

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY IN NAIROBI, 1957

By PRISCILLA M. ALLEN

It is thought that members in places other than Nairobi may like to know how we in Kenya's capital have been disporting ourselves. About half our members live in or near Nairobi, but it is the publication of the Journal, always one of our major activities since the beginning of the Society, which gives us a larger than merely local interest and is also the main drain upon our funds.

The past year has been a very active one here. Members will have learnt from the Newsletter that rambles were held each month, and last year we had the assistance of Mr. S. J. K. Collins, who explored and showed us a number of new places in the Machakos area, the Mau Hills and the piece of country between Eastleigh and Komo Rock. One expedition that stands out in my memory was to the Tana River at the Embu Road crossing and the Mwea Rice Scheme. Nightingales were singing in the bush along the Tana and the Mwea irrigated area was swarming with birds.

Mr. Collins also organised several week-end camps, of which perhaps the most noteworthy was from Empire Day over the following week-end at Elementeita (by kind permission of Lady Eleanor Cole). Nesting was in full swing, and besides the activities of the Flamingoes, which were being studied by a senior member whom the camping party feared to disturb, nests were found of Kitlitz Plover, Red-capped Lark and many others. A pair of Batis were watched pluckily attacking an Oriole, and it was interesting, too, to note that the Little Rock Thrush seemed to have been breeding there.

The most important event in the year for those interested in birds was the Pan-African Congress of Ornithology at Livingstone, which brought many transit visitors. We managed to catch Mr. Roger Peterson, now so well-known to us as the illustrator of the *Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* and to persuade him to give the Society a talk on various curiosities of bird life observed during his long experience. The meeting was held in the pleasant setting of Mrs. Fleming's house, where we had tea and a chance of chatting with Mr. Peterson and meeting other friends.

For those privileged to take part in them there were also delightful private occasions; a drive in the National Park with Miss Ferrier of Cley, with the lions behaving really nicely; an early morning walk by the Athi with Mr. Cohen of the British Trust for Ornithology, when we listened to Grey Hornbills, Guinea-fowl and Kingfishers and the Cossyphas imitating them; and an all too brief glimpse of the Herberts of Liston Front Range Lighthouse.

Visitors later in the year included Dr. R. C. Murphy, the world-famous authority on sea-birds, who gave us a most enthralling talk on the Bird Life of the Peruvian Guano Islands illustrated with wonderful colour slides. This lecture, which was certainly one of the highlights of the year, described an interesting example of the preservation of natural resources in the interests of all concerned. Mr. and Mrs. Bowles provided the meeting place, with tea in their garden and all arrangements for the lecture were beautifully made in their house.

Still more recently some of us were privileged to meet Mr. and Mrs. Chapin and Lord and Lady William Percy.

Talks and film shows given in members' houses have been a feature of our activities recently. The series was started the year before when Dr. Greenway gave a party at his house for members to meet Mr. Milne Redhead and Mr. Peter Taylor, both of Kew. These parties entail much less work and anxiety for Committee than a formal lecture, all the work being thrown on to one person (or two people) each time, and though we make a point of having a collection to cover the cost of the food, this does not begin to pay for the time and trouble taken by our hosts and hostesses in making these parties the success they have undoubtedly been. Neither can we have distinguished visitors every month, and local talent has also provided parties—at Dr. V. R. Patel's house, where besides the lovely rose garden, we saw excellent films of the Uganda National Parks, and at Mr. North's, where we listened to records of bird songs.

In this connection I might mention the meeting held under the humble and leaky roof of the Vice-President (luckily it was not raining at the time), at which the Society exercised its right to put forward the names of two people to sit on the Museum Board of Trustees. Mr. W. H. Hale and Mr. R. W. Rayner were chosen at this meeting in the places of Mr. H. Copley and Mr. Gedye, both now retired. (Mr. Hale is Game Warden and former President of the Society. Mr. Rayner is President at the time of writing). The austerity of this meeting was lightened by a showing of some very interesting colour transparencies by Mr. Collins.

I seem to have said more about bird study than about anything else. It has been in the ascendent during the past year, partly, no doubt, owing to the Congress, but mainly because of the presence of some members who combine learning with public spirit and of a fairly reliable body of followers. The botanical rambles almost came to an end at one point in spite of the President's efforts. They seem to be reviving again now, but are in need of a stiffening of keen people who are prepared to do some work. Beginners are always welcome, but it gets boring for the leader to have to show you *Achyranthes aspera* every time.

Those interested in geology have mostly forked out the extra 10/- to join the new Geographical Society (whose President is also a member of our Society), which has been organising first-class expeditions much enjoyed by those of us who belong to both. However, now that we hope to have a geologist on the Committee we shall have to do some more work in that line ourselves.

BOOK REVIEW

Flora of Tropical East Africa. Orobanchaceae

By DR. P. J. GREENWAY

Published under the authority of the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations, 4 Millbank, London, S.W.1. Price Sh. 1/6.

A further part of this Flora has now been published, a parasitic family containing the 'Broomrapes'. It consists of seven pages with one full page plate and two genera are represented *Cistanche* and *Orobanche*.