

CITES to permit sales of ivory stocks from Namibia and Zimbabwe

On 10 February 1999 the Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), at its meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, agreed to allow Namibia and Zimbabwe to each go forward with a single shipment of existing ivory stocks to Japan. The money from the sales will go to support conservation and community development projects in the two elephant range states.

The CITES Standing Committee agreed that the conditions set for an experimental and limited trade in ivory following the June 1997 decision at the 10th Meeting of the Parties to CITES to permit some highly controlled exports of ivory for the first time since 1989, had been met by two of the three intended exporters and in the case of the recipient, Japan. As a result, Namibia and Zimbabwe may ship 13.8 tonnes and 20 tonnes, respectively, of their ivory stocks to Japan on or after 18 March 1999. Botswana, the other African country that also wants to sell its ivory, was found not to have satisfied one important condition and will be subject to a further inspection mission by the CITES Secretariat's verification team before any final decision is made.

The Geneva meeting agreed on the procedures for halting the ivory trade if there is evidence of increased poaching or of non-compliance with the conditions.

IUCN's new partnership with business

At its 50th anniversary celebrations in Fontainebleau, France, in November 1998, IUCN—the World Conservation Union launched the IUCN Business Advisory Panel. Corporate leaders, acting in their individual capacities, will be invited to join the panel, which will be established in 1999 to advise the IUCN on how to forge long-term working relationships between the conservation world and key industrial sectors. The private sector manages a high proportion of the world's natural resources and IUCN will seek to influence business policies and practices while accepting that business may wish to influence conservation thinking and actions. IUCN President, Yolande Kakabadse, urged all business sectors that benefit from and have an impact on biological diversity—agriculture, pharmaceuticals, oil and gas, mining, forestry, fisheries, communications and financial services—to establish corporate biodiversity plans by the end of 2000. Michel Le Paire, President of Volkswagen France, the first major long-term corporate sponsor of IUCN, underlined the need for IUCN's international profile to match its global role as the world's biggest network of scientists and environment-

al specialists. He said he had secured the support of BBD, the world's largest advertising agency, to help launch an international awareness campaign in favour of IUCN's goals to foster sustainable development.

Conserving biodiversity in Europe

Nearly everywhere in Europe nature is under pressure as a result of the direct social and economic interests of various groups, writes Peter Bos, Chairman of the National Agencies of Centre Naturopa in a recent issue of *Strategy Bulletin* (no. 12, December 1998, Council of Europe). Any measures to conserve nature must inevitably take account of these groups. He argues that, while there is a danger that taking the needs and attitudes of other groups into account could erode nature protection measures, in most situations co-operation with other stakeholders is likely to result in considerable net benefits for ecological objectives.

For conservationists, actively dealing with people outside the conservation community, looking for common ground within potentially conflicting interests, is of growing importance. It requires communication skills, in which most staff of conservation institutions have not been trained. In order to rectify this situation, several activities are under way as part of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, an innovative and proactive approach to stop and reverse the degradation of biological and landscape diversity values in Europe. In September 1999, the European Centre of Nature Conservation will publish a *Manual on Communication for Nature Conservation*. It will focus particularly on issues and challenges facing nature conservationists in Central and Eastern Europe, but will also be a useful guide for anyone who is interested in the role communication plays in making nature conservation policy successful. Training programmes are also being run on communications skills for conservation officers.

The Strategy's vision for the future is to achieve conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity for the whole continent of Europe and all its regions within 20 years.

- It addresses all biological and landscape initiatives under one European approach.
- It promotes the integration of biological and landscape diversity considerations into social and economic sectors.
- It reinforces the implementation of existing measures and identifies additional actions that need to be taken over the next two decades.
- It provides a framework to promote a consistent approach and common objectives for national and regional action to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Strategy is a European response to support implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The drafting group was led by the European Centre for Nature Conservation and it was endorsed at the Pan-European Ministerial Conference 'Environment for Europe' in October 1995 in Sofia, Bulgaria. Fifty-four countries are involved, all of which are member countries of the UN Economic Commission for Europe, as well as all international governmental organizations and NGOs involved in nature conservation, biodiversity and environment protection in Europe.

More information about the Strategy is available on the Web at: <http://www.ecnc.nl>

Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Since 1987, driven by the fact that 70 per cent of land in the USA is privately owned, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has been working with private landowners to restore and protect fish and wildlife habitats. The programme—now called Partners for Fish and Wildlife—started by focusing on restoring wetlands. From 810 ha of wetlands restored in 1987 the programme grew to embrace native prairies, riparian corridors and streams. Since its inception it has engaged in over 17,500 co-operative habitat restoration agreements with private landowners and restored 1469 sq km of wetlands, 1141 sq km of prairie grassland and 2575 km of riparian and stream habitats.

