

INTERNATIONAL

Parks for Life

On 19 September 1994 the IUCN launched a new European action plan, Parks for Life. Europe has around 20,000 protected areas, 10 per cent of which are national parks, but some are poorly managed and need better protection. The action plan aims to encourage the creation of cross-border networks and improve collaborative management of protected areas. The IUCN hopes that the action plan will be adopted Europe-wide by some 40 governments. The plan is under consideration by the EU Environment Commission in Brussels.

Source: *Environment in Brief* (EEB), September 1994, No. 59.

Malaysia to join Ramsar

The Malaysian Government has decided to ratify the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance and will nominate Tasek Bera in Pahang as a Ramsar site.

Source: *Asian Wetland News*, 7 (1), 3.

Wetland commitment

The governments of the South East Asia region demonstrated their commitment to wetland conservation at a Ramsar Regional Workshop in March 1994. All participants supported the Pulau Rambut Declaration, which urges all governments and relevant NGOs to stop the degradation and loss of wetlands in South East Asia. The recommendations included in the declaration urged governments to strengthen cross-sectoral co-ordination and environmental impact assessment as well as

adopt monitoring and control mechanisms, including the establishment of national wetland committees. They also encourage the promotion of the awareness of the functions of wetlands and their relevance and importance to everyday life, and the participation of local people and NGOs in all stages and development of land-use policy, planning and management related to wetlands. The meeting was attended by delegates from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, together with representatives from Japan, India, Sri Lanka and Australia.

Source: *Asian Wetland News*, 7 (1), 3.

EUROPE AND NORTH AFRICA

Musk deer declining further

Reports indicate that the Siberian musk deer *Moschus moschiferus* population has declined by 70 per cent in Russia in the last 2–3 years due to demand for musk on world markets (see *Oryx*, 28 [1], 5). Some protective measures have been taken: the island population of *M. m. sachalinensis* is listed in the *Russian Red Data Book* and the hunting of musk deer in the Altai has been banned for 3 years.

Source: *Deer Specialist Group News*, June 1994, No. 12, 4.

Attack on Siberian tiger operation

In the Russian Far East, where Operation Amba was launched to protect Siberian tigers *Panthera tigris altaica* (see *Oryx*, 28 [4], 224–225), an undercover informant was seriously

injured and his wife and child killed by a bomb planted in their house. The three anti-poaching teams recruited in March 1994 have been conducting extensive patrols, which have led to the arrest and prosecution of poachers. Tiger bones and skins have been seized and legal proceedings against offenders are in progress.

Source: *Cat News*, Autumn 1994, No. 21, 3.

Oil threatens tundra and Barents Sea

A massive leak from the corroded Kominet pipeline, which carries oil from the Arctic to refineries in central Russia, has been estimated at 14,000 tonnes by Komi province's civil defence department, 60,000 tonnes by the central government and 200,000 by American oil-workers at the scene of the spill. The US Department of Energy says it has had reports of a slick 11 km long and up to 1 m deep spreading from near the town of Usinsk. The oil had been leaking for several months and an earth bank built by Kominet to contain it was breached by heavy rain in October. The oil reached the River Kolva, a tributary of the Pechora, which flows into the Barents Sea. As well as potential marine pollution, large areas of tundra could be contaminated for decades.

Source: *New Scientist*, 5 November 1994, 8–9.

New reserves in Denmark

Denmark is to establish 60 new reserves in the next 5 years to protect waterbirds from hunting. Three have already been designated.

Source: *European IBA News*, September 1994, 5 (9), 2.

Cudweed reintroduction

Plans are going ahead to reintroduce the narrow-leaved cudweed *Filago gallica*, which was declared extinct in the wild in the UK in 1978, to the site near Colchester, Essex, where it was last recorded. The plants are to be grown from seeds from a population in the garden of a botanist who, in 1948, collected seeds from the last remaining wild plants growing on a site used for army tank manoeuvres.

Source: *New Scientist*, 29 October 1994, 12.

Bears on the move

Brown bears *Ursus arctos* in former Yugoslavia are increasing in numbers and moving into the eastern Italian Alps in search of new habitat.

Conservationists plan to plant fruit trees along their route to lure them into a protective corridor that will guide them clear of major roads, poachers and domestic livestock.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation*, September–October 1994, 8.

Monk seal breeding plan blocked

A French plan to breed Mediterranean monk seals *Monachus monachus* in captivity has foundered because the Moroccan Government has refused to allow six seal pups to be taken from a colony on Cap Blanc in Western Sahara to Marineland, a commercial sea mammal centre in southern France. The Moroccan decision came after protests co-ordinated by the Bellerive Foundation, a Geneva-based conservation group, which said that the seals could be killed during the project and that the capture attempt could disturb the colony. Another Dutch/Spanish

plan aims to reintroduce monk seals to the Canary Islands using orphans from the Cap Blanc colony and has applied for EC funding.

Source: *New Scientist*, 24 September 1994, 6–7.

