

## International

**Protocol on Biosafety agreed**

On 29 January 2000 in Montreal, governments agreed the Protocol on Biosafety to the Biodiversity Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, as it will be known, addresses the safe transfer, handling and use of live modified organisms (LMOs) that may have an adverse effect on biodiversity. It focuses specifically on movements between countries. LMOs include the controversial genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Under the Protocol, an advanced informed agreement (AIA) procedure will be created for the importation of LMOs. There are also provisions on documentation, confidential information and information sharing, capacity building and funding.  
*Source: Plant Talk (2000), 21, 20.*

**New global Forum on Forests**

The newly-created United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) grew out of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, which held its final meeting in February 2000. The UNFF will provide a permanent forum to review the implementation of existing commitments and future proposals to conserve and manage forests sustainably. For the Forum to succeed, it will need to engage a broader range of stakeholders, promote action on the ground, build on existing partnerships and initiatives, and support more involvement by civil society in decision-making on forests.  
*Source: IUCN Arborvitae (2000), 14, 1.*

**The 2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species**

The year 2000 will see the first compilation of one list that includes both animals and plants—to date, lists had been produced separately. It is also agreed that the current listing process needs to be improved. For more than 30 years, IUCN *Red Lists* and *Red Data Books* have highlighted species of international conservation concern. Over the years, the system for determining threatened status has

become more objective and scientifically rigorous.  
*Source: Species (2000), 33, 21–29.*

**TRAFFIC and CITES sign Memorandum of Understanding**

In November 1999, TRAFFIC International and CITES signed a Memorandum of Understanding that will further strengthen the working relationship between the two organizations, particularly in the realm of capacity building. The agreement aims at jointly developing activities for CITES Parties needing assistance and will include training, networking, information dissemination and fundraising at regional and sub-regional levels.  
*Source: TRAFFIC North America (2000), 3(1), 13.*

**International Plant Names Index launched by Kew Gardens**

The International Plant Names Index (IPNI), comprising more than 1.3 million scientific names for seed plants, was launched in June. Developed by scientists at Kew Gardens in the UK in collaboration with their counterparts at Harvard University Herbaria in the US and the Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research in Canberra, Australia, the Web site is the first freely-available global system. The Web site ([www.ipni.org](http://www.ipni.org)) includes a 'plant name spell checker' and, eventually, links will lead the user from the name itself to other electronic sources of information on the plant in question. Information will be updated as and when new species are described and named.  
*Source: Environment News Service (2000), 27 June.*

**Reclassification of great apes**

Bornean and Sumatran orang-utan populations are as genetically distinct from one another as chimpanzees are from gorillas, and comprise four—not two—separate taxa, all of which are endangered. Moreover, experts decided at a meeting in Orlando in April that there are two, not one, species of gorilla. The outcome of the meeting, which included

primatologists and taxonomists from the Primate Specialist Group of the IUCN (World Conservation Union)/Species Survival Commission, Conservation International and the Centre for Environmental Research and Conservation of Columbia University, has major implications for the conservation of great apes. The latest taxonomic research will be incorporated into a Primate Conservation Strategy and Action Plan for the twenty-first century, which will be released at the International Primatological Society in Australia in 2001.  
*Source: BBC Wildlife (2000), 18(7), 34.*

**BirdLife International predicts significant extinctions**

A recent report by BirdLife International estimates that one in eight of the world's bird species, around 1200, may become extinct in the next century. An additional 600–900 species are on the verge of joining this group. Habitat loss and environmental degradation are the greatest threats. Brazil has the highest number of species (111) facing extinction. Indonesia comes second with 94 species, while China is third with 81.  
*Source: Audubon (2000), 102(3), 20.*

**Cause of global amphibian decline remains a mystery**

The cause of the global phenomenon of decline of apparently healthy populations of amphibians remains unclear. A fungus that was identified in 1998 as one of the suspected causes of the mass die-outs of frogs and toads around the world has been discovered in specimens of Yosemite frogs collected in California in the 1970s. In Australia, the chytrid fungus has been found in a preserved dainty tree frog *Litoria gracilentia* from the late 1970s. This species is still common, but the southern gastric brooding frog *Rheobatrachus silus*, which incubates its young in the stomach and regurgitates the babies, has not been seen since 1979. Scientists believe that there may be more than one cause to the global decline and the main threat to these

sensitive animals remains habitat loss.  
*Source: Wildlife Conservation (2000), 103(3), 12.*

#### **Diseases may be major threat to marine species**

The Harvard University Major Marine Ecological Disturbances Program is collating information on the effects of a range of diseases on marine species. Eight main diseases have been identified as being potentially significant threats. The five leading killers of marine species are: 1) the morbillivirus that affects harbour seals, monk seals and dolphins; 2) *Pfiesteria*, an alga that can poison fish, shellfish and humans; 3) herpes viruses that can cause tumours on green, loggerhead and olive Ridley turtles; 4) the parasites known as Dermo and MSX that can devastate oyster populations; and 5) the fungus *Aspergillus* that can impact upon corals and sponges. It is suggested that water-borne pollution of various kinds as well as changes in the marine ecosystem may be responsible for an increase in the incidence of marine diseases.

*Source: Audubon (2000), 102(3), 39–45.*

#### **Genetics may help identify protected species in food products**

Researchers in the US have extracted mitochondrial DNA from fresh and frozen turtle meat and canned turtle soups to identify which species they contain. In most cases, the species were ones that are legally traded, but some were protected species. It may be some time before this technique can be used to control the massive trade in freshwater turtles in South-east Asia. Regulation of trade in this region is largely inadequate, particularly in China where an increasing market is leading to the sourcing of meat from farther afield.

*Source: BBC Wildlife (2000), 18(6), 62.*

### **Europe**

#### **Chocolate company helps seahorse project**

The Belgian company Chocolaterie Guylian has announced that it will work with Project Seahorse to raise international awareness about the

precarious state of seahorse populations world-wide. The company, famous for its chocolate seashells, will donate \$750,000 to enable Project Seahorse to expand its team of researchers and focus on seahorse ecology and behaviour in Australia and Europe. Seahorses are increasingly threatened by overfishing and habitat destruction. More than 20 million a year are harvested for the pet trade and traditional medicines. According to Project Seahorse, many populations have declined by 50 per cent in the past 5 years. To increase awareness, Guylian will print an alert on every package of their chocolate seashells.  
*Source: Wildlife Conservation (2000), 103(3), 10.*

#### **Proposals to flood Important Bird Areas withdrawn**

The Icelandic Government has dropped plans to flood Eyjabakkur Important Bird Area (IBA), a vital moulting ground—the largest in the world for this species—for around 10,000 pink-footed geese *Anser brachyrhynchus*. The Icelandic Society for the Protection of Birds (ISPB), together with other conservation organizations, has been fighting plans to flood Eyjabakkur since the early 1990s. The IBA was to be flooded to create a water reservoir for a hydroelectric power station at Fljótsdalsvirkjun. Power from this station would have been used to supply an aluminium-smelting factory. Although the Icelandic Government is still planning to build an aluminium-smelting plant in the area, an alternative site will be chosen for the reservoir. Moreover, the new scheme will be subject to an environmental impact study, something that was never carried out for the original proposal.

