

# Briefly . . .

## International

### 96 for CITES

El Salvador became a Party to CITES on 29 July 1987, becoming the 96th Party, and the CITES Secretariat has cancelled its appeal to the Parties (4 July 1986) to prevent and prohibit any trade with that country in specimens of species listed in the CITES appendices. *Traffic (USA)*, **8** (1), 24.

### 102 for World Heritage Convention

Cape Verde and Paraguay have become the 101st and 102nd state parties to join the World Heritage Convention. *CNPPA Newsletter*, **43**, 3.

### Airplants gathered from wild

The horticultural trade is endangering the survival of many species of *Tillandsia*, the largest single group of bromeliads. Popularly known as airplants, they are being sold in increasing numbers in garden centres and most are gathered directly from wild populations in South and Central America. *Plants Today*, **1** (2), 38–39.

### Call for ivory boycott

The US-based African Wildlife Foundation has called for people to stop buying worked ivory products in an attempt to reduce illegal poaching. *Nature*, **333** (6171), 290.

### Cichlid association

The International Association for Research on, and Conservation of, Endangered Cichlids (IARCEC) has been set up by a group of experienced cichlid workers and has four aims, which are in brief: the conservation of certain species by captive breeding programmes; the continuation of research into the use of certain cichlid fish as biological control agents against the vector snails of human schistosomiasis; collecting well-documented material of cichlid species before too many species are lost; and the creation of educational displays involving living material to inform the public about the importance of these fishes and the dangers of introducing alien species. Details from: Dr C. D. N. Barel, Department of

*Briefly*

Organismal Zoology, Zoologisch Laboratorium, Postbus 9516, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands.

## Europe and North Africa

### USSR marine reserve

The USSR has established its first marine reserve in the Far East. Covering 630 sq km, it lies in the Bay of Peter the Great near the Isles of Rimsky-Korsakov in the Sea of Japan. Its wildlife includes 300 migratory bird species, 800 seaweeds, 900 crustaceans, 300 molluscs and 1000 fish species. The southern section of the reserve will serve as a testing ground for experimental rearing of marine invertebrates in nurse-ponds. *CNPPA Newsletter*, **43**, 4.

### Chernobyl ecological reserve

The Soviet Government has decided to designate an area of 10-km radius from Chernobyl nuclear power plant, scene of the accident in 1986, as an ecological reserve. It will be used to carry out scientific studies of the impact of radiation on the natural environment. *Science*, **240** (48–54), 377.

### Saving a seal

The Saimaa seal *Pusa hispida saimensis*, a subspecies of ringed seal, which lives only in Lake Saimaa in Finland, now numbers 150–160. The most effective conservation measure has been making the seal's breeding areas off-limit to fishing, thus eliminating the danger of pup death by entanglement in nets. But there are now other problems: the building of summer cottages is encroaching on the last breeding areas and it is planned to lower the water level to meet demands for hydro-electric power in the winter, which could destroy seal lairs made of ice and snow.

*Suomen Luonto*, **47** (4), 21–25.

### Finland to help woodpecker

A conservation programme is being developed for the white-backed woodpecker *Picoides leucotos* in Finland, whose population there is down to 30–40 pairs. The Ministry of the Environment has commissioned Raimo Virkälä of the University of Helsinki to

draw up the programme. He says that more research is needed because the reproductive biology of the bird in Finland is still poorly known. It is likely that the species would benefit from changes in forest management and from assistance in finding each other. *Suomen Luonto*, **47** (3), 6–7.

### New threats to eagles

Finland's white-tailed sea eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* have made a good recovery in recent years due to the provision of uncontaminated winter food and to the falling toxin levels of the Baltic Sea. In 1987, 65 pairs reared 34 young. However, extensive new clearings, roads, and summer homes on many of the islands on which the birds nest now threaten them. *Suomen Luonto*, **47** (3), 13–17.

### Coypu banished

It appears that Britain is now free of feral coypu *Myocaster coypus*. None has been found since the last one was caught in April 1987 in the River Ouse, Cambridgeshire, although trapping will be carried out for at least another nine months. Feral coypu became established in Britain after animals escaped from fur farms, primarily in East Anglia in the 1920s, and a £2.5 million eradication campaign was started in 1981. It trapped a total of 34,000 animals. *MAFF News Release*, 18 April 1988.

### Nature in Art

Nature in Art, The International Centre of Wildlife Art, opened on 28 May in Gloucester, UK. It is the first art gallery anywhere to bring together in one collection fine works of art in any medium from all parts of the world and all periods. It is owned and managed by the Society for Wildlife Art of the Nations (SWAN), which was established in 1982 to fill a gap in art collections open to the public and to promote the study of wildlife art and the conservation of wildlife. Contact: Simon Trapnell, Deputy Director, Nature in Art, Wallsworth Hall, Sandhurst, Gloucester GL2 9PA.

### Polish wolves

After the wolf *Canis lupus* was removed from the list of game animals (for which there is a restricted hunting season) in

229

# Briefly . . .

Poland in 1955, there was an effort to exterminate it by all possible means—including poison and traps. By 1972 only 115 were left and in 1975, as a result of pressure from the public and game biologists—the wolf was restored to the list of game animals with a close season from 1 April to 31 July. By 1986 the wolf had recovered to an estimated 880 individuals, mostly in the east, where wolves migrate from the USSR. A research programme on wolf biology and ecology started in 1987 at Jagiellonian University, led by Dr Boguslaw Bobek, and it is hoped that the results will help to improve the situation for the species.

*Grupo Lobo Newsletter*, May/June 1988, 4–5.

## Monk seals returned to Mediterranean

Two orphaned Mediterranean monk seals *Monachus monachus*, which were nursed back to health at the Sea Rescue Centre at Pieterburen in the Netherlands, were returned in May to the Aegean Sea off the northern Sporades, Greece. Both carry radio transmitters. The Greek Government marked the occasion by establishing officially the country's first National Marine Park around the northern Sporades. Conservationists believe that the park is too small, but monitoring the movements of the seals could show whether this is the case.