Road threatens estuary in Portugal

A proposed new road crossing of the Tejo (Tagus) estuary in Portugal is a serious threat to internationally important habitats for passage and winter waterfowl. In winter the estuary holds up to 75,000 black-tailed godwits *Limosa limosa* and 15,000 avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta*. While the government is pressing ahead with the scheme, non-governmental organizations have persuaded the Portuguese President to oppose the plans.

Source: *European IBA News*, September 1994, 5 (9), 3.

Monk seals in Sardinia

At least two Mediterranean monk seals *Monachus monachus* were sighted in August on the coast of Sardinia near Cagliari, the first confirmed record of the species in southern Sardinia since last century. Monk seals were also seen in north-east and east-central Sardinia and in the Tuscan archipelago and Sicilian islands. WWF Italy has launched a new campaign, Blue Marino, to educate people on the importance of the species, to study sites suitable for the return of the seal and to institute marine reserves. The first Information Centre on the Monk Seal, set up by WWF–Italy at Cala Gonone, in the Gulf of Orosei in east-central Sardinia, has already been visited by several thousand people.

Source: WWF–Italy, August 1994.

Success for Greek turtles

The Greek Government has agreed to declare Laganas Bay, Zakynthos, which is one of the Mediterranean's last nesting beaches for loggerhead turtles *Caretta caretta*, a marine park. Speedboats will be banned from November 1994. A conservation organization is purchasing the land behind the most important nesting beach, Sekania, to keep it free from tourist development. Tavernas on another nesting beach, Daphne, were closed from 8 to 9 September but the local administration discovered a by-law, which they claimed justified their reopening.

Source: MEDASSET, 12 September 1994.

AFRICA

Law enforcement agreement signed

On 9 September 1994 Kenya, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia signed the Lusaka Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora (see *Oryx*, 28 [4], 227). The agreement aims to reduce and ultimately eliminate illegal international trade in African wildlife, which is currently estimated as worth £5 billion a year. The agreement will enter into force after the fourth instrument of ratification has been deposited with the UN Secretary General and it could be in operation by the end of 1995 if funds are secured and ratification is rapid.

Source: *African Wildlife Update*, September–October 1994, 3.

Crocodile numbers falling

In recent years there has been a substantial decline in crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus* numbers in Kenya as a result of expanding human populations and climate change, which has caused aquatic habitats to dry out. Along the Tana River, there is a high incidence of human–crocodile conflicts and crocodiles regularly take people and livestock. Unscrupulous crocodile farms collect eggs, hatchlings and subadults, assuring local people that they are getting rid of pests. In Lake Victoria, fishermen claim that they destroy any crocodiles and nesting sites encountered. There is an urgent need to increase awareness and start community projects, such as hatcheries, crocodile farms and ecotourism.

Source: *SSC Crocodile Specialist Group Newsletter*, 13 (3), 5–6.

First sable in Tsavo

A sable antelope *Hippotragus niger* photographed recently in Tsavo East National Park by a veterinarian from the Kenya Wildlife Service is the first known sighting of the species in the Tsavo area. The nearest population is in Shimba Hills on the Kenya coast.

Source: *Wildlife News* (African Wildlife Foundation), Fall 1994, 29 (3), 3.

Lovebirds recovering

Tanzania's population of Fischer's lovebirds *Agapornis fischeri* has the capacity to recover from the effects of the international wildlife trade, according to a new survey. Up to 50,000 of these small, brightly coloured birds were captured for export every year in the last decade but tougher trade restrictions since the late 1980s

have enabled numbers to increase slightly in the last 2 years. It is suspected, however, that Fischer's lovebirds are being exported illegally as red-faced lovebirds *A. pullaria*.

Source: *Wildlife News* (African Wildlife Foundation), Fall 1994, 29 (3), 3.

Distemper spreads

The canine distemper virus that has affected 20–30 per cent of the 3000 lions in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park has spread to spotted hyaenas and possibly other predators. There is concern that the disease may spread to Ngorongoro Crater, where it could devastate the isolated lion population: a sick jackal with distemper-like symptoms has been observed there. Domestic dogs appear to be the reservoir for the virus and officials are currently vaccinating dogs in the Ngorongoro area.

Source: *African Wildlife Update*, September–October 1994, 7; *Cat News*, No. 21, Autumn 1994, 2.

Selous confirmed as wild dog stronghold

A 3-year study of wild dogs *Lycan pictus* has found that the Selous Game Reserve, Tanzania, holds about 800 adult wild dogs. The study was carried out as a result of a 1990 report that estimated that perhaps only 5000 wild dogs survived in Africa and that the Selous might be an important site. Mikumi National Park, which borders the Selous to the north-west, probably holds an additional 90 adults. These protected areas, together with others in southern Tanzania, may be the best remaining stronghold for the species and, with the poor outlook through much of the species's range, southern Tanzania may play an

increasingly important role in wild dog conservation continent-wide.

Source: *Il Licaone*, May–August 1994, 7–10.