*Source: BirdLife in Europe (2000), 5(2), 4.*

#### **Finland and Latvia join forces for education project**

Four institutions in Finland and two universities in Latvia are working together to tackle environmental problems in the Baltic Sea region. The project has identified environmental needs in Latvia and how Finnish institutions might assist. The harmonization of environmental legislation and the lack of continuing

environmental education for government and private sector employees are particular needs. Network building is also a primary component of the project. Increased awareness of environmental issues in Latvia has set the stage for further collaboration between professors, students and the government.  
*Source: Russian Conservation News (2000), 22, 27–28.*

#### **United Nations institute opened in the UK**

The World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) officially joined the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on 3 July. The WCMC, founded by the IUCN in 1979, joins UNEP as its global biodiversity information and assessment centre and will help nations to create their own biodiversity information systems, thereby enabling them to develop science-based policy and regulations for the environment. WCMC works with governments and the private sector to provide biodiversity information, for example, on the presence of threatened species and the location of protected areas. It will also help developing countries gather and handle biodiversity data while seeking partner organizations to promote and enhance its work. In addition, the WCMC will negotiate agreements with relevant international conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the World Heritage Convention.  
*Source: Environmental News Service (2000), 3 July.*

#### **Bialowieza forest under threat**

Commercial logging of Poland's Bialowieza forest, the last primaevial forest in Europe, is continuing in more than 80 per cent of the forested area outside of Bialowieza National Park. Most of the primaevial stands have been removed and only 20 per cent of natural old-growth stands remain. The forest is the only place where it is possible to see how forest ecosystems in Europe functioned before human interference. The Polish Society for the Protection of Birds, together with

other NGOs and international support, is campaigning to ban commercial logging in Bialowieza and to protect the whole forest as a national park. On 23 February, the Polish Minister of the Environment accepted a draft decree on the enlargement of Bialowieza National Park to include the whole forest from January 2001. This declaration, however, is not legally binding and logging is continuing unabated. Furthermore, foresters, timber loggers and local administration are strongly opposed to the extension of the national park, and are lobbying the government forcefully to reject the proposals.

Source: *World Birdwatch* (2000), 22(2), 7.

### Two million against French hunting laws

The Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux and France Nature Environment have collected more than 2 million signatures against France's hunting laws. This constitutes the greatest number of signatures ever collected by a petition on a conservation issue. A law passed in July 1998 permitted the hunting season to begin as early as mid-July in most coastal areas, when the birds are still nesting, and continue until the end of February, when migratory species return to breed. This runs counter to the European Union's Birds Directive. The petition, presented to the European Parliament on 1 March, presses the European Parliament to resist any attempts to modify the Birds Directive and asks the French Government to repeal the July 1998 law, and to shorten the hunting season as soon as possible.

Source: *BirdLife Update* (2000), April, 1.

### French Government proposes controversial wolf management plan

Since their natural return to the French Alps from Italy in 1992, wolves have been reported to have killed sheep in the area. In March, the French Government put forward a 25 million French francs proposal to manage wolves and sheep transhumance over a 3-year period. It proposes that the wolf range be divided into wolf areas (mainly the Mercantour and Queyras protected areas), where wolves are protected, and non-wolf areas, where wolves are

controlled or excluded.

Conservationists have warned that such a plan may not ensure viability of the managed population, and that defining zone borders may prove unfeasible. The proposal has not yet been implemented, but, in early July, a 'protocol to decrease the number of sheep killed by dogs and wolves' was adopted that allows for the removal of up to six wolves (out of a population of 30).

Source: *Plan d'action pour la préservation du pastoralisme et du loup dans l'arc alpin* (2000). Conseil National de la Protection de la Nature. Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe Web site: <http://www.large-carnivores-icief.org/> (sent by Guillaume Chapron, e-mail: g.chapron-al98@veterinaire.fr and François Moutou, e-mail: f-moutou@alfort.afssa.fr)

### Pyrenean ibex extinction

The last-known Pyrenean ibex *Capra pyrenaica pyrenaica* (a captive female) died in January 2000 when a tree fell on it. Widespread in the Middle Ages, the subspecies became rare in the nineteenth century and finally became extinct in France in 1910, mainly as a result of overhunting. On the Spanish side, 50 animals survived in the Arazas valley, a protected area since 1918. By 1986, only three females and one male remained and a captive breeding programme was established, using embryo transfer techniques. Despite conservation efforts, however, this subspecies of the Iberian ibex *C. pyrenaica*—distinct from the Alpine ibex *C. ibex*—is now extinct.

Source: *La lettre de la Société d'Encouragement pour la Conservation des Animaux Sauvages (SECAS)* (2000), 22, 6 (sent by Guillaume Chapron, e-mail: g.chapron-al98@veterinaire.fr)

### Plight of the last French brown bears

The French brown bear population has dropped from about 80 in 1950 to just six individuals recorded this year. In March 2000, a Congressman from Central Pyrénées proposed an amendment to current hunting regulations, recommending that bears be captured in order to protect sheep from poaching. Both French chambers approved the proposed amendment, but the environment minister finally overruled it. Fifty thousand people

signed a petition in support of protecting the remaining bear population. Local controversy continues between herders, who are in favour of the removal of bears, and the tourist industry, which benefits from the presence of bears.

Source: ORSO (2000) Office National de la Chasse. *Le Monde* 4 April 2000. Web: [www.ladepeche.com/dep\\_dos.asp?Doss=00015](http://www.ladepeche.com/dep_dos.asp?Doss=00015) (sent by Guillaume Chapron, e-mail: g.chapron-al98@veterinaire.fr)

### Swiss timber to be certified

Twelve per cent of Swiss timber will be certified under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) by the end of 2000. This development is the result of the adoption of Swiss national standards on forest certification in June 1999, and includes a commitment to establish protected areas accounting for 10 per cent of the certified forests. The demand for FSC-certified products is increasing rapidly in Switzerland, and a Swiss print shop was the first in the world to gain FSC certification. Source: *WWF Press Release* (2000), 10 July.

### Further toxic mine spills in Romania

Following the toxic mine spill at Baia Mare gold mine in north-west Romania (reported in *Oryx*, 34(3), 159), two further spills have occurred, the first on 10 March and the second on 14 March. On 10 March, heavy rain and melting snow broke the dam wall, releasing 20,000 tonnes of black sludge—contaminated with zinc and lead—into the Vase River, a tributary of the Tisza River, and spread downstream into the Tisza River in Romania. Unlike the first spill, which was largely short-lived and where the toxic waste dispersed downstream, the toxic sludge in the later spills sank to the riverbed and is expected to have long-term implications for the area's wildlife. Heavy metal contamination has been found on adjacent flood plains, which are important feeding areas for birds using the river and the many migrant birds in the region. There are particular fears for heronries and populations of black storks *Ciconia nigra*.

Source: *BirdLife in Europe* (2000), 5(2), 5.

### Record number of bird reserves in Italy

The national network of nature reserves and recovery and education centres managed by LIPU (BirdLife in Italy) has reached the record number of 53; the reserves now cover some 7100 ha. LIPU has been developing the network since 1979, and it now protects all of the main habitats in Italy, from the Alps to Sicily, and hosts more than 3600 species of plants and animals. Six reserves are within Ramsar sites, nine are included in the official list of protected areas and 24 are Important Birds Areas. LIPU nature reserves provide protection to important populations of heron, Eurasian bittern *Bitaurus stellaris*, ferruginous duck *Aythya nyroca*, lanner *Falco biarmicus* and Eleonora's falcon *Falco eleonora*.

