

Conservation news

New conservation project for hawksbill turtles in Estero Padre Ramos Natural Reserve, Nicaragua

Although categorized as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, new discoveries continue to raise hopes for the recovery of hawksbill marine turtles *Eretmochelys imbricata* in the eastern Pacific Ocean. In 2008 a region-wide workshop on the species led to the formation of the Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Initiative (ICAPO, from its Spanish acronym), an organization that aims to understand, protect and conserve hawksbill turtles in the region. ICAPO's strength comes from collaborative partnerships between local conservation organizations throughout the eastern Pacific.

Following leads generated at the workshop ICAPO staff visited the Estero Padre Ramos Natural Reserve in July 2009, on Nicaragua's north-west coast, which was rumoured to host nesting hawksbill turtles. The team met with local community leaders and representatives of Nicaragua's Ministry of the Environment (MARENA), and found a total of 11 hawksbill nests, all of which had been poached. Using information on the condition of the nests and anecdotal reports by local community leaders about annual hawksbill nesting density, the research team made a conservative estimate of 60–100 hawksbill nests per season in Estero Padre Ramos. Considering that only 400–500 hawksbills are thought to nest annually across the entire eastern Pacific (from Mexico to Peru), which consists of c. 15,000 km of coastline, these estimates would make Estero Padre Ramos one of the most important nesting sites for the species in the region.

A few months after the visit ICAPO joined forces with Flora & Fauna International (FFI) and secured funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), The William H. Donner Foundation and the National Geographic Society to initiate a conservation programme at Estero Padre Ramos. Through the leadership of members of a local fishing cooperative (Cooperativa Multi-Sectorial de Jiquilillo, los Zorros y Padre Ramos, COJIZOPA), the project officially began on 9 May 2010. On only the second day of monitoring the team encountered its first nest and several more have since been protected. As the season progresses and the peak of the nesting season nears, data on nesting levels at Estero Padre Ramos will continue to accumulate and allow the assessment of the regional importance of the site.

Inspired largely by the recent discoveries at Estero Padre Ramos the site has been chosen as the venue for the Second Workshop of the Hawksbill Turtle in the Eastern Pacific, in July 2010. This gathering will provide an important opportunity for stakeholders to discuss and design options

for conservation and recovery of the population, while highlighting the recent discoveries in Estero Padre Ramos. The meeting will conclude with the first-ever Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Festival, which will include local and national bands, educational games and conservation awards.

Hawksbill conservation efforts in Estero Padre Ramos hinge largely on local community member stewardship and the primary involvement of these stakeholders is a central focus of the project. ICAPO, FFI, COJIZOPA, NFWF and MARENA are working cohesively to assure the continued success of the project, whilst eagerly awaiting information on the number of nesting females from the first season of monitoring.

ALEXANDER GAOS *Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Initiative, San Diego, USA. E-mail info@hawksbill.org*

JOSE URTEAGA *Fauna & Flora International, Managua, Nicaragua*

Massive die-off of fish at Lake Naivasha, Kenya

Following heavy storms along the southern shore of Lake Naivasha on 15–16 February 2010 many thousands of fish were found the following morning floating on the surface of the water adjacent to several horticultural farms. The event triggered intensive media speculation about the cause, together with an outcry from local fishermen and residents. Laboratory tests have shown that the fish died of oxygen starvation but the true cause of the problem is as yet unclear.

Lake Naivasha, long regarded as the jewel in the crown of Rift Valley lakes, was formerly known for its crystal clear waters and rich biodiversity. It was arguably one of Kenya's most valuable ecosystems and freshwater resources but over the past 30 years has been subjected to sustained abuse as a result of uncontrolled and unplanned human activities, which have resulted in the degradation of the entire lake basin to such an extent that it may already be irreparably damaged.

A burgeoning horticulture industry centred around the lake has attracted migrant workers from all parts of the country, and as a result numerous unplanned townships have emerged to service the ever expanding farms that produce flowers and vegetables for export to the super-markets of Europe. A 10-fold population increase and poor land-use practices have led to massive surface run-off, bringing thousands of tons of silt, nutrients and solid waste into the lake. Pollution of the lake is caused by nutrients leaking from some commercial horticultural farms together with all of Naivasha town's raw sewage, which enters the lake daily. Meanwhile, the papyrus belt that for decades

acted as a natural filter system has been seriously breached as a result of receding water levels, fires, bovine and human encroachment and conversion to farmland and agriculture, and now covers only 20% of its original extent.