Wildlife road kills

Increasing numbers of animals – most of them mammals – are being killed on the 50 km of Tanzam highway that runs through Tanzania's Mikumi National Park, according to a study started in 1990. There are two reasons for the increase: increased trade with Zambia and road improvements in 1991, which have allowed speeds in excess of 95 kmph. Where possible carcasses are removed to reduce risk to carrion feeders but most deaths are a result of speeding, which is difficult for the park authorities to police. Warning signs are to be erected and Mikumi's chief park warden is seeking support for speed ramps. The records from Mikumi are the first account of a road-kill problem in Africa, but the problem probably also exists in other parks traversed by major roads and is expected to increase as development proceeds.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, October 1994, 58.

Limestone endemics need more reserves

Limestone fynbos vegetation is restricted mainly to the soils of the Bredasdorp geological formation on the south coast of South Africa, stretching from Gansbaai in the west to the mouth of the Gouritz River in the east. A recent study identified 110 limestone endemics, 29 of which are listed in the *South African Red Data Book*. Some species are widespread, while others are restricted to a single site and 42 per cent have

very narrow distributions. Many factors threaten the viability of limestone communities: encroachment by invasive alien vegetation, land clearance for agriculture, resort development, inappropriate fire management and over-harvesting of wild flowers. Only two formal protected areas conserve limestone fynbos – De Hoop Nature Reserve and Pauline Bohnen Nature Reserve – and 21 per cent of all limestone fynbos species and 38 per cent of Red Data Book species do not occur in either reserve. The study identified other sites for potential reserves but the acquisition of new land will be difficult, financially and politically. The key to further conservation efforts lies in working co-operatively with private land-owners to create a protected network.

Source: *Veld & Flora*, September 1994, 69–72.

Cape fur seal cull continues

Namibia went ahead with its cull of Cape fur seals *Arctocephalus pusillus* in 1994 despite the fact that more than 120,000 seals had already died of unknown causes (see *Oryx*, 28 [4], 228). The quota included 43,000 pups and 12,000 adult males and the government claims that it wants to reduce the population to 500,000 over the next 5–7 years because the seals compete with fishermen, although there is no evidence to support this.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, September 1994, 60.

Penguin update

Of almost 10,000 jackass penguins *Spheniscus demersus* rescued after an oil spill near Cape Town, South Africa (see *Oryx*, 28 [4], 229), more than

4300 were treated and released, 1656 died in transit to the rehabilitation centre, 3531 died at the centre and 142 remain there. It is estimated that 6000 chicks died following the loss of their parents but the overall impact of the spill will be apparent only when a census is conducted in the next breeding season, in April and May 1995. Source: *African Wildlife Update*, September–October 1994, 2.

Zebra numbers increasing

The cape subspecies of mountain zebra *Equus zebra* has been increasing at around 7 per cent per year and now numbers over 700. At the present rate of increase the target population of 2500 will be reached in about 2013. The two largest populations, in Mountain Zebra and Karoo National Parks in South Africa, number 268 and 106, respectively, and translocations will be made to Zuurberg and Bontebok National Parks.

Source: *Equid Specialist Group Newsletter*, July 1994, No. 1, 6.

ASIA (EXCLUDING INDO-MALAYA)

New breeding programme for giant pandas

With only 1000 left in the wild and just over 100 in captivity, the Chinese Government has embarked on new initiatives to save the giant panda *Ailuropoda melanoleuca*. Giant panda habitats have been identified for new reserves and corridors designed to connect them.

Costs for establishment of the reserves, including the removal of logging activities, anti-poaching patrols and reforestation, are to be funded by the Chinese Government and a giant panda breeding loan

programme to North American zoos, with San Diego zoo as the cornerstone.

Source: *International Zoo News*, July/August 1994, 41 (5), 47–48.

Rare spoonbill site found

A breeding colony of 10–20 black-faced spoonbills *Platalea minor* has been discovered in the Han Estuary in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. The only other known breeding site for this species is off the coast of North Korea, where up to 30 birds have been recorded in the breeding season. The total known world population is 341 – estimated from passage and wintering counts.

Source: *World Birdwatch*, 16 (3), 5.

INDO-MALAYA

Gharial breeding success

After 16 years of effort, Nepal's gharial *Gavialis gharial* project has had success with seven captive-raised gharials (hatched in 1978 and 1979) laying eggs, which hatched successfully. Other captive-raised gharials of the same age released into Narayani River have been laying eggs since 1992. A captive-raised gharial, which escaped in 1990, also laid eggs, which resulted in 20 hatchlings in the Rapti River, which is a shallow and heavily deforested tributary of the Narayani.

Source: *SSC Crocodile Specialist Group Newsletter*, 13 (3), 7.