Source: *BirdLife in Europe* (2000), 5(2), 6.

### National parks in central Italy in decline

The 10,794-sq-km Abruzzo region of central Italy is a Mediterranean hotspot for plants, with over 3200 taxa of vascular plants recorded in the area. In the early 1990s, two new national parks and a regional park were established; together with other protected areas these covered 30 per cent of the region. However, NGOs are now taking legal action against several projects that threaten these protected areas. The Sirente Regional Park has been cut from 60,000 to 50,000 ha and within the park there have various EU-funded tourism developments in the sensitive high karst plateau. Expansion of skiing facilities is also planned for the Gran Sasso Park and the Majella National Park, putting montane grasslands and protected species such as the chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* at risk.

Source: *Plant Talk* (2000), 21, 14–15.

### Olympic threat to Greek wetlands

The Greek Government is coming under pressure from WWF and other conservation NGOs and citizens groups to reconsider its plans to build facilities for the Athens 2004 Olympics at Schinias, one of southern Greece's most significant coastal wetland habitats. The area has a rich variety of bird species, one of three remaining stone pine forests in the country and

other rare plants. The government is prepared to designate the area a national park, but at the same time allow the construction of Olympic rowing and canoeing facilities within it. Despite much pressure, Schinias has never received protected status. After it was awarded the Olympics, Schinias was omitted from the Natura 2000 national list although it was on the scientific list. Opponents of the scheme are to contest the Presidential Decree at the Council of State.

Source: *Marine Pollution Bulletin* (2000), 40(5), 364.

### Maltese Important Bird Area relieved

The Ta' Cenc Cliffs on the Maltese island of Gozo and their important breeding colony of Cory's shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea* and other seabirds has been saved, at least for the time being. The cliffs were under threat from proposals for tuna pens, which were to be constructed beneath the cliffs that support Malta's largest colony of Cory's shearwaters. BirdLife Malta submitted its case to the planning authority, stating why the project should be rejected, emphasizing the importance of the area for conservation. The directorate of the planning authority subsequently recommended that the project proposal be refused, and the applicant was advised to seek another site for the tuna pen project.

Source: *BirdLife in Europe* (2000), 5(2), 3.

## North Eurasia

### Fate of the snow leopard in the former Soviet Union

In the former Soviet Union, populations of the snow leopard *Uncia uncia* were concentrated in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In the 1980s, between 1200 and 1400 animals were found in these two republics, 75 per cent of the species' total Soviet population. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, poaching has increased by a factor of three or four. Greatest losses appear to have occurred in Kyrgyzstan and it is estimated that the total population in the former Soviet Union does not exceed 700–900 animals. Corruption, unemployment and a widespread

black market are blamed for these declines. However, signs of improvement are evident in Kyrgyzstan. The Canadian mining company Kumtor has implemented anti-poaching measures on their land while foreign-currency hunting areas have seen increasing snow leopard populations. A presidential reserve, Kergety, in the Kyrgyz Mountains has been successfully stocked with snow leopard and other declining species. Source: *Snow Line* (2000), XVI, 1–2, 7–8.

### One-third of Novaya Zemlya proposed for protection

Until 1990, Novaya Zemlya Island off the northern coast of Russia was the world's largest nuclear test base. Now, 12 areas on the island, representing one-third of the total area, have been proposed as protected areas. These areas fall into two groups: natural and cultural heritage reserves, and nature reserves. The proposed Willem Barents National Park will be Russia's northernmost protected area and will cover 950,000 ha, including 320,000 ha of coastal waters. It will aim to preserve the natural and cultural heritage and to accommodate tourism. Source: *Russian Conservation News* (2000), 22, 16–17.

### Russian desman reappears in the Urals

The population of the rare Russian desman *Desmana moschata* declined drastically during the twentieth century. Causes include changes to the desman's habitat through dam construction and land reclamation, water pollution and hunting. In the past 50 years, various attempts to reintroduce the species have largely failed. However, one scheme in the Ural Mountains has had some success and the desman population in the Kurgan and Chelyabinsk Oblasts has increased over the past 10 years. This has encouraged efforts in other areas and may provide long-term hope for this rare endemic species.

Source: *Russian Conservation News* (2000), 22, 34–36.

### Russian National Fund for the Environment created

Strana Zapovednaya or 'protected land' is the name of a newly-created



Russian foundation that aims to boost nature protection and render support to protected areas throughout Russia. Founder members include the Siberian Aluminium Financial and Industrial Group, the Russian Industrialist and Entrepreneur Union, the Bryansk Chamber of Commerce and the Russian State Committee on Environmental Protection. The foundation aims to maintain Russia's Zapovednil system and engage the public in nature conservation issues. This is the first example of a collaborative approach to conservation by the private sector in Russia.

Source: *Russian Conservation News* (2000), 22, 40.

### North Africa and Middle East

#### Israel imposes stricter wildlife regulations

The CITES Management Authority in Israel has implemented new regulations that tighten domestic measures concerning the import and export of CITES specimens. The new regulations include a ban on the import of species taken from the wild, the general prohibition of the export of Israel's native wildlife, the banning of falconry and the general import and export of Falconiformes species, the banning of circuses and all trade in poisonous animals and plants, including those listed in the CITES Appendices.

Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), 3(1), 13–14.

#### Reports of poaching in Israel

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel issued a public call to replace Thai agricultural workers by others. This controversial move is prompted by large-scale poaching by Thai workers, who allegedly use hunting practices unknown in Israel. In particular, nooses and other traps that are laid on the ground or hung from fences are deployed. Rangers of the Nature Reserve Authority collected 1500 traps over a period of 2 months in the southern Golan Heights. Furthermore, over an 18-month period, four of 18 wolves equipped with radio collars were found in traps thought to

have been laid by Thai workers. In addition, two of 10 radio-collared jungle cats in the northern Jordan Valley were discovered in such traps. The Nature Reserve Authority is powerless to deal with such cases of poaching, which is considered a serious threat to wildlife in Israel.

Source: *Society for the Protection of Nature* (2000). Supplied and translated from Hebrew by Professor Yoram Yom-Tov, Department of Zoology, Tel Aviv University, Israel. E-mail: yomtov@post.tau.ac.il

### Sub-Saharan Africa

#### Boom in bushmeat trade blamed on development projects

In Cameroon's Dja Biosphere Reserve, chimpanzees, gorillas and elephants are being killed for bushmeat. Dja is the subject of ECOFAC, an EU conservation scheme. However, another EU project known as Stabex has financed the upgrading of a 52-km stretch of road that leads to the reserve, making access easier. This is being blamed for an increase in the bushmeat trade. It has been suggested that such development projects are threatening animals and their habitats, particularly in the Congo Basin. Estimates suggest that the annual bushmeat 'harvest' from Africa's tropical forests may now exceed 1 million tonnes.

Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), 18(6), 59.

#### Problems in Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site

A report by the Kenya Wildlife Service describes widespread destruction within the Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site. This includes illegal logging of camphor *Ocotea usambarensis*, cedar *Juniperus procera* and East African rosewood *Hagenia abyssinica*, the growing of marijuana and uncontrolled charcoal production. These activities have increased the susceptibility of forests to destructive fires. It has been recommended that the World Heritage Commission should send a monitoring team to the area to assess the seriousness of the situation.