The Lake Naivasha Riparian Association, mandated by the 1929 colonial government to ensure that all riparian lands are safeguarded, and itself a Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award winner in 1999, along with all Naivasha stakeholders, drew up a Management Plan to deal with all potential threats to the Lake. The plan was developed to ensure that all adverse impacts on the Lake's ecosystem could be minimized and corrected, and was also seen as a tool with which to lay down guidelines towards effective regulation of all human activities in the Lake Naivasha basin. The implementation of the Management Plan was vested in a committee comprising the nominated representatives of all Naivasha stakeholders. The then Kenya Government seeing both the importance of, and the urgent need for, such a plan, gazetted it into law in October 2004. It was seen at the time to mark the beginning of a new era in the history of Lake Naivasha. Sadly within weeks of the Gazette Notice being published an injunction was obtained to prevent any implementation of the Management Plan, and this injunction remains in force.

Despite being declared a Ramsar Site in 1996 the lake has undergone years of neglect because of a lack of any enforcement of laws and land-use policies. As a result, in August 2008 the Ramsar Secretariat placed Lake Naivasha on the Montreux Record (a register of wetland sites where changes in ecological character have occurred as a result of human interference) following unprecedented levels of habitat degradation, nutrient enrichment and biodiversity loss.

DONALD A. TURNER, P. O. Box 1651, Naivasha 20117, Kenya
E-mail mat@wananchi.com

Linking Biodiversity Conservation and Poverty Reduction: What, Why and How

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted, in 2002, a target 'to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth'. There is currently much discussion of this target (see *Oryx*, 43, 449–450), and it is clear that biodiversity loss will continue beyond 2010, but it is less clear whether any reduction in loss could contribute to poverty reduction.

To discuss this and related matters further, a Zoological Society of London symposium entitled Linking Biodiversity Conservation and Poverty Reduction: What, Why and How?, organized by the International Institute for Environment and Development, UNEP–World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the African Wildlife Foundation,

played to a full house in London on 28–29 April 2010. Delegates participated in 2 days of presentations and discussions exploring the theoretical and realized overlap between biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction.

Keynote presentations outlined the global context: Bill Adams (University of Cambridge) set the scene from a political perspective and Pavan Sukhdev (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity) outlined the role of economics, in particular ecosystem service valuation. In the state of knowledge reviews that followed Monica Hernandez-Morcillo (UNEP–World Conservation Monitoring Centre) presented global maps illustrating overlaps between biodiversity and poverty. Bhaskar Vira (University of Cambridge) then reviewed the literature on the dependence of the poor on biodiversity, both as a means of subsistence or income and as a buffer against shocks and stresses. Craig Leisher (The Nature Conservancy) followed with an analysis of mechanisms by which biodiversity acts as a safety net for poor people and as a pathway out of poverty, highlighting that, for many of the poor, it is biomass rather than biodiversity that is important. In the latter two reviews the paucity of empirical evidence was identified.

The complexity of the issues, and the importance of context, became clear in the afternoon's case studies. Speakers presented attempts to link poverty and biodiversity among pastoralists in forested regions, coastal environments and agricultural systems. Research in East Africa by University College London and the University of Manchester considered not just the production of benefits but also their relative importance to household income, conservation-related revenue often being of relatively low importance compared with returns from livestock, agriculture and off-farm work.

