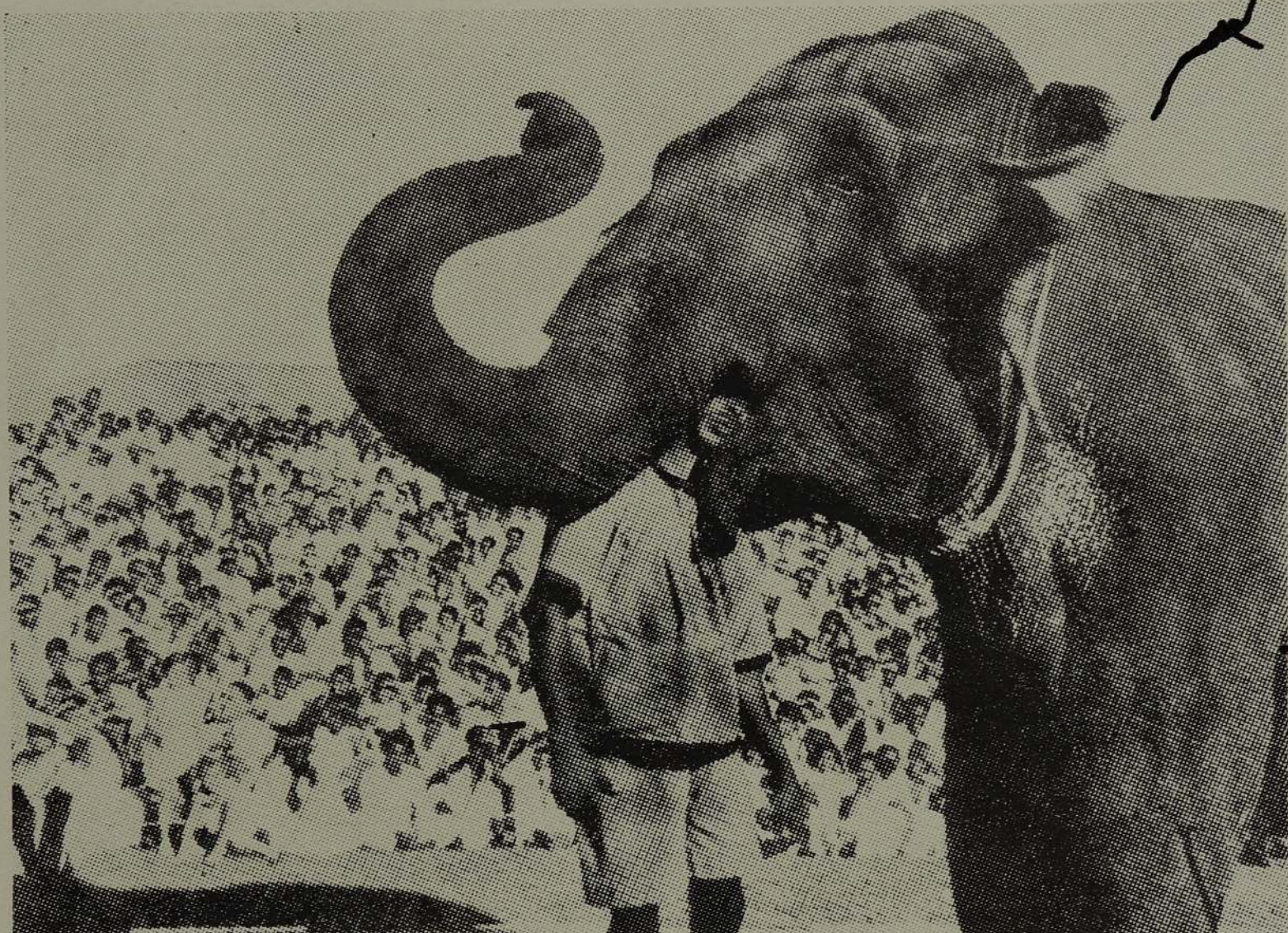


# LORIS



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# Wild Life Protection Society of Ceylon

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The objects for which the Society was formed were—

“ To prevent the elimination of game in Ceylon by destruction of animals for trading purposes, to further the interests of legitimate sport, and to conserve one of the food supplies of the inhabitants.”

At the Annual General Meeting held on 30th November, 1945, the Rules were revised, and the objects of the Society now are—

- (1) To prevent the progressive destruction of species of wild animals and wherever possible to preserve wild life intact in natural conditions in Ceylon.
- (2) To continue the tradition of the Society in furthering the interests of legitimate Sport.
- (3) To promote an interest in the life histories of all forms of animal life and to co-operate with other Societies and Institutions which have similar aims and objects.

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*The Subscription to the Society is Rs. 15 annually, payable on the 1st October.*

*All members, whose subscriptions are not in arrears, receive a copy of each number of the Society's Magazine, "LORIS," which is issued bi-annually in June and December. Further copies may be had at Rs. 4-50 each, at which price copies are also available to the general public.*

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# LORIS

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# The Effect of the Floods on Wild Life

By J. A. DE SILVA  
*Warden of Wild Life*

THE floods in December, 1957, that unexpectedly swept a large part of the Dry Zone left in its wake, a wave of destruction which affected not only man and his property but also beasts, both small and large, reptiles and wild birds. Some animals like deer, sambhur, pig, bear and porcupine suffered the most, whilst others, among the reptiles, like snakes, crocodiles and monitor lizard either swam for safety or clung on to trees or floating branches to escape from the flood waters. Still others, like the wild elephant, moved towards land on high grounds. Carnivores, like the bears and leopards, whose normal abodes are caves in large out-crops of rock, took refuge in them from the floods. Though not much damage was caused to water birds in tanks yet their nests, eggs and fledglings have been carried away. The reaction of the floods has also revealed strange aberrations among certain wild animals like the elephant. These animals have been found to invade and remain in certain areas close to villages where they were hitherto unknown. Damage to wild life by the floods cannot be assessed with strict accuracy as it was not directly noticeable but it is firmly believed that it took away a heavy toll. In some places,

where a particular species made their haunt before the floods, they have disappeared from these places after the floods.

### Ruhuna National Park

The North-East Monsoon broke on 14.10.57 with a rainfall of 1.29", and for this month it totalled 10.07". At the end of November, it increased to 15.08" and replenished the tanks, water-holes and *kemas* that dried up in the drought. Early December these tanks, water-holes and *kemas* over-flowed, inundating the lowlands and filling up the coastal lagoons. In the latter part of December, the effect of the monsoon coupled with the cyclone that ravaged the Island, brought unprecedented rain registering a fall of 2.38" on 10.12.57, 3.26" on 19.12.57, 1.43" on 20.12.57, 4.17" on 21.12.57, 1.24" on 23.12.57, 2.88" on 24.12.57 and 1.14" on 27.12.57 giving a total rainfall of 18.13" in December.

The rainfall for the year in the three months from October was treble that in normal years during the same period. The result was that the flood waters took their own course mostly along jeep and gravel roads, thereby swelling the rivers and lagoons along the coastal belt. The

Menik Ganga which runs through the Reserves topped its bank on 24.12.57, and by 25.12.57, it overflowed and submerged the low lying areas. At Kataragama the Menik Ganga rose to a height of over 40". Much anxiety was expressed when the river, on the southern bank of which stood the Yala Park Bungalow, overflowed. But fortunately the floods subsided on 27.12.57, and the bungalow was saved from wreck. The huge sand dunes that border the coastal belt, south of Yala, served the purpose of an effective bund. The water accumulated and spread flooding the approach to Palatupana. Several visitors who had booked the bungalow in the National Park, months ahead, were disappointed due to the impossibility of the road and had to abandon their visits. The surging waters of the Menik Ganga had caused considerable erosion on either side of the Yala bungalow. The road to Yala, maintained by the P.W.D., and the departmental jeep roads had been washed away in several places. Suitable drains, causeways and culverts will have to be provided and breaches filled up.

The wattle and daub building at Palatupana, erected on a frail foundation, sank. The circuit bungalow kitchen and the bungalow keeper's quarters collapsed. The circuit bungalow was gradually sinking. The semi-permanent quarters of the staff at Bambawe and Katagamuwa were in a state of collapse. The flood water did not remain long. Hence it did not affect wild life much. But nests of some aquatic birds were reported to have been washed away. A wild elephant in attempting to cross the flood waters missed its footing and fell into the water but it tenaciously anchored itself to a branch of a tree and swam for safety.

### Wilpattu National Park

The total rainfall during the month of December had been 34.86" of which the rainfall for the last ten days, when the floods ravaged the area, was 22.87". Never had Wilpattu experienced such a high rainfall within living memory. Considerable damage had been caused

to the approach road from Thimbiriwewa to Hunuvillegama and after about one and a half months this road was impassable for motor cars. Near Galkadawala alone, a stretch of about 100 feet of the road had been completely washed to a depth of 5 feet due to the impact of the spill water from the Galkadawala tank. Near Horuwila temple a section of the road was converted into a muddy crater across which no vehicle could get through. A party of visitors that left the Park on 24.12.57, had to engage 18 labourers to transport it across this chasm.

The Department's motorable road from Hunuvillegama to Kumbukwila *via* Maradanmaduwa and the roads to the central villus have also been severely damaged due to the overflow of water from the streams. The length of motorable roads had been reduced as most of the villus are now full and water had extended to the forest edges. The road itself was 3 feet under water. Of the nine villus only five of these were accessible by car. Several jeep tracks within the Park were also submerged.

The Maradanmaduwa tank rose to a height that would have been sufficient to breach. Timely action taken by the staff to lengthen the spill to three times its normal length saved the bund. Kumbukvillu, the most important villu, filled to capacity and completely submerged the parkland round it, rendering it impassable. Here too water continued to rise but additional spillways were cut and the bund sand-bagged and thus the bund was saved.

Of the buildings, the quarters of the Pomparippu staff were submerged to a depth of 6 feet. The building crumpled and the flood water carried away their personal belongings and Government property. The Paymadu quarters were also submerged and one of the two rooms was completely washed away. The Paymadu staff found refuge in one of the Land Development Department sheds. Katankandal Kulam quarters, which stand immediately on the southern bank of the Moderagam aru, was completely devastated and here the water rose up



to a height of nearly 20 feet. There was no trace of the Makalanmaduwa quarters. The overflow of the Kala Oya spread to a distance of nearly  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. The entire area was completely submerged and water rose up to a height of nearly 15 feet. The doors and windows were carried away. The wild animals that have been mostly affected by the flood were deer. Their feeding grounds, which served as resting places at night to escape attacks from prowling leopards, were also completely submerged. In the lowlands, bordering the Kala Oya and the Moderagam aru and Pomparippu, few carcasses of spotted deer and buffalo were found.

The flood was at its peak on December 24th, December 25th and December 26th, and very fortunately the staff, whose quarters were swept away, were on their way to Maradanmaduwa for their salaries and had therefore not suffered much.

In the **Okanda Area**, every year, during the period November to February of the following year, heavy floods are a normal feature. But this year the floods had been heavier than in the previous years. During these months of heavy rain and periodical flooding, animals in the lowland retreat temporarily to higher ground. The damage caused here was very negligible. This is mainly due to the ideal topography of the country which consists of a coastal belt of sand dunes, scrub jungle followed by parkland with adjacent lagoons. The ground then gradually rises to rocky mounds covered with forest interlaced with plateau-like grassy areas. The rocky ground provides shelter to bears and leopards in caves which would otherwise die with the increasing rains. Damage had been caused to some quarters, the Okanda tank and the bridle path that runs through Okanda.

#### North-Central Province

Nuwaragampalata East and West, in the heart of the N.C.P., were the areas most affected by the floods. The damage was caused mainly by the swelling of the Malwatu Oya and the Kala Oya. These two major rivers over-

flowed their banks and swept everything that stood in their way in their torrential rush to the sea. Of the wild life that perished were several hare, pole-cats, deer, pig and a few monkeys. In the N.C.P. 40 per cent of the number of tanks breached. It is therefore feared that the ill effects of the floods on wild life will actually be felt only during the on-coming drought. Some of these tanks are the only source of water for the wild animals in the drought. Several wild elephants from the marshy Meenvillu, Kaudulluwewa and Gal-Oya area, moved to high ground and village tank bunds for safety. Gal-Oya area, the favourite haunt of wild life, was virtually deserted after the floods. Several monkeys that could not withstand the cold, fell from their tree perches and perished in the flood waters.

In the **Eastern Province** of the several tanks that breached and rivers that overflowed, the breach of the Mahaweli ganga tank bund and the overflow of the Mahaweli caused the most disastrous results. Kallar, Muttur, Killivedi, Sampur, Navaladi Mukattu Waram, Kandal Kulam and Upparu were completely submerged. In these areas, several deer and pig were seen floating in the flood waters. No casualties were reported from Kantalai and Gomerankandawala. Many wild animals moved to high ground around Seruwila and Toppur and were saved. The elephants and a few deer were marooned here for about a week. As the water subsided, deer moved into the jungle and wild elephants ravaged plantations. Elephants were seen for a considerable time by night in the vicinity of these villages. The area north of Tiriyaï was most affected. Animals of this area moved to higher elevations in Galkulamkande and Mahanikwewa. At Nilaveli and Perkar, two to three elephants rampaged the area but no damage was caused. Never before have elephants been seen in this area.

At Welamanal, two elephants destroyed crops although elephants have been hitherto unknown to this village.

At Sober Island, in the Trincomalee sector, a

male elephant about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet was marooned, probably cut off from its herd. The animal in its attempt to rejoin its herd swam nearly half a mile in the sea to the land but at the dockyard the animal was scared back to the Island which it then inhabited. There was food and water to last for a month. Action was taken to capture the animal.

Not only had wild animals fallen victim to the flood but also poachers. Police detected a dead body of a man under a tree with a shot gun. This individual, it is reported, was from Muttur who had gone out hunting on December 23rd and did not return.

Wild elephants happen to be the only class of animals that have suffered least the ravage of the floods. By instinct they are able to foresee the approach of rain and floods. Accordingly they move to higher ground where they can be safe. Remarkable examples of such behaviour by elephant have been specifically observed in the resident **Bingiriya** herd of ten to twelve elephants in the Deduru Oya sector. Between the months of January and July each year generally, this little herd migrates feeding on the patches of forest along the Deduru oya between Ruwaneliya and the jungles of Manuwangama, Nariyagama and Veherabendikele across the Deduru oya. In August, the animals cross the road near Pallama and enter the water-holes and tanks of Patrakadawala, Wettilapoo ebbe and Andarankatuwa, all of which survive the drought. These are the only sources of food and water for them in the neighbourhood. Foraging continues till the end of October and with the break of the N.E. Monsoon and before the arrival of another herd of about 50 animals from the north, the animals return to their usual habitat, the Deduru oya. In the course of their migration across chenas

and plantations, which a few years ago were the haunt of elephant, the animals naturally are induced to invade them and there they have been continuously harassed by cultivators by shooting at them. This little herd during the dreadful days of the floods did not return to the Deduru oya and the forests of Nariyagama, Veherabendikele and Manuwangama, but remained and fed in the Bingiriya temple plantation of about 600 acres for nearly twelve days under the close protection of the High Priest of the Buddhist temple who gave strict injunctions to the watchers not to disturb or scare these animals. By this benevolent act of this priest this little herd of pocketed and harassed elephants, whose survival will probably not last more than a few years, was saved from the wrath of the floods. With the subsidence of the floods, the animals moved north-west towards Sippikalana and then through a belt of forests to the north—not westwards as they usually do during this part of the year, towards Thalamawatagama near Andiyagama. The animals remained here for about a week until one of the herd received a volley of bullets off a .405 rifle of a watcher when it trespassed on the estate. The animals never remained in the area thereafter but are believed to have migrated towards Savarangala or Vanni Hatpattu jungles outside their usual migration limits.

The floods have certainly done plenty of damage to wild life though the damage itself was mostly not noticeable. Several tanks and water-holes, deep in the jungle, have either breached or been washed away draining out all water. Thus an acute scarcity of water for wild life in the forthcoming drought is inevitable. This will facilitate the aspiration of the poacher, so that in the next drought the full programme will focus on intensified preventive action.

# The Killing of the Punanai Man-eater

By CHRISTINE WILSON

MR. R. S. Agar's stirring account of his killing of the Punanai leopard may be forgotten, for it happened many years ago. The story is revived through the eyes of one of the six men who accompanied Mr. Agar on his historic shoot and recounted these incidents, detail by detail to the author not six miles from where they happened.

A few days ago we sat talking in the jungle with an old man whose tranquil face looked as if it had never chanced on violence. We had been talking of jungle things when the old man—his name was Podisingho—said, quietly, "I was present at the hunting of the Punanai leopard."

The Punanai leopard was probably the greatest man-killer this country has ever known. Its eighteen known victims were killed within the space of six months; it is said there were many more whose number will never be known.

Thirty-two years ago, newspapers blazed with news of the killer. First one man, then another, and another, was killed and dragged into the jungle to be devoured. The three-mile beat between the Vakanarai turn-off and Punanai became the most dreaded stretch of country in Ceylon.

It all started, said Podisingho, with the killing of a young Moor boy who looked after the cattle of a contractor. One afternoon, to protect himself from a shower, the boy huddled under a sack near the cattle. No doubt it was one of the bulls the leopard was after when it sprang. Missing, it landed on the boy and dragged him into the jungle.

Believing that their son had been beaten to death by the contractor, and his body hidden in the forest, the parents took their suspicions to the police. The contractor, vainly protesting his innocence, was arrested.

Then, in the jungle, the remains of the boy were found with the unmistakable evidence of tooth and claw upon his body.

Those were the days when tappal runners carried the mail from Kalkudah to Punanai and back on foot. Leaving at six in the morning, they would, after a brief mid-way rest, reach their destination 12 miles away about noon. Next day they would set out on the return trip. Podisingho, our narrator, then young and intrepid, was one of these men.

Not far from the scene of the first killing, another man was killed . . . And so it went on. It was never certain when the beast would spring. Sometimes nearly a month would pass free from attack; then, week after week, the leopard would strike again. Growing more and more contemptuous of man it would sometimes sneak up on a party of travellers and leap on a straggler, while his companions, screaming, fled as if the devil were at their heels. Those great, over-developed front paws would clasp a man's neck: the back legs would kick convulsively clawing open a man's stomach or liver.

