

# OPERATION NOAH

When the main Ord River Dam is completed and begins to fill in November or December this year, a Western Australian "Operation Noah" will be set in motion to save the threatened wildlife in the Kununurra area.

A special sub-committee of the Western Australian Wild Life Authority has been making plans and preparations for a rescue operation similar to that undertaken in Africa when the building of the Kariba Dam flooded an area of approximately 2,000 square miles. Members of the sub-committee are the Chief Warden of Fauna, Mr. Harry Shugg; World Authority on Western Australian birds, Dr. Dom Serventy; two farmer-conservationists from the Katanning and Quairading districts, Messrs. Neville Beeck and Henry Hall; and the Deputy Director of the W.A. Museum, Mr. John Bannister.

A brief study of the area has already been made, and the Museum will undertake a further survey in September and October. The survey team will attempt to determine the species, numbers and distribution of the fauna which will be significantly affected by the flooding, and make recommendations to the sub-committee, based on their studies. Investigations are also being carried out to determine the likely extent of flooding and the potential areas of high ground which could become island refuges or suitable relocation areas. Since the extent of the flood area could vary between 200 and 800 square miles depending on the seasonal rains, varying plans will be needed to cover every eventuality.

Final plans for the actual rescue operation cannot be drawn up until the museum survey team have made their recommendations, but since the rescuers must be ready to move at a moment's notice, some of the necessary equipment is already being purchased. Two 17 ft. 6 in. aluminium boats with powerful outboard motors will be used, backed-up by a spotter plane in constant radio contact. The plane will survey the area daily reporting on blind gullies and other difficult areas to which animals have been driven by the rising water. The boats will be manned by strong swimmers capable of going overboard to rescue certain species if necessary. Some animals such as water buffalo will be able to swim out, but kangaroos will be placed in onion bags and trussed tightly enough to prevent them injuring themselves. The smaller animals and snakes will be placed in burlap bags.

The project has been made possible by a Government grant of \$12,500, and private donations from members of the public are also being received. In addition, offers of active help are received daily, which the Department finds most gratifying since it indicates an awareness and sense of responsibility for the survival of our native fauna. It is thought, however that the fully-trained and qualified members of the rescue teams will be able to carry out the operation without additional assistance.