

## INTERNATIONAL

**New approaches to rain forest conservation**

A British financier, Sir James Goldsmith, is promoting a plan to save rain forests by renting them to an international organization, to be called Forestco. The rent would be paid by writing off part of the host country's foreign debt on condition that they protected the forest. Sir James has bought 5000 acres of Mexico's rain forest on which he is building a house but he has put the forest in a trust to preserve its wildlife. Meanwhile his brother, Edward Goldsmith, Editor of the *Ecologist*, is promoting a rain-forest plan of his own and on 19 September at the start of the UN General Assembly handed the UN Secretary-General a 3 million-signature petition asking for an emergency meeting of the Assembly to discuss an action plan including a trade ban on rain-forest products and a freezing of development finance leading to deforestation.

*The Guardian*, 31 August 1989.

**PCB threat to ocean mammals**

Seals, polar bears and some whales could face extinction unless urgent international action is taken to stop PCBs being released into the atmosphere according to Professor Joseph Cummins, a geneticist at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. He has collected data from all over the world that shows that even deep ocean killer whales have contained 410 ppm of PCBs and polar bears in the remote Arctic have 10 ppm of PCBs. Reproductive failure could result; levels of 50 ppm in male



Parrots in Crisis: the hyacinth macaw is one of the species severely threatened by trade (Bruce Coleman Ltd).

blubber is known to result in a cut-off in the production of sperm. Professor Cummins is appealing for large quantities of PCBs still in use in Third World countries to be gathered and destroyed by industrialized nations, saying that should they ever enter the oceans the result would be the extinction of most marine mammals and the chemical fouling of the Ocean fisheries, rendering them unfit for human consumption. Some other scientists believe Cummins' predictions are a little alarmist but agree that there must be a concentrated effort to prevent PCB contamination getting worse. There is a world ban on production, but PCBs are still in use in generating and insulating fluid in the developing world.

*The Guardian*, 31 August 1989.

**US/USSR joint park**

A joint US and Soviet national park and wilderness reserve is being planned for the land on both sides of the Bering Strait, where Soviet Siberia and USA Alaska are 50 miles apart.

Scientists from both countries are planning joint research programmes into migration patterns and breeding zones.

*The Guardian*, 21 August 1989.

**CITES soars to 103**

New Zealand and Vanuatu became Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora on 8 August and 15 October 1989, respectively, bringing the total number of Parties to 103.

*TRAFFIC (USA)*, June 1989, 7; *Traffic Bulletin*, 4 September 1989, 1.

**Mammoth tusks sought by carvers**

Thirty ivory carvers in West Germany, who faced unemployment when their country banned ivory imports in June, are negotiating with the geological ministry in Moscow for tusks from mammoths discovered in the Soviet tundra. The carvers say that the mammoth ivory, preserved for 10,000–20,000 years in permafrost, polishes faster than elephant tusks and has an interesting grain and colour.

*New Scientist*, 29 July 1989, 21.

**World heritage gains new members**

The German Democratic Republic, Malaysia and Uruguay have become Parties to the World Heritage Convention.

*Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas Newsletter*, No. 48, 6.

**Parrot campaign**

The International Council for Bird Preservation launched its new campaign, World Parrots in Crisis, on 30 October 1989. It

announced proposals for the action necessary to avert mass extinction of the world's parrots, which are threatened by both trade and habitat loss. The ICBP will be calling for a complete ban on threatened parrots into the EEC.

ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, UK.

### Ceramic ivory

A new artificial ivory is being developed at the University of Nottingham, UK. Unlike existing plastic alternatives, the new ceramic substitute is porous so that it feels more like real ivory. *New Scientist*, 26 August 1989, 35.

## EUROPE AND NORTH AFRICA

### Seal epidemic dies out

The virus epidemic that killed more than 17,000 of Europe's common seals *Phoca vitulina* in 1988 seems to have ended. There were few reports of seal deaths in 1989, the largest number in Britain being 60 pups off Orkney. *The Guardian*, 30 August 1989.

### Reserve in Siberia

The USSR's 150th reserve is in the Turukhanski district of Krasnoyarsk territory in central Siberia. Here the second largest Soviet river, the Yenisei, is 2.5–3 km wide, and lakes and marshes dot the taiga. This biosphere reserve covers 70,000 sq km and is largely untouched by man, with pristine air, water and soil. *Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas Newsletter*, No. 48, 6.

### New park in Finland

A new national park has been

established in the Tammissaari archipelago along Finland's southern coast, about 100 km west of Helsinki. The park covers only 39 sq km but will secure a representative section of the islands, which are in danger of becoming covered by summer cottages. However, the acquisition is not yet complete, many of the islands still being in private ownership and there is no information centre. *Suomen Luonto*, 6, 1989.

### Swedish nets take bird toll

Since 1982 some 25,000 sea birds have died in fishing nets along the south-west coast of Sweden during the winter cod fishing season. Ninety per cent are guillemots *Uria aalge*, mostly from the Shetland Islands and Heligoland, where the bird population has been affected by these losses. It has also been reported that 500,000 Brünnich's guillemots *Uria lomvia* die in nets each year off the west coast of Greenland. These deaths could be reduced by the use of a new kind of net, which, although equally effective for fishing, is less dangerous for birds. *Council of Europe naturopa newsletter*, 89–6, 3.

### Iceland ceases whaling

Greenpeace ended its boycott campaign against Iceland fish after Iceland's decision to halt scientific whaling. According to Greenpeace, Iceland's fishing industry lost £30 million in cancelled orders in the 18 months since the boycott began in May 1988. *The Guardian*, 2 August 1989.

### Oil spill in Mersey

On 20 August a Shell Oil pipeline, which fractured in Britain's river Mersey, allowed

150 tonnes of crude oil to spill into the river, resulting in the deaths of at least 1000 birds. Shell is being prosecuted by the newly established National River Authority under the 1974 Control of Pollution Act, which carries the penalty of an unlimited fine. *The Guardian*, 21, 24, 30 August, 18, 26 September 1989.

### Lords urge UK to support EC habitats initiative

A report from Britain's House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities Habitat and Species Protection urged the Government to change its approach and support the European Habitats Directive. The chairman of the committee, Lord Cranbrook, said that the protection of wild species and their habitats could not be considered in isolation from economic and human aspects of the community and that a European conservation fund should be established. *The Guardian*, 23 August 1989.

