

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and its scientific journal *Oryx* celebrate their centenary this year. FFI was founded in 1903, as the Society for the Protection of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, by a group of well-travelled sportsmen, hunters and statesmen (see Prendergast & Adams, this issue). The Society assiduously gathered support from leading figures around the world, and for 40 years had unbridled access to the corridors of power, guiding and admonishing local governments whilst the foundations of a programme of conservation were laid across the British Empire.

After the Second World War, as the Empire faded, the Society perforce changed gear. With the foundation of the International Union for the Protection of Nature (later the IUCN) and of the United Nations Environment Programme, and with the major environmental conferences in Stockholm (1972), Rio de Janeiro (1992) and most recently Johannesburg (2002), the scope of conservation became truly global. FFI found a new role, as catalyst and agent provocateur, as secretary and outrider for the growing conservation movement. Wherever there was innovation in conservation, the Society was there, coping with the challenge of growth in the context of limited funds, and working with partners. Although FFI was not the first conservation organization to be founded – there were many previous associations – it can justly claim to be the oldest international organization. Its history is the history of global conservation, and this will be told in a book written by Bill Adams, to be published in December of this year by Earthscan.

Throughout its 100 years FFI has enjoyed the support of many exceptional people, and if you look at the composition of the present Council you will see that it continues to do so. In the early period supporters included people such as Edward North Buxton, E. E. Austen, Denys Finch Hatton, James Stevenson-Hamilton and the mercurial hunter Frederick Selous. Later came The Earl of Onslow, Peter Chalmers-Mitchell, Julian Huxley, Victor Van Straelen, Frank Fraser Darling, Richard Fitter, John A. Burton and Peter Scott. Some of those who have led the Society are household names in conservation, some are great leaders in another public field, persuaded to lend their name and talents to the Society. Others have been stoical, diligent organizers, building with their daily efforts the work of conservation.

What would the founders of FFI make of the conservation scene, 100 years on? I think that, with nature

threatened, beleaguered and bulldozed aside to make way for humans and their demands, it would look entirely familiar to them. FFI's founders were petrified at the prospect of large-scale extinctions; 100 years later we know more, and what we know is even more alarming. We are entering unknown territory regarding extinctions, with unprecedented levels of habitat loss and pollution having effects that we are only beginning to understand.

I do not think our predecessors would be very surprised at the conservation movement either, although they might marvel at its size, certainly at the amount of money it spends, and at the technologies it has to put across its message. Recently Achim Steiner, Director General of IUCN, spoke optimistically to the 4th Student Conservation Conference in Cambridge, UK. He pointed out that a great deal has been achieved, and he urged the new generation of conservation scientists to get to work, combining excellence in their science with humility for what needs to be done. Amen to that, I can hear Buxton, Onslow or Peter Scott say – but I doubt they would be impressed with what we have done with their heritage.

The real reason conservation in 2003 would be familiar to those active in 1903 is that not much has changed. We are on the same journey, but we have not arrived at a satisfactory destination. We are still fighting the same battles, still facing the same problems, still attempting similar solutions. Is there going to be a happy ending? Will it be enough if we end up simply with a suite of protected areas based on biodiversity hotspots or similar? If so, what will happen to areas such as Eurasia that are regarded as too 'dull' for hotspots? Hotspots are exceptional, but people everywhere should have the right to protect their own wildlife and receive assistance to do so.

We need to explore approaches to conservation that are sustainable. To do this two critical challenges stand out. Firstly, we need to build local capacity and involvement. Conservation organizations encompass the earth like behemoths, planting their scaled down national level organizations like Victorian missionary societies. These organizations can be successful, but more often they draw resources from a country, damaging or closing down the smaller local environmental groups. It is not sustainable or efficient to deliver conservation globally using teams of expatriate experts, rappelling

down into areas of species richness. We need to take a holistic approach to capacity building, not only assisting local people to achieve their own goals, but helping them to construct good governmental, non-governmental and community organizations and systems. This is one of the greatest challenges facing conservation today. Secondly, sustainable conservation has to build on sustainable livelihoods. Unless we can develop mechanisms that help people realize value from their environment then we are destined to fail. Crudely, this means putting bread on the table: conservation has to yield livelihood value if it is to be acceptable.

A good example that demonstrates this is the conservation of mountain gorillas in the Virunga Volcanoes of Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. Careful work by a number of partners over many years has created a wildlife tourism business based on gorilla viewing, a business worth \$20 million per annum. In Rwanda it is the third largest revenue earner after tea and coffee. This project has survived a terrible security situation because it generates revenue for the state, business and local people. There are both risks and problems with this situation, but it is a going concern. Without tourists the chances of the mountain gorilla surviving would have been minimal. But the National Parks in the Virungas are also important because their forests are essential to regional hydrology, and the only remaining forests are in the protected areas. Without the Parks the agricultural economy would be at risk.

Another good example, and one that is not based on the vagaries of the tourist industry, is that of Flower Valley in the Cape of Agulhas in South Africa. A programme based on the sustainable harvesting of fynbos is proving successful, not only for conservation, but in providing local people with livelihoods. The South Africa National Parks are considering using this approach as a blueprint for the conservation of the Cape Floral Kingdom.

Both of these examples have a common characteristic, that of a public-private partnership involving government, NGOs, the private sector and local communities. It is depressing, however, that there are precious few such examples, especially if you look outside ecotourism. We need civil society and NGOs to work together to unlock this valuation of the environment and monetize it. This may seem impossible in industrialized countries, with their cynicism, lack of imagination and trivial politics and spin, but paradoxically it may be easier in developing societies, despite their poverty, lack of resources, and often fractured recent pasts. There may be a real opportunity to introduce innovative ways of generating income from ecological resources.

Of course, although there are already companies both working and interested in working in conservation, we need business to play a larger role. Conservationists now realize they have to go beyond the occasional charitable handout, to build relationships with companies that bind them into being part of the solution and not part of the problem. We need not only their financial resources, but their expertise, energy, and capacity to organize. We need them to develop products and promote ways of living that reverse the destructive grip of human consumption. We need them to work with governments and communities to build new relationships and connections, to generate new ideas and ways of managing change.

In this Centenary Issue of *Oryx* 10 invited papers cover some of the most pressing issues and emerging ideas in conservation today. In addressing these and other critical matters we need to create a new world, one that is substantially different from that of the 20th century. We have to formulate strategies that bring all interested parties together – to support the realization that biodiversity is not just a bolt-on extra, but is at the centre of both the development agenda and of life itself.

Mark Rose  
Executive Director, Fauna & Flora International