

Notes and News

On the highly controversial annual Canadian harp and hooded seal hunts, IUCN and WWF have stated, in line with the World Conservation Strategy, that they are not opposed to the hunts provided three conditions are observed: that the

**IUCN and
the
Seal Hunts**

total catch does not endanger the herds by exceeding their potential for natural increase; that the entire animal is utilized, and that killing is as humane as possible. IUCN urged the need for an aerial check of the harp seal *Pagophilus groenlandicus* population *before* hunting started in order to compare it with the four-year census that has been done, and also deprecated the increase in inshore hunting that results in more animals over one year old being killed, which in turn threatens the herd's reproductive capacity. On the hooded seals *Cystophora cristata*, a much smaller and more precarious population about which far less is known, IUCN urged the need for 'significantly reduced quotas, perhaps even a cessation of the hunt' until scientific information permits sound management proposals to be drawn up. But, as the statement observed, not only groups and individuals, but also the Canadian federal government had taken up such strong positions for or against the hunt that they could not retreat for fear of losing face.

Rational management is the element that has been most conspicuously lacking in the attitude of the North Atlantic nations towards their salmon stocks in recent years. We are of course centuries away from the happy days when London

**Managing
the Atlantic
Salmon**

apprentices would strike against being fed too often with salmon. Today salmon stocks, though still numbering millions, are severely depleted. It is therefore good news that rational management is one of the four aims (alongside conservation, restoration and enhancement of the stocks) of the Convention adopted in Reykjavik last January to establish a North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation, with headquarters in Edinburgh. The parties concerned, the EEC, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Canada and the

USA, will operate through three commissions, for North America, West Greenland and the North-east Atlantic respectively. Salmon fishing outside the areas of jurisdiction of coastal states and beyond 12 miles within those jurisdictions is now forbidden. Catch quotas for the West Greenland and Faeroes salmon fisheries, however, will be dealt with in separate fishery agreements, and this may be an Achilles heel. This new convention gives the North Atlantic nations an opportunity to conserve salmon stocks rationally, but will they take it? For a start the Scottish Office might put its own house in order and bring in some effective legislation to control the illegal fishing, or in plainer words poaching, that is the major threat to British salmon stocks. Ireland has very effective laws that enable inspectors to challenge anybody in possession of a salmon to prove that it was legally acquired. Why not Scotland?

Most of the discussion about the destruction of tropical forest has centred on the loss of habitat for wildlife or the removal of topsoil by rainfall. But in most, if not all, parts of the tropics, the forest is also an important source of food for the local population, as Professor Abdul Manap Ahmad of the Universiti Pertanian Malaysia has recently shown in *Tiger Paper*. In Malaysia many forest trees produce fruits which can be and are widely eaten: *Durio zibenthinus*, a relative of the cashew nut, *Eugenia michelii* with slightly acid-tasting bright red fruits and various species of *Ficus* are only a few. Cashew nuts *Anacardium occidentale* themselves are very rich in protein and grow in tropical forests. Leaves and shoots of many species are eaten as salads or vegetables. The sap of some species, such as *Areca celiso* in the Philippines, is used as a drink. Roots are also eaten, as are many species of mushroom that grow in forests but will not do so after they have been felled. Animal food, too, is important in Malaysia (as in West Africa), and Professor Ahmad lists two dozen mammal species that are or were (for some like the gaur and the banteng are now endangered) eaten by local people. So those to whom the felling of forests is a sign of modern progress may like to reflect that whereas most tropical forest loses its soil and becomes agriculturally unproductive a year or two after felling, a real live forest continues to produce nutritious food for ever.

