

INTERNATIONAL

Forests treaty talks abandoned

More than 100 countries meeting in Geneva in August in preparation for the June 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) abandoned efforts to complete a treaty for protection of the world's forests. Talks failed because of the lack of communication between developed and developing countries on the relationship between conservation and development. There is doubt that the UN Conference will make headway in addressing the broader range of environmental problems that occur across a similar economic divide.

Source: WWF-International, 21 August 1991.

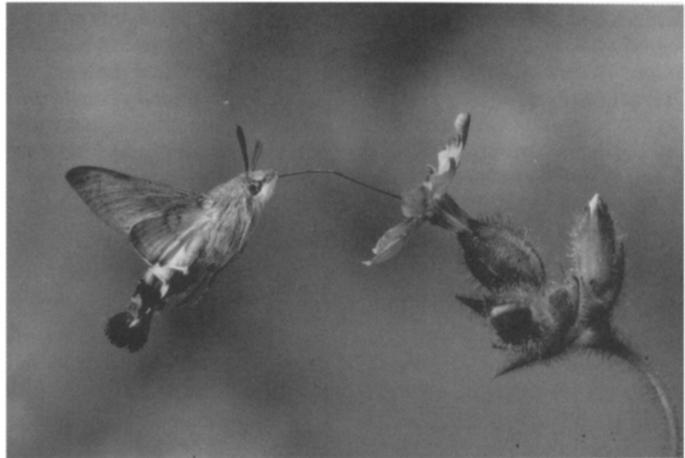
Antarctic protocol signed

In October the member nations of the Antarctic Treaty signed a protocol banning mining on the continent for at least 50 years. It is expected to come into force in about 2 years time after formal ratification. The protocol includes rules on pollution and waste disposal, and requires that any new activity, including tourism, is subject to an environmental impact assessment.

Source: *New Scientist*, 12 October 1991, 17.

World Bank's new forest policy

The World Bank launched a new policy document in July, which will ban the funding of logging projects in tropical rain forests. The rights of forest-dwelling people to carry on traditional sustainable harvesting are recognized. The Bank will confine itself to reforestation



This photograph of a hummingbird hawkmoth feeding on nectar, taken by Hans Christoph Kappel of Germany, won the Animal Behaviour: Insects category in the British Gas Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition organized by BBC WILDLIFE Magazine and the Natural History Museum in association with FFPS (see pp. 59-60).

projects, bringing degraded land back into production, developing secondary forests and paying for the policing of primary forests.

Source: *The Guardian*, 17 July 1991.

CITES update

Izgreva N. Topov, a Bulgarian diplomat, became the new Secretary General to the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on 1 July 1991. Mexico acceded to the Convention on 2 July, effective on 30 September 1991, bringing the total number of Parties to 111.

Source: *Cat News*, July 1991, 20; *TRAFFIC Bulletin*, 12, 1/2, 1.

GATT rules against dolphins

A US law banning imports of yellow-fin tuna from Mexico, in order to protect dolphins taken with the fish in purse seine nets, contravenes international trade rules, according to the

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) dispute committee, which sat in September. The decision, due to be adopted or rejected by the full GATT Council on 8 October, was the first test of whether environmental concerns can be a factor in restricting a country's imports. If adopted, the precedent set could lead to GATT being used by any national government to overturn trade measures designed to protect endangered species or habitats. Conservationists are expressing deep concern about GATT, which is the only world body with no remit for the environment.

Source: *The Guardian*, 6 & 13 September 1991.

Airline bird ban grows

A growing number of international airlines, 26 in all, have stopped transporting wild-caught birds but 20 major airlines are still participating, including the world's largest bird carriers—Air Afrique, Alitalia, Iberia Airlines, Japan

Airlines and Korean Air.
Source: Monitor, 29 July 1991;
Animal Welfare Institute Quarterly, Summer 1991, 1 & 4-5.

EUROPE AND NORTH AFRICA

Last ditch effort for cranes

In 1991, in the Siberian village of Gorki, six Siberian, or great white, cranes *Grus leucogeranus* chicks were hatched artificially from eggs flown from the US and Germany. One chick died and in June the five survivors were taken by helicopter to the territory of one of the only two known wild pairs of cranes in western Siberia. A researcher from the International Crane Foundation, dressed as a crane, taught the cranes to feed and protected them from predators. It was hoped that in August the chicks, fitted with radio-transmitters, would join the wild cranes and migrate south to India or Iran. Although more than 2500 Siberian cranes survive in the far eastern Soviet Union, the western population numbered only 14 in the 1990-1991 winter.
Source: The ICF Bugle, August 1991, 4.

Golden eagles killed

Almost 20 pairs of golden eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* were shot, poisoned or trapped in Padasjärvi, their best nesting area in northern Finland in 1991. Of 40 fledglings only one is now expected to survive. The killings shocked scientists from Oulu University, which has been running a conservation project for the eagle for the past 15 years, sponsored by the Finnish Ministry of the Environment and WWF-Finland. Local reindeer owners

are suspected of the killings; they say that eagles kill newborn reindeer. The Finnish Government already compensates owners for losses but the reindeer owners' association wants the government to replace per capita payments with a fixed annual amount to prevent eagles being killed.
Source: WWF News, October 1991, 8.