The programme operates on a strictly voluntary basis and no funds are provided for purchase, rent, lease or incentive payments for use of the land for habitat projects. Instead, in exchange for an agreement from the landowner to maintain the habitat project for a specified period, the Fish and Wildlife Service provides technical and financial assistance to help the landowner complete the project. About 60 per cent of the funds to run the programme come from non-federal sources, including other government agencies, industry, conservation groups and private landowners themselves.

A recent example of the kind of projects carried out started in 1994 when the Fish and Wildlife Service New York Field Office launched a project with the Central and Western New York Chapter of The Nature Conservancy to preserve and enhance French Creek. This stream, which rises in the foothills of the Allegheny Plateau in the south-western corner of New York State, is one of the most biologically diverse aquatic systems in north-eastern USA. The 3100-sq-km watershed is home to 66 species of fish and 25 species of mussel. It supports 98 rare or endangered species of plants and animals. To date the partnership has fenced 48 km of French Creek for four landowners in order to limit cattle access along the stream

banks. This has allowed vegetation to grow and stabilized the banks, as well as limited the detrimental physical, chemical and biological effects of intensive livestock use of the stream.

Another project reconstructed habitat for an endangered butterfly—the Karner blue *Lycaeides melissa samuelis*. It started in 1995 with an actively involved landowner in Wisconsin who used 6 ha of retired agricultural land to replicate the Karner blue habitat, reseeding it to take into account the needs of all stages of the butterfly's life cycle. Colonization of the new habitat took place earlier than expected and new partnerships are being developed with other landowners in the butterfly's range to restore more habitat and connect small isolated populations.

Further information about the Partners programme and other examples of its projects were published in *Endangered Species Bulletin*, XXIII(5), 4–19.

PORI—A landmark project to protect Tarangire

Tarangire, in eastern Tanzania, near Lake Manyara in the Rift Valley, was established as a national park in 1969 and covers c. 2590 sq km of biologically diverse habitat. In the late 1980s, Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) and the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) selected Tarangire as the site for an experiment in community conservation, a programme designed to help local people realize the economic benefits that can be derived from conserving natural resources. Through the years AWF has nurtured relationships with village elders and local organizations that continue today. Now, AWF is undertaking an ambitious new conservation effort that encompasses the entire Tarangire ecosystem—not only the park but the corridors used during the great migrations of antelope, wildebeest and other species in their seasonal searches for food and water. The project has been named PORI, an acronym for Partnership Options for Resource-Use Innovation and a Swahili word meaning 'wild' or 'wilderness'. With a grant from the US Agency for International Development and in collaboration with organizations as varied as the Masai association, Inyua e Maa, and the US National Park Service, the project aims to improve the outlook for ecosystem management and the well-being of people living in the region. In collaboration with these neighbours, AWF through the PORI project is developing an overarching strategy that addresses conservation, land management and development for the Tarangire ecosystem.

Much of the effort will be devoted to promoting and managing tourism and to this end the US National Park Service plans to train Tarangire staff in tourism management and visitor services. Tarangire is less visited than

other parks in the region yet has a great deal to offer tourists. The park has more than 300 bird species, including ostrich and kori bustard, and the Tarangire River, the only source of water in the region, attracts spectacular migrations of elephant, wildebeest, zebra, oryx, eland and buffalo during the dry season.

Efforts will also be concentrated on expanding community-based management of natural resources, especially in neighbouring pastoral lands, and developing local wildlife-related businesses that are environmentally sound. The AWF will arrange study tours for local leaders to see how other communities manage their natural resources. This will help them inventory their own resources and find ways to accommodate the community's needs with those of wildlife. Expanding park ties to local groups enlarges the area that is devoted to conservation and PORI, according to the AWF, has the potential to completely change the way the world looks at ecosystem management.

Source: *Wildlife News* (African Wildlife Foundation), 33(4).

Saving biodiversity in Korea's Demilitarized Zone

Twenty-two of the world's leading environmentalists and Korean experts have joined in a campaign to transform the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea into a system of nature reserves and protected areas for conservation and peace. The DMZ Forum was established by three US institutions: the Pennsylvania State University Center for Biodiversity Research, the Institute of Public Administration, and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The DMZ, 4 × 250 km, was created by the Korean War 45 years ago. The devastated land was then left untouched by humans while nature reclaimed the corridor. It is now a sanctuary for rare birds, animals and plants and the last vestige of Korea's natural state.

