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1971

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Florida State Museum

Ndumu Game Reserve,  
P.O. Ndumu,  
ZULULAND,  
South Africa.  
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CROCODILE SPECIALISTS GROUP: NEWSLETTER NO. 2.

1. NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA.

Protection for the salt water crocodile Crocodylus porosus in the Northern Territory of Australia. Members of the Group will remember that at the New York meeting in March, Dr. Bustard said that he was pressing for the Northern Territory to apply total protection to this species and hoped that following action by the Northern Territory it might be possible to get Queensland to follow suit.

Following a report by Dr. Bustard, the Government of Western Australia applied total protection to this species on 1st January, 1970. The administration of the Northern Territory has now announced that as from June 30th, 1971, there will be a total ban on the shooting of the salt-water crocodile. This decision is greatly welcomed and every effort will now be made to extend this to Queensland with the result that this large crocodylian will be totally protected throughout the whole of its Australian range, making control of poaching much easier than at present.

2. Crocodile Farming.

Dr. Bustard is setting up a model crocodile farm in North Queensland later this year. This farm will be used to teach Australian Aborigines crocodile farming methods. The only sizeable populations of the Australian crocodile in Queensland now occur inside Aboriginal reserves from which Europeans are excluded by law. It is Dr. Bustard's intention to manage these resources on a sustained yield basis to benefit Australia's indigenous peoples.

3. CUBA.

Extract from a Newspaper Report: Johannesburg, South Africa.

Crocodile Farming.

Near Cuba's Bay of Pigs, at a place called Treasure Lagoon, live 18,000 crocodiles, cared for and fed at the expense of the Cuban ratepayers.

The crocodile ranch resembles a huge zoo, with well kept gardens, Japanese-style bridges and a restaurant. Sixteen keepers take care of the reptiles, digging up newly laid eggs and placing them in incubators to hatch. The hatchlings are placed in special tanks and fed on choice fish, while attendants keep a watch out for any signs of eye or lung disease - the two big killers of infant crocodiles.

However, with the help of eye drops and plenty of attention, the mortality rate has been cut to 10 per cent.

so it should not be long before the target level of 80,000 animals is reached. Thereafter a certain number will be skinned annually and turned into women's shoes, handbags, wallets and belts. Besides the valuable skins, the musk glands will be extracted for perfume bases. The lard, said to have medicinal properties - is used against asthma and bronchitis, and other parts of the animal have reputations almost as good as those of PEANUTS.

The teeth and scales will be turned into necklaces and earrings and the tails carved up into juicy steaks, which the Cubans maintain, taste better than pork.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Can anyone verify the existence of this farm, and supply more accurate details??

#### 4. SINGAPORE: CROCODILE FARM.

Extract from magazine: 'Saturday Titbits' no. 4436. week ending 20/3/1971 entitled 'The Cruel facts of Fashion' p.4.

'There are more than 500 crocodiles of all ages and sizes penned in at the farm known as the 'Tan Moh Hong Farm' in Singapore. Visitors can make a choice of a likely looking reptile which is then hauled out of a pen, jaws and legs carefully tied, to be put on display. The chosen animal can be safely patted while it lies helpless - with a pair of shoes and a handbag neatly posed beside it - so that it can be compared with the skin of a finished product.'

EDITOR'S NOTE: The magazine published photographs which look authentic. Who can supply further information??

#### 5. INDIA: CROCODILE FARMING.

The F.A.O. Crocodile Farming Project in India is now off the ground and in fact the Chief of the Wildlife Division of F.A.O. recently contacted I.U.C.N. for suggestions for an expert, preferably Asian, to act as adviser.

Mr. Youngparpakorn was proposed with Dr. Bustard and Tony Pooley being suggested as seconds.

#### 6. PROPOSED SANCTUARY FOR THE ESTUARINE CROCODILE.

Mr. J.C. Daniel of the Bombay Natural History Society, has been awarded a grant by the Indian National Appeal of the World Wild Life Fund.

This is to conduct a feasibility study of establishing a sanctuary for the estuarine crocodile on the Vitarkhanika Island, off the Orissa coast.

#### 7. NEWS FROM AFRICA: ETHIOPIA.

Extract from a report by John Blower (1971) Wildlife Conservation and National Parks: Ethiopia. (Unesco. Serial no. 2351). Section 5. 12.

'In Ethiopia, a French owned company, DOFAN, is

involved in exploitation of crocodiles, as well as numerous other animal and bird species. The operations of the Dofan company are subject to a concession agreement between the company and the Ethiopian Government, which covers such matters as royalty payments and a number of restrictions designed to guard against over exploitation. For example, no crocodile of less than 2 metres length may be taken, no area may be hunted for more than three years or for more than 8 months in any one year, and all hunting is strictly prohibited during the breeding season.

Unfortunately, most of these conditions have been, and still are disregarded by Dofan, and no serious attempt has been made to enforce them. Surveys of certain rivers and lakes were carried out by a zoologist, Mr. Colin Chapman, who concluded that the crocodiles were being seriously over-exploited. Mr. Chapman recommended a stricter control of hunting operations and limitation of the offtake of crocodile in relation to the populations concerned and their likely reproductive capacity. He also proposed measures for protection of breeding sites and the collection and artificial incubation of eggs, in order to reduce the heavy predation of eggs and young crocodiles, under natural conditions.

If exploitation continues, it is quite certain that the crocodile will eventually be exterminated in all those areas where the Dofan company is operating. At present, Dofan has a monopoly concession covering eight of the major rivers.

