

## INTERNATIONAL

**Revision of leopard subspecies?**

A molecular genetic analysis of 13 populations of *Panthera pardus* suggests a revision is needed of the 27 described leopard subspecies. The analysis found that phylogenetic differences support subspecies recognition for six geographically isolated groups and indicates that leopard taxonomy be revised to comprise only eight subspecies: the North African leopard *P. p. pardus*, the North Persian leopard *P. p. saxicolor*, the Indian leopard *P. p. fusca*, the Sri Lankan leopard *P. p. kotiya*, the Javan leopard *P. p. melas*, the Amur or Far Eastern leopard *P. p. orientalis*, the North China leopard *P. p. japonensis* and the South China leopard *P. p. delacuri*. However, the study sample failed to incorporate data from preserved material, physical differences were not taken into account and sample sizes and origins may be inadequate. Sources: *Conservation Biology*, August 1996, 1115–1132; *Cat News*, Autumn 1996, 9.

**Register of marine organisms**

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (of UNESCO), in partnership with the National Museum of Natural History in Leiden, the Netherlands, and the Expert Center for Taxonomic Identification, the Netherlands, is developing a register of marine organisms as a tool to assist governments in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity. It is also hoped that the register will build up a basis for an internationally agreed taxonomic terminology of

marine organisms. Internet: <http://www.unesco.org:80/ioc> Source: *Sea Wind*, April/June 1996, 26–28.

**Mongolia joins CITES**

Mongolia acceded to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on 4 April 1996, bringing the total number of Parties to the Convention to 132. Source: *Traffic Bulletin*, August 1996, 37.

## EUROPE

**Call for logging moratorium**

The protection of Swedish forests and the implementation of Swedish forest policy has been severely criticized in a recent report by Parliamentary Auditors (an independent body directed by members of the Swedish Parliament). They have reported views and concerns expressed by Swedish environmental organizations for many years. Old-growth forests are continually under threat of being logged in Sweden and there is a lack of resources for forest protection and unclear policies on biodiversity protection. Only 3.4 per cent of productive forest land is protected and nearly 1800 forest-living species are on the national Red Data List. The auditors recommend a moratorium on logging. Source: *Taiga News*, August 1996, 4.

**Rhino horns seized**

Rhino horns, worth almost £3 million were recovered by police in London on 3 September 1996. Weighing 240 kg, the seizure is the largest ever recorded. The horns are thought to have been

destined for Taiwanese, Hong Kong and Chinese communities in England. The horns were mainly from animals shot earlier this century, probably obtained from private collections. Source: *The Times*, 4 September 1996, 1.

**Large tortoiseshell returns**

Large tortoiseshell butterfly *Nymphalis polychloros* larvae have been observed on elm trees at Limburg in the south of the Netherlands. This is the first recorded sighting in the country since the 1960s. Source: *Butterfly Conservation News*, Autumn/Winter 1996, 16.

**Lynx returned to Bavaria**

Lynx *Lynx lynx*, reintroduced into eastern Bavaria in the early 1970s, in 1982 and 1989, have prospered in the forests on the border area of Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic. Local landowners, unaware of the reintroduction, are angry at the lack of consultation, and management of this lynx population will require dialogue between all parties concerned. Source: *Cat News*, Autumn 1996, 18.

**Canals threaten wildlife**

A proposed eastern-German engineering scheme, which aims to connect Berlin with Hanover by new canals and the conversion of the River Havel to a canal, will have a devastating impact on river ecology and the surrounding wetlands. Disruption to the water table may also affect seven nature reserves. No environmental impact analysis has been carried out for the scheme in its entirety but final planning permission may be imminent. Source: *BBC Wildlife*, November 1996, 60.

### Doves hunted

Illegal hunting is threatening turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur* populations across much of Europe. French and European laws banning the hunting of doves during their spring migration are being flouted as these birds migrate along the French Atlantic coast. The LPO (BirdLife partner in France) plans to take the French Government to court for failing to act appropriately to uphold the law and the EU Birds Directive. *Source: World Birdwatch*, September 1996, 5.

### Environmental Protection for Romania

Romania's new Environmental Protection Act came into force in January 1996 and a new forestry code followed in July. The Act aims to conserve biological diversity and ecosystems, and makes provision for the protection of natural resources, biodiversity, and protected areas. The forestry code aims to regulate forest development and ensure its integrity. *Source: Naturopa newsletter*, 96–7, 3.

### Recovery for pearl mussel

A species of mollusc last recorded in 1916 has been rediscovered by researchers from the Museo de Ciencias Naturales, Madrid. The pearl mussel *Margaritifera auricularia* was strictly protected by the Bern Convention in 1987, and in 1992 the Standing Committee of the Convention recommended a survey of the species in the River Ebro. Twenty individuals were found alive in a channel close to the river. There is still concern for the future of this species, however, because its larvae spend a parasitic phase in the gills of a sturgeon that is

no longer found in the Ebro. The Spanish Government will implement a recovery plan for the mussel.

*Source: Naturopa newsletter*, 96–6, 3.

### Dam effects park

The construction of a new artificial barrier to provide water for irrigation of farmland, in the lower Guadalquivir River in south-west Spain is expected to have a negative impact on the Doñana National Park and its surroundings. The dam will alter the mixture of salt and freshwater in the estuary, with resultant effects on wildlife.

*Source: Quercus*, September 1996, 20–22.

### Slender-billed curlew

A new project has started in Greece for the slender-billed curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*, one of Europe's most threatened species. Co-ordinated by the Greek Ministry of Agriculture, the project hopes to conduct surveys, site evaluation and satellite tracking, and will include a public awareness and educational campaign. During fieldwork from March to May 1996, three confirmed sightings of the species were made in the Evros Delta, Greece, and the first spring sighting in Hungary for 20 years was recorded in May. *Source: World Birdwatch*, September 1996, 4.

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## NORTH EURASIA

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### Russian reserve

The Russian Government signed a decree in April 1996 to establish a new nature reserve on the Severnaya Zemlya archipelago. The 420,000-ha

reserve includes Domaseniy Island, home to the largest colony of ivory gulls *Pagophila eburnea* in the world, and the Parizhskoy Komuny Peninsula, habitat for many rare plants, arctic fox and reindeer *Rangifer tarandus*.

*Source: WWF News*, Summer 1996, 3.

### Reserve expanded

Sikhote Alin Nature Reserve in the Russian Far East has been expanded by 673 sq km to cover a total area of 4143 sq km. The mixed deciduous forests are vital for the conservation of the endangered Amur tiger *Panthera tigris altaica* and provide refuge for the brown bear *Ursus arctos*, the Asiatic bear *Ursus thibetanus*, red deer *Cervus elaphus* and wild boar *Sus scrofa*.

