

INTERNATIONAL

Antarctic Treaty update

In June plans for an historic ban on mining in Antarctica faltered when the US refused to sign an environmental protocol banning mining and mineral prospecting, which had been agreed in April in Madrid (see *Oryx*, 25, 136). After 50 years a review could be called but the ban would stay in force unless all 26 treaty members with voting rights overturned it. The US returned to Madrid with a new proposal and the treaty members changed the agreement to suit US demands. Now, after 50 years, if only three-quarters of the 26 full members agree, a country that wants to mine can simply wait 3 years before going ahead. If all 26 members do not agree within the 3-year period, the country can then leave the entire environmental protocol. It is expected that the new agreement will be signed in Bonn in October.

Source: *New Scientist*, 29 June 1991, 15; 13 July 1991, 19.

Two more for CITES

Namibia acceded to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora on 18 December 1990 (effective 18 March 1991) and Bulgaria acceded on 16 January 1991 (effective 16 April 1991). The total number of CITES Parties is now 110, including the consolidation of the two Germanies as the Republic of Germany.

Romania joins Ramsar

Romania became a Contracting Party to the Ramsar Convention on 21 May 1991 and designated the Danube

Delta for the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Source: *IWRB News*, July 1991, 2.

Kenya joins World Heritage

Kenya has become the 116th country to sign the World Heritage Convention.

Bulgaria for Bern

Bulgaria acceded to the Bern Convention (Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats) on 1 May 1991.

Source: *Council of Europe natura newsletter*, 91–3, 1.

Demand for rhino horn soars

Demand for rhino horn products in China, Thailand, South Korea and Taiwan has risen dramatically since the mid-1980s, encouraging a rise in retail price to \$US60,000 per kg and a surge in poaching, especially in India, Nepal, Java and Sumatra. Thailand and China are both Parties to CITES but have failed to enforce trade bans and South Korea has so far refused to join CITES.

Source: *WWF*, 21 April 1991.

Consultative group for TFAP

A meeting in Geneva in April between the co-founders (World Resources Institute, World Bank, FAO and United Nations Development Programme) of the Tropical Forest Action Programme (TFAP) concluded that a consultative group (CG) was needed to give international leadership and quality control to the TFAP. The CG would be chaired by a Vice-President of the World Bank and UNDP would provide a secretariat and funding. The group would

comprise 28–37 representatives of tropical forest countries, aid donor countries and NGOs and it would complement the work of the existing Forestry Advisers Group and the FAO-based TFAP secretariat. The IUCN has expressed concern that the CG is likely to overlap with the TFAP Forest Advisory group in membership and function and that this may lead to duplication and inefficiency.

Source: *IUCN Forest Conservation Programme Newsletter*, June 1991, 3.

Geneva Convention to protect nature?

Deliberate destruction of the environment during a war should be declared a war crime, according to an international panel of lawyers and environmentalists at a conference in London in June. The Environment Commissioner of the European Community promised support for a Geneva Convention proposed by Greenpeace to protect nature during times of war. The proposal is to be taken to the General Assembly of the UN in October.

Source: *New Scientist*, 8 June 1991, 13.

EUROPE AND NORTH AFRICA**Finland revises nature legislation**

The Finnish Parliament has endorsed a partial revision of the Nature Conservation Act, which will improve protection for threatened species. It provides for the preparation of protection plans for all species in need of them and requires landowners with threatened species to undertake habitat management measures.

Provincial governments will have powers of compulsory purchase to ensure habitat protection. So far 71 species have been listed for special protection.

Source: *Suomen Luonto*, 1991, 50 (3), 43.

New park for Norway

Norway has established its 17th and largest national park, Saltfjellet-Svartisen. It adjoins two other protected areas and together they cover more than 250,000 ha. Lying astride the Arctic Circle the protected area stretches from fjords in the west to the mountains of the Swedish border in the east, taking in Norway's largest glacier. Source: *Council of Europe natura newsletter*, 91-2, 3.

Ireland's whale sanctuary

The Irish government has declared its seas a Whale and Dolphin Sanctuary, the first European country to do so. Under existing legislation the hunting of all cetaceans has been totally banned within 200 miles (328 km) of Ireland's coast.

Source: Government Information Services, Dublin, 7 June 1991.

Peat enquiry

Plantlife, the UK plant trust, has set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate whether there has been real progress in the conservation of Britain's peat bogs. Evidence has been invited from a variety of quarters and will be assessed by commissioners drawn from academic, public and industrial sectors in preparation for three public hearings to take place between September and November.

Information: Melanie Oxley,

Commission Organizer, Plantlife, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

Black stork returns to Ardenne

In the early 1980s a plan was launched to establish a network of nature reserves in Belgium and Luxembourg for the black stork *Ciconia nigra*, which used to nest in the Ardenne in the nineteenth century. Sites are being acquired, starting with 34 covering a total of 319 ha of grassland and marshes. Sightings of the bird have increased and some eggs have hatched.

Source: *Council of Europe natura newsletter*, 90-12, 3.

Park downgraded

The European Council has refused to renew the status of the Pyrenees National Park because France has done nothing to improve the situation for brown bears *Ursus arctos* and other wildlife. It was warned 5 years ago that protection was inadequate. Since then plans have gone ahead for a road through the bears' habitat, a ski resort has been built in the park, and the environment ministry has been arguing with local politicians and hunters over its attempts to ban hunting and traffic in the area crucial to the bears' survival.

Source: *New Scientist*, 29 June 1991, 20.