*New Scientist*, 12 May 1988.

## Dalyan surrendered

The hotel development at Dalyan beach in Turkey (see *Oryx*, 21, 248) has been given planning permission despite conservation opposition. The IUCN has prepared a management plan for the beach and its surroundings to protect the loggerhead turtle *Caretta caretta*. The beach is one of the few places where it still breeds in the Mediterranean.

*The Ornithological Society of the Middle East Bulletin*, 20, 56.

## Turkey protects three wetlands

Turkey has now given protection to three wetlands: Manyas Golu, the Sultan Marshes and Seyfe Golu. The main threats to Manyas include pollution, and drainage and irrigation schemes. The Sultan Marshes, one of the most

important wetlands in the Middle East, are also threatened by drainage, which has already depleted several bird populations. The drainage plan for Seyfe Golu has been cancelled.

*The Ornithological Society of the Middle East Bulletin*, 20, 55–56.

## Lagoons safer

The local government of Yumurtalik has protected 95 sq km of the Yumurtalik Lagoons in the Gulf of Iskenderum south of Adana in southern Turkey. There are about 600 sq km of lagoons, sand dunes and salt marshes in the area, which has good numbers of wintering waterfowl and which is an important staging area for waders. A recent survey recorded 62 species of birds, including 40 wader species.

*The Ornithological Society of the Middle East Bulletin*, 20, 2–3.

## Illegal sparrowhawk take

A survey of illegal bird shooting and catching in north-east Turkey is now under way, carried out by Dogal Hayati Koruma Demegi with ICBP. The work began in August 1987 in the Borcka–Arhavi region, an important migratory bottleneck area, where over 100,000 raptors have been recorded on passage in a single day and where the catching of sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* for hawking quail *Coturnix coturnix* is common. Preliminary results indicate that over 10,000 sparrowhawks were caught during the autumn of 1987, some of which died in captivity. Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* and peregrines *Falco peregrinus* were also kept by falconers. In addition, large raptors, particularly honey buzzards *Pernis apivorus*, booted eagles *Hieraetus pennatus*, harriers *Circus* spp., and falcons *Falco* spp. were indiscriminately shot or caught and used to feed shrikes, mainly red-backed shrikes *Lanius collurio*, which are kept as decoys to catch sparrowhawks.

*The Ornithological Society of the Middle East Bulletin*, 20, 54.

## Cyprus bird kill continues

Despite an international campaign to enforce the laws against bird-liming and netting in Cyprus, large-scale bird-liming continued in autumn 1987, according to the Cyprus Conservation Committee. The Cyprus Government

admitted that the recent presidential election had made it unlikely that unpopular measures, such as rigidly enforcing the wildlife laws, would be taken.

*The Ornithological Society of the Middle East Bulletin*, 20, 57.

## 19 for Bern

The Cypriot Parliament ratified the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) on 18 March 1988. Cyprus is the 19th country to ratify the Convention.

*Naturoopa newsletter-nature*, 88-5, 1.

## Catalan animal protection

The parliament of Catalan province, Spain, has recently passed a law on the protection of animals, which is regarded as a significant breakthrough. Among its provisions it bans the use of tiger cubs and chimpanzees by beach photographers.

*Naturoopa newsletter-nature*, 88-5, 2.

## New wildlife law for Andorra

In February the Government of the Principality of Andorra passed a law on the defence and protection of animals and wild fauna, both native and non-native. Among other things, the law prohibits the capture, possession, trafficking, trade, sale and export of protected species, their young and their eggs.

*Naturoopa newsletter-nature*, 88-4, 3.

## Last chance for a guillemot?

Barely 100 pairs of the once abundant Iberian guillemot *Uria aalge ibericus* remain—in four colonies in the Sisargas Islands, Vilan Cape, the Cies Islands and the Berlengas Islands (Portugal). Oil pollution and fishing nets claim most lives. The Spanish Ornithological Society, with financial support from the EEC's programme of Urgent Actions for Endangered Species, has launched a campaign to save the bird from extinction.

*Naturoopa newsletter-nature*, 88-5, 2.

## Lake Manzala to be protected

Lake Manzala in Egypt, perhaps the most important lake on the Nile delta, has been nominated as a Ramsar site

*Oryx* Vol 22 No 4, October 1988

# Briefly . . .

and there is a proposal to gazette it as a protected area.

*The Ornithological Society of the Middle East Bulletin*, 20, 58.

## Africa

### Army hunts in the park

On two occasions in May the Sudanese army unit stationed in Nimule National Park was ordered by the Commander to hunt in the area. Using automatic machine guns, more than 70 soldiers killed or wounded about 100 animals. The park staff were powerless to resist and have complained to the office of the Governor.

*CNPPA Newsletter*, 43, 7.

### Corrupt officials sacked

Kenya's Minister of Tourism and Wildlife announced on 7 January that seven top officials in his Ministry had been sacked, eight field officers had been interdicted and a further 12 were under investigation for committing grave mistakes that violated their duties and terms of employment. The offences committed included condoning poaching and killing giraffes and selling the meat. The Minister said that this action was only the beginning of an effort to stop corruption in the Ministry.

*Swara*, 11 (2), 6–7.

### New wildlife conservation society in Tanzania

A new wildlife conservation society has been formed in Tanzania with the aim of providing a forum for Tanzanians interested in conservation and wildlife. It will produce a quarterly newsletter, *Miombo*, containing articles, news and letters about conservation issues in Tanzania and elsewhere. A regional network will enable everyone to become an active member and the Society will raise funds for conservation programmes. For further information write to the Secretary at PO Box 70919, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

### US bans Burundi ivory

On 29 April the US banned the import of elephant ivory from Burundi because of the large quantity of illegal ivory in that country. The ban followed the

*Briefly*

discovery of 16,000 elephant tusks in private ownership that had not been registered under the international control system set up by CITES. They were reportedly imported before Burundi banned such imports in November 1987 and must have been obtained illegally because no ivory-producing country has authorized ivory exports to Burundi since the control system began in December 1986. The US will also invoke emergency provisions of its Endangered Species Act to ban all ivory imports from any country that accepts the illegal Burundi ivory.

