

support human needs. We have succeeded in altering a large ecosystem in a major way and I find this alarming.

Of course, this is not an isolated instance of such a broad-scale assault on a large system. Many other examples exist in the USA, including degradation of the entire southern half of Florida (the everglades, Florida Bay and the coral reefs), the demise of old-growth temperate rain forests and their watersheds of the Pacific Northwest, the choking death of Chesapeake Bay and its once famous oyster, blue crab and striped bass fisheries, the 90 per cent loss of riparian forests of the arid southwestern USA and the 99 per cent destruction of native grasslands of California. Global changes of epic proportions include the collapse of one marine fishery after another, changes in atmospheric ozone layer levels, and increases in greenhouse gases. These are all large, non-trivial entities whose basic characteristics are being altered, and that is the scary part; we are destroying the fundamentals of life, not just eliminating individual parts. What is quite maddening is that the value of these systems to humanity apparently is not perceived by most citizens. The Edwards Aquifer supports several major cities and huge agricultural interests, yet the most common response to a declining aquifer level is to dig deeper wells and pump more water!

What is the solution to such madness? I am not sure. They say that 'ignorance is bliss', and many people seem to be blissful in their ignorance of our environmental predicaments. Aldo Leopold knew this 50 years ago when he stated that a person with an ecological education 'lives alone in a world of wounds.' Certainly an ecological education of the populace is a big step toward a solution, but that will be a major effort and I do not know if it is enough. Environmental awareness in the USA has expanded greatly over the last 30 years, yet it seems to fall dismally short of true understanding of the real problems and possible solutions. People focus on recycling and tree planting, which, although important, do not begin to address fundamental problems such as habitat destruction, loss of biological diversity and a human population out of control

and consuming resources as though it were participating in a one-time liquidation sale. A major, global effort is necessary to expose that 'world of wounds' to a much larger circle, to bring those fundamental issues to the forefront. Without an understanding of the basic and expansive nature of these problems, a global mobilization to truly address them is unlikely.

Scene 3. Anytown, USA, Earth Day. US Senators and Congressmen are planting trees, stocking fish, visiting zoos and delivering speeches that proclaim their support for the environment and indicate how 'green' they really are. For most, this is an unusual and awkward experience, the first time since last 22 April they have spoken *for* the environment. Many have voted against every environmentally related bill or issue that has come before them and some have systematically attempted to dismantle every environmental protection law in this country within their legislative reach; witnessing so much hypocrisy in one day is nauseating. As the vital signs of the planet grow weaker, as fundamental processes such as aquifer recharge continue to decline, and as major ecosystems around the world disappear, politicians falsely proclaim their concern, citizens celebrate the earth's goodness and decry pollution, and children go on planting trees. And the human population spirals upward while the fundamentals continue to disappear from under us, above us, and on every side.

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## The (dis)information age – a reply

I was greatly disappointed that *Oryx* chose to run 'The (dis)information age' by Gary Meffe (29 [3], 152–153) and Sidney Holt's reply (29

[4], 222–223), primarily because their political tone seems totally at odds with what I feel that FFI stands for. While I appreciate the need for *Oryx* to appeal to a generally liberal, nature-loving audience, it is verging on libellous to insinuate that people who are disenchanted with the US Endangered Species Act (ESA) are soulmates with the Oklahoma City bombers, or learned their public relations skills from the KGB.

Ranked among the legion of organizations with a gripe against the ESA is Zimbabwe's CAMPFIRE movement, threatened as it is by this Act's onerous and iniquitous provisions aimed at curtailing trade in foreign species, plentiful or otherwise. Are Zimbabwe's impoverished rural communities – the beneficiaries of CAMPFIRE – to be classified as right-wing fanatics? Even if *Oryx* sees merit in this viewpoint, there surely remains an obligation to provide equal space for the other side of the story, and preferably in the same issue.

Which brings me to Meffe's thrust: that 'disinformation' is systematically practised by landowners, hunters and ultra-conservatives, and, I would infer, could even be considered their exclusive preserve. On the contrary, the contemporary masters of misinformation are to be found not among the duck hunters of Wisconsin but among society's paragons of 'green liberalism'.

