

# Briefly...

## International

### IWC: no further objections

Iceland, Korea and Brazil did not oppose the IWC decision, to halt commercial whaling by 1986, in the 90-day objection period which ended on 2 February, despite the fact that they originally voted against the moratorium. *WWF News*, January/February 1983

### 78th for CITES

Sudan's ratification of CITES, which became effective on 23 January 1983, brings the total number of contracting parties to 78.

*Traffic Bulletin*, 9 December 1982

### France joins Ramsar

France signed the Ramsar Convention and designated the Camargue an international protected area at an Extraordinary Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention in Paris last December. The Treaty now covers 264 wetlands, with a total area of

18 million ha, in 33 countries.

*Council of Europe Newsletter*, 83-1

### Otter colloquy

The 3rd International Colloquy on Otters will be held at the Council of Europe (BP 431 R6, F 67006, Strasbourg, Cedex, France) on 23-25 November 1983.

### Marine mammal conference

The Fifth Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals on 27 November-2 December 1983 in Boston, Massachusetts, is sponsored by the Society for Marine Mammalogy. Details: John H. Prescott, Conference Chairman, New England Aquarium, Central Wharf, Boston, MA 02110, USA.

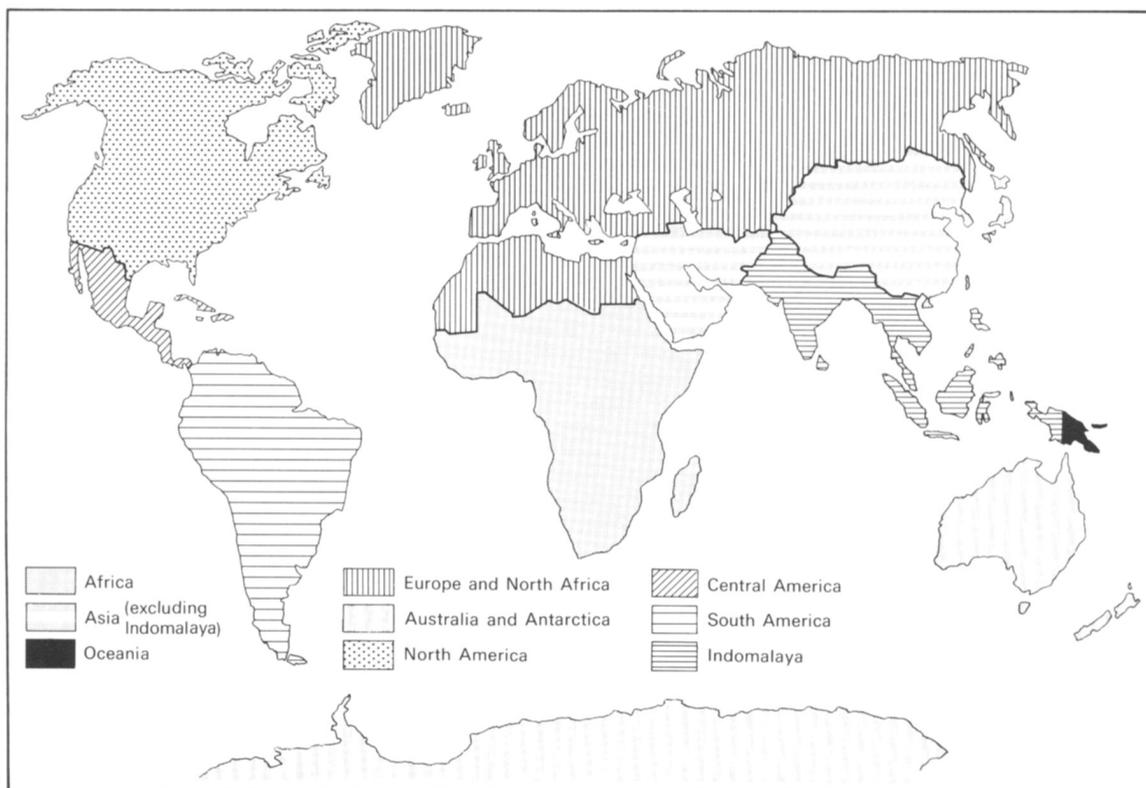
### Primatological Society Awards

The International Primatological Society is to make three awards for distinguished services to primate conservation in the wild each year, one for each major primate habitat area. Africa,

