

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE

THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION
OF THE ZOOLOGICAL LIFE OF THE
GALAPAGOS ARCHIPELAGO¹

IN the month of September, just one hundred years ago, a young man in his twenties landed from H. M. S. *Beagle* on an island of the Galapagos Archipelago. Twenty-four years passed without any one realizing the importance of that historic visit, and then in November, 1859, appeared a publication, which aroused a storm of controversy. The "Origin of Species" had forced the world to realize that something extraordinary had happened! It is particularly fitting on this centenary of the visit of Darwin that the Government of the Republic of Ecuador should take steps to recognize the intellectual acumen of the zoologist who made her island possessions famous, and to create a memorial to his careful observations of its strange life and his revolutionary theory of evolution, which resulted from the impinging of impressions of these extraordinary forms upon a peculiarly sensitive brain.

Since Darwin's time, the islands have been visited by pirates, whalers, scientists and wealthy yachtsmen. Lured to this desolate volcanic archipelago by varying causes, all have been astounded by the extraordinary creatures that live there. Every expedition to the islands has brought back reports of the rapid destruction of the strange life, of thousands of huge shells of tortoises, mute mementos of commercial greed, of the depredation by natives, whalers and other visitors upon the inoffensive birds and mammals. Public interest has been so aroused that many individuals and a number of organizations have exerted their influence in an endeavor to save such species as are approaching extinction.

The history of the effort to protect the extraordinary endemic species of the Galapagos Archipelago is one that has been marked by many vicissitudes, and has recorded, until recently, little but a series of failures. It is impossible in the limits of this paper to adequately record or even mention the many more or less isolated movements, to accomplish the purpose, which have

ranged from individual endeavor of loyal conservationists to helpful resolutions by international organizations, such as the Office International pour la Protection de la Nature, the Netherland Committee of International Protection of Nature, the Royal Academy of Sciences in Belgium, the Executive Committee of the Parc National Albert, the Carnegie Institution, the Fifth Pacific Science Congress and the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection.

No account of the assistance furnished by various organizations would be adequate unless it stressed the influence of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and the wise counsel of Dr. John C. Merriam, its president. For a considerable period of time Dr. Merriam has had contacts with various representatives of the Ecuadorian Government to the United States. Having frequently consulted with the Ecuadorian Minister concerning the desirability of protecting the fauna and flora of the islands and action to this effect by the Government of Ecuador, his co-operation has been particularly helpful to the American committee. He has always shown a keen interest in the preservation of the life of the Galapagos Islands, and his carefully considered suggestions, drawn from a wide experience of international affairs, have helped to build the basis for the final accomplishment.

Without question, one of the most influential factors has been the quiet and unassuming work of Harry S. Swarth, of the California Academy of Sciences, which has gone on for a period of years by personal correspondence. Mr. Swarth's letters to various individuals and organizations in the United States and abroad and his indefatigable personal effort has played a large part in the final success. He was greatly helped in arousing interest and support in European countries through the enthusiastic cooperation of Julian Huxley. Furthermore, Mr. Swarth's outstanding publication, "Avifauna of the Galapagos Islands," provided Dr. Egas and the writer with exact scientific material to serve as a basis for the laws and regulations, which were prepared and forwarded with Mr. Swarth's book to the Ecuadorian Minister of Foreign Affairs in May of 1934.

In 1928, Dr. Spillman, of Quito, Ecuador, visited Mr. P. G. Van Tienhoven, of Holland, and made suggestions similar to those so effectively fostered by Mr. Swarth. On the return of the *Nourmahal* from the Galapagos Archipelago in 1930, Dr. Townsend was visited by the consul of the Republic of Ecuador to New York in regard to a suggestion that the fauna of the Galapagos Islands should be preserved. The con-

¹ The American Committee for International Wild Life Protection wishes to express its appreciation of the far-sightedness of the Ecuadorian Government in the action they have recently taken for the protection of the zoological life in the Galapagos Islands. It is certain that such a course will meet with high approval among the scientific and conservation agencies of the world. We have asked Robert T. Moore, a member of the committee, to prepare an article giving the brief history of this subject. He has played a leading part in bringing this problem to the attention of the Ecuadorian Government.—HAROLD J. COOLIDGE, JR., *Secretary*.

sul had read the *Bulletin* of the Zoological Society for July–August, 1930, in which Dr. Townsend made suggestions relative to the preservation of the Galapagos fauna, and was inspired by these recommendations to make this visit.