*Source: Cat News*, Autumn 1996, 5.

### Energy crisis puts forests at risk

An energy crisis caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union is threatening the survival of some of Eastern Europe's finest forests. Forests are at risk of being overcut for firewood in areas such as Georgia, which depended on central energy reserves under the old regime. *Source: BBC Wildlife*, September 1996, 60.

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## NORTH AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST

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### Damage to reef

A bulk carrier, the *Million Hope*, holding hundreds of tonnes of oil on board was grounded on a reef in the Strait of Tiran in the Red Sea on 20 June 1996. A storm pushed the carrier along the edge of the reef, causing

considerable damage, before grounding on the seabed. The accident occurred in an important marine park and prime location for tourist diving. A salvage team is working to remove oil from the carrier and prevent further damage.

Source: *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, August/September 1996, 584.

### Gazelles over-hunted

Two expeditions have failed to find any evidence of the dorcas gazelle *Gazella dorcas* in the Qattara Depression of the Western Desert, Egypt, once a stronghold for the animal. Protected under Egyptian law since 1966, the gazelle was once widespread in Sinai and the Western and Eastern Deserts. It is now threatened by both local and expatriate hunters. A total ban on all hunting was declared in northern Sinai and the Western Desert in 1994, in response to a massive decline in a number of species, but is inadequately enforced. The Egyptian Wildlife Service suffers from understaffing, poor funding and an inadequate strategy for the management of hunting. Another of Egypt's gazelle species, the slender-horned gazelle *G. leptoceros*, is listed as vulnerable by the IUCN and may have been hunted to extinction in Egypt. Without intervention, the dorcas gazelle may face a similar fate.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, September 1996, 59.

### Mudflats and mangrove

An area of 4 sq km of mudflats and mangrove in the United Arab Emirates is to be declared a protected area by the Ruler of Sharjah. The area hosts 15–20 pairs of an endemic race of white collared kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* and is

classified as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International.

Source: *World Birdwatch*, September 1996, 2.

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

### Seal survey and reintroduction

The Sahara–Mauritania population of monk seals *Monachus monachus* on the west coast of Africa may be larger than previously estimated; the current estimate is 288 individuals. Survey work has shown that the number of pups counted is larger than the known number of births and does not account for the proportion of adults in the population. Satellite markers are to be used in the search for an unknown breeding cave. Pups that have washed out of breeding caves may be used in a project to reintroduce the species to the Canary Islands where the species became extinct over 400 years ago.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, October 1996, 63.

### Hunting resumes in Ethiopia

The ban on game hunting implemented 3 years ago in Ethiopia has been lifted by the Wildlife Conservation and Development Enterprise, under the Ministry of Agriculture. The restrictions were enforced to allow the volume and diversity of wildlife in the country to be registered.

Source: *Traffic Bulletin*, August 1996, 37.

### Touraco widespread

Recent surveys have revealed that Prince Ruspoli's turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* is not as rare as previous records suggest. It has

been observed for the first time in a number of new localities in the Borana and Bale Provinces of southern Ethiopia. It was also found to inhabit a greater variety of habitats than was previously thought, including areas disturbed by humans.

Source: *Avicultural Magazine*, 102 (2), 91.

### Elephant survey

The results of a recent aerial survey of elephants in North Luangwa National Park, Zambia, has shown that the population has not increased over 5 years, despite high security against poaching. The population remains at approximately 1800. Heavy poaching in the 1970s decimated the population, which fell from 17,000 in 1973 to 1800 in 1991. The recovery of this population is thought to have been affected by selective poaching of the fittest, most reproductively active elephants.

Source: *African Wildlife Update*, October 1996, 7.

### Bush meat on the increase

Increasing evidence suggests that the bush-meat trade is expanding and having an increasingly negative impact on wildlife populations in east and southern Africa. TRAFFIC has launched a study into the impact of the trade, documenting its dynamics, the impact on wildlife and protected areas, and its role in rural communities and economies. It will focus on Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Source: *TRAFFIC Dispatches*, October 1996, 1 & 3.

### Elephant poaching in Kenya

Poaching and illegal hunting of semi-tame elephants *Loxodonta africana* from Amboseli National



Captured hiroa *Damaliscus hunteri* being tagged for later identification and monitoring (Hiroa Task Force).

Park in Kenya is on the increase. Eight big tuskers have been killed since June 1996 and three females have disappeared, presumed dead; their calves are now being cared for by foster mothers. All the elephants killed had crossed the border into neighbouring Tanzania where trophy hunting is still legal. A 13-km-wide buffer zone along the border of Amboseli, in which hunting is banned, has been in place since 1994 but has proved difficult to enforce.

Sources: *The Times*, 15 August 1996, 13; *BBC Wildlife*, October 1996, 61.

### Hiroa translocation

As an emergency conservation measure hiroa *Damaliscus hunteri* have been translocated from their natural range in Garissa District, Kenya, to Tsavo National Park. In August 1996 35 animals were captured and moved including at least 20 pregnant females. This has doubled the Tsavo population. The translocation aims to

reinforce the population in Tsavo to conserve the species in the short term while efforts are made to resolve the problems causing near extinction of the species, now endemic to Kenya. Fauna & Flora International has been helping the project with support from the 100% Fund. Source: Fauna & Flora International, 7 October 1996.

### Logging threat to rain forests

The government of Gabon has announced plans to review the status of La Lopé Forest Reserve, one of the country's largest wildlife reserves. Over recent years the government has allocated almost all of the country's rain forest for commercial exploitation. Logging is permitted and carried out in most of the eight protected areas in Gabon. Legislation for stricter controls over protected areas has been passed but has never been put into practice. By reviewing the status of La Lopé it would appear that loggers are being

further encouraged to encroach on wildlife reserves.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, October 1996, 64.

### Rhino deaths...

An adult male northern white rhino *Ceratotherium simum cottoni* was shot by poachers in Garamba National Park, Zaire, in February 1996, the first confirmed shooting of a rhino in the park in 12 years. This incident was followed by the shooting of a 10-year-old pregnant female rhino on 28 March. Garamba is home to the last known wild northern white rhino subspecies, now reduced to 29 individuals. Poaching pressure in the country has increased with 12 years of civil war with southern Sudan and a deteriorating national economy. With easy access to arms local people, refugees and rebel armies poach from the park for bushmeat and for trade. Local populations of buffalo and elephant are also suffering.

Source: *Svara*, May/June 1996, 14.

### ...and births

A northern white rhino unexpectedly gave birth to a calf in Garamba National Park, Zaire in June 1996. Guards have named the infant Mbolifue, meaning 'a gift from heaven'. The birth is welcome news at a time of grave concern over renewed poaching.

Source: *WWF News*, Autumn 1996, 5.