Lion translocation to be tried again

Wildlife authorities in India are planning to move some of the country's only population of Asiatic lions *Panthera leo persica*

– in Gujarat's Gir Sanctuary – to two other wildlife sanctuaries – Palpur Kuno in Madhya Pradesh and Sitamata in Rajasthan. The translocations will not be possible for some time because of the need to prepare the reserves and secure adequate prey populations. There are around 280 lions in the 1400-sq-km Gir Sanctuary, which is threatened by roads, grazing livestock and other human incursions. An attempt to establish a second population of lions in the 1950s in Chandraprabha Wildlife Sanctuary failed when the lions disappeared after increasing their numbers from three to 11. *Sources: BBC Wildlife, November 1994, 59; Cat News, Autumn 1994, No. 21, 1.*

Anti-tiger-poaching work gets results

In the stepped-up battle against tiger poachers in India, enforcement authorities have seized considerable quantities of tiger skins and bones and arrested poachers and traders. The seizures have also shown the toll being taken of many other wild animals. For example, in the railway station at Pathankot, on the Punjab/Jammu and Kashmir border, bags marked 'goat and sheep skins' contained skins of 931 jungle cats, 8 fishing cats, 391 foxes and 587 jackals. *Source: Cat News, Autumn 1994, No. 21, 3.*

Irrawaddy dolphins get support in the Mekong

The Irrawaddy dolphins *Orcaella brevirostris* in the Mekong River are benefiting from the Lao Community Fisheries and Dolphin Protection project started in 1992. Two villages on the Laos–Cambodian border have

established fish conservation zones, including deep pools inhabited by dolphins. No fishing is allowed and the villagers in Laos have encouraged Cambodians living on the other side of the river to stop using explosives to catch fish. The villagers are actively protecting the dolphins – none has been killed since May 1993 – and one village has set up a small dolphin-watching operation to help promote conservation efforts and provide additional income for the community. The project is extending and by May 1994 nine more villages had set up conservation areas. *Source: Sonar, September 1994, No. 11, 24–25.*

Using rusa

Local communities near the Wasur National Park in Irian Jaya, Indonesia, are benefiting from an initiative to harvest rusa deer *Cervus timorensis*. In 1993 2250 deer provided villages with a total annual income of more than \$US51,000. The marketing system is operated by the National Park Bureau, an NGO established specifically to deal with socio-economic aspects of park management. Although widely distributed throughout much of Indonesia, the rusa deer was introduced to New Guinea.

Source: Deer Specialist Group News, June 1994, No. 12, 11.

Hopes fade for Javan tiger

A year-long camera-trap and ground survey has failed to provide evidence of the survival of the Javan tiger *Panthera tigris sondaica* in its last known home, Meru Betiri National Park. The cameras photographed more people and domestic dogs than wild animals. The Indonesian researchers say

there is a slight possibility that the tigers may have moved from the park, which has suffered from encroachment and disturbance, to dense forests nearby. Large tracks and scratches have been found in Gunung Raung, which the tigers could have reached. The last population census of the Javan tiger was in 1976 when there were estimated to be 3–5 left, based on tracks and faeces. The last reliable sighting was in 1982, although tracks and dung were found in 1990.

Source: Cat News, Autumn 1994, No. 21, 12–13.

New gecko from Lombok

A new gecko *Cnemaspis gordongekko* has been described from the island of Lombok in the Lesser Sundas, southern Indonesia. The type specimens were collected from the walls of an abandoned house near the Sendanggila Falls in disturbed evergreen forest. This is the first record of a *Cnemaspis* sp. for Lombok and the nearest location of another is on Timor Island 800 km to the east. *Cnemaspis* spp. are apparently absent from the intervening islands of Sumbawa, Sumba and Flores and from Bali and Java to the west. *Source: Das, I. 1993. Hamadryad, 18, 1–9.*

New snake named from photograph

A snake discovered by US naval officers in Vietnam in 1968 has been named as *Cryptophidion annamense* from three colour slides. The specimen was lost before it could be deposited in a museum. It appears to be a burrowing snake and is unlike any other known in South East Asia. *Source: BBC Wildlife, October 1994, 11.*

NORTH AMERICA

Oceans policy for Canada?

On 8 September 1994 the Canadian Prime Minister, in his capacity as chairman of the National Advisory Board on Science and Technology released the committee's report, *Opportunities From Our Oceans*. Designed to determine how science and technology can be used to reap the economic benefits of Canada's coastal zone and continental shelf, the document makes clear that environmental protection should be the key thrust of Canada's oceans policy and calls for a Canada Oceans Act. Source: Canadian Nature Federation, *Nature Alert*, 4 (4), 3.

Compounding the error

After 2 years of killing wolves in order to increase the numbers of caribou *Rangifer tarandus* in the Aishihik herd in the Yukon, Canada, the provincial government has issued a permit for mining exploratory activity in the herd's territory, disregarding opposition from local groups and its own reports that mining would destroy caribou habitat. In Yukon, mining claims are exempt from environmental impact assessment, the only place in North America where this is the case. Meanwhile, the latest figures on the status of the Aishihik herd indicate that the wolf kill did not benefit the caribou. The Yukon Government has not yet decided whether to continue the wolf kill for a third year. Source: Canadian Nature Federation, *Nature Alert*, 4 (4), 3.

Industries protect old forest

In Canada, Nova Scotia's three largest forest industry

companies have moved towards setting aside significant areas of old forest for protection. Stora Industries has set aside 1000 sq km within its licence area as well as Scatarie Island, off the east coast of Cape Breton. Scott Maritime Ltd has donated 136 ha of old-growth red spruce forest (one of the last small remnant of the province's original Acadian forest) and 207 ha of younger forest to act as a buffer zone to the Nature Conservancy of Canada. This has allowed the creation of Abraham's Lake Forest Reserve. Bowater-Mersey Paper Company Ltd is protecting 160 ha of old forest on its land near Panuke Lake in central Nova Scotia and is preparing to designate a 165-ha conservation reserve in Annapolis County, which includes undisturbed lakeshore and mature hardwoods. Source: Canadian Nature Federation, *Nature Alert*, 4 (4), 4.