A Tamil tappal runner would be killed. Then a road-mender, or one of a group travelling with their *tavalam* carts. On the roadside, generally between the 28th and 31st milestones, there would be found a bloodstained neck cloth; or a shabby *malla* (pouch) with a few cents inside. Once the tappal runners found thirty rupees lying on the blood-soaked grass; on another occasion a man had hidden his gold earrings between the betel leaves in his bag.

It was no longer safe to travel on the road alone. Two tappal runners now made the journey together. They would set out armed with nothing more than a big stick, a knife and their voices shouting and bellowing to warn off the leopard.

They were allowed no guns or other adequate protection. Yet never for a single day did the tappal go undelivered.

The old man paused in his narration. Then he said thoughtfully, "I remember so well one

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man who died . . . The seventeenth man, it was."

He was a Tamil working on the road at Manampitiya. ("The leopard never ate a Sinhalese," said Podisingho with a wry smile. "After his first taste, he seemed to prefer Tamils and Moors.") One night he arrived at about seven o'clock at the railway camp at Punanai.

"Where are you going so late?" he was asked. "Don't you know how dangerous these roads are—especially at night?"

"I have just had word that my mother has died at Chenkaladai. I must get there quickly."

"Don't go now. Come with us when we leave at six in the morning," urged the tappal runners.

It was four o'clock in the morning when Podisingho awoke to see the man sitting by the embers of the fire, chewing betel. There was, he said, a look of great sorrow on his face.

Podisingho turned over and went to sleep. When he and the others awoke again an hour and a half later, the man had gone.

"He was strong," said one of the men doubtfully.

"He said he would fight the leopard with his clasp-knife, if it attacked him," said another.

Full of fears for their visitor they started on their way.

By the 31st milepost they saw his neckcloth. A few yards further there was a mass of blood and a piece of human liver. Apparently the man had put up a terrific struggle; there was evidence that the exhausted beast had probably watched his victim bleed to death from behind a nearby anthill.

Some of the greatest shots in the country patrolled the Punanai stretch. As early as May, after the death of the tenth victim, R. S. Agar had made his first attempt to kill the man-eater and failed.

Other sportsmen tried, but the killings continued. Then two sportsmen in turn claimed to have shot the man-eater. It looked as if one of them had succeeded, for a whole month passed without any further assaults.

One of the runners, Manikan, declared one day that he would no longer travel in tandem. It day was obvious, he said, that the leopard had been shot: besides, he would receive higher pay if he went alone.

He set out gallantly: a slightly built man with a small mouth, receding teeth and short-cropped hair.

It was Saturday, the 16th of August.

The Railway Inspector working on the Punanai-Vakanarai road glanced impatiently at his watch. The tappal runner should have gone by some time ago.

Another half hour passed.

Yes, he was told. The man had started off alone, not even armed with a stick or *katty*.

The Inspector got on his motor bike.

Near the 28th mile-post he saw something fluttering from a bush. It was Manikan's headcloth. The tappal bag lay on the side of the road. Near by were only a few drops of blood, for the man was small enough for the powerful beast to have carried him off immediately into the jungle.—It was discovered later that one terrible spring and bite at the neck, had probably killed instantaneously.

The Inspector grabbed the tappal bag and raced on to Kalkudah to report his news. It was telegraphed from there to the G.A. at Batticaloa.

Now by one of those freak chances, Agar had arrived at Batticaloa for petrol some 29 hours after the kill. He had come from his up-country estate not to shoot the leopard, which he had abandoned all hope of killing, but a rogue elephant. His arrival there coincided with the news of this latest human kill.

Collecting six men at Punanai, one being Podisingho, he hurried in his great shooting car with its revolving spotlights and elaborate equipment to the site of the attack. This was only a few yards distant from the locality of the kill Agar had previously seen. Following the trail of the dragged body through dense jungle, they came at last on it.

• The body showed a ghastly bite at the base of the skull. The intestines and part of one leg had been eaten.

Agar gave orders for a *massa* or hide to be built on a nearby tree. The body was pegged out firmly.

By now it was dusk: there was the eerie knowledge that hidden in the scrub quite close, the leopard was watching all the time. There was nothing for it now but to go back for torches and whatever else was required for the long wait on the *massa*.

They had just rounded a bend when the last man froze.

“Leopard!”

What manner of beast was this that almost before they were out of sight it had returned to drag away its meal?

Agar swung round: fired at the patch of yellow in the undergrowth. The beast sprang forward. Then it fell back, roaring. The driver fired; missed. Agar fired again—the beast was gone.

Cursing, Agar had the corpse's legs tied firmly to a tree, and they set out once more knowing the full measure of their enemy.

By the time they had collected electric torches and other necessities from the car and returned to the *massa* it was eight o'clock. The body was gone.

By now even Agar—as he admitted himself later—had the wind up, brave man though he was. The jungles seemed filled with the demon that lurked there contemptuous of man. But thinking of his men more than of himself Agar made his decision.

“It is too dangerous to try and find the body in the dark. The leopard is sure to spring. We'll have to go back,” he said quietly.

At Punanai he told them, “Rest well and be ready to leave with me at 6 in the morning.”

Sickened at his failure he sat through the night smoking cigarette after cigarette. “Apoy! How sad he was!” said Podisingho. “He had no food, no sleep. He didn't even shave or wash, and all he drank was tea.”

Sharp at six next morning they were back on the job.

Silently they crept through the trail already cleared in the dense scrub. Here, tangled bushes showed the path along which the corpse had been dragged . . . Here was a dead tree over which the leopard had pulled it; and here on this side was the head which had got detached from the rotting body and lay face downwards in the rank grass. Podisingho continued the story.

“We were told to turn it over with a stick so that we could be sure it was Manikan's: this jungle was strewn with the skulls of other victims.”

It was Manikan's right enough: “We knew by his newly cropped hair, his small mouth and receded teeth.”

“Be careful now!” warned Agar.

A few steps more.

“We crouched, very still, listening. We could hear, quite near us, the loud crunching of bones. Then we saw the leopard, near an anthill. It was crunching Manikan's ribs, and the sound it made was so great it had not heard us.

“We tried to show it to Agar Master, but he was tall, and standing, so that he could not see it as we could.

“Then suddenly we heard a *valli-mua*, a (barking deer) cry, ‘Bah! Bah!’ It was standing there, staring in fear at the leopard.

“We were very hungry: how much we would have liked that *valli-mua* to eat. ‘Shoot Sir, Shoot!’ Podisingho whispered to Mr. Agar.

“He did not know in which direction to look. As he swung round the leopard heard us and sprang into the undergrowth.

“But at least we knew where the body was; it was certain the leopard would return to it.

“Mr. Agar told us to build a really big *massa* this time, one in which he could stay for days if he had to. It was only about ten feet from the ground, a height the leopard could easily spring. But that Master was brave: he had no fear, and always he thought of us first, never of himself. There are few like him, these days . . .”

At 11.30 Agar sent all his men back to get themselves a meal, though he himself had had nothing.

"I'll stay here a week if necessary to shoot this beast," he told them. "If it is not killed now, it will never be shot."

He was completely alone in the jungle above that decaying, headless body. By now the hum of flies was strong about it, and the stench was terrible. One buttock, the chest and part of the shoulders were now gnawed away. Somewhere, close to that pegged-out body, a hungry leopard watched.

Here is Agar's own description of his vigil.

"As soon as my people got out of sight a feeling of loneliness came over me. I at once began to calculate time, which I had no thought of before. I knew it was 12 miles to and from Punanai and all my equipment (for the night) had to be collected. A lot could happen in that time . . . I began to think of serious matters, for danger was very near, indeed. The alarm call of the sambhur made that clear . . . My nerves were strained to their very limits and my imagination was also playing tricks with me. The thud caused by the fall of a rotten branch made me swing round and draw a bead in that direction. The creaking of one tree against another fixed my attention, and the sudden sharp voices of birds, etc., sounds that I would have instantly recognised and placed in the ordinary way, made me start. I misinterpreted the ever-changing play of light on the fallen leaves. Near a mound, in a shadow, I saw leopard colours which gave me concern. The picture altered with the sun . . . I was standing up in the middle of this platform of thin vibrating sticks, with rifle ready for immediate use, trying to keep a look-out everywhere. There was only one way for the leopard to gain his kill again, and that was past my rifle. He would have to do for me first. I was expecting an attack any moment . . . I had no fear of the leopard. I was there to meet him. I knew the business would be short and sweet either way."

The men returned with oranges, a bottle of tea, biscuits, a mosquito net, another gun and Agar's raincoat, for the clouds were gathering. Shortly afterwards, the clouds burst into a heavy shower. Agar put his raincoat over the shoulders of his driver, Juanis, sent all the men back to Punanai, and settled himself with Juanis on that dangerously low *massa* for a long wait.

3 o'clock. As the rain lessened, a watery sun came out.

*So did the leopard.* Unnoticed.

Glancing casually over his shoulder Agar saw the white belly of the beast. Having crept silently up from behind, it sat there on its haunches, calmly watching Agar.

"We were nearing the road," said Podisingho, "when we heard the sound of a shot, like a dashing cracker, and a *boo* cry. We all ran back to the *massa*. Mr. Agar and the driver were on it holding their guns pointed; and there was the leopard—its eyes open—so live and terrible it seemed that one of us rushed up to it with his knife."

"Don't touch it!" the gentleman shouted. "Can't you see it's dead?" But he still held his rifle ready.

The beast was not over-long, but unusually massive of head and shoulder, beautifully muscled, in its prime, with a coat like satin off which the ineffectual knives of those who had tried to defend themselves had slid barely making a mark. One ear was nicked by the bereaved Tamil's knife; the under side of its belly was grazed by Agar's first bullet of the previous day.

"The stench of dead carrion from its mouth," said Podisingho, "was most terrible."

Jubilantly they returned to Punanai. Agar, his task done, was ready to wash and shave and eat an enormous meal of eggs and bread. To his men he gave all his provisions and tinned food. Between the six of them he shared half of the hundred rupee reward he would receive for the killing of the leopard: the rest went to an orphanage.

As the news spread of the death of the man-

eater, more and more people gathered to see it, until the roads were thronged.

Swiftly, for the carrion human flesh it had eaten was causing speedy decomposition, the leopard was hurried to Maha Oya for a necropsy.

Inside its stomach was found the silver waist-chain of one of its victims.

The man-killer of Punnani would kill no more.

“I do not think its like,” said old Podisingho softly, “will be seen in this country again.”

## It's Tough—hooking a Sailfish

By RODNEY JONKLAAS

*In Sunday Times*

WHEN the south-west monsoon is not blowing quite so furiously on the west coast, round about September or late August, a vast and mysterious migration of Sailfish takes place some miles off Colombo. Hundreds and thousands of squid appear, and in their wake, the long-billed jumping-jack of the sea—the fighting “thalapatha” or Sailfish.

In other parts of the world, amateur anglers pay huge sums to guides, charter boat owners and professional fishermen to be able to present a bait to these fine fishes. There is something really thrilling in the hooking of a Sailfish—for he is the clown and trapeze flyer of the sea and a fighter to the bitter end. There is no more spectacular big-game trophy of the sea than a Sailfish, especially when it is mounted by an expert and adorns the wall behind your bar or in the clubhouse.

Three years ago I landed a Sailfish about a hundred pounds in weight, using a surf rod and monofilament nylon of less than 30 lb. breaking strain. Last September I sallied out once more in the hope of bettering this by using lighter tackle.

In order to be sure of at least seeing Sailfish, you must go out with the tough professional fishermen who brave the waves, cold and squalls to earn their daily bread. For they alone know, by some uncanny instinct and navigation, just where in the vast expanse of the sea, with Colombo just on the horizon, the Sails are on

the feed. This mysterious feeding-ground is seldom more than a few square miles in extent; draw up on it and you'll see fishing craft from Moratuwa, Lunawa, Dehiwala, Mutwal—even Negombo all fishing for Sailfish, which bring in high prices at a time of fish scarcity.

If you are lucky (and stubborn) enough to team up with a Sailfishing crew from Dehiwala, you will be asked to turn up at 11 a.m. on the great day, and bring with you light bedding, two meals, some drink, your tackle, plus a good deal of optimism. No one knows when the Sails will feed or when they will merely leap about in the sea and refuse the bait presented so tantalisingly to them—with a hook inside it. The main point is that you will not touch dry land for another 24 hours at least; and if you know just how hard and cramped a 5-man outrigger boat can be . . . .

You leave Dehiwala by negotiating an extremely rough and surf-swept reef. Perched precariously, and well out of the way of the men who wield all kinds of ropes and other parts of the boat to the accompaniment of a great deal of foul language. Getting the sail up is always a complicated process and more often than not the most important rope gets caught round your neck and the boom misses your head by a mere fraction of an inch.

Having survived these preliminary perils, you settle yourself as comfortably as possible on a very smooth piece of wood about 8 inches in

diameter which links the two outrigger poles close to the gunwale. As a special concession you may be permitted to sit inside a very rude and narrow hammock of coir rope atop the outrigger section, in the company of all the handliness, hooks, traces, food, oilcloths, water bottles and betel-bags. Together with your personal paraphernalia, comprising torch, fishing tackle, camera, rod, food, etc., it is really a tight fit, with occasional playful waves serving to wet your cramped buttocks. There is no question of your standing, stork-like within the hull of the boat in a puddle of (foul) water because of the lack of room.

To return to My sailfishing trip; having survived these various vicissitudes, I found myself about ten miles out of Dehiwala, headed north-westwards in the company of several other boats from the same area. If any one of them passed close, or was overtaken, a refreshing stream of invective was cheerfully exchanged.

By evening we reached the fishing grounds where, parked in neat rows, were several dozen boats already fishing for Sails. We took our position after the sail was lowered; down went the rude anchor, and over the side went our smelly squid baits.

Just ahead of us, in the glorious September sunset, a magnificent Sailfish took to the air in a burst of spray; it had been hooked by a Negombo boat a few score yards to our right and I watched the battle which was to end in favour of the fishermen a few minutes later.

Suddenly one of our hand-lines paid out; it was grabbed and handled expertly by one of our crew.

"One, two, three, four, five, s-i-x and HEAVE!"

He struck mightily with tight line, and in response, a gleaming twisting Sailfish took to the air ahead of us. I drew in my line and watched, fascinated, as with his bare fingers, the

fisherman fought the fish on a slender hand-line. He gave and took, and each time he took, the Sail leapt. His fingers did the jobs of brake, spool, anti-backlash, star-drag and rod flexibility of a modern outfit; yet his line was scarcely stronger in breaking strain. In ten minutes the gallant fish was spent; a companion grabbed its bill with cloth-protected hands, a club banged away at its head, the gaff went home and soon the dead fish lay in the water, tied by its tail to our boat.

No more bites that evening; we dined at sunset, I on sandwiches and rolls washed down with Schweppes, they on deliciously-smelling rice and curry which I secretly envied them. The kerosene lamps were lit and we prepared for the important operation of catching bait.

As dusk sets in, the air turns chilly, even though the land, less than 10 miles east, is warm enough at this time. We donned our long sleeved woollen cardigans and looked into the darkening waters. Pink arrow-shaped missiles kept shooting about under us and would converge swiftly and unhesitatingly on the scraps of bait we threw in. These were live squid, the jet-planes of the sea, and savage and



Sunday Times

'He struck mightily with tight line'



cannibalistic, they ate pieces of their own kind, brought by the fishermen as bait. A slender line with a piece of squid was lowered into the water and gently brought close alongside, illuminated by the kerosene flare. Nibbling at it were several squid, and a hand-net swished behind and under them would always get them. Popping and squirting, they would be placed in a basket to die, which they did quickly enough. A dead squid is a white and smelly object with no appeal. A live one is a transparent streamlined and wondrous creature with built-in luminous light-organs, giving it an unearthly appearance. The closest thing in miniature I have seen to a space-ship is a live squid just out of the water.

Almost the whole night through we fished for squid; some of us slept fitfully, but never soundly. Although I had the most comfortable position I never really did sleep, but dozed, and glanced impatiently at my watch every half-hour.

•As dawn approached, we prepared for our

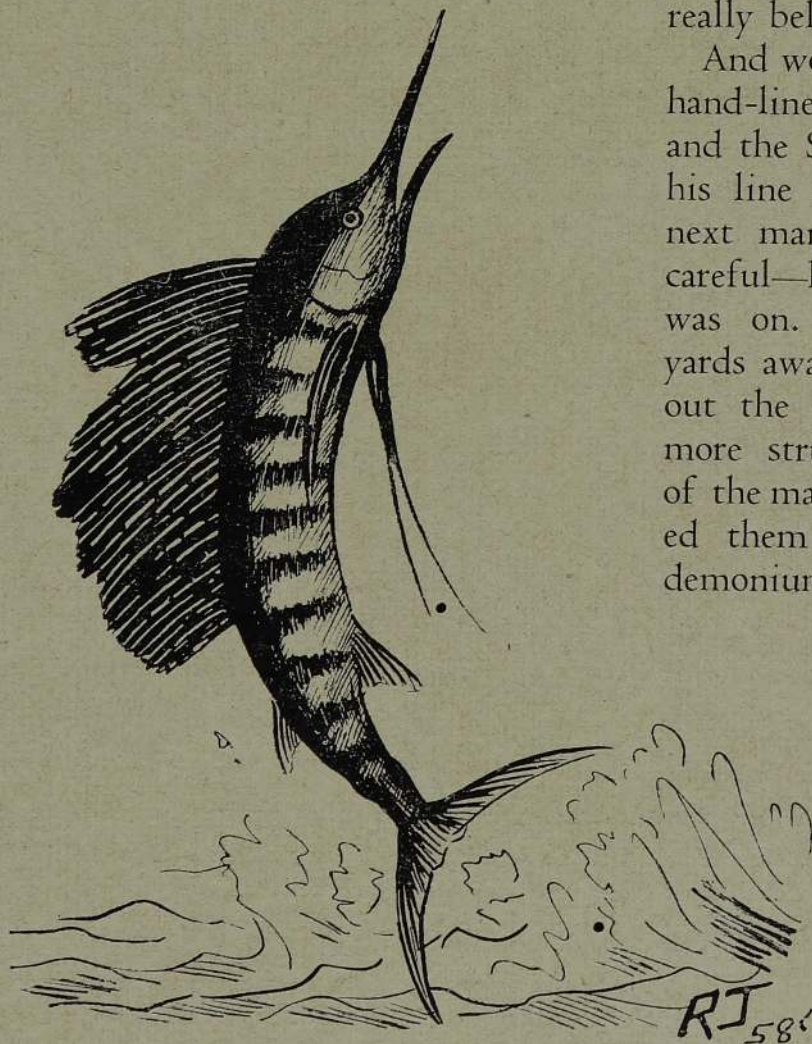
main task—Sailfishing, and all lines were baited and prepared. One or two squid are carefully impaled on large hooks and then sewn on to the shanks completely concealing them. A 6 ft. wire trace is used to prevent the line being cut by the tail of the leaping fish. All our lines, including mine were baited, but the fishermen refused to lower them in the sea until it was light enough because of the hordes of squid that would tear them to pieces in a few minutes.