*Department of the Interior News Release*, 29 April 1988.

### Rhino swap

Six black rhinos *Diceros bicornis* from the Zambezi Valley in Zimbabwe were sent to Swaziland on 29 December 1987, where they were given sanctuary in the newly declared Mkhaya Nature Reserve. This action not only puts them out of reach of poachers, who have killed at least 250 of Zimbabwe's rhinos in the space of 40 months, but is also an attempt to reintroduce the species to Swaziland. In exchange Swaziland sent four white rhinos *Ceratotherium simum* to Zimbabwe in an effort to increase the population there. The swap was funded by WWF.

*Swara*, 11 (2), 20.

### Anthrax found in rhino horn

Anthrax spores were isolated from the horn of a young rhino that died in Damaraland in October 1987. Most of the rhinos that may enter the infected area have been doted with an inoculation against the disease. Anthrax spores in horn pose a danger to those engaged in the illegal traffic of horns, grinders and carvers of horn and to those taking it as a medicine.

*Save the Rhino Fund Newsletter*, 5.

### Giant earwig probably extinct

The Zoological Society of London expedition to St Helena (see *Oryx*, 22, 142) found only remains of the giant earwig *Labidura herculeana* and the giant ground beetle *Aplothorax burchelli*. It is feared that both these large insects may be extinct. The expedition made small collections of other threatened endemic invertebrates for captive-breeding at London Zoo, including St



A blushing snail *Succinea sancae-helenae* with an egg batch. These threatened snails from St Helena promise to be valuable for genetic research (Dave Clarke).

Helena blushing snails *Succinea* sp., which may prove as useful in genetic research as *Partula* snails. *London Zoo Press Release*, 24 May 1988.

### Rhino exporter sentenced

A South African, Christopher Bull, was convicted in the Supreme Court in Pietermaritzburg of unlawfully buying and attempting to export 17 rhino horns from Natal to Transvaal. He was sentenced to a fine of R500, or six months' imprisonment, on each count. An amount of R31,000, which was allegedly given to Bull by a Chinese to buy rhino horns for export to China, was confiscated.

*South African press*, 20 February 1988.

### Fish eagle not quite as rare as believed

The Madagascar fish eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides* is confined to a 600-km strip of the western coast of Madagascar and was estimated at 10 pairs in 1978. Comprehensive surveys in 1982 and 1986 found 96 individuals, including 40 pairs. Hunting and taking young from the nest are major threats, but some waters where the birds feed are also becoming too opaque because of

# Briefly . . .

erosion. Diurnal birds of prey are considered pests in Madagascar and at present only two pairs of the species occur in protected areas. A proposal to create a national park within a World Heritage Site in the region between Antsalova and Belo sur Tsiribihina would protect 11 pairs, and several small rocky islands off the extreme north-west coast could be managed to protect a further six pairs.

*Biological Conservation*, **42** (1987), 73–77.

## Decline of a turtle

*Erymnochelys madagascariensis*, a freshwater turtle once widespread in Madagascar, appears to be declining in numbers. It is being exploited increasingly for food for a growing human population, and the turtles are often taken before they are sexually mature. G. Kuchling of the University of Vienna believes that the species should be classified as vulnerable and that conservation strategies should be developed. *Biological Conservation*, **43** (1988), 107–113.

## Asia (excluding Indo-Malaya)

### Birds stuffed in Syria

Recent travellers in Syria have noted a marked increase in the number of stuffed birds for sale, including white storks, long-legged buzzards, kestrels and Egyptian vultures. Many species on sale are protected in neighbouring countries.

*Sinai Newsletter*, **16** (1),

### Bustard on brink

The endangered Arabian bustard *Choriotis arabs* is not yet extinct in Saudi Arabia, according to a survey in October–November 1987. Team members found one bird, saw the footprints of others in two other places, and were told of five sightings in other places in the last five years. The scientists recommend that the bird be given total protection and that a bustard sanctuary be set up at Jabal Labiba in the Asir National Park where they made their sighting. The main cause of the species's decline appears to be uncontrolled shooting from four-wheel drive

vehicles and habitat deterioration through overgrazing.

*The Ornithological Society of the Middle East Bulletin*, **20**, 58–59.

### Panda plan

A long-term conservation plan for the giant panda *Ailuropoda melanoleuca* is being developed as a result of a resolution put forward jointly by the Species Survival Commission and the FFPS at the IUCN General Assembly in February. One week after the resolution was adopted representatives of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, WWF, Wildlife Conservation International and the SSC met at Chicago Zoo and pledged the assistance of their organizations to help their Chinese colleagues develop the plan. They agreed that funds raised from loans of captive pandas should be used for specific conservation programmes and that pandas should not be loaned from captive-breeding programmes or be taken from the wild.

*Species, Newsletter of the SSC*, **10**, 16.

### Mai Po a little safer

In response to public pressure the Chinese Government has announced that a major airport will not be built adjacent to the Mai Po Marshes Nature Reserve (see *Oryx*, **22**, 53). But threats still hang over the area; a large rubbish dump will be located near the marshes and the Government of China is expected to start dredging and straightening the Shenzhen River. This could damage Mai Po and also Fu Tien Nature Reserve.

*WWF News*, No. 52.