### Congo bay owl rediscovered

The Congo bay owl *Phodilus prigoginei*, has been rediscovered in eastern Zaire. The female owl was captured in the Itombwe Forest on 1 May 1996, measured, photographed and ringed before release back into

the forest. Surveys in the past have all failed to locate this owl and this is the first sighting since the bird was first discovered by collectors in 1951. Itombwe is the largest area of montane and bamboo forest in Africa and is considered the most important area for bird conservation on the continent – 563 species have been recorded here. The area is unprotected and faces threats from agriculture, logging and hunting.

Sources: *World Birdwatch*, September 1996, 3; *African Wildlife Update*, August 1996, 6–7.

### Protected rhinos threatened

Intensive Protection Zones (IPZs), put in place to protect Zimbabwe's remaining black rhinos, may be threatened by a lack of funding. A Zimbabwean conservation group, the Zambezi Society, claims that the government's Parks Department may not be able to maintain its protection strategy, that de-horning and radio-collaring are not being maintained, and that levels of staffing and ground protection are inadequate. The Parks Department refutes the allegations, claiming that no poaching incidents have been reported for 2 years and that the rhino is thriving, with population growth rates of more than 10 per cent per year. Sources: *African Wildlife Update*, August 1996, 14; *Zimbabwe Wildlife*, July–September 1996, 21–22.

### Hunting to rehabilitate park

British researchers have started a project to rehabilitate one of the most important of southern Africa's national parks, Gorongosa, the largest and most biologically diverse in Mozambique. The long-term aim of the research is to create an economically profitable



Congo bay owl *Phodilus prigoginei*, newly rediscovered at Itombwe, Zaire (Tom Butynski/BirdLife International).

park, restocked with 'desirable species for safari hunting', mainly elephant, hippopotamus and buffalo. The company running the project, ECT International, says safari hunting is 'a highly profitable and economically sound form of land use'.

Source: *New Scientist*, 31 August 1996, 7.

### Botswana inquiry

The decline of Botswana's wildlife will be investigated by a team led by Dr Douglas Crowe, former assistant director of research for Botswana's Department of Wildlife and National Parks. The inquiry is expected to investigate the feasibility of privatizing some of the Wildlife Department's functions or establishing an independent parks board. Source: *African Wildlife Update*, August 1996, 2.

### Turtles increase in Tongaland

The population of loggerhead turtles *Caretta caretta* on the Tongaland coast has doubled over 30 years, from an average of 200 females per season to well over 400. The leatherback turtle *Dermochelys coriacea* has

also seen a population increase from 21 females to an average of about 80. The sea turtle programme was started by the Natal Parks Board in 1963 and is the longest-running project of its kind.

Source: *Africa Environment and Wildlife*, May/June 1996, 8.

### Illegal succulents

A TRAFFIC horticultural survey has discovered that thousands of southern African succulent plant species are being sold on the international market, frequently without permits. Of the 7000 succulent taxa covered by the survey, 5500 have been offered for sale internationally over the past 5 years. Over 1000 species, including more than 100 Red Data Book species, were exported with no provincial or CITES permits.

Source: *Our Living World*, May/June 1996, 9.

### Attacks among wild animals

Aberrant behaviour among wild animals in local game reserves is increasingly a cause for concern in South Africa. Recent attacks by elephants, in particular, rhinoceroses and giraffes, on other animals and humans have been reported. Specialists suggest that the behaviour could be a consequence of trauma and stress caused by increasing trade, culling and relocation programmes.

Source: *The Times*, 6 July 1996, 16.

### Wild dog increase...

A photographic survey of wild dogs *Lycan pictus* in Kruger National Park and adjacent conservation areas indicates a healthy viable population. The study was carried out between May 1994 and June 1995 to follow up surveys carried out

in 1988–89. A population estimate of 434 wild dogs was obtained, a 22 per cent increase on the previous survey. In general the results were favourable, with increasing numbers of packs, high breeding success, large litter and pack size and low pup mortality rates.

Source: *Il Licaone* (The Wild Dog and African Nature Protection Fund), No. 8, 6–9.

### ...and decrease

A mystery disease is responsible for the deaths of five packs of wild dogs, the most endangered predator in Africa, in the Santawani/Moremi region. Tests on tissue samples have proved that the dogs did not die of distemper or rabies, the most common killers of these animals. Efforts are being made to determine a cause for the deaths.

Source: *Kalahari Conservation Society Newsletter*, September 1996, 11.

### Fire kills buffaloes

A bush fire, thought to be started by sparks from local household fires, at Mamil National Park, Namibia, in August 1996 killed over 100 buffaloes *Synceros caffer*. Fires are relatively common in the area but this is the first record of such a major loss of wildlife. The park is home to Namibia's largest and best-established buffalo population.

Source: *African Wildlife Update*, October 1996, 1.

### Lions shot

In April 1996 a pride of 21 lions *Panthera leo* broke through the fence of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, Botswana, into neighbouring Namibian farmland. A farmer shot 14 of the

animals after they attacked and killed several sheep. The lions were driven to leave the park after 3 years of drought in the Kalahari. The South Africa National Parks Board and the Namibian Ministry of the Environment have entered into negotiations to prevent another similar incident.

Source: *African Wildlife Update*, August 1996, 1 & 8.

### Weather kills wildlife

Snow storms in early July 1996 have resulted in devastation in the mountain state of Lesotho and in large parts of South Africa. Large numbers of wild animals, including oribi *Ourebi ourebi*, klipspringer *Oreotragus oreotragus*, impala *Aepyceros melampus*, reedbuck *Redunca arundinum*, blesbok *Damaliscus dorcas*, zebra *Equus burchellii* and roan antelope *Hippotragus equinus* were killed in the blizzards that swept the national parks, game and nature reserves of Drakensberg KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State Province.

Source: *African Wildlife Update*, August 1996, 1 & 8.

### Captive-bred griffon

The first-ever captive-bred and parent-reared Cape griffon vulture *Gyps coprotheres* is soon to be released in the mountainous area north-west of Johannesburg. The chick hatched on 16 June 1996 at a South African research centre. Both parents suffer from osteodystrophy, a bone disease, caused by lack of calcium in the diet. Vulture are susceptible to the disease because of a decline in carcasses on the veld.

Source: *African Wildlife Update*, October 1996, 3.

### New chameleons

As many as 40 'new' varieties of dwarf chameleons of the

genus *Bradypodion* may exist in South Africa, according to a study funded by the Institute of Natural Resources and WWF South Africa. The exact number is still unknown but the 15 species currently recognized in South Africa is expected to double. Many may be threatened by habitat destruction and airborne pollutants.

Source: *Africa Environment and Wildlife*, May/June 1996, 8.

