

GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION

The idea of an international organisation for the protection of birds originated from Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson, President of the National Association of Audubon Societies, U.S.A. In 1922 he made an extensive tour of Europe, met many ornithologists and spoke at meetings of national societies for the protection of birds in various countries. During the course of his visit he found that little was known of bird protection in America, and indeed bird protectors in Europe had little knowledge of what was going on in other countries. Dr. Pearson summed up the situation as follows: "How many people in the United States and Canada know what the Germans or the Dutch or the Japanese are doing to save their birds; or what methods they are employing in the undertakings? Surely there is much we can learn from each other. Why not effect an international organisation which, among other things, will further stimulate interest in bird protection by the interchange of publications and by occasional conventions where representatives of different countries can meet in council? Also there are a number of problems that are distinctly international such as oil pollution of the high seas and the export and import of birds or their feathers."

Dr. Pearson concluded his tour in England and at midday on June 22nd 1922 he invited a group of people to meet in London for the purpose of discussing the advisability of forming an international Committee for the Protection of Wild Birds. Those present included Viscount Grey of Fallodon and Dr. Percy Lowe of Great Britain, Dr. P.G. van Tienhoven and Dr. A. Burdet of Holland and Jean Delacour from France. As a result of this meeting, the International Committee for Bird Preservation was founded with Dr. Pearson as President.

The main framework and strength of the ICBP is its National Sections which act as a focus for national opinion and information and as a channel for cooperation in international matters. The constitution of the section varies a good deal, some of them being composed of the full number of twelve organisations allowed under the Bye-laws and including scientific, sporting, agricultural and other interests, in addition to conservationists; in some there are only a few, or even one, organisation. Some National Sections are officially supported by their Governments but the ICBP as a whole is a non-governmental and entirely independent body.

For a number of years the organisation of the work of the Committee and the funds to carry this out were mainly undertaken by the President, Dr. Gilbert Pearson, but the activities grew so rapidly, especially in Europe,

that in 1928 Dr. Jean-Marie Derscheid (Belgium) was appointed European Secretary. He was succeeded by Count Leon Lippens (Belgium) who was appointed in 1935 and carried on the work of General Secretary till 1946 when he was succeeded by Miss Phyllis Barclay-Smith (U.K.)

Informal meetings of the ICBP were held in Paris in 1923 and Luxembourg in 1925. At the latter meeting the inadequacy of the International Convention for the Protection of Birds Useful to Agriculture (Paris 1902) was discussed and the ICBP was requested to consider this subject and secure the ideas of representative people in various countries and give an opinion as to what course should be taken. This matter was discussed at various international conferences through the years and considered by a series of specially appointed sub-committees, and finally led to the Inter-Governmental Conference in Paris in 1950 when a draft Convention to amend the 1902 Convention was signed ad referendum by the official representatives of twelve countries. The main step forward was the adoption of the principle that all birds should be protected, with exceptions where necessary, and the concept of "harmful" and "useful" birds was discarded. The Convention came into force in 1963 with the signature of Luxembourg as the sixth adherent.

The ICBP has achieved much in promoting an international approach to bird preservation by showing that migratory birds are *not the property of one country* alone, but the responsibility of many countries, and that cooperation between several nations is necessary in order to ensure their adequate protection. This viewpoint was early recognised in the United States and Canada and has become very general in Europe. In 1960, during the world meeting of ICBP in Tokyo, an Asian Continental Section was established with one of its chief charges to provide for the protection of migratory birds of the Pan-Pacific area. This resulted in the "U.S.-Japan Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds and their Environment and Birds in Danger of Extinction" which was signed by both countries on 4 March 1972.

Full details of the ICBP's work, especially for migratory birds cannot be given in this report, but one example may be mentioned. In the past few decades, the White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) has greatly decreased in a number of countries in Western Europe and even disappeared in some. The ICBP therefore organised an international census in 1958 in an effort to find out the reasons for the decrease and to propose measures to maintain the numbers of this species. The results of this work were published in the VIII Bulletin of the ICBP together with a report on the Asiatic sub-species *Ciconia ciconia boyciana*.

The scheme for a series of reserves along migration routes in Europe, especially for waterbirds and the larger migrants, was put forward at the world meeting of the ICBP in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1950 and, in conjunction

with other international organisations, great progress has been made in this direction.