Asia, South and Central America. The awards are intended primarily for nationals of the countries in the areas mentioned. Nominations, including a description of the achievements and conservation plans of the nominee of no more than two typewritten pages in length, together with a curriculum vitae, may be sent to Dr Kenneth Green, Remote Sensing Systems Laboratory, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742, USA.

### Peregrines on rebound

The peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus* is recovering from its long bout with DDT and other pesticides in many parts of the world, according to The Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology. In the British Isles there are now more than 1000 pairs compared with 350 in 1963, and in Alaska, Canada and Greenland, arctic and boreal nesting peregrines have increased substantially since 1975. Nesting peregrines in North America south of Canada remain severely reduced, with no more than five to ten per cent of the original



# Briefly...

population, but recovery plans involving release of captive-bred birds are beginning to succeed.

## Plastics killing turtles

Plastic bags are killing leatherback turtles *Dermochelys coriacea* who mistake them for jellyfish, according to Dr Nicholas Mrosovsky of Toronto University, who estimates that 44 per cent of leatherbacks in the open ocean have plastic material blocking their stomachs and intestines. The International Centre for Endangered Species on Rhode Island is making an international plea to plastic manufacturers to publicise the problem and start a campaign to warn people of the consequences of discarding plastics overboard.

Institute for the Protection and Preservation of Endangered Species

## Rhino horn—no medicinal use

Rhino horn is ineffective in reducing fevers, and has no analgesic, anti-inflammatory, anti-spasmodic, diuretic or bactericidal properties, according to tests carried out by an international pharmaceutical company for WWF/IUCN: they believe that the findings could help stem the trade in rhino horn in Asia where it is still widely used for medicinal purposes.

WWF News, January/February 1983

## Europe and North Africa

### Silver medal for EEB

The European Environment Bureau (EEB) was awarded the Silver Medal of the United Nations Environment Programme in December 1982 for 'excellence and leadership in the field of environment during the past decade'. The EEB consists of 62 member organisations, including fFPS, from ten countries and is the first European NGO to win the award.

### Nest robbers convicted

In 1982, 68 people in Britain were convicted of robbing nests of rare birds of prey, especially the peregrine falcon and the goshawk. All were fined and one was jailed. The RSPB are campaigning to halt illegal trade: birds can fetch over £1000 in Britain and more in Belgium and Germany. The Wildlife

and Countryside Act (1982) requires all legitimate owners to have certain birds of prey registered and ringed.

*The Observer*, 13 February 1982

## Geese and swans die from pesticide

Organophosphates, which have replaced organochlorine pesticides such as aldrin, dieldrin and DDT in the UK, may be having adverse effects on birds. Last December, 30 Bewick and whooper swans died in the Cambridgeshire fens after eating wheat treated with carbophenothion, and 150 Brent geese were killed on the Norfolk coast by the same pesticide. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are researching the effects of non-lethal doses of organophosphates on bird behaviour: they are believed to retard short-term memory and induce lethargy.

*New Scientist*, 13 January 1983

## Could the fen violet re-appear at Wicken Fen?

The fen violet *Viola persicifolia* was lost recorded at Wicken Fen, in East Anglia, UK, in 1916. In 1980 soil samples taken from the Fen yielded a seedling of fen violet suggesting that seed had remained buried and viable for more than 60 years. It is likely that further seed of the Wicken stock exists and could germinate if habitat conditions were suitable.

*Watsonia*, 14, Part 2, November 1982

## Hedge destruction illegal?

The destruction of thousands of miles of hedges in Britain by farmers over the past 20 years, often subsidised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, may have been illegal according to Peter Hardy, a Labour MP, who has consulted the Enclosure Acts of the 18th and 19th centuries. Invoking the Acts could prevent further hedge destruction.