Greenpeace, perpetrator of such myths as 'the whale' that 'chooses a partner for life', has even used the unreliability of its information as a legal defence. In a March 1995 ruling against Greenpeace at Norway's Dalane Magistrates Court, Greenpeace's own lawyer is recorded as arguing that his client's press release should not be admitted as evidence 'owing to the fact that they contain in part inaccurate and unfortunate wording'!

Brian Davies, founder of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), testified in 1969 before a Canadian Federal Standing Committee that he could not say with certainty that he had ever seen a seal being skinned alive. He also stated that he was aware of a post-mortem reflex action shown by clubbed seals comparable to that shown by decapitated chickens. Yet as late as 1982, IFAW

was still promoting the myth in its fundraisers that sealers skinned their quarry alive. If Meffe insists on closing one eye to such misinformation archives, he need look no further than the response he provoked from a former Greenpeace consultant and current advisor to IFAW – Sidney Holt.

To Holt, everyone from Norway to Zimbabwe who in any way deviates from his own ideology of conservation is out to despoil the environment under the evil banner of 'Wise Use'. Yet in support of this argument he parades only straw men, such as the ludicrous notion that some IUCN members interpret one of their own Statutes to mean that the use of wildlife is mandatory, and in so doing concocts one of the most blatant pieces of misinformation I have ever seen.

Many of the developing world's most successful conservation programmes – not least CAMPFIRE – are based on the consumptive use of wild species. They are also based on an appreciation that the biggest threat to biodiversity is poverty, and that effective goal-orientated conservation involves making tough decisions, many of which will not sit well with ideologues like Meffe and Holt.

J. M. Hutton

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## Responses to Hutton

From Garry K. Meffe

I welcome and appreciate the comments of J. M. Hutton in response to my editorial (*Oryx*, 29 [3], 152–153) and the subsequent writings of Sidney Holt (*Oryx*, 29 [4], 222–223). While I am disappointed in some of his apparent misinterpretations of my writing, I acknowledge one important oversight on my part that he has highlighted, which I shall discuss shortly.

When I was asked to initiate this column, I was told that *Oryx* desired North American

input, a regular perspective on conservation from this side of the Atlantic. Being from the USA, this North American perspective will naturally be biased towards an American view. I see it as my task to relate to this international audience what is happening in America regarding conservation and the various forces, positive and negative, that impinge upon it. Together with the editor and publisher, I decided from the outset that the style would be personal and editorial in nature, based of course on scientific fact and current events. This is what I have tried to do.

My column on 'The (dis)information age' was intended to inform the readership of a current mood in the USA, ranging to high political levels, that favours particular short-term agendas to the exclusion, if necessary, of the truth. This mood has resulted in active, and apparently intentional distortions and fabrications regarding environmental matters. This part of the editorial does not seem to have troubled Hutton. I believe what bothered him is a perception that I overlooked or am unaware of similar distortions and untruths propagated by pro-environment interests.

Do environmentally sympathetic individuals or organizations ever distort the truth or exaggerate claims to advance their cause? Of course they do. Is it justifiable or defensible? Absolutely not. Untruths and distortions in any form, regardless of intent, are to be exposed and shunned. We will make little progress towards a just world if we build a false foundation to stand upon. My editorial was intended to highlight the blatant untruths and devious methods of particular groups, and a present mood of this country, as they relate to conservation efforts. I stand by every word. I do regret that I did not devote a paragraph or two to the other side of the equation, to balance out the 'ideological' feel that Hutton took away from the article. I assure him that my personal feelings towards conservation of global resources very much include humans, and I support solutions centred on justice, equity and human well-being.

I believe that Hutton took a few liberties of his own in his response. I in no way insinuated that individuals opposed to the

Endangered Species Act are 'soulmates' of the Oklahoma City bomber(s). I merely mentioned that despicable act, as well as the formation of paramilitary groups, to further demonstrate the present anti-government mood in this country and the unlikelihood that these kinds of people would favour pro-environment regulations. The point was that the milieu in which we are currently working is not a favourable one to those involved in conservation. Neither I nor Sidney Holt brought up the Zimbabwe CAMPFIRE programme, so any apparent connection was made by Hutton. Finally, I did not mention 'duck hunters of Wisconsin' (or hunting at all) and I am in no way opposed to responsible and sustainable use of wildlife resources. I happen to agree with Hutton that a great threat to biodiversity is poverty, although I would add social injustice, concentration of wealth and greed to that list (all of which in turn contribute to poverty).