### Japanese imports of musk rocket

Japan announced at the CITES meeting in July 1987 that it would drop its reservation on the Appendix I listing of the musk deer *Moschus moschiferus* in two years. However, it has since been discovered that traders have been importing huge quantities of musk into Japan, possibly anticipating the closing of the Japanese musk market. From 1 January to 31 October 1987, 818 kg of musk 'pods' were imported into Japan, more than twice that of the previous year and representing the killing

of 80,000 animals. The musk came from China, Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore, all CITES members and none of which has a reservation on musk deer.

*Traffic (USA)*, **8** (1), 17.

### Japanese link hands around lake

In February 10,000 Japanese people linked hands around Lake Shinji in protest against the Government's plans to shut it off from the sea, thus destroying a valuable local fishery. There are also fears that thousands of waterfowl that winter around the lake will be endangered because they feed on the tiny shimeji clams that abound in the brackish water. The project to desalinate Lake Shinji and the adjacent Sea of Naka started 20 years ago in order to create a gigantic freshwater pond for watering rice paddies. Shortly after the project started rice was being over-produced and the pond was no longer needed, but the Government pressed ahead and spent millions of dollars on land reclamation and building a set of sluice gates at the mouth of the Naka Sea. These were due to be closed in September, but because of the protest one of the gates will be left open for a trial period. It will not be enough to prevent devastating effects on the ecology of one of Japan's few remaining brackish lakes.

*Nature*, **332**, 7 April 1988.

## Indo-Malaya

### Pakistan extends hunting ban

Pakistan has extended its hunting, trapping and export ban for all wild mammals, reptiles and protected indigenous birds, except for certain hunting trophies, until August 1989. The ban was first introduced in September 1981 for three years but was extended before it expired in 1984.

*Traffic (USA)*, **8** (1), 24.

### Snow leopards hang on in Hunza

The snow leopard *Panthera uncia* still survives in at least two areas of northern Hunza, in northernmost Pakistan, at the western end of the Himalaya–Karakoram mountain complex. An

*Oryx Vol 22 No 4, October 1988*

## Briefly . . .

expedition from Operation Raleigh visited the region towards the end of 1987 and found that as far as prey species are concerned, the ibex *Capra ibex* is the only ungulate that is still widely distributed, although smaller prey—hares, marmots and partridges—are also present. The conservation prospects for the leopards and their prey are not good. Hunting is popular and very damaging because of the availability of modern, powerful weapons. Hunters have already exterminated the urial *Ovis vignei*, a small mountain sheep, in Hunza. Although the snow leopard is fully protected by law in Pakistan enforcement is difficult in these remote mountain areas.

*Snow Line*, No. 14.

### Brow-antlered deer in captivity

There are 94 Manipur brow-antlered deer *Cervus eldi eldi* in Indian zoos, according to a survey conducted by the Zoo Outreach Organization and sponsored by the West Germany based Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations. No zoos outside India hold this subspecies and the wild population consists of perhaps only 30–40 animals in the Keibul Lamjao Reserve in Manipur, north-east India. Ten of the 13 zoos holding the species have bred the deer successfully, although some management problems arising from lack of space and from TB due to poor sani-

tation need to be tackled to cut down deaths, and a national breeding strategy is to be formulated. There are hopes that reintroduction into the wild can take place; two attempts, in 1974 and 1983, failed.

Zoo Outreach Organization, Pioneer House, Peelamedu, Coimbatore, T.N. 641 D04, 6 June 1988.

### Crocodile programme succeeding

In 10 years of operation the crocodile reintroduction programme in Orissa, India, has made tremendous progress in its main objective of restoring depleted crocodile habitats. So far 973 young saltwater crocodiles *Crocodylus porosus* have been released into the rivers of Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary, 470 young gharials *Gavialis gangeticus* have been released into the Satkosha Gorge of the River Mahanadi, and 100 young muggers *C. palustris* have been released into rivers in Similipal National Park.

*Crocodile Specialist Group Newsletter*, 6, January–December 1987.

### Nepal monitors mammals

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife in Nepal is monitoring the populations of 13 large mammal species classified as game, including the sloth bear *Ursus ursinus* and nilgai or bluebuck *Boselaphus tragocamelus*, and will close the hunting season in any area for any species if necessary. Nepal has protected 26 mammals, nine birds and three reptiles, but it is feared that the wild yak *Bos grunniens* and the pygmy hog *Sus salvanius* are extinct. *Wildlife Nepal* No. 2, Newsletter of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation.

### Blackbuck update

The two wild populations of blackbuck *Antelope cervicapra* in Nepal—together totalling 25 animals—that were discovered in 1975 after the species was believed extinct in the country, have suffered different fates. The population in Banke District appears to have vanished, but the population in Bardia District has increased from 11 to 200 animals in an area of 0.84 sq km, which is surrounded by agriculture. They have to compete with 671 cows, 108 buffaloes



Brow-antlered deer are breeding well in Indian zoos (Sally Walker).

*Briefly*

233

# Briefly . . .

and 30 goats and are prey to domestic dogs, so it is surprising that they are doing so well. It is possible that the reasons include the facts that predation is low because there are no big cats in the area and that blackbuck raid crops. In contrast the group of eight blackbuck from Kathmandu Zoo, which were released in Royal Bardia Wildlife Reserve in 1980, has increased only to 11. *Wildlife Nepal* No. 2, Newsletter of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation.

## End of Sri Lanka's forests?

Sri Lanka's Forest Master Plan (1985–2020) prepared by a Finnish forest consultancy group, Jaakko Pöyry International Oy, has been called a prescription for ecological disaster by the country's conservationists. It grossly overestimates the amount of native forest remaining, calls for timber and fuelwood exploitation at levels that would have to include production from tea, rubber and coconut plantations, and that are over two-and-a-half times the local need until the year 2000. The plan also involves the installation of at least 12 sawmills at a cost of US\$80 million, which are to be sponsored by the World Bank, and states that over 900,000 cu m of timber would have to be extracted each year from Forest Reserves that are at present under the control of the Wildlife Department. *Rainforest Action Network*, May 1988.