Temperate rain forest protected

The largest intact coastal temperate rain forest in the world – the Kitlope Valley on the central coast of British Columbia – has been protected permanently after the British Colombian Government reached an agreement with the Haisla Nation and West Fraser Timber Company. The rugged terrain of the 3170-sq-km watershed is cloaked in old growth firs, the coastal Douglas fir reaches its northern limits there and the terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine and marine systems support a rich variety of wildlife. The Haisla Nation regard the valley as part of their traditional territory and will enter into discussions with the provincial authorities as to how it will be managed. West Fraser Timber Company, which

had sole logging rights to the valley, relinquished them unconditionally and without compensation. Much of the credit for the lack of conflict in the move to preserve the Kitlope belongs to an Oregon-based conservation group, Ecotrust, which worked with the parties involved, helping to establish a new model for dealing with potential wilderness conflicts. Source: Canadian Nature Federation, *Nature Alert*, 4 (4), 1.

Initiative to raise funds for non-game species

The US International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies have launched a programme – A Bridge to the Future: The Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative – to raise funds for the conservation of non-game species. A small tax will be levied on some items – bird seed, binoculars etc. – bought by people who view wildlife as a pastime. At present hunters and anglers are charged licence fees and excise tax on equipment: \$10 million are raised annually to benefit 100 game species. By contrast 1852 non-game species receive \$1 million annually from federal funds and nothing from wildlife watchers. Source: *Grus Americana*, October 1994, 33 (4), 4.

Pollutants pose problems for terns

Reproductive abnormalities have been found in terns breeding on an island off the coast of Massachusetts, USA. Only four of 15 male embryos examined had normal reproductive organs: in the others cells destined to become sperm cells had migrated to the region of the embryo that gives rise to female egg cells. The

cause is believed to be PCBs, which pollute New Bedford harbour where the terns feed. The PCBs are broken down in the body to form oestrogen-like chemicals. The harbour is being cleaned up, but oestrogen-mimicking chemicals pose similar risks to reptiles, amphibians and birds elsewhere. Some are banned but others are not and some newly developed alkyphenols – used in detergents – are converted into oestrogen mimics by bacteria in sewage treatment plants. Effects on male fish downstream from such plants have been reported.

Source: *New Scientist*, 3 September 1994, 9.

500th wildlife refuge for USA

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has started to purchase 9700 ha from willing sellers in West Virginia to create the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, the 500th parcel in the national wildlife refuge system. The 22-km-long valley has a cool, wet climate and is the largest wetland in West Virginia.

Source: *Outdoor News Bulletin*, 23 September 1994, 48 (9), 1.

Mono Lake to be restored

The water level of Mono Lake, California, USA, is to be raised by more than 5 m over the next 20 years by restricting the use of feeder streams by the city of Los Angeles. Water from these streams has been diverted since 1941, causing the water level in the lake to drop drastically and threatening its wildlife. Los Angeles will replace this water source mainly by increased recycling of waste water.

Source: *New Scientist*, 8 October 1994, 11.

Grey whale recovery

On 15 June 1994 the California grey whale *Eschrichtius robustus* was removed from the US List of Threatened and Endangered Species because of its recovery. The North American population increased from fewer than 10,000 animals in the late 1930s to about 21,000 in 1992 and is estimated to be about as large as in pre-whaling days. Each winter the whale migrates from its feeding grounds in the Bering Sea to its breeding grounds in Baja California, Mexico. A geographically isolated population of this species in the western North Pacific remains in serious peril and will remain listed as Endangered.

Source: *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, XIX (4), 8.

Global warming spells danger for turtles

Fears that global warming could cause problems for turtles and crocodiles have been boosted by a new study. The sex of some reptiles depends on the ambient temperature at a critical period in the development of the egg. More females hatch when it is warmer than usual and more males hatch in cooler temperatures. A study of freshwater painted turtles *Chrysemys picta* in the Mississippi River in Illinois, USA, showed that males become rare as the average July temperature rises and that the modest increase predicted by climatologists for the next century would eliminate male hatchlings altogether. The researcher doubts that the reproductive biology of the turtle could adapt quickly enough to keep pace with global warming.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, November 1994, 10.

Snails listed

Two species of freshwater snails have been listed as Endangered in the USA. The royal snail *Pyrgulopsis oregonensis* is known only from two spring runs in the Sequatchie River system in Tennessee. Two small populations of Anthony's riversnail *Athearnia anthonyi* occur at sites in the Sequatchie River and in Limestone Creek in Alabama. Both species are vulnerable to habitat degradation and threats include siltation, road construction, logging, cattle grazing and pollution.

Source: *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, XIX (4), 21.