Chamois back on the Majella Massif

Twelve Abruzzo chamois *Rupicapra pyrenaica ornata* were reintroduced to the Majella Massif in Abruzzo National Park, Italy, in July. The subspecies had become extinct there several decades ago

because of hunting and intensive sheep-rearing. There are only 400-450 Abruzzo chamois left in total, most of them in the Val di Rose or the Camosciara Massif and about 20 in the Faunistic Area of Bisegna in the Abruzzo National Park.

Source: WWF-Italy, 9 July 1991.

A Sicilian turtle

In 1990, for the first time for more than 5 years, a loggerhead turtle *Caretta caretta* nested on Lampedusa, one of the Pelagian Islands, Sicily. About 100 volunteers guarded the nest and kept tourists and islanders informed; 68 hatchlings emerged.

Source: *Council of Europe natura newsletter*, 90-12, 3.

Fishermen threaten to kill monk seals

Local fishermen in the Northern Sporades in the Aegean Sea are threatening to kill one monk seal *Monachus monachus* each week (there are only 20 in the colony) until the Greek Government renews an agreement that gave them exclusive fishing rights in the waters around the islands. When the agreement lapsed in May industrial trawlers moved in; one boat alone was reported to have taken 40 tonnes of fish. The fishermen used to kill seals until 1986, when a marine national park was set up with EC money, the deal being that the fishermen protected the seals in turn for fishing rights. Source: *The Guardian*, 21 June 1991.

Akamas peninsula threatened by tourism

The Akamas peninsula on the west coast of Cyprus is one of the island's last coastal areas undeveloped for tourism. Its

flora includes at least 20 rare or endemic species and two species of turtle, *Caretta caretta* and *Chelonia mydas*, visit its beaches. Environmentalists are fighting plans for tourist complexes and launching a campaign to establish a national park.

Contact: Friends of Akamas, PO Box 5204, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Cyprus shooting ban upheld

President George Vassiliou of Cyprus confirmed that a ban on the spring shooting of migratory birds would be upheld this year.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, May 1991, 558.

Sultan Marsh drying up

Turkey's Sultan Marsh, a wetland of international importance for waterfowl, is drying up because of climatic conditions and the national water company's drainage programme.

Source: *Council of Europe natura opa newsletter*, 90–12, 3.

Malta bird shoot continues

Up to 3 million birds are still being shot in Malta every year, while several millions more are trapped. More than 17,000 of Malta's 350,000 people have gun licences and this means there are more than 50 licensed guns per sq km of Malta's countryside. Bird protection laws passed in 1980 are ignored. Relations between hunters and conservationists are strained, with anti-shooting demonstrations ending in violence. Successive Maltese governments have supported the hunt but the current government has taken one step forward by establishing a three-man Environmental Unit in the



Turtle dove: subject of a hunting ban in parts of Spain.

police force.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, May 1991, 324–329.

Turtle doves not to be shot in Extremadura

The Hunting Council of the Extremadura region of Spain has agreed to ban the hunting of the turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur*, which has suffered large declines, in response to a campaign by the Iberian Council for Nature Protection. The Council is hoping to persuade other regions, especially Castilla La Mancha and Andalucía, to follow suit.

Source: Consejo Ibérico para la Defensa de la Naturaleza, c/Cuba 10, 06800 Merida, Spain.

Screwworm beaten

The screwworm fly *Cochliomyia hominivorax* invasion that threatened Libya and neighbouring countries appears to have been contained (see *Oryx*, 25, 66). Millions of artificially bred sterile flies have been released to prevent the invaders mating successfully and in the first 6 months of 1991 only six cases of infested livestock were reported compared with 2000 in the same

period in 1990.

Source: *The Guardian*, 21 June 1991.

Whales and military activity

Several live mass strandings of goose-beaked whales *Ziphius cavirostris* and other whales have been reported at Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands in recent years. The strandings in 1985, 1988 and 1989 coincided with military activity in the area and it is possible that naval manoeuvres could have driven the whales ashore.

Source: *Nature*, 1991, 351, 448.

AFRICA

Red lechwe thriving

The population of the red lechwe *Kobus leche leche* of the Busanga Plain in northern Kafue National park, Zambia, is one of the few protected groups of this subspecies in its entire range in southern Africa (see *Oryx*, 21, 233–235). It was first afforded protection in 1950 and numbers have since increased from 100 to 3427 in 1985 and to 4844 in 1990. It now occurs outside the boundary of the park in the Kasonso-Busanga Game Management Area. The average annual increase is slowing down, perhaps because the antelope is reaching its carrying capacity.

Source: *Busanga Plain Red Lechwe Population 1990*. Report to National Parks and Wildlife Service, Zambia.

Game translocation

Ten giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis* and 29 gemsbok *Oryx gazella* were successfully translocated from Etosha National Park to Purros in the Kaokoveld last August as part of the Namibian

Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism's programme to restock key wildlife areas. This was the first time in Namibia's conservation history that game from a national park had been moved to a communal area. Local Purros communities have been given responsibility for the animals. The area's giraffes were lost to poachers in the late 1970s.

Source: *Endangered Wildlife*, March 1991, 25.

Gooseberry invader

Barbados gooseberry *Pereskia aculeata*, a native of South America, is invading indigenous forests at Port St Johns and Coffee Bay on the Transkei Wild Coast. The plant has not been reported this far south in southern Africa before, although there is grave concern about the threat posed by *Pereskia* to indigenous forests along the Natal coast. The creeper scrambles into tree canopies where it forms an impenetrable blanket. There is no known method or herbicide for killing the plant effectively and expensive clearing operations at Sezela on Natal's southern coast have had disappointing results.

