

Oryx 100% Fund – grants awarded

At its meeting on 21 May 1992 the FFPS Conservation Committee awarded the following grants for Oryx 100% Fund projects.

£2850 for a survey of wetlands and wetland birds in the Ordos Highland of Inner Mongolia, China

The Ordos Highland is a poorly known desert area in Inner Mongolia and the lakes and wetlands found there are believed to be internationally important for some birds. Recently two large breeding colonies of the relict gull *Larus relictus* were discovered there, making the region home to the largest known population of this globally threatened species. There are about 100 lakes in the region, all potentially important as breeding habitats or as stopover points on migration for many bird species. A team of Chinese scientists will survey the area, classifying and identifying the wetlands that should be listed under the Ramsar Convention as internationally important sites. (Project no. 92/10.)

\$3500 for a survey of crocodiles in Nigeria

In the recently published *Crocodiles: An Action Plan for their Conservation*, Nigeria is identified as one of the countries particularly requiring survey data. Three species have been recorded from that country – slender-snouted crocodile *Crocodylus cataphractus*, Nile crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus* and dwarf crocodile *Osteolaemus tetraspis*. Their distribution, numbers and threats to survival are poorly documented. The slender-snouted crocodile has not been recorded in markets in the past 10 years and none survives in Nigeria's zoos. The Nile crocodile is no longer common, although it is present in certain lakes where it is of religious significance. The dwarf crocodile is hunted for meat and skins, and there is a need to develop a sound management programme for this species. The field survey will cover all potential crocodile habitats in Nigeria to ascertain distribution, population sizes and utilization levels and will be complemented by a questionnaire survey. The findings will form the

basis of a conservation and management programme. (Project no. 91/35.)

£1500 for fruit bat conservation in the Comoro Islands, Western Indian Ocean

Livingstone's fruit bat *Pteropus livingstonii*, with a population of fewer than 120 individuals, faces imminent extinction. The major threats are destruction of primary forest, the bat's preferred habitat, because of agricultural expansion and cyclones, which are believed to have wiped out the population of bats on Moheli in 1983–84. It is now only known with certainty from Anjouan where a team of five British ecologists will carry out research on the bat's feeding ecology and ranging behaviour as part of a long-term conservation programme. The team will also attempt to capture some individuals for a captive-breeding programme. The problems involved in the capture and handling of large fruit bats are exacerbated by the difficult terrain of Anjouan, and to minimize disturbance, the capture techniques will be first tested on *P. seychellensis*, which is more numerous, being better able to adapt to degraded forests. Having established the habitat factors preferred by *P. livingstonii* the three islands of the Comores will be surveyed for further roosts and suitable reintroduction sites. The bat will be used as a keystone species to emphasize the importance of habitat protection. Tourism is expanding in the Comores and bat-related tourism could be developed to the financial benefit of local people. (Project no. 92/13.)

£1500 for a study on the effects of human disturbance on the frugivore bat community in Argentina's subtropical montane rain forest

Despite the biological importance of the Yungas, an area of subtropical montane rain forest in Argentina, its diverse fauna and flora face severe and growing threats, particularly from commercial logging and land conversion by colonists. Carlos Alberto Iudica will study the effects of human disturbance on the fruit bat communities in the Yungas, comparing colonies in disturbed and undisturbed forest

and paying particular attention to their food plants and their role as pollinators and seed dispersers. A secondary, but important goal, will be to train Argentinian field assistants in ecological field techniques. This will be an important step in forming a nucleus of professional conservationists dedicated to the preservation of the Yungas. (Project no. 92/3.)

£1000 for conservation of bats in Thailand

Mark Robinson is planning an 11-month project to promote bat conservation in Thailand. There is large-scale disturbance and hunting of both insectivorous and frugivorous bats in the country and this has caused considerable declines in several species, including the threatened Kitti's hog-nosed bat *Craseonycteris thonglongyai* and Lyle's flying fox *Pteropus lylei*. Buddhist temple grounds, which often contain cave complexes and good roosting trees, are important sanctuaries for some species and the project will identify the most important ones and encourage the monks to act as wardens. A public education programme will also be developed to promote public awareness of the importance of bat conservation, not only because of the bats themselves and their vital role in the ecosystem but also for the maintenance of the bat-guano fertilizer industry and for tourism. (Project no. 92/15.)

Members' meetings

London meetings

The Annual General Meeting of the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society will be held at 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday 7 October in the Meeting Rooms of the Zoological Society of London. The booking form for this meeting was inserted in the July issue of *Oryx*. Further information can be obtained from the Secretariat: Telephone 071 823 8899.

23 November 1992. Joint meeting with British Ornithologists' Union at London Zoo's Meeting Rooms. See insert in this issue.

Regional meetings

Bristol, Bath and West of England Group

Thursday 15 October 1992. Congorilla. Mark Linfield, a zoologist whose photograph of a lowland gorilla hit the front page of *Time Magazine* on 13 July, will speak on lowland gorillas in Congo, with a preview of his new BBC2 documentary on the subject.

Thursday 3 December 1992. Parrot Problems. David Williams, Conservation Officer for the Parrot Society, will give an overview of parrot conservation, with particular emphasis on the Caribbean and Amazonia.

Thursday 18 February 1993. Russian Wildlife. John Sparks, Senior Producer at the BBC Natural History Unit, will describe conservation and wildlife filming in the former Soviet Union, and show more clips of the new BBC TV series on Russian wildlife.

Thursday 29 April 1993. An Evening in Belize. Jo Clarkson, eco-tour operator, will talk about conservation through tourism with reference to the Programme for Belize.

All four meetings are sponsored by Bristol Zoo and are held in its lecture theatre. Admission is £5 adults, £3 students and senior citizens, with 20 per cent reduction for FFPS members. The price includes a cheese and wine buffet. We aim to raise £300 for FFPS at every meeting so please come, bring your friends and enjoy raising money with a full evening's entertainment.

Chester and North of England Group

Friday 20 November 1992. Chimpanzees of the Gombe. Jane Goodall returns to Chester to give an update on her work at the Gombe River Reserve and throughout the world.

The meeting will start at 7.30 p.m. in the North of England Zoological Society's Lecture Hall. Admission by ticket only, price £7, which includes a light buffet and wine, from Penny Rudd at the zoo during the daytime (0244 380280) and during the evenings through Alan Woodward (0244 373312).