I suspect that Hutton's opinions and my own are not that far apart. I ask him to remember that I wrote a brief essay on one aspect of current events in the USA; those 1314 words do not begin to address fully the issues and problems, and do not represent fully all my own perspectives. Am I an ideologue? Of course, as is Hutton and every other thinking person who has a viewpoint on the world, and those ideologies will be reflected in my editorial writings. The very purpose of an editorial column is to stimulate thought and discussion; the responses of Holt and Hutton indicate that it has been, in this case, quite successful.

*Gary K. Meffe*

*From Sidney Holt*

I respond to Jon Hutton's letter briefly. First, concerning the 'ludicrous notion' that some of IUCN's 600 or so member organizations and states interpret its Statutes as mandating (lethal) use of (all) wildlife: a candel of 27 non-governmental member organizations, mostly representing groups of sport hunters and a few state agencies, such as those in Canada and Zimbabwe, which espouse strong 'lethal

use' policies, objected in 1994 to IFAW's application for IUCN membership, largely on the ground that it did not 'promote' lethal sustainable use. Subsequent events have revealed that substantial numbers of IUCN's Council and some of its headquarters staff take the same view. In fact, the revision of the Statute article on the matter of 'sustainable use' was, at the last IUCN General Assembly in Buenos Aires, very controversial, with a vociferous minority of member participants trying to insist, in effect, that if some group said they wanted to kill any 'living resource', and claimed their intended kill to be 'sustainable', then it was out of order for any other group, or even a national or international authority, to say 'nay'. Fortunately, the dominant 'ideology' was then that if a certain type of wildlife is being used (lethally), then such use must be sustainable and, further, that in accordance with the 'precautionary principle' it is up to the present or prospective 'user' to demonstrate sustainability scientifically.

Second, although Hutton is entitled to his belief that 'the greatest threat to biodiversity is poverty', I would counter that a much greater current threat is greed, in conjunction with the global market and largely unrestricted international trade, whether these lead to the destruction of forests, wetlands and coastal systems, the continued inhumane killing of whales, or the virtual extermination of rhinos, tigers and, now, even some sharks and other marine fishes.

Third, and last, there is a growing literature on the social and economic nature of CAMPFIRE, in which questions have been raised about how much of the money exchanged in the trophy-hunting business (and of the substantial external 'aid' for this activity) actually reaches the impoverished indigenous people. Safari International is not, I suggest, an entirely altruistic company.

Yes, I have been a scientific consultant to IFAW and Greenpeace, and to WWF, UNEP, UNESCO and the governments of Italy and other states. What does Mr Hutton think that says about my status as an 'ideologue'?

*Sidney Holt*

## African Wildlife Policy Consultation

The Overseas Development Administration (ODA) of the UK hosted an important African Wildlife Policy Consultation at Sunningdale Park, Berkshire, UK, from 17 to 19 April 1996. About half of the 100 delegates were Africans from 12 countries, including Permanent Secretaries and/or Directors of Wildlife from most of the Southern and East African states. Among UK-based non-governmental organizations FFI played an active part in the meeting, acting as a joint host with the Department of the Environment (DoE) at a special lunch for senior African representatives. Others participating were conservation institutions and representatives of the international donor community.

Although papers were given on the economic value of wildlife, models of wildlife management, eco-tourism, policy, financial and legislative arrangements and approaches to community participation, the concluding 'free' discussion period tended to concentrate on the last topic. There was general agreement on the principles involved and the need for initiatives to be bottom-up, taking account of varying land tenure systems and the politics of local/central relations. Derek Hanekom, Minister of Land Affairs, South Africa, who, as well as being a keynote speaker, stayed throughout, made a strong plea for a practical follow-up in the form of regional workshops in Africa, where case studies could be unpacked to illuminate the causes of both success and failure in actual projects.