Source: *Veld & Flora*, June 1991, 39.

Nesting turtles protected in Mozambique

Nesting leatherback and loggerhead turtles, *Dermochelys coriacea* and *Caretta caretta*, have been totally protected on Bazaruto and Benguera islands in Mozambique as a result of an Endangered Wildlife Trust/Southern African Nature Foundation project, which started in 1989. Loggerhead hatchlings were collected on emergence in 1990 to protect

them from predators, reared, and released into the Mozambique current in February 1991 when that year's hatchlings would be heading south. Islanders are supporting the project and in 1991 not one nest was disturbed; in previous years all nesting females and eggs were eaten.

Source: *Endangered Wildlife*, March 1991, 22.

Pest control modified to help magpie robin

Magpie robins *Copsychus sechellarum* survive only on Fregate island in the Seychelles and there are only 23 left. The birds that feed near human habitation have a higher mortality rate than those feeding in the forest and pesticides are suspected as the cause. The UK Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, supported by several agro-chemical companies, is supplying two new compounds, methoprene and hydroprene, to the International Council for Bird Preservation's Magpie Robin Project as alternatives to the toxic insecticides. The new compounds prevent reproduction in insects but are non-toxic to other animals and break down to acetic acid and carbon dioxide.

Source: ICBP, 8 July 1991.

ASIA (EXCLUDING INDO-MALAYA)

Siberian cranes crash in Iran

Out of the 10 Siberian or great white cranes *Grus leucogeranus* that arrived to winter in Iran in November 1990, between one and three were killed by poachers and another four were taken alive for a zoo, leaving only three–five to migrate back

to Siberia for the 1991 spring. Source: *IWRB News*, July 1991, 12.

New bird reserve in China

A bird reserve has been set up in Beidaihe, east of Beijing in Hebei province, China. Beidaihe is particularly noteworthy for the large numbers of migratory birds and a diverse range of habitats provides resting and feeding sites for many species.

Source: *Asian Wetland News*, 3 (2), 7.

Gull in peril

Saunders' gull *Larus saundersi* is feared to be in grave danger of extinction due to China's current reclamation projects. Currently known to breed in only three sites in China, the world population is estimated at 2000. In Yancheng Nature Reserve, Jiangsu province, nesting gulls are threatened by a World Bank funded project to develop shrimp farming and agriculture, while at Shuangtaizihokou National Nature Reserve in Liaoning 130 nests were discovered in recently impounded saltmarsh only after extensive reclamation had begun.

Source: *Asian Wetland News*, 3 (2), 16.

Black-necked crane's largest winter site

Some 314 black-necked cranes *Grus nigricollis* have been recorded wintering in Dashanbao, a remote high-mountain pasture and wetland in north-eastern Yunnan, China. This new site for the crane was discovered by biologists from Yunnan University and Yunnan Institute of Environmental Science. Previously Chaohai, Guizhou

province, was the largest known wintering site with 250 cranes.

Source: *Asian Wetland News*, 3 (2), 16.

Japan's Olympic plans threaten wildlife

A group of Japanese environmentalists is concerned that development for the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano prefecture, 400 km north-west of Tokyo, will threaten wildlife, including a swallowtail butterfly *Luehdofia japonica* and the Asiatic black bear *Selenarctos thibetanus*.

Source: *New Scientist*, 8 June 1991, 17.

Japan bans tortoiseshell imports

Japan is to ban imports of hawksbill turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata* (tortoiseshell) by 1993 in response to threats of US sanctions. Japan, which imported 22 tons of tortoiseshell in 1990, will limit imports to 7.5 tons between August 1991 and the end of 1992.

Source: *Bangkok Post*, 20 June 1991.

Taiwan burns ivory

In January confiscated wildlife products, including ivory, fox and leopard skins, and rhinoceros horns, worth \$US3.7 million, were destroyed in Tamsui, Taiwan.

Source: *Bangkok Post*, 1 February 1991.

INDO-MALAYA

Volcano erupts on Barren Island Nature Reserve

Barren Island, a volcano in the Andaman and Nicobar group, erupted on 6 April 1991 after

being dormant since 1884. It is a wildlife sanctuary under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act. An expedition on 26–27 June to study the effects of the eruption was unable to land due to heavy seas and due to hot lava pouring into the sea at the usual landing place. The Society for Andaman and Nicobar Ecology wants to start a monitoring programme but is hampered by insufficient funds and equipment.

Source: Samir Acharya, Co-Convener, INTACH, Andaman and Nicobar Chapter, Tarangs, Middlepoint, Port Blair, Andaman 744 101.

Spiny-tail lizards exploited

The spiny-tailed lizard *Uromastyx hardwickii* has a patchy distribution in the north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. The animals are exploited for their meat and for their fat, which is believed to be an aphrodisiac, and an estimated 4000–5000 animals are trapped each year by local tribal people in Gujarat, with 2000–3000 being sold in Ahmedabad city alone. The lizard is protected under Schedule II of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and the Gujarat Forestry Department has tried to stop the trade by confiscating large numbers of lizards from shops and markets.

Source: *Hamadryad*, 15, 1, 28.

Cut cheese production to save pandas

There are probably fewer than 40 red pandas *Ailurus fulgens* occurring as four isolated populations in Langtang National Park in Nepal. They are dying because of disturbance by large numbers of dogs, and their fir-bamboo forest habitat is being degraded by an excessive num-

ber of *chauri* (yak-cattle hybrids) kept to supply milk for cheese-making, and by overcollection of fuel wood for the cheese factories and for tourists. A solution might be to reduce cheese production and to increase its price (cheese is sold only to tourists), thus reducing the impact of grazing animals and fuel collection.