### Whale calves

Record numbers of southern right whale calves *Lissodelphis peronii* were counted off the South African coast during a WWF-funded aerial survey in 1996. Dr Peter Best of Pretoria University's Mammal Research Institute recorded 360 southern right whales, including 109 calves, between Muizenberg and Nature's Valley during the work. The area is thought to hold the largest nursery for right whales in the world.

Source: *Africa Environment and Wildlife*, May/June 1996, 8.

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## SOUTH & SOUTH EAST ASIA

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### Endangered rhino

A study carried out by TRAFFIC India, with the support of WWF India, reports that the greater one-horned rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*, may be the most endangered of the country's large species. It is found in nine protected areas in Nepal and India. Only about 1500 exist in the wild. Hunting has been banned since 1910 allowing the population to steadily increase in India but poaching in the 1980s and 1990s has left at least 682 animals dead. Demand for rhinoceros horn in Asian traditional

medicine is a continued threat. The illegal domestic trade is small and most rhino horns traded in India are destined for the international black market. TRAFFIC investigators passed the names of 125 poachers and traders to the authorities.  
 Source: *TRAFFIC Dispatches*, October 1996, 12–13.

### Lions killed for claws

At least 14 Asiatic lions *Panthera leo persica* were poached in Gujarat State, India in 1996. The paws had been removed from the animals, suggesting that they were killed for their claws, which are made into good-luck pendants. A census in 1995 suggested a population of 304 Asiatic lions, the last survivors of a subspecies that once ranged from Macedonia to northern and central India.  
 Source: *Cat News*, Autumn 1996, 2.

### Indian insects protected

The Indian Environment Ministry has brought in new measures in an attempt to prevent the smuggling of winged insects. Customs officials have been provided with identification charts in an effort to combat smugglers. Two German tourists were recently caught trying to leave the country with 15,000 preserved butterflies and moths concealed in their luggage.  
 Source: *Butterfly Conservation News*, Autumn/Winter 1996, 16.

### Contiguous tiger reserve

A protected area of 4000 sq km has been created by the expansion of three small, unconnected tiger reserves in the mangrove forests of Bangladesh, to adjoin the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve in India. The Sundarbans mangrove forests in the delta region of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers hold as many as 400–500

tigers, the largest population in the world.  
 Source: *Cat News*, Autumn 1996, 5.

### Giant elephants

An expedition to the forests of northern Nepal has confirmed the existence of a race of giant elephants. The animals are about a foot taller than other Asian elephants *Elephas maximus*, with pronounced domes on their foreheads. Genetic tests show that these elephants (the Beasts of Bardia) may be a subspecies of *E. maximus*. It is believed that there may be as few as 100 Bardia elephants left.  
 Source: *The Times*, 15 July 1996, 9.

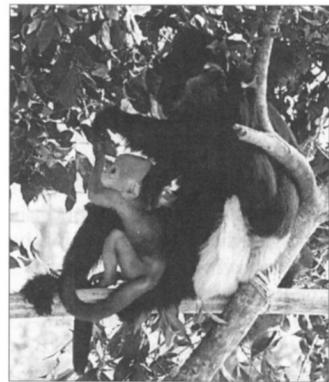
### Blue sheep at Myanmar

Evidence has been found in Myanmar of a population of blue sheep *Pseudois nayaur*, a species mainly restricted to Tibet and previously unrecorded in this area. Horns thought to have originated from the range of Himalayan peaks locally known as Ice Mountain have been identified and hunters have confirmed the existence of a blue sheep population. One hunter killed four of these animals in 1990.  
 Source: *Wildlife Conservation*, August 1996, 10.

### Thailand tiger project

A tiger project in its second year in Thailand is funded by the Hong Kong Bank, and managed by the Seub Nakhasathien Foundation and the wildlife division of the Royal Forest Department with help from Minnesota University, USA. The project started with workshops to train forest rangers in survey skills and the rangers are now doing regular surveys in their protected areas and sending the results to the wildlife division for inclusion in a

database. When rangers report unexpected results, more senior researchers go into the area to check. Meanwhile, the country's forest cover and conservation areas are being mapped using Geographical Information System technology. These maps, overlaid with the survey results, will be used to produce a more accurate estimate of Thailand's surviving tiger population and a conservation action plan.  
 Source: Belinda Stewart-Cox.



Delacour's langur *Trachypithecus delacouri* female with infant born in captivity (Tilo Nadler).

### Langurs born in captivity

In July 1996 a female Delacour's langur *Trachypithecus delacouri* was born at the Endangered Primate Rescue Centre, Cuc Phuong National Park, Vietnam. The Delacour's langur is one of the most endangered primate species in the world with a maximum total population of 130–180 in the wild. This is the first to be born in captivity. Two Hatinh langurs *Trachypithecus hatinhensis francoisi* were also born at the centre in 1996. More than 30 monkeys are currently kept at the centre, many of which were confiscated from hunters, merchants and illegal animal shipments.  
 Source: Roland Wirth, Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations.

### Pheasant rediscovered

Edward's pheasant *Lophura edwardii*, thought to be extinct in the wild, has been rediscovered in Bach Ma National Park, central Vietnam. A mating pair has been caught by local villagers. The last recorded capture of the species was in 1928 and three expeditions between 1988 and 1994 failed to find any trace of the bird. The female has since died from injuries sustained in capture and the male has a broken leg. *Sources: The Times*, 5 September 1996; *WWF News*, Summer 1996, 3.

### Saving Cambodia's forests

The government of Cambodia has agreed to take responsibility for preserving the country's forests. A moratorium has been imposed on logging, and timber exports will be monitored independently. The agreement has been made as a direct result of evidence supplied by a small UK pressure group, Global Witness, which gathered photographic and documentary evidence of large-scale illegal felling and export of timber. In the years following the civil war, Cambodia's forests have been cut down on an industrial scale by both the Khmer Rouge and the Cambodian Government. *Source: BBC Wildlife*, September 1996, 60–61.

### Landmark turtle sanctuary

The world's first conservation area for marine turtles to cross international borders was formally established by the foreign ministers of Malaysia and the Philippines on 31 May 1996. The Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area includes nine islands situated between north Sabah, west Malaysia, and south-west Philippines. They

form the largest green turtle *Chelonia mydas* rookery in South East Asia and an important hawksbill turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata* nesting ground; each year 5440 turtles nest on the islands. Protection is vital because egg production has dropped by 88 per cent over 40 years owing to exploitation for trade and local consumption, fishery-related deaths and loss of habitat due to development. The agreement recognizes that the area, although split by political boundaries, is a single rookery and will be managed jointly by both governments. *Sources: WWF News*, Summer 1996; *Traffic Bulletin*, August 1996, 41.