Finnish mere to be drowned

A 234-sq-km reservoir being planned on the river Kemijoki in Finnish Lapland would drown one of the world's largest aapa mires. The Vuotos reservoir was proposed in the 1970s but strong opposition led the Government to cancel the project in 1982. It has been revived to provide 300 jobs for 10 years and to help meet peak electricity requirements.
Source: Suomen Luonto, No. 7, 1991.

Finland's butterflies declining

Of Finland's 114 butterfly species only one, the dusky meadow brown *Hyponphele lycaon*, has disappeared but others have dwindled: 27 are listed as threatened. Causes of the declines are drastic changes in agricultural practice and modern forestry techniques.
Source: Suomen Luonto, No. 6, 1991.

Baltic cod collapse

The stock of cod in the Baltic Sea is in a precarious state, according to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. Because of adverse environmental conditions related to the lack of water exchange with the North Sea, the volume of water where cod eggs can survive has steadily

decreased since the mid-1980s and the number of cod produced each year is too small to renew the stock.
Source: Fishing News International, August 1991, 6.

Wrasse replace chemicals

Wrasse are being caught for use as cleaner fish in Norway's salmon farms as an environmentally friendly alternative to the chemical control of fish lice. Several species of wrasse are found in Norway's shallow waters and they have been regarded in the past as 'bait thieves' and 'useless' bycatch. The European Commission has recently granted subsidies for a cleaner-fish technology project, to be run in co-operation between Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Norway and the UK.
Source: Fishing News International, August 1991, 29.

Move to protect Denmark's otters

Denmark's Ministry of Fisheries has declared that all fishermen in northern Jutland must use stopgrids or stopnets in fish traps in all areas where otters occur. The regulations were imposed on 1 January 1991 and will remain in force until 30 April 1995.
Source: IUCN Otter Specialist Group Bulletin, No. 6, 1991, 13.

Cod ranching

A cod ranching project started by Danish fishermen in 1989 made its first large release of young cod on 3 June 1991; 300,000 small fish reared in hatcheries on the west coast were taken to sea in a fishing vessel. Some 10,000 cod are being kept in nursery tanks until they reach a size of 15-20 cm, when they will be tagged and released to check migration

patterns and growth rates. Turbot is also being investigated for ranching off Denmark. *Source: Fishing News International, August 1991, 22.*

UK adds to Ramsar list

Rutland Water in the UK has been designated a Special Protection Area under the EC 'Birds Directive' and as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Over 20,000 waterfowl use the wetland in winter. *Source: English Nature, 4 October 1991.*

Eagle reintroduction planned for Ireland

Captive-bred young white-tailed sea eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* from the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland are being sent to the Fota Island Wildlife Park, County Cork, Ireland. They will be released to selected sites in counties Kerry and Clare within 2 years. The eagle was hunted to extinction in Ireland 90 years ago. *Source: BBC Wildlife, August 1991, 526.*

Vulture project success

The project to reintroduce griffon vultures *Gyps fulvus* to the Causses region of France celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1991. Between 1981 and 1987 69 birds were released and the first successful breeding in the wild occurred in 1982; 19 chicks hatched in 1991, bringing the total number to over 100. *Source: Fonds d'Intervention pour les Rapaces, 29 rue de Mont Valérien, 92210 St Cloud, France.*

War wrecks Croatian parks

The war in Yugoslavia has wrecked three national parks in

Croatia. Federal tanks have destroyed the fragile environment of the Plitvice Lakes and two other parks, Paklajnice and Sibenik, have received severe shelling from the Federal Army. *Source: New Scientist, 5 October 1991, 10.*

Dalmatian pelicans in Albania

A Czech team visited important bird sites in Albania in 1991 and discovered 35 Dalmatian pelican *Pelecanus crispus* nests in two colonies in Karavastas lagoon, the last national stronghold for the bird. However, 36 eggs were either sterile or pricked, the latter presumably by fishermen who view the birds as competitors. This wetland, Albania's last intact example, is threatened by reclamation. *Source: World Birdwatch, September 1991, 5.*

Greek bird hunting

An estimated 700,000 protected birds are wounded or killed

each year in Greece including possibly 4000 buzzards. The Greek Centre for the Care of Wild Animals and Birds on the island of Aegina alone receives 150–200 buzzards wounded by hunters. Although hunting is forbidden in cold or snowy weather the law is rarely enforced and hunters object to Greek hunting laws being brought into line with EC regulations.

Source: Nature, Bulletin of the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature, January–March 1991, 44.

Turkey's turtles face renewed threats

Development for tourism is once again threatening loggerhead turtle *Caretta caretta* nesting beaches in Turkey. The beaches were protected in 1988 by the Turkish Authority for Protection of Special Areas (see *Oryx*, 23, 39), which has now changed its mind. The beaches at Dalyan, where 200–300 turtles nest, are causing most concern among conservationists



Frans Lanting from the Netherlands took this photograph of lily pads from below the surface of the Okavango river in Botswana and won the In Praise of Plants category in the British Gas Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition organized by BBC WILDLIFE Magazine and the Natural History Museum in association with the FFPS (see pp. 59–60).

because they are considered vital for the survival of loggerheads in the Mediterranean. *Source: Marine Pollution Bulletin*, October 1991, 484.

Seagrass decline in Mediterranean

Beds of the seagrass *Posidonia oceanica* are declining in the Mediterranean, especially in tourist areas where plankton growth, enhanced by raw sewage, prevents light reaching the plants on the sea-bed. The seagrass beds provide food and shelter for several thousand species of fish and invertebrates as well as being important oxygenators. France was first to raise the alarm about the shrinking beds and now has laws to protect them; Spain is thinking of following suit. *Source: New Scientist*, 5 October 1991, 11.