Source: *Conservation Biology* 1991, 5, 196–202.

Thailand's parks under threat

Thailand's Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, west of Chiang Mai city, is facing serious threats from poachers and developers. Hunters have eliminated larger animals and have now switched to smaller birds and mammals. Collecting for the horticultural trade has stripped the park of many rare plants and capture of beetles and butterflies for the tourist trade is depleting populations. Tourist development has already degraded native vegetation and there are plans for hotels, restaurants, car parks, roads, a fairground and sports facilities. A project for the park's restoration offers hope. The Khao Yai National Park, Thailand's oldest, is also threatened: poor boundary markers make it difficult to stop poaching and logging; tourist development and jungle food restaurants on the perimeter encourage wildlife hunting.

The Royal Irrigation Department also has plans for a dam in the park's main valley. Sources: *Bangkok Post*, 18 April 1991; *The Nation*, 5 & 20 April 1991.

Thai trade

The Thai Government has responded to international criticism of its poor record in con-

trolling illegal trade in wildlife (see *Oryx*, 25, 130–131) by promising that it will amend existing legislation and crack-down on violators. Meanwhile, on 12 April the Executive Committee of CITES decided to urge its 110 member nations to ban all trade with Thailand in wildlife products listed on CITES appendices. Orchid exports have become the first casualty of the CITES ban; the EC, US and Japan have all banned their import.

Source: *Bangkok Post*, 5, 14 & 20 April 1991; *The Nation*, 10 May 1991.

Thai park encroachment

Thailand's Forestry Department is planning to survey forest areas across the country to determine which forest reserves are being occupied illegally by people carrying false land-holding papers. The survey is the result of suspected forest encroachment by a private firm, which is building a hotel and golf course near the entrance to the Khao Yai National Park.

Source: *Bangkok Post*, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25 June 1991.

Roads in Thai parks cancelled

A planned security road through the Thung Yai Naresuan Sanctuary in Kanchanaburi province in Thailand has been cancelled and 44 others proposed by the National Security Council have been frozen pending an environmental review.

Source: *The Nation*, 24 May 1991.

Tiger reserves for Thailand

Thailand's Forestry Department is planning three tiger reserves as a result of a survey by Dr Alan Rabinowitz,

which revealed that probably no more than 250 tigers remain in the country. The proposed reserves are all in existing protected areas: Huai Kha Kaeng-Thung Yai-Umphang Wildlife Sanctuary; Phu Khieo in Chaiyaphum; and Khlong Saeng Wildlife Sanctuary in Surat Thani.

Source: *Bangkok Post*, 12 May and 15 June 1991.

Project for Thailand's dugongs

The Wildlife Fund Thailand has launched a project to preserve dugongs, which are threatened by hunting, trawlers and dynamite fishing. Laws banning hunting of dugongs are ignored, as are those prohibiting trawlers to fish within 3 km of the shore. The project is targeted on the Sikao Gulf off Trang Province because it still has good seagrass habitat. In co-operation with villagers WFT is erecting fences to exclude trawlers from the 3-km zone and is restoring habitat by cultivating and transplanting seagrass.

Source: *The Nation*, 28 February 1991.

Laos dam would flood priority conservation areas

If the proposed hydroelectric dam, Nam Theun 2, on Nakay Plateau in Khammouane province, Laos, goes ahead, 14 villages and much of the plateau would be flooded including two of the country's 14 high-priority conservation zones identified by IUCN. Most of the electricity generated would be exported to Thailand to provide much needed income. However, if the watershed is protected as a result of the dam, logging its primary forests would have to cease or be seriously curtailed and this

would mean a loss of income from Japan.

Source: *The Nation*, 24 April 1991.

Villagers relax pressure on turtles

People of Ban Laem Sai, Trang province, Thailand, who have traditionally collected and sold all the turtle eggs they could find, have agreed to allow eggs to hatch to give the turtle populations a chance to recover. The villagers say, however, that the main threat to the turtles is the large fishing trawlers that fish within the 3-km legal limit.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, April 1991, 8–9.

Unexpected ally for Cambodia's wildlife

Pol Pot, the infamous leader of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, has issued a directive calling on Cambodians not to poach wild animals. In areas where poaching is most serious the Khmer Rouge is fencing animal sanctuaries and anyone contravening Pol Pot's directive along the northern border of the country is sentenced to 4 days' labour constructing the fences. In areas under the control of the Vietnam-backed Phnom Penh regime wild animals are still offered for sale for food or medicine to Thai traders.

Source: *Bangkok Post*, 31 January 1991.

Sarawak ignores ITTO recommendations

Logging increased in Sarawak to 18 million cu. m in 1990 despite the fact that an International Tropical Timber Organization study, which took place between November 1989 and March 1990, recommended a reduction from 13 million cu. m to 9.2 million cu. m per year

in order to achieve sustainability. Lord Cranbrook, who led the Mission to Sarawak, has written to the Executive Director of ITTO expressing concern over Sarawak's disregard for the work of the ITTO Mission.

Source: Friends of the Earth, 8 June 1991.

Sarawak's new park

In April Sarawak gazetted its ninth national park, Batang Ai, which covers 2040 ha of forest north of Batang Ai Lake in Lubok Antu District adjacent to the Lanjak-Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary on the border with Indonesia. Although affected by shifting cultivation the forest still contains a large number of orang-utans *Pongo pygmaeus* because the local Iban people have a taboo against killing them. The new protected area abuts the Gunung Bentung and Karimun Nature Reserve in Indonesia and the transfrontier protected areas now cover 8000 sq km.

