

Notes and News

Crofters in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland's west coast have to contend with poor soil, unfavourable weather and long distances from markets. To help them the European Economic Community (EEC) are setting up an Integrated Development Programme (IDP), a £56m. agricultural and infrastructure scheme. But the scheme is far from integrated as far as the islands' wildlife is concerned. One of the most important habitats to be affected is the machair – dunes and species-rich grassland with some small lochs – which supports

**Scheme Threatens
Wildlife
of the Hebrides**

the highest densities of many breeding waders in western Europe. The lochs also support red-necked phalaropes, a bird protected throughout Europe, and corncrakes which in the meadows have their last major UK stronghold. Grant-aided draining and re-seeding under the IDP would destroy this habitat. Although the IDP proposal emphasizes the importance of machair, stressing that severe and irreversible damage should not be exchanged for short-term benefits, no EEC funds are provided for environmental assessment. The Nature Conservancy Council says this infringes important principles of the EEC environment policy, and is also worried that the IDP carries no funds for them to compensate crofters who object to a scheme on conservation grounds; this may alienate crofters and cause a people-versus-birds argument. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland (DAFS) will encourage crofters to apply for grants yet refuses to promise the rejection of any scheme opposed by the NCC, even on Sites of Special Scientific Interest. IDP schemes need not be subject to cost benefit analysis, as is necessary for domestic agricultural grants, and if they were would probably be rejected as a waste of money. Government spokesmen justify this by saying the aim is to improve living conditions, not increase food production; contradictorily they are insisting that increased food production, by draining, fertilizing and re-seeding, is a condition of the grant. In Brussels the agricultural directorate admits that if increased food production were the point, the money would be better invested elsewhere. Perhaps they should also admit this scheme to be an expensive mistake and think of some more environmentally acceptable way to help out the crofters.

Great was the jubilation among the whale conservationists over their victory on 23 July when a resolution promoted by the Seychelles to phase out whaling after three more years at last gained the elusive three-quarters majority of the voting members of the International Whaling Commission (IWC): 25 to 7. It is indeed a victory, but increasing vigilance will be needed to ensure that it is a lasting one. It may seem ungenerous to spoil the party, but there are many loopholes in the phase-out resolution. The biggest is that it could be reversed at any of the next three IWC meetings. Japan, having gone to such lengths to prevent the vote so narrowly achieved, seems more than likely to redouble its efforts to get the decision reversed, if not next year then in 1984. And in any case, under the IWC's own rules, any nation can always evade a decision without even having to resign. The price that was paid for the victory was a series of even more intensive 'horse-trading' sessions of the Commissioners than usual. In the course of these several zero quotas passed by simple majorities in the Technical Committee were lost: Japanese North Pacific sperm whales up from nil to 890 over two years; Spanish fin whales up from nil to 420 over four years; the Peruvian Bryde's whales from nil to 165 for next year. The seriousness of these concessions can be appreciated when it is realized that there may be no more than 800 fins all told in the Spanish stock and 1000 Bryde's in the Peruvian stock. Moreover, a resolution to reduce the Alaskan bowhead quota to nil also went by the board, and this is the one whale that is universally agreed to be in danger of extinction. Has the victory been too dearly bought?

Five of Britain's most important wildlife sites were being destroyed or threatened with destruction only six months after the Wildlife and Countryside Act was passed in October 1981, states a report of CoEnCo's Wildlife Link Committee (representing 22 wildlife organizations), thus confirming widespread fears about the loopholes in the Act. Most criticized is the provision that leaves a landowner free to destroy a site during the three-month consultation period that must follow notification of an SSSI. Three wetland SSSIs – at Ripon Park in North Yorkshire, West Sedgemoor in Somerset and Halvergate Marshes in Norfolk – have been ploughed and/or drained with no regard for the voluntary code for management of SSSIs, just as conservationists predicted. The Nature Conservancy Council is powerless to prevent further destruction until the government introduces Section 29 of the Act which provides for a 12-month stop order. Money is another problem. In the Berwyn Mountains in Wales, the NCC has notified only 34,000 of 53,000 acres of SSSI quality; the unprotected area is the more vulnerable in that it has the greatest potential for agricultural improvement, and so the costs of compensation would be higher. On Romney Marshes the NCC had to withdraw its objection to a drainage scheme that would destroy one of the five new breeding sites of the black-tailed godwit because it could not afford to purchase the site or to pay compensation. Conservationists who criticized the sum of £600,000 given to the

**Countryside
Act
Failures so Far**

NCC to implement the Act were right – it is quite inadequate to fund what the NCC is legally required to do.