### Acid rain and eggshells

Two Dutch biologists from the Institute for Ecological Research at Heteren have established a link between acid rain and eggshell thinning in some woodland insectivorous birds – blue tit, great tit, coal tit, nuthatch and great spotted woodpecker. For example, between 1983 and 1988 they found that the proportion of great tit eggs with a thin shell or no shell at all increased, especially in woods on poor soil. It appears that the leaves of some trees growing on poor soils have up to 44 per cent less calcium than those growing on rich soil; hence the insects that feed on the leaves (the birds' main prey) are calcium-deficient too. The Netherlands has

one of the highest levels of forest decline – much of it attributed to acid rain – in Western Europe; perhaps the eggshell thinning is being noticed only now because after a century of acid rain calcium levels in the poorest soil have at last become exhausted. *The Guardian*, 29 September 1989.

### Crane protection in East Germany

Common cranes *Grus grus* are strictly protected in the German Democratic Republic and a national volunteer network protects breeding pairs and carries out conservation work to improve breeding sites and roosts as well as recording numbers at stopover sites on migration between Scandinavia and Spain. The programme has had excellent results; breeding pairs have increased from 600 in 1965 to nearly 1200 today, while numbers of non-breeding individuals spending their summer in GDR has also increased to 2000–2500. The important stopover places have also seen increased numbers of cranes. They damage crops, but management has minimized this by planting 10–12 per cent more seed on vulnerable wheat fields, chasing cranes from new sowing, increasing nitrogen fertilizer application and diverting cranes to feed in other fields by leaving crop stubble. The state also compensates for crane damage. *The ICF Bugle*, August 1989, 1–3.

### New national park for Poland

Poland has just created the Wigry National Park, its 16th. It covers 150 sq km and pine forests are interspersed with rivers and wetlands. The forests support a rich nordic or

boreal type of flora with a large number of post glacial relict species.

*Council of Europe naturopa newsletter*, 89–5, 4.

### Bears to Austria

There are plans to reintroduce the brown bear *Ursus arctos* in the Ötztal region of lower Austria, where only a single individual of the species remains. The bears will come from Yugoslavia.

*Council of Europe naturopa newsletter*, 89–6, 20.

### Greek tortoises

In the last 3 years woodland fires have increased in southern Greece, destroying habitat for *Testudo marginata* – thousands of individuals of this species were killed near Sparta when 20 sq km were burnt. The tortoise may soon become the most threatened in Europe, although its status is unknown and detailed studies are needed. To make matters worse, farmers are increasing the clearing of scrub for olive groves, herbicide use is increasing and roads are proliferating. Hermann's tortoise *Testudo hermanni*, although still very common in Greece, has also suffered and many populations appear to have declined in recent years, but again studies are urgently needed.

*Tortoises and Turtles, Newsletter of the IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group*, September 1989, 6.

### Turkey's turtles still threatened

Although the turtles that nest at Dalyan beach in Turkey have been protected, tourism still threatens other, perhaps even more important nesting grounds in the country. A

1-year survey by the World Wide Fund for Nature found that Turkey had by far the most important turtle nesting beaches in Europe. Some of the 17 sites discovered were previously unknown and almost all are under threat, from tourism, shrimp fishing, excavation of sand and gravel, and industrial development. *The Guardian*, 19 September 1989.

### Bonelli's eagle in Catalonia

There has been a gradual decline in populations of Bonelli's eagle *Hieraetus fasciatus* in France and the Iberian Peninsula, but the productivity of the most stable northern nucleus, in Catalonia, has dropped from 18 to 12 pairs in the last 15 years. A protection plan has been operating since 1986 and its activities include direct measures to increase breeding success through artificial incubation when adult birds encounter difficulties, keeping threatened nests under constant observation to prevent human interference, and improving nutrition by introducing live prey. Continuous contact with landowners, the administration and those visiting or managing these areas has been fundamental in the reduction of human pressure, and the future of this species is still not guaranteed. *Quercus*, April 1989, 24–29.

### Great bustards in danger in Aragon

Great bustards *Otis tarda* are still relatively common in some parts of Spain but are diminishing rapidly in others. For example, in Aragon, in the north-eastern part of the country, only 30 individuals, in five isolated groups, were found in a 1987 census with little evidence

of breeding. The survivors are threatened by new agricultural practices – irrigation, mechanization, blanket pesticide application – and road construction.

*Quercus*, March 1989, 34–38.

## AFRICA

### Kenya burns ivory

The Kenyan Government ceremonially burned about 12 tonnes of raw ivory, which had been recovered from poachers over the past 5 years, on 17 July 1989, in an effort to eliminate commercial trade in ivory and prevent stockpiling.

*Traffic Bulletin*, 4 September 1988, 2.

### Murchison Falls threatened

Uganda's Murchison Falls National Park is threatened by a 480-megawatt hydroelectric power project, which would reduce flow over the falls and affect fish and other wildlife. A similar project proposed in the 1960s was defeated in 1971 after vigorous opposition by environmentalists. Now the Energy Minister argues that the grandeur of the falls has been lost due to changes in river levels and that it is no longer one of the world's natural wonders. Conservationists disagree and say if the project goes ahead the park will be compromised, wilderness will be lost and that alternatives exist elsewhere to supply the power involved.

*Earthcare Appeals*, September 1989.

### Burundi's ivory sale fails

In February 1989 the CITES Standing Committee decided that 28 tonnes of ivory confiscated by the Burundi Government could be exported

on condition that all proceeds from the sale were used for specific conservation projects in the country. The CITES Secretariat drew up a tender and screened potential buyers, but by 17 June, the deadline for receipt of tender, in the light of the many ivory bans being made, no bids had been received. Burundi has no elephants and Tanzania claims that, since most of the ivory was smuggled out of that country it should be returned.

*Traffic Bulletin*, 4 September 1988, 2.

### Biggest ever ivory haul

The world's biggest illegal ivory cache was found in Namibia in September 1989 when police broke a massive international ivory smuggling syndicate, capturing 25 people with 980 tusks weighing about seven tons in total. Hippo teeth and rhino horns were also seized.

*Johannesburg Sunday Times*, 17 September 1989.