Day two began with a look at different responses to biodiversity loss and their poverty implications. Sven Wunder (Centre for International Forestry) gave an overview of payment for environmental services, identifying criteria, including security of tenure and transaction costs, which determine who benefits from payment for environmental services and emphasizing that quantitative effects on poverty are generally small-scale. Will Turner (Conservation International) was more upbeat, concluding from global mapping of ecosystem services that the potential for conservation to support poor communities is high. Chris Sandbrook (International Institute for Environment and Development) explored links between species-based conservation and poverty reduction, using great apes as an example, and concluding that benefits are often too limited or poorly distributed to be significant to poor people. Fikret Berkes (University of Manitoba) focused on community based approaches, emphasising the need to understand incentives that communities themselves consider important, not all of which are economic. Daudi Sumba (African Wildlife Foundation) reviewed experiences with value chain interventions and

highlighted key success factors, including commercial viability and governance systems for community ownership and equitable revenue-sharing. George Holmes (University of Leeds) presented a review on human well-being and protected areas, outlining the importance of understanding the wider socio-economic and political context. Finally, Alberto Vega (Convention on Biological Diversity) concluded the morning with a discussion of the Convention.

An afternoon discussion on policies, plans and practices highlighted the continuing need to improve the dialogue and cooperation between the environmental and development communities, with the scarcity of development representatives at the workshop noted. A recurring message throughout the symposium was the importance of a clear understanding of key terms such as biodiversity and poverty reduction, with the context within which case studies are implemented and analysed crucial. During the final panel discussion a warning note was sounded on the increasingly urgent need to start seriously engaging the development community. All the presentations are now available to view at <http://povertyandconservation.info/en>

CHLOE HODGKINSON and HELEN SCHNEIDER *Fauna & Flora International, Cambridge, UK*
E-mail chloe.hodgkinson@fauna-flora.org

IUCN Species Survival Commission: the Reintroduction and Invasive Species Specialist Groups' Task Force for Moving Species for Conservation Purposes

It is widely supposed that many wild species face the prospect of extinction in their current range in the face of the overwhelming adversities of climate change, habitat loss and fragmentation. The latter will be a major factor preventing species from tracking progressive climate change or leap-frogging unsuitable areas to occupy new ranges of preferred conditions.

Focusing on such medium-term prospects, rather than fire-fighting today's pressing issues, there is ongoing debate in academic and conservation circles on the concepts of assisted migration or colonization and managed relocation as management interventions for rare or threatened species with limited ability to move to more suitable locations. Such actions would contravene the principle that species should not be moved deliberately beyond the limits of their known historic range. One may quibble about what determines historic but the question is whether the scale of anticipated ecological change should force reconsideration of what will be acceptable under future conservation objectives and ethics.

IUCN has stated the importance of the historic range condition in two policies: its 1987 Position on Translocation of Living Organisms, and the 1995 Guidelines for Re-introductions developed by the Species Survival Commis-

sion's Re-introduction Specialist Group (RSG). The latter encompassed situations of managed relocation under the term conservation/benign introduction, where the Guidelines state this is 'an attempt to establish a species, for the purposes of conservation, outside its recorded distribution but within an appropriate habitat and eco-geographical area. This is a feasible conservation tool only when there is no remaining area left within a species' historic range.' This has resulted in the marooning and successful establishment of populations of threatened and endemic species in Australia and New Zealand, utilizing habitat or offshore islands that are free of introduced predators.

However, conservation is now faced with the potential demand for conservation introductions on a massive scale, many of which could be ecologically irresponsible. The dilemma for conservation decision-makers lies in the balance of risk in doing nothing to assist species threatened with extinction against the risk of moving them and, potentially, seeing them die out or become pests in their new homes rather than become successfully established. There are questions about the degree of certainty of our ecological knowledge and understanding and about the accuracy of projections of future climatic and ecological conditions for targeted sites.

IUCN has requested a review and update of its policies on this topic, with the aim of having a comprehensive IUCN position for submission at the 2012 World Conservation Congress. Accordingly, the Species Survival Commission has asked the RSG, as originator of the 1995 Guidelines on Re-introductions to undertake this task. Core RSG members (Chair Fred Launay, Vice-Chair Mike Maunder, Executive Officer Pritpal Soorae, Phil Seddon, Mark Stanley Price, Mike Jordan, Sanjay Molur and Sarah Dalrymple), joined by Piero Genovesi, Chair of the Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG), held an inception meeting in May 2010, hosted by the Al Ain Wildlife Park and Resort, United Arab Emirates. The meeting charted the way ahead and specified the collaborations and technical information that the group must include in preparing its opinions and position. It was evident that the ISSG's experience of introduced species, and its network of specialists, were essential resources, and thus the meeting agreed on establishment of the RSG-ISSG Task Force on Moving Species for Conservation Purposes. The lead person for this task force is Mark Stanley Price.