Source: *IUCN Arborviatae* (2000), 14, 4.

#### Population decline of black-and-white colobus monkey in Kakamega Forest, Kenya

Groups of black-and-white colobus monkeys, or guerezas, *Colobus guereza*, have declined in number from 18 groups in 1992 to 12 groups in 1998 in a study site in the Kakamega Forest in western Kenya. This decline occurred largely in the eastern half of the study site. The western half is bordered by buildings of the forestry department and a village where the activities of local inhabitants and tourists may help reduce predation levels. This factor may be partly responsible for keeping the number of guereza groups in the western half stable while forest degradation, which occurs throughout the forest, takes its toll on guereza groups in the eastern half. The decline is of particular concern because it has taken place in an area of forest that has not decreased in size and because guerezas are thought to be well adapted to degraded forests.

Source: von Hippel, F.A. *et al.* (2000) *African Zoology*, 35(1), 69–75. Sent by Michael Hoffmann, PO Box 16539, Atlasville, 1465, South Africa. E-mail: mikehoff@mweb.co.za

#### Mixed-species primate groups

A survey conducted in the Kibale National Park, Uganda, revealed that the amount of time that the five common diurnal primate species (red colobus *Procolobus tephrosceles*, black-and-white colobus *Colobus guereza*, redtail monkeys *Cercopithecus ascanius*, blue monkeys *Cercopithecus mitis* and grey-cheeked mangabeys *Lophocebus albigena*) spent in mixed-species groups varied markedly between different sites within the park. Certain benefits, such as decreased predation risk, were derived from such associations. For example, the time that red colobus monkeys spent in mixed-species groups was correlated to chimpanzee density (chimpanzees *Pan troglodytes* are known to prey heavily on red colobus although they seldom kill other primates). Hence, red colobus may obtain some kind of protective benefit by associating with other primates when chimpanzee density is high. Interestingly, when red colobus groups had more infants and were at their greatest risk of predation, they formed

mixed-species groups most often. (See also *Long-term effects of logging on African primate communities.*)

Source: Chapman, C.A. & Chapman, L.J. (2000) *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, **47**, 129–139. Sent by Michael Hoffmann, PO Box 16539, Atlasville, 1465, South Africa. E-mail: mikehoff@mweb.co.za

#### **Long-term effects of logging on African primate communities**

Surveys conducted over 28 years in Kibale National Park, Uganda, have revealed that group densities of blue monkeys *Cercopithecus mitis* and redtail monkeys *Cercopithecus ascanius* in the heavily-logged area continued to decline decades after logging ended. In the heavily-logged area, there was no evidence of an increase in grey-cheeked mangabeys *Lophocebus albigena* group density, while red colobus *Procolobus tephrosceles* populations were recovering very slowly (0.005 groups/sq km/year). Black-and-white colobus *Colobus guereza* appeared to do well in some disturbed habitats. However, no species were found at lower densities in lightly-logged areas. Results of the study therefore suggest that, in this area, high-intensity logging, which is typical of most logging operations throughout Africa, is incompatible with primate conservation and that low-intensity selective logging would be preferable.

Source: Chapman, C.A. *et al.* (2000) *Conservation Biology*, **14**(1), 207–217. Sent by Michael Hoffmann, PO Box 16539, Atlasville, 1465, South Africa. E-mail: mikehoff@mweb.co.za

#### **Current status of the bonobo in the proposed Lomako Reserve, DRC**

The creation of a 3800-sq-km forest reserve along the Lomako River in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is considered to be crucial for the conservation of the endangered bonobo *Pan paniscus*. A 1-month qualitative study conducted in parts of the Lomako Forest revealed the presence of a fairly large bonobo population in the south-central part, which is relatively free of hunting. However, the northern population appears to be decimated except in the most impenetrable parts. The proposed reserve faces threats from indigenous

inhabitants—who have intensified commercial bushmeat hunting as an alternative to the loss of income from farming—and also from an increasing number of commercial hunters entering the area. Renewed support of local agriculture, the presence of research teams and the creation of the Lomako Forest Bonobo Reserve may be key factors for the conservation of the bonobo, as well as other protected wildlife species, in this area.

Source: Dupain, J. *et al.* (2000) *Biological Conservation*, **94**, 265–272. Sent by Michael Hoffmann, PO Box 16539, Atlasville, 1465, South Africa. E-mail: mikehoff@mweb.co.za

#### **Threats to Príncipe's rain forests**

The island of Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea covers only 132 sq km, but has remarkably high levels of endemism. Like other islands in the region, Príncipe's rain forests are threatened by logging and clearance for small agricultural holdings. A new threat is the proposal to develop a free trade zone in the pristine south-west of the island. The proposed Agulhas Bay Concession Free Zone was granted to the South African enterprise WADCO on a 50-year renewable lease. Plans include building a deep water port, oil storage facilities, an airport and commercial and industrial areas. This would affect about 40 per cent of the island, taking up most of the area occupied by primary forest that has been earmarked for conservation. Conservation organizations and the World Bank have opposed the scheme, suggesting an alternative site in neighbouring São Tomé, which might bring social and economic benefits to the larger population of this island. However, this does not appear to fit with WADCO's plans.

Source: *Plant Talk* (2000), **21**, 13.

#### **Captive chimpanzees released into semi-wild state in Zambia**

Nearly 50 chimpanzees have been released into two 200-ha enclosures in Central Zambia—the largest area ever set aside for captive primates. The enclosures, which include forests, fruit groves and open grassland along the Kafue River basin, allow the chimpanzees to forage and roam as much as they would in the wild. However, they are fed once a day if

they return to the handling facilities. Staff from the Chimfunshi Wildlife Orphanage organized the transfer, aided by a team of veterinarians. Many of the chimpanzees had been rescued from poachers or removed from run-down zoos and circuses. The sanctuary has been placed on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Global Roll of Honour 2000 for its work in looking after chimpanzees. Further information is available from [www.chimfunshi.org.za](http://www.chimfunshi.org.za) or by e-mailing [chimps@yebo.co.za](mailto:chimps@yebo.co.za)  
Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), **18**(7), 57.

#### **New transfrontier park established**

The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park was launched on 12 May 2000. It is the first transfrontier park to be established through a formal treaty, signed in April 1999 by the governments of Botswana and South Africa. Until the establishment of the new park, conservation activities were confined to national boundaries. Now, however, there are increasing opportunities to create conservation programmes that cover regional issues, which will benefit the protection and management of wildlife and biodiversity.

Source: *Kalahari Conservation Society News* (2000), **65**, 7–8.

#### **Population trends of oxpeckers in north-eastern Namibia**

Both redbilled oxpeckers *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* and yellowbilled oxpeckers *Buphagus africanus* have experienced recent population declines in southern Africa largely as a result of cattle dipping against ticks, their primary source of food. In Namibia, oxpeckers are confined mainly to the Caprivi region in the north-east. Recent counts of oxpeckers conducted in 1997–98 were compared with counts from 1983 to 1984 and demonstrated that bird numbers have not increased in proportion to cattle numbers, the primary host which have increased threefold in the last 15 years. Although current redbilled oxpecker numbers appear similar to those in the 1980s, counts of yellowbilled oxpeckers indicate that a serious decline has taken place. The decline is probably attributable to changes in the prevalence of preferred tick species,

resulting from the combined influences of dry conditions and an increased incidence of burning. If the status quo continues, yellowbilled oxpeckers may soon disappear from the Caprivi.