### Cycad scandal in South Africa

After Joe Berardo, chairman of the Johannesburg Mining and Finance Corporation, was said to have received permission to export 725 wild cycads to Madeira, the Pretoria government in South Africa has been forced to set up an inquiry into this illicit trade. It is alleged that conservation officials have come under pressure from a very high level in the government to allow the exports. Cycads are listed in Appendix I of CITES and only exports of artificially propagated plants or non-commercial exchange between scientific institutions are allowed. The cycads in question were supposedly bound for Madeira Botanic

Gardens, but it appears that they had instead been planted in the grounds of Mr Berardo's hotel in Funchal. South Africa has 29 native species of cycad in two genera (*Encephalartos* and *Stangeria*) and already two species have become extinct in the wild. A least another 18 could become extinct if nothing is done.

*New Scientist*, 12 August 1989, 21.

### Taiwanese arrested in South Africa

On 3 August 1989, during an undercover operation by the newly formed Endangered Species Protection Unit of South Africa, a Taiwanese businessman was arrested as 106 elephant tusks and a rhino horn were being delivered to his house in Cape Town. The tusks are believed to be from elephants killed outside South Africa.

*Traffic Bulletin*, 4 September 1989, 2.

### Micropropagation and the trade in medicinal plants

About 50 plant species in South Africa are threatened by collection for medicinal purposes and at least one – wild ginger *Siphonochilus aethiopicus* – is considered extinct in the wild. Providing alternative supplies from large-scale cultivation is one possible solution but the supplies must be cheaper than plants collected from the wild. Due to problems in the availability of seed, poor seed germination and slow vegetative multiplication, micropropagation through tissue culture could be helpful in building rapidly large stocks of plants. Both the Threatened Plant Laboratory in Cape Town and the University of Natal have succeeded in propagating several medicinal

plants by tissue culture.  
*Veld & Flora*, June 1989, 60–61.

### New ethnobotany programme

An insurance company, Southern Life, is sponsoring an ethnobotany programme in Natal, South Africa. Based at the Institute of Natural Resources in Pietermaritzburg, the programme aims to identify plant species threatened by their use in medicine and craft-work and to develop ways of using them sustainably, including cultivating the economically important ones. As well as being important for conservation the project will also provide employment for local people.

*Our Living World, Supplement to Weekend Argus*, 3 June 1989.

### Heritage sites for South Africa

A scheme to create a network of reserves on private land in South Africa registered its 100th site in 1989. These sites complement the system of state reserves and those registered to date help protect a large range of threatened species, including cycads, Cape vulture, geometric tortoise and aardwolf.

*Our Living World, Supplement to Weekend Argus*, 3 June 1989.

### Egyptian vulture returns to South Africa?

The sighting of two Egyptian vultures *Neophron percnopterus* in the northern Transvaal in 1989 caused excitement among conservationists in South Africa: the last confirmed breeding of the species in the country was in 1932 in Transkei. The Endangered Wildlife Trust appealed to farmers in the region to stop putting out poison bait for

jackals to protect the birds from accidental death.

*Our Living World, Supplement to Weekend Argus*, 3 June 1989.

### New Ramsar site

The West Coast National Park, which includes Langebaan Lagoon, in South Africa has been accepted as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar convention.

*Our Living World, Supplement to Weekend Argus*, 3 June 1989.

### Racecourse harbours endangered species

In South Africa the Cape Flats Conservation Priority Survey has found that Sand Plain Fynbos, which once covered the acid sands of the area, has shrunk to a total of only 500 ha, of which only 325 ha are of good quality, 0.013 per cent of its original distribution. Half has been built on and most of the remaining area is infested by weedy alien species or under agriculture or other artificial planting. At least 75 species native to Sand Plain Fynbos are in the Red Data Book. An aerial survey has found that 27.6 per cent of the remnant fynbos occurs on racecourses and 26.1 per cent in military zones. These fynbos remnants do not harbour only endangered plants. A colony of the highly endangered micro frog *Microbatrachella capensis*, which was long considered extinct in the Cape Flats, was recently discovered on one of the racecourses, Kenilworth. Now a project is under way to help improve the conservation status and management of the area. Apart from building and agricultural pressure the biggest threat to Acid Sand Flats Fynbos is the invasive alien, Port Jackson *Acacia saligna*. A rust pathogen has

recently been introduced from Australia in an attempt at biological control, but until the outcome of this is known, the fight against the alien will continue with mechanical clearance and herbicides.  
*Veld & Flora*, June 1989, 36–39.

### Skimmers washed from sandbars

African skimmers *Rynchops flavirostris* are widely distributed in tropical Africa where they breed on sandbars in large rivers. The southernmost population, which used to breed at Lake St Lucia in Zululand, was lost in 1944 due to development and now colonies in the 'panhandle' of the Okavango River in northern Botswana are under threat from fishermen whose speedboats create vast wakes, which wash over sandbars, taking eggs and chicks with them. Some tourists and fishermen, oblivious to the presence of the skimmers also picnic and fish from sandbars, causing the birds to desert their nests. An education programme is recommended to counter this threat.  
*Quagga*, No. 26, 1989, 6–8.

### Zimbabwe bird survey

The Ornithological Association of Zimbabwe is half-way through a five-year project to compile a bird atlas for Zimbabwe. Although 60 per cent of the 700 members are participating, coverage of remote areas is still a problem and anyone willing to help should write to: The Atlas Organizer, Ornithological Association of Zimbabwe, PO Box 8382, Causeway, Zimbabwe.

### Wetland saved

A threat to the most important wetland in Mauritius, the Terre

Rouge estuary (*Oryx*, 23, 41) has been averted. Pleas from conservationists resulted in the Prime Minister agreeing to changes in plans for the site's development and this important bird site is now secure. *World Birdwatch*, April–June 1989, 4.

## ASIA (EXCLUDING INDO-MALAYA)

### UAE bans turtle-catching

On 10 July 1989 the government of the United Arab Emirates banned the catching of turtles in its territorial waters, and a decree issued by the Agriculture and Fisheries Minister ordered fishermen to put turtles back into the sea if they became entangled in their nets. *VIA Earthtrust X\*Press*, 10 July 1989.