Salamander habitat saved

The Red Hills salamander *Phaeognathus hubrichti* is to benefit from an agreement between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and International Paper Company. The company has agreed to forgo harvesting 1800 ha of south Alabama woodland, which is prime salamander habitat, in exchange for harvesting another 1000 ha of marginal habitat. The Red Hills salamander was listed as threatened in 1976 and is found only in five counties between the Conecuh and Alabama rivers, spending most of its life in burrows in steep ravines.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation*, September–October 1994, 12.

Restoring the Florida panther's lost genes

There are plans to restore lost gene flow in the Florida panther *Puma concolor coryi* by strategic placement of 6–10 young adult females from a population that historically exchanged genes with the Florida population. The Florida panther, of which an estimated

30–50 adults survive, is inbred and has lost approximately half of its genetic diversity. It suffers numerous problems that may be genetically rooted, including congenital heart defects.

Source: *Cat News*, Autumn 1994, No. 21, 15–16.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Park for a parrot

A new national park on South Abaco, Bahamas, will protect most of the nesting habitat of the Bahamas parrot *Amazonas leucocephala bahamensis*, whose population numbers around 800 individuals. It has disappeared from all but two of the Bahama islands – Abaco and Great Inagua – because of habitat destruction and capture for the pet trade. It is the only parrot species on Abaco, where it nests in limestone cavities.

Sources: *Conservation Biology*, September 1994, 8 (3), 625; *Wildlife Conservation*, September–October 1994, 15.

Action for crocodile in Dominica

When the last remaining population of American crocodiles *Crocodylus acutus* in the Dominican Republic declined to about one-third of its former size in the late 1980s and early 1990s due to human impact, the national wildlife department embarked on an action plan for the species. Since 1992 20 men have regularly patrolled Lago Enriquillo, where the crocodiles live. Only a few incidences of crocodile killing have been reported since patrols started and in 1994 no nests were robbed. The adult-subadult crocodile population appears to have increased slightly to

around 200. At the Santo Domingo Zoo 130 juvenile crocodiles are being raised as a genetic reserve. A beneficial side-effect of the surveillance is a reduction in the illegal hunting of ducks and pigeons and the illegal trade in parrots. Lago Enriquillo is soon to be made a national park.

Source: *SSC Crocodile Specialist Group Newsletter*, 13 (3), 14.

SOUTH AMERICA

Andean condor reintroduction continues

On 9 September 1994, five captive-raised juvenile Andean condors *Vultur gryphus* from San Francisco Zoo and the San Diego Wild Animal Park arrived in Bogota, Colombia, as part of the ongoing programme to re-establish this endangered species to its historical range in Colombia and Venezuela. After quarantine the birds will be released in the National Park Sierra La Culata, Venezuela. With this shipment a total of 39 captive-reared condors have been reintroduced over the past 6 years – 29 in Colombia and 10 in Venezuela. Thirty-four survive and it is hoped that the fledglings released in 1989 will breed in 1995. The programme in Colombia is co-ordinated by RenaSer in co-operation with the Colombian Ministry of the Environment and in Venezuela by the Environmental Project of the Banco Andino in co-operation with the National Park Service.

Source: Alan Lieberman, Peregrine Fund, 14 September 1994.

New bird from Ecuador

A new bird species has been described from South America:

the chestnut-bellied cotinga *Doliornis remseni*. First seen in the Podocarpus National Park in the Andes of southern Ecuador in 1989, it has since been found elsewhere in Ecuador, over the border in Peru and 1000 km away in the central Andes of Colombia. Source: *BBC Wildlife*, October 1994, 13.

Galápagos's status as world heritage in question

The Galápagos Marine Resource Reserve, the second largest marine reserve in the world after the Great Barrier Reef, has been nominated by the Ecuadorian Government for the World Heritage List. However, concerns over inadequacies in the management of the marine area have already led to suggestions that it could also be considered for the List of World Heritage in Danger. Source: *IUCN Bulletin*, No. 3, 1994, 31.

Galápagos fires

The fires that swept through Isabela, the largest island in the Galápagos, in April 1994, destroyed some 4000 ha of woodland and threatened a large colony of giant tortoises, rare iguanas and a severely threatened finch. It is reported that the fires were fuelled by the guava, an introduced tree. Ecuador's President declared a state of emergency and several countries responded to his call for help to put out the fires, which were finally extinguished in June. Some people claimed that the fires were started deliberately by enraged members of the local fishing community protesting against the ban on fishing in the Marine Resource Reserve. Source: *IUCN Bulletin*, No. 3, 1994, 31.

Parrot in peril from poachers

The red-tailed Amazon parrot *Amazona brasiliensis* is confined to a stretch of coast 250 km long and 30 km wide in Paraná and southern Sao Paulo states in Brazil. Heavy poaching is causing the population to decline rapidly: there were 4000 birds in 1989 and 3000 in 1992. Trapping continues and the taking of nestlings also damages nesting cavities. While the species is legally protected, enforcement is almost nil. Most of the parrots are smuggled to Europe and the USA and there is no proven record of captive breeding. It has been suggested that certain fishermen and their families, who are the worst nest-robbers, should be offered economic incentives to act as unofficial guards and an education campaign aimed at local people, which started in 1991, extended.