*The Observer*, 6 February 1982

## Pesticides and wildlife: farmers fund study

A group of 15 large-scale farmers in Britain are funding a £125,000, five-year study on the effects of agricultural chemicals on wildlife. The group believes that current safeguards are not

sufficient and they wish to advise farmers on achieving a balance between using chemical and biological pest control methods. The study will be carried out by the Game Conservancy.

*The Sunday Times*, 13 February 1983

## Metals in fishes may affect otters

A study of levels of mercury, cadmium and lead in freshwater fishes in the UK suggests that they are sufficiently high to present potential hazards to otters. The levels could be affecting otters, by impairing optimal functioning, in parts of their present range and might interfere with any expansion of range into areas which otters have vacated over the last two decades.

*Metals in Freshwater Fishes in the United Kingdom 1980-1981*. The Vincent Wildlife Trust (Available free from fFPS. Please send large 17p-SAE. SAE)

## Survey by balloon

A hot-air balloon is being used to survey the Black Wood of Rannoch, one of the most important remnants of the ancient Caledonian pine forest in Scotland. The Forestry Commission has managed 2048 acres (829 ha) as a nature reserve since 1975 and the survey will yield data necessary for the management plan review, due in 1985. The balloon will allow the survey team to fly at only 200 feet with minimum noise and to anchor at strategic points for prolonged observation and record photography.

Forestry Commission

## New reserves for UK

The Stiperstones in Shropshire has been declared a National Nature Reserve. The vegetation of its 1078 acres of hillside represents a transition between lowland heaths of southern and eastern England and the moorland of the north and west. There are now 186 NNRs in Great Britain.

Hunsdon Mead in the Stort Valley, a 68-acre ancient meadow, which has a rich flora and is important for waders and wildfowl in winter, has been bought by the Hertfordshire and Essex County Trusts.

## French ratification awaited

The Berne Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural

*Oryx Vol 17 No 2*

## Briefly...

Habitats is still awaiting ratification by France. The Convention establishes a European network of biogenetic reserves with the particular aim of protecting 249 bird species, 34 reptiles, 17 amphibians and 119 plants.  
*Eco-Forum*, December 1982

### Bearded vulture re-introduction

The bearded vulture or lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* is to be re-introduced into the Austrian and French Alps in 1984 by WWF/IUCN and the French Ministry of the Environment. The breeding programme will use birds from zoos throughout Europe.  
*Council of Europe Newsletter*, 83-1

### Swiss threatened plants

A list of Switzerland's endangered and rare vascular plants comprises 773 species, 28 per cent of Swiss flora: 46 species are extinct, 213 endangered, 261 vulnerable, 194 rare and 59 'attractive'. Plants in the latter category need protection because they are prized for decorative, medicinal and other useful properties.  
*Council of Europe Newsletter*, 83-1

### Spread of rabies halted

A new technique has stopped rabies spreading in the valleys of Switzerland. Veterinarians in Berne have used chicken heads as bait for foxes to administer a weakened, non-infectious live virus, which does not revert to an infectious form. Scientists want to use the technique to protect parts of West Germany and Italy where rabies has recently spread from Austria. Foxes are the chief carriers of rabies in Europe, having brought the disease steadily westwards at a rate of 50 km each year since it re-appeared in Poland in 1947.  
*New Scientist*, 13 January 1983

### Botanic garden for Spain

The botanic garden at Cordoba will grow Iberian, and especially Andalusian, plants and will include a selection of species of especial economic and agricultural interest. The region has a high proportion of endemic plants and the garden intends to establish a programme to conserve Andalusian threatened species.  
*Threatened Plants Committee Newsletter*, November 1982

*Briefly*

### Przewalski's horse exchange

The USSR and USA are exchanging one male and two female Przewalski's horses to help combat the inbreeding in captive herds; all living members of the species trace their ancestry to 12 individuals captured in the wild, 11 at the turn of the century and one in 1947. The three US-bred horses are from the San Diego Wild Animal Park and the New York Zoological Society while the three USSR-bred animals come from Askania Nova, the nature reserve renowned as the site of the first captive herd.  
*ZooNooz*, December 1982

### Moroccan mammal records wanted

Papers or unpublished records are sought from visiting mammal watchers for a bibliography of Moroccan Mammals. All contributions will be acknowledged. Contact: Michel Thévenot et Stéphane Aulagnier, Centrale Ornithologique et Mammalogique, Institut Scientifique, BP 703, Rabat-Agdal, Morocco.