Early in 1933 the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection, on which the writer represents the California Institute of Technology, took an active interest in the matter. Ever since then this committee has given its loyal support at all times to the efforts which have now proved successful.

Prior to membership on the board of the American committee the writer's connection with the project had been that of an independent lance, working largely through Ecuadorians since the year 1927, which marked the date of the first zoological expedition of the California Institute of Technology to Ecuador. These efforts had been of little avail until August of 1932, when the former consul of the Ecuadorian Republic to Los Angeles, Dr. V. M. Egas, who had been interviewed first in 1927, put his able and indefatigable enthusiasm behind the project, and since that time has continuously and persistently worked in cooperation with the writer to attain the desired results.

In April of 1934, after several months of collaboration with Dr. Egas, the so-called "Scientific Station of the Galapagos Islands Act" was completed and forwarded to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ecuador. On May 5, 1934, the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection passed a resolution giving its "unqualified approval to this Act as worded." The resolution contained this sentence: "We are joining with other scientific institutions throughout the world in recommending to the government of the Republic of Ecuador, the creation of certain reservations (Asilos Reservados) in the Galapagos Islands and the preservation of the rare zoological species, which exist only in this Archipelago, and which have been made famous by the visit of Charles Darwin."

This was cabled to Ecuador. Subsequently the bill was returned for slight modification. It was once more forwarded to Ecuador in July, 1934, and on July 21 a supporting letter was addressed to the minister of foreign affairs. With remarkably little delay and accompanied by splendid cooperation from members of the Ecuadorian Congress and enthusiastic popular approval, the president and executive of the Republic of Ecuador, His Excellency Abelardo Montalvo, on the 31st of August, 1934, published by executive decree the most important of the regulations. This decree is known as "Poder Ejecutivo, No. 807, Parte Tercera." It is almost a literal translation in Spanish of the original regulations in English. I will brief the most pertinent passages from a translation

of the decree, prepared for the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection.

The most important objectives accomplished by the decree are as follows: (1) All the species which are in real danger of extinction are positively protected everywhere in the archipelago. (2) Rather heavy penalties are decreed for disturbing these species in any way. (3) All boats of every description visiting the archipelago must call at Chatham Island, and each applicant to land must sign a document agreeing to respect the laws protecting the zoological wild life. (4) A large number of islands are designated for sanctuaries and a permissive decree issued for their creation as such, so that whenever funds are available for financing of a warden with equipment to protect the reservations, the reservations may be formally set aside.

These islands are Isla Espanolo (Hood), Isla San Salvador (James), Pinzon (Duncan), Santa Fe (Barrington), Rabida (Jervis), Las Islas Seymour, Daphne, Tower, Marchena (Bindloe), Pinta (Abingdon), Wenman and Culpeper and a part of Isabela Isla (Albemarle) which begins at Punta Albemarle and extends two miles beyond Tagus Cove (Ancon de Tagus) and includes a strip of land a mile wide extending to the interior from the beach at low tide. The species which are protected are the fur seal, the sea lion, the sea iguana, the land iguanas (two species), the land tortoises (thirteen species), the albatross, Galapagos penguin, flightless cormorant, flamingo, Galapagos teal and Galapagos doves (two races).

It is obvious that legislation without enforcement is usually of little value. Until an efficient warden is appointed, financed and supplied with adequate equipment to protect the reservations, poaching may continue with more or less impunity. Nevertheless, this Ecuadorian decree makes possible the enforcement of an important clause in "Vandegrift's United States Tariff of 1930," covering the "Importation of Wild Mammals and Birds in Violation of Foreign Law." A brief quotation from its follows:

If the law or regulations of any country . . . restrict the taking, killing, possession or exportation to the United States of any wild mammal or bird, alive or dead, . . . no such mammal or bird, . . . shall after the expiration of ninety days after the enactment of this act, be imported into the United States from such countries . . . unless accompanied by a certification of the United States consul, for the consular district in which is located the port or place from which such mammal or bird . . . was exported from such country . . . that such mammal or bird . . . has not been acquired or exported in violation of the laws or regulations of such country. . . .