Source: *Psitta Scene*, August 1994, 6 (3), 3–7.

Oil exploration in areas of high biodiversity

Oil exploration by sub-contractors to Mobil Oil may threaten areas of high biodiversity in Madre de Dios, Peru. One proposed seismic survey line goes through forest north of Manú Biosphere Reserve, which almost certainly contains uncontacted groups of Mashco-Piro or Yura people. In the upper Tambopata region the subcontractor, Gema SA, has proposed survey lines that cross the Guacamayo and Candamo river basins, an area of exceptional biodiversity and one of the core areas of the proposed Bahuaja-Sonene National Park. Mobil requested an Environmental Impact Assessment after the national parks authority objected to

Gema's proposal and while a decision is awaited on the EIA report it is probable that the national park proposal will be put on hold.

Source: *TReeS News*, The Tambopata Reserve Society, No. 28, October 1994, 1–2.

Caiman project success

The broad-snouted caiman *Caiman latirostris* is increasing in numbers in the Sante Fe and Entre Rios provinces of Argentina. This is partly as a result of a project in which wild-collected eggs are hatched in captivity and the young caiman released as yearlings, and partly as a result of the cessation of poaching for tanneries.

Source: *SSC Crocodile Specialist Group Newsletter*, 13 (3), 10.

AUSTRALASIA/ ANTARCTICA

Turtle found after 30-year search

A new species of freshwater turtle has been described from the Mary River in south-east Queensland, Australia, more than 30 years after it had been discovered in pet shops in Victoria. Dealers proved reluctant to disclose the source and two herpetologists spent years working backwards through the supply chain until they traced a key supplier in Queensland. They then embarked on 20 years of riverside observation and diving in Queensland's rivers. The turtle is very different from other Australian turtles with a long and laterally compressed tail. It has been named *Elusor macrurus*.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, November 1994, 12.

Phosphate problem for reefs

Research on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia has indicated that corals are particularly sensitive to phosphorous enrichment from sewage and/or agricultural sources. While both nitrates and phosphates stimulate algal growth, which inhibits the process of calcification, phosphates also directly inhibit calcification.

Source: *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, July 1994, 28 (7), 411–412.

Sea dragon threatened

The once common Tasmanian sea dragon is being brought to the edge of extinction by over-fishing to supply live to aquarium markets in North America. There is also a large demand for dried and crushed sea dragons in Asia, where they are reputed to have aphrodisiacal properties. Australian authorities are considering banning the collection of this increasingly threatened species.

Source: *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, July 1994, 28 (7), 409.

New skink on Stewart Island

A new species of lizard has been described from Stewart Island, New Zealand. The small-eared skink *Leiopisma stenotis* is normally brown, often with a pale greenish sheen, and is one of two skinks endemic to the island.

Source: *Forest & Bird*, August 1994, 7.

Call for care to avoid disturbing penguins

There is growing evidence of severe disturbance to penguins and other seabirds on sub-Antarctic islands by fixed-wing aircraft making airdrops. A

recent paper reviews the evidence and presents the results of direct observations of panicking king penguins *Aptenodytes patagonicus* on Marion Island, Prince Edward Islands, southern Indian Ocean. Although no mortalities occurred and the penguins quickly returned to their colony after fleeing at the sound of the aircraft, the observations lend strong support to the supposition that 7000 dead king penguins discovered at Macquarie Island in 1990 had died as a result of an aircraft passing over. The estimated 1000 adults and 6000 chicks had apparently been asphyxiated after they stampeded and piled up to 10 deep against a barrier of rock and tussock grass. It is recommended that visits by fixed-wing aircraft to sub-Antarctic islands should be kept to a minimum and several specific recommendations are made for situations in which they are absolutely necessary.

Source: *Polar Record*, October 1994, 30 (175), 277–282.

OCEANIA

Hawaiian bird successes

The Big Island Endangered Hawaiian Conservation Programme of the Peregrine Fund, in collaboration with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, had a productive year working with two endemic Hawaiian species. Nine Hawaiian crow or Alala *Corvus hawaiiensis* chicks were raised, five of them artificially incubated and reared from eggs taken from wild nests by the Peregrine Fund and four produced at the Hawaii State Facility at Olinda. Seven of these are now at the Peregrine Fund's release facility

in the South Kona Forest. When competent to fend for themselves they will be 'soft-released' into the surrounding forest to join the five young birds released in 1993. Another captive flock will be established in the Peregrine Fund's new facility to be completed in mid-1995. There are no more than 11 confirmed birds in the wild. Peregrine Fund staff also raised five amakihi *Hemignathus virens*, a nectivorous–insectivorous member of the endemic Hawaiian honey-creeper subfamily Drepanidinae to gain experience for incubating and hand-rearing 19 endangered Hawaiian forest bird species of the same subfamily. Source: Cyndi Kuehler, Alan Lieberman and Peter Harrity, The Peregrine Fund, 21 September 1994.