Source: *Biological Conservation* (2000) **92**, 241–247. Sent by Michael Hoffmann, PO Box 16539, Atlasville, 1465, South Africa. E-mail: mikehoff@mweb.co.za

#### **Land Rover helps wild dog conservation**

Land Rover is to support a programme to conserve wild dogs in southern Africa. It will work with the Endangered Wildlife Trust and the Wild Dog Action Group (WAG), which operates under the auspices of IUCN's Canid Specialist Group. The WAG aims to establish a minimum of nine packs distributed in several suitable areas and managed as a metapopulation. Land Rover's launch of this project coincides with the establishment of a new pack destined for relocation in the Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve in the Northern Province of South Africa.

Source: *Endangered Wildlife* (2000), **34**, 40.

#### **Research on rare dolphin in South Africa**

Thirty-seven cetacean species occur in the waters off southern Africa, including Heaviside's dolphin *Cephalorhynchus heavisidii*, which is endemic to the cold Benguela Current between Cape Point, South Africa and southern Angola. Several features of its behaviour and environment make this species prone to entanglement in fishing gear. The setting of nets for fishing is a common activity off South Africa's west coast and WWF–South Africa with support from De Beers Marine will study patterns of movement as a means of assessing the potential for entanglement. In a 1999 study between Stompneus Point and Cape Columbine, 1300 Heaviside's dolphins were encountered and 4700 photographs taken for identification purposes. This photo-identification will be repeated on a much wider scale in 2000.

Source: *Our Living World* (2000), Summer, 8.

#### **Action plan to rid Cape Peninsula of alien vegetation**

In January 2000, the South African Government launched a multimillion rand action plan to rid the Cape Peninsula of invading alien vegetation. The plan, named 'Ukuvuka—Operation Firestop' follows devastating fires that swept through 9000 ha of the Peninsula. Under the plan, alien vegetation will be cleared from public and private land along the entire Peninsula mountain chain from Cape Point to Table Mountain. Clearing alien trees will improve water supplies, help to maintain the biodiversity of the fynbos and prevent high-intensity fires that pose a threat to homes and people. Initial funding will come from Santam Independent Newspapers, Cape and TOTAL, with further funding from the Global Environment Facility and the Working for Water Programme of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry.

Source: *Our Living World* (2000), Summer, 10.

#### **Cow dung and termite mounds help protect Madagascar's forests**

Cow dung and termite mounds are being mixed with clay or red earth to construct fuel-efficient stoves that will help protect Madagascar's highly endangered dry forests. WWF Madagascar and the US Peace Corps have taught more than 1500 Malagasy women how to build simple wood-burning stoves in place of the traditional open fires. The stoves help reduce fuel consumption by 40 per cent and thus relieve pressure on the island's forests. The stoves also cut down the amount of time spent looking for fuel, allowing women more time to work for money and thus reduce poverty levels.

Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), **18**(5), 31.

### **South and South-east Asia**

#### **Tigers continue to face uncertain future**

A WWF field study in Indonesia has found that at least 66 Sumatran tigers *Panthera tigris sumatrae* have been killed in the past 2 years. This represents about 20 per cent of the

wild population. A recent TRAFFIC report *Far From a Cure: the Tiger Trade Revisited*, shows that poaching continues despite a fall in the consumption of tiger bone. In some areas, trade has shifted to skins, teeth and claws. Despite the introduction of tougher legislation, active markets still exist in most tiger range states. WWF is demanding immediate action from Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia and Vietnam to take whatever steps are necessary to prevent the species' extinction from the wild.

Source: *WWF News* (2000), Summer, 5.

#### **Vultures in Keoladeo National Park**

Seven of the eight species of vultures reported in the Indian subcontinent are recorded from Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan. The population and distribution of species were studied between the years 1985 and 1988, 1990 and 1992 and 1996 and 1999. A decline of 96 per cent has been recorded in the population of white-backed vulture *Gyps bengalensis* and 97 per cent in long-billed vulture *Gyps indicus*. Circumstantial evidence indicated contamination with pesticides and disease as the most likely causes of decline. It is recommended that a captive breeding programme be instigated to save the white-backed vulture from imminent extinction.

Source: Prakash, V. (1999) *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*, **96**(3), 365–378.

#### **Rare bird faces extinction in Thailand**

The rare Gurney's pitta now numbers fewer than 10 pairs as a consequence of continued deforestation. The population lives in the Khao Nor Chuchl Wildlife Sanctuary in southern Thailand. Although this reserve contains the remaining lowland rain forests in Thailand, ongoing illegal clearing for rubber and oil palm plantations has reduced the population of this bird to fewer than 10 pairs. By contrast, in 1986, there were up to 30 pairs in the reserve with at least four other smaller populations scattered through neighbouring forests. Marcus Kohler of the Oriental Bird Club attributes the decline in the population to the failure of the Royal Forest Department to enforce protection of

the sanctuary. Further information is available at [www.oriental-birdclub.org](http://www.oriental-birdclub.org)

Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), **18**(7), 57.

#### Forest reprieve in Cambodia

Cambodia has pledged to lift the threat of commercial logging from the Cardamom Mountains, one of Asia's richest areas for biodiversity. The pledge was made in May following the publication of a report from the Asian Development Bank, which stated that the country's forests would be destroyed within 10 years without urgent action. Preliminary research findings have confirmed that Cambodia's relative isolation during three decades of conflict has helped to protect many species that have disappeared elsewhere in Asia.

Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), **18**(7), 58.

#### Forest fires continue in Indonesia

In early March 2000, up to 1200 fire hotspots were recorded in Sumatra and Kalimantan, mainly in Riau and West Kalimantan. Large-scale land clearing by plantation companies is blamed for the fires. The government has set up a forest fire enforcement team. The EU Forest Fire Prevention and Control Project in South Sumatra confirmed that major fires were in large oil palm developments and peat swamp forest areas. Four companies have had their licences suspended and plantation owners were given 2 weeks to extinguish the fires or face jail.

Source: *IUCN Arborvitae* (2000), **14**, 5.

#### Indonesia gets tough over forest fires

The newly-elected reformist government in Indonesia has suspended the operating licences of four plantation companies and threatened their owners with jail in response to the widespread fires in the region in the past months. However, few of the companies responsible for the fires in 1997–98 were punished. According to the Orang-utan Working Group, new research indicates that the species may become extinct in 5–10 years if current declines are not halted. Furthermore, it recommends that the threat status for the species be increased to Critically Endangered.

Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), **18**(5), 57.

#### New report on causes of Indonesian forest fires

As the forest fire season rages in Indonesia, the World Resources Institute (WRI) warns that these fires will continue to occur unless the government changes the way in which it manages the country's remaining forests. *Trial by Fire: Forest Fires and Forestry Policy in Indonesia's Era of Crisis and Reform*—co-published by WRI, the World Wide Fund for Nature–Indonesia and Telapak Indonesia Foundation—examines the destruction of Indonesia's rain forests under former president Suharto. During his 32-year rule, the country lost at least 40 million ha of forests. The report focuses on the 1997–98 forest fires that resulted in the burning of 10 million ha of forests. Many of these fires were deliberately set by plantation owners who take advantage of the dry season to clear the forests and plant export crops such as palm oil. The problem was exacerbated by a drought induced by the periodic El Niño climatic phenomenon, which was particularly severe that year.