## Dry forest reserve in Sri Lanka

The Government of Sri Lanka established the Victoria–Randenigala–Rantambe Sanctuary on 13 January. It is in the dry forest zone of central Sri Lanka and protects 400 sq km of upland dry forest and riverine forest around three reservoirs on the Mahaweli River. *WWF News*, 53, 7.

## Thailand set to allow more logging

Following the change in Thailand's forest policy (*Oryx*, 22, 145) the state-owned Thai Plywood Company has demanded the right to log a forest area that forms part of the Huay Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary. The Forest Department agreed to the request in April, but the decision has to be approved by the

Agriculture and Co-operatives Ministry. *Bangkok Post*, 19 April 1988.

## Park's corals destroyed

Fishermen catching fish with explosives are destroying large numbers of rare corals around Tarutao Island National Park in Thailand. Scientists from Kasetsart University have found that the density of corals at some spots around the island is only two per cent of what it used to be. The illegal fishing is hard to stop; the park has only one patrol boat and the fishermen use only nets when they see it. Tourist divers are also destroying the coral, and they light fires and leave litter on the beaches. *Nation*, 25 April 1988.

## Collectors main threat to peafowl

The endangered green peafowl *Pavo muticus* is extinct or declining in most of its range in the lowland forests of South East Asia. Belinda Stewart-Cox, who studied Thailand's last viable population in the Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary near the border with Burma, believes that, although forest destruction is a major cause of the species's decline, a more serious threat now comes from the demand for captive birds. A pair of green peafowl can fetch 8000 baht (£200) in Thailand. *Landscape*, March 1988, 43–44.

## World Bank loan for Indonesian forests

The World Bank has made a loan of US\$34 million to Indonesia for a long-term project to strengthen forestry planning and management, improve watershed conservation measures, and manage existing nature conservation areas more effectively. Forests in Indonesia are being depleted at a rate of 10,000 sq km a year and if this continues they will be gone in 40 years. The Indonesian Government is providing \$16 million for the project, other local contributors \$10 million and the Netherlands \$3 million. *World Bank News Release*, 88/63.

## Prison for rhino killer

A man has been sentenced to 15 years in prison in West Java for killing a Javan

rhinoceros *Rhinoceros sondaicus* for its horn. The theft involved four other people who were sentenced to one-and-a-half years in prison. There are believed to be only 45–55 Javan rhinos left in Java. *Jakarta Post*, 9 May 1988.

## Debt-for-Nature Swap in Philippines

The World Wide Fund for Nature signed an agreement on 24 June in Manila to purchase up to \$2 million of Philippine's external debt to benefit conservation. The debt will be converted into local currency and made available to the Haribon Foundation, a private conservation organization, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to carry out a variety of conservation activities. The first stage of this effort will benefit two parks—St Paul's National Park on Palawan Island and El Nido National Marine Park. *CNPPA Newsletter*, 43, 3.

## Still trouble over timber in Sarawak

A 13-strong Malaysian Timber Trade delegation visited Europe in April to speak with British, Dutch and German timber traders, conservation groups and MPs. The delegation was attempting to counter claims by international conservation and human rights groups that logging in Sabah and Sarawak was having devastating social and environmental impacts. The conservation protests arose when tribal lands were leased for timber concessions, ignoring the rights of tribal people, and protestors were arrested by the Malaysian Government (see *Oryx*, 22, 117). *Survival International Press Release*, 18 April 1988.

## Singapore trade threatens tigers

An investigation by the *Observer* newspaper (London) has revealed that the sale of tiger skins is thriving in Singapore and could be vigorous enough to eliminate the Sumatran tiger *Panthera tigris sumatrae*, and greatly reduce the small tiger populations in Thailand and Malaysia. The skins are smuggled into Singapore through the Jurong Free Trade Barter Zone. Most buyers

*Oryx* Vol 22 No 4, October 1988

# Briefly . . .

are Singaporean, or Japanese and Taiwanese tourists, although a few are European. Singapore is a member of CITES and its guidelines are backed up by Singaporean law; however, no prosecutions have yet been made and even if a shopkeeper were prosecuted he would be liable only to a maximum fine of S\$1000 (£277).

*The Observer* (London), 24 April 1988.

## North America

### Arctic oilfield damage

An unreleased report by US Fish and Wildlife Service officials says that the Prudhoe Bay Oilfield and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline in northern Alaska have caused far more environmental damage than was envisaged in the Government's environmental impact statements prepared before the projects began 16 years ago. Among the findings are that 4450 ha of vegetation used by wildlife at Prudhoe Bay have been destroyed, almost double the area predicted, and that the populations of most birds have declined, as have those of bears and wolves. The report could influence the decision on whether to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, just east of Prudhoe Bay, to oil exploration.

*The New York Times*, 11 May 1988.

### Seals dead—industry alive?

The 1988 Canadian seal hunt in the breeding grounds off Newfoundland was expected to kill 40,000–50,000 seals, mainly harp seal *Phoca groenlandica* pups about 15–25 days old. The Canadian Sealers' Association is pressing the Canadian Government to purchase the pelts in order to keep the industry alive.

*Monitor*, 21 March 1988.

### Canada abandons seal cull

Canada's Federal Fisheries and Oceans Minister announced in late December 1987 that a proposed cull of grey seals *Halichoerus grypus* scheduled to take place in January would not take place (see *Oryx*, 21, 141–142). Representatives from the Nova Scotia Fisheries Department and the Eastern Fishermen's Federation argue that seals are responsible for declining fish stocks and should be culled. They also blame seals

*Briefly*

for spreading fish parasites. The Minister, however, said there was insufficient evidence to justify the cull and proposed the establishment of a joint government–industry programme to conduct further research and explore alternative ways of controlling seal populations.

*Canadian Nature Federation Almanac*, 1, (4), in *Nature Canada*, 17 (2).