On 1 July, Peter Walker, the UK Minister of Agriculture, made the surprise announcement that badger gassing had been suspended. Hydrogen cyanide gas has been used to kill badgers since 1975 in areas where badgers are infecting cattle with tuberculosis. It had been widely assumed that gassing badger sets was humane, although both the RSPCA and the British Veterinary Association had expressed doubts. Lord Zuckerman, in his report on badgers and tuberculosis, recommended that the Government's Chemical Defence Establishment should be called in to devise improvements in the gassing procedures. The results of their experiments were unexpected and disturbing. The badgers showed a surprising resistance to cyanide gas and survivors appeared to exhibit long-term after-effects. It was realized that it was probably impossible to introduce gas into a set in sufficiently high concentrations to kill all the badgers quickly and humanely. The Minister immediately banned gassing and asked the Consultative Panel on Badgers and Tuberculosis (on which ffPS is represented) to consider alternative methods of controlling the disease in badgers. The panel recommended that control should continue, substituting live trapping for gassing. There is still no effective way of determining whether live badgers are suffering from tuberculosis so all the inhabitants of a set will still be killed. But live trapping, unlike gassing, will allow bodies to be retrieved for post-mortem and offer a real possibility of a breakthrough in understanding the disease in badgers. This in turn should improve the chances of finding a better means of control than wiping out all infected sets.

The Cairngorms are one of the great Naboth's vineyards of the British countryside. As Scotland's, and Britain's, premier mountain range, whose natural interest has been compared with the completely unspoiled Baffin Land, they are coveted by a wide range of users: naturalists, hill walkers, mountain climbers, skiers, deer-stalkers, foresters and even a reindeer farmer. Many of their conflicting demands on the area mean that ideally the others should keep out. If ever an area cried out for an authoritative and generally accepted multilateral use management plan, it is the Cairngorms. Moreover, the national nature reserve covers only 12 per cent of the area critical for wildlife conservation, and the goodwill of the landowners, who are more influential in Scotland than in the rest of the kingdom, is essential in any future plan. It is clear that diplomacy of a high order is needed. The whole question will be brought to a head this autumn, when the Secretary of State adjudicates on the inquiry into the proposed skiing development in Lurcher's Gully on Cairn Gorm itself. A most timely pamphlet, *The Future of the Cairngorms*, issued by the North East Mountain Trust (PO Box 25, Crown St, Aberdeen, £1.90) puts the

**End to
UK Badger
Gassing**

**Safeguarding
the
Cairngorms**

case for urgent strengthening of the safeguards for the natural features and wildlife. This can only happen in a framework that also safeguards the other interests concerned. It is very much to be hoped that funds can be found to enable an authoritative multilateral use management plan to be prepared. It was the Pearsall Report, promoted by the then FPS, that saved the Serengeti. Whose report shall save the Cairngorms?

Most predators became rare in Finland during the 19th century. Lynx, protected since 1968, now number about 300; wolverines, many of which were killed by snowmobiles in the 1970s, number 30 at the most along the frontiers between Finland and the USSR and Norway; bear and wolf numbers – 300 and 100 respectively – are maintained by migrations from the USSR. Dr Erkki Pulliainen has pointed out that relying on such immigrations cannot be a long-term solution to maintaining and increasing Finland's large predators, especially since the Russians are reducing their wolf populations. Ultimately, stable predator populations in Finland depend on their adaptation to the proximity of humans and humans overcoming deep-rooted fear and hostility. The Finnish Government has accepted that, if predators are to survive, people who lose livestock to them must be recompensed; all reindeer losses are repaid at 150 per cent of their value, thus also compensating for cases which are undiscovered. The compensation system works except for two major gaps; payments are not made for dogs lost to wolves, or bear damage in oat fields. But people are still afraid of wolves even though they rarely attack humans. Much of this fear is based on the fact that in 1880–81 one or two canids, probably first generation dog-wolf crosses with hybrid vigour, killed 22 Finnish children. At least once every decade newspapers resurrect the story and reinforce the fears. Dr Pulliainen concludes that opinion in Finland is changing in favour of the large predators, but education must continue if the change is not to be too late to save them.

Baboons from Nakuru National Park in Kenya are raiding crops on nearby farms and inevitably provoking local hostility. The baboons are a valuable tourist attraction, but keeping them inside the park and out of the crops is a problem.

Fences are no obstacle and killing raiding baboons is counter-productive because those that escape continue raiding – with more caution. In a WWF project to try to solve the problem, Shirley Strum has found that raiding olive baboons *Papio anubis* spend only half as much time feeding as do non-raiders. The crops and the natural food are similar in nutritional quality, so do the baboons raid crops to save time? If so a solution could be to grow crops which are as time-consuming to harvest as natural foods, such as beans which baboons rarely take, preferring maize. The local climate and soil are more suitable for beans than maize, so a shift in crops is feasible and might reduce raids. Other control techniques being tried include playing back baboon alarm calls

**Can the Large
'Predators
Return?**

**How to Prevent
Baboons
Raiding Crops**

and testing the emetic effects of lithium chloride in an attempt to create a taste aversion to maize. If the project can yield a model for baboon management in newly-settled areas of Kenya and elsewhere that will avoid these conflicts, it will be very valuable.