Source: World Resources Institute (2000), *Press release*, 19 July.

#### The Critically Endangered Negros cave frog

Recent surveys on Negros in the Philippines suggest that the status of the Negros cave frog *Platymantis spelaeus* should be changed from Vulnerable to Critically Endangered. In January and February 2000, the population in the two low-level limestone caves where it is found numbered no more than 20 individuals. The environmental conditions in these sites have deteriorated because of dam construction and loss of forest habitat. It may be too late to save this species, but it may be possible to prevent further deterioration of the cave environment by reforesting the areas around the caves and protecting the species.

Source: *Froglog* (2000), **39**, 1.

### East Asia

#### Snow leopard conservation progress in Mongolia

Earlier this year, a comprehensive

Snow Leopard Conservation Plan was adopted and signed by the Mongolian Ministry of Nature and Environment, the Nature Conservation Agency and the Endangered Species Commission. As part of the plan, the signatories have undertaken to attempt the following activities. 1) Establish and maintain a snow leopard and prey species population monitoring programme. 2) Ensure that adequate and representative areas across the range of snow leopards in Mongolia are included in the protected area system. 3) Enact and enforce national legislation that is sufficient to protect snow leopards, their prey and their habitat from degradation. 4) Enforce pertinent international conservation laws and conventions to which Mongolia is a signatory. 5) Educate the public and government regarding the cultural, ecological and financial values to Mongolia of maintaining a healthy snow leopard population. 6) Reduce snow leopard–human conflicts, particularly in protected areas and other areas where snow leopards are abundant. The Snow Leopard Conservation Plan can be viewed at [www.irbis-enterprises.com](http://www.irbis-enterprises.com)

Source: *Cat News* (2000), **32**, 12.

#### Tibetan antelope populations threatened by shahtoosh trade

The Tibetan antelope or chiru *Pantholops hodgsonii* is listed in Appendix I of CITES. The animal is a source of shahtoosh, known as the 'king of wools'. Shahtoosh is used to make scarves and shawls that can sell for more than \$10,000 each. Demand for shawls and scarves is fuelling a trade that involves the killing and skinning of several animals to provide wool for a single shawl. Wool is smuggled from Tibet to India, where the shawls and scarves are woven. Although the species is protected in China, it is still legal to weave shahtoosh in India. It is estimated that 20,000 chiru are poached each year and the wild population is currently thought to number only 75,000.

Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), **3**(1), 1–2.

#### Black-faced spoonbill facing extinction

The Critically Endangered black-faced spoonbill *Platalea minor* could face



extinction if the Taiwan Government agrees to the building of an industrial site at the birds' main wintering area. BirdLife International recently estimated the world population at 722, with 488 in Taiwan, mostly in the Chiku lagoons on the south of the island. The area is vulnerable to development and pollution. Taiwan's Environmental Protection Administration has passed a plan for various industrial developments near the lagoons. Little is known about the species, which breeds on a few rocky islands off the Korean Peninsula's western coast. The birds migrate to winter in Taiwan, China, Japan and Vietnam.  
 Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), 18(6), 62.

#### **Trade in exotic pets flourishes in Japan**

The trade in exotic, and in some cases threatened, animals for pets is booming in Japan. Shops and Internet brokers are offering a whole range of species, including lion tamarins and Aldabran tortoises. Wild animal imports into Japan currently rank the highest in the world, per capita. Smugglers can make huge profits, in some cases 150–200 times the overseas price. Shops that have been prosecuted for trading in endangered species then tend to attract collectors. Many of the animals that are smuggled die in transit before reaching Japan. Confiscated animals become national property and are placed in zoos, with only a few being returned to their place of origin.  
 Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), 18(5), 60.

### **North America**

#### **The \$17,000 rodent**

The Vancouver Island marmot *Marmota vancouverensis*, with a population of less than 80, is teetering on the brink of extinction. The species is found in a few patches of subalpine habitat on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. The British Colombian Government and the timber company MacMillan Bloedel Ltd. have committed what amounts to \$17,000 per animal to ensure the species' survival. The money, along with \$1 million being raised by the

Marmot Recovery Foundation, will fund a captive breeding programme. It is hoped that 27 captive marmots in the Toronto and Calgary zoos will produce 400–600 marmots that can be released into the wild.

Source: *Audubon* (2000), 102(3), 18.

#### **Royalties benefit conservation**

Wildlands and open spaces in the US will receive a \$3 billion a year boost after the Conservation and Reinvestment Act was passed by Congress by a vote of 315 to 103. The funds will come from the \$4 billion a year that the government earns in royalties on offshore oil and gas leases. According to the Wilderness Society, the bill is 'the single most significant commitment' to federal and state conservation ever made.

Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), 18(7), 58.

#### **Money for mussel conservation**

In February 2000, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation announced that more than \$260,000 in grants had been awarded to support the recovery and protection of the nation's endangered freshwater mussels. The Foundation manages the Freshwater Mussel Conservation Fund and these grants represent the first instalment of a \$1 million restitution payment from a Japanese-owned business, Tennessee Shell Company, that had been investigated for illegal mussel trafficking. US mussels are valued in the cultured pearl industry, particularly the larger and thicker shelled animals from the South and Midwest. The Tennessee Shell Company pleaded guilty to buying and exporting mussels taken illegally from rivers in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia.

Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), 3(1), 5–6.

#### **US Navy cancels sonar trial programme**

The US Navy has cancelled plans for the deployment of powerful underwater sonar in a military exercise because of mounting evidence of its adverse effects on whales, dolphins and other marine life. The decision follows a number of mass strandings of whales, which have been linked to naval exercises involving

low-frequency active sonar (LFAS). LFAS involves massively loud sounds—up to 230 dB—being broadcast under water with the aim of identifying enemy submarines. Environmental groups have claimed that LFAS causes lung haemorrhage and tissue trauma, hearing loss, disruption of feeding and breeding patterns, and physiological stress in cetaceans. The most recent evidence of the damage LFAS may do was the mass stranding of 17 whales in the Bahamas in March. Two of the dead whales had suffered bleeding from the eyes, consistent with acute shock trauma produced by a wave of sonar.  
 Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), 18(7), 60.

#### **US Fish and Wildlife Service sued by conservation organizations**

Defenders of Wildlife, the National Wildlife Federation, Florida Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club and Collier County Audubon Society have filed a lawsuit in the US District court in Washington, DC. The lawsuit charges the federal agencies—the FWS, US Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Highway Administration—with failure to protect the critically endangered Florida panther *Puma concolor coryi*. Specifically, they claim that these agencies have negligently allowed permits and planning for development to infringe upon essential panther habitat in south-western Florida. The Florida panther is one of the world's rarest mammals and survives in southern Florida only. It has been listed as Endangered in US law since 1973 and was identified as Critically Endangered in the 1996 *IUCN Red List of Threatened Mammals*.  
 Source: *Cat News* (2000), 32, 18–19.