The sort of problem that park managers dread – an endangered species dying of a transmittable disease in its last stronghold – has arisen in Indonesia. Five of the world's 60 remaining Javan rhino were found dead between December and

Javan Rhino Deaths	February in Java's Ujung Kulon National Park. Some had suffered from diarrhoea and all had died suddenly and near water. The guards who discovered them fenced them against scavengers, and a team from the Indonesian Conservation Department and a veterinary officer confirmed early on that deaths were not caused by poachers – the valuable horns were intact and trackers could not find any human footprints around the corpses.
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An emergency team, visiting the area in late February, decided that an infectious disease was the most probable cause of the deaths, but none has yet been identified. A link between the rhino deaths and those of domestic buffalo in the park surrounds has been suggested, but if this were so large numbers of banteng, the wild cattle, and other wild animals would be expected to have succumbed too; in fact, only two dead banteng were found. It may be that the unusually heavy rain of the period left the rhinos susceptible to infection and its spread might have been exacerbated by their enforced congregation in the drier parts of the park. All is speculation until more evidence is found, but the remaining rhinos are being watched and domestic animals will, as far as possible, be kept away.

What happened to the *Partula* snails of Moorea in the South Pacific is a classic case of the unpredictable consequences of introducing exotic species. The land snails *Partula* spp. became extinct in their wild home after a Frenchman, in 1967, introduced giant African snails *Achatina fulica* for food. These decimated the island's orange trees, so an American snail *Euglandina rosea* was introduced in 1974 to prey upon them, but instead they fed on the original *Partula* snails, almost wiping them out. At the last moment Professor Bryan Clarke, with a grant of £650 from the ffPS Oryx 100% Fund, rescued colonies of five of the island's nine species and has been breeding them at Nottingham University. Now the Wildlife Preservation Trust in Jersey is building a glass 'snailarium', with regulated temperature and humidity, to breed one species, *Partula taeniata nucleola*. The snails are especially valuable because they reveal unique patterns of evolutionary development. If *Euglandina* is ever eliminated from Moorea the *Partula* snails will be re-introduced.

The 1973 Endangered Species Act (ESA) comes before the US Congress for reauthorization this year and hearings have already begun. A strong anti-conservation lobby wants to see the Act scrapped altogether and conservationists are concerned that even if it survives it will be significantly altered. Amendments brought in during the past two reauthorizations have already reduced its effectiveness. Not one of the many species ready for listing has been accepted by the present administration, and hundreds more await action. A 1978 amendment, which requires that any species not adopted within two years be dropped, may mean that such species never receive protection. Already 1700 plants and 63 animals have been dropped from consideration. Industry now litigates every step of the way to slow the Department of the Interior from making final determinations within the required time. Another 1978 amendment created a Cabinet-level committee to decide the fate of species in unnegotiable conflicts with development projects – and the latter often win. An indication of the current level of commitment to wildlife conservation is the Interior Department's recent acceptance of comments on an environmental

assessment that would allow golden eagle nests to be removed if they interfere with energy resource development or resource recovery operations, although moving the nests is banned by the Eagle Protection Act 1978. The present administration has already severely cut the budget for endangered species programmes by more than 25 per cent this year – and similar cuts are slated for 1983; it has tried to eliminate funds for endangered species habitat acquisition and research; invertebrates and plants have been relegated to the status of 'lower life forms' less worthy of protection. Twenty-five national and international organizations in the USA have combined to produce a bulletin about the Act's progress and copies are available from the Center for Education, 624 9th Street, NW, Washington DC 20001, USA.

A high proportion of primates imported into the US are dead on arrival or die within 90 days from disease. Import documents show that, of 10,072 long-tailed macaques *Macaca fascicularis* imported from Indonesia in 1978/79, 1600 died in flight or within three months of arrival. But that is not the whole story. An Indonesian primate dealer has stated that 43 per cent of long-tailed macaques die before export: 5 per cent at capture, 3 per cent on the way to the holding site, 8 per cent at the holding site, 10 per cent between holding site and collector, 7 per cent between collector and exporter, and 10 per cent at the exporter's compound. A further 25 per cent are not fit for export due to wounds and disease. Extrapolating from these rates Traffic USA estimates that over 14,000 animals died before the 10,072 that arrived in the US were exported. Capture and treatment techniques vary but the long-tailed macaque is one of the hardier primates. Others, like the vervet *Cercopithecus aethiops*, are more vulnerable; nearly half the 970 imported from Ethiopia in 1978/79 were dead either on arrival in the US or within 90 days. Some mortality is inevitable in the wildlife trade, but a rate of two monkeys dead for every one reaching its destination alive is quite unacceptable – but then, we should question whether a primate trade is acceptable at all. We must demand that all primates needed for research should be supplied by captive breeding, as the Medical Research Council in Britain has been pressing for some years.

