

Help for Liberia

Oryx readers responded generously to our appeal in the last issue for money to help the re-emerging conservation movement in Liberia re-establish its activities. To date just over £30000 has been donated and we thank everyone who sent in contributions; they really will make a difference.

The country's first elections were held later than expected, in July rather than May, but they were peaceful and there is real hope that Liberia is entering a period of stability. We initiated and brokered an arrangement for European Commission funds to be used by the Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL) to employ ex-combatants in park restoration and community projects. This has now started and we are continuing to provide help and support in other ways. An FFI representative will be travelling to Liberia in January to hand over the money donated by *Oryx* readers to the SCNL to support rehabilitation work in Sapo National Park and to help the organization rebuild its core infrastructure.

Jacqui Morris, Editor

Trouble for International Gorilla Conservation Programme

In this issue (pp. 265–273) Andrew Plumpton reports on a study conducted in Rwanda's Parc National des Volcans to determine the effect of the civil war on the poaching of ungulates. It appears from his study that poaching increased during and after the war, especially in the west of the park. These findings are particularly disturbing as far as the International Gorilla Conservation Programme is concerned because snares set for game animals are a serious threat to the mountain gorillas that also inhabit the volcanoes. Indeed, the collection and destruction of illegal snares is normally a major routine task for park personnel.

Even more worrying is the fact that both the Parc National des Volcans and the adjoining Parc National des Virunga in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) are now

occupied by the *interahamwe* (the Hutu militia who were responsible for the genocide in Rwanda). These people make regular raids on villages in Rwanda to kill people who witnessed the genocide and who are working with the new government. They were responsible for killing the deputy conservateur of the Parc National des Volcans at his home in Ruhengeri on 17 May this year. The situation in the volcanoes is considered too unsafe for park personnel, who are unarmed; the Parc National des Virunga has been closed for some time and, in June, Rwanda closed the Parc National des Volcans until further notice.

At the IGCP meeting in August we learned that as soon as the Parc National de Volcans was closed, human activity increased in the protected area. The park authorities (Office Rwandais du Tourisme et des Parcs Nationaux) tried to collect information about the activities in the park from the local communities but the *interahamwe* were still carrying out raids from within the park, which made it unsafe.

Information collected so far suggests that the gorilla groups in the Rwanda sector of the volcanoes are unaffected. However, the *interahamwe* are now totally reliant on the park for their food (and must be poaching game at high levels) because the villagers who once supported them have turned against them and are now co-operating with the Rwandan army. The hope is now that the army, with support from the local people, will be able to deal effectively with the *interahamwe* so that park activities can be resumed.

Jacqui Morris, Editor

CITES meeting reflects shift towards sustainable use

The 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, from 9 to 20 June. It was attended by 128 Party states and over 1100 registered delegates and observers, as well as nearly 500

press representatives and members of the local Zimbabwean public.

Although, as expected, the meeting was dominated to some extent by elephants and ivory, it was by no means a single-issue meeting. Indeed, although the decision on elephants was a major issue, the meeting may well be remembered more for its overall tone than for the decision to allow some international trade in ivory in the future.

Perhaps the Zimbabwean/southern African venue played a more important role than had been expected, or perhaps the global conservation climate within CITES is genuinely changing. Either way, the most significant development in Harare was probably the clear, major swing away from the previously dominant protectionist approach towards a recognition that CITES, particularly in developing countries, must be placed in the context of sustainable use of natural resources. It will be interesting to see whether this swing is maintained at the next meeting, scheduled to be held in Indonesia in November 1999. In fact, the choice of Indonesia as the next host may well be important in this respect, given that country's strong support for sustainable use.

The results of the species proposals are an important indicator of this change in attitude. The number of proposals accepted to transfer species from Appendix I to Appendix II was greater than the number of proposals to transfer species from Appendix II to I, and more proposals to include species on Appendix I were rejected (or withdrawn) than proposals to transfer species from Appendix I to II. This is probably the first time this has happened at a CITES meeting. Some people may regard this result as a disaster for species conservation. Others will herald it as the turning point, where the fact that more species were 'downlisted' than 'uplisted' was an acknowledgement that CITES needs to adapt to current conservation thinking and philosophy.