Visitor threat to bald ibis

The eastern population of northern bald ibis *Geronticus eremita* became extinct in 1989 and the western population, mainly in Morocco, has continued to decline despite the establishment of hunting reserves at major colonies and feeding grounds. The main reason for the recent decline has been habitat degradation due to agricultural intensification. Four colonies remain on the Moroccan coast, in a semi-arid area unsuitable for agricultural development, and good rains since 1987 have resulted in a slight population increase to 220 individuals in March/April 1990 with 78 breeding pairs. The birds face problems, however, in that local people throw stones to flush them out for foreign visitors as a way of earning tips. Birdwatchers are advised to visit the colonies only with an experienced guide

from the Water and Forest Authority or the Scientific Institute.

Source: World Birdwatch, September 1991, 13.

AFRICA

African rain forest campaign

The African NGO Environment Network, ANEN, is launching a campaign to promote community-based action to save Africa's rain forests.

Details from: Simon Muchiru, ANEN, PO Box 53844, Nairobi, Kenya, Fax: 2542 335108.

Two African warthogs

A recent review of African suids by Peter Grubb has concluded that two species of living warthogs should be recognized, rather than the single species *Phacochoerus aethiopicus*. He suggests that the common warthog, which is widely distributed, should be correctly called *P. africanus*, while the second species should be called the desert warthog *P. aethiopicus*. The latter species is known only from two widely separated locations, in north-eastern and extreme southern Africa. It has been extinct in the latter locality, where it was known as the Cape warthog, since the end of last century. It has been impossible to assess the status of the north-eastern population, in Somalia/north-east Kenya, because of the unstable political situation there, but warthogs were reported to be widespread in Somalia in 1984.

Source: William L. R. Oliver.

Ethiopia's new government gives hope for wildlife

Ethiopia's national parks and wildlife sanctuaries were van-

dalized in the week between the abdication of president Mengistu Manam on 26 May 1991 and the assumption of authority by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) on 1 June. First retreating soldiers and then local people destroyed park buildings and hunted animals. One park that survived the interregnum and also the civil war is Simien, which was controlled by rebels. The new government tried to re-establish law and order in the park system and in August a televised policy declaration took a strong stand against deforestation and for wildlife conservation.

Source: BBC Wildlife, September 1991, 591.

New bird from Somalia

A new bird species, the Bulu Burti boubou *Lanarius liberatus*, has been described from Somalia. Its English name is derived from the name of a hospital in whose grounds it was discovered by Eddie Smith in 1988. After some months in captivity in Somalia and Germany it was released into the Balcad Nature Reserve in Somalia.

Source: BBC Wildlife, August 1991, 534.

The Gambia defends itself against hunters

Two French companies, Paris-based Jet Tours and Lyon-based Grand Nord Indien, advertised The Gambia as a hunting destination in their brochures for 1991/92. The Gambia's Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment has written to the directors of both companies to protest and request withdrawal of the advertisements. In view of the wide circulation of the adver-

tisements, the Government is particularly concerned to refute the suggestion that The Gambia is opening up hunting to tourists. It stands firmly by its conservation legislation.

Source: Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, 5 Marina Parade, Banjul, The Gambia, 9 October 1991.

Dja Reserve threatened by road

Work may soon start on the section of the trans-African highway that will pass close to the Dja Reserve in south-east Cameroon, which is a World Heritage Site but which has a weak conservation management programme. The Environmental Impact Study for the road has been criticized as inadequate, particularly because no measures are planned to ensure the sustainability of the logging that will occur in the road's hinterland.

Source: IUCN Forest Conservation Programme Newsletter, No. 11, 6.

DDT situation worse in Zimbabwe

Eight clutches of fish eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer* eggs collected in 1989 close to sites sampled in 1980 near Lake Kariba, Zimbabwe, showed an average increase of 60 per cent in levels of DDT. Although only 11 clutches were sampled in 1989, making it difficult to estimate the risk to the entire fish eagle population, the degree of eggshell thinning and residue levels of DDE (a DDT metabolite) were sufficient to reduce breeding success. The red-billed hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus* has suffered a serious decline in numbers in an area first sprayed against tsetse fly in 1987 and annually since. The species feeds on insects taken

low down on tree trunks where DDT is applied.

Source: *Zimbabwe Wildlife*, June 1991, 13.

Fencing out the lions

Electric fences around certain villages and cattle kraals in Chobe Enclave, northern Botswana, were erected in 1991 to try to solve problems with marauding lions and elephants. An anti-elephant fence at Kavimba village successfully turned back one elephant within the first week after completion and the anti-lion fences are being monitored. Already other communities are enquiring about how to obtain similar fences in their areas.

Source: *Kalahari Conservation Society Newsletter*, September 1991, 12.

Sharks deterred by invisible barrier

The deaths every year of thousands of sharks, turtles and dolphins could be avoided if shark nets around holiday resorts in Australia and South Africa were replaced by harmless, invisible electric barriers developed by Eddie Smith at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. He discovered that using a submerged cable to apply a field of 4 volts per metre in pulses of 0.8 milliseconds long, 15 per second, repels sharks of 1.1 m and over.

Source: *New Scientist*, 26 October 1991, 27.