In 1981 France and Japan imported over 13,000 crocodile skins, all of species listed on Appendix 1 of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). Trade in Appendix 1 species

**Reservations
on
Crocodiles**

‘must only be authorized in exceptional circumstances’ and these should not include use for commercial purposes. So how is it that the trade continues? One reason is that a state may make reservations when ratifying the Convention or when a species is first listed on an appendix. France on joining CITES in 1979 made reservations for four of the five Appendix 1 crocodiles: Nile *Crocodylus niloticus*, slender-snouted *C. cataphractus*, saltwater *C. porosus* and dwarf *Osteolaemus tetraspis*. So the skins imported by France were apparently legal. Japan on joining CITES made a reservation only on the saltwater crocodile, and therefore its import last year of the skins of 13 Nile crocodiles and 200 Siamese crocodiles *C. siamensis* may have been illegal. Two-thirds of the French and Japanese imports came from non-CITES members, but the rest came from three CITES members, Togo, Malaysia and Zimbabwe. The last country’s reservation on the Nile crocodile made its export of 1445 skins to France legal, but Togo’s and Malaysia’s exports were probably illicit. This reservation loophole was originally made to encourage countries to join CITES, but its effect in practice may be too damaging for some species. All the secretariat can do now is to urge reservation parties to consider seriously the effect of their trade.

Thousands of poisoned fish rotted on the banks of a river in Cameroon this year after the deliberate use of an insecticide. This is just one example of the misuse of pesticides all over the developing world. Pesticides may be necessary if many more people are not to die of hunger, but it is

**Pesticides
Poison
Developing World**

safe pesticides that we need, and too often those supplied to the developing world are those banned or tightly controlled in the developed world because they are too dangerous – heptachlor, aldrin, dieldrin, 2,4,5-T, chlordane, DDT and lindane. When they reach the target countries little or no control exists. They are sold freely over shop counters; even warning labels are of little use to people who cannot read. The recently formed Pesticides Action Network (PAN) estimates that at least 375,000 people are poisoned by pesticides each year in the Third World and 10,000 of these die. Wildlife suffers too, as these chemicals spread through natural ecosystems; fish eagles around Lake Kariba in Zimbabwe now lay eggs with shells 10–40 per cent thinner than normal – a well known DDT effect; fruit bats in Cameroon have enormous concentrations of dieldrin in

their livers; in Central America fish catches are declining in contaminated estuaries. PAN is urging governments to restrict the export of chemicals banned at home and asking Third World governments and international agencies to adopt safer pest control methods. Many developing countries are trying to set up tougher regulations but an overriding concern is to keep crop yields up and that means keeping pests down. Since 1978 the US has required chemical manufacturers to notify foreign buyers of pesticides banned, restricted or unregistered in the US but the results are not encouraging – no developing country has yet stopped a shipment. British American Tobacco has just stopped supplying aldrin to farmers in Kenya but is replacing it with another organophosphorus pesticide, orthene – only marginally safer than aldrin and still requiring protective gloves, face shields, washing facilities and warnings about breathing the mist – not much of a step.

Research workers often immobilize female turtles taken after egg-laying by turning them on their backs for tagging, weighing and measuring. The same researchers have often wondered why such a small percentage of turtles return

**Turtle
Turning
Questioned**

to the nesting beach in subsequent years. Tag loss, natural mortality and missed turtles may explain this, but a recent study by Rosskopf and Woerpelin has led Peter Pritchard, in the May issue of the *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, to question this handling technique. Rosskopf and Woerpelin found that the sudden death of a captive female desert tortoise *Gopherus agassizi* was due to peritonitis resulting from ruptured eggs in the body cavity. This, they say, is common in chelonians and is thought to be induced by trauma to the delicate developing ova. They advise researchers to avoid trauma to all female chelonids, especially any activity that may lead to the tortoise turning on its back. Peter Pritchard suggests that present handling of marine turtles may be causing rupture of next season's eggs leading to breeding failure or mortality from egg yolk peritonitis. Not for the first time a scientific research practice may be harming the species being studied.

