

World of Nature

IT may be true that "the proper study of Mankind is Man," but nearly all of us prefer to take constant refreshing glimpses at the other more innocent forms of life. Though in the majority of cases the cares of adult life preclude us from retaining the "collections" of our childhood, memories of bird-nesting, of butterflies embalmed in match-boxes or albums of squashed flowers help us to share nostalgically in the achievements of the modern naturalist. The popularity on the air of such speakers as Crosbie Morrison and Dr. R. A. Falla indicates the appeal that natural history has for most listeners.

A selection of three programmes from a BBC series entitled *The Naturalist* will be broadcast soon from 3YC and later from other stations. They are produced by Desmond Hawkins and Tony Soper, and each programme takes the

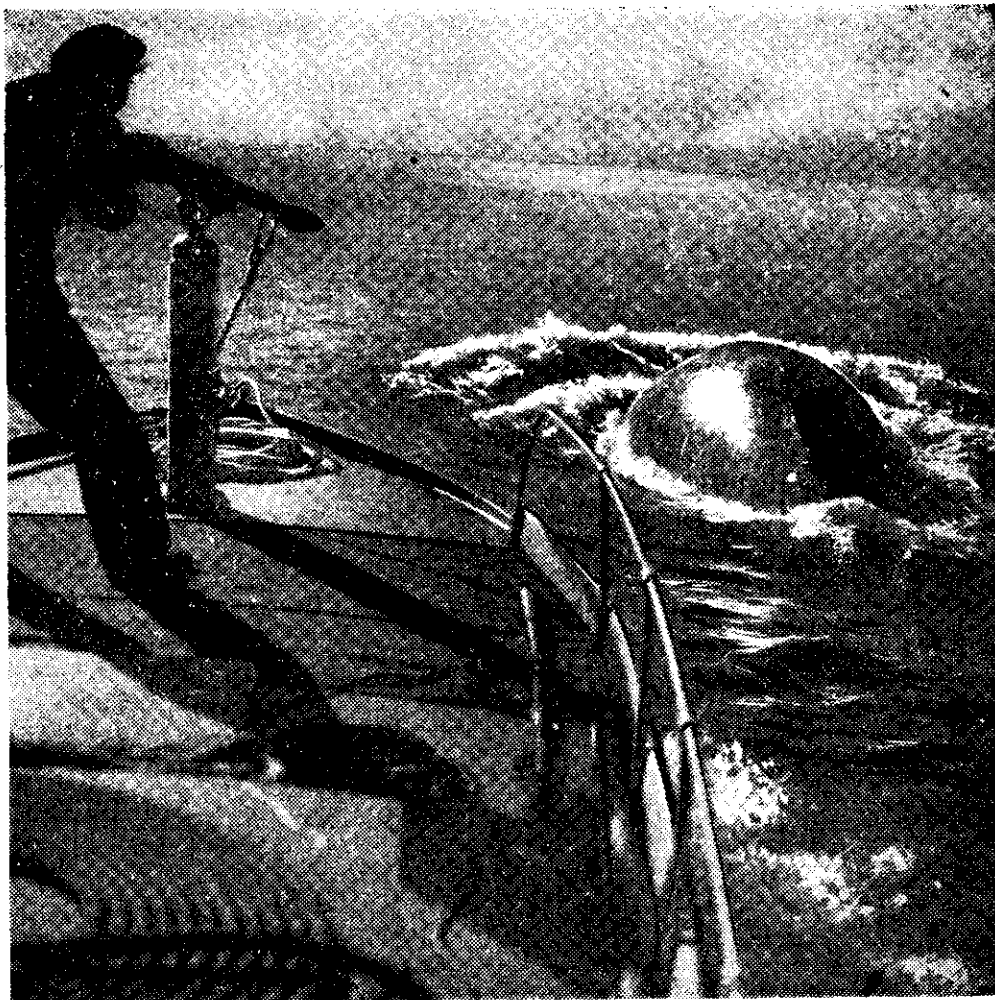


BBC photograph
MAXWELL KNIGHT

form of a discussion under the chairmanship of Maxwell Knight.

The first of them will be about whales, the largest living mammals. "Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook?" queries the Book of Job; this is answered today by the huge factory-ships and their attendant chasers that every year steam south to hunt the whale. These floating towns and the speedy chasers mounted with the Sven Foyn harpoon gun are a far cry from the first whalers who attacked the whale in the shallows with spear and lance. New Zealand's connection with whaling has persisted for a long time, and is an important one. In the Auckland Islands lie the bones of a M. Lefrançois who, according to D'Urville, committed suicide when a harpoon gun he had invented turned out a total failure. And it was men like Paddy Gilroy in the big *Chance* with a crew of Maori friends and relations, that developed the Solander grounds, later immortalised in Bullen's *Cruise of the Cachalot*.

In this programme, Dr. Harrison Matthews, Director of the London Zoo, discusses the subject of whales with Dr. F. C. Fraser, whale expert at the Natural History Museum in London, who has himself hunted them in the Antarctic.



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The other talks to be heard are *Plant and Animal Introductions*, dealing with the movements of plants and animals from country to country, the speakers being J. Edward Lousely, a distinguished amateur botanist, and Dr. Maurice Burton, nature editor of the *Illustrated Lon-*

don News; and lastly, *Popular Fallacies in Natural History*, in which Dr. Burton and L. Hugh Newman, an entomologist and butterfly farmer, discuss the erroneous beliefs to which many people cling when they judge merely by appearances. The talk on whales will be heard from 3YC at 7.30 on April 28.

THREE THOUSAND MILES OF RIVER

THE special Sunday morning feature for April 29, *The Fulness of the Nile*, is written by one of the top writers for the BBC, Louis Macneice. Famed for his radio play *The Dark Tower*, and for his script to the Everest film, Macneice has a flair for producing programmes of unusual interest. His latest assignment began in Egypt, where, for a Commonwealth series on Africa, he was asked to prepare a radio picture of the most famous river in the world—El-Bahr, the Nile. Three thousand miles of the river's course he travelled by boat and air, from the Delta to the borders of Uganda. The Nile, he found, flowed past scenes of astonishing variety—past tall black fishermen, who stood like statues on the rocks at the Fula rapids, past the cotton crops of the famous "Gezira cotton scheme," past the Royal Tombs embedded in the hills in the Valley of Kings, to Cairo itself, where the new vigorous army regime were planning many reforms, including new uses of the Nile.

He found he had been pitched into a scene that exhilarated, saddened, intrigued, confused and occasionally bored him. Haunting him were the great figures of the past, the pyramid builders, Moses, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra. Crowding in upon him were the present-day problems that this river presents to the countries that use its waters. And he came to the conclusion that to write up the Nile in an orderly fashion was a mug's game. Instead he decided to use "a suggestive or glancing technique," to present the main character, the river itself, through a quick and kalaidoscopic succession of facts, figures, quotations, impressions and "character"

camera angles. He has combined ancient and modern by dramatic reconstruction—recreating history of

a river which he describes as "a chain which binds us all to our earliest past and a spinal cord which is still as alive as ever." The programme will be presented on April 29, at 9.30 a.m., from all YAs and 4YZ.



RIGHT: The Nile is a trade-route for these feluccas, as well as a source of fertility for Egypt and the Sudan