### Discoveries on Tanimbar

The Tanimbar archipelago in south-east Maluku, Indonesia, has been the focus for two recent discoveries, emphasizing its importance for global biodiversity. In late 1995 a lesser masked-owl *Tyto sororcula* was sighted in the first positive identification in the field since 1922. The species is only recorded from four owls collected on two other islands. More recently the islands' megapode has been designated a separate species *Megapodius tenimberensis*. This brings the number of endemic species in the islands to a total of eight. *Source: World Birdwatch*, September 1996, 4.

### Swamp threatened

An area comprising mainly pristine swamp forest in the Indonesian province of Central Kalimantan, Borneo, is to be drained and felled for agriculture using £145 million from the country's 'reforestation fund'. The government plans to clear 1 million ha of land for agriculture over 3 years. The swamp

forest is little studied and known to have a rich biodiversity, supporting at least five primate species, 140 species of birds – of which six are rare or endangered – and providing an important breeding area for fish. The forest is also home for the Dayak tribespeople. The land is to be used to create rice fields and plantations, land-use claimed to be unsuitable for the acidic deep peat area. *Source: BBC Wildlife*, October 1996, 62.

### Hope for Javan hawk eagle

A study of Indonesia's national bird, the Javan hawk eagle *Spizaetus hartelsi*, has resulted in sightings of the bird in nearly all suitable forest habitats on Java. The population is now estimated to be 126–160 pairs. The eagle still faces threats from habitat loss and trade. Recruitment to the population is slow because the birds breed only once every 2–3 years, laying a single egg. An action plan for the conservation of this Javan endemic is to be prepared. *Source: Press Release*, Birdlife International Indonesia Programme, 29 August 1996.

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## EAST ASIA

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### False reforestation claims

Claims made by China over large-scale reforestation are largely false, according to Professor Vaclav Smil of the University of Manitoba. False reporting, severe pest problems, fire and sapling mortality meant that, of the 3–5 million ha claimed to be afforested each year in the late 1980s, the maximum real net gain was only 1.2–1.8 million ha. The report claims that by the year 2000 almost 70 per cent of



China's state forestry bureaus will have no trees to fell.  
 Source: *BBC Wildlife*, September 1996, 60–61.

### Clamp down on trade

As part of a campaign to stop the illegal trade in endangered species, the Hong Kong authorities have called on the public to refrain from buying medicines containing tiger *Panthera tigris* or rhino ingredients and to report any illegal activities relating to endangered species. Training and education also form part of this campaign. The authorities recently fined two traders \$US31,000 and \$US18,500 for offering medicines containing protected species and in June, a man was sentenced to 15 month's imprisonment for illegal sale of wildlife at a medicine store.  
 Source: *TRAFFIC Bulletin*, August 1996, 39.

### Battle to save wetland

The world's most important winter site for black-faced spoonbill *Platalea minor*, Chiku, near Tainan, Taiwan, is under threat of development. Chiku provides refuge for 300 black-faced spoonbills (total estimated world population 400) and is the prime feeding ground for Tainan's breeding little egrets *Egretta garzetta* and black-crowned night herons *Nycticorax nycticorax*. In June 1996 Taiwan's minister of economy announced plans for an industrial site, dominated by petrochemical and steel works, to be built on this coastal site. The development is to be established within 6 months, despite the lack of a completed environmental assessment. The Taiwan Association for Coastal Protection argues that water resources will be over burdened and that more suitable land is available.

Conservationists hope to save the area as a national park.  
 Source: *BBC Wildlife*, September 1996, 59.

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## NORTH AMERICA

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### Canada's new national park

Wapusk became Canada's 37th national park on 24 April 1996. Situated between the Churchill and Nelson rivers, in northern Manitoba, it contains flat inland expanses of tundra, eskers and permafrost and is home to one of the world's largest known polar bear *Thalarctos maritimus* denning sites. The park covers 11,457 sq km and, in addition to protecting critical habitat for polar bears, will protect caribou *Rangifer tarandus*, moose *Alces alces*, wolves *Canis lupus* and wolverines *Gulo gulo*, and provide shelter for hundreds of thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds that nest and gather for migration along the Hudson Bay coast.  
 Source: *Nature Alert*, Summer 1996, 4.

### ...and more on the way

At the World Conservation Congress in Montreal, Canada, in October the Canadian Prime Minister announced the creation of two new national parks. The first will be in Wager Bay on the west coast of Hudson Bay, a tundra region. The second will be on Bathhurst Island near the North Pole. Detailed negotiation will begin with the Inuit peoples, who share jurisdiction of these areas.  
 Source: World Conservation Congress, Montreal.

### Pristine forest logged

In June 1996 activists blockaded a logging operation in

Clayoquot Sound on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. Old growth forest is still being logged contrary to the recommendations of scientists. Of the 170 major watersheds (5000 ha or more) on Vancouver Island, only 11 remain unaffected by logging. Friends of Clayoquot Sound is calling for full protection of all remaining pristine watersheds.  
 Source: *Taiga News*, August 1996, 2.

### Support for coral reefs

The US State Department has contributed a grant of \$US25,000 to the Coral Reef Fish Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission to support the production of a Global Overview of the Status of Coral Reef Fishes. The grant will enable the completion of a survey of coral reef fishes and habitat in over 100 countries and a Geographical Information Satellite analysis of about 2000 species of coral fish.  
 Source: *Sea Wind*, April/June 1996, 6.

### Alaskan food shortage

Coastal and marine wildlife populations in Alaska have experienced devastating declines in recent years. The Fish and Wildlife Service recently reported reductions in sea duck populations and similar decreases have been observed in harbour seals *Vitulina kurilensis*, Steller's sea lions *Eumetopias jubatus*, thick-billed and common murre, *Uria lomvia* and *U. aalge*, and red- and black-legged kittiwakes, *Rissa brevirostris* and *R. tridactyla*. A 1994 review of sea ducks in the North Pacific Rim found that 13 of 17 species studied showed a marked decrease in numbers. The declines in some species may be due to food

shortages, thought to have resulted from over-exploitation of fish stocks.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, October 1996, 59–60.

### Winter home for eider ducks

Scientists of the US Fish and Wildlife Service have found the primary wintering area of the spectacled eider duck *Somateria fischeri*. Using satellite transmitters small enough to implant in the duck's body cavity, the location and body temperature of migrating ducks can be monitored. Little is known about the distribution of this species, listed as threatened in 1993, because most of its life is spent at sea. In February 1995 scientists flew to an area of pack ice in the Bering Sea following a satellite signal from the area. Dense flocks of eiders were found in holes within the pack ice north-east of St Matthew Island, Alaska, now believed to be the primary wintering area. More satellite transmitters were deployed during 1996 and locations from these will be used to guide further aerial surveys of moulting and wintering areas.