### Turmoil in China threatens conservation programmes

Wildlife conservation in China, which has made tremendous advances in recent years, and is partly internationally funded, now appears threatened by the national turmoil. Most current projects involving western input are continuing, including one for whitefin dolphin *Lipotes vexillifer* and another on rain forest in Yunnan province, but new projects are temporarily on hold. The WWF's management plan for the giant panda is currently before China's state council for approval, but a delay is now expected and meanwhile the giant panda continues to decline despite all the recent conservation efforts. A few western organizations are taking a stronger line; the US National Academy of Sciences has suspended all activities for the time being because of the suppression of

the students. *The Guardian*, 25 August 1989.

### Reclamation threatens China's wetlands

More than 6,600,000 ha of wetlands and coastal lands in the People's Republic of China have been targeted for reclamation before 2000. One major reclamation project will destroy 660,000 ha (more than 30 per cent) of the Sanjiang Plains in Heilongjiang province. This wetland is of international importance, and is a breeding ground for the endangered oriental stork *Ciconia boyciana* and red-crowned crane *Grus japonensis*. Reclamation is also recommended for 600,000 ha in the Yellow River delta, one of China's largest estuarine systems and extremely important for fisheries and migratory and wintering waterfowl. *Asian Wetland News*, 1 (2), 4.

## INDO-MALAYA

### Breeding bêche-de-mer

An artificial breeding and rearing programme for sea cucumbers (bêche-de-mer) has been started by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute in India. On mainland India sea cucumbers are restricted to the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay region. Currently two species, *Holothuria sabra* and *H. spinifera*, are fished commercially and because of over-exploitation the Indian Government imposed a ban in 1982 on the export of processed sea cucumbers less than 77 mm in size. *Fish Farming International*, July 1989, 93.

### Masks deter tigers

Face masks worn on the back of

the head appear to be effective in protecting their wearers from attacks by tigers (which attack from behind) in Sunderban Tiger Reserve in west Bengal. In 1987 wood-cutters, fishermen and honey collectors permitted to work in the buffer zone of the reserve were issued with masks. Although there were attacks and some casualties that year, none of the victims was wearing a mask at the time of the attack. Some of the local people feel that the Sunderban tigers are too clever to be deceived by masks for long. More experiments are under way to provide conclusive evidence that the wearing of masks is indeed a foolproof tiger deterrent. *WWF Reports*, June/July 1989, 16–18.

### Reserve in Nicobar

The Government of India has announced a new national biosphere reserve to protect forests in Nicobar Island. The area was officially gazetted in January 1989 and covers 885 sq km. Apart from in a core zone of 520 sq km, agroforestry and



The orang-utan was featured on four denominations of Indonesian stamps issued in 1989.

agriculture can be practised. *Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas Newsletter*, No. 49, 2.

### New tiger reserve

The Government of India has recently declared a new reserve under its Project Tiger scheme. It lies in the Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu in southern India.

*Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas Newsletter*, No. 48, 8.

### Coelacanths contaminated

Scientists in California have found traces of PCBs and DDT in coelacanths, which live 180 m down in the Indian Ocean. It was not thought that these pollutants would reach this depth. *The Guardian*, 6 October 1989.

### Thailand's illegal exports

Since July 1987 more than 200 wild animals in 17 concealed shipments from Don Muang Airport in Thailand have been intercepted by Japanese officials at Narita Airport in Japan. The seizures began when officials found that illegal wildlife was being hidden in crates containing legal wildlife. Most of the smuggled wildlife was drugged to avoid detection. *Bangkok Post*, 21 August 1989.

### Dealer arrested

In August 1989 93 wild animals were seized from a suspected wildlife trader in a joint raid on his house by forestry officials and provincial police in Chom Thong District, Thailand. There were 5 leopards, 8 tigers, 4 Asiatic black bears, 5 clouded leopards, 16 elk deer, 22 hog deer, 7 gibbons, 3 pittas, 9 hornbills, 4 civets, 5 owls, 3 green peafowl, 1 goral and 1 serow in

the house and the Forestry Department intends to return them to the wild. The suspect is being detained on charges of possessing protected species. *Bangkok Post*, 17 August 1989.

### Singapore bird sanctuary

An 85-ha wetland area at Sengei Buloh in north-west Singapore has been set aside as a bird sanctuary in response to a proposal from the Singapore branch of the Malayan Nature Society that 318 ha be protected to preserve an example of Singapore's dwindling water-bird populations. The site has a complex of wetland habitats, a resource that is fast disappearing in Singapore, and 126 bird species have been recorded there.

*Asian Wetland News*, 1 (2), 2.

### Environmentalists win right to sue.

An Indonesian environmental group, Walhi, sued the government and a pulp and rayon industry company, PT Inti Indorayon Utama, for violating environmental laws in North Sumatra. In August the case was lost as the judges ruled that although the company had logged pines, it had also carried out reforestation, and that the logging was not to blame for a water shortage and a landslide. However, the judges also confirmed the right of a community organization to file a lawsuit on an environmental issue. *Jakarta Post*, 2 January and 15 August 1989.

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## NORTH AMERICA

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### Pitcher plants in trade

The white, red-veined traps of the North American white-topped pitcher plant *Sarracenia*

*leucophylla* are being harvested from wild plants for the international and national florist markets according to Dr Thomas Gibson, a botanist associated with the University of Wisconsin. The traps are much in demand for floral displays and Gibson estimates that more than 4 million traps of *S. leucophylla* are being taken each year from bogs in the south-eastern US. The demand is growing and it is unknown what effect the take will have on the plants, but the physical impact of such heavy collection on fragile bog communities is potentially disastrous. Since December 1987 all species of North American *Sarracenia* have been listed on at least CITES Appendix II, and three species have been on Appendix I since 1981. The US issued permits for the export of 400,000–450,000 cut traps in autumn 1988. In winter, when wild pitchers are unavailable, traps from cultivated plants in the Netherlands can fetch \$10 each. One US company has started growing white-topped pitcher plants in Honduras. *TRAFFIC (USA)*, June 1989, 7.

### North American orchids – propagation needed

Although advances have been made in orchid propagation over the last decade there are still difficulties in establishing orchids raised in artificial conditions to gardens or into the wild where they succumb to herbivory, subtle climate changes or to disease. At a meeting in March 1989 most leading US and Canadian growers admitted that their inability to establish seed-grown plants in gardens presents a formidable barrier to large-scale commercial propagation. Most native orchids offered for sale in North

America are still collected from the wild and if growers cannot produce low-cost propagated material soon collectors will continue to deplete wild populations.