MARK R. STANLEY PRICE *Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK*
E-mail mark.stanleyprice@zoo.ox.ac.uk

Conference on Biodiversity Conservation in the Arabian Peninsula

In recognition and celebration of a decade of successful annual conservation workshops the Sharjah Environment

and Protected Areas Authority (EPAA) hosted a 2-day conference on biodiversity conservation on the Arabian Peninsula at the American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, on 3–4 February 2010. The aim of the meeting was to review past progress and current needs for biodiversity conservation throughout the Arabian Peninsula. The conference was opened by its patron, His Highness Dr Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed al Qassimi, Ruler of Sharjah and Member of the Supreme Council, in a plenary session that featured a keynote address from Simon Stuart, Chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and a review of 10 years of Conservation and Management Planning Workshops for the Fauna of Arabia by Abdulaziz Al Midfa, Director General of the Sharjah EPAA.

Invited speakers from IUCN, WWF, BirdLife International, and from conservation agencies, universities and NGOs in the region, gave presentations designed to provide a regional perspective that highlighted the current state of biodiversity on the Peninsula. Topics included reviews of Important Bird and Plant Areas, WWF Ecoregions, application of the Hotspot concept, regional conservation agreements, and protected area networks on the Peninsula. The first sessions concluded with a summary of the output of a 2-day GIS Workshop hosted by the EPAA Breeding Center for Endangered Arabian Wildlife in preparation for the conference, which sought to start the important process of collating, compiling and integrating spatial data on species and habitats as a basis for a systematic conservation assessment for the Peninsula. The final session of the first day focused on trans-boundary conservation areas, a regional conservation management approach that was developed during Conservation Workshops in 2007–2009.

Day two of the conference had the theme Looking to the Future, aiming to identify data gaps, challenges and needs for the implementation of both national and regional conservation programmes. Presentations and associated discussions covered the role of captive breeding, habitat restoration, species reintroductions and climate change, and taxonomic reviews including freshwater and marine fish, the Arabian leopard, migratory birds, including the houbara bustard, carnivores and small mammals. These talks drew heavily on the outputs of previous Conservation Workshops and charted a course for a future Regional Red List assessment process, as detailed in an IUCN Regional Red List Assessment Training Workshop held before the conference, in parallel with the GIS Workshop. During an open discussion conference delegates identified a number of specific points under the headings of Vision for the Future, and Doing the Doing. The conference closed with a clear commitment from all involved to sustain and expand the annual Conservation Workshops, taking a regional perspective to work towards integrated conservation strategies and regionally coordinated conservation action.

Outputs of the meeting will include a special issue of *Zoology in the Middle East* featuring selected peer-reviewed papers and short communications dealing with topics covered in the conference. Information about past and future Conservation Workshops can be obtained by contacting the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife, Sharjah, UAE (e-mail breeding@epaa-shj.gov.ae).

PHIL SEDDON Department of Zoology, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
E-mail philip.seddon@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

MIKE KNIGHT South African National Parks & Department of Zoology, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

DAVID MALLON Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK

Scimitar-horned Oryx Conservation Strategy

The scimitar-horned oryx *Oryx dammah*, a species symbolic of a broad swathe of North Africa and the Sahel, is now Extinct in the Wild sensu IUCN. The last populations in the Sahelo-Saharan region were observed in the 1990s. The loss of this spectacular and previously wide-ranging antelope is cause for profound scientific, cultural and economic regret. However, substantial populations, both managed and unmanaged, exist in captivity, and the expertise has been established both with scimitar-horned oryx and the Arabian oryx *Oryx leucoryx* to make reintroduction of the species a practical possibility. Successful reintroductions of scimitar-horned oryx are proceeding into fenced protected areas in both Tunisia and Morocco.