## Africa

### New reserve for Uganda

The Ugandan Government has passed an act to make Lake Mburo Game Reserve into a national park, the country's fourth and the first established in 20 years. The park's 530 sq km of grassy hills, swamps and lakes are the last place in western Uganda where impala, eland, roan antelope and common zebra are found.  
*WWF News*, January/February 1983

### Elephants declining in Malawi

A 1981-82 survey of Malawi's elephants found that annual mortality far exceeds replacement. Kusungu National Park has about 1000 elephants; about 900 occur in small numbers elsewhere. Malawi has an excellent wildlife education programme but law enforcement needs to be strengthened to combat poaching, which has increased in the past four years, and crops need electric fencing to prevent the need for crop protection shooting.  
*WWF Monthly Report*, January 1983

### Slaughter in the Kruger National Park

At least 137 of the Kruger National Park's elephants were killed between June 1981 and December 1982 by poachers from Mozambique with automatic rifles. More than R500,000 (US\$ 550,000) worth of ivory has been smuggled over the border. The Mozambique Government has taken no action against the poachers whose names and addresses are known, despite diplomatic pressure from the Parks Board of South Africa. One of the recent victims was *Groot Haaktand* (also known as the Shawu bull) one of the world's largest bull elephants. The situation is now extremely serious: as well as killing bulls, poachers are now shooting indiscriminately at breeding herds.

Monitor: the Conservation, Environmental and Animal Welfare Consortium (translated from *Afrikaaner*, 1 December 1982)

## Asia (excluding Indomalaya)

### Wetland to be destroyed

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) aims to reclaim 300,000 ha of coastal wetlands for agriculture.  
*Democratic People's Republic of Korea Magazine*, November 1982

### Dam could threaten sturgeon

The Gezhouba Dam on China's Yangtze river will prevent sturgeon migrating to the upper reaches to spawn. Research is being done to investigate whether to provide ladders up the dam, to net the fish and transport them, or to use artificial breeding methods.  
*Fishing News international*, December 1982

## Indomalaya

### A new olive ridley site

A new nesting ground for olive ridley sea turtles *Lepidochelys olivacea* has been discovered in Orissa, on India's east coast; 100,000 females nest there.

## Briefly...

The addition of this population to the 150,000 already discovered at Gahirmatha and others at smaller nesting beaches brings the nesting population of this species in Orissa alone to at least 300,000.

*Marine Turtle Newsletter*, December 1982

### Pangolin scales seized

Pangolin scales worth \$60,000 and probably on their way from Thailand to Singapore or Hong Kong, have been seized by the Department of National Parks, Malaysia. The Malayan pangolin *Manis javanica* is a CITES Appendix II species and protected in Malaysia—fines of up to \$3000 and two-year prison sentences can be made.

*Traffic Bulletin*, 9 December 1982

### More Sumatran rhinos

A survey in Silabukan and Lumeran Forest Reserves, Sabah, Malaysia indicates that there may be 18 Sumatran rhinos in the Silabukan area, six more than previous best estimates. The Sabah Forest Department has proposed that 1230 sq km of the two reserves be designated as a rhino conservation area.

*WWF Monthly Report*, December 1982

### Turtle and coral smuggling foiled

Customs authorities in Manila, Philippines, seized £29,400-worth of stuffed turtles and 3000 kg of semi-precious fan-shaped black corals which are banned exports and are on Appendix II of CITES. They were bound for Spain and Germany respectively.