Source: WWF-Malaysia, 26 June 1991.

New park in Brunei

Brunei Darussalam's Minister of Industry and Primary Resources has announced plans to establish a new national park of 48,854 ha in Temburong District. The area concerned comprises Batu Apoi Forest Reserve and contains primary rain forest.

Source: Brunei Rainforest Project 1991-1992, 26 July 1991.

Good news for Bali starling

A recent count of the only remaining population of Bali starling *Leucopsar rothschildi* in the Bali Barat National Park, Indonesia, revealed 36-39 birds compared with 13-18 in March.

Good weather is partly responsible for a successful breeding season and improved site protection has also undoubtedly contributed.

Source: *World Birdwatch*, June 1991, 3.

Philippines turtle project

The Philippines government is running the Pawikan Conservation Project to conserve and manage its dwindling marine turtle resources. Nine sanctuaries have been declared but financial constraints mean that only one, on Baguan Island, is managed. This island is one of the Turtle Island Group, which supports the only major green turtle *Chelonia mydas* nesting aggregation in the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) region. The illegal trade is hard to control but project personnel at Manila airport confiscated 171 stuffed turtles and 20 turtle carapace guitars between 1989 and January 1991. In the near future the project will press for the whole Turtle Island Group to be a National Heritage Park as a step towards declaring an ASEAN Heritage Park to be managed jointly with Malaysia and Indonesia.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, April 1991, 5-7.

Endemic tree frog at risk

Romer's tree frog *Philautus romeri*—a species endemic to Hong Kong—is threatened by major development projects within the territory. It occurs only on three islands, Lamma, Lantau and Chek Lap Kok, and the latter is the site of Hong Kong's proposed Port and Airport Development Scheme, which would totally destroy the island with its freshwater marshes, excellent mangrove swamps and habitats for 32 ter-

restrial vertebrate species. The frogs on Lamma and Lantau are not secure because their habitats have no legal protection and are threatened by rapid development.

Sources: *Forum News*, May 1991, 3; *BBC Wildlife*, June 1991, 425.

Orchid smuggler imprisoned

An orchid smuggler in Hong Kong has received a 6-month prison sentence for trading in endangered plants. It was Hsu She-hua's third conviction for illegal possession of slipper orchids *Cypripedium* spp. collected in southern China. He was caught with 2269 plants in his apartment.

Source: *New Scientist*, 8 June 1991, 19.

NORTH AMERICA

Watchable Wildlife Act

The proposed Watchable Wildlife Act currently before the US Congress would offer federal grants to encourage states and private companies to put up matching funds for conservation projects for species that are not hunted, trapped or fished.

Source: *International Wildlife*, July-August 1991, 26.

Wildlife trade conflict

Two conflicting draft laws on the trade in wild birds have been put before the US Congress. One, drawn up by several conservation groups headed by WWF-US, is based on an agreement with the US pet industry and the American Federation of Aviculture; it seeks to phase out the trade over 5 years giving bird dealers time to replace imports with captive-bred birds and to work

with Third-World governments to regulate and manage captive breeding. The other, presented by a rival coalition including the UK-based Environmental Investigation Agency, calls for an immediate ban. If no compromise agreement is reached both could be rejected.

Source: *The Guardian*, 17 May 1991.

Steller sea lion listed

The Steller sea lion *Eumetopias jubatus* has been listed as Threatened by the US. It ranges from Japan through the Soviet Union's Kuril Islands, the Okhotsk Sea, the Bering Sea, the Gulf of Alaska and down to southern California. The Alaskan population has fallen from 140,000 in 1956–60 to 25,000 in 1990 and declines are apparent elsewhere. Possible causes are reductions in the availability of pollock and other prey, incidental take during fisheries, and disturbance. A recovery plan is being prepared by the US National Marine Fisheries Service.

Source: *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, January 1991, 9.

Yew news

The finding that taxol, which is obtained from the bark of the Pacific yew can be synthesized (see *Oryx*, 22, 19) is good news for cancer sufferers and conservationists. Taxol has been found to reduce breast and ovarian cancer, but many trees are needed to supply enough to treat each patient and there were fears that rising demand could eradicate the species. Meanwhile the US Forest Service is offering rewards to information leading to the capture of thieves who are stripping yew trees in Oregon's Willamette National Forest.



American Bison: one of 50 paintings of endangered species by David Shepherd being exhibited at the Tryon Gallery, 23–24 Cork Street, London W1 from 16 October to 1 November 1991.

Currently only one company is authorized by the Forest Service to harvest bark.

Sources: *The Guardian*, 1 June 1991; *New Scientist*, 1 June 1991, 20.

Logging restricted for owl

In April the US Fish and Wildlife Service proposed logging restrictions on nearly 5 million ha of Pacific Northwest forests to help save the northern spotted owl *Strix occidentalis caurina* in response to a federal court order. The restrictions, the most sweeping protection of wildlife in the history of the Endangered Species Act, could cost the region tens of thousands of jobs.

Source: *The Vancouver Sun*, 27 April 1991.

Wolf downlisting plan

A committee set up by the US Congress to develop a plan for reintroducing the endangered grey wolf *Canis lupus* into Yellowstone National Park has recommended that Congress amend the Endangered Species Act, reclassifying the 35–50

wolves in north-western Montana and central Idaho as 'experimental, non-essential'. This would allow landowners to shoot wolves that harass livestock.

Source: *International Wildlife*, July–August 1991, 27.