**Primate Deaths
in
Wildlife Trade**

Large predators are difficult to 'sell' to farmers, and none more so than the wolf. But a brave effort is being made by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Glacier National Park on the Canadian frontier. The hope is to attract wolves into the park from Canada, where they are still numerous – the nearest ones are 50 miles north of the border – by building up the numbers of their prey species in Glacier Park, notably beaver and moose. But there are some formidable problems. The Red Riding Hood image is one – although there are no US records of wolves attacking human beings; livestock is another and more serious. When sheep and cattle ranchers settled in the wolves' territory, replacing the deer, the wolves inevitably turned on the livestock and were soon

**Problem in
Wolf
Conservation**

wiped out by the ranchers. The situation could be repeated, even though the wolf is now fully protected in the US as an endangered species. The conservation scientists have come up with an ingenious zone management plan which would give the wolves different degrees of protection in four zones, but no one has yet solved the problem that, in order to be able legally to destroy wolves that attack livestock, wolves would have to be officially downgraded from 'endangered' to 'threatened' status. To do this with an animal as rare as the wolf would undermine the whole structure of rare species conservation.

The grizzly bear is in trouble in the western United States, says Jim Jubak in *National Parks*. Numbers in the 8000-square-mile Yellowstone National Park are down to about 250, the Grizzly Bear Study Team there believes, and this is one of the only two viable populations in the US outside Alaska – the other is in Glacier National Park. Moreover, this population has a high proportion of young animals and also of males – not good omens for such a slow-breeding large mammal – which may be the result of poaching, and killing by shepherds (10,000 sheep graze in the Team's study area) and also the killing of 10 per cent of the bear population in 1968–73 after accidents involving park visitors. No visitors have been killed in Yellowstone recently, but they have in Glacier, and with the increase in 'second homes' and other developments in the bears' range, people and bears are increasingly likely to clash. But, say the Team, they do not have enough information about the population to manage it properly, and to get this they plan a two-year intensive trapping programme for 1983/84, fitting the trapped bears with radio collars and monitoring their movements after release. This is now possible because the Team has developed an expanding radio collar that can be used on young bears, allowing them to grow without being choked as the ordinary rigid collar would do. But the difficulties of getting anything like an accurate count in this huge area with much dense forest are still formidable, and even the monitoring of the collared bears has its excitements. Usually the bears get away from humans after being released, but on one occasion one got curious and circled back to within 50 yards of the monitoring station – which was quickly relocated up a tree.

The National Trust's foresters unexpectedly found themselves embroiled with local people when they changed the management of Brigsteer Wood, Westmorland. Here, for a great many years, local people had come each spring to admire the sheets of daffodils, not so far from where Wordsworth himself sang of their glories. Modern foresters trying to make a wood produce an economic return, can have little regard for daffodils. Wordsworth never paid a fee to be allowed to admire daffodils. The National Trust fell unwittingly into a trap and found itself being accused of vandalism when its foresters started planting conifers. Nobody had given any thought to the

**Programme
for
Grizzlies**

**Managing
Wild
Daffodils**

possibility that daffodils might not grow under conifers, and since almost all their members prefer daffodils to conifers some research clearly had to be done. John Barkham of the University of East Anglia has now been able to demonstrate that what the daffodils need is a continuation of the ancient but now wholly uneconomic practice of coppicing. Other ways of managing the woodland may enable some daffodils to survive, but not so well as under coppice. The deeper the shade, the fewer the daffodils. And the one thing that is certain is that planting conifers is the best way of banishing daffodils back to the poetry books, where economists and accountants believe they belong.

