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EDITORIAL.



It is with great pleasure that we issue this, the first number of the Journal of the Natural History Society of Siam. That some such publication would be forthcoming was obvious from the commencement of the Society, both as a record of what was being accomplished, and as a means of binding our scattered members more closely together.

It is hoped that we shall be able to issue the Journal at least three times a year, but this will depend upon the material in hand and on the funds available. We do not propose to bind ourselves down to any fixed dates of production, as we should probably be unable to adhere to them. The difficulties to be overcome in editing such a publication as this are considerable, particularly in the matter of illustrations, most of which have to be reproduced in Europe.

The Society has now been in existence for one year, and at the time of going to press its membership numbers 64. This is many more than was anticipated in the beginning, and we may congratulate ourselves upon the rapid strides we have made, and upon the large amount of interest which we have managed to arouse in so small a community. We hope that each member will do his or her best to assist the Journal with contributions. Those who do not feel qualified with a sufficient knowledge of their subject to send in papers, can at least forward notes upon the habits of animals and plants, or local lists of collections made in different parts of the country. The

latter will be of use in working out the geographical distribution of species.

An immense amount of work in every branch of Natural History is waiting to be done in Siam—work which possesses all the pleasure and fascination attaching to any form of pioneer research. Hitherto it has been an almost untouched field. Few expert naturalists have visited the country, still fewer have lived in it, and the records of both its fauna and flora are meagre. It is not to be expected that any large number of species will be added to Science, at least among the vertebrates, but it is in the distribution of those species already known, and in the life-histories of the little-known ones, that so much remains to be accomplished.

Siam, as would naturally be expected, has species in common with those of each country which she adjoins, and although the great majority of them are found over the whole area, the limit of distribution of many lies through her own territory. Of the fauna of Burma and of the Malay Peninsula we have a fairly extensive knowledge, and the literature upon the subject relating to those countries is considerable, and is indispensable to anyone working in Siam. The same, unfortunately, cannot be said of Indo-China, in regard to which no publication of any great value has yet appeared, to which reference can be made for information concerning the many species peculiar to that country and Siam.

The two regions of which we probably know the least are, the large tract of country to the east and north of Korat, bordering upon Indo-China, and the mountainous district west of Petchaburi, adjoining the Burmese frontier. Both offer a rich field of new material and will well repay any naturalist who can find the time and money to visit them.

It is to be hoped that within a year or two the Society will be in a position to publish certain hand-lists relating to the fauna and flora of this country. These will be published separately from the *Journal*. They will naturally be far from complete, but they will form a basis for future work and should be valuable as a reference to anyone studying the particular subjects dealt with. A circular letter relating to this matter has already been issued, and it is hoped that every member will assist the Society in its undertaking. The Committee will be only too pleased to help members in every way

with the identification of specimens, and, where this cannot be done in Bangkok, to see that they are forwarded to others who have a greater knowledge of the subject.

It is believed that enough material is already in hand to issue the lists relating to the Mammals, Birds and Reptiles, and these will no doubt be the first to appear. The lists published by Capt. S. Flower in 1900 in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society* upon the Mammals and Reptiles are both very valuable, but a considerable amount of information has been gained since then, and the identity of certain species at that time obscure, has been now cleared up.

With regard to the Birds, if we except such standard works as Oates' *Birds of British Burma*, 1883, and Oates' and Blanford's volumes on Birds, in the *Fauna of British India*, 1889-1898, no publication in any way pretending to be complete has yet been issued. Both the works just mentioned naturally include a great number of the species inhabiting Siam, but in the majority of cases no record has been made of their having been found here. Of local lists, the most comprehensive is that published by Messrs. Robinson and Kloss in 1911, on *Birds from the Northern portion of the Malay Peninsula* (mainly obtained in the Muang of Trang), while Count Gyldenstolpe, again, as recently as 1912-13 made a short expedition to this country, and published last year a list of the birds he obtained.

As regards the Fishes and Insects of this country, practically nothing has been published, so far as we are aware, though several collections of Butterflies have been made—notably one by Mr. E. J. Godfrey. It is hoped that a list of the species comprised in this collection will be issued before long.

In connection with the Flora, a very extensive subject, the most prominent worker is Dr. A. F. G. Kerr, who has published some papers in the *Journal of the Siam Society*, as well as in one or two British scientific journals. Much valuable work is also being done by the officers of the Forest Department, who have for some time past been making systematic collections of the plants of Siam, and forwarding them to Kew (the Botanical headquarters of Great Britain), where they are being investigated, and the results published from time to time.

We include elsewhere in this number a Catalogue of the works

upon Natural History relating to Siam. It is, we believe, with the possible exception of short articles that may have appeared in scientific journals, a complete list of all the literature which has so far appeared in the English language.

We would conclude by repeating once more our sincere request that every member will endeavour to contribute something towards the welfare of the Society and its Journal. We are still in our infancy and upon our trial. It will depend very largely upon the results of the next year or two whether the Society is to retain its place or not as one of the useful and permanent institutions of this country.