Nine species listed

The US Fish and Wildlife Service listed nine species under the Endangered Species Act in January. Four endemic Hawaiian plants were listed as Endangered: *Remya kauaiensis*, *R. montgomery* and *R. mauiensis* (Asteraceae) and *Isodendron hosakae* (Violaceae), which are in decline because of non-native grazing animals. The fringed campion *Silene polypetala* of Georgia and Florida survives as 15 populations threatened by logging, residential development and Japanese honeysuckle *Lonicera japonica*. *Tulotoma magnifica* is a large freshwater snail now known from only parts of the Coosa River, Alabama, and its tributaries. The yellow-blotched map turtle *Graptemys flavimaculata* is found only in the

Pascagoula River system, Mississippi, and the Florida saltmarsh vole *Microtus pennsylvanicus duke-campbelli* is known only from one saltmarsh in Florida. The Indus river dolphin *Platanista minor* was listed as Endangered; only 500 remain, mainly in the lower Indus river in Pakistan.

Source: *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, February 1991, 7–8.

Graphite mine's large bat colony

A census of a previously unsurveyed graphite mine in New York State revealed 120,000 bats, making it the largest known concentration of hibernating bats in the eastern US. About 100 endangered Indiana bats *Myotis sodalis* were among them.

Source: *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, March 1991, 10.

Warbler listed

The golden-cheeked warbler *Dendroica chrysoparia*, which breeds only in parts of central Texas and requires mature Ashe juniper *Juniperus ashei* and oak woodlands has been listed as Endangered. Urban development and clearance of juniper for pasture have left no more than 106,750 ha of suitable habitat, much of it fragmented. The warbler's winter habitat in the pine-oak forest highlands of southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, is also being destroyed and degraded.

Source: *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, January 1991, 8.

Carolina strandings

More than 50 sea turtles were stranded along the coast of

North Carolina in early December 1990, at the same time as trawling for summer flounder started. An intrusion of warm Gulf Stream water may have been responsible for the concentrations of both fish and turtles. The State of North Carolina closed state waters to trawlers on 7 December to protect the turtles and, after experimental trawling, reopened the area on 26 December, requiring each vessel to use a modified turtle excluder device and to keep a logbook to evaluate its effectiveness.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, April 1991, 5–7.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Jaguar sanctuary expanded

The government of Belize has added nearly 40,500 ha to the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary to provide additional territory for jaguars *Panthera onca*.

Source: *International Wildlife*, July–August 1991, 28.

Golden toads extinct?

Golden toads *Bufo periglenes*, which were known only from The Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve in Costa Rica, may be extinct. They were last seen in 1987, when more than 1000 gathered to mate. J. Alan Pounds, the reserve's biologist, believes that a drought in 1986–87, caused by the 1986–87 El Niño southern oscillation and exacerbated by changing regional patterns of precipitation, is to blame.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, June 1991, 381.

Restoring reefs

Experiments in Caño Island Biological Reserve, Costa Rica,

have demonstrated that transplanting living fragments of reef-building corals *Pocillopora* spp. on to the dead framework of reefs can be a successful restoration technique. Reefs in the area were devastated by the 1982–83 El Niño warming event; in some cases all the dominant coral died and recovery was hampered because the reef-building corals have low reproductive potential and recolonization depends on the availability of living coral fragments broken off in storms or by fish.

Source: *Conservation Biology*, 1991, 5, 189–195.

Low-intensity logging

Portico, a Costa Rican company that makes and exports high-quality doors made of mahogany, has described its logging practice as 'minor surgery', felling one tree per acre every 15 years. Unlike most logging companies, which clear fell by concession on private land, Portico owns and manages its own forest on the Atlantic coast in north-eastern Costa Rica. A study by Costa Rica's National Biodiversity Institute found more wildlife on Portico's land than in the neighbouring Barra de Colorada Wildlife Refuge, which suffers from poaching and the effects of road building.

Source: *Development Forum*, March–April 1991, 15.

SOUTH AMERICA

Oilbirds better than helicopters

A colony of 10,000 oilbirds *Steatornis caripensis* is more efficient than government helicopters at reseeding deforested Venezuelan hillsides. A study by the US Nature

Conservancy's Latin American Science Program found that the birds drop about 10 tons of seeds each month. Venezuela has abandoned its helicopter reseeding programme and expanded Guacharo National Park fourfold to provide more protected habitat for oilbirds. *Source: International Wildlife, July–August 1991, 28.*

Woodstar find

A team from the US Philadelphia Academy has found the long-lost Esmeralda's woodstar *Acestrura berlepschi* in the extreme north-western province of Guayas in Ecuador just outside Machalilla National Park. *Source: World Birdwatch, June 1991, 3.*

Artificial burrows for petrels

Attempts to assist the endangered dark-rumped petrel *Pterodroma phaeopygia* met with some success last year when four pairs nested in artificial burrows dug in an extinct volcano on Santa Cruz island in the Galápagos. Tape recordings of a petrel colony were used to attract prospectors to the nesting sites. Unfortunately all four chicks were killed by rats. *Source: 'Elepaio, April 1991, 25.*

Campaign for manatee

The Amazonian manatee *Trichechus inunguis* is declining and although hunting it is banned, its meat is still being sold in markets. The National Amazonian Research Institute is trying to rectify this and is touring villages with educational programmes as part of a major conservation campaign, which also involves trying to halt the destruction of mangroves and to clean up pollu-

tion of remaining ones. The Institute also plans to breed manatees in captivity for release into the wild. *Source: Marine Pollution Bulletin, May 1991, 221.*