The DMZ Forum officers include: three founding members, (Dr K. C. Kim, Dr Seung-ho Lee, Dr Robert J. Lee) and Ms Deborah Natsios, Natsios Young Architects. The 20-strong international Advisory Board covers a wide range of expertise and backgrounds. The Forum provides opportunities for environmentalists from both Koreas and all over the world to promote and propagate the concept of DMZ preservation and help establish the Korea Peace Bioreserves System, which would offer a natural laboratory for research and teaching.

The DMZ Forum's first conference was scheduled for 20 March 1999 and a larger conference is planned. The Forum will also undertake a landscape analysis and

biological survey of the DMZ ecosystems, galvanize global support for DMZ preservation and study, collaborate with scientists in North and South Korea, and study biodiversity and conservation in the DMZ.

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Houbara bustard conservation makes progress

The houbara *Chlamydotis undulata* (Plate 1) is a medium-sized bustard, which inhabits the arid-zone belt from north-west Africa through to China. Its prominence for conservation derives from its value, and indeed notoriety, as the traditional quarry of Arab falconers. Since the early 1960s, traditional camel-back falconry has been transformed by the development of modern transport and communications, and the increased availability of falcons (both wild-caught and captive-bred hybrids). The efficiency and intensity of hunting has increased considerably, to the detriment of local populations of houbaras, especially in Arabia and the Middle East. As a result, falconers have latterly begun hunting in other countries in Asia and North Africa, much to the alarm of conservationists in the region. While the overall population is today estimated to be at least 49,000 birds, numbers have declined greatly during this century for a variety of reasons, which include hunting and trapping, agricultural intensification and other land use changes. The houbara's future is probably best served by acknowledging the conservation benefits that would accrue from its wise use as a quarry species and establishing a sustainable management system through an Agreement under the Bonn Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

In January 1996, the Species Survival Commission of IUCN—the World Conservation Union, organized a meeting in Muscat, Oman, to discuss the conservation management of the houbara bustard in Asia and the Middle East. There were over 90 participants from 13 Range States: Afghanistan, Bahrain, India, Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Yemen. A number of recommendations were developed at the meeting, including the need to improve protection measures, carry out further research on migration and assisting Saudi Arabia to conclude an international management agreement under the Bonn Convention.

Since that meeting there has been significant progress. On the research front, the National Avian Research Centre (NARC) in Abu Dhabi in November 1997



Plate 1 Houbara (*Yoshi Eshbol*).

reported the first successful tracking by satellite of a houbara that moved from Abu Dhabi to northern China, and back again. The bird was released in February 1997, and it covered 6600 km in just 54 days. It crossed Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, to summer in the Chinese province of Xinjiang. Eight months later, the bird returned to Abu Dhabi following almost exactly the same route. The NARC is now concentrating further research efforts in this region of China. In addition, there is active co-operation between Pakistan, Uzbekistan and the UK to undertake intensive research on the ecology of Central Asia populations.

The confirmation of the integrity of the houbara population from the Gulf to China has given added impetus to international efforts by the Range States, led by Saudi Arabia, to complete a legally binding agreement on joint management of the houbara to ensure that its habitats are properly conserved, and that hunting is conducted on a sustainable basis. A draft agreement is now ready for distribution, but the action plan that is intended to be an integral part of the agreement is still required. The National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development of Saudi Arabia hosted an expert meeting in October 1998, in Riyadh. The outline of the action plan was agreed, together with a timetable for its completion. The Bonn Convention Secretariat expects the agreement and action plan to be formally distributed by the end of April this year.

With the situation in Asia and the Middle East improving steadily, the spotlight now increasingly falls on the North African populations. Here, the political situation in Algeria and the far south of Morocco (former Western Sahara) means that pressure from hunting is presently very slight. In Morocco, there have been significant investments in captive-breeding centres seeking to restore locally reduced populations. These are now operating at Agadir and near Missouri. Perhaps more importantly, King Hassan deserves congratulations for creating a substantial Royal Game Sanctuary on the Tamlelt Plain aimed at conserving wild houbara populations. More initiatives like this are needed, not only elsewhere in Morocco where good populations of wild houbara still survive, but also across the whole of North Africa. Perhaps the time has come for the Maghreb Five countries (Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Tunisia) to follow the example of the Asian Range States and consider how the conservation tools of the Bonn Convention can be applied as successfully in their region.

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