The Sahara Conservation Fund and the Al Ain Wildlife Park and Resort (AWPR) have initiated a series of workshops to draft a Global Conservation Strategy and Action Plan for scimitar-horned oryx as a document to advance the restoration and conservation of the species across its historical range. Thousands of scimitar-horned oryx are currently held in zoos and private collections and these populations have significant potential for supporting reintroductions. Within Abu Dhabi very large herds are maintained by both the Al Ain Wildlife Park and Environment Abu Dhabi.

Workshop I, hosted by AWPR, was convened in November 2009 to identify the skills and resources available and to develop a suite of criteria by which future reintroduction sites could be assessed. The workshop was facilitated by the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC). A total of 28 people attended, representing international agencies such as the Antelope Specialist Group of the SSC, the Commission on Migratory Species, the European Associations of Zoos and Aquaria, the American Association of Zoos and Aquaria, the University of Oxford,

Environment Abu Dhabi, and major zoos (Smithsonian's National Zoo, Marwell Wildlife, Rotterdam, Zoological Society of London, St Louis and San Diego). The range countries of Tunisia, Morocco, Niger and Senegal were represented. The workshop reviewed the key issues of genetic diversity in captive herds, disease implications for reintroduction, the habitat needs of this migratory species, and conservation infrastructure and capacity needs for the range nations. The next workshop, planned for late 2010 in Algeria, will focus on the practical issues of reintroducing scimitar-horned oryx to the range nations of the Sahara and Sahel.

The reintroduction of the scimitar-horned oryx should be viewed as a mechanism for restoring the degraded habitats of the Sahara-Sahel and for recovering the highly threatened mega-vertebrate fauna—most notably carnivores and antelopes—of the region. The work has a strong cultural and development context as any reintroduction must partner with the local communities with whom the species previously existed. A dedicated website (<http://sites.google.com/site/cbsgsho/>) has been established by the CBSG to facilitate sharing of workshop briefing materials and outputs, and reports and background papers.

MIKE MAUNDER *Al Ain Wildlife Park, Centre for Arid Land Conservation, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates*
E-mail michael.maunder@awpr.ae

Reaching consensus: impact of the liana *Sericostachys scandens* on forest dynamics in Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda

Sericostachys scandens is a native, monocarpic liana in Afromontane forests that mass flowers and dies back approximately every decade. It appears to be proliferating in the globally significant Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda, where it often covers trees, clearings and road edges, possibly causing tree mortality and impeding regeneration. Concern over such impacts, visible from the national road, has led some politicians and members of the public to demand interventions to control the liana. This concern and the resulting polemic have challenged decision makers. In Kahuzi-Biega National Park, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, there is also concern about proliferation of *S. scandens* because of a perceived threat to gorilla habitat. But in other forests, such as Bwindi National Park, Uganda, *S. scandens*, although common, is not viewed as a problem.

The Rwanda Environment Management Authority, in collaboration with the Rwanda Development Board (in charge of national parks), organized an international workshop on 24 September 2009 to reach consensus among the diverging opinions held by researchers and managers about the supposed proliferation of *S. scandens* in Nyungwe. The workshop, facilitated by the Wildlife Conservation

Society and the Global Environment Facility–UNDP Montane Forest Project, united participants from Rwanda (25), Uganda (4), DRC (2), Europe (4) and the USA (2). Eight managers and 12 researchers participated, with remaining participants (17) in advisory positions.

The workshop began with one overarching question: is *S. scandens* functioning within its historical parameters or has something triggered the recent proliferation, thus justifying interventions? Opinions were mapped through a participatory exercise. Just over half of the participants considered the liana's proliferation to be within its natural range of variability. The level of intervention desired varied but, apart from one outlier, participants supported low to moderate intervention levels. Many agreed that our ignorance limits effective decision making for this species. Subsequently, research results from Nyungwe and Bwindi were presented, and participants then divided into research and management working groups, analysing current knowledge and required management interventions.

S. scandens, a pioneer species dominating open areas, appears to be most abundant in eastern Nyungwe National Park. This most likely reflects recent human disturbances and may explain why this liana appears to have increased. Monitoring in the forest interior shows that following post-flowering die-back of the species in 1994 other species increased rapidly in areas vacated by the liana. Ten years later, cover of *S. scandens* had reached pre-dieback levels. Various observers noted spatial variation in flowering events at different places in Nyungwe at varying times, as well as at varying periods between different forests.