EDITORS NOTE: For a full account of Colin Chapman's survey read the Geographical Journal 136 (1) p. 55 - 59.

#### 8. SOUTH AFRICA: NATAL, DURBAN.

On June 22nd 1971, a 2.2metre crocodile was shot by a policeman in the Umgeni river, Durban, at a spot just 8 kilometres from the river mouth. The last known record of a crocodile occurring in this river goes back over 100 years.

The explanation for this animal's occurrence was explained by a former director of the municipal gardens. He recounted that over thirty years ago, a person on a visit to Zululand found a crocodile nest, collected 9 eggs and took them back home to Durban. The eggs were hatched in a box of sand and upon hatching, released the young into this river on the joking advice of the director.

The Umgeni river flows through a heavily populated area and is polluted with effluents from nearby factories. It is astonishing that the crocodile survived undetected for so many years and that it survived pollution hazards which in the past has resulted in mass die-offs of fish life.

The killing of the crocodile aroused a surprising degree of protest and many irate letters were published by the local press. A newspaper survey revealed that of all people interviewed, 40 percent condemned the killing.

Colleagues in the Natal Parks Board, members of the Wild Life Conservation Society and a team of newspaper reporters tried to capture the animal with nets, as soon as it was discovered, and were bitterly disappointed to learn that it had been killed.

It is interesting to record that 5 years ago, crocodiles were classed as vermin throughout the province. After much conservation propaganda, including the establishment of the Ndumu Restocking Station, we managed to get full

protection for crocodiles, 2 years ago. Now we find that 40 per cent of the people interviewed were angered by the killing of one animal.

A good example of conservation propoganda.

#### 9. NDUMU RESTOCKING STATION.

We had the pleasure of having Prof. Raymond Cowles as a visitor during July. Prof. Cowles published extensively on the Thermal Requirements of Desert Reptiles, and will be known to crocodile specialists for a paper co-authored with Edwin H. Colbert and Charles M. Bogert; Temperature Tolerances in the American Alligator and their Bearing on the Habits, Evolution and Extinction of the Dinosaurs. Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist. vol. 86 Article 7: New York:1946.

Although Prof. Cowles is now Professor of Human Ecology at University of California, he is still very interested in the crocodilians and in particular, in the work being undertaken by the Crocodile Specialist Group. Discussions with him were stimulating and valuable.

#### 10. U.S.A. FLORIDA ALLIGATOR DEATHS.

'Extracts from the "Orlando Sentinel" June 1971'.  
'Lake Apopka, 10 years ago was one of the nations best known bass fishing lakes, with catches running over 20lbs. It then had 13 fishing camps, with zoo boats regularly drifting over its 31,000 acres of water. Sport fishing was a one million dollar a year business. Commercial fishing was a 260, 000 dollar a year business. Today, the fishing camps are almost gone. Apopka is a fetid, shallow body of water, nearly unfit for human use. It is Florida's third largest lake, the states largest and most embarrassing pollution problem.

The trouble has no single cause. Human waste is dumped into the Lake from a sewage treatment plant. Effluent from a citrus processing plant and chemicals and fertilisers applied to citrus groves along the lake shore, leach through the soil and end up in the water. All of these stimulate the growth of objectionable plant life - mainly algae. This excessive vegetation has speeded up Lake Apopka's natural ageing - or eutrophication process - and as a result the lake is fast filling with debris and degenerating into a swamp.

Because of the high nutrient count of the lake and the lack of oxygen, a bacteria known as 'aeromonas liquefaciens' normally found in fresh water lakes, has multiplied enormously and is responsible for the deaths of 21 alligators, numerous turtles, and thousands of fish in recent weeks.

Dr. Frank Hayes, head of the University of Georgia veterinary school who diagnosed the bacteria as being responsible for the deaths said that he thought the malady hit adult alligators harder than younger ones, because the adults were now breeding and in a physically weaker condition. This is probably the first recorded instance of alligator-eutrophication mortality. Various experts estimate that it will cost about one million dollars to restore the lake to a healthy state.

11. I.U.C.N./F.A.O. CO-OPERATION.

I.U.C.N. is officially approaching the Secretary General of the F.A.O inviting them to collaborate with the Crocodile Group. Mis Moira Warland, Executive Officer of the Survival Service Commissions, reports that I.U.C.N. have had an extremely fruitful association in the Marine Turtle Group with the Chief of the Fisheries Division, Marine Biology and Environment Branch, Dr. Sahrhage. Hopefully we might be able to develop the same kind of relationship on the Crocodile Group.

12. THE LITERATURE OF THE LIVING CROCODILIANS OF THE WORLD.

As mentioned in the June newsletter, the New York Zoological Society has provided the funds for Mr. M.C. Downes, Chief of the Wildlife Ecology Section, Papua-New Guinea, to continue his work on Bibliography of the Crocodilians. Mr. Downes will travel to the Smithsonian Institution, Washington and the British Museum (Natural History), commencing in September.

The project is expected to last six months and will entail examining of all original papers, journals and books to complete the existing draft manuscript started two years ago, and will include additions, corrections and deletions of erroneous titles using the major library collections. (Already another 2000 titles have been added to the 1970 list).

There is currently an increased activity of research, conservation and management into the world crocodilians and it will be invaluable to have an up to date, comprehensive bibliography available. For these reasons Mr. Downes hopes to have the work completed and published as soon as possible.

*Tony Pooley*  
TONY POOLEY: EDITOR.