

OBITUARY

CAREL PIETER JOHANNES DE HAAS

CAREL ("CHARLES") PIETER JOHANNES DE HAAS was born at Breda, Holland, on May 20, 1895. It was at Breda, where his father held a military rank, that he received his education together with his younger brother, who died during World War II. Information is at the moment lacking as to DE HAAS's earlier years, but as he often hinted at himself, already as a boy he took a deep interest in Natural History subjects. In 1911 DE HAAS went to the College of Agriculture at Wageningen, but since his main interests were devoted to tropical cultivated plants, he moved to Deventer where he attended the Colonial Agricultural School. His student years were bright and unconcerned, and in 1914 he passed the examinations easily. On competing for a planter's job in the East Indies he was soon called to follow one of his best school friends from Deventer, with whom he entered the employ of the same Company. He became an estate assistant on various plantations, and in 1921 he entered the tea estate Goalpara near Sukabumi, West Java. On September 22, 1924, he married MARGARETHA BODOM, and in 1927 he was transferred to Tjibatu where he secured an appointment as estate manager at Nandjungdjaja. Here he stayed until 1934. In the years which followed DE HAAS was manager of the tea and cinchona plantation of Bandjarwangi, near Tjikadjang. The fifteen years which the DE HAAS spent in the beautiful Priangan hills were undoubtedly the happiest they enjoyed together as a family.

At the time of the Japanese invasion, in 1942, DE HAAS served as an instructor with the Auxiliary Forces; — after his internment at Tjimahi, towards the end of the next year, he was sent to Singapore and remained there as a prisoner of war until the liberation, in 1945. Having not yet met his wife and children again, who at that time were still interned at Bandung, he returned to Holland in November, and it was not until 1946 that the family was reunited. After four years constraint he cherished the hope to see his beloved Priangan mountains once more. Satisfying his ambitions, he was finally asked to take charge again of his former estate Bandjarwangi at Tjikadjang. It is well remembered though, how isolated and worried DE HAAS felt on finding his factory ruined and the plantations abandoned. In spite of this setback he accepted the position of Agricultural Divisionary Advisor of the "Algemeen Landbouw Syndicaat" at Garut and went to work with apparently inexhaustible mental and physical energy. By his charm and cheerfulness it is not surprising that he won

considerable support for his projects and acquired great local merit. Then, quite unexpectedly, as fate would have it, came the end. In the afternoon of September 25, 1949, on returning home with Mrs DE HAAS from a three days' visit to Bogor, where they had visited several friends and the Museum, his car crashed near Trogong, and both he and his wife were killed almost instantly.

Although, at the request of the Planter's Association and various local societies, he had a busy time studying and advising on problems associated with his job, DE HAAS had numerous hobbies.

Before his marriage DE HAAS had collected beetles and butterflies; but since the necessary utensils were lacking to keep his treasures out of the reach of the usual insect pests, he soon gave up collecting insects and began to extend his interests to living animals. He delighted in building huge cages and terrariums for native birds and reptiles which were constantly brought in by the native population, and there were seldom periods when civets, slow loris and young monitors and snakes were not to be found in his garden. His ardent love of snakes never eclipsed that for other animals, as witness his interest in the composition and ecology of the local fish and bird faunas, and his keen observations on insects, which revived in later years. As late as 1939 and 1940 he made a fine collection of mammals and birds for the Bogor (Buitenzorg) Museum and his significant collection of gobiid fishes of the Priangan presented to the Leiden Museum is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the local fresh-water fauna. As is well known, however, his main interests ever since 1929 lay with the Javanese snakes, of which he acquired an unrivalled knowledge, especially of their habits and life histories.

At the outset various museums were supplied with his captures, small numbers of living viperids and cobras being sent regularly to the Pasteur Institute at Bandung. Some problems in which he first became interested in 1930 were the geographical distribution and the relative abundance of the various snake species within a limited area, and also the possibilities of a specific breeding season. These problems he tried to investigate by methods carried out over a prolonged period. When he started collecting assiduously, the beginning was made of what ultimately became a very large and representative collection, which was deposited in the Leiden Museum. Almost every spare minute was spent on sexing and measuring living specimens which, as time went on, were showered upon him in ever increasing numbers by the Sundanese hands working on the estate, first at Nandjungdjaja (1932-1933) and later at Bandjarwangi (1935-1939). His publication on this subject in Treubia (1941) is the result of much careful observation and recording.

