



## Notes on Dr John C. Phillips

in whose memory the Council of IUCN presents

### **The John C. Phillips Memorial Medal for Distinguished Service in International Conservation**

John Charles Phillips was born in Boston in 1876. At the age of twenty he went to Greenland with Peary, and in 1906 traveled with Theodore Lyman to Japan and Korea. During the next several years, John Phillips' travels took him on trips to Mexico, and he went up the Nile to Khartoum in 1908. He explored extensively through the Canadian Rockies and the great Northwest of the United States, and also in lower California in 1910. Just before the First World War, he visited the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petra. His thorough medical training brought him command of a field hospital during the War. During the years 1923 and 1924, accompanied by his wife and eldest son, he travelled widely through Kenya, Uganda and the Eastern Belgian Congo making zoological collections for Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology, of which he was a life-long benefactor. Over the years, John Phillips made timely contributions to the study of genetics, and his four stately volumes on the Natural History of Ducks is a widely recognized reference monograph.

John C. Phillips' work in conservation started with his town and country, and extended out to the State of Massachusetts where he was instrumental in building up the Massachusetts Fish and Game Association, the Trustees of Public Reservations, and similar private organizations to carry forward conservation activities that could not be handled by local and state government agencies. He worked constantly to increase public awareness of the forces of wildlife destruction that were increasing from year to year.

His foreign travels made him particularly aware of the need for US assistance in the field of international conservation. In 1930 when the Boone and Crockett Club founded the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection for the purpose of representing American sympathy and interest in international wild life protection, he became its first Chairman and served in that capacity until his death in 1938.

It was he who presented reports on the work of the Committee at the North American Wildlife Conferences. In 1935 Phillips became increasingly aware of the need for a comprehensive scientific review of existing knowledge of vanishing species in order to pinpoint those mammals and birds which might be saved from extinction. He raised the funds and enlisted the services of Francis Harper and



Glover M. Allen, who prepared the basic volumes on Extinct and Vanishing Mammals of the Old and New World, published in 1942 and 1945.

In 1933 when a conference was called in London to establish a Treaty for the Conservation of Wildlife in Africa, the United States was invited to send an official observer. John Phillips was selected for this assignment, and worked closely with Lord Onslow and a group of conservation leaders in developing the framework for the Convention that was subsequently to play such an important part in the whole scheme of development of game laws, parks and reserves in many parts of Africa.

Encouraged by the success of this Convention, the American Committee took steps to establish a somewhat similar Convention for the twenty-one republics in the Western Hemisphere, with the Pan American Union as the implementing agency. Phillips was active in helping with plans for this, although his untimely death prevented his realizing the full success of these efforts because this Convention did not become effective until 1940.

Other international activities in which he played an active part included the development of the Migratory Bird Treaty, which involved both Canada and Mexico.

He was amongst the first American leaders in the field of international conservation, but his views were those of a complete sportsman, who enjoyed many years of duck and upland bird shooting, as well as a limited amount of big game hunting both in the United States and abroad.

Upon his death John Phillips left the shadow of a great man, and the benediction of a great friend, to those who were fortunate enough to have been close to him. The American Committee for International Wild Life Protection has tried to carry forward his inspiring ideas in the field of international conservation, particularly through its support of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. It therefore, seems appropriate that, when asked, an admiring friend offered to support the establishment of a memorial medal giving recognition to John C. Phillips' leadership in this field, and that the awarding of the medal should be entrusted to the Council of the Union. In John C. Phillips' own words, "Agreements among nations in the field of conservation, whether based on economics or not, help to build up a more unified cultural background, to develop an aesthetic response to nature which ought to be part of the common inheritance of mankind. Science, Art and Literature have forged strong ties between nations. Perhaps to these three may be added in the future another tie through the preservation of "nature monuments" which will help to bring about a far-flung common interest in the great masterpieces of creation."

***Note by former IUCN President, Harold Coolidge, September 1963 on the occasion of the first awarding of the medal at the Eighth General Assembly of IUCN, Nairobi, Kenya.***