Titanium mine in Madagascar coastal forest

A plan to strip-mine rich deposits of titanium near Tolagnaro, in the most extensive remaining area of coastal forest in south-east Madagascar, is currently subject to an environmental impact

study. The mine, to be partially funded by the World Bank, would generate revenues of \$US550 million over the next 30 years for the Malagasy authorities. It would appear that it would be possible to protect small areas of forest from exploitation and to rehabilitate mined areas. A number of plants and three reptiles are endemic to the forest.

Source: *IUCN Forest Conservation Programme Newsletter*, No. 11, 6.

ASIA (EXCLUDING INDO-MALAYA)

Bird toll of Gulf oil spill

The Gulf War oil spill in the first part of 1991 was the largest ever. Approximately 460 km of shoreline were heavily oiled. The most conspicuous fauna to suffer were seabirds, particularly black-necked and great crested grebes, *Podiceps nigricollis* and *P. cristatus*, and Socotra and great cormorants, *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* and *P. carbo*. At least 25,000–30,000 seabirds died. One of the most significant impacts may have been on waders, 260,000 of which winter on the Saudi Arabian coast; apart from direct damage from the oil these birds would have suffered severe food shortages on the oil-covered tidal flats. There was a massive mortality of invertebrates but only five marine turtles were known to have died and a large die-off of marine mammals (14 dugongs and 78 cetaceans) may not have been linked with oil pollution. Sources: ICBP and WCMC, Cambridge, UK.

Gazelle reintroduction

Mountain gazelles *Gazella g. gazella* from the King Khalid Wildlife Research Centre

(KKWRC) have been reintroduced into the Special Ibex Reserve, 200 km south of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Of 30 animals moved since January 1991, four have died but at least 12 have been born and are surviving. The KKWRC is managed by the Zoological Society of London for the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development as a centre for captive breeding and research into indigenous gazelles. Several more reintroductions are planned to re-establish gazelle herds in protected areas in their former ranges.

Source: Nick Lindsay, King Khalid Wildlife Research Centre, Saudi Arabia.

Deer reintroduction

Part of the captive herd of 131 Père David's deer *Elaphurus davidianus* in Beijing, China, is being released into a 1000-ha wetland reserve on the Yangtze River in Hubei province. As the herd increases the reserve will be extended by a further 3000–4000 ha. The deer became extinct in the wild about 1500 years ago and survived only in captivity in the palace grounds of the Chinese emperor, where Père Armand David, missionary and naturalist, found them in 1865. By the time the Chinese empire collapsed, and the captive deer herd with it, several captive herds were in existence at several places outside China, notably at Woburn Abbey in the UK. In 1985 20 Père David's deer from the Woburn herd were returned to their original enclosure in China.

Source: BBC Wildlife, August 1991, 522.

Tibet's cranes

In January 1991 scientists from the Tibet Plateau Institute of

Biology and the International Crane Foundation discovered more than 2800 black-necked cranes *Grus nigricollis* wintering in south-central Tibet, more than doubling the known world population to 3909. The Lhasa Municipal Government in Tibet has announced plans for a nature reserve in Linzhou county, a major wintering area for 300 of the cranes.

Source: The ICF Bugle, August 1991, 7.

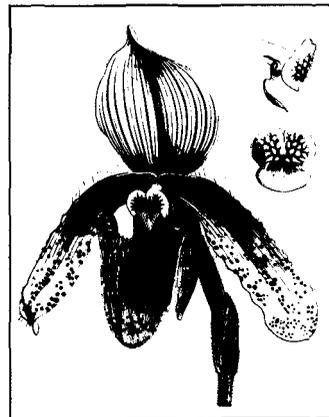
Japan bans mist nets

Japan has at last bowed to persistent pressure from conservationists and revised its laws concerning mist nets. From 15 September 1991 the export of nets (except for research purposes) was banned, as was the sale of and possession of nets, except under permit. The Wild Bird Society of Japan says that within the country each year 3 million birds are trapped for human consumption (despite this being illegal since 1947) and that eradicating poaching is difficult because the legal imports of frozen wild birds make it easy for birds caught illegally in Japan to be passed off as imports.

Source: BBC Wildlife, November 1991, 795.

Illegal orchid trade in Japan

Two genera of slipper orchids, *Phragmipedium* and *Paphiopedilum*, were transferred from Appendix II to Appendix I at the seventh meeting of the Parties to CITES, meaning that from 18 January 1990 all commercial trade in wild-collected plants was banned. The trade continues, however, in Japan, where there is much interest in wild-collected orchids. Some dealers claim that the orchids offered for sale are artificially propagated. In



Paphiopedilum superbiens, one of the endangered orchids still in illegal trade in Japan (drawing by courtesy of TRAFFIC Bulletin).

most cases this is unlikely to be true; two species on sale, for example, were discovered only 8 years ago in China and are very slow-growing. For others propagation techniques have not been perfected.

Source: TRAFFIC Bulletin, 12, 1/2, 12–14.

INDO-MALAYA

Conservation in northern Pakistan

People of the Bar Valley in northern Pakistan have embarked upon a wildlife conservation plan for their area. Villagers have pledged to abstain from hunting and in return have been granted a Rs240,000 loan to buy food to replace hunted game. The loan is to be repaid in full within 5 years, when income will be derived from trophy hunting. Source: Natura (WWF Pakistan), Summer 1991, 2–3.