As usual, I was the greediest and most impatient of us all, and hardly did it dawn than my bait was out and I clung hopefully to my rod and reel awaiting a strike. My companions were wiser. They waited even longer and then their lines went over the side. It dawned magnificently over the land and soon the kerosene lights went out one by one. A Sailfish jumped behind us; another Dehiwala boat had hooked it. Then on the left, another—three hundred yards away another, and the fishing was on. The fishermen banged the sides of the boat and called aloud for the fish to bite—they really believed this would work.

And work it did, for suddenly the helmsman's hand-line tautened and he struck but too soon and the Sailfish got away. Grumbling, he drew his line in to attach another bait. Then the next man to him had a bite, he was more careful—he counted six and struck and the fish was on. It leapt and tail-walked a hundred yards away while I drew in my line and took out the camera to get some shots. Then two more struck, simultaneously, from both hands of the man in the bows and he struck and hooked them both! There was temporary pandemonium in our boat with three frantic

Sailfish leaping about on the ends of hand-lines which kept paying out and singing in the sea, gyrating in all directions and threatening to entangle all of us.

Fighting a Sailfish off an anchored catamaran on



a hand-line is an art in itself. Fighting three of them is something to behold! The recovered lines would become hopelessly tangled and looped about in the hull but an old fisherman would cleverly unravel them and loop them in coils ready for the next rush. The two Sailfish hooked simultaneously had been shared by two men who were fighting them separately. Three times they entangled themselves in the sea but each time the skill of the men saved the lines and the fish. One by one they were seized, gaffed, clubbed and boated. The entire operation took 15 minutes.

At last we were ready to fish again, and since my bait was almost gone from the hook, thanks to the attentions of squid, I had a fresh one on, and a fresh supply of optimism to go with it. But I was doomed to miss my Sailfish on this trip, for another struck on the line of the helmsman, and in the bright morning light, I drew in my line and watched the fight with camera ready. After this one was boated they appeared to stop feeding although we could see them in plenty. In the bright blue sea-water around us were hundreds of porpoises and Sailfish, diving, surfacing, jumping, gambolling. It was a grand carnival of the sea put on for our

benefit. They weren't touching our bait, probably they had been feeding enough, and they were just playing about. The porpoises were sleek, swift and graceful and they passed only a few feet away from each boat. The Sails kept a discreet distance, but would leap out every now and then or cruise swiftly on the surface with fins half-raised. No wonder the name "Thalapatha" was given them, for nothing resembled more closely the fronds of a palmyrah leaf being drawn swiftly through the water.

Finally, about 9 a.m. we raised anchor, hoisted sails and turned back for Dehiwala, some 15 miles to the south-east. It was a dull and tiring journey back, tacking across the monsoon breeze, every limb cramped and weary, our eyes blood-shot from lack of sleep. At length, at 12 noon, we were ashore, and having taken my last few pictures I staggered home to sleep it out. As I lay in bed, after a bathe, shave and lunch, I thought of the men who do this day after day, week after week, all their life. Surely they deserve more credit, sympathy and assistance from the population of Ceylon whose fish-hungry stomachs they fill at such great physical and mental expense!

## SPEARFISHING

SPORT OR SLAUGHTER ?

*Adapted from an article by Norman Lewis in Oryx, May, 1956*

**F**ISH inhabiting shallow coastal waters in all accessible parts of the world are at this moment in the process of being exterminated, through the mass invasion of these waters by spearfishermen.

On the Mediterranean shores of France and Spain, and all round the coastline of Italy the process is almost complete, so far as several species of fish are concerned, and we learn from the magazines of spear-fishing enthusiasts, of new centres of their sport being continually

established on the more remote coasts of the Adriatic, of Greece and of North Africa.

In a recently published book on spear-fishing, the information was given that over 10,000 spearguns had been sold in this country alone. This is only a tiny fraction of the number of these guns sold in countries such as France, Spain, Italy and the U.S.A., where this sport first developed.

Originally spearguns were powered by elastic bands, which gave them an under-water range

of only a few feet, and considerable practice and skill was called for on the part of the hunter.

Elastic bands, alas, were soon followed by powerful steel springs, and then by weapons operated by compressed air and by carbon dioxide. The latter type of gun, in almost universal employment in the Western Hemisphere, is a lethal weapon indeed: its killing range extends to about thirty feet and is often augmented by an explosive spearhead.

No fish, however powerful, is a proof against this latest production in the underwater armoury—in fact, the bigger the fish, the greater the target area it offers.

Even the redoubtable shark comes off worst when attacked in this way.

The sport is an extremely easy one in which to reach a fair proficiency, and so long as virgin territory can be found, the rewards are very tempting. "The Skin-Diver," a U.S. journal devoted to spear-fishing, reports instances where under-water fishpoachers off the Florida coast have taken 1,000 pounds weight in fish in a night.

Fish, when encountered in their natural surroundings, are in most cases tragically tame and even curious.

Far from seeking to escape from the spearfisherman, they will often approach to within a few feet of the harpoon, or like the tarpon, actually follow him about; so that while any fish are present they can be slaughtered as fast as the hunter can reload his gun.

These beautiful shallow-water fish appear to be irreplaceable—or, at any rate, replaceable only over a very long-period.

They live out their lives in certain caverns or rocky labyrinths, to which the spear-fisherman has only to track them down to despatch them at his leisure.

Old hands speak of the great numbers of big fish seen off the coasts of southern France when they first spear-fished there, not much more than ten years ago.

These waters are now barren, and the fish observer or marine photographer of the future has thus been deprived of his innocuous pleasure.

To give an example of the depredations for which one man alone can be responsible, the champion spear fisherman of Iviza in the Balearic Islands—a young man of twenty-four—is proudly claimed by his native villagers to have practically annihilated the large fish in the island waters in a matter of ten years.

A point to remember is that for every fish killed outright, at least two injured fish succeed in escaping. These often survive for days, sometimes bearing upon their bodies the most dreadful wounds.

There seems to be need for legislation in this matter.

Already most countries have made it illegal to hunt with aqua lungs; but this is not enough, for the thousands of holiday spear-fishermen who throng in the shallows of the warm seas every summer, kill or wound innumerable fish without doing more than splash about on the surface.

Certain coastal areas must forthwith be designated as sanctuaries. Even now, only a few accessible areas can be saved from the denudation of their fish life.

## FISH DYNAMITING

THERE has been a great deal of agitation about the wanton destruction of Ceylon's fish fauna, both in our coastal waters and in our tanks and inland waterways. Various suggestions were made to check and eradicate finally—with legislation and the strict supervision of the sale of such explosives as dynamite—this undoubtedly wasteful, indiscriminate taking of fish.

The dynamiting of fish is a problem that existed before the last war, but with the large-scale dumping of explosive by the military authorities on the local market at the end of hostilities, and a fair amount of pilfering of

these stocks from army and navy stores, the blasting of fish—big, small, edible or not—increased at an alarming rate, and not even the most careful vigilance and the most secretly laid ambushes and surprise visits were of any avail.

Dynamiting continues and big money continues to be made by a ring of influential, new-type “fish mudalalis,” and the problem is still far from solved.

And now comes a suggestion that Spear-fishing which is regarded by many enthusiasts as a thrilling and difficult sport is not really an exciting sporting recreation but a pastime which—in a way—spells as much danger to our fish fauna in our coastal waters as dynamiting does.

The idea may seem ridiculous to some, especially to those who have experienced the difficulties of taking fish this way and know that a great deal of luck and skill has to be

present before a fish can be successfully speared many fathoms under the sea.

On the other hand, there are those who feel that with the rapidly growing popularity of this sport in Ceylon and with the many improvements being made in underwater spear guns, in breathing apparatus and such-like equipment, what was once a sport can today be most destructive and a real danger to Ceylon's valuable fish fauna.

Published below are extracts from an article by Norman Lewis from *Oryx*, the Journal of the Fauna Preservation Society of Great Britain (Vol. III, No. 4, May, 1956).

Are the dangers and the warnings described and given in this article applicable to this Island?

We have no doubt there will certainly be two opinions on the subject—perhaps more.

*Sunday Observer.* •

*February, 1957.*

## Canoeing Down the Menik Ganga

By H. C. BAGOT

RISING at about 6,000 feet on Namunukula, the Menik Ganga—“Jewel River”—flows south and south-east for some 70 miles or more to the sea at Yala in the Ruhuna National Park. The river runs for over three quarters of its length through jungle and from Buttala flows parallel to the Galge-Kataragama pilgrim route. From a few miles below Kataragama the river is bounded on its north-eastern side by the Yala North Intermediate Zone and lower down by the Yala Strict Natural Reserve now known as Block 2.

Through the courtesy and assistance of Mr. J. A. de Silva, the Chief Warden of the Department of Wild Life, and his assistant, Mr. Pakeer, it was possible to arrange an exploration trip by canoe down this river from Kataragama to the sea through the Game Sanctuary.

In Colombo Mr. Neil Macpherson of Caltex, who was able to come with us, was most helpful in contacting the Department personally, arranging the necessary formalities, and obtaining a River Report which gave the depth at Kataragama as 8 to 10 inches . . . barely enough for our purpose. We had planned to go down the river in May, but it was not until 29th June that Neil, Barry Cameron and I were able to co-ordinate our “leaves”; and by then, of course, the country side in that area was in the grip of a severe drought. However we thought, rather optimistically, that there would probably be more water below Kataragama where the Darage Aru joins the main river.

Neil came up to stay with us in Maskeliya a few days before the trip was due to start and we set off on the morning of Sunday, 29th June, in the Land Rover with one canoe on the roof and the

other on a trailer in which we packed all our kit. We picked up Barry Cameron and a driver on our way past Norwood and reached Kataragama by 5 p.m. that evening. Here we were met by the Wild Life Guard, George, and together we inspected the river, which had now shrunk in depth to a mere 6 inches or so and was clearly unnavigable. This was disappointing; so we decided to have another look at the river a few miles further down. But it was now nearly dark and a very pleasant jungle road took us some 5 miles to Katagamuwa Tank. This was a delightful camp site shaded by a large tree, yet open to the tank and a strong breeze off the water kept us cool and did much to lessen the mosquito nuisance.

Nightjars were calling as we banked up the fire and turned in for the night and in the distance two leopards were "sawing" harshly. A sambhur "bonked" suddenly from the jungle close by and the clear, liquid notes of spotted deer came to us from near and far as they kept an apprehensive watch on the hunting leopards.

We slept fitfully under the magic of a full moon. Once we awoke to the sound of deep breathing far out in the lake and after listening intently for some time George concluded that two rival bull buffaloes were breathing defiance at each other across the water.

Dawn broke with an unexpected shower of rain and by 8.30 we had motored the two or three miles to Warahana where the river seemed to have even less water than at Kataragama. However, a final decision had now to be made: either we abandon our project altogether, or walk down beside the river, or tow the canoes using them for carrying the kit.

Fortunately we decided on this last course and were soon rewarded by finding enough water for normal canoeing. The Land Rover we sent round to Yala with the driver, after a suitable wait in case we should come back up the river.

Once committed, the "Expedition" took on a more cheerful aspect and interest was heightened almost immediately by the sight of

a herd of 5 elephants resting peacefully in the shade of the dark green foliage overhanging the river bed. But the wind was wrong, blowing down stream, and they moved back silently into the arid jungle beside the river, returning to drink, I hope, as soon as the two strange objects had floated past. At frequent intervals the ten foot banks had been broken down to form a steep sand-slide down which elephant, and in fact all the animals, came down to drink or cross the river.

Buffalo were encountered in almost every pool deep enough for them to wallow in; mostly solitary bulls who allowed us to approach within 30 or 40 yards when they would heave themselves out of the water, take a few aggressive (or inquisitive) steps towards us and then swing round and gallop up the bank and away.

We passed half a dozen or so baby crocodiles basking on the bleached and weathered limbs of fallen trees, and as we paddled past, a few feet away, they would open an eye apprehensively, and, after one horrified look, close it again pretending to be part of the log they lay on and that what they had seen just wasn't true.

On one occasion the leading canoe had disturbed a 6-foot croc which fled upstream and tried to pass me (in the second canoe) on the landward side at a place where the water was shallow and the channel only about 4 feet wide. A submerged log partly blocked the channel and the bank rose steeply above it. In the ensuing melee it seemed likely that the croc would end up in the boat since it could not escape up the bank, and I had some difficulty in pushing the brute's head away from the canoe with the paddle at the same time keeping my elbow out of reach of the clashing jaws. Fortunately it was unable to make use of its powerful tail or damage might have been done. Had the occupants of the other canoe not been so convulsed with laughter they might have secured some shots of this rather unique performance with the cine camera.

However, not long afterwards, and while they were still in the lead, the truth of the old adage

of "he who laughs last laughs longest" was amply borne out when they drifted unsuspectingly right over an 11-foot crocodile lying head upstream in about 18 inches of water. It must have been an impressive sight. By great good fortune the beast was either asleep or too astonished to erupt beneath them; had it done so some truly spectacular results would have been achieved. The apparition had deprived my companions momentarily of the powers of speech and only just in time did they warn me of the dragon below.

Having by-passed the croc who remained

about two feet high at this point, prodded the beast in the ribs, to ascertain whether it was alive or not. Results were immediate and dramatic. Both ends of the crocodile rose several feet above the water and the great jaws opened and clashed together like a man-trap and the serrated dragon's tail thrashed to and fro sending clouds of spray skywards. I stood in the shallows beside Neil the photographer while he filmed the scene from less than 10 yards. But the croc was craven and the rifle with which I had him covered never looked like being needed. We could now safely inform the

Warden that the reptile was in sound health for we had been requested to send in a report of anything unusual encountered en route.

It was now well past midday and we had been going since 8.45; so we ran the canoes ashore on a sand spit under the shade of a large kumbuk tree and had lunch. As we ate, a small herd of spotted deer came hesitantly down the sloping bank 50 yards behind us and spread out over the sand.

Most of the game we saw after lunch. Several single elephants and a group of three, including a mother and calf, who found it quite a scramble getting out of the river bed into the bank.

Because the wind was now blowing diagonally downstream and across us from right to left the game had plenty of warning of our approach and would often fade quietly into the jungle without becoming alarmed, and it was due to a bend in the river and consequent alteration in the direction of the wind that we were able to get



*A Halt for Lunch*

*Neil Macpherson*

motionless on the sandy floor of the channel, it was decided to investigate the matter further, for, either the monster was sick or paralyzed with fear at being floated over by a bright green and a bright silver shape 16 feet long and having neither head nor tail nor legs. So Barry went ashore with a paddle and from the bank, only

some close-ups of a large bull elephant. I was leading at a point where the channel ran close in to the right bank, and there, immediately above me, right on the edge of the 6 ft. bank and partly screened by a line of large bushes, was the elephant. It was a most unusual view and he was very close indeed.

George and I signalled to the others to run ashore while we crossed to the other side, beached the canoe and watched him from the safety of the far bank. He browsed on unconcernedly, until he came to a sand-slide and, as predicted by the Guard, turned ponderously towards us and swayed slowly down into the river bed. It was then seen that he was in "must" and had in consequence to be treated with considerable respect. From behind his tree Neil filmed furiously, with the elephant now half way across and about 15 yards distant. Barry watched the performance seated nonchalantly on a tree root in full view while I rather anxiously covered Neil with the rifle as his enthusiasm threatened to override his caution. Then sensing that all was not well, the great beast halted, turned and withdrew with leisurely dignity. Whether he intended crossing the river or had come down for a drink and a bath I do not know, but either action would have provided excellent material for photography. I think we were fortunate in not being winded when we had drifted past in the canoes within a few feet of him.

Only one incident marred the trip and a photographic record was made of it in the hope of persuading the Department to amend one of its strictest rules.

A herd of some dozen or so buffalo allowed us to approach to within 30 yards before bolting, and even then had to be "shooed" away. As they thundered across the river bed and up the far bank one of their number ran straight into a fallen tree and knocked himself over. The herd disappeared and the fallen buff regained his feet and charged back again across the shallows to his original position. It began to look as if he intended giving us some trouble when the

sickening truth dawned on us that he had lost both eyes, probably in a fight with a leopard or a rival bull. To test his reactions we threw a stick near him and immediately he lowered his head and charged the sound. Then he galloped round and round in a tight circle until he fell again. His body was covered in fresh scars. As I instinctively raised my rifle to put an end to his misery, the Guard reminded me of the strict no-shooting rule in the Sanctuary, and pointed out to me that he would certainly lose his job if I persisted. He told me that nothing could be done about destroying the buffalo until authority had been obtained from a higher authority in the Wild Life Department. When we argued that we couldn't get the canoes past with the buff in the fairway he suggested we unload and carry everything past him through the jungle. So we were deprived of a chance of even shooting him in "self-defence," a contingency for which we had the Warden's authority. Eventually Barry and I led the canoes past while the others threw sticks towards the other side of the river to keep him occupied.

To begin with he charged blindly at the splash, but after a bit just stood there tossing his head defiantly. Whether the herd would have come back for him I do not know for we had to be on our way. With the scent of the herd in his nostrils and the sound of them around him he might have found grazing and water for a few more days, but the best he could hope for would be a sudden fall into the river bed and a broken back, or a head on collision at full speed with a tree which might break his neck. So, reluctantly we left him, tragic as the old bull in Ralph Hodgson's poem.