Source: *Endangered Species Bulletin*, September/October 1996, 7.

### Caribou translocation

In April 1996, 19 woodland caribou *Rangifer tarandus* were translocated from British Columbia to the Selkirk Mountains of north-east Washington, USA, as part of a recovery effort for this species. Since their release the relocated caribou have travelled throughout the area, some joining caribou that were already present. At least one calf has been born and there have been two deaths from suspected

predation. An estimated 40–48 caribou will be introduced over 2 years.

Source: *Endangered Species Bulletin*, September/October 1996, 20.

### Grizzly bear recovery

An intensive 6-year study has concluded that grizzly bears *Ursus arctos horribilis*, thought to be extinct in Washington State, still live in the North Cascades area. An area of 10,000 sq miles has been designated the sixth 'grizzly bear recovery zone'. Restoration plans have been stalled, however due to lack of federal funding and Washington State wildlife bureaucracy.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation*, August 1996, 12.

### Whale rehabilitation

The world's first centre for the rehabilitation of stranded marine animals is to be built in the town of Bourne, Cape Cod, Massachusetts, USA. The National Marine Life Center will rescue, rehabilitate, study and release all stranded marine animals.

Source: *New Scientist*, 24 August 1996, 13.

### Forestry success

The first commercial timber reservation in the USA to be certified as well-managed and endorsed by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is owned by the Menominee Indian tribe along the Wolf River in Wisconsin. The reservation consists of 250,000 acres of old boreal forest. Over 25 species are grown including oak, beech, maple, white pine and hemlock. Harvesting is carried out no faster than the forest is replenished. The management of the forest combines

a tribal ethic of community, continuity and respect for nature with some of the most advanced scientific forestry practices in the world.

Sources: *The Independent (UK)*, 4 March 1996; *TRAFFIC Bulletin*, August 1996, 43–44.

### Pumas protected

The population of California has voted 58 per cent in favour of maintaining protection of mountain lions *Puma concolor* despite fatal attacks on two women in 1994 and an increase in killing of livestock and pets. The population is estimated at about 6000, an increase of about 3500 since 1972.

Source: *Cat News*, Autumn 1996, 11.

### Redwoods saved

The logging company Pacific Lumber has agreed to spare a grove of ancient redwoods at Headwaters Forest on California's north coast. If approved, California and the US Congress will acquire the 1200-ha grove and 1820 ha of adjacent forest for £250 million. Pacific Lumber is awaiting government approval of a management plan that would protect wildlife and allow logging on a sustainable-yield basis on 83,770 ha of surrounding land.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, November 1996, 59.

### Murre success

Decoys and recordings set up to attract common murrets or guillemots *Uria aalge* back to abandoned nesting grounds on Devil's Slide Rock, California have already shown promising results (See *Oryx* 30 [4], 245). The birds began to land and court on the island only days after the decoys were set up in January 1996. Between six and

seven pairs have been recorded as laying eggs and at least three eggs have hatched. This is the first record of murres breeding here in almost a decade.

Source: *Audubon*, September 1996, 107.

### Botulism kills sea birds

An outbreak of avian botulism (type C) at southern California's Salton Sea has killed more than 7900 white pelicans *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*, 1000 brown pelicans *P. occidentalis* and 700 great egrets *Casmerodius albus*. The epidemic, which began in mid-August 1996, threatened the arrival of more than a million migratory wildfowl and shorebirds. Small outbreaks of botulism are not uncommon here at this time year, but affect only scavengers and ducks which ingest the toxin through dead animals or maggots. The disease in fish-eating species suggests the presence of the toxin in live fish. Work is under way to remove sick and dead birds before migrants arrive to stop the toxin spreading.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, Autumn 1996, 66–67.

### Head-start for Kemp's ridley turtles

A project to establish a secondary nesting colony at Padre Island National Seashore (PINS) near Corpus Christi, Texas, has resulted in the first-ever documented case of a sea turtle species nesting at an experimental imprinting site and outside of captivity after being 'head-started'. Between 1978 and 1988, 22,507 eggs were collected from the Rancho Nuevo, Mexico, nesting site and transported to PINS for incubation. Attempts were made to imprint the eggs and hatchlings to PINS so that they would return to nest as adults.

The hatchlings were raised in captivity (head-started), and tagged prior to release in a variety of locations. In 1996 five Kemp's ridley nests were observed at PINS and two female turtles nesting there were identified by tags, which dated their release at 1983 and 1986.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, July 1996, 5–7.

### Help for Hawaiian crow

A lawsuit has prevented a private landowner in Hawaii from logging native forest that is home for the endangered Hawaiian crow *Corvus hawaiiensis*. The species was abundant in the early 1900s but suffered a massive decline in recent decades due to a combination of disease, predation, logging and development. The wild population is now estimated to be only 14 birds. The forest is also the habitat of three other endangered birds. The landowner must now complete a conservation plan that complies with the US Endangered Species Act before attempting any logging. The US Fish and Wildlife Service hope to purchase the land.

Source: *Audubon*, September 1996, 107.

### Hope for Schaus swallowtail

The Schaus swallowtail butterfly *Papilio aristodemus ponceanus* may have been saved from extinction by a captive-breeding programme in southern Florida. It is one of the rarest insects in the world and among the first insects protected under the Endangered Species Act. The decline of the species was originally due to habitat loss, aerial application of insecticides and over-collection. By the early 1980s the butterfly's range was severely reduced and in 1992 the population was further

devastated by Hurricane Andrew. Habitat protection is now in place and ground-spraying of mosquito insecticide has been discontinued during the butterfly's breeding season. The captive-breeding programme resulted in successful releases in 1995 and 1996.

Source: *Endangered Species Bulletin*, July/August 1996, 22–23.

### Turtle tumours

A new retrovirus has been discovered in green sea turtles *Chelonia mydas* infected with fibropapillomatosis, a condition previously only associated with the herpes virus. Symptoms of the disease include large skin tumours, particularly around the eyes, mouth and limbs and it is often fatal. Some researchers link vulnerability to the disease to immune system suppression caused by exposure to environmental pollutants in near-shore habitats. The number of cases has greatly increased worldwide and prevalence is especially high in Hawaii and Florida. The first confirmed case of fibropapillomatosis in Western Australian waters has been reported in a green turtle *Chelonia mydas*. New research suggests that the disease may also affect loggerhead turtles *Caretta caretta*, and previous work identified the disease in olive ridley turtles *Lepidochelys olivacea* and flatback turtles *Natator depressus*, raising concern that the disease has spread across species. Sources: *BBC Wildlife*, October 1996, 61; *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, July 1996, 7–9 & 24.