Early explorers reported that *S. scandens* was already abundant in Nyungwe in 1898 and 1907, despite the presence of elephants and buffaloes, refuting assumptions that the recent extirpation of these species triggered the proliferation of *S. scandens*. Observations from Bwindi suggest that while elephants occasionally feed on the liana they also favour habitat suitable for *S. scandens* by maintaining open areas. Participants agreed that reintroduction of elephants to Nyungwe would not suppress *S. scandens*.

To understand the influence of *S. scandens* on forest dynamics and composition, monitoring of cover and abundance over the complete multi-annual life cycle of the species was recommended. The greatest knowledge gap appears to be the impact *S. scandens* may have on forest regeneration but there is also a need to document its local distribution. Participants concluded that political will for action and slow recovery of disturbed areas justify trial interventions that should consider: reduction (not elimination) of *S. scandens*, experience with ongoing forest regeneration trials, experimental cutting in highly visible places (e.g. along the national road), and the anticipated die-back conditions following the current flowering.

The workshop concluded that the earlier polemic on *S. scandens* was related to the limited information available

and poor communication between scientists, managers, decision-makers and the public. The proposed trial interventions represent a timely opportunity to address these deficiencies. The workshop report will soon be available at <http://www.rema.gov.rw>

PAUL SCHOLTE* *Kitabi College of Conservation and Environmental Management, Rwanda. E-mail pault.scholte@gmail.com*

LOUIS RUGYERINYANGE, FRANCOIS BIZIMUNGU and FIDEL RUZIGANDEKWE *Rwanda Development Board, Rwanda*

NERISSA CHAO, FELIX MULINDAHABI and NICOLAS NTARE *Wildlife Conservation Society, Rwanda*

DENNIS BABAASA and DOUGLAS SHEIL *ITFC, Uganda*

ROBERT FIMBEL *Washington State Parks, USA*

EBERHARD FISCHER *Koblenz University, Germany*

JEAN GAPUSI *Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Rwanda, Rwanda*

BETH KAPLIN *Antioch University New England, USA*

*Also at: *Rwanda Development Board and, formerly, Rwanda Environment Management Authority and UNDP*

Japanese demand for ivory declines

Japan has a long history of ivory carving, famous especially for the *netsuke* (an intricately carved toggle for the kimono) and signature stamps called *hankos* or *inkans*, used by nearly all adult Japanese for signing documents. Japan's domestic ivory trade remains legal. However, uncertain supplies of new raw ivory, strict regulations, the long recession, the export ban and changes in fashion have reduced Japanese interest in ivory. In November 2009 we conducted an ivory survey in Tokyo and Osaka and found a variety of ivory items on display for sale in certain department stores, gift shops and *hanko* shops but in reduced amounts since Esmond Martin's previous survey in 2001.

After the 1990 CITES ban on international ivory trade, CITES allowed Japanese traders to buy 100 t of ivory from southern Africa in 1998. This was all from savannah elephants. Tusks from the forest elephants of Central and West Africa have been illegal to export from Africa since the CITES ban but traders and private individuals in Japan still have some old stocks of these. In 2001 the traders had 100 t of stock left and by 2008 60 t remained from savannah and forest elephants. In late 2008 the traders, with CITES permission, bought nearly 40 t of savannah elephant ivory from southern Africa, so by 2009 stocks were back to c. 100 t. But supplies are irregular and thus traders are worried; some have already left the business.

About 80% of Japan's raw ivory is used to make signature stamps; this percentage has remained constant for over 10 years. Of these, 90% are produced from so-called

soft ivory from savannah elephants. *Hankos* are also made from wood, horn, stone and plastic. Still also produced in ivory, but in smaller amounts in recent years, are chopsticks (from so-called hard forest elephant ivory); jewellery and accessories (90% from soft ivory compared with 60% in 2001); small items for the traditional tea ceremony (mostly soft ivory); traditional musical instrument parts (hard ivory), especially the plectrum for the shamisen; and small figurines and *netsukes* (about 60% from hard ivory and 40% soft).