We saw a few more crocs, one rather sinister 12-footer which swam around us seemingly loath to submerge, another solitary bull buffalo, deer in the shade of a Mee tree blending perfectly with the dappled foliage and fawn coloured sand. Then in the last two or three miles the river became deep and wide where the water had backed up behind the

unbroken sand-bar. This was real canoeing and the Guard warned us not to trail foot or hand in the water as, surprisingly, sharks were known to infest this sector of the river, cut off from the sea by the closing of the sand-bar. It was nearing dusk as we paddled on past the Yala circuit bungalow on the right bank of the river. As a final reward we found a pair of elephant

looking rather larger than life beside two gaunt, isolated trees on the river bank, where a narrow plain separated the sea shore from the forest. This was journey's end, and silhouetted against the clean horizon of sea and sky, these huge beasts, gaunt and gnarled as the trees they stood beside, made a noble picture on which to end our voyage.

## ELEPHANTS HAVE A STRONG DISLIKE FOR CROCODILES

By C. E. NORRIS

RECENTLY, while travelling through some very wild, uninhabited jungle I came across the carcass of an elephant, lying bloated and stinking under the shade of some small trees growing beside a green, slimy water-hole. The inspection of dead elephant carcasses is not one of my strong points as the stench is so overpowering as to turn my stomach. I tried to make a very hasty inspection but my stomach refused to allow me to complete more than a very hurried glance at close quarters.

My trackers, luckily, possessed stronger tummies as they were able to move round the carcass giving it a very close scrutiny. When they got to the head they exclaimed this elephant had lost half its trunk. I wanted so badly to see the condition of the wound but, although the spirit was willing, the body was incapable! The trackers assured me the trunk had not been eaten after death and that the loss had been incurred whilst the animal was alive. From what they could see there were no other wounds visible which could have been caused by gunshot. We came to the conclusion that a crocodile had probably been the cause of this horrible maiming and that death had been caused by gangrene, starvation and thirst.

Elephants have a strong dislike of crocodiles and will attack them whenever they can. A

very fine jungle-man, well versed in the habits of animals, once recounted to me a scene he had witnessed when a herd of elephants trampled a large crocodile to death. To bear out this story I saw the skull of the crocodile which was broken and mangled.

The elephants had gone to a small fresh water pool to drink and bathe. Amongst them was a large cow with a young calf. All of a sudden, the herd became excited and trumpeted and screamed with rage. The large cow, my informant stated, was seen by him to be trampling something in the water. She then reached down with her trunk and threw the mangled body of a crocodile into the air. She again attacked it until it was dismembered and nothing more than a bundle of bloody skin and flesh.

The carcasses of crocodiles have been found, far from water, drunkenly lodged in the branches of trees; undoubtedly the result of an unfortunate crocodile moving overland at night having encountered an elephant, which had trampled it to death and thrown the carcass in the air, as is the habit of elephants when dealing with something they do not like.

The whole economy of an elephant is centred upon its trunk. Without this most important part of its anatomy it is incapable of feeding itself. Although, I have heard of instances of



elephants having survived after having had their trunks badly disfigured, it must be very rare for them to outlive such wounds.

The trunk is highly sensitive and is looked

after with the utmost care. Captive elephants taking part in processions, nearly always carry their trunks curled with the end in their mouths when torch-flares are carried near them.

## The Past History of the Gal Oya Valley

By DR. ROMAN W. SZECHOWYCZ,

*Chief Forest Officer,*

*Gal Oya Development Board*

THE history of the Island is the history of the rise and decline of civilization, and it is also the study of the "jungle tide" resulting from the reclamation of land by men, its reclamation by the jungle, and again by man, etc. This fight started against nature centuries ago when the first man put foot on the Island and is continued till today and many ruined temples and other ruins found very often deep in the forest are the monuments of a splendid past.

The Gal Oya Valley which at present has been re-reclaimed again from the jungle is divided historically into four areas, namely: the Mahakandiya (Digha Vapi) area, the Govinda-hela (Westminster-Abbey) area, the Vaddah country round Nilgala and the Sammanthurai-Akkarai-pattu coastal belt.

### DIGHA VAPPI (MAHAKANDIYA) AREA

The Gal Oya Valley except the coastal belt, was in the past a part of the Sinhalese Kingdom called Ruhunu Rata and when the invaders from India forced the Sinhalese to retreat from the king's country (Raja Rata) in the 3rd century B.C., they recovered in this part of the Island and prepared themselves for deliverance. One of the most prominent parts of Ruhunu Rata in those days was the area round the Digha Vapi tank ("the long tank"), which is situated approximately seven miles to the North of Inginiyagala and is known at present as Mahakandiya. The first mention of the Digha Vapi tank (which is now completely abandoned and

overgrown with jungle), appears in the first part of the second century B.C. and as at this time it was already in existence, it must be much older.

According to the Mahawansa, King Kavan Tissa of Magama, sent his younger son Saddha Tissa to Digha Vapi "to superintend the agricultural works" and it may be accepted ("Ancient Ceylon" by H. Parker, pg. 397) that several other less important tanks were in existence in those times as well. Local tradition attributes the construction of Amparai, Kondawattuwana and Irrakamam tanks to Dutugemunu era and this was confirmed by recent findings. Dr. S. Paranawithana in "Report of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon for 1953", pg. 22 states:

"While touring the Gal Oya area the Archaeological Commissioner came across a pillar which stands on its ancient site to the Kondawattuwana tank. It is inscribed on its four sides and is dated in the 10th year of King Dappula IV (924—935 A.D.) of Geiger's list (Dappula V of Wijesinghe's). The name of the place is specifically mentioned in it and the additional information is given that the site belonged to a territorial division translatable as "Hither Digamadulla" (Methera Digamadulla). This would be so-called by the Rajarata chronicler the site being on the left or the northern bank of the Gal Oya.

"The information is of historical as well as geographical interest, for it enables us to conclude

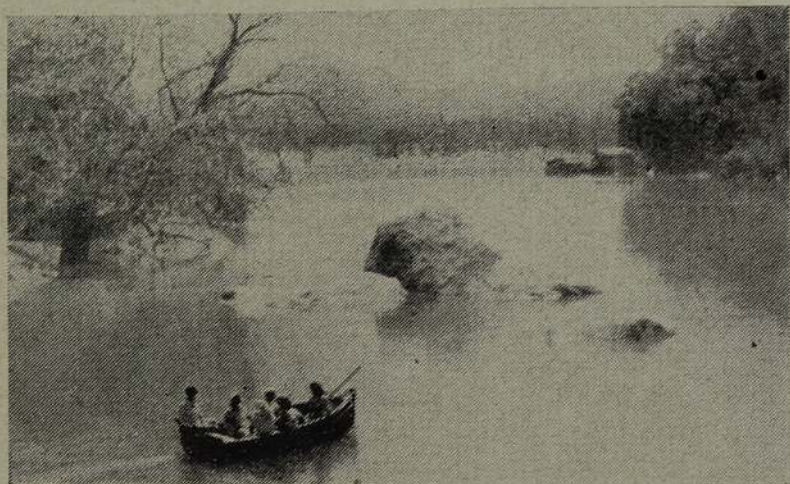
that the greater part of the area of development by the Gal Oya Development Board belongs to ancient Digha Vapi Mandala. The Digha Vapi district figures prominently in Buddhist tradition as containing a Vihara of one of the 16 sacred places which the Lord Buddha is said to have visited. It was of great significance in the second century B.C. Mahawansa states that after the death of King Kavan Tissa of Mahagama, Dutugemunu in disfavour being in Kotmale at the time, Saddha Tissa took charge of affairs, performed the Royal obsequies, removed his mother Vihara Maha Devi together with the Royal elephant Kandula and returned to Digha Vapi. At the subsequent settlement after the war between the two brothers, Saddha Tissa was entrusted with the task of developing this area with the purpose of securing an adequate store of food in the campaign with which Dutugemunu was planning against Elara. For this valuable finding, the Commissioner is grateful to Mr. W. P. Sczechowycz of the Equipment Branch of the Gal Oya Development Board."

There were two battles between the two brothers; one close to Buttala and the second decisive one must have been fought somewhere in the Gal Oya Valley. Saddha Tissa sought and was given refuge in a temple and was hidden under a bed. On being questioned by Dutugemunu as to the whereabouts of his brother Tissa, the chief priest, unable to tell a lie, answered that he was "not on the bed". Dutugemunu magnanimously stopped the search, but put guards around the temple. During the night Saddha Tissa was smuggled out dressed as a corpse. The temple referred to was somewhere in the Gal Oya Valley, most probably at Mahakandiya and the Queen Mother, Vihara Maha Devi, who was for some period in the Gal Oya Valley, was the daughter of King Tissa of Kelaniya—who put her in a box into the sea as an act of offering to God when part of his kingdom was submerged as punishment for killing a Buddhist priest. She landed at Tissamaharama and married the king, thereby became the mother of Dutugemunu and Tissa. At

present the Victoria Park in Colombo is re-named as "Vihara Maha Devi Park".

Many ruins at Diulana, Mahakandiya, Wawinna, etc., indicate that this area was well developed and thickly populated in those times. It had continued so for many centuries and still in the 17th century (when the Dutch first arrived in Ceylon) this part of the country was termed "A rich, prosperous and populated district." Parker in 1909 referring to Digha Vapi has written: "The prosperous and populous neighbourhood of the work is totally abandoned, with the exception of two small huts, all have relapsed more or less into its original wild forest."

Most probably due to malaria this part of the country was slowly but steadily deteriorating and the population died or abandoned the place, and the "jungle tide" reclaimed that which



*Makara—where Gal Oya River enters the Senanayake Samudra*

once belonged to the jungle. Amparai, now the "City of Gal Oya", consisted only of an Irrigation Circuit bungalow (which in enlarged form, serves as a circuit bungalow at present). Inginiyagala was known only as a hill without any settlement close by.

Reclamation by men started during the Dutch period. Mr. Frankie when Chief of the District rebuilt the dams at Amparai while another Dutch Chief, Mr. Burnard, repaired the dam at Irrakamam, but after slavery and forced labour was abolished in 1833, those tanks again

deteriorated. Those tanks were restored under the British administration—Irrakamam in 1859, Amparai in 1860 and the Kondawattuwan tank few years later. “ Ancient Irrigation Work in Ceylon ” by Brohier, Part III, Pg. 44. It is really a pity that ancient masonry structures were pulled down without any records being kept in regard to their state, sizes, inscriptions, etc.

The development of the Gal Oya Valley was delayed by the high incidence of malaria in this region. The Surveyor-General’s report for 1923 with reference to the Eastern province states : “ Changes in staff and about 50% sickness reduced the output of work very much, so that at the close of the year, practically no details have been touched.”

The year 1923 was not an exception and the situation did not improve till 1951, and consequently the development of this part of the country in the initial stage under the present development scheme was not an easy task. During the engineering survey of the tank bed of the Senanayake Samudra, five men lost their



*Author on “ picture ” hunting trip on the Senanayake Samudra Reservoir*

lives due to malaria and were buried in the submerged areas covered by the water now stored in the tank. All the pioneer workers in the Valley can be considered “ silent heroes ” as they have worked in spite of the permanent

threat of sickness. In fact, at that time before the modern methods of fighting malaria had brought the Valley under check, often nearly half of the employees were down with fever.

The Digha Vapi Dagoba built in the 2nd century B.C. to mark the spot where the Lord Buddha sat on his last visit to Ceylon, was re-discovered by Major Forbes in 1810. It is a structure covered with brick and mortar ; and its base is about one-fourth of a mile in circumference. This dagoba attracts at present thousands of pilgrims.

#### GOVINDA-HELA (WESTMINSTER-ABBEY) AREA

Approximately 15 miles south of Inginiyagala on the fringe of the Gal Oya Valley, a large mass of gneiss rock with a Dravidian name Govinda-hela (Govindagala, Govindasale, Govindamala) with an altitude of 1,881 ft. dominates the Valley. On the top of this rock which is nearly flat and approximately 3 acres in extent, King Buwaneka Bahu I (1271-1284 A.D.) established a fortress when all Northern Ceylon was in chaos and in a permanent state of war due to the invasion from India. The Culawansa-Mahawansa (Part II, Geiger-translation, pg. 135, chapter 81) records the following :

“ On the summit of Govindamala, hard to reach by rebels, the Adipada-ruler Bhuwanekabahu by name, whose courage was known to the world, has founded a town and by dwelling there he protected the province of Ruhuna, the Community and the Order.”

This rock is known to many as “ Westminster-Abbey ” from its quasi similarity to this magnificent building in London. The “ towers ” rise about 600 feet above the “ roof ” and on the top remains of three pokunas and masonry walls are to be seen. Considering the scarcity of water (which is available practically only during the monsoon) and the fact that every stone and other building material for the king’s palace had been carried to the top from long distances (there are no traces of quarrying in the vicinity or on the top) this was enormous task work showing the skill of the ancients.

From the top there is a splendid and beautiful view over the Gal Oya Valley. To the North-east the spread of the Senanayake Samudra and to the West the Indian Ocean catches the eye. Many old and newly constructed tanks, irrigation channels and colonist villages which look like red flowers in the greenery of paddy fields, forests and new construction works are clearly visible. It is worth the trouble to climb this hill in spite of the fact that to reach the summit, ladders are required. These have been constructed for the benefit of the visitors by the Gal Oya Development Board. The ruins at Wadinagala and Dambadeniya show that probably larger settlements arose at the foot of this rock fortress having its protection. The ancient tank on the Pallang Oya river below Wadinagala, the Kulgoda Kandiya, which is now completely abandoned, originated most probably from much earlier times.

On Wadinagala hill, there is a large cave, 170 feet long where inscriptions in Brahmi characters can be seen. Inscriptions can also be seen on the rock over the Buddama temple and those inscriptions which are from pre-Christian times are still awaiting decyphering. The Buddamama rock temple is in a good state of preservation with a large statue of the sleeping Buddha inside. This temple had not long ago been repainted and most probably valuable inscriptions and pictures were over painted and lost. In this temple there exist to date a Vali Pila, where children in ancient times have learned to write on sand.

#### NILGALA AREA

Not many records exist, which give some historical data on Nilgala area which always was considered a Veddah country. The scenery of this part of the Valley is most beautiful—a park like savannah with scattered trees of Aralu, Bulu and Nelli; home of herds of wild buffaloes and elephants. This area was always ruled by Sinhalese kings to whom the Vaddahs were most loyal and whom they considered as their “cousins”. In fact, any Vaddah was

at any time entitled to approach Royalty without formalities and put before him any grievances. The Sinhalese kings treated them as most loyal subjects entrusting to them their families in time of danger.

The Naul Oya river was the boundary of the Kandyan kingdom and it continues till today to be the boundary between the Uva and Eastern provinces. One of the British soldiers who took part in the 1817 campaign and who has kept a day to day diary, recorded that when the British soldiers proceeded to Kotabove, the Naval Aru was crossed without any objection from the Sinhalese, on bank where a thorny gate was constructed. Knox, in his memories, describes such thorny gates, which were constructed by the Sinhalese kings on any road leading to the kingdom—“to examine all that come and go, and to see what they carry, that letters are not be conveyed, no prisoners or other slaves run away”.

This thorny gate was on the spot where the old Mahakandiya-Kotabove road (now partially submerged in the Senanayake Samudra) crosses the Namal Oya (Naval Aru) and where till today ruins of an “Ambalam” on the bank of Namal Oya on the Mullegama road exist.

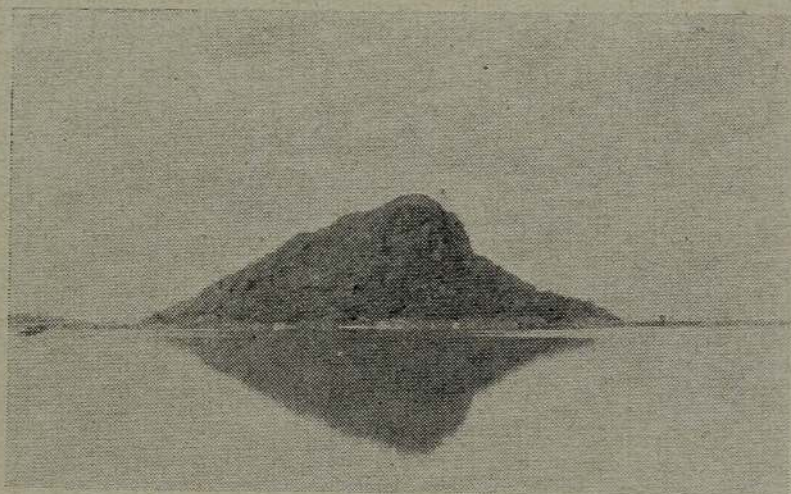
According to the local tradition, King Rajasinghe (1632-1682) had travelled across this Vaddah country and when crossing the Gal Oya, he killed a man-eating crocodile with his spear (*Tetrapod Reptilia*—by Dr. Dereniyagala, p. 132). This “Vaddah country” in the beginning of the 19th century became suddenly a theatre of quick moving events in connection with the last efforts for independence against British rule. In September, 1817, a Muslim named Abdul informed the Government Agent at Badulla that Dore Swami, the son of Kalunayake who was the brother-in-law of the last king of Kandy—Sri Wickrema Rajasinghe, was proclaimed by Bhikkhus as the successor to the Kandyan Kingdom and that he had succeeded in organizing many supporters. The religious ceremonies were started and the movements were fast growing. The A.G.A. Sylvester Wilson

who was sent to investigate was killed on 16th September, 1817. (A square monument on the bank of the Gal Oya—bridge No. 3 at 35th mile, commemorates and marked the place where he was killed). On 2nd November, 1817, the Sinhalese Chieftain Keppetipola who was sent by the Government Agent to Alupotha (a settlement within the Gal Oya Valley) was captured by a gang under the command of Kohu Kumbura and brought to the newly proclaimed king who appointed him as his Adigar. According to local traditions the adherents of the newly proclaimed king were organized at Nilgala which at this time was quite a big settlement. On the map prepared by Knox in the 17th century this settlement is marked as "Nilgala", it was completely abandoned in 1919 when many inhabitants had died due to malaria.