Corbett National Park

A buffer zone of 2300 sq km surrounding the 512-sq-km Corbett National Park in India

has been proposed to improve conditions for wildlife. People living in the buffer zone would benefit from a \$US500,000 welfare programme and would be provided with biogas plants, which are powered by cow dung, thus relieving pressure on wood.

Source: *Cat News*, July 1991, 5.

Burma bans border trade in wildlife

Burma's military government, which had previously encouraged trade with China and Thailand through border towns, banned border trade in 23 items on 1 November 1991. The items include teak, freshwater fish and prawns, elephants, endangered species, animal hides and ivory.

Source: *The Nation*, 30 October 1991.

Thai wetland drying up

Conservationists are trying to force the Thai Government to save the country's largest freshwater marsh system, the 39.5-sq-km Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park, 275 km south of Bangkok. It is the only wetland in Thailand with extensive reedbeds and is one of only two known sites in the country where purple heron *Ardea purpurea* breeds. It has suffered massive encroachment for shrimp farms and fish ponds, and illegal dredging of the Khao Daeng river has lowered water levels, allowing the influx of saltwater.

Source: Bangkok Bird Club, 8 August 1991; Project for Ecological Recovery, Bangkok, 24 August 1991.

Part of Pattani Bay protected

The Governor of Pattani province in southern Thailand

has declared a Non-Hunting Area at the mouth of the Pattani river as a result of a campaign by a group at the Prince of Songkhla University. The new protected area is one of the principal waterbird sites in Pattani Bay, which is of international importance for migratory shorebirds. Several thousand birds of up to 32 species use the bay at times of peak passage but its conservation value is being eroded by industrial pollution, the spread of shrimp ponds, bird trapping and other developments.

Source: *Asian Wetland News*, July 1991, 3.

Project for Thailand's last lowland forest

A project to protect Thailand's last remnant of lowland rain forest and the birds it contains, including the endangered Gurney's pitta *Pitta gurneyi*, is under way. Efforts to conserve the Khao Pra-Bang Khram Non-Hunting Area started in 1986, when the pitta was rediscovered there, and the focus is on rural development initiatives to enlist the support of villagers, some of whom are now benefiting from income from visitors. Native trees are being provided free for fruit and construction materials and forest regeneration is being hastened by planting hardwood trees. Illegal clearance is still a problem: at least three pairs of pittas lost their territories in the 1990/91 season and there have been reports of these birds being trapped for trade.

Source: *Bangkok Bird Club Bulletin*, August 1991, 10–11.

Fish export ban in Thailand

Thailand is to ban exports of 400 species of marine fish to protect rare species and prevent further damage to reefs by

fishermen. The ban is being drawn up at the request of the Agriculture and Cooperatives Ministry and will cost the country about 5 million baht a year in export earnings.

Source: *Bangkok Post*, 18 July 1991.

Wetland restoration

The Tram Chim Nature Reserve in southern Vietnam, a small part of the Plain of Reeds devastated by 20 years of war, is being restored in a project funded by the MacArthur Foundation and the Brehm Fund for International Bird Conservation, and managed jointly by US and Vietnamese scientists. A management plan has established land-use zones to guide development of the surrounding area so that it benefits wildlife and people. In the core area the aim is to restore the original wetlands. Eastern sarus cranes *Grus antigone sharpii* were reported at Tram Chim in 1987, the first verified report of the species on the Asian continent for 15 years (see *Oryx*, 22, 145).

Source: *The ICF Bugle*, May 1991, 2–3.

White-shouldered ibis in Vietnam

The white-shouldered ibis *Pseudibis davisoni* has been found in Nam Bai Cat Tien National Park in Vietnam. The only previous recent records of this little-known species are from Kalimantan, Indonesia; it is now probably extinct in Thailand and there are no recent records from Laos and Cambodia. Unfortunately the wetlands are subject to major disturbances by fishermen living within the park; a recent conflict between fishermen and park staff culminated in the deaths of a park guard and a

fisherman. The park authorities are about to remove several thousand villagers from the park, which will be difficult but is the only way to preserve the integrity of the wetlands.

Source: *World Birdwatch*, September 1991, 4.

Pulau Redang Marine Park being developed

Pulau Redang, an island off the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, with national park status, is being developed into a major holiday resort by a private company. Management plans for the park, which proposed only a small-scale, 'ecologically friendly' development, have been ignored and conservationists are concerned about the impact of increased human activity. Already, forests on steep slopes have been cleared, mangroves have been infilled and coastal waters have been polluted.

Source: *Asian Wetland News*, July 1991, 4.

Forest clearance threatens Siberut

The Indonesian island of Siberut, which was declared a Biosphere Reserve in 1981, is at the centre of a power struggle between government ministries. The Environment Minister says the wildlife is so special (15 per cent of the plants and 65 per cent of the mammals are endemic) that it must be preserved. The more powerful Forestry Ministry has leased three-quarters of the island to logging companies, the Ministry of Plantations has cleared areas for oil palms and the Ministry of Social Affairs plans to 'modernize' the indigenous Mentawai people. In addition the Ministry of Transmigration plans to move 40,000 people from Java and

Sumatra to Siberut in 1992, clearing around 1850 sq km of forest on the east side of the island to accommodate them.

Source: *New Scientist*, 2 November 1991, 14.

Rain dampens forest fires in Indonesia

Fires raged through forests in Indonesia from mid-August until rain in October resulted in at least some being quenched. The fires destroyed 43,454 ha of natural forest and 6428 ha of indigenous forest as well as plantations, bush and grassland. The worst hit areas were Kalimantan, Java and Sumatra.