*TRAFFIC (USA)*, June 1989, 3.

**Duck numbers poor**

North America's duck populations continue to fall to new record low numbers. The 1989 spring breeding population for ducks (31 million) was 8 per cent lower than in 1988 and 24 per cent below the long-term average for 1955–1988. The poor numbers reflect the effect of the severe 1988 drought on duck populations already depressed after a series

of droughts in the 1980s. *Outdoor News Bulletin*, 11 August 1989, 1.

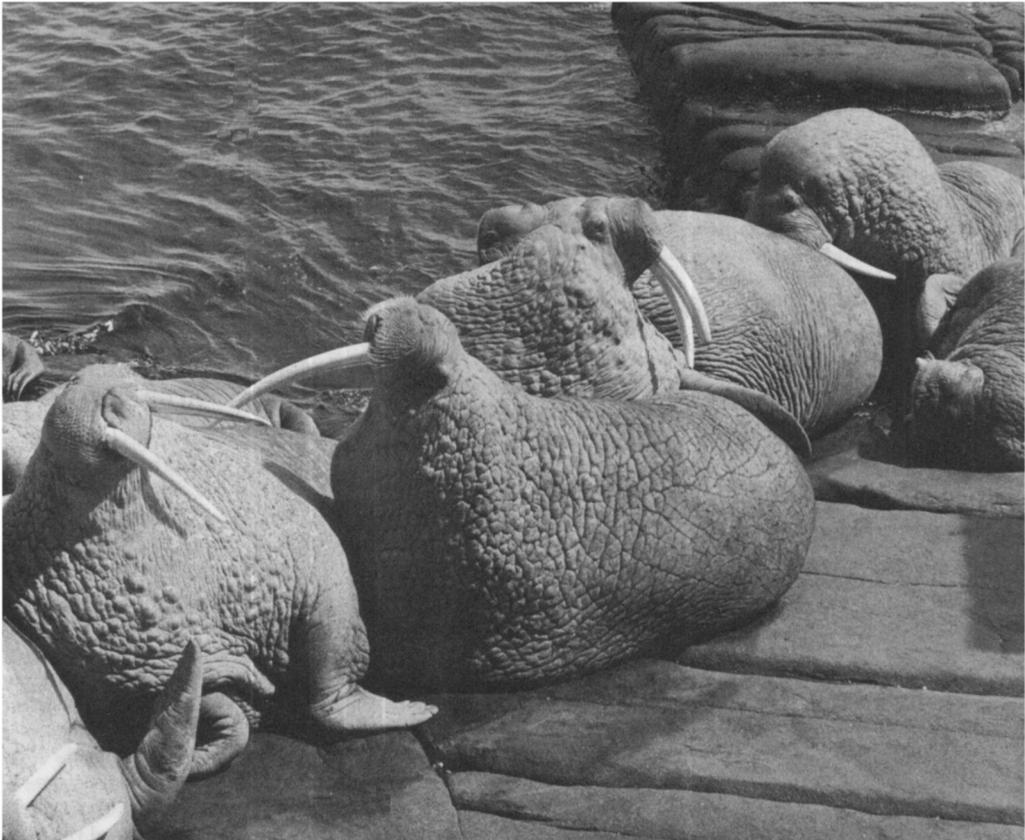
**Demand rises for walrus ivory**

Some Alaskan Eskimos are illegally shooting walrus *Odobenus rosmarus* to obtain the tusks and conservationists fear that too many are being killed to meet the growing demand for walrus ivory. The Marine Mammal Protection Act prohibits walrus hunting, except by Alaskan Eskimos, in an unwhasteful way, for food. So far only one Eskimo had been tried for 'wasteful taking' of ivory; he was found guilty in July 1987 and faces a year in prison

and a \$100,000 fine. Fish and Wildlife Service officials say nearly every walrus case they handle involves drugs; in one case 10 walrus heads were traded for an ounce of marijuana. *The New York Times*, 15 July 1989.

**Goose recovery**

The Aleutian Canada goose *Branta canadensis leucopareia*, which faced extinction 20 years ago, has recovered in numbers large enough to be reclassified from 'Endangered' to 'Threatened', according to the US Wildlife Management Institute. With efforts by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, state wildlife agencies and private



The increasing demand for walrus ivory and the rise in illegal killing of these animals is giving cause for concern (*Karl W. Kenyon*).

conservation groups the population has grown from fewer than 800 in 1960 to more than 6000. It now nests on six islands in the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The recovery effort involved removing introduced Arctic foxes from former breeding islands and reintroducing geese. *Outdoor News Bulletin*, 20 October 1989, 4.

### Exxon oil spill 6 months on

A US federal government agency said that is estimated that the Exxon Valdez oil spill in March in Alaska had claimed the lives of more than 300,000 birds. The death toll of animals is known to include 950 sea otters, 150 bald eagles, nine whales and millions of fish. By mid-September Exxon will halt all clean-up work because of the weather, leaving 2200 km of the 3860 km of contaminated shoreline still untreated. *The Guardian*, 7 and 8 September 1989.

### Salmon skin fashion

Salmon skins from packing plants on the west coast of Canada are being tanned locally to produce a high quality leather for use in a range of items, from briefcases to belts. Skin tanned from large salmon resembles snake skin and has two-and-a-half times the durability of cowhide. Prior to this discovery salmon skins were discarded. *Nexus*, 11, 2, 11.

### Swift foxes back in Canada

The swift fox *Vulpes velox* once again roams the Canadian prairie but, although 250 individuals have been released since 1983 in south-eastern Alberta and south-western Saskatchewan, the Canadian

Wildlife Service does not know the precise number of foxes now alive and does not consider the species to be re-established yet. Nine radio-collared individuals are known to be alive, but there could be many more. In spring 1988 at least 31 young were known to be born to seven pairs of foxes, but many did not survive the drought of that year. Foxes continue to be bred in captivity – an additional 60–100 young could be produced in 1989. *Recovery: An Endangered Species Newsletter*, June 1989, 8–9.