To bring the area under control the British decided to send a detachment of soldiers from Batticaloa to Kotabove (a village in the Gal Oya Valley close to Bibile). Soldiers were sent in barges to Mandur, (the present water transport of goods from Batticaloa to Mandur is not an invention of the Gal Oya Board engineers). From Mandur the detachment proceeded *via* Mahakandiya, the present tank bed of the Senanayake Samudra and through Nilgala Talawas. One soldier, Callandine, mentioned previously, made note of it in his diary. He complained of "swarms of mosquitoes" and "myriads of leeches" and has mentioned that "wild life was abundant, herds of elephants and deer passed close by." He complained that while crossing Gal Oya, which he calls Pattipola Aru which is the Tamil name for this river, "Sinhalese were watching unseen and an occasional arrow kept the soldiers on the alert". He further reports that "the relief was great, when the clang of elephant bells revealed the proximity of the Sinhalese, who had been sent from Maha Nuwara (Kandy) and who accompanied them to Kotabove, which was found abandoned by all, except Moors". At Kotabove was established the military headquarters for Vellassa, and at Makara on the bank

of the Gal Oya, a fort (ruins of which still remain) had secured supplies from Batticaloa. The Headquarters at Kotabove and military post at the bank of the Gal Oya were of short duration due to violent outbreak of malaria; Callandine adds: "Nine Europeans were buried in the last week of August, but while they and the Malays proved very susceptible to infection, the caffrees remained immune." By the end of 1818, Kappetipola was captured; the pretender king Dore Swamy left this country and the Nilgala area became peaceful again and forgotten ("Sinhala and the patriots" by Peiris, pg. 197.)

As those savannah forests are the home of wild animals even today, it is no wonder that such



*Inginiyagala Rock, a land mark which has become an emblem of the Gal Oya Valley*

famous hunters of the past century like Sir Samuel Baker who became the Governor-General of Sudan, and Major Rodgers who was killed by lightning at Haputale, established their "shooting camps" in this area. These shooting camps are marked on the topo-surveying maps on the road from Kotabove to Makara, but no traces of them remain on the ground today.

The attention of the public was focussed again on this area when the Vaddah outlaw Tissahamy succeeded in evading the Police for many years. At present, Vaddahs are slowly but steadily disappearing from this area due to deaths or through inter-marriages with the Sinhalese.

It is interesting to note that the "Kalugalbamma" (the stone embankment) straddles the Nilgala area. There is a theory that this embankment is an artificial road built of boulders in ancient times. It runs in a North—South direction and it crosses the Badulla—Batticaloa road at the 57¼ mile; the Gal Oya river approximately 2 miles East of Nilgala and the Pottuvil—Moneragala road at the 38¼ mile. Some geologists are however of opinion that it is not an artificial road linking Polonnaruwa with this part of the country but a natural dyke or extrusion of rock and this is most probably the fact.

Passing through the Nilgala talawas, the Gal Oya is very rocky and from this part of the river it takes its name (Gal-rock, Oya=river, the Rocky river). The lower part of the Gal Oya is known as Pattipola Aru, today by its Tamil name.

#### SAMMANTHURAI—AKKARAIPATTU (COASTAL BELT) AREA

The whole Island of Ceylon slowly but steadily is being washed away into the Indian Ocean and the coastal belt paddy fields, at Kalmunai, Sammanthurai and Akkaraipattu are nothing else but lagoons silted in the past. This area is at present thickly populated by Muslims, the decendants of the Arabs, who left the Arabian Peninsula when they were forced to accept the teachings of Mohamed. Strange to say those refuges accepted this faith later and are today all devoted Muslims. They had arrived in Ceylon *via* India, when this area was ruled by Tamil kings and hence adopted the Tamil language as their mother tongue; many of them are converted Tamils who accepted the Muslim religion. The coastal belt Muslims are a very industrious and hard working people keeping their community isolated from outside influence. Although they are "Tamil-speaking" they are not a "Tamil conscious" people. Some of them are descendants of the Arab traders of the olden days. The name "Moors" by which they are sometimes referred to is however a misnomer given to them by the Portuguese who found them in appearance

similar to the inhabitants of Morocco. The coastal Muslims are called locally "Sambankariar" and the Muslim priests use the Arabic script for their religious purposes. The name "Sammanthurai" indicates that on this place there must have been a ferry (Samman-thurai means Samman-goods, Thurai-ferry).

#### TREASURE HUNTERS

The description of the past would be incomplete if no reference is made to the "hidden treasures". It is a general belief among treasure hunters, that a sacrifice is required to pacify the spirit who is the guardian of the place. The law and good work of the Ceylon Police prevents treasure hunters from using human sacrifices as it "should be", so they cunningly invented a method of cheating the guardian-ghost. The modern treasure hunter takes a fowl egg, keeps it against the throat of another man and then cuts it with a knife, so that the contents of the egg run down the man's body. The spirit is supposed to be satisfied and the treasure hunter is not afraid of being convicted for murder. In the Gal Oya Valley three ancient treasures were reported to be found. The first was in the Wawinna area, where some gentlemen in 1950 found a treasure in a rock and removed it (the treasure chamber is still there) but what was removed is unknown. The second treasure was removed in the Mahakandiya area in 1953, where some Muslims had dynamited the old ruins. It was said that they had found some gold coins. The third treasure was unearthed in 1956 by a tractor during the development work close to Irrakamam. It was an earthen pot full of ancient coins, which in few minutes disappeared into the pockets of those who were present. Those coins were the "copper massa" dating the time of "Sahassa Malla, A.D. 1200-1202. Treasure hunters had dug a large hole close to Inginiyagala in 1957 using dynamite but as far as is known nothing was found. At Nilgala area the treasure hunters it is rumoured were chased out of one place by a "white dressed

lady", a few years ago and since then no further efforts were made to look for "easy money". Many dagobas (at Nilgala, etc.) were the target of treasure seekers in the past and the mark of this sacrilege are clearly visible.

#### 7. SUMMARY

The Gal Oya Valley is the only Valley in Ceylon, which can claim to have given shelter in three different places to Sinhala kings. Once at Digha Vapi to King Tissa in the 2nd century B.C., one on the summit of Westminster Abbey to King Buvanekabahu in the 13th century and on the third occasion to the self-proclaimed King Dore Swamy in the 19th century in the Wellassa jungle at Nilgala, who without doubt had certain rights to the Sinhalese throne being

third in descent to the last Sinhalese king and who without doubt was proclaimed a king by Bhikkhus.

The claims that the Gal Oya scheme is the only scheme in Ceylon which did not originate by the restoration of ancient irrigation works of the past are not warranted. In general, engineers of the 20th century using modern methods and modern equipment are following only the policy of King Kavan Tissa and his two sons, Dutugemunu and Saddha Tissa.

The new chapter of the history of the Gal Oya Valley has opened with the discovery of modern methods of conquering malaria. The area has now become a healthy place to live and is quickly developing and the fear exists that sometime it will become over-populated.

## OUR TRIP TO BAGURA

By PAMELA WIJEYERATNE  
(Aged 14 years)

OUR trip to Bagura was most enjoyable. Bagura is in the heart of the jungle twenty-five miles south of Arugam Bay on the East coast. The last fifteen miles from Panama to Bagura have to be done by jeep or by bullock cart. We were very lucky to have two jeeps, but even they got bogged down once or twice.

When we arrived at Bagura late in the evening we found that the place where we intended to camp could not be reached because the Bagura Ara was too full. But we found another lovely spot by the stream and were very happy there.

It was our first experience of camping out. We worked hard unloading the jeeps and helping in getting our tents up and making ourselves comfortable.

Although the main interest was in seeing animals, we all had other interests as well. Some were interested in photography, some in collecting various flowers and plants, and some in collecting butterflies. I was most keen on bird-watching and it was here that I actually realized how very interesting it could be. My mummy and daddy had given me a lovely book

on our birds for Christmas and I was very keen on using it on the trip.

Bagura is a big plain with the Ara flowing into it and forming a lagoon before it falls into the sea. From our camp-site we could see sand dunes and at night used to hear the sound of the sea. As it was towards the end of April there was plenty of water and the grass was very green and most places were marshy. So we saw a number of aquatic birds, and I was told that most of them were visitors to Ceylon.

There were many black-winged stilts (a white-breasted bird with black wings, a long black beak and thin long orange legs), oyster catchers (we saw as many as 25 to 35 in one place), whistling teal, garganey teal, purple herons, sandpipers and the red-wattled lapwing commonly known as the "did he do it." The lapwing has black, white and grey wings. It has rather long yellow legs, a black head with a red beak, black at its tip. On each wing it has a spur which it uses in fighting (other birds do not have this spur). There were a few yellow-wattled lapwings too. For the first time I saw

the Malabar pied-hornbill, a large bird with a huge unusual shaped black and white beak which measures about seven inches in length and about four inches at the broadest part. Though we saw many red-wattled lapwings we did not see any yellow-wattled lapwings.

We left Bagura, and on our return to Colombo, we went to Yala where we saw two elephants. One was a huge one a few yards off the Buttua bungalow and no more than fifteen yards from us. Although he saw us he did not try to do anything but kept on eating; but as soon as we started he suddenly turned and came towards us, but stopped as one of our party shouted, and didn't trouble us any more.

I also saw some painted storks and a pair of Ceylon hoopoes which are very beautiful birds

with a crest which they raise from time to time.

We spent the next day at Hambantota and as we heard there were flamingoes, we went in search of them and found about 400 to 500 of these beautiful birds. They stand about four or five feet in height and have very long legs and necks. When they open their wings a beautiful dark pink and black colour can be seen. The males are much prettier than the females and young birds. These birds visit Ceylon only at a certain season. We watched them for a very long time while they fed in the lagoon; and when they arose and flew away to the sea they formed a beautiful picture against the blue sky.

We were very sorry to leave the jungle but we hope to go there again and watch lots of animals and birds.

## BAMBARA BEES AND HONEY-BUZZARD

By C. E. NORRIS

IT was one of those up-country mornings heavily overcast with clouds after a night of heavy rain. Even at 10 a.m. the air was damp, heavy and still, without a breath of wind to even stir the leaves of the trees.

I was walking round the estate when a movement, near a swarm of Bambara bees (*Apis dorsata*), which was clinging to a high Grevillia branch, caught my attention. I was amazed to see a bird perched on the branch directly above the bees. This certainly needed closer investigation, so I waited at a respectable distance from the tree, as I did not want the wrath of this large swarm to be vented on me.

The bird I quickly identified as a Crested Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis apivorus ruficollis*). It was quite unconcernedly wiping the bees away from the comb with its beak, until a yellowish-white patch revealed the comb; it then started to peck at the comb. The bees to my astonishment were not swarming around in the angry mass I expected: there were some flying around which had been disturbed, but there did not appear to be any frenzied attack on the buzzard, which flapped off the branch and landed on the comb itself.

It held on by its talons and supported itself

with outspread wings. The comb rocked and swayed but was strong enough to support the weight of this large bird. From where I stood I could see the buzzard pecking at the comb taking large beakfuls of grubs and honey mixed with comb.

After a few minutes the bird flew away to a nearby tree. No sooner had it left than another bird arrived, I took this to be the female as it was slightly larger. The first bird then started to call, intermittently uttering a shrill single-noted call, very similar to that of the Serpent Eagle.

The female appeared to prefer feeding from above the swarm continually sweeping the bees away with her beak, every now and again she flicked a bee from her head with her foot. The bees seemed to still take this attack quite philosophically, the majority staying put on the comb, whilst others started to swarm below the main swarm on the same branch. The gap, which appeared like a wound on the hanging swarm, caused by each sweep of the bird's beak, was quickly covered again by the bees.

The male decided it was time he came for more but just as he reached the swarm with the female feeding he changed his mind and alighted in a neighbouring tree. The female then hopped



to a branch close by the swarm and commenced to clean herself up and after about ten minutes returned to feed again.

The male was still uttering a single screech but, now at longer intervals. I was not able to watch the end of this feast as some children started to make a noise nearby which frightened the female off to a tree situated about one

hundred yards away. Even when the children had moved on and quietness resumed, she just sat resting and the male made no attempt to revisit the bees.

I was astounded at the matter-of-fact way these birds tackled the swarm, which only goes to show the marvellous protection nature gives them against the savage stings of the bees.

## FEATHERED FRIENDS PAY ANNUAL VISIT TO INDIA AND CEYLON

Thousands of colourful visitors of the season are already in our midst.

Notable among these are: Rosy Pastors, Pintail Ducks, Blue-winged Ducks, Red-crested Pochards, Greenshanks, Fantail Snipes, Pintail Snipes, Teals, Wildfowls, Swallows, Eastern Golden-plovers, Woodcocks, Pied Ground Thrushes, Painted Snipes, House Martins, Pipits, Storks and Wagtails.

These are the migratory birds who have flown hundreds and thousands of miles across the barren steppes and vast oceans to winter in India.

Many of these have flown over the Himalayas from Siberia, Central Asia and the Plateau of Tibet, and some from Europe to spend the winter in the warmth of the salt lakes east of Calcutta, the lakes at the Zoological Gardens at Alipore, the Nilgiris and other selected places in South India. Some have flown through India to Ceylon and the islands in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.

Most of the migratory Ducks, Pochards, Teals and Storks have come to India flying at great heights and distances such as regions in Siberia, Central Asia and the Lakes of the Tibet region of China. Heights are no problems to these birds and Sir Edmund Hillary, conqueror of Mount Everest, has reported a bird flying at 28,000 feet without any apparent difficulty. But they usually fly over plains at about 3,000 feet and below.

Many of these birds are now seen living in perfect camaraderie with local birds in the Calcutta Salt Lakes. They started arriving since late October and will leave for their breeding places early in spring. During this period, if a "quack" call is heard at night in North and Central India, it is not necessarily the distress signal of a duck which has lost its way, but in all probability the call signal "Follow Me" from the leader to his flock on flight.

Almost all migratory birds are winter visitors to India. The solitary exception is the Pied Crested Cuckoo of Africa which is a summer visitor to this land from south of the Sahara. It comes to India to breed during the monsoon and spreads all over India. It is known at places in the country as the J "Precursor of the Monsoon".

Finding accommodation is no problem to the Cuckoo. It has only to sing to possess its chosen spot or a branch of a tree. If its musical challenge goes unaccepted, it is taken that its rights over the place have been established. It withdraws to Africa after the monsoon.

The common Cuckoo, however, is a local bird. It is normally very shy and is, therefore, little noticed. But it sheds this shyness in spring, its season of love, when trees and arbours echo with its long-drawn melodious notes, so much glorified by poets and the imaginative.

The Eastern Golden Plover which breeds in

western Alaska and north-east Siberia is the greatest nonstop flyer that comes to India, covering about 2,000 miles in a single hop. The Pacific Golden Plover, however, usually goes to winter in Hawaii flying nonstop over 2,000 miles of salt waters.

The Woodcock, whose nearest breeding place is in the Himalayas, is another great nonstop flyer with a range of about 1,500 miles. It winters in the Nilgiris, other parts of South India and Ceylon, but has never been caught anywhere between the Himalayas and the Nilgiris.

A species of snipe which breeds in Japan but winters in eastern Australia and Tasmania is the greatest nonstop flyer among birds being known to fly three thousand miles without break—a range surpassing that of an aeroplane.

The Arctic Tern (*Sterna Macrura*) has no winter in its calendar. Breeding in the Arctic within eight degrees of the North Pole, it goes to summer in the south Atlantic and Antarctica doing about 25,000 miles of flying each year. It enjoys the longest day light of all creatures on earth.—(PTI).  
November, 1958. Ceylon Observer

## THE YOUNG SHOT—Pluck and Draw

By "PETROL"

*In the Shooting Times and County Magazine*

HE must know what he may legally shoot and when, and something of the habits of his quarry. He must be able to recognise it at first sight at various ranges and in several different postures, on the ground or in the air. When the time comes to shoot he must have an idea of range and where to point his gun, and above all, the rules of safety must be second nature to him. Natural history, fieldcraft and gun handling are things which have been drummed into him from time immemorial and without a reasonable knowledge of all three, he cannot hope to begin to enjoy his sport, the main object of which is to put something in the bag. But that is where the interest often ends. Even before this a man who has hitherto appeared to be a good and responsible shot may show himself up. I have my doubts when I see him carrying *birds by their feet and ground game otherwise than by their hind legs*. This is no fad or fancy. There is a perfectly sound reason for holding and hanging birds by the neck; they are easier and tidier to handle and take up less room. Likewise, hares' and rabbits' obvious "handles" are their hind legs. Which reminds me how seldom one sees the tyro carrying out the simple

precaution of *rubbing his hand down the belly of newly shot ground game so as to empty its bladder*. Unless this is done soon, the chances are that it will be forgotten, resulting in a mess in game-bag, cart or car, or worse still, a *pungent puncturing at paunching time*. Deft hock of the back legs is another small sign that the shooter knows what he is about; and the final touch, of severing the tendons in the "threaded" legs to ensure a nonslip lock, is an additional mark of experience.

Every one who shoots should be able to pluck, draw and truss a fowl. I have never been able to understand the man who can enjoy the actual shooting of a bird and then become squeamish about preparing it for the kitchen. Wherever possible, it is a job to be done outdoors, or in the roominess of some shed or outhouse. Birds of (large) size I prefer to suspend at waist level, leaving both hands free for plucking. Duck take a long time for their size because of the down, but rubbing with the palm of the hand "against the grain" usually removes this more quickly than attempting to pick out every individual feather of the undercoat. Fatty fleshed birds like teal, snipe, plover,

etc. respond well to this rubbing treatment. Defeathering ease or otherwise depends on several things. If the bird is dry, it is a simpler matter than if the plumage is wet and mud caked. Birds badly shot about are awkward customers and it is best to leave the damaged parts till last, for floating feathers stick to raw places. Young birds pluck (and eat) better than old. Feathers pulled against their natural lie strip readily but if the bird is warm or particularly fat the skin is apt to tear at rough treatment. The drums stick of any sizeable young fowl is my favourite portion, but this can be spoilt if the leg sinews are not removed prior to cooking. Lazy poulterers never go to this trouble, merely chopping off the leg at the knee. A shallow knife cut round the knuckle and a quick draw, holding firmly on both parts of the leg will remove the offending sinews.

