Shift in wildlife conservation policy in Zimbabwe

In recent years Zimbabwe's wildlife management policies have been based on the principle that wildlife is a valuable resource and can be made to pay for itself. Under the CAMPFIRE programme, rural communities have been given the legal right to manage wild animals on their land and sell game meat. The success of this venture has been reflected in an increase in the amount of land given over to wildlife – from 12 to 35 per cent in the past 5 years. The policy has led to some criticism, mostly from protectionists outside the country who object to culling. Most of this has focused on the elephant cull and its resultant ivory harvest: Zimbabwe has been strongly in favour of resumption of a controlled ivory trade so that the African countries that manage their elephants well can benefit financially and raise funds for conservation work.

However, all this may be changing. Rowan Martin, who was one of the country's most outspoken supporters of wildlife harvesting and who had worked in the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management for 20 years, has lost his job in a restructuring exercise funded by the World Bank. Without Martin's influence as one of the Department's top decision makers, the shift towards a more protectionist approach appears to be under way. This year's scheduled cull of 5000 elephants has not taken place. Willie Nduku, the Director of the National Parks, said that 2000 elephants need to be moved from Hwange National Park to conserve habitat, and that they would be sold if someone comes up with funds to capture and move them.

While a shift in Zimbabwe's policy would have some support from outside the country, the shift is not welcomed by Zimbabwe's own wildlife groups, which have supported culling programmes and a resumption in the trade in ivory, believing the pragmatic approach to be appropriate to the country's circumstances. There is concern that the new policy will see wildlife being brought back under the control of the state rather than staying with the people. The CAMPFIRE programme is at risk as are the private initiatives to conserve the country's black rhinos. The Government made an election promise to resettle people on farms and keeping this promise may mean that land currently managed for wildlife may be turned over to farming. The Government has already started proceedings to buy forcibly two large ranches, a major part of the Save Conservancy programme (see *Oryx*, **26** (3), 192), as part of its resettlement scheme.

Source: New Scientist, 12 June 1993. A report by Mary Cole.

Trade in Pacific fruit bats – are CITES controls working?

A recent report in TRAFFIC USA's newsletter (Sheeline, 1993) points to loopholes in CITES regulations that are hampering conservation efforts for fruit bats in the Pacific. In the 1970s and 1980s the Pacific island of Guam was a major importer of fruit bats for food and the consequent declines in fruit bat populations led to the 1989 listing of seven species of fruit bats of the genus *Pteropus* on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (see *Oryx*, **24** (2), 81–89), prohibiting commercial international trade. All other species of *Pteropus* and all *Acerodon* spp. were listed on Appendix II of the Convention in order to monitor the trade.

While the 1989 listings appear to have had a positive effect, serious trade problems still exist. Guam is an unincorporated territory of the US and the southernmost island of the Marianna Islands in the southern Pacific. Guam's indigenous people have been eating fruit bats for at least 2500 years but it was not until after World War II, when firearms became widely available, that the island's bat population plummeted as a result of hunting pressure. At the same time, air transport services between the region's isolated islands made it possible to import frozen carcasses of fruit bats from other Pacific islands. Many of these islands in turn experienced declines in

fruit bat populations as a result.

By 1958 there were 3000 Marianna fruit bats *Pteropus mariannus mariannus* on Guam, a subspecies endemic to the Mariannas; by the mid-1970s there were only 50–100. More recently numbers have hovered around 400–500. The bats appear to move periodically between Guam and Rota, the southernmost island of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianna Islands (CNMI) (which is a freely associated commonwealth to the US), and the combined bat population for these two islands is about 1200–1500, approximately 15 per cent of the archipelago's total.

Loopholes in the US CITES control system are preventing effective enforcement of trade restrictions and trade in Pacific fruit bats is still a problem.

