

# Letters

increasing numbers and technical advance produce much of the unemployment. To increase quality of life the individual in effect occupies more space and uses more finite resources and so compounds the population pressure. Increased numbers may well have repercussions in excessive aggression between individuals and between nations.

We all work away in separate pressure groups, following our personal special interests, trying to relieve the situation.

Should we seek greater effectiveness by any organisational expedients? Education in these matters is of course essential but the time factor is so long in comparison with the rapidity of population increase.

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## Hermit ibis in Turkey

During a visit to Turkey (mainly in pursuit of orchids) in May 1983, we made a pilgrimage to the hermit ibis *Geronticus eremita* at Bireçik. We were so impressed with what we found, and the most recent report that I remember in *Oryx* was so gloomy, that I thought that you might be interested, even though Bireçik is so easy of access that I expect it is often visited now.

The whole area of the nesting cliff is securely fenced and there is an obviously very keen Turkish warden/guardian. We counted 44 adult birds, including those in a completely enclosed 'aviary', but the real figure could be higher as there was a succession of birds flying to and from the colony. As the warden spoke no English, most of our questions had to go unanswered, but we gained the impression that the purpose of the 'aviary' was to hold back a number of the birds from migration. I did not count the young, but on 25 May there were birds that could not have been far from flying as well as nests that still contained eggs.

At least half the nests were on wooden shelves erected against the cliff face, and the birds appeared happy on these. Some were covered with netting; as far as I could see the birds could

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get out at the sides, and judging by the number of rocks lying on top of the netting this is probably for protection from natural rock-fall. Judging from a quick visit it does look as though the colony is in good heart and has recovered from its 'low' of some years ago.

In spite of ever more intensive agriculture there is a wealth of natural history interest in Turkey, and still surprisingly little known. Much more work is still required on the distribution map for birds. And there are still new orchids to be found, at least at subspecific level. I was checking up on a probably new taxon I found in 1976, and found an additional one this time. The big development since our last long journey there in 1976 is the rapid and extensive reforestation. Somebody in the Government must have this very much at heart. And in some areas there are nesting boxes by the hundred. As far as we could ascertain this has been organised by the Government, not by a voluntary body. I should so much like to know more about this.

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In June 1978 *Oryx* (XIV, 3; 210) it was reported that the number of hermit ibis in the colony near Bireçik had fallen to 34, from 1300 in 1953. The species is endangered and there is only one breeding colony in Turkey and 15 more scattered in Morocco.

*Editor*

## Visiting Taman Negara

I have recently spent two weeks in Taman Negara in Malaysia. It is a really superb area, not least because entry is only via a two-and-a-half-hour river trip. There are several trails and hides, although some trails are poorly maintained and time and elephants succeed in blocking them. Rubbish control is poor, unfortunately. Opportunities for seeing birds and mammals, however, are excellent.

It is best to spend at least seven days in the Park to allow for at least two or three days spent away from Park Headquarters. A permit costs M\$1.00

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Sungai Kenyam, whose catchment is in Taman Negara, is one of the very few unspoilt rivers left in the Peninsula. It is navigable to small boats for more than 15 km (*Henry Barlow*).

and should be obtained well in advance (specifying exactly the day of entry, the planned length of stay and type of accommodation required) from Wildlife and National Parks Department, Block K20, Government Offices Building, Jalan Duta, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. An information brochure will be sent in reply to allow planning for the visit. Lightweight boots, or preferably jungle boots, are desirable, as is a good supply of insect repellent. Leeches are particularly abundant in the monsoon period. A sheet sleeping bag would be useful when staying overnight in a hide or lodge.

Park boats depart daily, at 14.00 hours, from Tembeling jetty, which can be reached either by rail from Singapore or from Kuala Lumpur or elsewhere, to Jerantut by bus or taxi and then by taxi to the jetty. The Headquarters area is well organised, with helpful staff. Accommodation is either in dormitories with bunks, or in twin-

bedded chalets with own bathroom. Two cafeterias provide adequate though, for Malaysia, expensive meals. There is an information centre, an inadequate shop, facilities to hire boats, guides and camping equipment.

The Park covers 4343 sq km and trails for visitors are mainly around Park Headquarters or up to a day or two's walk from there. Those around Headquarters are well maintained, but those further away are less so, making travel more arduous. There are a number of elevated hides, with bunks and toilet facilities, situated to view animals at salt licks or grazing. There are also fishing lodges, sometimes quite isolated, with the same facilities, which make a good base from which to observe wildlife. Food, cooking equipment and sleeping gear must be taken as well as a powerful torch.

There is a remarkable variety of both flora and fauna, in primary jungle, both hill and riverine. Mammals include elephant, tiger, rhinoceros, tapir, gaur, deer and primates; birds range, in abundance, from osprey to sunbirds. There is a superb jungle in untouched state. I can thoroughly recommend a visit.

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Taman Negara, Peninsular Malaysia's National Park, was saved when the Malaysian Government scrapped the Tembling Dam Project on 15 January 1983 (see *Oryx*, January 1983).

*Editor*



Stink-bugs in Taman Negara (*Henry Barlow*).