Source: *The Nation*, 17 & 31 October 1991.

Elephants rescued and trained

The Elephant Training School established by the Indonesian Directorate for Forest Protection and Nature Conservation at Way Kambas National Park has hired out its first trained elephants to a timber company in Sumatra. The school was set up to rescue crop-raiding elephants from being killed by farmers and to demonstrate the usefulness of domesticated elephants.

Source: *WWF News*, October 1991, 6.

Illegal turtle killing continues in Indonesia

Intense protests world-wide about the illegal killing of turtles in Bali, Indonesia, have not been able to stop the poaching of the animals. While there are almost no turtles in Bali's waters now, every morning fishermen bring in hundreds of turtles poached from waters around Sulawesi and the Banda Sea. There are about 50 turtle slaughter houses in Bali and

tourists are still offered turtle shells along with other products of endangered species. The situation on Bali is only the tip of the iceberg apparently; turtle eggs and soup are readily available all over Indonesia.

Source: *Jakarta Post*, October 1991.

Record roost of Chinese egrets

In April 1991 635 Chinese egrets *Egretta eulophotes* were recorded roosting in mangroves on the islets of Tahong-tahong, Banacon, Kalituban, Mahaba and Bubujan in Bohol province, the Philippines. Before this discovery the largest concentration of this threatened species was 75 in March 1990 at Olango Island in Cebu province. The Philippines is on the flyway for Chinese egrets migrating from Korea, China and Hong Kong.

Source: *Asian Wetland News*, July 1991, 11.

NORTH AMERICA

Oil killing seabirds

Fuel oil leaking from the *Tenyo Maru*, a Japanese fish-factory ship, which sunk on 22 July 1991 off the west coast of Washington with 400,000 gallons of fuel-oil on board, has killed at least 4000 seabirds, mostly common murrelets (or guillemots) *Uria aalge*. Beaches along 60 km of coast, mostly in Olympia National Park, were oiled but storms helped in cleaning them.

Sources: *Vancouver Sun*, 31 July 1991; *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, October 1991, 481-482.

Drift-nets banned

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

has issued regulations banning the use of drift-nets in the South Pacific in 1991, and elsewhere by 1 July 1992. The regulations ban the sale in the US of any fish caught in drift-nets, which are used primarily by Japan, Taiwan, North Korea, South Korea and France. The US National Marine Fisheries Service reported in 1990 that just 10 per cent of Japan's drift-net fleet killed 1758 whales and dolphins, 253,288 tuna, 81,956 blue sharks, 30,464 seabirds and more than 3 million non-target fish.

Source: *Outdoor News Bulletin*, 20 September 1991, 2.

Judgement due on spotted owl

The US Department of the Interior has convened a high-level committee to decide whether to uphold restrictions on logging in the west coast forests, proposed to help save the northern spotted owl *Strix occidentalis caurina* (see *Oryx*, 25, 193). The committee has powers to overrule decisions made under the Endangered Species Act, and must resolve a dispute between the Bureau of Land Management, which wants to allow logging on 1600 ha of federally owned forest, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, which has blocked these logging permits (while approving others) because the logging would harm the owl. The committee has 6 months to make a decision.

Source: *New Scientist*, 12 October 1991, 13.

Grass invader in Washington

A species of cord grass *Spartina* sp. from the eastern coast of the US has colonized mudflats off the western state of Washington, turning them into

marsh unsuitable for shellfish and shorebirds. The grass, whose seeds were carried in packing material a century ago, now covers more than 800 ha in Willapa Bay, the west coast's prime oyster area. So far the state has found no acceptable, effective control method.

Source: *National Wildlife*, August–September 1991, 28.

Woodpecker gains new protection

The US Forest Service has decided to include Florida's Appalachian National Forest in its protection plan for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker *Picoides borealis*, which depends on old pine trees. Environmentalists had stated their intention to sue under the Endangered Species Act unless all populations of the bird were protected. The decision means that clear-cutting is now prohibited within 1.2 km of all active and inactive woodpecker colonies in Appalachicola and in Louisiana's Kisatchie National Forest.

Source: *National Wildlife*, August–September 1991, 27.

Four more species listed

During May 1991 the US Fish and Wildlife Service listed three plants and a mussel under the Endangered Species Act. The leafy prairie-clover *Dalea foliosa* is known only from 14 small populations in Tennessee, Alabama and Illinois, only four of which are safe. The north-eastern bulrush *Scirpus ancistrochaetus* occurs in 13 populations in the north-eastern states, 10 of which are on private land potentially threatened by development. A sunflower *Helianthus schweinitzii* also survives only in 13 small populations in North and

South Carolina, all in highway or powerline rights-of-way and all threatened by habitat alteration due to suppression of fires and grazing. The Cumberland pigtoe mussel *Pleurobema gibberum* is endemic to the Caney Fork River system in Tennessee, where its distribution has been reduced to four reaches due to impoundments and deteriorating water quality resulting from coal mining, poor land-use practices and waste discharges.

Source: *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, June 1991, 8–9.

California condor release imminent

The California condor *Gymnogyps californianus* captive population had a record-breaking year in 1991. Eleven pairs of birds at Los Angeles Zoo and San Diego Wild Animal Park laid 22 eggs, of which 13 hatched successfully. The total population now stands at 53, almost twice the number of condors in 1987 (27) when the last free-flying bird was captured. Biologists were optimistic that some birds could be released into the wild by the end of 1991.