In 1926 the Chairman of the Swedish National Section, Professor Lonnberg drew attention to the decrease of wildfowl in Europe and asked for reports on their status. He was strongly supported by Dr. Percy Lowe, Chairman of the British Section, and in 1927 an intergovernmental conference on the preservation of wildfowl was held in London. Recommendations were made for shortening the shooting season for wildfowl and for investigations of migratory routes by means of ringing. Nothing came of this Conference and in 1936, Dr Percy Lowe established the Wildfowl Inquiry Committee of the British Section, with the object of inquiring into the status of wild ducks and geese, and, if possible, to provide for their future welfare. From this Committee grew the International Wildfowl Research Bureau, which was established in 1947 as a specialist branch of the ICBP. The IWRB has a great list of achievements to its credit, not the least being the success in obtaining the cooperation of sportsmen.

At the 1950 Conference in Sweden, the danger of insecticides was raised and a resolution adopted supporting that agreed by the International Technical Conference for the Protection of Nature held at Lake Success in 1949. This called on the Governments to study the researches on the effects of these substances and to take steps to prevent their indiscriminate use. The fears expressed at that meeting over 20 years ago have been only too dramatically realised. The question of pesticides has remained permanently on the Agenda of the ICBP at every international meeting and many resolutions have been adopted on the various aspects of the problem. The Secretariat of the ICBP keeps the various National Sections informed of the researches and investigations being carried out in other countries and the legal and other measures being taken to control the use of toxic chemicals.

Even since its inception, the ICBP has worked on the problem of oil pollution and there is no doubt that it was owing to the constant pressure by National Sections all over the world on Governments that the International Convention for the Prevention of the Pollution of the Sea by Oil (London 1954) was agreed. But it is not until the discharge of waste oil is prohibited anywhere at any time that the seas will be free from this menace and the destruction of seabirds cease. To this end the ICBP continues to work.

At the world meeting of the ICBP in Tokyo in 1960 a resolution was adopted calling attention to the urgent need for international protection of the unique antarctic fauna and urging the inclusion in the proposed Antarctic Treaty of appropriate provisions to protect this fauna. This resolution was sent to all the Governments concerned and also to the Special Committee for Antarctic Research (SCAR) set up by the International Council of Scientific Union. As a result, a number of general rules of

conduct for preservation and conservation were recommended and adopted, and subsequently embodied in this Treaty.

The preservation of rare birds has been one of the prime activities of the ICBP and assistance has been given in various ways by letters to Governments, research programmes, and advice on measures to be taken.

When the IUCN was founded in 1948, a friendly agreement for cooperation was drawn up and the two organisations worked closely together. The work of the Survival Service Commission, so far as birds are concerned, is primarily the responsibility of the ICBP as is the compilation of the Volume AVES of the Red Data Book on threatened species.

At the ICBP Conference in Tokyo in 1960 a resolution was adopted urging each country to designate a species as its national bird as a means of bringing the intrinsic value of birds to the attention of the general public. This scheme has proved a great success and aroused widespread interest.

In 1938, Dr. Gilbert Pearson resigned in favour of Monsieur Jean Delacour who remained President till 1958, when he was succeeded by Professor S. Dillon Ripley who was elected at the World Meeting in Finland that year. At this meeting the title of the ICBP was changed from "Committee" to "Council" as being more suitable for the standing and scope of the organisation.

The ICBP now has 61 National Sections in every continent of the world and in a number of oceanic and other islands, which are in constant touch with the President and Central Secretariat either on account of their own problems or assisting other countries with theirs. Bulletins containing reports of international meetings, articles on various subjects and accounts of the situation of bird preservation in different countries are published from time to time, and the information pamphlet under the title "The President's Letter", containing information on the activities of the ICBP and the National Sections, is issued free to anyone interested in the work.

Each year new National Sections are formed and each year the need for the work of the ICBP becomes more evident, as the very existence of birdlife becomes ever more hazardous with the spread of modern methods of civilisation.

In 1974 ICBP will be holding two interesting Conferences. One in April will be held in Cyprus and is entitled "The Conservation of Birds and their habitats in the Mediterranean Countries." We sincerely hope to be represented there. The second, in August, will be the "XVI World Conference of ICBP", and it will be held in Australia, where Mr. A D'Andria will represent Malta.