*Pruning the Preening Gland.*—A further refinement in the case of duck, is to cut out the preening gland which you will find just above the tail. This secretes almost as much water-

proofing oil as the contents of an average tooth-paste tube, which can be no asset in the cooking. Forgotten, it may make little difference to an inland feeding mallard, widgeon or teal, but when applied to costal fowl it may make all the difference. Until a bird is plucked, many of the circumstances of its death remain a mystery. Shot plays peculiar tricks which do not come to light until the feathers are removed. I am always pleased to find no shot marks at all in the normal course of plucking, for this generally means that I have scored a well placed hit in head or neck which remain for the most part unpicked.

The *Platypus* or Duckbill of Australia is not the harmless oddity I always supposed. The male platypus is the deadlier of the species. On his hind foot he bears a horny, hollow spear. It is sharp and at the base is a gland containing a poisonous secretion similar to the fang of a venomous snake. These spurs are his only means of defence, but he wields them with effect, producing a serious wound.

## FOSSILS OF TOMORROW

*From the UNESCO Courier*

**H**UNTED to excess, victims of Man's expansion and struggle for more living space, prey to epidemics, prejudices and other destructive forces, wild creatures are diminishing in numbers. Entire species are disappearing from the face of the earth.

In the 19th century alone 70 species became extinct and in the past 50 years a further 40 have died out. Today the existences of a further 600 are threatened. One after another they seem destined to join the long list of animals, each of whose name is now no more than a scientific appellation used by the palaeontologist and whose only relics are skeletons, reconstituted—with varying success—in museums.

It is true that in recent years there has been some heartening progress in wild life protection

in some countries, where governments have set up conservation departments. But, on the whole, if it were not for the few scientists, nature lovers and economists who are trying to save them, realizing their importance in nature's biological pattern many animals would quickly be doomed to extinction, and would be fated to become the fossils of tomorrow.

In the Arabian desert there lives an animal which is believed to have given rise to a famous legend. It is the handsome *White Desert Antelope*. The smallest representative of the *Oryx* group, it is becoming increasingly rare.

In former times the animal was found in the whole of the Arabian Peninsula and the regions north of the Syrian and Mesopotamian deserts. But it has always been hunted, pursued to the accessible limits of its familiar haunts.

Nowadays the only known specimens are in the Rub el Khali desert. According to some accounts only about 100 of these magnificent antelopes still exist; other estimates place their number at no more than 40. In any case their chances of surviving are slim indeed.

The *One-horned Rhinoceros* from India a survivor of prehistoric times, was once found in all parts of the ancient Indian Empire. One of the reasons for its progressive extermination is the superstition surrounding its horn which, when ground to powder, is said to have the rapeutic properties. Several hundred of these beasts still live in the animal sanctuary at Kasiranga Assam. Like its Javan relative—the one-horned rhinoceros of the Sunda—it is counted among the world's rarest animals.

The *Addo Elephant* whose mighty herds once roamed the plains of Africa is now restricted to a special reserve, the Addo Elephant National Park to the north of Port Elizabeth. Elephants are the biggest animals that walk on four legs but the Addo elephant is one of the smaller of the species.

The *Caribbean Monk Seal* is about 8 feet long and its colour shades from grey to dark brown. It inhabits the Gulf of Mexico from the coast of Honduras to that of Jamaica or Cuba. Already observed by Christopher Columbus in 1494 it continued to thrive until about the beginning of the 18th century.

At that time it began to be exploited systematically for its oil. Fishermen were able to take as many as 100 in a single night and at this rate the "gold mine" gradually became worked out.

Its very existence is problematical today, although reports that individual animals or isolated groups have been sighted by ships are received from time to time.

The *Wild Bison of North America*, inescapably linked with the adventurous character Buffalo Bill, barely escaped extinction. Immense herds, millions strong, once grazed on the great North American Prairie. Despite trading in the hides

of these animals, the herds remained practically intact until 1870. Today the American bison lives protected in United States National Parks where there are about 30,000 head. Across the Atlantic, the *European Bison*, still lives on Soviet and Polish reservations and a recently noted increase in numbers gives hope that efforts made for its preservation may also be successful.

There is a group of animals in the highest order of mammals whose members have a strangely attractive and rather mysterious appearance. Their large, round eyes, frequently nocturnal habit and almost exclusively tree-dwelling existence all add to their mystery. These are the *Lemurs*, named from the Latin word *lemures*, as the Romans called the ghosts of the dead.

This species is more or less the link between insectivores and monkeys. Ancient writers believed that lemurs had inhabited a lost continent, Lemuria, which had joined India to Madagascar and East Africa; their general distribution about the Indian Ocean could be explained in this way. But the hypothesis has now been disproved by palaeontological discoveries. Fossil lemurs have been found in Western Europe and even in North America. The group probably scattered from a Eurasian centre and reached Africa and Indonesia, Europe and America.

In size, the lemures vary from that of a mouse to that of a ten-year-old child. They feed on insects, small animals and fruit; their different types of colouring are often striking; they have long noses and thin fingers.

Their habitat is in the forest—and that is the principal reason for the danger threatening them. During the past five centuries the forests have disappeared from nine-tenths of the great island of Madagascar, and the rate of destruction is increasing. So it is too with the *Loris*, the representative of the lemurs in Ceylon. Lemurs, despite protective laws, also become food for a poverty-stricken population whose diet lacks proteins.

## AS DEAD AS THE MOON

There is unshakable evidence that all the world over, even in this island, we have been following a course which would eventually make the earth as dead as the moon."

So says Major A. Weinman in his Zoo Annual Report.

This planet is in danger of being reduced to a similar lifeless state, not millions of years hence, but in the foreseeable future, and by the work of man.

When Caesar's Asian ancestor, after being tossed by fate from shore to shore, reached at last the promised Hesperian land, one of the first things his men did was to go into the primeval forest, the deep coverts of its wild life, and cut down some of its trees for wood to feed a funeral fire.

The ilex resounds to the axe's stroke—*Sonat icta securibus ilex*. What is it in the Latin words that has made a modern critic, E. M. W. Tillyard, feel there is more in them than their plain meaning? Their sound suggests, he says, the rhythmic ring of axes with their woodland echo. But what is the undefined "something more"—more than mere onomatopoea—which he finds here in Virgil's verse?

In the history of human development there are, as between man and the forest, three great ages. In the first, primitive man, dwelling in cave or on tree, is the nursing of the forest. In the second, he has become the destroyer of the forest. In the third and last, he learns that, for his own preservation, he must protect the

forest. If Virgil's verse is charged with surmise, it is surely the surmise that the first of these three ages has given way to the second. In that pre-dawn hour of Roman civilization, man has already become the destroyer of the forest that once nurtured and sheltered him.

And if Major Weinman's phrase "dead as the moon," is more than a picturesque simile, it is because his writing is heraldic of the third great age—the age when man, if his race is to endure, must make himself the protector of the forest. Another of the quire was Mr. C. H. Holmes of the Forestry Department, who in a broadcast talk ten years ago sounded a like note.

The forests, he said, were the only naturally renewable capital asset of the world to which, in the last resort, man will have to turn when coal, oil and other mineral resources, not excluding radioactive ores, are exhausted.

And when that time comes, should there be no forests to which man can turn, what will be the result?

A gloomy prospect. But all will go well if each one decides now to abstain from violence on his country's flora and fauna.

And, as a last resort, why not cultivate some grassy plot in your back garden? There, should the worst come to the worst, the moonlight will sleep as sweetly as ever it did on that bank in Belmont. Even if you are not there to see it.

SENEX,  
in the *Observer*.

## WILD LIFE IN TANGANYIKA

*Keeping Word to Masai Tribe*

The decision to excise the Ngorongoro Crater from the Serengeti National Park was taken because it was found incompatible for human beings to live in a national park, and there is a section of the Tanganyika Masai tribe who have been there for a very long time and who have established rights. When the park was first created in 1940, the Tanganyika Government

gave a solemn undertaking that their rights would be respected. The Masai are an honourable people and once they have given an undertaking they will always abide by it, and they expect Government to do the same.

It has been suggested that the Tanganyika Government has shown weakness in not directing them to leave the Ngorongoro Crater. This, of

course, is quite out of the question. As a result of an investigation by an ecologist of international repute, it was clear that for scientific reasons it was most desirable that the Masai should move from an area known as the Moru Kopjes which is included in the reconstituted national park. This they have agreed to do after prolonged negotiation on the understanding that Government will provide them with alternative water and grazing elsewhere. The Tanganyika Government has agreed to do this and will be involved in considerable expense as a result during the next few years.

Government has explained to them the importance of the Crater and has made it perfectly clear to them that the conservation unit would have a particular duty to conserve the natural resources of the Crater floor and that there could be little doubt that the use of the Crater floor would have to be restricted to those Masai who have established rights there. It is also appreciated that stock would have to be limited and, if the interests of conservation demanded it, even permitted herds might have to be evacuated from time to time.

But the Masai are not the enemies of game. They do not kill game except for lions and other beasts that attack their stock, and they do not eat game meat. In fact, had it not been for the Masai having been in occupation of this area for probably 150 years, it is unlikely that there would be any game there today. While it is considered that, in the future as in the past, there is room for both the game and the Masai in the Crater, as a long term policy the position can be made and assured by a conservation unit carrying out a programme for the development and improvement of water supplies, the con-

servation of forests, and the improvement of pasture. This is going to cost a great deal of money.

The Tanganyika Government is already committed to considerable expenditure on the National Park and on moving the Masai from the Moru Kopjes, and it seems unlikely that there will be any additional local funds available for some time to come. It is a question of priorities, and in a huge and so rapidly advancing a territory as Tanganyika there are very many pressing claims. It looks, therefore, that if anything is to be done in the near future outside financial aid will be needed, and it is to be hoped that when the Tanganyika Government has its plans ready some financial assistance will be forthcoming from those people who are anxious to see everything possible done to preserve the game in this area.

Finally, the following passage from the report of the committee of inquiry (which incidentally had an impartial chairman and included the President of the Zoological Society of London) puts the importance of the Ngorongoro Crater into its proper perspective:—"There appear to be two independent areas in the present Park, each with its own cycle of animal migrations—the Ngorongoro Crater with its double population of forest and plains species, and the western Serengeti with its vast movements of plains species. It is our considered view that of these two areas the conservation of the habitat of migratory animals in the western and central Serengeti is of paramount importance, and should be given the highest priority."

*East Africa Office,  
Trafalgar Square.*

TWINING,  
*London Times.*

## ALL NIGERIAN WILD LIFE CONFERENCE

The following is the text of the address by the *Minister of Agriculture*, The Hon. P. O. NWOGA, at the opening of the first *All-Nigeria Wild Life Conference* in Enugu, 18th February, 1958:—  
"Gentlemen,

I am as well aware as any one that a Conference of this nature would have been far more effective had it been held thirty or forty years ago. At the same time we believe that it is not too late to take some steps to preserve our fauna. We

wish to preserve them all as far as possible in their wild state. In this Region we are fortunate in possessing one of the few remaining groups of gorillas in the British Commonwealth and steps have already been taken to offer them the maximum chance of survival by increasing the various Forest Reserve areas in which they make their habitat.

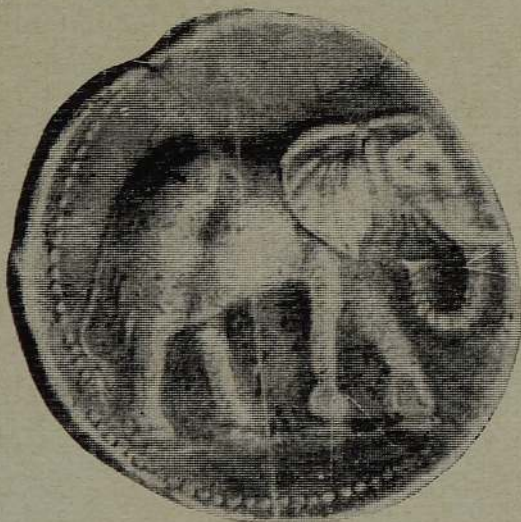
I understand the Northern Region employs a full-time Game Warden and that the Western Region contemplates a similar appointment. In this Region we do not at present feel that such an appointment would be justified but we have taken the step of appointing the Chief Conservator as Chief Game Warden and Forest Officers of all ranks as Game Wardens. We in this Region have taken the lead in creating a

Wild Animals Protection Advisory Committee and it is arising from the deliberations of that Committee that I have convened this Conference. We have a number of ideas we hope to put into effect but we feel that they can only be implemented effectively with the co-operation of the other Nigerian Governments. We also feel that with the spread of education and the general opening up of the more remote areas the time is now ripe to sow the seeds of fauna protection; we know it will be a long uphill battle and for that reason it is all the more important that we should take action now.

As Minister responsible for Wild Life I shall do all in my power to ensure the implementation of your findings."

## HANNIBAL'S ELEPHANTS

THE identification of the nature of Hannibal's elephant is a matter of unexpected complexity and depends in part on the evidence supplied by coins. The beautiful issue of Carthaginian coins in Spain which were practically contemporary with Hannibal's campaign bear on the reverse side the image of an unmistakable African elephant. It can be distinguished from an Indian elephant by the following features:—



*Carthaginian Coin showing African Elephant*

1. The back shows a concave dip between a hump over the shoulders and another hump over the hind quarters, whereas the Indian elephant's back is an unbroken convex dome.

2. The hind quarters are almost flat instead of projecting backwards at a fairly sharp angle as in the Indian elephant.

3. The head is carried high instead of in the low position characteristic in the Indian elephant.

4. The forehead is flat instead of showing the Indian elephant's concave profile.

5. The ear is very large instead of small.

6. The trunk is marked by repeated transverse ridges instead of being smooth.

7. The tip of the trunk has two "fingers" instead of the single one at the front edge in the Indian elephant.

8. The upper part of the hind leg is masked by a fold of skin of the flank, whereas in the Indian elephant the outside of the hind leg is distinctly visible right up to the groin.

All these features can be clearly seen on the Carthaginian coins and prove beyond a doubt that Hannibal used African elephants.

The proportions of the elephant and its rider on the Carthaginian coins show that the elephant was about 8 feet high. As Sir William Gowers has shown, the African elephants used by the Egyptian Pharaohs and by the Carthaginians were of the small forest type, variety *cyclotis*, standing about 8 feet high at the shoulder, and not of the large African bush elephant race which reaches 11 feet. The latter is larger than the Indian elephant, but the Indian is larger than the African forest elephant. The ancient authors, Polybius, Ctesias and Philostratos were perfectly correct when they described the African war-elephant as being no match for the Indian; and modern critics who have tried to ridicule the ancients have only succeeded in demonstrating their own ignorance of zoology.

The Carthaginians' African elephants were obtained from the foot of the Atlas mountains and the coast of Morocco where Hanno saw them about 500 B.C., Herodotus described them, and Hasdrubal Gisgo was sent to find some in 205 B.C. Suetonius Paulinus surveyed the area in A.D. 47 and particularly the forested valley of the Guir with its wild animals including the elephant. Its disappearance forms part of an Arab legend. In Pliny's time elephants were plentiful around Ghadames, south of Tunisia. Today the forest elephant in the west of Africa does not extend farther north than Senegal.

The Pharaohs' African elephants were obtained from the shores of the Red Sea and Eritrea, where forest elephants were still living at the time of Napier's expedition to Magdala in 1868. Today in East Africa they do not extend farther north than the areas bordering the Nile in the Sudan.

Although there is no doubt that the Carthaginians used African elephants, the question arises whether they might not have had Indian elephants as well. Some authorities have assumed that they did, simply because Polybius referred to the drivers of the Carthaginians' elephants as *indoi*. But this name must be based on the fact that ever since war-elephants were first encountered in Portus's army by

Alexander the Great at the battle of the Hydaspes in 326 B.C., Indian trainers and drivers were regarded as the experts. When the Pharaohs began to use African elephants, they imported Indian trainers, and the word *indos* must have come to mean an elephant-driver. The dress of the driver of the elephant on the Carthaginian coins suggests that he was African.

It might be imagined that as India and Carthage were at opposite ends of the known world it would not have been possible for the Carthaginians to obtain Indian elephants, but this is not so. After the death of Alexander the Great his successors became so impressed with the prestige and power conferred by the possession of these new armoured fighting animals that they left no stone unturned to acquire elephants. The Ptolemies managed to get some in repeated wars against the rulers of Syria, and they were all Indian elephants. Ptolemy I probably captured some from Perdiccas in 321 B.C. when the latter invaded Egypt with a force of elephants and was defeated.

Nine years later Ptolemy captured all Demetrius's forty-three elephants at Gaza, and Indian elephants are depicted on a gold stater minted about 300 B.C. In the third Syrian war, which was fought between 246 and 241, Ptolemy III defeated Seleucus and captured more Indian elephants.

During this period the relations between Egypt and Carthage were close and friendly, and it is known that Ptolemy II lent Carthage large sums of money during the first Punic War. It is necessary to believe that Egypt also sent elephants, including Indian elephants, to Carthage, because of the evidence provided by a remarkable coin from Etruria. This coin bears on the obverse an obvious African negro's head, and on the reverse an equally obvious Indian elephant, as may be seen by comparing it with the African.

The Chiana valley of Etruria is far removed from the parts of Italy through which Pyrrhus passed with his Indian elephants in 279 B.C., but it is on the line of Hannibal's march to



Lake Trasimene after he had crossed the Alps. It is known from Polybius that after the battle of the Trebbia all Hannibal's elephants died except one on which he himself rode across the Appenines. It is also known from Pliny that Cato, no friend of Carthage, recorded that the elephant which fought most bravely in the Punic Wars was called *Surus*. *Surus* means "the

Syrian," and Syria was where the Ptolemies' Indian elephants came from. It is therefore almost certain, as Sir William Gowers and Dr. H. H. Scullard have shown, that Hannibal's elephants included at one Indian. least It is a lsovery possible that Hannibal's surviving elephant, *Surus*, is depicted on the Etrurian coins.

## GAME SANCTUARIES OF ASSAM

BY WAR VETERAN in the *Ceylon Fortnightly Review*.

ASSAM, the eastern-most State of India possesses the richest fauna in Asia. Next to Africa, it has the largest variety of animals. It is the last remaining habitat of the great Indian rhinoceros which now wanders protected in its game sanctuaries. After Burma, Assam has the largest population of elephants in Asia.