Riding Mountain National Park in Manitoba, Canada, was designated in 1933, upgrading a reserve after encroaching settlements had already destroyed the buffer forests. Now the 2990-sq-km park is surrounded by agriculture and there

**Who Would
Run a
National Park?**

is considerable pressure from both landowners and the general public. The farmers see the forest not only as a waste but also as a fire hazard; they would like to use the timber and grazing within the park. They resent the beavers that emigrate from the park and dam the streams causing thousands of dollars worth of damage each year. No compensation is paid, partly because beaver numbers have increased only in the last few years and they are fully protected. The large deer, wapiti *Cervus canadensis*, from the park damage haystacks and crops. Farmers claim that the compensation paid is

inadequate, but they object even more to the damage done by hunters, selected by public draw. The general public clamours for better access and more recreational facilities within the park but Parks Canada is resisting. Embarrassed by the size of the recreational settlement that has grown up over the years, they are prepared to maintain and upgrade the present facilities but not to allow new development within the park. Parks Canada's mandate – to provide for the 'benefit, education and enjoyment of the public' as well as preserve the land base 'so as to leave it unimpaired for future generations' – is so wide open to interpretation that there are bound to be continuing conflicts with the user public. What is beneficial, educational and enjoyable for one group may be anathema to another. And while farmers regard the park simply as a waste of resources and a source of damage to their crops the confrontation will continue.

One of Panama's last remaining areas of virgin rainforest is soon to be penetrated by an extension of the Pan-American highway to the Atlantic coastal town of Carti in the Comarca, a reservation of the Kuna Indians. The Kuna fear that this

**Kuna Indians
Protect
Their Forest**

will open up the Comarca to wealthy speculators and land-hungry settlers, although it is illegal for non-Kunas to own land there. Already there is uncontrolled colonization along the approaching road; forest has been cleared for several kilometres on either side. The Government has given land

titles not to poor farmers, as was intended, but to wealthy speculators. According to the *New Scientist* the Kuna have responded with an imaginative plan to establish their presence in the vicinity of the road by creating a large botanical park, labelling trees with their Kuna, Spanish and scientific names, and prohibiting hunting and clearing. They also want to expand the tourist business they now run on the coast to embrace tourism for scientists in the heart of the rainforest -- a scheme that would both bring in income and gather support for any future battles over sovereignty and uncontrolled development. Scientists from Costa Rica's Centre for Tropical Agriculture are making wildlife inventories and studying land use to help the Kuna find the best ways of using the newly accessible forest.

The cause of the recent deaths of five Javan rhinos *Rhinoceros sondaicus* in their last stronghold in western Java remains a mystery. Professor Rudolf Schenkel of Basel University, Switzerland, who investigated the deaths earlier this year, says

**What Future
for
Javan Rhinos?**

it was undoubtedly a disease that killed them, possibly anthrax. But the population of between 40 and 60 rhinos is at risk not only from another outbreak but also from changing conditions in the habitat. The vegetation is still changing after the Krakatoa tidal wave devastated the forest

in 1883. Dense stands of the palm *Arenga obtusifolia*, which provide no food for rhinos, are increasing. The rhinos appear to be changing their diet in response to food shortages and they may also be having to compete with banteng *Bos*

javanicus, the wild cattle, which are increasing in the absence of predators, such as the Javan tiger, and may be starting to eat plants outside their normal diet. Trials in vegetation management have been carried out to try to improve conditions for the rhinos. Palms are cut down to allow the rhinos' food plants to grow, but this has to be done near the rhinos' existing feeding routes. Eventually some rhinos may have to be translocated to establish a second population, but the ground has to be carefully prepared. Sumatra would be suitable but local people must be prepared. Even if all this were done translocation is only possible if the Ujung Kulon population can be proved to be increasing.

When, in 1965, the International Whaling Commission, judging the humpback to be on the threshold of extinction in the Pacific, banned commercial harvesting Tonga, not a member of the IWC, continued to take a traditional subsistence harvest of 5–15 whales each year. But the Tongan method of throwing harpoons from small sailing boats caught only the weaker whales – lactating females and calves especially – and the population decreased so much that in 1979 the Tongan Government imposed a two-year ban on whaling.

Tonga and the Humpbacks

A WWF survey by Ronald Keller in 1979–80 showed that only 300 humpbacks were left around Tonga compared with 10,000 at the turn of the century, and few were calves. It became evident that a two-year moratorium was not sufficient since even one year of 15 kills, mostly females and calves, could be disastrous. At the end of 1979 the Whaling Act was amended to require the king's permission to kill a single whale, but whalers wanting to resume the hunt found enough political support recently for the Tongan Government to repeal the amendment. Tonga, now at the end of the moratorium, has to choose between short and long term economics. A compromise would be to impose a ten-year moratorium and continue the surveys on the understanding that the final results might reveal that any harvesting is incompatible with the humpback's survival. In that case new food sources are needed; the Government has already built fish-storage facilities, developed methods of salting and smoking fish, and built up a fleet of boats to increase the catch.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

This list is only intended to cover acronyms used in this issue of *Oryx*.

CoEnCo	Council for Environmental Conservation
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
EEC	European Economic Community
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
NCC	Nature Conservancy Council
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WWF	World Wildlife Fund