It is, therefore, apparent that since it will be difficult to import the zoological life of the Galapagos

Islands, alive or dead (without scientific permits), into the United States, from which country has originated nearly all the non-scientific expeditions that have threatened the extinction of these valuable primitive species, the incentive, which has been the chief lure for most of them, has disappeared. Furthermore, we are informed that an effort is being made to have similar laws to Vandegrift's Tariff Act, passed by the other important countries of the world with special reference to promoting a world-wide enforcement of the recent London Convention for the Preservation of the Fauna and Flora of Africa.

Admitting that this decree of the Ecuadorian president is merely the first step, it is not the intention of the American Committee for the Protection of International Wild Life to relax its efforts, but on the contrary to cooperate as far as possible with the Ecuadorian executive in promoting a proper means of enforcing the provisions of this decree, and thereby permanently insure the preservation of the extraordinary and primitive species which are still left in the Galapagos Archipelago.²

ROBERT T. MOORE

CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

SOCIETIES AND MEETINGS

THE SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

At the closing session of the recent meeting of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History, held in Washington, D. C., the following officers were elected for a term of three years: For president and chairman of the executive committee, Dr. John C. Merriam, of the Carnegie Institution of Washington; for vice-president, Dr. Conde de Affonso Celso, Brazil, Dr. Roberto Andrade, Ecuador. Three honorary presidents were also elected: Dr. William Bowie, U. S. A., Dr. Rafael Belaunde, Peru, and Dr. Wallace W. Atwood, retiring president of the institute. The assembly expressed the desire to hold the next meeting, which should come in 1938, at Lima, Peru. The delegate from Peru expressed pleasure in the selection of his country, and before the day was over, through telegraphic communications, a very cordial invitation came from the Peruvian government to the Pan American Institute of Geography and History to hold their next general assembly at Lima.

The week from October 14 to 19, 1935, had been crowded with formal sessions, at which papers were presented by delegates from several of the nineteen countries represented in the institute, with social engagements and with excursions to places of special interest in and about the national capital. The State Department of the United States Government served as host, and the Hon. Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, gave the address of welcome on behalf of the government. Later in the week Mr. and Mrs. Hull tendered a reception at the Hotel Carleton to all delegates, and provided a very delightful entertainment. The National Geographic Society invited the delegates to their home, where they enjoyed a premier showing of the motion pictures taken by Bradford Washburn on his recent expedition, conducted under the auspices of the society, in Alaska. Following the lecture the dele-

gates enjoyed the very generous hospitality of President and Mrs. Grosvenor and other officers of the National Geographic Society. The Carnegie Institution of Washington arranged special exhibits and illustrated papers for a meeting held at their headquarters during one of the evenings of the assembly week and entertained the delegates most generously. His Excellency, the Ambassador from Mexico to the United States, invited the entire party to the Mexican Embassy.

At the first regular session held in the Hall of the Americas at the home of the Pan American Union, Dr. Pedro C. Sanchez, director of the institute, presented his report of the work of the organization since the first general assembly was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1932.

Among the many notable papers presented in various sessions were: "The Development of Maya Research," by Dr. A. V. Kidder; "The Agricultural Mayans," by Dr. Rollin S. Atwood; "Bolivar, Man of Peace—The Beginning of International Cooperation in America," by Dr. Enrique Finot; "Geography and History Among the Sciences," by Dr. John C. Merriam; "The Historical Meaning of Monte Alban as Indicated by the Explorations of 1932–1935," by Dr. Alfonso Caso; "The Redistribution of Population," by Dr. L. C. Gray; "Early Economic Crises in Cuba and Their Relation with United States Commerce," by Dr. Ramiro Guerra; "Economic Transformation of South America," by Dr. Clarence F. Jones. These and many

² Recently the Liberal Party has come into power in Ecuador and His Excellency Doctor Antonio Pons is now acting President of the Republic. Word has been received that the Liberal Party is actively promoting a movement for the protection of the resources of the Galapagos Islands and is interested in saving its wild life, which more than anything else has made the islands famous throughout the world. It is hoped that the next step will now be taken, either in the form of legislation by the Congress or a supplementary decree of the president, to establish the islands as permanent sanctuaries and legalize a method for enforcement.