To protect rare animals, four large game sanctuaries have been developed in Assam. At least three of them are quite easily approachable and they attract a large number of tourists. Arrangements for board and lodging can be made in the nearby tourist huts.

*Kaziranga Game Sanctuary* is the largest of them all. Situated on the low-lying south bank of the Brahmaputra river, it covers 166 square miles in area. Dotted with small lakes, streams and *nullahs*, the sanctuary is considered as the show-piece of North-East India.

The easiest approach to this sanctuary is through Jorhat—the railhead from where it is only 60 miles away. One can also reach Jorhat by air from Calcutta. Travelling by road, one has to motor along Assam Trunk Road from Gauhati (also approached by air from Calcutta) to Jorhat *via* Nowgong. State transport services ply at regular intervals between Gauhati and Jorhat—a distance of 135 miles. Accommodation is available in the Tourist Lodge at Kohara at a distance of only 2 furlongs from the Assam Trunk Road. Reservation should be made at least one week in advance through the Divisional Forest Officer Spisagar Division, Jorhat, or the Conservator of Forests, Assam, Shillong.

The best time to visit this sanctuary is between February and March when the climate is cool, dry and bracing. The best way to view the animals is to wander through tall grasslands on an elephant. The visitor will thus be able to see the rhino from a range of 20 ft. without fear or risk of provocation. Elephants, buffaloes, Indian bison, swamp deer, hog deer, barking deer, tigers and leopards are found here. Rare birds like the floriam and hornbill can also be seen. There is a permanent game staff at Kohara who serve as guides.

Another interesting sanctuary is the *North Kamrup Game Sanctuary*. Having an area of 105 sq. miles, it lies at the foot of Bhutan hills on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. To one side of the sanctuary is the beautiful Manas river which provides good camping sites and fishing. The nearest railway station is Barpeta Road on the North-Eastern railway. From here, a jeepable road takes one right to the camping site about 20 miles ahead. The nearest airport is the Borjhar Airport at Gauhati from where the sanctuary is 110 miles away. Two elephants are available to visitors on hire. Rhinoceros, wild buffalo, elephants, tigers, leopards, swamp deer, pigs, the bison and wild dogs are some of the animals found in this sanctuary. Accommodation can be had in two furnished resthouses near this sanctuary by prior arrangement, for which Divisional Forest Officer, Kamrup, may be contacted.

Lying at the foot hills of the Himalayas in the Darrang District is the *Sonai-Rupai Sanctuary*

covering an area of 85 sq. miles. The nearest rail-head is the Rangapara Railway Station. The Sanctuary is situated at a distance of about 30 miles from the Steamer Ghat or about 20 miles from Tezpur aerodrome from which place it can be approached by an all-weather motorable road. Two elephants are available for the use of tourists. This sanctuary abounds in rhinoceros, elephants and the bison. There is a small resthouse at Gabru near the sanctuary

where a tourist can stay.

In the north of Lakhimpur District, *Prabha or Milroy Buffalo Sanctuary* covers 19 square miles in area. It has been developed exclusively for the protection of the magnificent wild buffaloes in Assam.

The approach to this sanctuary is rather difficult. It can be reached from North Lakhimpur (Lilabari) aerodrome. The tourists can hire elephants for a ride into the sanctuary.

## WILD LIFE PROTECTION SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE HALF-YEARLY GENERAL MEETING HELD AT THE GOLF CLUB, NUWARA ELIYA, ON 13TH SEPTEMBER, 1958.

MR. D. B. ELLEPOLA presided in the absence of the Chairman Dr. R. L. Spittel who was unable to attend this meeting.

The Chairman said that in the absence of Mr. Norris, the Secretary of the Society, who was on furlough Mr. Hodgson will act as Hony. Secretary.

The Acting Secretary was then asked to read the notice convening the meeting.

Proposed by Mr. Marks and seconded by Mr. Edmund de Silva the minutes of the last meeting which were circulated in the *Loris* were confirmed.

The CHAIRMAN in the course of his address said that in the absence of Dr. R. L. Spittel and some of the Senior Vice-Presidents the responsibility has become his to take the chair for this meeting. He said that he did so with very great pleasure, but also with a sense of trepidation. He was fully aware although he was keenly interested in the preservation of wild life in regard to wild life itself there are members present here who know far more about it and who could teach him a very great deal. Before he came here, however, in order that he may discharge his responsibility in a suitable manner he took the opportunity of meeting Dr. Spittel and consulting him. Dr. Spittel wished him to say that the activities of the

Wild Life Society during the past six months had perhaps been limited mainly because there was a Committee sitting, appointed by the Government, to make proposals for the Protection of Wild Life. The Committee has had many sittings and paid much attention to Reserves and Sanctuaries and the report was in the course of preparation. When the report was received, the Chairman said that they would have laid the foundation for planning the preservation of wild life in a manner worthy of the country and wild life itself. What the recommendations were going to be he did not know, but presumably it would deal with the adequacy and the inadequacy of the present reserves, the classification of reserves and sanctuaries, the question of extension, the management of the reserves, staff required, protection of game. All these will be effectively dealt with in the recommendations of this Committee.

As for the work of the Society itself, Dr. Spittel wished him to remind members how important it was to carry out some extensive propaganda work for educating the people of this country in the wealth of wild life.

While on the one hand we urge the Government to take action for the preservation of wild life under suitable conditions, a great deal

of work had to be done to make people realise that wild life had to be looked after now perhaps more than ever before. They had reached a very critical stage with regard to that problem. The population of this country is increasing by about 2.5 per cent per year and we reckon that in 10 years from now there will be about 3.6 million people more. We shall perhaps have over  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions more for whom employment will have to be found, by the extension of the holdings of land. That was a serious problem. The Chairman also said that we should try and industrialize the country and absorb more and more people into it so that both our reserves and wild life itself of the Island may be adequately saved. Unless we planned the use of available land in the right way, keeping well in mind the needs of wild life, the place that wild life will fill in the future of the country in its cultural and aesthetic aspects, we shall have a sorry situation in the not distant future. Therefore each District Association must carry out intensive propaganda among the villagers regarding the need for wild life and its preservation of a menace.

The Chairman thanked the President and Members of the Nuwara Eliya Golf Club for allowing the meeting to be held in their Club Hall.

He mentioned that the Committee of the Golf Club have kindly made the members of the Wild Life Protection Society attending this meeting and the film show, honorary members of the Club.

He also thanked the Headmaster of the Hill School for the loan of the Cine Screen, and Messrs. Caltex, Ltd., for kindly showing their Film on African Wild Life and also Mr. Burnaby for showing the film on Ceylon Wild Life.

Letters from members regretting their inability to attend the meeting were tabled.

The Secretary then read out the statement of accounts for 1957-58 which was duly approved.

The Secretary mentioned that Mr. Morgan

Davies was appointed as Park Keeper, Tanganyika, and congratulated him on the appointment, and thanked him for the enormous amount of work he has done for the Wild Life Society.

Mr. H. C. BAGOT read the following suggestion from his letter dated the 18th September, 1958 :—

(1) A folding map of Ceylon showing all Reserved Areas together with a key describing exactly the degree of Reservation. All Strict Natural Reserves could be marked "A" on the map and the key would tell you whether or not you are permitted to visit them and the procedure required, cost of entry permits, camp sites, type of accommodation, whether linen and crockery is provided, route and road conditions (car or jeep). General weather condition, *e.g.*, East Coast areas dry May to September. (National Parks could be marked "B," Buffer Zones, "C" and Intermediate Zones "D.").

(2) Since the Society professes to further the legitimate interests of sportsmen full information regarding game licences and how and where to apply for them should be given, together with a description of the areas open for shooting, and the close seasons for various game.

(3) A list of protected birds and animals, giving the Sinhalese and Tamil names.

(4) A list of game animals which may be shot on and off licence. How and where to engage trackers. Perhaps the Department could provide a provisional list of approved guides.

Finally, in view of the threat of alienation of parts of some of the existing Sanctuaries and Reserves for Colonization schemes, etc., and proposals to substitute these for other areas, more interest might be aroused if these areas could also be delineated on the map in dotted lines showing the incisions in red.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Bagot very much for putting up these suggestions very timely, because the Committee that is sitting on the question of Wild Life may well be expected to go fully into questions of reserves and sanctuaries.

GALWAYS LAND, NUWARA ELIYA

Mr. R. H. D. MANDERS, Government Agent, Nuwara Eliya, said that an extent of forest land of the same nature as Galways Land was actually private property belonging to Mr. F. J. Dunn of Oakley. Mr. Dunn is now selling his property and the Forest land when bought will certainly be used for building purposes which will completely destroy the charm of the adjoining portions of Galways Land. It is therefore most urgent that the forest land which now forms part of the property of Oakley should be acquired before it is too late. The Department of Wild Life should put in an application to acquire the land. He also said that he had shown the portion of the land referred to to the Town Planner and he agreed with him.

The President thanked Mr. Manders for bringing this matter up and said he would put forward this proposal in the form of a resolution. The resolution was proposed by Mr. Zair and seconded by Mr. Ebbels.

LAHUGALA TANK—ELEPHANT RESERVE

The Secretary said that before Mr. Norris left for England he wrote to the Warden of Wild Life Department in June this year that greater protection should be afforded to the elephant during the monsoon at Lahugala. The gist of the letter was that Lahugala Tank be made into a Sanctuary and no shooting be allowed. He said that something should be done about this area. The Game Ranger should be given a Jeep or Land Rover and also increase his range of protection and also appoint 3 or 4 Watchers and Guards.

The Meeting unanimously agreed.

1. The Chairman moved a resolution commending the urgency of protection in the

Lahugala area. Copies of the correspondence that has passed be sent to the Wild Life Department for urgent action in this matter.

This was unanimously passed.

2. Mr. Perera proposed and Mr. Davies seconded the resolution that this Committee was of the opinion that in view of the importance of the Lahugala area the Game Ranger from Pottuvil be transferred to Lahugala. It was carried.

Regarding the membership, Mr. Zair said that as many as possible should try and join this Society. He remarked that the present membership of the Society was very poor. He suggested that the people of the category of the D.R.O. should be persuaded to join the Society and be given a concessional membership fee, with a view to contacting the villagers through them.

The Chairman commended Mr. Zair's suggestion very strongly and said that every man and woman of this country should become members of this Society.

BINDUNUWEWA SANCTUARY

Mr. de Silva said that at a D.A.C. meeting at Kurunegala it was decided to make Kimbulawewa a Sanctuary. The Government Agent, the Members of the D.A.C. were very keen about it. They were however informed that the Warden was against it. The Warden's objection was that the trees in that area would not last for more than 3 years.

Mr. de Silva was requested to communicate the facts of the case to the Society for necessary action.

In the absence of any other business the Chairman declared the meeting adjourned.

# Snips

LOCAL

## Mr. Boone

To those of us who were working at the Hambantota Kachcheri in the early twenties, when Mr. Boone was A.G.A. Hambantota, the news that Mr. Boone has renounced his pension from Ceylon, is by no means a matter for surprise.

His sense of fair-play would make him bring down the gun aimed at a wild deer because his wristlet showed that it was a couple of minutes past six. Mr. Boone was responsible for reducing the massacre of animals by night with the aid of electric torches. He got some of the most influential local people who used to go out shooting at night prosecuted at the Tangalle Courts. He also made out a very good case for entering a prosecution against an Englishman who used to regularly go out elephant hunting without a licence and make out that he had to shoot the elephants in order to save his own life "as he was suddenly confronted by these elephants when he was out on a deer hunt."

Unfortunately for Mr. Boone this particular Englishman obviously had more "pull" at the CSO and his explanation was invariably accepted!

Mr. Boone had plenty of milk of human kindness in him. His diaries preserved at the Hambantota Kachcheri will prove that he was most interested in alleviating the sufferings of the poor villager.

To be brief, Mr. Boone was always a gentleman. May he live long happily.

G. P. ABEYWICKREME.  
*Daily News*

## Wild Life Slaughter

Recently I spent about three days in Ruhuna where I had the opportunity of observing how our Fauna is mercilessly destroyed by sportsmen who come from distant places as well as by villagers living on the borders of these jungles.

A drought prevails in Girua Pattu these days and almost all rivers, streams and tanks have run

dry. Still there are a few water-holes in the jungle or just near its borders. Wild animals, desperate with thirst gather in their hundreds there only to fall a prey to merciless sportsmen and villagers who lie in ambush. How inhuman it is to destroy such animals when they are undergoing all the agonies of hunger and thirst.

The other day I saw a number of monkeys and small birds being shot down and left to decompose. What sport is this? It is wanton destruction. Great numbers of deer and stags are killed daily, not to mention other animals such as wild boar, porcupines, peacocks, leopards and bears.

Our jungles are being cleared today gradually and wild life too is fast disappearing along with them.

Our Fauna must be protected and preserved at any cost.

September, 1958.

DAYA EDIRIMANNA.  
*Times.*

## The Deer of Fort Frederick

The Wild Life Department has decided to step in and save from extermination a herd of about 150 deer living in Fort Frederick, Trincomalee, in an area near the Swami Rock.

Mr. J. A. de Silva, Warden of the Wild Life Department, is considering the advisability of having these animals transferred to the Wilpattu Game Sanctuary as early as possible. It was not considered possible to declare the area in which they live at present a sanctuary, as it is situated in the heart of Trincomalee.

The Game Warden in Trincomalee is keeping an eye on the herd, as there have been reports that attempts have been made to shoot them.

Fort Frederick has been the home of the deer for nearly a hundred years. They have hitherto been looked after by personnel of the Royal Navy stationed at Fort Fredericik. With the departure of the British from Trincomalee no provision had been made to feed the animals.

Representations were made to the Trincomalee Urban Council by ratepayers, who requested the Council to take steps to preserve the herd.

The Urban Council has pointed out that the Fort area is outside the jurisdiction of the Council and the local authority is unable to do anything to preserve the herd.

Pending a decision, the herd will be looked after by committee set up by ratepayers.

June, 1958.

*Daily News.*

## Elephants Kill their Mahouts

( i )

An elephant that had been taken for a river bath dashed its mahout to death in the water, at Gampola.

The mahout, 24-year-old Loku Banda who had taken the elephant to the Mahaveliganga ferry at Pussethota to bathe it, went ashore having left it in water. On his return, the elephant showed signs of unrest and charged at him.

Loku Banda made every effort to bring the elephant under control, but realising that it was getting more and more out of control, he struck the animal on the forehead with the goad.

When Loku Banda tugged at the goad the handle got severed from the point which had penetrated the forehead.

The trumpeting of the angry animal attracted large crowds on either bank of the river.

When the elephant attacked the mahout, he clung on to its tail, but was swung into deep water. Every time the mahout appeared above the water, the tusker attacked him with its trunk. The semi-unconscious mahout, was then lifted and dashed into the deep water.

Heen Menika, a sister of the mahout, who had come to the river for a bath, begged of the crowd to save her brother, but none would dare approach the elephant.

The elephant was later chained and brought out of the water.

The body of Loku Banda, embedded in a sand bank, was recovered.

*Times.*

( ii )

A mahout, named Ukkubanda, who, after the day's work, had brought his elephant to bathe in a stream, was suddenly seized and trampled to death by the animal.

Then the elephant tore the body limb from limb. The stream was full of blood.

The tragedy occurred near the Mawanella town. This elephant had killed six people previously. Five were mahouts.

The elephant killed its seventh victim about 4.30 p.m. and till 7 p.m. was playing with the remains.

People gathered in large numbers at a safe distance but panicked when a false report was spread that the elephant was charging at them. Several were injured in the confusion.

At 7.30 p.m. the elephant came on to the main Colombo-Kandy road. A Police jeep followed the elephant and eight shots were fired at it. The last shot, fired by a constable from sixty feet away, killed the animal.

September

*Observer.*

## Killed by a Wild Elephant

A wild elephant has again killed a man at Mawatwewa, a lonely village about eight miles from Yakalla. It is believed that this is the same elephant which had earlier killed an attendant at a hospital while he was on his way to work and also chased several others on the high road.

Herathamy had gone into the jungle about one and half miles from the village to cut sticks for a fence, when the elephant is believed to have attacked him and crushed his head.

While an Inspector and a P.C. were on their way to the spot where the body of Herathamy was lying the elephant had trumpeted and come after them. The Inspector and the P.C. had hidden in the jungle for over an hour.

*Daily News.*

## Elephant Must Give Way to Man

Unless an alternative home can be found for them soon the fate of one-third of Ceylon's wild elephant population is sealed.

These elephants are today the sole inhabitants of Mannampitiya Marshes. But they will soon have to quit because the land is required for food production, says Mr. C. P. de Silva, Minister of Lands and Land Development.

"We must face facts and appreciate vital statistics," the Minister states.

"It is impossible for this country to reserve the Mahaweli Ganga Plain beyond Alutnuwara—the most fertile part of the dry zone with the best water supply—for elephants. We can't keep human beings out of it."

Mr. de Silva is asking for advice from his department heads for the best ways of seeing the elephants to another habitat.

August, 1958.

Observer.

## Licenses to Capture Elephants

### Who Ordered this Sadistic Job?

The Wild Life Department during the last four months allowed eight elephants to be captured in the jungles of the North Central Province. None of the permits for the captures was issued on the initiative of the Department. They were issued on express instructions from higher sources.

Wild Life Protection Society men call the operation one of the most callous and sadistic round-ups in living memory. Two of the captured animals did not survive the beating they got at the hands of their noosers.

One died last week at Piliyandala despite the efforts of top veterinary men who had been summoned in a last minute bid to save its life. It had been brought to Piliyandala strapped down on its side to the floor of the truck which transported it. The journey took two days.

One of Ceylon's best wild life authorities described the condition of the sick beast.

"It was a magnificent specimen eight feet tall with twenty toes—a rare feature for any elephant. It had been mercilessly handled. It had a bullet wound on its left flank, was bleeding from the head, and every one of its knees was terribly eaten into by leather nooses. The bones of its knee joints were exposed.

"At a time when every wild elephant in the Island—except a man killer—should be most scrupulously conserved, this happens. If elephants must be captured why can't they be noosed correctly? This is the first time I saw such cruel wounds."

November, 1958.

Observer.

### Politics of Wild Life

When an "Observer" reporter asked the Warden of Wild Life for what reasons permits had been issued to those responsible for the brutal manhandling of the captured elephant which died a painful death in Piliyandala last week he replied: "No comment." Asked whether any of the trained personnel in his own Department had supervised this capture he once again affirmed that he had no comment to make.

