

Your responses to the questionnaire

Almost 1000 members, nearly one-third of the total, returned the questionnaires circulated with the October 1992 issue of *Oryx*. While the exercise was designed to discover members' views on the Society and its work in general, several questions specifically concerning *Oryx* were included. Research Business International is currently analysing the 984 questionnaires received and the findings will be reported as soon as they are available. Meanwhile, I have analysed the first 500 responses so that I could give readers a general idea of the feedback we have received.

Around 70 per cent of respondents felt that *Oryx* should continue to be published quarterly, although 20 per cent said they would welcome its appearance bimonthly and 4 per cent would like to see a monthly journal. As far as the size of each issue was concerned 90 per cent felt that 60 pages was about right. Few would like to see the size of *Oryx* increase to A4 format: 93 per cent thought that it was acceptable as it is. The design met with general approval: 34 per cent ranking it as 'excellent', 57 per cent as 'good', 6 per cent as 'fair' and less than 1 per cent as 'poor'.

Readers were asked to rank the various sections of *Oryx* in order of preference: 39 per cent liked articles best, 36 per cent ranked Briefly most highly and 9 per cent felt that News and Views was most important as far as they were concerned. Least valued were Letters, Book Reviews and News from the SSC. Only 8 per cent, 17 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively, included these sections in any of the three highest categories. Overall the contents appear to be valued in the following order of decreasing importance: Articles, Briefly, News and Views, FFPS News, News from the SSC/Book Reviews, and Letters.

The possibility of the Society producing two publications – a scientific journal and a separate newsletter – met with a less conclusive response: 27 per cent appeared to be in favour with 47 per cent against. Many remarked that they liked the current mix of material and it was this that made *Oryx* unique, while others were concerned that any change of this kind

would increase the cost. Others expressed the view that they saw no point in changing a good product just for the sake of change.

Many readers accepted the invitation to make additional comments about *Oryx* and while these reflected a broad range of opinion, some views appeared several times. The journal was praised as 'unsurpassed', 'the best publication of its kind', 'superb', 'first class', 'excellent' and 'invaluable'. It was appreciated for its 'consistently high standard', 'reliable scientific content', as a 'source of reference' and for its 'readability' and 'interest'. Some liked its sober, unbiased and unemotional style but others thought it too dry, too scientific and too formal to have a wider appeal. Several people said they found it very depressing, but some commented that this might be inevitable given the state of the world. Some urged that it be made more cheerful, positive and lively (but only one person said that they thought that 'a new editor should be brought in from a racy magazine'). Suggestions for improvements and additions included more illustrations, clearer maps, better photographic reproduction, colour pictures inside and a more diverse layout. More articles highlighting conservation achievements would be welcome as well as review articles and more on botanical subjects.

The Editorial Board will be considering your views carefully and improvements will be made where possible, although some – such as using colour photographs inside – will be impossible unless circulation increases manyfold. We have to address the problem of our low circulation, not only to remain viable financially but also to make *Oryx* available to the growing number of conservationists in the developing world. We do supply some 100 copies free to organizations who cannot afford *Oryx*, but this is only a drop in the ocean. More members would certainly help to bring down the unit cost of *Oryx* but we also have to consider how to increase our share of the institutional market in the face of declining library budgets world-wide and increasing competition from new journals in the field.

Editor