

(greater sandhill) cranes and the foster parents allowed to rear the birds. In January last year nine Mississippi cranes reared in this way were colour-marked, fitted with radio transmitters for follow-up, and released in their natural habitat in south-east Mississippi, after a brief period for acclimatisation in an enclosure. 'All appear to have successfully made the transfer from captivity to the wild', is the verdict, and more releases are planned.

Self-Help in the SSC

The Species Survival Commission of IUCN (SSC), in a notable piece of self-help, has launched an endowment fund to finance its activities. One thousand people are asked to give US\$1000 (or £500) each to be invested, the income only to be used. The launch took place during the SSC meetings in New Zealand, during the IUCN Assembly, and immediately 17 members of the Commission signed up. By the end of the meetings \$22,000 had been promised, and the Fund is now open to subscriptions, which may be sent via ffPS.

The SSC Chairman, Gren Lucas, in his report to the Assembly, was able to display some of the products of the data collecting units at Cambridge and Kew, notably Volume I of the revised Mammals Red Data Book in the new bound format (not loose-leaf); this covers the New World – Americas and Australasia – and can be obtained from WWF UK. The Amphibians and Reptiles RDB should be available by March (crocodilians and chelonids), and the Invertebrates RDB is expected before June. A second Mammals volume will cover Africa.

Otters in Britain

Examination of several hundred fish from rivers all over the UK to find out whether pesticides were still affecting the food of otters in 1980 and 1981 showed contamination by chlorinated hydrocarbons in only six per cent. The Vincent Wildlife Trust which commissioned the work is continuing the studies. In its annual report the Trust describes its use of radiotelemetry to study otters in the Outer Hebrides and Perthshire, and also surveys made to show the most favoured type of river bank. In the River Teme catchment area, and also in Wales and on the Welsh border, these showed that otters favoured tree-lined banks, especially those with mature ash and sycamore, where the tree roots provided good potential holts. Bankside trees also improve the food supply for fish and therefore otters: four times as many terrestrial invertebrates fell into the river on tree-lined stretches as on bare stretches. Moreover, says the report, this food comes at a time when prey for the fish is reduced because many aquatic invertebrates are emerging as adults.

The Otter Haven Project, set up by the Trust with ffPS, has now created 146 havens in England and Wales, and has attracted a great deal of interest, help and support for otter protection. The havens are established by agreement with landowners and are intended to give maximum habitat protection combined with minimum disturbance. Because otters are so rare in most of England the work is concentrated on the rivers with 'better' populations as the only way to conserve viable populations that may increase and spread to other rivers.

The Editor

The editor of *Oryx*, Maisie Fitter, has resigned and is succeeded by Dr Jacqui Morris, who takes over with the June issue of *Oryx*. Dr Morris was formerly Education Officer with the Sussex Trust for Nature Conservation.