The inclusion of a species in Appendix I should be seen as tacit acknowledgement that conservation efforts for that species have failed. Inclusion in Appendix I should be a last resort, a mechanism to give breathing space while we work on the conservation of that

species. Transfer from Appendix I to II, rather than being regarded as bad for species conservation, may represent a success story: if a species no longer meets the criteria for Appendix I listing, it is often because conservation efforts have succeeded.

The case of the rhinoceroses illustrate this well. Despite inclusion in Appendix I for 20 years and despite a whole range of extra measures adopted under CITES, the trade ban has not succeeded in reversing the declines in rhinoceros populations throughout most of their ranges. Some experts would even argue (and they did, in Harare) that this approach has hastened the declines. South Africa is one country that has succeeded in increasing its rhinoceros population by investing considerable time and resources in conservation. South Africa's proposal at the previous CITES meeting to transfer its white rhinoceros population to Appendix II was based on this success. The transfer was agreed (for trade in live animals and hunting trophies only). In Harare, this issue was reviewed and there was general agreement that the transfer had not had an adverse effect on rhinoceros conservation.

None the less, South Africa's new proposal presented in Harare, to change the wording of the southern white rhinoceros Appendix II listing to include rhinoceros products but with a zero quota, was defeated. The Parties were clearly not ready to accept the idea of reopening trade in rhino horn. However, although defeated, the proposal received a great deal of support. It was voted on twice and on both occasions there was a majority in favour, but not the two-thirds majority required.

The fundamental point was whether or not any trade in rhinoceros products should be allowed, or even considered, in the future. This was effectively unanswered, although the majority opinion in Harare was clearly in favour of examining the possibility. South Africa believes that it should be possible to reopen such trade under strictly controlled conditions, such that there would be no threat to other rhinoceros species or populations. The benefits to South African rhinoceros conservation would be substantial because significant revenue would be generated and channelled into

conservation. The concern of those opposed to this approach centres on the possible effect this might have on rhinoceros conservation elsewhere. The worry is that any reopening of the trade in rhinoceros products, however well controlled, may stimulate the market in a way that encourages further illegal killing of rhinoceroses in other countries.

The arguments on this principle were also at the forefront of the debate on the elephant proposals. Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe had all submitted proposals to transfer their elephant populations to Appendix II, with specific ivory export quotas based on existing, certified, government-held stocks. The CITES Panel of Experts had examined the proposals and the situation in each country, including in Japan (the sole importing country), and had concluded that most of the necessary conditions had been met. At the technical level, it appeared that most people accepted that the elephant populations in question should not be in Appendix I and that, with refinement, the trade control measures would be acceptable.

The main point at issue, therefore, was what effect the transfer to Appendix II and subsequent reopening of a limited ivory trade might have on the rate of illegal elephant killing in African and Asian countries. This was resolved to the satisfaction of the majority when it was agreed that a system would be established to monitor illegal offtake and assess whether or not any changes could be ascribed to the CITES decision.

The three proposals succeeded in gaining more than the required two-thirds of the votes (Zimbabwe's proposal came close to getting 80 per cent of the votes), and the decision was made to allow a limited and strictly controlled trade in ivory. A series of very carefully defined conditions was proscribed, which must be met before any trade takes place and even when these conditions have been satisfied, exports from Africa to Japan can only take place 21 months after the close of the meeting.

The other ivory issue was not resolved so satisfactorily. It has been recognized for many years that the stockpiles of ivory in many African countries are a serious problem. They are a security risk and it costs substantial

amounts of money to store and guard them; they represent an unused source of valuable revenue; and they are growing all the time (or at least they should be as a result of natural elephant mortality).