#### **US Senators' poor environmental record**

The League of Conservation Voters latest National Environmental Scorecard shows that 37 US Senators failed to cast a single pro-environmental vote in 1999. This was the highest number since the Scorecard was introduced in 1970. One of the Senators is the new Chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works committees. Each year, 20 conservation organizations help decide which 10–15 issues are most important to the

environment. The League then scores Congress members according to how they vote.

Source: *Audubon* (2000), 102(3), 18–20.

#### **Caviar prosecutions in the US**

In two separate incidents, individuals and companies have been prosecuted or indicted for caviar smuggling. Since April 1998, all caviar shipments have had to be accompanied by CITES permits. In November 1999, a federal jury in New York found three individuals guilty of smuggling thousands of pounds of caviar into the US. Business records for the company of one of the guilty individuals showed that it sold 21,000 lb of caviar worth millions of dollars between April and November 1998. The company legally imported only 88 lb during this period. Also in November 1999, US Caviar & Caviar (USC&C) in Maryland was charged with a 4-year conspiracy to smuggle caviar into the US and falsify documents.

Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), 3(1), 3–4.

#### **Threatened listing for Canada lynx**

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has listed the Canada lynx *Lynx canadensis* as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The listing, on 21 March 2000, includes a special regulation that allows for the take and export of lawfully-obtained captive-bred lynx, interstate transport and commerce in skins that are properly tagged with a valid export tag under CITES, administered in the US by the FWS. The listing follows lengthy controversy, with US conservation groups demanding action and landowner groups opposed because listing gives the Federal authorities control over their properties and access to federal land. Following the announcement, conservation groups gave notice that they would sue on the grounds that the FWS should have classified the lynx as Endangered.

Source: *Cat News* (2000), 32, 13–14.

#### **Last fully protected area in Alaska under threat**

In the US, Republican Congressmen are trying to force through a US federal budget based on oil revenues that could only come from the Arctic

National Wildlife Refuge, which includes an important caribou calving ground. The budget is being opposed by the Clinton administration, but the Republican presidential frontrunner George W. Bush has indicated that he will allow oil exploration if he is elected.

Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), 18(5), 58.

#### **Ten Pacific coast plants added to US Endangered Species Act**

Ten Pacific coast plant species have been added to the US Endangered Species Act. Of the five from California, four grow on serpentine—the flora of this unique habitat is recognized for its high diversity. Keck's checker mallow *Sidalcea keckii* was thought to be extinct, but was rediscovered in 1992: there are thought to be fewer than 300 plants in the wild. Also from the California serpentine are Yreka phlox *Phlox hirsuta*, found at only two locations, and Kneeland prairie penny-cress *Thalpi californicum*, found on only 0.2 ha of land near Eureka Airport. Two species from Oregon, the Willamette daisy *Erigeron decumbens* var. *decumbens* and Kincaid's lupine *Lupinus oregonus* var. *kincaidii*, occur in native prairie in the Willamette Valley—a habitat almost all of which has been converted to farmland. The Wenatchee Mountain checker mallow *Sidalcea oregana* var. *calva* from Washington is threatened by habitat loss and is known from 3300 plants on 50 ha.

Source: *Plant Talk* (2000), 21, 18.

#### **Return of the ivory-billed woodpecker?**

The ivory-billed woodpecker *Campephilus principalis* has been believed to be extinct for several decades. However, following an alleged sighting in 1999, teams of scientists are combing remote areas of Louisiana's Pearl River Wildlife Management Area and Cuba's Sierra Maestra for evidence of the existence of this large flamboyant woodpecker. Louisiana has responded to the sighting by putting a 2-year moratorium on timber cutting in the area. The National Audubon Society is helping fund the search and supporting efforts to find the species

in Cuba, the southernmost part of its historic range.

Source: *Audubon* (2000), 102(3), 14.

#### **Rehabilitation of damaged reef**

In August 1994, the R/V *Columbus Iselin* ran aground on Looe Key, one of the most important coral reefs in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The ship remained grounded for 18 hours and in that time damaged almost 350 sq m of reef. In 1997, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) received \$3.76 million from the University of Miami, owners of the ship. New technology has now been used to repair the reef. Three to five ton limestone boulders have been lowered into holes and cemented in place. These have then been covered with fibreglass and cement with a topmost layer of small chunks of limestone. This year, biologists will transplant sponges and corals to the reef to start the restoration process. The Florida Keys attract more than a million divers a year and the reefs are important to the economy of the region.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation* (2000), 103(3), 20.

#### **Agreement to protect Mexican parrot species**

An agreement has been signed between the US and Mexico to protect the most important nesting area of the thick-billed parrot *Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*, an endangered species endemic to the pine-oak forests of Mexico's Sierra Madre Occidental and the sky islands that extend into the south-western US in New Mexico and Arizona. This area has over 100 nests, representing about 10 per cent of the total breeding population of the species. The agreement calls for a 15-year moratorium on the cutting of timber in the Bisaloachic (or Cebadillas) area, which represents about 10 per cent of the timber potential of the 40,000-acre Ejido Tutuaca, a rural forest co-operative.

Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), 3(1), 11.

#### **Plans for salt works abandoned**

Mexico has abandoned plans to create the world's largest salt works near grey whale breeding grounds in Baja, California. Under the plans, the salt

export company ESSA, owned by the Mexican Government and the Japanese Mitsubishi Corporation, would have dug out 300 sq km of the San Ignacio Lagoon, which borders the Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve. The reserve is one of only four places in the world where the grey whale is known to breed. *Source: BBC Wildlife (2000), 18(5), 58.*

### Central America and Caribbean

#### Captive-bred Puerto Rican parrots released

At the end of June, bird specialists released 10 captive-bred Puerto Rican parrots into the Caribbean National Forest of El Yunque in the north-east of the island. They join the last 40 such parrots still existing in the wild. The release is the result of 32 years' work to bring the endangered bird back from the brink of extinction. The parrot population declined from an estimated 2000 in the 1930s to an all-time low of 13 in 1975, as deforestation and hurricanes claimed their natural habitat and the birds fell foul of hunters and nest robbers. The 10 birds released were chosen from 113 captive parrots in two aviaries on the island. Information gathered from their release should help to establish a second population in north-central Puerto Rico.

*Source: The Associated Press (2000), 29 June.*

### South America

#### Update on golden lion tamarin reintroduction

The reintroduction programme for the Critically Endangered golden lion tamarin *Leontopithecus rosalia* is now in its sixteenth year, with the reintroduced population now numbering 302. The growth in numbers continues to result from reproduction in the Poço das Antas Reserve and on 15 privately-owned ranches in the surrounding Atlantic Coast forest. The proportion of the reintroduced population that is wild-born is now 95 per cent. Survival remains at 60–70 per cent across all

age classes. A further reintroduction is planned for 2000.

*Source: Tamarin Tales (2000), 4, 7–8.*

#### Golden lion tamarin reserve reaches capacity

The world's only reserve for the endangered golden lion tamarin is full. The Poço das Antas Reserve and its surrounding fragments of Atlantic coastal rain forest in Brazil are now home to 920 golden lion tamarins and have reached saturation point. In the 1960s, only around 200 of these monkeys remained in the wild, but the species was brought back from the brink of extinction through a captive breeding programme. Conservationists have set a target of having 2000 tamarins in the wild by 2025. In order to support these numbers, at least 25,000 ha of land will be required—less than half that available today.