How can a Texan eating a hamburger in a fast-food restaurant in Dallas be responsible for the silting up of a dam in Costa Rica? In the same way that the ladies at Victorian vicarage tea-parties devastated the environment of Ceylon – see *Oryx* 16, page 118 – by stimulating the felling of tropical forests to supply their needs. Tropical forests are one of the fastest disappearing habitats in the world, and in tropical Latin America, as Norman Myers has demonstrated, stockmen are destroying some 20,000 square kilometres a year, especially in Middle America. In the six countries from Guatemala to Panama the area of forest has fallen by 39 per cent in the past 20 years, while the area of pasture has risen by 65 per cent. The most profitable product is beef for the insatiable North American market. But it is only profitable because the stockmen do not have to pay for what economists call the disbenefits of their operations, such as the silting up of hydropower dams in Costa Rica or the hurricane damage in Honduras aggravated by the absence of forest cover.

The felling of the unique and world-renowned karri *Eucalyptus diversifolia* forest of south-west Australia to supply woodchip for the Japanese paper industry has provided one of Western Australia's biggest conservation battles. Every year 680,000 tonnes of timber are exported from an area where 86 per cent of all the karri forests grow. Since 1976, when exports began, the rate of clear-felling has increased from 400ha to 2000ha per year and it shows no signs of abating. The end result will be replacement of native diverse forest with impoverished even-aged karri plantations good only for pulping. Protective measures spelt out by the Forests Department have been ignored. The woodchip company is dumping bark, felling to the very edge of the tiny national parks, ignoring erosion-control measures, exceeding the maximum recommended size of coupes and cutting adjacent ones at the same time. Logs, debris and sediment have ruined tributary streams which are the only surviving habitat of ten species of freshwater animals that disappeared from the main streams when trout were introduced. The areas of karri set aside by some streams and roads for preservation are quite inadequate for effective wildlife

**Hamburgers
and
the Forests**

**Karri Forests
Fall
for Woodchip**

conservation. The so-called forest parks are too small and in any case are subject to felling – two of them were to be clear-felled even before their designation. The arguments of the Forests Department and both major political parties, that karri clear-felling improves the forests and provides much-needed capital and employment, do not stand up. In fact, Western Australian taxpayers are indirectly subsidizing the industry and thus paying to have their forests destroyed.

A serious scientific case for the survival of Neanderthal man, in the form of the ‘almas’ frequently reported from all parts of the high mountain ranges in Central Asia from the Caucasus to the Gobi Desert, has been made in the archaeological journal *Antiquity*. Russian scientists, some of them at any rate, take reports of these man-like primates much more seriously than western scientists take the sasquatch and the yeti. This could be because the USSR is not blessed with a press dependent on sensationalism for its circulation. The almas, like the yeti, and for that matter the Loch Ness monster, are taken for granted by the local inhabitants as members of the local fauna. Unfortunately they share with the other mystery ape-like animals and lake monsters the characteristic of never having yielded a specimen that can be examined by scientists. But since the last hundred years has seen the ‘discovery’ by western science of the mountain gorilla, giant panda, okapi and coelacanth among others, there is nothing inherently improbable in the existence of a large ape undescribed by science. What is more problematical is whether this ape could in fact be Neanderthal man. Nobody has ever proved that Neanderthal man is extinct – how can you prove such a negative? But again, Neanderthal man, if he still exists, could be demonstrating his human intelligence by keeping clear of his modern relative – known for his extreme bloodthirstiness. What is depressing, however, about the article by Dr Myra Shackley, Lecturer in Archaeological Science in the University of Leicester, is her conclusion: if small relict neanderthoid populations are to be found in these remote areas, their numbers must be rapidly dwindling. Is it the job of IUCN or of Survival International to try to save them?

**Neanderthal
Man for
the RDB?**

Hope for Abbott’s Booby

Australian conservationists have scored a well deserved success in the long battle to save the endemic Abbott’s booby on Christmas Island from extinction through phosphate mining. The Commonwealth Government has accepted a recommendation arising out of the latest survey that is most favourable to the boobies’ survival while allowing the mining to continue. (It is not likely to last more than another eight years.) The problem is that large areas of the rain forest are not suitable for the boobies to nest, and their survival depends on preserving as much as possible of the remaining suitable trees. The Government has also authorized monitoring of the birds’ breeding success so that protection and continued mining can be continuously reviewed. (See also *Oryx* 13, 3, page 230 and 14, 1, page 6.)