Previously, discussions on this issue had not resulted in any generally acceptable decision or solution. In Harare, a solution was finally agreed, but only in vague terms, which, for an issue of such great importance, is not at all satisfactory. It is anomalous that Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe have had to struggle and work very hard to meet an ever-increasing set of demands in order to realize the legitimate value of a part of their elephant resources, whereas the potentially much more difficult and dangerous issue of what to do about other countries' stockpiles was resolved through the adoption of a very loose and technically superficial mechanism.

The solution finally agreed involves the official registration and certification of existing government stocks within a 90-day period following the Harare meeting. This will establish the size of the stockpiles. Then the non-commercial purchase of stocks by appropriate donor organizations can go ahead as planned, with all the revenue going into specially established conservation trust funds. In principle, this appears to be an acceptable solution, but the details of implementation remain to be decided and it is these details that will determine the success or failure of the scheme.

One problem remaining to be resolved is the fate of ivory purchased in this way. Unless destruction of the ivory is made mandatory, the solution can be only temporary because the stockpiles would continue to exist, albeit under different ownership. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that adequate donor funds will be available to purchase all existing stockpiles. Even the most conservative estimates put the current continental stockpile at over 500 tonnes. At the rather low price of \$US100 per kg, this would require \$US50 million. Where would this money come from?

The fact that CITES made a positive decision to solve this serious and increasing problem should be welcomed, but it is only a start. A great deal of work needs to be done in

a short space of time for the scheme to become a workable reality. It is surprising, perhaps, that during these discussions no mention was made of the dangers that might arise as a result of the decision, such as sending the wrong signals to illegal hunters and traders. Yet the effects of this decision are likely to be far greater than those arising from the acceptance of the southern African elephant proposals.

What of the many other species proposals? Japan and Norway had each proposed the transfer from Appendix I to II of specific stocks of whales (grey, minke and Bryde's). If it had not been for the elephant issue, these probably would have occupied centre-stage. The difficulty facing the meeting was the conflict between the very strong case under the new CITES criteria for accepting the transfer, and the special CITES/International Whaling Commission (IWC) relationship. This was made even more complex by the general controversy that exists over whether or not commercial whaling should be allowed.

The cases presented by Japan and Norway clearly convinced some: the secret ballots resulted in a fairly even balance between votes for and against. Because a two-thirds' majority was required for success, the four proposals voted on were defeated. However, it was significant that Norway obtained a simple majority (57 to 51) for its proposal to transfer the North-east Atlantic and North-Atlantic Central stocks of minke whale to Appendix II. Although defeated, the Norwegians clearly took heart from this. The majority of delegates to an international conservation treaty meeting had voted, in effect, for the reopening of commercial whaling. Despite this, the proposal to repeal Resolution Conf. 2.9 (which recommends Parties not to permit any trade for primarily commercial purposes for any specimen of a stock protected from commercial whaling by the IWC), was rejected by 27 votes to 51. The long-term implications of these decisions will probably not become apparent for some time. The reaction of the delegates to the IWC will be awaited with interest.

One proposal that was accepted by consensus was the inclusion of all sturgeon species in Appendix II. This comes into effect on 1 April

1988 and, if properly implemented, should assist in ensuring that the catch of these fish for caviar is brought to within sustainable levels. Without doubt, there will be difficulties in the application of CITES controls to these species but urgent action is needed to reverse the catastrophic population declines that have occurred.

Cuba's proposal to transfer its hawksbill turtle population from Appendix I to II, to enable it to trade in tortoiseshell with Japan, was defeated. However, the voting was unusually supportive – on both occasions when a vote was called there was a simple majority in favour – despite the criticism that the population in question was clearly not Cuba's alone. It seems probable that Cuba will return to the next meeting with an improved proposal and, if the trend in Zimbabwe continues in Indonesia, there is a good chance that it will succeed.