*Manila Bulletin Today*, 23 November 1982

### Australia and Antarctica

#### Endemic snail close to extinction

Of New Zealand's many endemic snails *Placostylus ambagiosus* is closest to extinction. Only 200 are left, in isolated pockets of coastal vegetation in the far north between Cape Maria van Diemen and North Cape. Introduced pigs, rats and blackbirds are the main cause of their decline but the clearing of coastal

bush for farmland, and the introduction of cattle have made the habitat unsuitable.

*Forest and Bird*, November 1982

#### Last rain forests to get protection

The New South Wales Government is incorporating most of the State's remaining rain forests (about 50,000 ha) into the national park system.

*WWF News*, January/February 1983

#### Call for halt in Kangaroo exports

Since America lifted its ban on imports in kangaroo products two years ago the number of kangaroos killed has reached six million a year—twice the number for which the Australian Government issues licences as a means of keeping the total under control. Australian conservationists, concerned about the kangaroos' future, are preparing a campaign to persuade the US to restore the ban.

*The New York Times*, 28 November 1982

#### Sea snakes threatened by trade

Sea snake populations (Hydrophiidae) off Queensland could decrease if the State Government agrees to licence a sea snake factory. It has already given interim approval for the export of sea snake skins taken incidentally by prawn trawlers. Sea snakes are now 'prohibited exports' in Australia but Queensland's internal trade in skins would have a significant effect. Conservationists are opposing the factory and urging that methods be devised to reduce the incidental take of sea snakes by prawn trawlers.

*Fund for Animals and Total Environment Centre*, February 1983

#### Bandicoots' tip-site saved

Plans to remove car-bodies from a tip threatened to destroy a significant portion of the habitat of the Gunn's bandicoot *Perameles gunni* which now only occurs, in mainland Australia, in and around the city of Hamilton, Victoria. Conservationists began to live-trap bandicoots with the intention of releasing them at the site when the car-bodies had been removed but then

Simsmetal Pty. Ltd agreed to leave 20–30 car bodies and Hamilton City Council have delayed clearing the site for up to two years while conservationists develop alternative bandicoot habitat on adjacent land.

*Australian Conservation Foundation*, November 1982

#### Military presence in the Falklands

The effect of military presence on the wildlife of the Falklands has been given careful thought by the UK Ministry of Defence. Rules for troops prohibit the use of conservation areas, control shooting and fishing, prohibit flying over or landing near to seal rookeries, penguin colonies or sea-bird sanctuaries. Troops are also encouraged to participate in bird surveys and rabbit extermination on New Island.

### North America

#### Grizzly news

In 1982 at least 14 grizzly bears were killed in and around Yellowstone National Park: most of the deaths resulted from encounters with people. A new programme in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho will intensify law enforcement, inform visitors how to prevent encounters with bears, and step up the education campaign to explain the seriousness of the grizzlies' situation.

*Outdoor News Bulletin*, 14 January 1983

#### Bighorns restored in Arizona

Bighorn sheep are being restored to the Whipple Mountains near Lake Havasu City, Arizona. They disappeared 30 years ago because of uncontrolled recreational use, competition with feral burros for grazing, disruption of access to water and possibly disease. A number of federal and state organisations as well as private organisations are cooperating in the effort: 300 burros have been removed, habitat has been restored and new water sources have been developed. Five rams and 20 ewes will be released from a 320-acre enclosure after the lambs are born and further releases are planned.

*Outdoor News Bulletin*, 10 December 1982

*Oryx* Vol 17 No 2

# Briefly...

## Accident upsets Florida's panther programme

An adult female panther died while scientists, engaged in a programme to help save the dwindling numbers of Florida's panthers, were attempting to capture her to replace the radio transmitter in her collar. If investigations confirm suspicions that the cause of death was the tranquillising drug the programme may be abandoned rather than risk killing more panthers—only 20 are left in Florida.