1. Between 1990 and 1992 at least 20,000 bats entered the CNMI; 82 per cent of these came from Palau, a US Trust Territory, and the rest from the Federated States of Micronesia and the Philippines. Because the CNMI and Palau are both administered by the US, CITES restrictions do not apply to trade between them: it is classified as domestic rather than international trade. Similarly, the 20,000 bats that entered Guam from Palau in the same period were exempt from restrictions. In addition, US wildlife officials believe that the declared trade from Palau to Guam is only 80 per cent of the actual trade, suggesting that at least 45,000 bats of Palauan origin were shipped to Guam and CNMI from 1990 to 1992. However, Palau's population of the endemic *P. mariannus pelewensis*, a CITES Appendix I species, could not sustain this level of trade and so the bats must have come from elsewhere and entered Palau illegally.

2. Lack of a strong federal presence has facilitated the illegal imports to Palau, and from the Federated States of Micronesia and the Philippines to CNMI. The one US wildlife inspector stationed on Guam is also responsible for Palau and CNMI, and lack of funds for travel has restricted effective trade enforcement largely to Guam alone.

3. The US Lacey Act was used to restrict imports by the first wildlife officers on Guam. Because the Act prohibits the import of wildlife taken in violation of the laws of another US state or another country, bats imported from Palau were confiscated if they appeared to have been shot, because the use of guns is prohibited on that island. Now the US Fish and Wildlife Service has decided that the Lacey Act can only apply to laws and regulations developed specifically for wildlife conservation: the firearms law on Palau, having been designed to protect the public, does not fall into that category.

4. The Lacey Act could still be used to restrict imports from the Philippines, where the law excludes fruit bats from the list of wildlife that can be collected and exported. However, a prosecution of a Lacey Act offence requires that a certified copy of the relevant legislation be obtained from the country of origin's judicial branch. In 1991 federal wildlife authorities in Guam seized fruit bats from the Philippines and prosecuted under the Act but, despite repeated efforts, failed to obtain an official copy of the Philippine law and the case was dismissed.

Despite the difficulties described, the placement in 1990 of a full-time US Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife inspector on Guam has been an important and positive factor in the enforcement of trade restrictions. From 1975 to 1989 Guam imported about 14,700 bats per year on average, 51 per cent coming from Palau. From 1990 to 1992 declared fruit-bat imports into Guam declined to an annual average of about 7000, virtually all from Palau.

In addition, US wildlife officials and the governments of Palau and the CNMI are working more closely to improve regulation of trade between the islands. Palauan officials recently seized 421 Appendix I bats from Yap in the federated States of Micronesia, the first such seizure for Palau and the largest ever of Pacific fruit bats.

There is still a demand for fruit-bat meat in Guam, mostly among the older generation, but some people said they did not eat fruit bats any more because the imported bats have less flavour, less meat and more ectoparasites than the local bat and they are expensive. The report concludes that there is still hope for Pacific fruit bats and that this could and

should be increased. The loopholes in CITES enforcement must be closed and the stirrings of environmental awareness that are apparent among the people of Guam, should be encouraged.

Source: Sheeline, L. 1993. Pacific fruit bats in trade: are CITES controls working? *TRAFFIC USA Newsletter,* **12** (1), 1–4.

Year of the Reef on the way

After a 3-day colloquium at the University of Miami in June, more than 100 coral reef scientists from 30 countries concluded that, although there is an inadequate data base on many coral reefs around the world, available information shows a distressingly consistent pattern of reef degradation near centres of human population. The scientists were particularly concerned that, although coral reefs are economically invaluable and are often a major source of food in tropical developing countries as well as being valuable for recreation, the causes of recent declines in the health of coral reefs were poorly understood.

The meeting resolved to promote a Coral Reef Initiative to start immediately. Its goals will be to promote education about the value of coral reefs to people, to implement more research relevant to managing coral reefs, to establish a permanent international coral reef monitoring network linking research laboratories throughout the world, and to set up a global data base on coral reef health. It was agreed that 1996 will be International Coral Reef Year.