The proposal to include big-leaf mahogany *Swietenia macrophylla* in Appendix II was also defeated in a secret ballot; the 67 votes in favour, as opposed to 45 against, fell short of the two-thirds majority required by seven votes. A major factor influencing this result was the feeling held by many delegates that if the proposal were accepted it would be followed by others to include many commercially exploited timber species in CITES appendices. An unjustified fear, perhaps, but one that held some sway over the delegates. However, it was suggested that Latin American range states should include the species in Appendix III (as Costa Rica has already done). This does not require a decision at a CITES meeting. A working group was also proposed to examine all aspects of this issue before the next CITES meeting.

The Asian and European populations of brown bear *Ursus arctos* were not transferred from Appendix II to I. Here the debate revolved around the argument that the species did not qualify for Appendix I under the new CITES criteria but that some national populations were clearly highly endangered and that this was exacerbated by the demand for bear products. It was a sign of the atmosphere of the meeting that the former argument held

sway, but the voting was unusual. The proposal received 17 votes in favour and 33 against, but there were 58 abstentions – an indication of the dilemma in which many delegates found themselves.

Lasting memories of this CITES meeting will include the relatively frequent and successful use of the secret ballot, the swing in overall policy direction away from extreme protectionism towards sustainable use, and the adoption of more transfers from Appendix I to II than in the reverse direction. All these made the Harare meeting memorable in unusual ways. But for many, the outstanding memory will almost certainly be the response of many of the African participants to the final decision on the elephant and ivory issue: they broke into a spontaneous rendition of the African anthem, *Ishe Komberera Africa* – God Bless Africa.

Stephanie Pendry
Species in Trade Programme, FFI

Pemba flying fox update

The Pemba flying fox *Pteropus voeltzkowi* (see Entwistle and Corp, 1997) is to be protected by new forestry legislation (incorporating the old Wildlife Protection Act) drawn up by the Zanzibar Government and due to be signed soon. The species has been listed on Appendix I, which will make it illegal for it to be killed, damaged, collected or captured, except with special permits.

On a return visit in May, Abigail Entwistle found that the Pemba staff of Zanzibar's Sub-Commission for Forestry had continued the educational programme carried out by the Pemba Flying Fox Project in 1995, which was supported by FFI. They had worked in schools, held public workshops on the bats attended by high-ranking officers and military personnel, and extended the adult education programme in areas where there were bat roosts. As a result of the latter initiative four more villages are now actively protecting bats, which means that five main roosts – half of the island's total – are now protected. Some roost

monitoring has also been carried out in liaison with local villagers. Local village support was reinforced through an environmental award scheme set up in Pemba. The football team, that established the first direct roost protection was rewarded with new footballs.

The situation for the flying foxes of Pemba now looks more hopeful but, because the species is restricted to only one island, it is important to establish a captive breeding group as a safeguard for the future. This is now being developed.

Jacqui Morris, Editor

Reference

The Pemba flying fox *Pteropus voeltzkowi* (see Entwistle, A. and Corp, N. 1997 Status and distribution of the Pemba flying fox *Pteropus voeltzkowi*. *Oryx*, 31 [2], 135–142.

USA expands protected migratory bird habitat

At its meeting in August the US Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved \$12 million from special funds set up for migratory bird habitat conservation for efforts affecting a total of 525,500 ha. This includes: \$1.5 million for acquisitions for national wildlife refuges totaling 1134 ha in Arkansas, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, and Utah; \$2.6 million for wetlands conservation projects in California, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, and Virginia, affecting more than 13,000 ha of wetlands; \$U7.6 million for 13 projects affecting 76,000 ha in Canada; and \$276,000 for four projects affecting 360,000 ha in Mexico.

The largest new acquisition will be at Currituck National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina, which will expand by almost 900 ha of marsh and interdunal wetlands on the state's famous Outer Banks. This land provides breeding, stopover, and wintering habitat for waterfowl, especially black ducks, mallards, and wood ducks.

Source: US Fish and Wildlife Service, 11 August 1997.