### Grizzlies in trouble in Alberta

Grizzly bears *Ursus arctos* in Alberta, Canada, are being shot faster than they can reproduce because the extensive roads built for oil drilling have opened up the wild lands to poachers. The Alberta Government also promotes a hunting season that is too liberal for the remaining grizzly population. Except in the Rocky Mountains, grizzlies are already extinct in most of their former Alberta range.

*Bear News*, 5 (4), 1.

### Wolf shoot illegal

The British Columbia Government's policy of shooting wolves from the air was ruled as illegal in March by the British Columbia Supreme Court because it violates the Government's own hunting laws. Since 1982 the Government has killed about 1000 wolves in an attempt to increase numbers of their prey—elk, caribou, moose—for trophy hunters.

*Hansard*, Ottawa, 11 March 1988 and *Montreal Gazette*, 9 March 1988.

### Conservation lands cut in drought

The severe drought in parts of the US has forced the Department of Agriculture, under pressure from livestock producers, to open Conservation Reserve Programme (CRP) lands in 200 counties of 13 states to haymaking and grazing. Tens of thousands of nesting birds will be destroyed, according to the Wildlife Management Institute. Under the CRP farmers are paid to retire erodible land and strips round streams and lakes from crop production for 10 years and instead to plant vegetation that provides wildlife habitat.

*Outdoor News Bulletin*, 1 July 1988, 1.

### Steel shot use spreading

Waterfowl hunters in the US will be re-

quired to use non-toxic steel shot in zones in 46 states in the 1988–1989 hunting season to help diminish the needless loss of waterfowl by lead poisoning. Non-toxic shot will be required for waterfowl hunting nationwide by the 1991–1992 hunting season.

*Department of the Interior News Release*, 29 June 1988.

### Reptile smugglers caught

On 7 January two Californians were sentenced to a three-year suspended prison sentence and five years' probation, and fined US\$10,000 and US\$4000, respectively, for smuggling Australian and Mexican reptiles into the USA by post. The convictions resulted from a three-year investigation by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Customs Service, and it is speculated that the defendants may have illegally imported 100–150 reptiles in that time, including western bearded dragons *Amphibolurus minimus* from Australia and Gila monsters *Heloderma suspectum* from Mexico.

*Traffic (USA)*, 8 (1), 19–20.

### A world first for Californian condor

The world's first captive-bred Californian condor *Gymnogyps californianus* hatched on 29 April at the San Diego Wild Animal Park in California. In addition to the chick there are only 27 Californian condors alive, all in captivity, 14 at San Diego and 13 in Los Angeles.

*Department of the Interior News Release*, 2 May 1988.

### Monarch migration record

A female monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus* tagged on 7 November 1987 at an overwintering colony in Ellwood, Santa Barbara County, California, was captured on 9 April 1988 in the Chiricahua Mountains, south-eastern Arizona. Its migration flight of 1062 km breaks the previous long distance record of a tagged monarch from the California coast—a 909-km flight from the San Francisco Bay area to the Grand Canyon, Arizona, in 1957. More than 59,000 monarchs have been tagged in the last three years by researchers and volunteers from the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and Santa Monica

235

# Briefly . . .

College. The data collected are used to map migration routes, measure population sizes and monitor the monarch in an effort to protect it.

*Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County*, 13 April 1988.

## Catalina mahogany restored

The Catalina mahogany *Cercocarpus traskiae* is confined to a single canyon on the south-west of Santa Catalina, California, having been eliminated elsewhere on the island by goats, feral pigs and squatters. In 1985, when there were only seven adult plants, the Santa Catalina Conservancy fenced two of them and by the end of 1987 70 seedlings had established, compared with only one in 1984. Meanwhile, cuttings were taken and grown in test plots. However, researchers have now discovered that two of the seven adult trees and the seedlings nearby are hybrids between Catalina mahogany and the mountain mahogany *C. betuloides* ssp *blanchae*, the more common mahogany on the island. Fortunately, the majority of the seedlings occur 200 m up the canyon near the other five trees and this stand is pure. Efforts are now under way to keep this stand pure, to protect it from grazing and to propagate and reintroduce individuals to three new sites where chances of hybridization are minimal. *The Centre for Plant Conservation*, 3 (1), 1 and 8.

## Falcons on experimental release

Efforts are under way to restore the northern aplomado falcon *Falco femoralis septentrionalis* to the US, where it was last recorded in 1941 in Texas. The falcon is difficult to breed in captivity but the Peregrine Fund has produced 17 young from two females at the University of California, Santa Cruz, since 1983, and 12 of the young birds were experimentally released in Texas in 1985, 1986 and 1987. To establish a viable population of 30–40 nesting pairs will probably require the release of 30–50 young falcons a year for 5–10 years and so at least 12 breeding females are needed in captivity. Last year a search in Mexico, where the species still survives, found only eight adult pairs and seven active nests; most of the previously known nesting sites

had been disturbed by human activity. The team was able to bring back five young females and two males for the breeding programme and another collecting trip was planned for 1988. Mexican authorities are now interested in developing their own capacity to breed and reintroduce falcons and the Peregrine Fund is assisting their efforts. *On the Edge*, Preservation Trust International Newsletter, 1988.

## Central America

### Mexico's new law—a step forward for conservation

The Mexican Government has enacted legislation that strengthens the nation's environmental and resource conservation programmes. The new statute, General Law for Environmental Protection and Ecological Equilibrium, gives government agencies and citizens more opportunities to participate in resource conservation programmes. For example, federal and state governments may now pool resources with farm organizations and rural communities to establish and manage wildlife conservation areas. Two key provisions call for protecting natural areas and conserving all flora and fauna. The law also directs that conservation education be featured in elementary schools and government training programmes. *Outdoor News Bulletin*, 3 June 1988, 1.