Professor Marshall Murphree, Zimbabwe, argued forcibly for community (i.e. village/ward) authority over wildlife management, while accepting that initiatives to date were open to criticism and explaining that he was not arguing against protected areas. Nevertheless the consultation did not have time to consider whether protected-area management in Africa was working well, beyond acknowledging that in many countries it is appallingly underfunded, or to address the integration of protected area and community

participation systems into overall biodiversity strategies under which priorities for local action and international co-operation might be established.

That said, the ODA is to be congratulated on taking a first step of this kind. It was clearly appreciated by the delegates. It is to be hoped that there will be a follow-up, both at the workshop level and to pursue the policy dialogue with a wider range of African countries. Opportunities for inter-African discussion are not easy to arrange, while the tensions within CITES on the elephant and other issues are never far away. Informal contacts outside the sessions, including the DoE/FFI lunch, were able to help in confidence building. In addition FFI had the chance, through a presentation by the Director in Cambridge during the pre-consultation study tour, to reinforce existing contacts and make new ones. There was much appreciation for the 100% Fund and indeed for *Oryx* as a vehicle for rational communication on conservation policy and practice.

Robin Sharp  
FFI Trustee

### Numbers of greater one-horned rhinos continue to rise

Greater one-horned rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* populations are still expanding. The newest estimate, given at the December 1995 IUCN Asian Rhino Specialist Group meeting, was 2135. Nepal's rhinos now exceed 500 and India has about 1600.

Over the last few years, demand for the horn in eastern Asia has been falling. Its export price from the Indian subcontinent has stayed at \$US9000/kg since 1992, although the quantity of horns on the market has been reduced. Poaching in India in 1994 and up to November 1995 decreased by about half (to 31 and 35 rhinos, respectively) as compared with the previous 2 years, while in Nepal no rhinos were known to be poached at all in 1994 in or

around Royal Chitwan and Bardia National Parks, and, according to officials, only one was poached in 1995, north of Chitwan.

The reason for such success against the poachers is that India and Nepal independently stepped up their security measures in 1994 and 1995. In India's Kaziranga National Park (home to about 1300 rhinos), the budget was slightly increased, to \$US667,364 in 1994/95, or \$US1550 per sq km, one of the highest figures per unit area in Asia. The informant system was also improved around Kaziranga; there has been a tenfold increase in reward money over the last 4 years, to over \$US2110 spent in 1994, and 46 arrests were made in that year. Of significant importance was the prevention by the Director of Kaziranga National Park of the transfer of three excellent range officers, who are the key people in the field, motivating the 435 forest staff and regularly visiting the 115 guard camps. There is one man per sq km in Kaziranga, one of the highest concentrations of patrolling effort in the world, and with good leadership there has been improved vigilance and more patrols. As a result, 12 rhino poachers met their deaths in 1994, the most for many years, which has made poachers more reluctant to enter the park. There have also been fewer poaching incidents because more camps for forest guards were placed on Kaziranga's southern boundary, which is close to about 100 small villages. In order to help with patrol work, the Rhino Foundation for Nature in North East India gave boots to all the field staff and many jackets. 'Our guards are living in wretched conditions with hazardous duties' stated the park's director. This small amount of assistance has raised their morale and effectiveness. Not only has the welfare of the staff been slightly improved, but also that of the people surrounding Kaziranga, although officials admit that much more is needed. If local villagers are adequately helped by park officials, it is less likely that they will aid poachers.

A further factor in the reduction of poaching has been better co-operation between the police and the range officers because the police have been less occupied in dealing with