Tracking the jabiru

A radio transmitter was attached to a 2-month-old jabiru stork *Jabiru mycteria* in the Pantanal in Brazil last November in an attempt to discover where this species goes between November and June. Preliminary findings suggest that the jabiru migrates to the chaco in Argentina. Plotting the jabiru's migration route will enable conservationists to protect vital areas. *Source: New Scientist, 11 May 1991, 16.*

Fire incidents decrease in Amazonia

Satellite photographs are enabling IBAMA, Brazil's environment agency, to pinpoint fires in the Amazon basin. With the help of helicopters from the Brazilian Air Force and the federal police, IBAMA moves in to stop the burning and fine those responsible. In the past year IBAMA has reduced the number of fires by 25 per cent, levying 3073 fines; some 18,000 sq km of forest were destroyed in 1990 compared with 21,000 sq km in 1989. *Source: New Scientist, 13 April 1991, 15.*

Pampas deer increasing in Uruguay

There are now over 800 pampas deer *Ozotoceros bezoarticus* in Uruguay, an increase of 100 animals over a 1988 estimate. Populations are increasing solely because the landowners are committed to conservation. The population in Uruguay's zoos

has also increased to about 50 animals.

Source: IUCN/SSC Deer Specialist Group Newsletter, February 1991, 5.

Fighting for Chile's forests

Environmental groups in Chile are fighting to save the country's dwindling native forests from being shipped to Japan as woodchips. Massive Japanese investment increased the woodchip industry from virtually nothing in 1985 to 1.7 million tonnes in 1989 and new concessions could replace 30 per cent of remaining native forest with pine and eucalyptus. The Committee for the Defense of Fauna and Flora (CODEFF) is appealing for international support against a proposal by Marubeni corporation to clear 230 sq km of native forest in the Corral region of southern Chile. Opposition to the proposal prompted President Aylwin to commission a report, which supported CODEFF, but the Ministers of the Exchequer and the Economy disagreed, publishing an opposing report saying that the proposal should be judged on economic criteria alone. Aylwin has now commissioned another report. *Source: New Scientist, 13 April 1991, 11.*

AUSTRALASIA/ ANTARCTICA

Gold mine threatens finch

A planned gold mine in the Yinbarrie Hills in Northern Australia threatens the habitat of one of the world's only two large breeding populations of the Gouldian finch *Chloebia gouldiae*. The bird has declined drastically this century; researchers have discovered

that many of the birds are infested with air-sac mite. Grazing by cattle, and fire are also thought to be responsible for the decline. The Threatened Species Network of the Northern Territory is appealing for international and national pressure on both federal and territory governments as well as the mining company. *Contact:* Michelle Kanter, c/o The Environment Centre of Northern Territory, PO Box 2120, Darwin, Northern Territory 0801, Australia.

Kakadu saved

Mining for gold, platinum and palladium has been banned in

Kakadu National Park by the Australian federal government. *Source:* *New Scientist*, 22 June 1991, 19.

Cat curfew

Sherbrooke Shire Council, which controls the 80-ha Sherbrooke Forest near Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, has ordered residents to keep their cats indoors between 20.00–06.00 hours, with a \$100 fine each time a cat breaks the curfew. The forest is one of the few areas where the superb lyrebird *Menura superba* is found, but the population is dwindling: there are now only 60 birds in the forest, down

from 130 10 years ago. Feral and domestic cats have been blamed for contributing to the decline. A survey has shown that Victoria's 500,000 pet cats kill 13 million animals a year and victims include 76 species of birds, of which 67 are native. *Source:* *New Scientist*, 1 June 1991, 57.

Draft wildlife legislation suppressed

A draft Endangered Species Conservation Act in New South Wales, Australia, has caused such conflict in the coalition state government that the NSW Environment Minister has denied that it exists. The draft



Sea lions in the Falkland Islands, where the population has declined by 99 per cent in 60 years (*Ian Strange*).

Act, prepared by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in close consultation with environmentalists, has won widespread support from conservationists. It aims to conserve genetic diversity, prevent the extinction of any species or community of flora and fauna, provide for the recovery of endangered species, and eliminate or manage threatening processes. An Endangered Species Unit and a Scientific Advisory Committee would be established to identify endangered species and determine critical habitat, and the NPWS would have the power to issue stop-work orders to protect an endangered species or its habitat.

Source: *Conservation News*, February, 1991, 4.

Trawlers banished to help albatrosses

Trawlers using an antiquated net monitor cable have been banned from New Zealand waters after a campaign by Forest and Bird to save albatrosses *Diomedea* spp., which cannot see the cables and fly into them.

Source: *Forest & Bird Conservation News*, May 1991.

Sea lion's startling decline

The breeding population of southern sea lions *Otaria byronia* in the Falkland Islands has declined by 99 per cent in the last 60 years. In 1934 there were 380,000 animals, of which 80,000 were pups. A 1990 census revealed just over 600 pups indicating a total population of 34,000. The cause of the crash is a mystery and a 2-year research programme is being undertaken by biologists from the Sea Mammal Research Unit in Cambridge.

Source: Falkland Conservation,

Kate Thompson, Secretary, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT. Tel/Fax: 031 556 6226.

OCEANIA

Dugong stable in Vanuatu

A survey of Vanuatu, the easternmost point of the dugong's *Dugong dugon* range, has revealed that the species is widespread there, occurring around all the major islands and many smaller ones. Numbers appear to be stable and there are no planned developments that could pollute coastal areas or damage sea-grass beds. The regular cyclones may kill dugongs and there is some hunting. Its future could be made more secure by considering the establishment of marine reserves in areas where it is currently abundant, such as Havannah harbour.