### Plans to transport marmots

The Vancouver Island marmot *Marmota vancouverensis* population, which numbers 200–300, is showing signs of inbreeding according to recent research. The species has been reduced to one-third of its former range on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, and now there is only a cluster of colonies in the mountains in the west. The dispersal patterns of these colonies have been altered by logging, isolating colonies and reducing interbreeding. A recovery plan for the species proposes to transplant marmots to create new colonies. *The Vancouver Sun*, 9 September 1989.

### Logging and the owl

The controversial logging of old-growth forests, home of the spotted owl *Strix occidentalis* in Washington and Oregon in the north-western USA has temporarily been halted by federal judges in response to environmentalists' law suits. The US Forest Service, meanwhile, hired hundreds of owl spotters to discover whether the species is really endangered. The survey found 251 new pairs of

owls in 1989 compared with the previous total of 734, but arguments have already broken out about whether this means that the owls are safe.

*The Guardian*, 18 August 1989.

### Eggs hatched from road-killed terrapins

The diamondback terrapin *Malaclemys terrapin* has returned to abundance in the wetlands of southern New Jersey, USA, but many females die as they cross roads in search of nesting sites. Over 300 mortalities were recorded on 10 miles of road in 1989. Gary Wood salvaged 200 eggs from these often totally smashed animals and incubated them on damp vermiculite in plastic shoe boxes, achieving a hatching rate of 60 per cent. The turtle's nesting season in June coincides with peak tourist traffic and in future it is hoped to have the highways signposted to reduce speed limits and to advise motorists about the regular turtle crossing points. *Tortoises and Turtles, Newsletter of the IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group*, September 1989, 3.

### Desert tortoise news

The desert tortoise *Gopherus agassizii* was listed as 'Threatened' at the 22 June 1989 meeting of the California Fish and Game Commission, which means that large projects that fall under the California Environmental Quality Act will be screened to ensure that they do not jeopardize the continued existence of the species. The tortoise, which lives in the western US and north-western Mexico, is subject to habitat destruction, predation by ravens, competition with grazing livestock, off-road vehicles and a virulent respiratory

virus, possibly related to the release of sick captive tortoises. The US Fish and Wildlife Service, following a lawsuit by Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund, and the National Resources Defence Council, has also announced its intention to list western populations of the tortoise in the US as 'Endangered'. *Tortoises and Turtles, Newsletter of the IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group*, September 1989, 4–5.

### International bird ring broken

Twenty months of undercover work by the US Fish and Wildlife Service ended in arrests in California and Honolulu in May and indictments against dealers in Singapore, Buenos Aires, Mexico City and the US. The ringleaders were the Californian dealers whose targets were parrots of South East Asia and Latin America. The undercover operation saw hundreds of parrots worth around \$500,000 passing through the Singapore, Argentina, Mexico, California pipeline. Among them were hyacinth macaws *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus* and military macaws *Ara militaris*, which are listed in CITES Appendix I. Now that the law recognizes the gravity of wildlife smuggling offences the defendants could face penalties of 5 years in prison and/or a \$250,000 fine for the lesser offenders, and up to 75 years in prison and/or fines of \$3 million and more for ringleaders. *The Animal Welfare Institute Quarterly*, Summer 1989, 1–6; *TRAFFIC (USA)*, June 1989, 4–5.

### Condor population grows

Four Californian condor *Gymnogyps californianus* eggs

hatched in 1989 and all four chicks are thriving. The total Californian condor population now stands at 32, all of them in captivity at the San Diego Wild Animal Park and Los Angeles Zoo.

*Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, XIV, 6, 9.

### Problems for parrot project

The prospects for thick-billed parrots *Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha* in Mexico are grim, with continued habitat destruction and a recent increase in captures for the illicit pet trade. In Arizona, an attempt to re-establish the species, which disappeared from there in the early 1900s, is having mixed fortunes. There is a supply of confiscated birds, but there are two problems in releasing them. Some of those released so far have been seen heading back to Mexico. Others are not healthy – for example, of 37 parrots confiscated in Texas in 1988, nine died in quarantine of parrot wasting disease, which is currently incurable, and thus it is unlikely that any of the remainder will be used for release. However, one 11–13 strong flock of released birds has settled in the Chiricahua Mountains of south-eastern Arizona and the US Fish and Wildlife Service is now encouraging participation in captive-breeding projects to supply high-quality, parent-reared birds for more releases.

*Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, XIV, 4, 1, 3–4.

### A plant and a snail

In April 1989 two more species were added to the US Endangered Species List. The dwarf-flowered heartleaf *Hexastylis naniflora*, a member of the Aristolochiaceae, grows

in wet acid soils in North and South Carolina. Only 24 populations remain, much of its habitat having been converted to peach orchards and pastures, destroyed by housing developments or flooded by dams. The Magazine Mountain shagreen *Mesodon magazinensis* is a land snail that occurs only in small numbers on rock slides on the north slope of Magazine Mountain in Arkansas. *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, XIV, 5, 9.

### Just how many Hawaiian crows are there?

The Hawaiian crow *Corvus hawaiiensis* was given protected status in 1931 and recovery plans were adopted in 1982 and 1984 by federal and state governments, respectively. However, the captive flock of 10 suffers from inbreeding and the only wild birds are believed to be about 10 on McCandless Ranch, whose owners deny access to scientists. The landowners say the crows are breeding on the ranch but since no researchers have been allowed to visit since 1980 this cannot be confirmed. It is known, however, that the McCandless Ranch is carrying out logging and replanting activities, which are destroying the crows' habitat. *Greenprint, Audubon Hawaii Conservation News*, August 1989.

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## CENTRAL AMERICA

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### Illegal trade in Mexican animals

A major undercover wildlife trade operation has identified at least 15 Mexican and US suppliers of illegal furs smuggled into the US from Mexico. A store set up by the US Fish and

Wildlife Service in Van Horn, Texas, received 6000 smuggled furs from illegally trapped species, most of Mexican origin and some listed on CITES Appendix II. Eight people were arrested, warrants were issued for another three and FWS officials are pursuing leads that should result in further arrests. CITES Appendix II species purchased included almost 1000 bobcat *Felis rufa*, six ocelot *F. pardalis* and a few mountain lion *F. concolor* skins. Although Mexico is not a party to CITES it does regulate the taking of fur-bearing mammals and prohibits the general export of all indigenous animals. *TRAFFIC (USA)*, June 1989, 4.