In 2001 the Japanese crafted c. 13 t of ivory but in 2009 this had fallen to 7 t, according to the Japan Ivory Association. For example, members of the Association estimated that the number of signature stamps made in 2001 was c. 116,000 but in 2009 only 20,000–27,000. The wholesale price for raw ivory stayed the same in yen from 2001 to 2009, although it went up in dollar terms from USD 284 to 340 per kg for a 10 kg tusk, and from USD 200 to 284 per kg for a 5 kg tusk. The traders of Japan, to stay in the business, would like a steady supply of 10 t of good quality tusks per year at a price of c. USD 200 per kg. This is a sustainable amount that southern Africa could provide if the relevant countries' governments can appropriately manage their elephants for CITES to approve the sales.

There are other factors affecting the Japanese ivory trade. Demand worldwide for ivory items declined after the CITES ban. Campaigns against ivory succeeded in making it unfashionable and unpopular in the West and also in Japan, especially amongst the young. Ivory traders and carvers are untrained in publicizing a counter-argument and thus demand for ivory, and sales, have continued to fall in Japan, especially as campaigners have put heavy pressure on vendors and ivory outlets. In addition, Japanese culture is becoming more westernized and thus traditional items made of ivory are less in demand. The use of *hankos* is no longer compulsory in many sales and transactions. All this, compounded by the economic recession in Japan since 1990, has caused a slump in sales of ivory items.

We had meetings with 15 of the main ivory traders in Japan. They lamented that few young people are learning to work with ivory. Most master carvers are over 70 years old and their numbers are declining. A master carver can make one or two *netsukes* per month. These miniature works of art were nearly all made for foreigners but now exports are not allowed. One ivory dealer described the ivory market as suffering from a triple punch: exports are banned, the economy is poor, and there has been a decline in the number of artisans in the main Japan Ivory Sculptors' Association from 60 in 2002 to 46 in 2009 because fewer people are buying ivory carvings and complicated paper-work is now required.

If a legal supply of African ivory from well-managed elephant populations cannot be secured for the Japanese craftsmen then there will be further reductions in Japan's

ivory industry. Meanwhile, the debate, to trade, not to trade or to partially trade in ivory, continues, as conservationists try to tease out the multiple factors affecting the survival of elephants in Africa.

LUCY VIGNE and ESMOND MARTIN PO Box 15510, Nairobi, 00503, Kenya. E-mail rhino@wananchi.com

17th annual Whitley Awards

The 17th annual Whitley Awards Ceremony was held on 12 May at the Royal Geographical Society in London. The flagship event of UK-based charity the Whitley Fund for Nature was hosted by BBC wildlife presenter Kate Humble, and saw eight conservation leaders from seven countries receive Whitley Awards worth GBP 30,000 each in project funding over 1 year in support of their work. Over 350 people attended the event, where the charity's patron, HRH Princess Anne, presented the Awards. The big winner of the night was Angela Maldonado of Colombia, who went on to win the evening's top prize, the Whitley Gold Award—worth an additional GBP 30,000 and a second

year of funding—in recognition of her efforts to halt the illegal trade of night monkeys in the tri-border area of Colombia, Brazil and Peru. The other Whitley Award Winners 2010 are: Mathew Akon, Papua New Guinea (Conservation of the Scott's tree kangaroo and its rainforest habitat), Diego Amorocho, Colombia (Sea turtle conservation with artisanal fishing communities in the Colombian Pacific), Pablo Borboroglu, Argentina (Penguins as ambassadors for global ocean conservation), Susana Gonzalez, Uruguay (Pampas deer and neotropical grassland conservation), Vadim Kirilyuk, Russia (Conservation of the Mongolian gazelle and the Daurian Steppe), Jimmy Muheebwa, Uganda (Grey-crowned cranes as a flagship species for wetland conservation), and Louis Nkembi, Cameroon (Community-based landscape and biodiversity management of the Lebialem Highlands). For more information on the Whitley Fund for Nature, the Whitley Awards and to view short films about each of the winning projects, see <http://www.whitleyaward.org>

*DAVID WALLIS Whitley Fund for Nature, London, UK
E-mail david@whitleyaward.org*