a World Wildlife Fund. For unless a 'Noah's Ark' of endeavour and financial assistance can be launched quickly to save the world's endangered species of wild life from the flood tide of human apathy, thoughtlessness and indiscriminate killing, there may be no wild animals left in fifty years time.

Since A.D. 1 the world has lost for ever over 200 kinds of wild animals and birds. Not only that, but also the rate of loss has been increasing sharply with the growth of human population everywhere.

Up till 1800 A.D. the rate of loss of wild animals alone was one for every 55 years. From 1800 to 1900 it was one for every 1½ years. Since 1900 it has been one animal lost each year. In future, unless careful planning and preservation are done, this rate of loss will increase rapidly.

In addition to these 200 and more kinds of animals and birds lost since A.D. 1, another 250 are now threatened with extinction—unless we can now take steps to save them in time.

In India, during the last thirty years alone, we have lost for ever the Indian cheetah, the shou deer, the lesser one-horned rhinoceros and the two-horned rhinoceros; and very possibly the pygmy hog, the hispid hare and the rusty-spotted cat are now also extinct. Of birds we have lost for ever the pink-headed duck, the mountain quail and Jerdon's courser.

The following animals and birds of India are now very seriously endangered: the Kashmir stag, the Indian lion, the Indian rhinoceros, the brow-antlered deer, the great Indian bustard and the white-winged wood duck.

Enormous advances have recently been made by many countries in the realms of science and technology. But how much remains to be learnt and done in the field of nature and conservation of valuable natural resources! Historians may write in later years, if the human race survives the present dangers of nuclear war, that the generation of the decade 1960-70 was 'reaching for the moon and stars' with space craft, and neglecting the problems of this planet with its population explosion, deforestation, over-grazing and destruction of wild animals, birds, fishes and the like.

Each living creature that becomes extinct nowadays is the product of more than two-and-a-half million years of evolutionary development. Once lost, a living creature cannot by any means be re-created. Man cannot create the simplest living creature, not even a worm.

In the olden days of India's history, there were some efforts at conservation of natural resources. Consider the measures described in the Artha Shastra, attributed to Kautilya about 300 B.C., when certain forests 'with game beasts open to all' were specially protected. And in 242 B.C. the Emperor Asoka's fifth pillar edict gave protection to fish, animals and forests.

What is being done in India now to preserve natural resources, such as wild life? The Indian Board for Wild Life at the Centre is powerless and has no funds: it can only advise States and try to co-ordinate any efforts being done by the States.

It is entirely up to the State Governments of the Indian Union to conserve what is left of the country's rich heritage of wild life. The State Forest Departments are responsible for

the preservation of wild life and for the enforcement of protective legislation in all the lands under their jurisdiction.

But if the Forest Minister of a State, and the Chief Conservator of Forests of a State, are too preoccupied with other things and have not the time or the personal interest in preserving wild life, then little or nothing gets done and the destruction of wild life by poachers and the bombing of fish and so on continues unabated.

Unless strong, effective action can be taken now by the authorities in India, backed by a strong, enlightened public opinion, then our grandchildren may well ask

“Daddy, what was a wild animal?”

## Wild Buffalo of North Lakhimpur, Assam.

When I first came to Assam I was asked to assist villagers chase off herds of buffalo. I well remember the first call—they even offered an elephant for my use. I was young and very green, so ventured forth with just my 12 bore to do this good deed. It wasn't long before I learned from the mahout that his elephant was an excellent shikar elephant and wasn't afraid of anything including tigers—except wild water buffalo! Providence kindly spared the newcomer from any contact with the buffalo on that occasion.

Years of varied shikar experience, benefits from the experiences of others and the equipping of myself with a 375 H & H Magnum intervened before my first buffalo kill. I was quite surprised, however, at the lack of actual buffalo experience by most hunters.

The report had come in that a man had been killed by a wild buffalo. Soon a long petition was presented to the authorities by villagers who said this buffalo had come into the vicinity of their villages and was even chasing them off their fields during morning ploughing. The necessary order was issued that it might be killed if it could not be chased out.

I suggested to the villagers that they try to isolate it and when they knew its location, to call me. About 1.30 one afternoon they came. They knew where it was, and had left a sentinel in a tree to keep track of it in case it should move off.

It was only 3 miles from our house, plus a  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile tramp through almost hip-deep mud and water. They finally pointed out an old white ant hill suggesting I take my stand there and they would try and chase it past me.