### Mexican reserve for whales

The Mexican Government is creating a huge reserve to safeguard the grey whale *Eschrichtius robustus*, which spends each year between December and March off the Baja California coast of Mexico. The new reserve will cover 29,000 sq km, taking in much of the Baja California peninsula's Biscayne Desert and extending into the open sea. *The Hartford Courant*, 28 February 1988.

### Attack on Mexican tuna fishery

Greenpeace and the Mexican Ecology Movement have called for a worldwide boycott of Mexican-caught tuna because the country's tuna fleet uses nets that trap and kill tens of thousands of dolphins a year. Europe buys more than

80 per cent of Mexican tuna. Other major tuna fisheries use a new kind of net that has a panel allowing dolphins to escape, but it is expensive. The Mexican Government has stated that, although the fleet killed 130,000 dolphins in 1986, new measures introduced in 1987 reduced dolphin deaths by half and now Mexican tuna fishermen kill fewer dolphins per catch than other nations.

*The Mexico City News*, 16 April 1988.

### Porpoise on way to extinction

The vaquita or Gulf of California harbour porpoise *Phocoena sinus* has the most limited range of any marine cetacean and is so little known that there is no way of telling whether the population is increasing or decreasing. In 1975 the Mexican Government banned fishing for the over-exploited *Totoaba macdonaldi* in the upper Gulf of California and this relieved pressure on the porpoise, which had been accidentally caught in the gill nets. In 1985, however, the Mexican Government conducted experimental fishing operations to assess the population status of *Totoaba* and during these, and during some illegal fishing, 13 porpoises were killed. In 1986 an extensive survey of the upper Gulf of California made only 12 sightings of the porpoise and it is estimated that there may be only 31 animals in total. Illegal and experimental fishing for *Totoaba* continues and scientists fear that the porpoise could become extinct before they can document a decline or learn more about the species.

*Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, XIII (2), 7–8.

### Animals shot as they flee from fires

Fires swept through the Walter T. Deinger National Park in the Department of La Libertad in El Salvador in early 1988, causing wildlife to flee. Hundreds of animals, including endangered species, were shot or captured as they fled. The destruction in the park and in El Imposible was described as the country's greatest ecological tragedy for 20 years. The Manager of Tourist Centres and National Parks of the Salvadorean Tourist Institute called for severe penalties for the poachers and arsonists who are destroying the

*Oryx* Vol 22 No 4, October 1988



# Briefly . . .

organizations in the reintroduction of captive-bred golden lion tamarinds *Leontopithecus rosalia* to the eastern coastal rain forest in Brazil, is continuing to be very successful. One project initiative involves training the tamarins to forage for themselves after release rather than before. Another is to use a combination of tax incentives and the prestige associated with the project to persuade landowners with suitable habitat to establish private reserves, which will protect not only tamarins but also the flora and other fauna of these disappearing forests.

*On the Edge*, Wildlife Preservation Trust International Newsletter, 1988.

## Australia/Antarctica

### Loggers protected from research

A research paper was withdrawn from the annual congress of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Advancement of Science in May by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales because it threatened logging interests, according to a report in *New Scientist*. An abstract of the paper published in advance claims that extensive logging in south-eastern New South Wales could wipe out several rare marsupials, including the long-footed potoroo *Potorous longipes*, discovered only a few years ago and endemic to the region. The logging issue is highly controversial because the 20-year licence to log in New South Wales granted to Japan's second largest paper company is due for renewal with the Federal Government, and adverse publicity about the impact of woodchipping might force the government to withdraw the licence. Environmentalists have accused the State Government of suppressing information about the effects of logging and forbidding research in the affected forests, but these have been denied. The newly elected State Government supports the woodchippers and has already repealed a plan of the previous government to declare 800 sq km of forest as a national park.

*New Scientist*, 26 May 1988, 30–31.

### New parks in New South Wales

The New South Wales Government  
238

has announced the creation of national parks and reserves covering 924 sq km. The decision is a success for a long campaign to preserve the important eucalyptus forests in the area from woodchipping and export by the Japanese-owned company, Harris Daishowa. The proposed new parks are Coolangubra (473 sq km), Tawangalo (160 sq km), and additions to Wadbilliga (140 sq km). The proposed new nature reserves are Egan Peaks (108 sq km) and Murrah (43 sq km). Two sawmills will be closed, leaving two in operation. Conservationists greeted the announcement with enthusiasm, although there was disappointment that some park proposals—Yurramie State Forest, a koala habitat, and Mt Poole State Forest, which has rare and endangered plants, for example, were not included.

*Conservation News*, Newsletter of the Australian Conservation Foundation, 20, (2).

### Rat eradication gives weevils a chance

The success of the rat eradication programme on an island in Fiordland National Park in New Zealand's Breaksea Sound has meant a more secure future for some endangered species. Using safer, effective rat poisons, and innovative methods of dispensing them, rats were eradicated on Hawea Island in the space of a few weeks in 1986. This has removed the threat of rats invading Wairaki Island 300 m away, where Fiordland's endemic skink *Leiopisma acrinasum* still survives, having been eradicated from Hawea by rats, and where there are at least two undescribed species of large weevils known from nowhere else. Rat eradication on Breaksea Island, which is larger and has more inaccessible areas, is being tackled this year and, like Hawea, when rat free it will be used to reintroduce the skink and rare insects.

*Forest and Bird*, 19 (1), 30–33.

## Oceania

### Giant clams in the Solomons

A giant clam *Tridacna gigas* hatchery is being built on Guadalcanal, 25 km west of Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands, in an attempt to reverse the

trend towards the species's extinction. Cultivation of this traditional food resource should alleviate the pressure from commercial fisheries and will allow restocking of depleted reefs. The Coastal Aquaculture Centre is being developed by the International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management in collaboration with the Solomon Islands Government and the Guadalcanal Provincial Government.

*Environment Newsletter*, Quarterly Newsletter of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, No. 10.