*Fort Myers News-Press*, 20 January 1983

## Dusky seaside sparrow: genes to be rescued

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has at last approved the Florida Audubon Society's proposal to cross-breed the dusky seaside sparrow *Ammodramus maritimus nigrescens*, of which only five males remain, with the closely related subspecies *scotti* (see *Oryx*, February 1982, page 262). The breeding programme will start in August 1983 at Discovery Island Zoological Park in Florida.

*The Florida Naturalist*, December 1982

## Kirtland's warblers

A singing male census of the endangered Kirtland's warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii* in 1982 revealed 207 males—down by 25 from 1981 but higher than the all-time low of 167 in 1974.

*Bird Watcher's Digest*, November/December 1982

## Net ban to save sea-birds

Because of sea-birds being drowned by nets the California Department of Fish and Game has banned the use of gill-nets and trammel nets in waters less than 60 ft deep off a 25-mile stretch of coast in Marin County, north of San Francisco.

*Fishing News International*, December 1982

## Wheatfields for wildlife

Twenty-five farmers in Oklahoma left 12-foot strips of uncut wheat during the 1982 harvest to provide wildlife cover and food as part of a pilot project launched by the State's Department of

Wildlife Conservation and US Soil Conservation Service. The programme will be expanded this year.

*Outdoor News Bulletin*, 1 October 1982

## Idle croplands could benefit wildlife

Plans by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to take 20 million acres of croplands out of production because too much food is being produced, could benefit wildlife. Conservationists are encouraging USDA to develop guidelines for owners to manage their idle lands to prevent soil erosion and aid wildlife.

*Outdoor News Bulletin*, 28 January 1983

## South America

### Gold rush threat to Peruvian national park

An American company has been given a concession to prospect for gold in a river on the boundary of the Manu National Park in the Upper Amazon area of Peru. If gold is found a gold rush could lead to problems for the park which is the largest in Amazonia (15,000 sq km) and the most important in the region.

*WWF News*, January/February 1983

### Caiman goes and piranas are a problem

The South American alligator *Caiman yacare* has been exterminated from the Pantanal region of Brazil and as a result pirana populations have drastically expanded, posing an increasing threat to wildlife and cattle.

*IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group Newsletter*, January 1983

### Orinoco crocodile: a new population

A new population of 79 Orinoco crocodile *Crocodylus intermedius*, nearing extinction throughout its range, has been discovered in the Rio Caura in Venezuela by a team headed by Richard Franz of the Florida State Museum. But the region is threatened by a proposed hydroelectric scheme which would flood the nesting sites and open the area to humans. Richard Franz

plans to continue the study and help develop a management plan.

*IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group Newsletter*, January 1983

## Leatherback hatchery in French Guiana

A hatchery for leatherbacks *Dermochelys coriacea*, established in 1981 at Les Halles-Ya: lima:po in French Guiana, has achieved a hatching rate of almost 65 per cent using polystyrene boxes to incubate eggs collected from nests dug too near the sea or by females with injured back flippers. In 1979 only 4.3 per cent of the eggs in 4410 leatherback nestings produced hatchlings because of erosion of the beaches by the sea and infiltration of water from coastal marshes. The 7000-egg-capacity hatchery is expected to improve its success rate when temperature control is introduced, but humidity, which rots some eggs, is more difficult to control. The hatchlings are released at night on the beach under guard against predators.

*Marine Turtle Newsletter*, December 1982

## People

Richard Mabey, nature conservation writer and broadcaster, has been appointed a member of the Nature Conservancy Council, UK.

*Habitat*, February 1983

Dr Kenton Miller has been elected as the new Director-General of IUCN. He is at present Director of the Centre for Strategic Wildland Management Studies and Associate Professor of National Resources at the University of Michigan (USA). He is Chairman of the IUCN Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas. He replaces Dr Lee Talbot who resigned in November 1982.

The first recipients of the new Peter Scott Merit Awards created by the SSC in 1981 are the Jardin Botánico, 'Viera y Clavijo' del Excmo, Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria, under the direction of David Bramwell, for its contribution to the conservation of the Canary Islands' endemic flora, and Nick Carter, in recognition of his conservation work for whales.