This reticence speaks for itself: it is quite obvious that although the Warden of Wild Life is himself dedicated to the task of preserving the country's rapidly dwindling elephant population this matter has passed beyond him to higher authorities whom he cannot afford to upset. As the "Observer" reported eight permits issued during the last four months for the capture of elephants in the North Central Province were not issued at the initiative of the Wild Life Department but "on express instructions from higher sources."

We need refer to only two examples to show that wild elephants have not simply been captured but also subjected to primitive

“tortures”—on the authority of permits issued by the Government. One such incident occurred two months ago at Kelaniya where a fully grown elephant died after two weeks of agony. The other, as already reported was at Piliyandala where a wild elephant with a variety of injuries ranging from a gun-shot wound to lacerations caused by tightened ropes, died.

The fact is that these and other animals which have died recently were trapped by inexperienced and inexpert trappers who use the most inept methods of capture without a thought for the injuries which they inflict on the animals. Further, these animals have been transported from the point at which they are captured to the homes of their prospective owners under unsuitable conditions.

Many wild life enthusiasts who have followed the short and tragic histories of these elephants while in captivity believe that those who have interested themselves most in the animals have not been the same persons who obtained the licences. This is a matter which we feel the Wild Life Department should investigate even at the risk of displeasing “higher authorities.”

Perhaps as the result of such investigations the Government may realise the necessity to restrict the authority for issuing permits to one body—the Wild Life Department—and not pass the authority around to a number of officials as at present. This is one of the problems which could be profitably examined by the Special Committee on Wild Life Protection which has been existing with no easily discernible purpose for the past year.

*Observer Editorial.*

### **Elephant Racket**

Even elephants can figure in rackets these days. During the last four months several wild elephants have been captured on permits issued by the State and several of them have died as a result of mishandling.

The last elephant to die in such tortuous captivity spent his last hours on the premises of

a politician who, I am told, did not receive the original permit. Somebody with easy access to favours from the Government is apparently securing the permits and duly handing them over to others.

The theory goes that there are three such persons: two clerics and one layman.

*November, 1958.*

*Observer.*

### **Elephants of the Gal Oya Valley**

#### **“Waliga Kota” of Amparai is Shot Dead**

One more notch has been cut on the barrel of a gun which is speeding Ceylon's wild life towards extinction.

This week, “Waliga Kota,” the friendly 8 ft. high wild elephant, a familiar sight around the Amparai airstrip, was shot dead.

He had strayed into a piece of land which, from his point of view, had been encroached upon by man—P. W. Weeragoda's paddy tract at Parahagala. “Waliga Kota” had ambled into the paddy field with two other elephants, obviously in search of food, when he was brought down with a shot in the forehead from the gun of Mr. Abeyasinghe.

He carried seven previous pellet marks on its body. The other two elephants receiving gun shots in their legs limped off into the sanctuary of the jungle trumpeting in pain, possibly to lie down and die a lingering death.

Many visitors to the Valley have often commented on the picturesque and somewhat strange sight of wild elephants peacefully grazing almost side by side with the hustling modern machinery working in the area, and it would indeed be a shame if this aspect of the Valley was perforce to be blacked out.

The Gal Oya Development Board in collaboration with the Forest and Wild Life Departments is doing all it can, but yet, indiscriminate and unwarranted shooting by trigger-happy landlords and cultivators still takes its toll.



### Elephant Roam Valley

Like the war-displaced, elephants in the Gal Oya Valley are roaming about, looking for sanctuary. With the consistent rape of the jungle they have been hounded out of their ancient domains. What was once their homeland has been blocked out and given to man.

Engineers who planned out the Gal Oya Valley were, however, not unmindful of the necessities of wild life. They have demarcated a large tract of land for a national park round the Senanayake Samudra but *they have forgotten to leave corridors for the animals to move into the Park.*

A lone elephant, a majestic nine-footer, roams at will during the night hardly half a mile away from the Inginiyagala power house. Some homesteads light scare fires in the area but the elephant wanders about, looking as docile as a sheep. Even the blinding light from a camera-man's flash-gun did not scare it at feed time. It is, however, a matter of days before some man surprises this elephant with dire results to the former. The elephant will then no doubt be proclaimed a lone killer, and lo! and behold, there will be one less in our dwindling elephant population.

Only a few days ago an elephant fell a victim to the gun of an official of the Gal Oya Development Board. What is left of this animal is its tail proudly possessed as a trophy and the stench where its carcass lies rotting.

As early as 4.15 p.m. one day last week two elephants were seen just outside the front garden of the bungalow of the Chairman of the Gal Oya Development Board. Pressmen were able to get within a matter of ten yards from

these animals. Elephants are not generally known to come out from the jungle so early but in the Valley the lack of food drives them out before dusk.

There is conjecture here, regarding the estimate of the wild elephant population. Some estimate it at a modest 50 while others claim to have seen herds of over 120 animals, big even by African standards.

### Homeless—for Lack of Forest Corridors

I read with interest the news item, "Homeless they Roam the Valley," which appeared in the "Sunday Times" of October 5th. The elephant population in the Gal Oya Valley is dwindling at an amazing rate and if serious steps are not taken to stop the wanton killing of wild elephants, the Valley will lose these animals altogether in the near future.

Six months ago, elephant-watching was a favourite pastime among Amparai folk and elephants in twos and threes used to come to the open tank bund to entertain crowds as early as 10 a.m. It was not a rare sight to see one or more of them swimming or wallowing in the shallow waters of the tank, in broad daylight.

It is said that a total of 250 square miles of forest have been proclaimed National Parks and Sanctuaries in the Valley. The N.P. which skirts the Senanayake Samudra is 100 square miles in extent. But *why are forest corridors not provided* for the other small herds of elephants scattered throughout the Valley, to migrate into the N.P. unmolested by man? November, 1958. ELEPHANT LOVER.

*Times.*

### FOREIGN

#### Rhino-killers Shot at Sight in Nepal

Extreme measures have been ordered to save the single-horned Indian rhinoceros in Nepal forests from extinction at the hands of poachers.

Armed game guides have orders to shoot any poacher at sight.

The authorities are greatly alarmed at the large-scale poaching on the royal game sanctuary in the 400-square-mile Chitran Forest, south of here.

According to the Chief of the Royal Game Warders, Major-General Ranga Bikram, there

are still 1,000 to 1,200 Rhinos in Nepal. He estimated that 25 to 30 rhinos were poached every year. General Kiran Shamshere, A.D.C. Gen. to the King, however, put the figure at 80 to 90. According to Field Marshal Kaiser Shamshere, whose rhino bag is considerable, fifty are poached annually, which means extinction of this species in a matter of years unless effective measures are taken to stop poaching.

The poachers prize the horn most. A single horn fetches anything from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 14,000 because of its widely recognised aphrodisiac quality. Its market is in India, Tibet, Burma, Thailand and China. Siamese and Chinese value almost every part of the rhino for medicinal use. The Nepal rhino is regarded as highly sacred. At a ceremony the King of Nepal offers libation of its blood to his ancestors. King Mahendra performed libation ceremony early this year when he had to wait for four days before he could shoot a rhino.

P.T.C. Reuter Service.

### Elephant Bill

Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Williams, the man the British 14th Army knew as "Elephant Bill," died recently at Penzance, aged 60.

During the second world war in Burma, he commanded the only elephant company in the world. He was reputed to know 600 elephants by name, and could recognise each of them at a glance.

"Elephant Bill" spent 25 years in the jungle for the Bombay-Burma Company, before the Japanese invasion in 1942.

He was then given command of the army's only elephant transport company. His intimate knowledge of the terrain and the animals enabled him to retrieve nearly 4,000 elephants captured during the Japanese advance.

After the war he returned to Burma to resume work among elephants.

Colonel Williams then retired to a 100-acre farm near Penzance, Cornwall, and wrote

best-selling books—"Elephant Bill" and "Bandoola"—about his experiences.

### Never Run

When suddenly confronted by a wild beast, the golden rule is: *never run*. You haven't a hope of getting away and you may only put ideas into its head. The best thing, which takes a bit of doing, is to stay put, wave your arms and make as much noise as possible. You may fool the creature you're dangerous. I've never tried this myself, but I have seen Reuben (a hunter) in action.

JILL DONISTHORPE in *World Digest*.

### Venison

Sir,—Your cookery expert recently recommended venison as "a good buy just now." People who buy venison should be aware of the illegal organised cruel shooting of deer in some parts of Scotland by men who come by night in cars.

On September 13, for instance, the *Scotsman* reported a case in which the police stopped a car after eight dead deer had been found by the roadside; they stated that the boot of the car was "like a slaughterhouse floor."

Sir William Rootes, on whose ground the dead deer had been found, is reported to have said that they were all young hinds in milk and that their calves were wandering on the hillsides alone. Gamekeepers searched the deer forests for other injured animals, and two calves, one dead and the other so badly injured that it had to be destroyed, were found. Many similar instances have been reported. Legislation seems to be long overdue.

JANET M. SMITH,  
*London Observer*.

*Ratbo, Midlothian.*

### The Acute Anglers

The charm of fishing is one that has always got away from me. From my standpoint,

which is that of the world's most incomplete angler, there seem to be two types of fishermen. One type is romantic and dreamy: he sits all day in a trance among reeds and whispering leaves, thoughts drift through his mind like the slow clouds reflected in the water. All those canvas bags and stools and baskets, those devious Sunday journeys into the riparian solitude, are simply a complicated apparatus to enable him to feel vaguely moral about doing nothing (I like doing nothing *without* fishing). He catches boring-looking fish with unlikely names—pike, tench, gorp, dace, tring, fulch, glig, wibbot—fish that one imagines as all tasting of mud. The whole thing is beautifully useless.

The other type does at least catch worthwhile fish like trout. He is not lazy in the pasture, he is muscular in the wilderness. He does intricate conjuring tricks with flies, he *stalks* fish. It says in the "Gentleman's Diary", "Stalking must be done with great care . . . the top of the rod must be lifted to drive home the hook and then the fun begins. A good fish will fully test the skill of the angler," etc.

I don't think it is just sour grapes to say I don't *want* to pit my wits against a fish. I don't need to prove to myself that I am cleverer than a fish. I know I am. We all are, we left fish behind aeons ago. Fish can't sing, or play chess, or drive a car. Fish are bores.

But not fishermen. It is true that the first type tends to boast about being dreamy and relaxed while non-fishermen are restless and neurotic, and the second type to boast about being athletic.

PAUL JENNINGS,  
*London Observer.*

## Nature and the Arts

The aspect of science which is nearest akin to humanism, the close and loving interpretation of nature, was another source that inspired the literature of the time and another cause of its wide appeal. In the later eighteenth century, the way had been prepared by White of Selborne, Bewick and other naturalists both professional and amateur who taught their countrymen to observe and reverence the world of nature, in which it was man's privilege to dwell. At the turn of the century this widespread habit found further expression in the landscapes of Girtin, Turner and Constable, and in the poetry of Wordsworth and Keats. In the following generation, in the 'thirties, 'forties and 'fifties, de Wint, David Cox, Edward Lear and many others were added to the list of landscape painters of real talent, who could not even in water-colour paint fast enough to satisfy the public demand. And in poetry the long reign of Tennyson covered most of the Victorian era. His strongest appeal lay in the strength, beauty and accuracy of his pictures of nature.

G. M. TREVELYAN in *English Social History.*

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,  
And rarely pipes the mounted thrush:  
Or underneath the barren bush  
Flits by the sea-blue bird of March.

TENNYSON.

# Correspondence

## Flights of Butterflies

Sir,

My husband and I always receive with great pleasure our copy of *Loris*; it is one of the most interesting links we have with Ceylon. Also we have no small admiration for the work done by the very active naturalists whose observations, correspondence and tales are so faithfully recorded by *Loris*.

I have recently received this letter from Mr. French of Rothamsted Experimental Station. He is doing some research work on insect migration and asked in a radio broadcast for exact information about all types of insects.

Mr. French's letter is enclosed, and I hope that some of your readers may be able to supply the observations he requires and which should lead to some very interesting results, especially in a land so favourable to insect life as Ceylon.

162, Gilbert Road,  
Cambridge.

Mrs. M. JACKSON.

ED.—We are indeed glad to know that our Magazine is so much appreciated overseas. We publish the following letters in the hope that our readers may be able to supply some of the information required by Mr. R. A. French, whose address we give.

Dear Mrs. Jackson,

Thank you very much for your letter about insect migration in Ceylon. As you say they are a fairly well known phenomenon, the flights of butterflies appear to take place after the N.E. monsoons but the curious thing is that they seem to go in various directions, although there does appear to be a dominant northerly component. The flights appear to go on for some months and then, after a pause, there is further activity in March and April before the S.W. monsoon, during this latter period the direction seems to be more frequently to the S., S.W. or West.

The type of observations that we would like

are the particular butterfly, or butterflies, involved, the locality, the direction of flight, the date and any meteorological data, particularly wind direction. If you have or can obtain any such information it would be most helpful.

R. A. FRENCH,  
*Rothamsted Experimental Station,*  
*Harpenden, Herts.*

## Ground Thrush—A Rare Visitor

Sir,

A very rare visitor has called on us this morning and, while I write, is hopping about picking sundry insects beneath a low tree in our garden. He is a Northern Orange-headed Ground Thrush. I am positive about the identification; he is identical with the illustration (No. 7) on Plate 3 (opp. p. 40) of Henry's *Birds of Ceylon*.

The bird is not shy. I have spent quite some time watching him and he has hopped up to within 15 feet of me. Needless to say, I have never seen anything like him before and I note from Henry that only three or four have been reported, but I am not going to "collect" this bird to have my identification confirmed. I am quite positive I am not mistaken.

Negombo,

R. H. SPENCER SCHRADER.

12th November, 1958.

## Rara Avis

Sir,

In Robert Knox's *Historical Relation of Ceylon* there is the following description of a bird:—

"Here is a sort of bird they call Carlo, which never lighteth on the ground, but always sets on very high trees. He is as big as a Swan, the colour black, the legs very short, the head monstrous, his bill very long, a little

rounded like a hawk's, and white on each side of the head, like ears : on the top of the crown groweth out a white thing, somewhat like the comb of a cock ; commonly they keep four or five of them together ; and always are hopping from bough to bough. They are seldom silent, but continually making a roaring noise, somewhat like the quacking of a duck, that they may

be heard at least a mile off ; the reason they thus cry, the Chingulayes say, is for rain, that they may drink. The bodies of these fowls are good to eat."

What can this bird be ?

*Hermont Estate,  
Gonapinuwela.*

F. W. A. SOYSA.

## THRUSHES

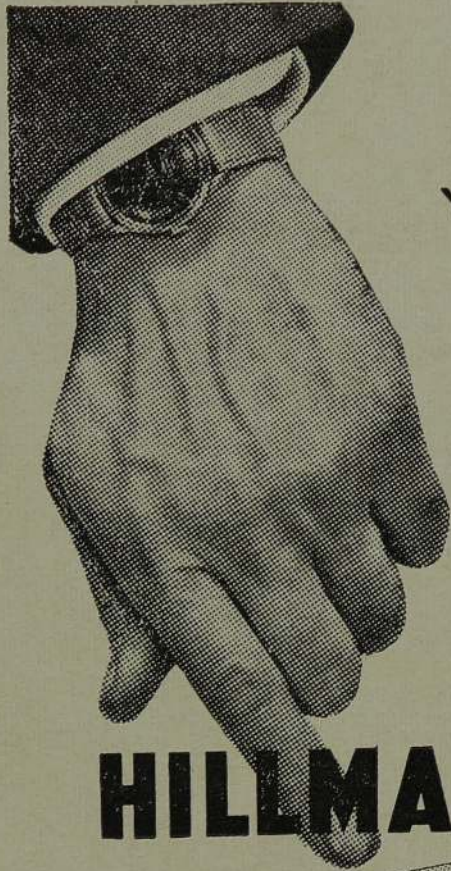
*Terrifying are the attent sleek thrushes on the lawn,  
More coiled steel than living—a poised  
Dark deadly eye, those delicate legs  
Triggered to stirrings beyond sense—with a start, a bounce, a stab  
Overtake the instant and drag out some writhing thing.  
No indolent procrastinations and no yawning stares,  
No sighs or head-scratchings. Nothing but bounce and stab  
And a ravening second.*

*Is it their single-mind-sized skulls, or a trained  
Body, or genius, or a nestful of brats  
Gives their days this bullet and automatic  
Purpose ! Mozart's brain had it, and the shark's mouth  
That hungers down the blood-smell even to a leak of its own  
Side and devouring of itself ! efficiency which  
Strikes too streamlined for any doubt to pluck at it  
Or obstruction deflect.*

TED HUGHES



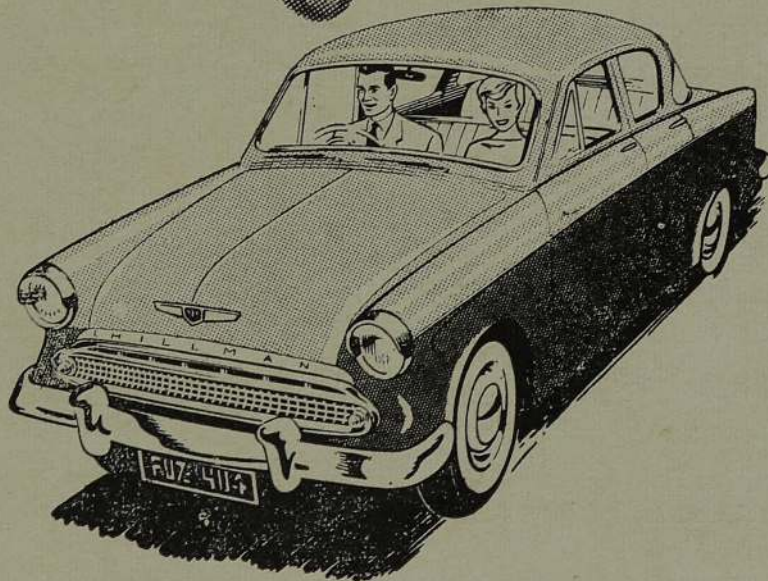




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