*Source: BBC Wildlife (2000), 18(7), 58.*

#### Brazil fights massive oil spill

Environmental workers in Brazil are fighting to contain the country's biggest oil spill in 25 years. More than 4 million litres of crude oil burst from a pipeline in Parana state, 630-km upstream from Iguazu Falls, on 16 July. Millions of litres of crude oil are flowing down the southern Iguazu River, endangering drinking water, farmland and animal life along a 230-km stretch. Dead fish, birds and mammals coated in oil are washing up on the river banks according to environmental officials. The state-owned oil company Petrobras is to be fined \$ 28 million for the spill—the maximum allowed for environmental disasters. Brazil's Foreign Ministry said it had spoken to the governments of Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay about the efforts to prevent the oil spreading over Brazil's borders.

*Source: BBC News (2000), 18 July.*

#### Oil spill in Bolivia

In January 2000, an oil pipeline traversing the altiplano from La Paz in Bolivia to Arica in Chile burst, spilling an estimated 175,000 gallons of crude oil into the Desaguadero River, which drains Lake Titicaca. The spill spread over 95 miles into Lakes Uru Uru and Poopo, which are important feeding

grounds for flamingos and other waterbirds. All three species of South American flamingos use Lake Poopo; the lake is also an important stopover for migratory birds. Indications are that the extent of the spill is not as severe as first thought. However, a more worrying threat is coming from an increase in the volume of aircraft that are transporting equipment and personnel to the area. Flamingos are highly sensitive to disturbance and the increase in air traffic could force them to abandon their nesting grounds. *Source: Wildlife Conservation (2000), 103(3), 21.*

#### Green corridor created in Argentina

In November 1999, the Misiones Province Government in Argentina created a 1 million-ha green corridor in the north-east of the country that protects an area of Atlantic forest. Several globally threatened species are restricted to this area, including red-spectacled amazon *Amazona preteri* and Temminck's seedeater *Sporophila falcistrostris*. Other threatened species such as the purple-winged ground dove *Claravis godefrida* will also benefit from the green corridor. Implementing sustainable use regimes within the area will be a major challenge. It is believed that \$20 million is needed to begin conservation and agricultural technology programmes to improve the living conditions of the 30,000 farmers in the area.

*Source: World Birdwatch (2000), 22(2), 2.*

### Pacific

#### Private legal moves to protect endangered species in Guam

The Marianas Audubon Society and the Center for Biological Diversity have filed a suit against the US Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service for failing to designate critical habitat for seven endangered species in Guam—the Mariana crow *Corvus kubburyi*, Guam rail *Rallus owstoni*, Guam Micronesian kingfisher *Halcyon cinnamomina cinnamomina*, Guam broadbill *Myiagra freycineti*, Guam bridled white-eye *Zosterops conspicillata conspicillata*, and the Marianas fruit bats *Pteropus mariannus*

and *Pteropus tokudae*. All species were listed as Endangered in 1984 and their continued survival is threatened by predation by snakes and continued destruction and fragmentation of habitat. The designation of critical habitat would allow areas to be managed to permit the species to recover to levels where they are safe, for the foreseeable future, from the threat of extinction. This would particularly restrict federal activities, such as military activities, road construction and other development projects.

Source: *Elepaio* (2000), 60(4), 29.

#### Ok Tedi Mine to close?

Pressure is mounting to close the controversial Ok Tedi copper and gold mine in Papua New Guinea. The World Bank has said that the mine should close 'without delay', but the Papua New Guinean Government is reluctant to close it because c. 10 per cent of the country's gross domestic product is generated by the mine. The mine has been accused of causing large-scale pollution in the Fly and Ok Tedi Rivers through the discharge of sediment from a tailings dam. Local communities have sought compensation from the mine's owners, BHP, for loss of fishing and destruction of agriculture and vegetation. However, closure could cause serious hardship because of the mine's economic value and the World Bank argues that mitigation plans should be drawn up urgently.

Source: *BBC Wildlife* (2000), 18(5), 61.

#### Australia/New Zealand/Antarctica

##### Agreement sought on albatross and petrel conservation measures

In July, representatives of governments and international NGOs met to develop conservation measures to protect albatrosses and petrels in the Southern Hemisphere. The meeting is reported to have established the principles and key elements involved and it is hoped that appropriate measures may be agreed within the next year. Participants agreed that it is important to maintain the momentum generated by the discussions held. Concern has been widespread in

recent years about the rates of decline in albatross (e.g. grey-headed, yellow-nosed, black-browed and wandering albatrosses) and petrel (e.g. white-chinned, spectacled and grey petrels) species in the Southern Hemisphere, with habitat disturbance, marine pollution and fishing activities seen as the major contributors to the problem.

Source: *Antarctic Non-Government Activity News (ANAN)* (2000), 26(4) (received by e-mail).

#### Underwater mountains threatened

In May 1999, the Australian Government declared about 20 per cent of the Tasmanian seamounts to be marine reserves. At the same time, the fishing industry is actively seeking out new seamounts to target. Seamounts are home to a distinctive benthic community, with corals forming the basis of their communities. At least 200 invertebrate species live amongst the coral and 140 fish and 29 shark species spend parts of their life cycles around seamounts. These habitats are threatened by the impacts of bottom trawling and trawled slopes.

Source: *Forest and Bird* (2000), 296, 32–35.

#### Marine Stewardship Council issues first seafood certification

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) has announced that the Western Australian rock lobster fishery products are the first ecologically-certified food to carry the MSC label, which guarantees that the product was caught in an environmentally sustainable manner. It has been estimated that 60 per cent of the world's fisheries are on the path to commercial extinction, with 35 per cent already overfished. Around 200 million people depend on income from the oceans and many coastal towns and fisheries are struggling to survive. The MSC has spent 4 years developing this market-based programme to reward fisheries for responsible conduct. Over 100 major seafood buyers world-wide have pledged to purchase from MSC-certified sources.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation* (2000), 103(3), 16.

#### Stewart Island to become national park

Stewart Island off the south coast of

the South Island of New Zealand is to become part of a 163,000-ha national park to be known as Rakiura. The island has extensive forests and natural features, which deserve 'protection in the national interest'. It is home to a number of endangered species such as the New Zealand dotterel *Charadrius obscurus* and the kakapo *Strigops habroptilus* and is notably free of mustelids, such as ferrets and stoats, which have devastated the mainland bird life. The park will include a number of offshore islands that support outstanding populations of lizards and seabirds, particularly those that are sufficiently far offshore to be free of rats. Various legal agreements relating to the park still have to be established between Crown and Maori lands.

Source: *Forest and Bird* (2000), 296, 7.

#### Hauraki Gulf Marine Park—a novel approach to management

The newly-created Hauraki Gulf Marine Park in the North Island of New Zealand is taking a novel approach to conservation management. As well as the marine waters, the park also includes the terrestrial catchment area up to 80-km inland. The park is to be managed by a forum of territorial local authorities, along with representatives of Crown Ministers and Maori. The park will have no dedicated staff and does not even have an operational budget. Each contributing authority will provide its own resources and pay a share of any costs. The park forum is charged by statute to prepare a strategic list for actions in the park and keep it under review. It is obliged to report to the Minister of Conservation every 3 years on the state of the environment and progress towards 'integrated management' of the Gulf.

Source: *Forest and Bird* (2000), 296, 6.

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