### Sandalwood exports controlled

Sandalwood *Santalum austrocaledonicum*, valued by woodcarvers and for its aromatic oil, has been exported from Vanuatu since 1825 and has disappeared from many areas. It is not clear how much is left and in early 1986 the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries took the first step in controlling exploitation by making export permits mandatory. In early 1987, after lobbying by the Forestry Service, a five-year moratorium on sandalwood cutting was implemented so that the resource could be estimated. This was interrupted temporarily for three months on Erromango and Aniwa after hurricane Uma, and during this period 110 tonnes of very poor quality young sandalwood were exported, emphasizing the poor state of the resource and the need for a closer look at existing stocks. Being a high-value, relatively low-volume product, which grows on dry stony areas unsuited for cultivation, sandalwood is an ideal commodity for an island nation such as Vanuatu and conservation measures are necessary to ensure that it continues to play its part in the economy.

*Naika*, March 1988, 11–15.

### Coconut crabs in Vanuatu

The Vanuatu Government, recognizing that stocks of robber or coconut crabs *Birgus latro* were declining rapidly, asked ACIAR (Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research) to investigate the status of the species. The research, which took place between July 1985 and December 1987, revealed that the crabs, which take 12–15 years to reach the size legal for capture, can be over-exploited very

*Oryx* Vol 22 No 4, October 1988

# Briefly . . .

quickly. The researchers also found that recruitment seems to be very low indeed—they found no juveniles at all in two years of searching. One reason may be the steeply shelving coast of much of Vanuatu where the crab larvae may sink beyond their ability to return to shore. To be certain of saving the species, the researchers conclude that it may be necessary to ban all collecting for sale to restaurants and for export. In November the local government council of the Torres and Banks region imposed a temporary ban. This will remain in force until a conservation plan can be prepared to protect both crabs and local income. It is unlikely that a total ban on collecting will occur and the researchers recommend a number of measures to prevent local extinction, including a publicity campaign, strong legislation on crab sales, further research, provision of sanctuaries and, in the long term, re-seeding areas with artificially reared juveniles. *Naika*, March 1988, 1–4.

## Meetings

### Nature Management and Sustainable Development

An International Congress on Nature Management and Sustainable Development will be held at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands, from 6–9 December 1988. The topics to be covered are: Climatic change and rises in the sea level; Management of tropical forests, European forests and Mountain forests in the Third World; Protected areas for sustaining society; Grasslands and desertification control; Wetlands; Trans-boundary rivers and *The seas*. Further information on content from The Foundation for Nature Management and Sustainable Development, PO Box 1141, 9701 BC Groningen, The Netherlands and on organization from Congressbureau Groningen, PO Box 72, 9700 AB Groningen, The Netherlands.

### The Management and Welfare of Invertebrates in Captivity

This conference, organized by the National Federation of Zoological Gardens of Great Britain and Ireland, is a result of the report *Butterfly Houses in Briefly*

*Britain: The Conservation Implications*, by N. M. Collins, published by IUCN in 1987 (see *Oryx*, 21, 207–208). The topics cover all aspects of invertebrates in captivity. It will be held on 9–10 December 1988 at The Royal Entomological Society of London. The programme and registration form are available from the Executive Secretary, The National Federation of Zoological Gardens, Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.

### International ornithological congress

The 20th International Ornithological Congress will take place in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 2–9 December 1990, and will focus on *The World of Birds—a Southern Perspective*. Details from: The Secretary-General, Dr B. D. Bell, 20th International Congress, Zoology Department, Victoria University of Wellington, Private Bag, Wellington, New Zealand.

### Pheasant symposium

The 4th International Pheasant Symposium will be held near Beijing, China, on 9–11 October 1989. It is being organized by the World Pheasant Association and details are available from Jane Skelton, WPA China Symposium, c/o Trade Coaters Ltd, 34 Mead Lane, Chertsey, Surrey, UK.

### OSME celebrates

The Ornithological Society of the Middle East is celebrating its 10th anniversary on 26 November in London. Members and non-members can attend an afternoon of lectures on Middle Eastern themes, plus various other entertainments and a cream tea. Tickets are available for a minimum charge of £5.00 and all income from the event will go directly to conservation. Details from The Secretary, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK.

### Plant ecology and conservation

An international symposium on Conservation Phytoecology will be held in Beijing, China, on 5–9 September 1989. The topics to be covered are: vegetation and ecosystems in nature reserves; protection of endangered and rare plants; designation and management of nature

reserves; restoration of disturbed vegetation; and the wise and rational use of plant resources. Further details available from Assoc. Prof. Chen Weilie, Institute of Botany, Academia Sinica, # 141 Xizhimenwai Ave, Beijing 100044, China.

## Publications

### Buy a monograph—help save a forest

From early 1989 a series of monographs of living primates will be published as separate loose-leaf editions, each featuring a single species or species-group. Each will contain one or more full-page colour plates, line drawings, authoritative up-to-date text and distribution maps. Edited by Jan B. Kaiser, Marc G. M. van Roosmalen, Russell A. Mittermeier and William L. R. Oliver, and illustrated by Piero Cozzaglio, the monographs are being produced in close collaboration with the WWF and all profits will be used to purchase key areas of natural habitat or to enhance the protection of some of the world's most threatened primate species.

## People

Dr Thomas Lovejoy, of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, has been awarded the 1988 Institute for Social Invention Third World Award for an idea he first proposed in 1984—Debt-for-Nature Swaps, whereby Western conservation organizations redeem part of a Third World nation's debt in return for that country providing funds for nature conservation.

Mr Ignacio Pop, Senior Warden of the Cockscomb Jaguar Reserve in Belize, and Mr Rafael Sancez, who has made an invaluable contribution towards the conservation of the monarch butterfly in Mexico, have each been presented with a WWF Award for Conservation Merit.

## Obituary

Dr Luis Varona, Cuba's foremost crocodile researcher and one of the founding members of the IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group and a contributor to *Oryx*, died in 1987 after a long illness.