### Mexican forests burnt

Eleven people accused of setting fires that burnt nearly 1500 sq km of forest in south-eastern Mexico were arrested in August. The fires advanced for five months until rain extinguished them in early August. Recovery could take 30 years according to scientists. *Los Angeles Times*, 17 August 1989.

### Park on Guadeloupe

On 20 February 1989 the 7th French national park was created on Guadeloupe (French Antilles). Covering 17,500 ha, it protects a number of valuable natural landscapes, including the Soufrière volcano. Tropical forest covers 95 per cent of the park area. *Nature and National Parks*, 1989, 27 (103), 34.

## SOUTH AMERICA

### Vicuna reintroduction to Ecuador

The governments of Chile and Peru have each donated 100

vicuna *Vicugna vicugna* to Ecuador, where they have been released into an area protected especially for them on the Chimborazo plateau. Both the capture and transport by air were carried out successfully with a mortality rate of only 4 per cent after their reintroduction.

*South American Camelid Specialist Group Newsletter*, June 1989, 3.

### Cocaine and the forests

Peruvian coca growers, driven by American and European demand for cocaine, have destroyed well over 2020 sq km of forests in the Upper Huallaga Valley. The coca leaf has become the largest crop under cultivation in the Peruvian Amazon. The result is severe pollution, deforestation and erosion. The pollution comes from dumped kerosene, sulphuric acid, acetone, toluene, lime and carbide used in the refining process as well as from herbicides and fertilizers used on the crops. Growers have cut down large sections of Tingo Maria, Cutervo and Abiseo national parks and Alexander Von Humboldt and Apurimac national forests. *The New York Times*, 13 August 1989.

### Brazil's plea for helicopter

The head of Brazil's Federal Environmental Agency, Mr Fernando Cesar Mequita, appealed to western governments for helicopters to monitor the Amazon region for the 3 months – August, September, October – when illegal burning takes place as cattle ranchers and land speculators set fire to the forest. When he made the plea he had only five helicopters and two small planes available and he has asked

pilots of commercial airlines to co-operate by reporting any big fires they see on Amazon routes.

*The Guardian*, 5 August 1989.

### New conservation foundation in Argentina

The Foundation for the Research and Development of Natural Renewable Resources (Fier) has been set up in Argentina. It intends to promote the rational use of natural resources, to develop research programmes, liaise with appropriate government and non-governmental organizations and promote the establishment of biological stations, protected areas and education programmes.

*Fier, San Jose 334, Piso 7, (1076) Buenos Aires, Argentina.*

## AUSTRALIA AND ANTARCTICA

### New park for Queensland

Masthead Island, a renowned bird and turtle habitat off Gladstone, Queensland, Australia, has been declared a national park. The island supports large colonies of wedge-tailed shearwaters *Puffinus pacificus*, black noddies *Anous tenuirostris* and a number of tern species.

*Wildlife Australia*, Autumn 1989, 28.

### Whale watching in Australia

Whale watching could become a commercial success in Hervey Bay, Queensland, Australia. Thousands of tourists have taken the opportunity to see humpback whales *Megaptera novaeangliae* on their migration north, and charter boat operators are co-operating with guidelines to protect the whales

from disturbance.

*Wildlife Australia*, Autumn 1989, 28.

### End of bat cave

Australia's longest-running conservation battle came to a sad end on 12 June 1989, with the destruction of a major winter roost cave of the rare ghost bat *Macroderma gigas* at Mt Etna in Queensland. Speaking Tube Cave was dynamited by Central Queensland Cement Limited within days of conservationists being forced to abandon court action against the company for lack of funds. Conservationists have been campaigning for over 25 years to have Mt Etna's caves and their bats protected. The ghost bat is listed by IUCN as 'Vulnerable'.

*Conservation News*, July 1989, 5.

### Mining blocked in Kakadu

The Australian cabinet, bowing to pressure from environmental and Aboriginal groups, has deferred for 12 months a deci-

sion on whether to permit mining in Kakadu National Park in Northern Territory. In taking the decision it has reneged on an earlier agreement to allow mining and now a new independent inquiry will take place. Even if the inquiry comes out in favour of mining, it will be restricted to 37 sq km rather than the 2252 sq km where Australia's largest company, Broken Hill Proprietary, won rights to dig in 1986. *New Scientist*, 14 October 1989, 19.

### Western swamp turtle – renewed hope

A new rescue programme and captive breeding project for the western swamp turtle *Pseudemydura umbrina* in Western Australia, which started in 1988 using new techniques, has had success, with 11 young hatching in 1989. This follows a long period of disappointment in which wild populations dropped from 200-300 animals in the 1960s to 15-25 today; captive breeding, which

had been sporadic between 1966 and 1980, came to a standstill in 1981. The next goal is to build up a viable captive population, assessing the genetic variability of the groups and developing a husbandry plan to minimize loss of genetic diversity. At the same time funds are being sought to build a fox-proof fence around the Ellen Brook Reserve, which holds the only wild survivors. *Tortoises and Turtles, Newsletter of the IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group*, September 1989, 16-19.

### Black swans die from lead

An outbreak of lead-poisoning in waterfowl at the Bool Lagoon Game Reserve in south-eastern Australia stimulated a survey that revealed that about 40 per cent of 50 black swans *Cygnus atratus* had excessive exposure to lead. The source is believed to be spent lead shot from hunting. Although this is the first detailed report on lead-poisoning and lead contamination in Australian waterfowl, it is believed that similar problems exist undetected elsewhere in Australia, especially where there has been a high level of hunting.

*Aust. Wildl. Res.*, 15, 395-403.

### Rare possum threatened by road programme

The habitat of Australia's endangered Leadbeater's possum *Gymnobelideus leadbeateri* is threatened by a road-widening programme in Victoria's Central Highlands. The state Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands is upgrading forest tracks to 'all-weather roads', clearing roadsides to a width of 75 m, destroying much valuable wildlife habitat and damaging wildlife corridors in



This ghost bat was netted in a protected part of its range in Queensland and photographed during a visit from delegates of the 8th International Bat Research Conference in July 1989. Now that an important roost site – Speaking Tube Cave – has been destroyed the future of the colony is uncertain (*Shirley Thompson*).

the process. The possum, which is restricted to an area of about 500 sq km, is of particular concern because the hollow trees in which it lives, and which have traditionally been left as a buffer between forest tracks and clear-felling areas, will be removed.