### Salt factory threatens lagoon

Environmentalists are seriously concerned over plans to build the world's biggest salt-production factory at the San

Ignacio Lagoon in Baja California Sur, Mexico. Conservation groups are fighting plans by the Mexican Explotadora de Sal SA and the Japanese Mitsubishi company, to expand the salt-mining industry along the shores of the lagoon, part of the largest protected area in Latin America and one of the world's largest breeding grounds for migrating grey whales *Eschrichtius robustus*. Three World Heritage Sites would be affected if the development goes ahead. The area is also one of the world's largest breeding grounds for migratory birds, a vital hatchery for fish and shellfish and is home to sealions, bottlenose dolphins *Tursiops truncatus*, green turtles *Chelonia mydas* and brown pelicans *Pelecanus occidentalis*.  
Sources: BBC Wildlife, October 1996, 60; Sonar, September 1996, 16–17.

### Proposal to save forest

El Carricito in Mexico may be saved from degradation by the creation of a nature reserve. The area, encompassing 17,000 ha of old pine and oak forest in the Sierra Madre Occidental, provides refuge for many important endemic and threatened birds including the eared quetzal *Pharomachrus sp.* and the thick-billed parrot *Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*.  
Source: World Birdwatch, September 1996, 3.

### Leatherbacks heading for extinction

Research has shown a dramatic collapse in the population of leatherback turtles *Dermochelys coriacea* at the biggest nesting site in Mexico, an area that supports half the world's nesting population. Numbers have been falling steadily

across the world and it is possible that the leatherback population has declined to a critical level, causing the population to crash. Monitoring at Mexiquillo on the Pacific coast of Mexico since 1983/84, has shown that numbers of nests have declined from more than 6500 in 1984 to fewer than 500 during the 1995/96 season. Scientists believe that a similar pattern of decline is occurring at other leatherback nesting sites, which are less well monitored. Uncontrolled domestic harvest and the drift-net fishery have greatly contributed to the decline.  
Sources: Marine Turtle Newsletter, July 1996, 2–5; The Times, 3 September 1996.

### Changes to USA endangered species list

From June to August 1996 four plant species native to the Hawaiian Islands were listed as endangered. Three are endemic to the uninhabited island of Nihoa: *Amaranthus brownii* – an annual herb (only 40 remain); *Pritchardia remota* – a fan-leaved palm of the Arecaceae family (about 680 still exist); and *Schiedia verticillata* – a perennial herb in the pink family Caryophyllaceae numbering fewer than 200. A palm species *Prichardia aylmer-robinsonii*, endemic to the island of Ni'ihau, has also been listed; only two remain in the wild.  
Source: Endangered Species Bulletin, September/October 1996, 23.

## CENTRAL AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

### Captive snakes lay eggs

Antiguan racers *Alsophis antiguae* have laid clutches of five and six eggs at the Jersey



Adult female Antiguan racer *Alsophis antiguae* (Mark Day).

Wildlife Preservation Trust, the first captive egg laying by any species in the genus *Alsophis*. Captive bred snakes will be released on suitable islands off the coast of Antigua once they have been cleared of black rats *Rattus rattus*. Seven species of Eastern Caribbean colubrid snakes (genus *Alsophis*, *Liophis* and *Chironius*) are threatened with extinction.  
Source: Fauna & Flora International.

### Bat survey in Belize

Research carried out on bats in Belize using a sonic detector to record the calls of echolocating bats is giving a very different picture of bat distribution when compared with mist-net surveys. The shaggy-haired bat *Centronycteris maximiliani* had previously been considered rare in Central America, but its distinct vocalization has been recorded frequently using this technique. The bat has very effective echolocation abilities, which allow it to avoid nets.  
Source: Wildlife Conservation, August 1996, 9.

### Shark slaughter

In May 1996 30–40 sharks were slaughtered by an American vessel in the Abacos, the Bahamian waters near Walker's Cay and Little Grand Cay. Over a 4-day period 8–10 sharks were killed daily. The residents of both Cays have

been working since 1994 to establish a national park in the waters and endorse a 'Zero take' rule, which would make such a slaughter of sharks punishable by law.  
 Source: *Sea Wind*, April–June 1996, 29.

### Caribbean botanic network

A 3-year initiative organized by Botanic Gardens Conservation International aims to promote conservation and networking among Caribbean botanic gardens. The initiative follows from a project in 1995 to establish the first botanic garden in Haiti, the Katherine Dunham Botanic Garden. Plans include programmes for the reintroduction of Barbados mastic *Mastichodendron sloaneanum* and a fern *Adiantum tenuifolium* var. *farleyensis*.  
 Source: *Plant Talk*, October 1996, 16.

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## SOUTH AMERICA

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### Coral death

In January 1996 a massive coral reef die-off occurred in Morrocoy National Park on the western coast of Venezuela. The cause is unknown but scientists believe that either a sudden drop in the surface sea temperature or a plume of a pungent, yellow–brown, glue-like substance reported by local fishermen may have been the cause. The reef has been destroyed and only three small cays located east of the park have survived. Burn-like scars can be observed in coral heads and sponges. Support is needed to conduct a detailed investigation into the death.  
 Source: *Sea Wind*, April–June 1996, 30.

### New bird species named

A new species of bird, first discovered in Colombia 5 years ago, is to be named *Vireo masteri*, after Bernard Master, who made a donation to BirdLife International for the honour. This will contribute to funding conservation work in the Río Nambi Community Nature Reserve, which protects over 300 species of bird, including eight that are globally threatened birds, and has one of the world's greatest concentrations of endemic birds.  
 Source: *Press Release*, BirdLife International, 22 October 1996.

### Sustainable reserve

On 12 July 1996 the Governor of the Brazilian state of Amazonas approved the conversion of the 1,124,000-ha Mamirauá Ecological Station into Brazil's first Sustainable Development Reserve. This is the result of 4 years of work by the Sociedade Civil Mamirauá and the local communities, and provides a legal framework for the creation of similar reserves in Brazil. The new law will promote local people's participation in reserve management, protect local access to natural resources and make them principal partners in the conservation of the area. The reserve is home to a wide range of endangered and endemic species including Brazilian manatee *Trichechus inunguis*, giant Amazon river otter *Pteroneura brasiliensis*, black caiman *Melanosuchus niger* and jaguar *Panthera onca*. It also covers the entire ranges of the blackish squirrel monkey *Saimiri vanzolinii* and the white-faced uakari *Cacajao calvus calvus*.  
 Source: *Neotropical Primates*, June 1996, 64–65.