Of recent years the scope of the work on snakes undertaken by him was altered considerably. As a result of the hopeless confusion in synonymy and the difficulty in obtaining the correct names for his species,

he became interested in taxonomic problems. He was disappointed that apparently no museum systematist would endeavour to write a new Hand-list of Indo-Australian Snakes, which indeed was badly needed, and after mature deliberation decided to do it himself. For this purpose he spent most of his time in Holland at the museums, travelling to and fro between Amsterdam and Leiden and receiving much help and encouragement from the leading zoologists at these institutions. Untiring in his zeal to make his check-list as complete and up-to-date as possible, the literature on snakes became the absorbing interest, and a brisk correspondence with herpetologists all over the world dealing with the classification of the snakes lasted until the day before his death. It is a source of satisfaction to the author, as it will be to DE HAAS' many other friends, to know that in one of his last letters to his son ERIC in Australia he cheerfully announced the completion of his "book" and the urgency of a final brushing up at Bogor. This he was able to accomplish during his brief stay at Bogor, just before he met his tragic death. Fortunately the manuscript of his "Checklist of the Snakes of the Indo-Australian Archipelago", which is published below, was left behind.

DE HAAS had a busy and restless life. All that he did was done with enjoyment and with great and infectious enthusiasm. He was especially happy and stimulated when talking on some scientific topic to museum people and others interested in biological problems. His wide circle of friends in all walks of life will remember him as a stimulating friend and companion.

M. A. LIEFTINCK.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

by

C. P. J. DE HAAS.

1933. *Drycphis prasinus* BOIE. De Tropische Natuur, 22: 131.
1934. Het jeugdkleed van *Dipsadomorphus cynodon* BOIE. De Tropische Natuur, 23: 154.
- Slangenvangsten. De Tropische Natuur, 23: 235-239, with 4 photographs of *Amblycephalus carinatus* (BOIE), *Dipsadomorphus cynodon* (BOIE), *jaspideus* (DUM. & BIBR.), and *nigriceps* (GTHR).
1935. *Xenodermus javanicus* REINH. De Tropische Natuur, 24: 87.
- Zweefslangen. De Tropische Natuur, 24: 118-119.
1936. Slangenbeet. De Tropische Natuur, 25: 86.
- Een gevecht met een merkwaardigen afloop. De Tropische Natuur, 25: 206-207, fig.
- Het balderen van *Centropus*, de doedoet. De Tropische Natuur, 25: 207-208.

1937. Over een eieren leggend wijfje van *Lamprophorus dorsalis*. De Tropische Natuur, 26: 13-16, 2 photographs.
- Eenige aantekeningen over *Haplopeltura boa* (BOIE). De Tropische Natuur, 26: 101-104, 3 photographs.
- De Tando. De Tropische Natuur, 26: 151-156, 2 fgs., 3 photographs.
- *Helictis orientalis* HORSF. De Tropische Natuur, 26: 193-194, 2 photographs.
1938. *Naja bungarus* SCHLEGEL. De Tropische Natuur, 27: 37-38.
1940. Het genus *Natrix*. De Tropische Natuur, 30: 23-31, 6 fgs, 1 photograph.
- Een merkwaardig biologisch verschijnsel. De Tropische Natuur, 30: 59-64, 1 map, 5 photographs.
1941. Some Notes on the Biology of Snakes and on their Distribution in two Districts of West-Java. Treubia, 18: 327-375, 8 graphs.
1949. The Genus *Natrix* in the Collection of the Raffles Museum and its Distribution in the Malay Peninsula. Bull. Raffles Mus. 19: 78-97.
- De Koningscobra. De Indische Jager, 3: 92-94.
1950. Checklist of the Snakes of the Indo-Australian Archipelago. Treubia, 20: 511-625. (Issued posthumously.)
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