The meeting brought together a large number of coral researchers from the Caribbean, and Pacific and Indian Oceans and confirmed what was previously only a vague impression of global trends in reef health. In each region there are still pristine reefs with abundant natural resources. However, there is a growing number of reefs, particularly near urban centres, that are showing dramatic degradation. The scientists decided that they could no longer simply continue with science as usual, but needed to increase dramatically the attention given to management of coral reefs.

Sewage, siltation and overfishing were considered to be the most damaging influences. The researchers concluded that a dramatic increase in scientific effort will be needed to provide the information necessary to manage the fragile reef ecosystems. In addition, there is a critical need to set up a clearing house for global information on the status of coral reefs.

More scientists have been consistently studying coral reefs in the Caribbean for longer than anywhere else in the world. There are five major laboratories located on the rim of the Caribbean basin (US Virgin Islands, Netherlands Antilles, Barbados, Panama and Jamaica) where over the past 40 years scientists have documented decreases of up to 50 per cent of previously abundant corals and significant reductions in numbers of reef fish.

The first step of the Coral Reef Initiative will be to carry out a detailed review of the status of the world's reefs. The scientists face daunting problems of obtaining information from a wide variety of sources, such as diving groups, marine park managers and fisheries agencies throughout the world, in addition to collating information from scientific publications in dozens of languages.

Efforts are already under way by two international agencies to set up global data bases on coral reefs. The World Conservation Monitoring Centre, based in the UK, and the International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management in the Philippines are co-ordinating efforts to make their data bases available to scientists and the public through computer networks such as Internet.

Action plan for marbled teal

The marbled teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris* has been classified as Vulnerable because of its increasingly fragmented distribution and declining world population. A major review of the its status and conservation needs has just been published (Green, 1993).

The world population currently peaks at about 33,000 in winter; 25,000 of these winter

in Iran and 5000 in Pakistan. Important breeding populations occur in Iran, Iraq, Pakistan. Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. About 2000 birds occur in the western Mediterranean – Morocco, Spain, Tunisia and Algeria, with smaller numbers wintering south of the Sahara in Senegal, Chad, Mali and Nigeria. About 1000 birds occur in the eastern Mediterranean, mainly in Turkey and Israel.

In parts of the species's range where precise historical data are available, major declines have been revealed and it is possible that the world population may have declined by over 90 per cent this century. There has also been a major shrinkage in range, particularly in the former Soviet Union: the species is almost extinct in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia and has gone from most of Turkmenistan.

Drainage and degradation of breeding sites, and hunting pressure during the breeding season are probably the major causes of these declines. Most Western Palaearctic ducks migrate to the northern tundra and subarctic areas to breed, where they are relatively undisturbed. In contrast, the marbled teal breeds at lower latitudes with much denser human populations and has suffered relatively more from wetland loss resulting from agricultural schemes and other human activities. As one of numerous examples, 'countless numbers bred' at Lac Fetzara in Algeria before it was drained in the 1930s. Marbled teal are also a major target for hunters during the summer when there are few other ducks around. For example, hunting is believed to have wiped out the population that used to breed in Egypt. Another factor that puts the marbled teal at risk is its tendency to form large concentrations in winter. Up to 20,000 birds occur at Shadegan marshes in Iran while most of the western Mediterranean population congregate at Merja de Sidi Bou-Rhaba in Morocco.

Wetland loss and hunting are continuing, causing further declines in marbled teal numbers and range. Only 37 per cent of the 140 wetland sites of importance for the species have any kind of protected status and many of these are very threatened. The major marbled teal population wintering in Iran has been

Marbled teal (Andy green).

stable in recent decades but is now at risk. Most of these birds may breed in marshes in southern Iraq, which are being drained by a huge canal, recently completed by Saddam Hussain in an attempt to drive out the dissident Marsh Arabs. New dams on the Tigris and Euphrates upstream in Turkey and Syria are further draining of these wetlands.