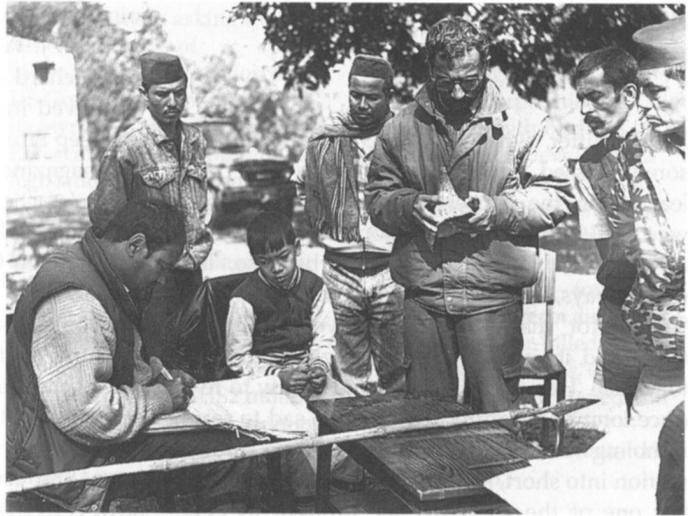
Two-thirds of Kaziranga National Park in Assam, India, are nutrient-rich grassland and ideal Indian rhino habitat (*Esmond Martin*).

terrorists in Assam. Recently, several arrests were made of rhino horn traders in Calcutta, Siliguri and Dudhwa; in the past such arrests were very rare. However, as Anne Wright of the Rhino Foundation states, 'India must be one of the few countries in the world which lets rhino poachers out so easily on bail', and this must be rectified through better enforcement of India's Wildlife Act.

Rhino poaching in Nepal has been reduced recently for similar reasons. The police have become more active. About 40 rhino poachers were in jail in 1995 (including 14 arrested in 1994), and unlike in India, the sentences are commonly upheld. Furthermore, sentences were increased to a maximum of 15 years in jail and a Rs100,000 (\$US2000) fine in 1993. Of great importance to the safety of rhinos is the integrity of the District Forest Officers (DFOs), especially around Royal Chitwan National Park, because the animals are sometimes

poached when they wander into neighbouring farmland. The DFOs were very active in catching poachers and traders in 1994 and 1995. Non-governmental organizations have been increasing their efforts in Nepal also. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is helping to fund two new antipoaching units inside Chitwan and one more outside the park. Each unit consists of six armed men. There is now a similar unit in Royal Bardia National Park, also funded by WWF. The army has increased its day and night patrols inside Chitwan and Bardia as well, acting as an effective deterrent against poachers.

As in India, most poachers are caught through informers, and intelligence gathering has been improved recently in Nepal. The International Trust for Nature Conservation is now paying people on a regular basis to collect information, as well as giving reward money. These payments have increased five-



Officials of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation in Nepal keep up-to-date records of rhino-poaching incidents (*Esmond Martin*).

fold since 1991, to \$US6827 in 1994. This money has been raised from individual donors and through a collection box at Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge in Chitwan.

Officials have also been allocated access to a higher budget to improve park management, as in India. In 1995/96 the total budget of Chitwan was about \$US900,000 (or \$US966 per sq km). More financial aid must be given to the neighbouring villagers, however, because rhinos damage crops and even kill people. There are a few eco-development projects under way and more are planned to improve relations. For example, buffer zones have been proposed around Chitwan and Bardia, with 30–50 per cent of the revenue earned by the two parks being spent on these zones for local people. When this is approved by the government, the killing of rhinos may be reduced even further.

One must not become complacent in view of these increasing successes against poachers in India and Nepal. One corrupt or inexperienced senior official can have dire consequences, as can a breakdown in law and order. In Assam, at least nine rhinos were killed in Orang Wildlife Sanctuary in 1995, due to mismanagement and lack of adequate patrols, following the theft of the main radio set and arms by terrorists. In Manas National Park there are perhaps only 20 out of 90 rhinos left,

due to political disturbances in the area over the last 7 years. Both Orang and Manas now urgently require equipment to strengthen anti-poaching efforts.

The question is, has wildlife in India the same level of political support from the Prime Minister as it had in the days of Nehru and Indira Gandhi, to enable the government to allocate sufficient funds and manpower to safeguard India's rhinos now and in the future? According to S. Deb Roy, formerly Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Assam and Inspector General of Forests (Wildlife) Government of India, 'The rhinos will be gone in 25 years if there is not the political will to save them'. The same fear exists in the long term in Nepal now that the King, a supporter of rhinos, no longer has so much power with the advent of multiparty democracy.

Rhinos can be saved if adequate funds are provided for their protection and if there is effective leadership in the field. The situation in both India and Nepal has improved and will continue to do so in the future as long as there is significant support from senior politicians and bureaucrats.

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