Source: *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, June 1991, 4.

Shrimp name honours Nature Conservancy

A newly described species of fairy shrimp has been named after the US Nature Conservancy, the first time a species has been named for an environmental group.

Branchinecta conservatio was described in 1990 by scientists from California's Department of Fish and Game, who wished to recognize the Conservancy's efforts to protect the seasonal pools in central California

where the shrimp lives.

Source: *Nature Conservancy News*, July/August 1991, 6–7.

Three taxa listed

In April 1991 the US Fish and Wildlife Service added three taxa to the list of threatened species. *Schoepfia arenaria*, a small evergreen tree endemic to the coastal forest and limestone hills of northern Puerto Rico, remains in three small populations. All are under development pressure, although a landowner in Isabela has offered to donate the cliffs on which some trees grow to the Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources. The white-necked crow *Corvus leucognaphalus* has disappeared from St Croix and Puerto Rico and now occurs only in parts of Dominican Republic and Haiti. Its remaining forest habitat is being cleared and the bird is also hunted in the Dominican Republic. The silver rice rat *Oryzomys palustris natator* has been listed as endangered; it is endemic to Florida's Lower Keys where its remaining mangrove and salt-marsh habitat is threatened by residential and commercial development. Source: *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, May 1991, 10–11.

Crow in court case

The Hawaii and National Audubon Societies have filed a lawsuit against the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Hawaii Federal District Court in an attempt to prevent the extinction of the endangered Hawaiian crow *Corvus hawaiiensis*. There may be as few as 10 crows in the wild, all on the McCandless Ranch on Big Island, whose owners refuse to allow government access. The purpose of the lawsuit is to

compel the Service to implement recovery plans (see *Oryx*, 24, 44).

Source: *'Elepaio*, July 1991, 1 & 3.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Action over pesticide

Environmental groups in the US are threatening to sue the federal government over its programme to eradicate the Mediterranean fruit fly in Guatemalan banana plantations. The US Department of Agriculture is spraying malathion illegally without consulting the Fish and Wildlife Service about the programme's effect on endangered species. The pesticide is killing many of the insects important for of the endangered golden-cheeked warbler *Dendroica chrysopareia*. Source: *National Wildlife*, August–September 1991, 26.

Mosquito Coast to be protected

The Mosquito Coast Protected Area will cover 12,950 sq km of coastal lagoons, mangroves, offshore coral reefs and sea-grass pastures along the north-east coast of Nicaragua. Residents in 23 coastal communities will be trained to manage and defend the coastal region, which suffers serious problems from foreign boats fishing illegally. Source: *Crocodile Specialist Group Newsletter*, January–March 1991, 6.

SOUTH AMERICA

Venezuela declares largest rain forest conservation area in the world

Nearly one-half of the entire Venezuelan territory of

Amazonas has been declared a biosphere reserve. Covering 83,000 sq km it encompasses all the headwaters of the Orinoco and is the home of Yanomami and Yekuana Indians. The presidential decree creating the new Orinoco-Casiquiare Biosphere Reserve and, within in, the Parma–Tapirapeco National Park, was a response to concern by the Indians themselves about the difficulties their people are experiencing over the border in Brazil as a result of a road-building programme, which has brought settlers and gold prospectors into the region (see 'Illegal road in Brazilian park' below). Source: *BBC Wildlife*, October 1991, 665.

Rain forest destroyed for satellites

The French Government has started building a dam in French Guiana to provide hydroelectricity for Kourou, the rocket construction and launch site for the European Space Agency's satellites. The dam, at Petit-Saut on the River Sinnamary, will flood 310 sq km of rain forest and the French authorities have decided not to attempt to harvest the timber. Engineers warn that rotting vegetation will generate methane, hydrogen sulphide, carbon dioxide and ammonia and will consume all the oxygen in the reservoir. Some of the poor quality water will be discharged directly into the river downstream to prevent it damaging the turbines. Source: *New Scientist*, 19 October 1991, 9.

Road planned through Sangay

The Ecuadorean Government plans to build a road through the Sangay National Park,

which straddles the eastern cordillera of the Andes in Ecuador, to improve access to the Amazon basin forests from the densely populated high Sierra. Other roads constructed in the Ecuadorean Amazon have encouraged colonization of forest lands, often resulting in severe land degradation and soil erosion.

Source: IUCN Forest Conservation Programme Newsletter, No. 11, 6.

Black caiman reintroduced into wild—a first

The black caiman *Melanosuchus niger*, one of the most endangered New World crocodylians, remains only as small isolated populations in the Amazon, the upper Essequibo and Berbice drainages in Guyana, and in coastal French Guiana. In Bolivia, where the species is in danger of imminent extinction, 25 individuals were released in July 1990 in the Normandía lagoon near Beni Biological Station, once home to a black caiman population. The animals were donated by Hacienda El Caimán in northern Bolivia, having been captured in the late 1970s to form a breeding nucleus for a commercial farming operation that proved unsuccessful. Eleven hatchlings and yearlings are being kept in a lagoon at the biological station until they are large enough to release.

Source: *Herpetological Review*, September 1991, 90–91.