*Conservation News*, July 1989, 9.

### Accord for New Zealand's forests

Tasman Forestry Ltd, wholly owned subsidiary of the Fletcher Challenge Group, joined with New Zealand's Minister of Conservation and conservation organizations to sign the Tasman Conservation Accord on 22 June 1989. The Accord safeguards 52 important areas of native forest covering 421 sq km throughout New Zealand and is the biggest ever commitment made by a New Zealand company to conserving native forests and wildlife. Tasman Forestry will



Leadbeater's possum, already endangered, is threatened further by road-widening activities (detail from a painting by Ninon Phillips).



The wedge-tailed shearwater is one of the species that breeds on Masthead Island, Queensland's new national park (Roger Wilson).

also fund 3 years research and management to ensure the survival of the kokako *Callaeas cinerea* of which only 1000 survive. The most significant provision of the Accord is that 'Tasman Forestry shall adopt an environmental code of practice for its operations in New Zealand that will preclude the clearance of indigenous forest'. *Forest & Bird*, August 1989, 10-13.

### Thar in New Zealand

Himalayan thar *Hemitragus jemlahicus* numbers in the central southern Alps of New Zealand have doubled since commercial hunting was banned in 1983. Management options are being considered for this introduced species, which is damaging the high alpine grasslands. The Department of Conservation appears to be favouring a sustained harvest approach rather than an eradication programme but critics say this will result in an expensive bureaucracy of game management experts and scientists dedicated to maintaining populations of problem animals in one of New

Zealand's most sensitive ecosystems. *Forest & Bird*, *Conservation News*, August/September 1989.

### New Zealand bans drift nets

The New Zealand Government is to prohibit the use or possession of drift nets in its waters, introducing regulations under existing legislation. The ban is largely symbolic since most driftnetting is done in international waters but it reflects the growing abhorrence for the indiscriminate fishing method used mainly by Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. Hawaii is also reported to be considering banning drift nets within its waters. *Fishing News International*, July 1989, 2.

### Ways of trapping snakes in Guam

Ways are being sought to control the introduced brown tree snake *Boiga irregularis*, which has been implicated in the precipitous declines in native bird populations on Guam (*Oryx*, 21, 210-211, 23, 49). Catching the snakes in

traps baited with live quails *Coturnix coturnix* has been successful, but new research has revealed that funnel traps made of wire window-screen material baited with droppings of quails or chickens also succeed in catching snakes, whereas unbaited traps are unsuccessful. The work also suggested that 15 traps per ha were too few and that 80 probably over-saturated the area.

*Journal of Herpetology*, 23, 189–192.

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## OBITUARY

George Adamson, famous for his lion rehabilitation work, died on 20 August 1989, aged 83. He was killed by bandits when attempting to rescue members of his staff and a German visitor who had been ambushed near his home in Kora National Reserve in north-eastern Kenya. Kenya's Director of Wildlife Conservation, Dr Richard Leakey, has said that Kora is to be proclaimed a national park.

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## CORRECTION

### The Shamba Raiders

In the review of *The Shamba Raiders* (*Oryx*, 23, 173–174) Mweka (the College of African Wildlife Management) was incorrectly passed as Mkweke and Bruce Kinloch was described as having been a game warden in Uganda and Tanzania. In fact he was the Chief Game Warden of both these countries.

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## PUBLICATIONS

### Losing Ground

*Losing Ground – Habitat destruction in the UK; a review in*

1989 shows that while protection of special sites has improved, the needs of wildlife outside protected areas has been neglected. The 21-page report makes recommendations for individual and government action. It costs £2.50 including postage from Royal Society for Nature Conservation, The Green, Nettleham, Lincoln LN2 2NR.

### IWRB publications

International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau Special Publications Nos 8 and 9 were published in October 1989. *Results of the IWRB International Waterfowl Census 1967–1986*, compiled by J.-Y. Monval and J.-Y. Pirot, and *Flyways and Reserve Networks for Water Birds*, edited by H. Boyd and J.-Y. Pirot, are each available from IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BX, UK for £10.00 plus £1.50 postage.

### Biology and Conservation of the River Dolphins

This publication is the Proceedings of the Workshop on Biology and Conservation of Platanistoid Dolphins, which was held at Wuhan, People's Republic of China, 28–30 October 1986. Edited by W. F. Perrin, R. L. B. Brownell, Jr, Zhou Kaiya and Liu Jiankang, it is published as Occasional Paper No. 3 of the IUCN Species Survival Commission 1989. It is available from IUCN Publications Services Unit, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, UK, for £12.50 or \$US25.00, plus £2.19 or \$US4.38 for surface post or plus £4.38 or \$US8.76 for airmail.

### Amphibians and Roads

*Amphibians and Roads*, the proceedings of the Toad Tunnel

Conference, Rendsburg, Federal Republic of Germany, 7–8 January 1989 was published in September 1989. The FFPS, through its former herpetological consultant, Tom Langton, was one of the organizers of the meeting and Tom Langton also edited the Proceedings. The 200-pages cover 23 papers, most of them fully illustrated with photographs, maps and figures. It is available from the publishers ACO Polymer Products Ltd, Hitchin Road, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5JS, UK for £5 plus £1 p. & p.

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## MEETINGS

### Seminar on education and conservation

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) is organizing an International Seminar on Environmental Education, Conservation and Public Action from 30 April to 11 May 1990. Details from SPNI International Seminar 1990, POB 930, 91008 Jerusalem, Israel.

### Breeding and Conservation of Endangered Species

An intensive course aimed at zoo staff, student and lay people with a strong interest in conservation and/or captive breeding is to be run by Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust from 28 July to 18 August 1990. Course Directors include: Mr John E. Cooper from the Royal College of Surgeons and Dr Pat Morris from the University of London. The inclusive fee, is £625. For further information contact: The Summer School Coordinator, Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, Trinity, Jersey, Channel Islands, British Isles. Tel: 0534 61949. The closing date is 31 January 1990.