Research needed for singing dog

The New Guinea singing dog is one of the least known and little-studied mammals of New Guinea. A primitive form of domestic dog, with distinct morphology and behaviour, scattered populations survive in some of the most remote and isolated parts of the Central Highlands. More information on its status and distribution is needed, particularly because, as the only large mammalian predator other than humans in most of its range, it may pose a threat to some forms of native fauna. The information is required both to develop control/removal programmes where necessary and conserve and protect other populations where appropriate. While the current taxonomic designation of the dog is *Canis lupus dingo*, further studies may justify its separation from the Australian dingo through the designation

C. l. hallstromi.

Source: Brisbin, I.L. Jr. et al. 1994. *Science in New Guinea*, 20 (1), 27–38.

Less logging in the Solomons

Logging threats in the Solomon Islands have been reduced. The Prime Minister has banned Malaysian-owned Silvania Products from logging and has instigated a package of new measures to reform the logging business into sustainable forestry. The moves came after Solomon Islanders protested after they found that more than 1,300,000 cu m of logs would be exported in 1994 – at least twice the sustainable amount.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, October 1994, 58.

Laysan teal numbers down

A survey in 1994 on Laysan island, 1500 km north-west of Honolulu in the Pacific Ocean, found only 38 adult and 15 juvenile Laysan teal *Anas platyrhynchos laysanensis*. The subspecies is endemic to this small 370-ha island, which has only one lake on which the birds depend for food. The cause of the decline is unclear but the water level in the lake has fallen due to the reduced rainfall and this has resulted in smaller numbers of brine flies, on which the birds feed.

Source: *Wildfowl and Wetlands*, Autumn/Winter 1994, 6.

PUBLICATIONS

International Wildlife Trade: A CITES Sourcebook

This book explains how the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora operates

and includes a full text of the CITES treaty as well as CITES Appendices I, II and III, a list of Parties as of March 1994 and a list of reservations by Parties as of October 1993. Chapters address the status of highly threatened species such as elephants, rhinos and tigers as well as other heavily exploited species including parrots, primates and bears. (Ed. Ginette Hemley, 180 pp., ISBN 1 55963 348 4, SB \$16.95. Published for the World Wildlife Fund-US by Island Press, 1718 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20009, USA.

International Zoo Yearbook

Volume 32 of the *International Zoo Yearbook* has just been published (ed. P. J. S. Olney, 1993, Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY, UK, 564 pp., ISSN 0074 9664). It contains 24 articles on ungulates and 14 on recent developments in the zoo world. It also includes 107 pages of vertebrate species bred in collections world-wide in 1991, a 45-page census of rare animals held in collections on 1 January 1992, an up-to-date list of *International Studbooks*, a list of zoo associations world-wide and the biennial directory of zoos and aquaria.

Towards the Wise Use of Wetlands

This report of the Ramsar Convention's Wise Use Project (ed. T. J. Davies, 1993, Ramsar Convention Bureau, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland, ISBN 2 940073 07 4) describes the wise use concept, 17 varied case studies from around the world and the lessons learnt.

NEW GROUPS

New SSC Group on invasive species

A new group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission has been formed to address the threats to wildlife from introduced species. The mission of the Invasive Species Specialist Group is to reduce the threats posed by invasive species to natural ecosystems and the native species that they contain through increased awareness of invasive species and how to deal with them. Sub-groups are planned to cover groups of taxa, genetically modified organisms, and international agreements and laws controlling invasives. Special attention will be given to oceanic islands. Contact: Dr M. N. Clout, Chairman ISSG, Centre for Conservation Biology, School of Biological Sciences, University of Auckland, Tamaki Campus, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand. Tel: (649) 373 7599; Fax: (649) 373 7001.

OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers needed for sea turtle work

The Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece is offering opportunities for voluntary work. From mid-May to the end of October 1995 volunteers are needed on the sea turtle nesting beaches of Zakynthos, Crete and Peloponnesus in monitoring and public awareness programmes. Volunteers will stay on free camp sites and will receive training by experienced project members. Volunteers are also needed throughout the year at the new Sea Turtle Rescue

Centre in Athens. Candidates for both projects are expected to possess a strong team spirit, be able to communicate in English and share all aspects of the very demanding work. Volunteers are expected to cover their own travel costs and expenses and participate for a minimum of 4 weeks. Contact: Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece, 35 Solomou St, GR 106 82 Athens, Greece. Tel/Fax: +30 1 38 44 146.

PEOPLE

Joseph Makabuza Kabirizi, who died in October 1993 (see *Oryx* 28 [1], 74) has been honoured posthumously by being placed on the United Nations Environmental Programme's Global 500 Roll of Honour. A former park warden in Zaire, he later became the regional director in North Kivu for the Institut Zairois pour Conservation de la Nature and national co-ordinator of the International Gorilla Conservation Programme.

Kailash Sankhala, one of the world's leading tiger experts and first Director of Project Tiger, India, died on 15 August 1994, aged 69. He was a senior member of India's Forest Service and was awarded the Padma Sri (Order of the Lotus) in 1992 for his services to wildlife.

MEETINGS

Planta Europa. 2-8 September 1995, Hyères, France. Contact: Plantlife, London. Tel: (44) (0)171 938 9111; Fax: (44) (0)171 938 9112.