Amazon fires worst ever

Air and satellite surveys of the Amazon region of Brazil revealed 50,000–88,000 fires during September 1991, making it the worst year ever for burnings. Meanwhile, the pilot programme for the conservation of Brazilian Amazon



This photograph of an elephant seal and a tussac bird in the Falkland Islands was taken by Fritz Pölking, runner-up in the Humorous Views category of the British Gas Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition organized by BBC WILDLIFE Magazine and The Natural History Museum in association with FFPS (see pp. 59–60).

forests, agreed in 1990 by the G7 group of seven most developed countries, has stalled through lack of funding. At the 1991 London Summit the EC announced its commitment to support the programme with a contribution of \$US15 million, just 1 per cent of the total required, but no further funds have been promised. The German Government in association with the World Bank, has decided instead to stage a separate initiative.

Source: Friends of the Earth, 16 October 1991.

Illegal road in Brazilian park

An extension of the BR309 road is being built through the western section of the Pico da Neblina National Park in northern Brazil by army engineers at the request of the garrison commander in São Gabriel da Cachoeira. Road building in national parks contravenes Brazilian law and the plans were made in secret. Brazil's environmental agency, IBAMA, which administers the park,

only found out about the project when the bulldozers moved in. The main reason given for the road is 'to develop a route for the commercialization of Yanomami agricultural produce'. The Yanomami grow no crops, however, and the secondary reasons are given as 'facilitating military transport' and 'security'. The park is home for many threatened species, including the golden-backed uacari *Cacajao melanocephalus ouakary* (see *Oryx*, 25, 80–88).

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, September 1991, 589.

Spix's macaw

The only Spix's macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii* in the wild is still at the same site, in Bahia state, Brazil, and is being carefully guarded (see *Oryx*, 24, 224–228). The Brazilian Government's environmental agency (IBAMA) has sent an ornithologist to study the ecology of the bird and its apparent requirement for caraiba woodland. There is strong support

for and pride in the macaw locally and the mayor of the nearest town has offered assistance for the recovery plan. *Source: World Birdwatch*, September 1991, 4.

Forest drowned in vain

The Samuel Dam, 55 km south of Porto Velho in the Brazilian Amazon, flooded 500 sq km of virgin rain forest when it was completed 2 years ago but it has failed to produce enough electricity even for the offices on it. It was to have supplied electricity to the entire state of Rondonia, but only two turbines were installed instead of five and of those, one never works and the other only occasionally.

Source: The Guardian, 2 August 1991.

Penguin colony at risk

Oil from an unknown source is threatening a major penguin colony in southern Argentina. The Fundacion Vida Silvestre reported that about 500 Magellanic penguins *Spheniscus magellanicus* had been found contaminated with oil as they arrived at Punta Tombo, 1500 km south of Buenos Aires, their largest breeding ground outside the Antarctic. Some birds have subsequently died.

Source: Nation (Bangkok), 12 September 1991.

AUSTRALASIA/ ANTARCTICA

Falcons stop building work

All building work was stopped on a new multistorey office-block in Melbourne, Australia, when a pair of peregrine falcons *Falco peregrinus* nested on its roof. The stop-work deal was agreed between the owner,

building unions and the Department of Conservation and Environment.

Source: Weekend Australia, 7–8 September, 1991.

Falklands Conservation

Falklands Conservation was launched in August 1991 to promote the conservation of wildlife, wrecks and places of historic interest in the Falkland Islands. The Falklands hold a number of endemic species in addition to internationally important populations of albatrosses, penguins and other birds but the economy of the Islands is developing rapidly, increasing pressure on habitats and wildlife. Falklands Conservation will be managing projects on seabird monitoring and sea lion research, conducting botanical and freshwater surveys, and producing conservation education materials. It also manages a number of nature reserves, publishes a newsletter and is a source of advice on conservation matters for the Falkland Islands Government and other bodies. *Details from: Dr Kate Thompson*, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT (Tel./Fax 031 556 6226).

MEETINGS

26–28 February 1992.

International Conference on World Forests—Progress on Sustainable Development, Bandung, West Java.

Contact: Dr Nani Djuangsih, Institute of Ecology, Padjadjaran University, Jl, Sekeloa, Bandung, Indonesia. Fax 620 22 433208.

10–17 May 1992. 4th World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls, Berlin.

Contact: World Working Group

on Birds of Prey, 15b Bolton Gardens, London SW5 0AL, UK or Wangenheimstr. 32, 1000 Berlin 33, Germany.

17–19 June 1992. Systematics and Conservation Evaluation. Co-sponsored by The Natural History Museum, Systematics Association and The Linnean Society of London.

Contact: Dr Peter L. Forey, Department of Palaeontology, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, UK. Tel: 071 938 9405; Fax: 071 938 9260.

24–28 August 1992. Tropical Trees: Potential for Domestication, The Edinburgh Centre for Tropical Forests, UK.

Contact: Dr R. R. B. Leakey, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Bush Estate, Penicuik, Midlothian EH26 0QB, Scotland, UK.

PEOPLE

Professor Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, was awarded the 1991 Africa Prize (jointly with Myram Babangida, wife of the Nigerian head of state). At the instigation of the Green Belt Movement 50,000 Kenyan women have established 10 million trees and 1500 tree nurseries. A further 12 African countries are starting similar schemes.

CORRECTION

On p 192 of the October 1991 issue of *Oryx* it was stated that there were 13–18 Bali starlings in March 1991. *World Birdwatch*, the source of this information, has now published a correction: 13–18 was the size of the population in October 1990.