Conservation action is urgently required if further declines in marbled teal populations are to be prevented. Recommendations in the action plan concentrate on the protection of habitat and removal of hunting pressure. A top priority must be to give complete protection to as many breeding sites as possible. Field surveys are required in some parts of the range, especially to clarify the location of breeding sites. Ecological research is needed to identify the species's requirements as an aid to habitat management and flyway management plans are required due to the regular migrations of marbled teal across national boundaries.

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Reference

Green, A.J. 1993. *The Status and Conservation of the Marbled Teal Marmaronetta angustirostris.* IWRB Special Publication 23, 107 pp.

Available from IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BX, UK, for £12 plus postage and packing (£2.50 UK, £3.00 Europe, £5.00 outside Europe).

Forest Stewardship Council

In March 1990, following much research, the FFPS called for a moratorium on the felling and sale of mahogany timber, except where the source could be proved to be sustainable. It has now become common practice for dealers to claim that their timber, whether of mahogany or other species, has come from such sources and to advertise the assertion with self-appointed logos. Given that the speed of forest loss has actually accelerated in the last decade, virtually all claims of 'sustained resource', 'replanting' or 'good management' must be viewed with scepticism. Indeed, a number of environmental groups have recently successfully referred such cases to the UK's Advertising Standards Authority.

Few would argue that wise forest management, including the production of timber, can contribute to conservation of biodiversity or at least slow the destruction in order to buy time to work towards other, long-term solutions. Yet, if it has become clear that industry self-regulation is wholly unreliable, who is to monitor forest management, or certify that any particular window-frame or sheet of plywood has come from an approved forest area?

What is needed is an international, independent and credible body to establish minimum environmental, social and economic forestry standards and then license out the monitoring of forestry and trade routes to approved certification bodies. Such, it is hoped, will be the Forest Stewardship Council, which will hold its founding assembly in Toronto 1–4 October.

A great deal of work around the world – much of it voluntary – has been put into preparing for this initiative, involving environmental organizations, human rights groups, indigenous peoples' organizations and, importantly, concerned individuals from forestry industries and governments. The FFPS has contributed to this process and will be represented at the founding assembly. Until the Forestry Stewardship Council's system starts to receive government backing, it will inevitably remain voluntary, driven by consumer pressure and the far-sightedness of an increasing number of timber and wood product dealers. None the less, despite the magnitude of the task the Forest Stewardship Council is taking on and the radical upgrading of forestry practices that will be required in many instances, hopes are riding high.

Mike Read

Sibuyan Island, Philippines

The condition of the forest on Sibuyan Island in the Philippines, and the illegal logging that threatens it were described in an article published in *Oryx* (**27** (3), 174–180). In September 1992 the authors informed Atlas Mining Corporation that it buys illegally cut timber from lowland forest in Sibuyan for its gold-mining operations on Masbate Island. Atlas replied that all its timber came from legitimate sources. However, during a visit to Sibuyan in February 1993, one of the authors again observed stacks of cut timber in the lowland forest of Silum. Residents said that this timber was to be sold to Atlas and that extraction of timber for delivery to Atlas on Masbate has continued unabatedly. As a result, they said, trees of the hardwood species preferred by Atlas have become scarce. Whereas last year Atlas bought timber of selected tree species, it now takes beams of any tree species as long as they are of the specified dimensions.

Another major logging site in lowland forest, Espana, was also visited in February 1993. Inhabitants said that most timber from the area is shipped to Panay for building construction and furniture, but some is also sold to Atlas Mining Corporation on Masbate.

During the February visit information gathered in March 1992 was verified. Two corrections to the article in *Oryx* are in order: (i) the DENR has no record of a logging concession in Sibuyan run by Atlas Mining Corporation in the past; (ii) loggers said that as many timbers as possible were cut from each tree, usually 10–20 per tree. Filling Atlas's order for March 1992 of 80,000 board-feet would have entailed the felling of at least 250 trees.

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