Source: *Naika*, March 1991, 8–15.

Freezers to the rescue of crabs

The people of the Banks and Torres Islands (Vanuatu) are harvesting too many coconut crabs *Birgus latro*. Crabs are buried in sand at the airport while awaiting transport and many die; freight capacity depends on the number of people on the planes. The average size of crabs being sold is smaller than 2 years ago, a sign that stocks are declining. Crabs are currently the islanders' only source of cash income and it has been suggested that a freezer on Loh Island close to the airport at Linua, would enable the islanders to export fish rather than crabs.

Source: *Naika*, March 1991, 4–7.

Topshell workshop

In May the South Pacific

Commission held a 3-week workshop on the topshell *Trochus niloticus*, which is an important source of income to rural communities in the region, its shell being exported for button-making and other uses. The species is native to countries of the western Pacific and has been introduced to many other islands. There are fears that in some places current levels of harvesting are not sustainable and depletion will occur unless management regimes are developed and implemented.

Source: *Fishing News International*, April 1991, 50.

Bikes for birdwing

A conservation programme for Queen Alexandra's birdwing butterfly *Ornithoptera alexandrae* in Papua New Guinea is receiving a boost from the Commonwealth Development Corporation. The butterfly's last remaining habitat in Northern Province is being destroyed as oil palm and timber industries are developed. The CDC has already set up a conservation area for the butterfly and a nursery for its food plant, the vine, *Aristolochia* spp., on an estate it manages. The butterfly's distribution is being mapped so that further reserves can be established and motorcycles are being donated to conservation survey workers.

Source: Commonwealth Development Corporation, 18 July 1991.

AWARDS

Expedition award

The Gilchrist Educational Trust is offering £10,000 in 1992 for an overseas research expedition with most of its members from

established university/polytechnic departments.

Contact: Director, Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR. Application deadline: 31 January 1992.

ICBP/FFPS Conservation Expedition Competition

This annual competition offers awards of £3000 and £1000.

Contact: Gary Allport, Expeditions Officer, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton CB3 0PJ. Tel: 0223 277318. Closing date for applications 31 December 1991. See p. 238 for further information.

MEETINGS

IV World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas

This once-a-decade event will take place in Caracas, Venezuela, 10–21 February 1992. The two-week event will include presentations from international leaders in conservation, symposia dealing with four major topics and over 40 workshops on specific subjects. Details: IUCN, Avenue du Mont-Blanc, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland.

CITES

The next biennial meeting of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora is scheduled for 2–13 March 1992 in Kyoto, Japan.

Conference on captive-breeding

The Sixth World Conference on Breeding Endangered Species in Captivity, 'The Role of Zoos

in Global Conservation', will be held 4–6 May 1992 in Jersey, Channel Islands. Co-sponsored by Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, the FFPS and the Zoological Society of London. Contact: Jeremy J. C. Mallinson, JWPT, Les Augrès Manor, Trinity, Jersey JE3 5BF, Channel Islands. Tel: 0534 64666; Fax: 0534 65161.

Snow leopard symposium

'Parks, People and Snow Leopards', is the theme of the Seventh International Snow Leopard Symposium to be held in Xining, Qinghai Province, People's Republic of China, 27–31 July 1992. It is sponsored by the Qinghai Bureau of Agriculture and Forestry, the Northwest Plateau Institute of Biology, and the International Snow Leopard Trust. Contact: Helen Freeman, International Snow Leopard Trust, 4649 Sunnyside Avenue North, Seattle, WA 98103, USA.

Mollusc conservation

The University of Glasgow will be the venue for the International Conference on Molluscan Conservation from 10–12 September 1992. Contact: Fred Woodward, International Conference on Molluscan Conservation, Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery, Kelvingrove, Glasgow G3 8AG, UK. Tel: 041 357 3929; Fax: 041 357 4537.

Botanic Gardens Congress

The Third International Botanic Gardens Conservation Congress, 'Botanic Gardens in a Changing World' will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 19–23 October 1992. Contact: Botanic Gardens Conservation Secretariat, 3rd Botanic Gardens Congress

Registration, Descanso House, 199 Kew Road, Surrey TW9 3BW, UK.

OBITUARIES

Rennie Bere, who died on 23 March 1991, was a major motivating force behind Uganda's first national parks, Queen Elizabeth and Murchison Falls, and was their first Director and Chief Warden from 1955 to 1960. He held views, controversial at the time, on the need to cull to preserve wild animals and their habitats and on the necessity of managing national parks for the benefit, advantage and enjoyment of the general public. On his retirement he became a founding member of the Cornwall Trust for Nature Conservation in the UK and was its President from 1967 to 1970. He wrote several books on wildlife and was a contributor to *Oryx* (see 3, 180–182; 4, 21–27).

David Barber.

Charles Elton, founder animal ecologist, died on 1 May 1991, aged 91. He was one of the first scientists to appreciate the importance of conservation and was a member of the Wildlife Special Committee whose 1947 report laid the foundation of Britain's official conservation policies. Founder editor of the *Journal of Animal Ecology* for nearly 20 years, he received the Darwin Medal of the Royal Society and the Tyler Ecology Award. In 1932 he created the Bureau of Animal Population at Oxford University, which was a mecca for ecologists until his retirement in 1967. Peter Crowcroft's history of the Bureau—*Elton's Ecologists*—was published on 26 March 1991 by University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London (\$14.95 or £12.75 SB, \$35 or £27.95 HB).