### Last chance for macaws

The voluntary declaration of captive Spix's macaws *Cyanopsitta spixii* in Brazil ended on 30 October 1996. Any undeclared birds will now be confiscated by the Brazilian authorities and added to a managed population. The wild population was reduced to a single male by a combination of habitat loss and trade. In 1990 the Brazilian Government formed the Permanent Committee for the Recovery of the Spix's Macaw and issued a decree inviting all holders of the species to enter their birds into a globally managed population. The managed captive population is increasing but would benefit from more founder individuals.  
 Source: *Avicultural Magazine*, 102, (2), 81.

### New measures to save the Amazon

The Brazilian Government has decreed tough new restrictions on forest clearance based on new evidence showing the accelerated destruction of the Amazon rain forest. Satellite data from Brazil's National Space Research Institute in São José dos Campos have revealed that deforestation increased by 34 per cent between 1991 and 1994. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso has decreed a 2-year suspension on new permits to harvest mahogany and virola and has increased the amount of land that farmers and ranchers must preserve from clear felling, from 50 to 80 per cent of their property. Although environmental experts are in favour of the measures, there is some doubt about whether they are enforceable.  
 Source: *New Scientist*, 3 August 1996, 4.

### Tortoise mortality

A serious illness has killed several giant tortoises and left others gravely ill in the area of El Chato, in the Tortoise Reserve, Galápagos National Park, Santa Cruz Island. In August 1996 the giant tortoises began to show symptoms of a mystery illness: secretions from the eyes, nose and mouth, difficulty in breathing and diarrhoea. By the end of August eight tortoises had died and nine were ill. The source of the disease is unknown but samples have been taken from dead, ill and healthy animals to attempt to diagnose the cause. *Source: Press Release, Galápagos National Park and Charles Darwin Research Station, 19 & 20 August 1996.*

### Bird population declines

A survey of the avifauna of the island of San Cristóbel, Galápagos, in April 1996, reported a dramatic decline in bird species. The vermilion flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus*, the large tree finch *Camarhynchus psittacula*, the Galápagos rail *Laterallus spilonotus* and the Galápagos dove *Zenaidura galapagoensis* were not seen at all, and populations of the Chatham mockingbird *Nesomimus melanotis*, Hawaiian petrel *Pterodroma phaeopygia* and the cactus finch *Geospiza scandens* were found to be greatly reduced. *Source: Noticias de Galápagos, August 1996, 23–24.*

### Aster rediscovered

A member of the Asteraceae endemic to Santiago, Galápagos, *Scalesia atrectyloides* Arn. vars. *atrectyloides* and *darwinii* has been rediscovered. In October 1995 five mature plants were recorded, the first sighting

since 1990. In February 1996, the exact position of the plants was located and an inventory carried out. Flower heads were taken and seeds planted in a fenced site close by. The remaining seeds were taken to the Charles Darwin Research Station for propagation. The species suffers from grazing and only survives on steep slopes out of the range of goats. *Source: Noticias de Galápagos, August 1996, 24–25.*

### Boost to bromeliad

A project at Cochabamba, Bolivia, aims to save *Puya raimondii*, the largest species of bromeliad. It is only found in small solitary groups on Mt Comanche and in the Vacas area. There has been no regeneration of the species in recent years and no young plants are found in the area. Conservationists plan to artificially reproduce the plant in nurseries and plant them in the natural habitat to boost the wild population. *Source: Plant Talk, October 1996, 23.*

### Hawk deaths

The death of thousands of Swainson's hawks *Buteo swainsonii* in Argentina (see *Oryx*, 30 [4], 348) has called into question pesticide regulation in Latin America. There is mounting evidence that the pesticide monocrotophos was responsible for the deaths. The chemical was withdrawn in the US in 1988 because of its toxicity to wildlife. Records show that exports of hazardous pesticides from the US to Argentina increased from 1.3 million pounds in 1992 to 8.1 million pounds in 1994, including chemicals banned by the US Environmental Protection Agency. The federal

government of Argentina has now prohibited the use of monocrotophos but enforcement will be difficult for provincial governments. Argentine scientists will be observing the autumn 1996 incoming flight of Swainson's hawks. *Source: Audubon, September/October 1996, 50–56 & 94–95.*

### Huemul conservation

A review of surveys of the huemul *Hippocamelus bisulcus* carried out in Argentina and Chile by Raleigh International has found little immediate threat to populations within reserves but little evidence of established populations outside protected areas. Scarcity or absence of huemul in previously reported habitats suggests that numbers are in decline in parts of their range and even in protected areas populations are small and extremely localized. More reliable information is required on population size and distribution before an effective conservation strategy is planned. *Source: Raleigh International Field Research News, July 1996, 2.*

### In search of a liane

The Chilean endemic liane *Berberidopsis corallina* is increasingly threatened in the wild as lowland forests are cleared to make way for plantations. A wild population of the plant was located, with the assistance of the native Mapuche people, in February 1996 by a joint expedition from Chile and the UK. Between 20 and 30 plants were discovered in a remote area of forest where local people still produced liane baskets for local trade and export to Argentina. This may be one of the last remaining viable breeding populations of the species.

Viable seeds were collected and left in a native tree nursery in Chile in the hope of establishing a programme to restore the species to the wild. Further seeds were taken to the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, UK to conserve the species off-site for possible future restoration.

Source: *Plant Talk*, July 1996, 28–29.

### Reprieve for 'cold forest'

A temporary reprieve has been gained for 100,000 ha of subantarctic 'cold forest' in southern Chile's Tierra del Fuego. The US-based Trillium Corporation already has the approval of the local government to log the forest, but environmental groups have challenged the plans. It is argued that the company must provide more information regarding soil recovery and the time-scale for forest management. The commercially valuable lenga *Northofagus pumilio* and coihue *N. dombeyi* trees (southern beech) are slow-growing, taking over 100 years to reach maturity, and provide refuge for the guanaco *Lama guanico*, which feeds on the lenga leaves. The forest is the last of its type in Chile that remains largely unlogged.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, October 1996, 66.

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## AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND/ANTARCTICA

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### Sharks nominated for protection

The white shark *Carcharodon carcharias* and the grey nurse shark *Carcharias taurus* have been proposed for protection under the Australian Endangered Species Protection

Act. The grey nurse is protected in New South Wales and the white shark in Tasmanian waters, but listing under the Endangered Species Protection Act would afford protection throughout Australian waters. The government will also be required to develop and provide funds for a national recovery plan.

Source: *Shark News*, June 1996, 14.

### Woodland threatened by rain forest

The rain forests of northern Queensland, Australia, are encroaching into areas of rare wet sclerophyll woodland. The forest occupies a narrow transition zone along the western boundary of the rain forest and is an important habitat for specialized woody and ground flora and for rare endemic marsupials. Changes in management from Aboriginal fire methods to European grazing and forestry may be the cause of the invasion.

Source: *Plant Talk*, July 1996, 15.

### Recovery of the woylie

The woylie, or brush-tailed bettong *Bettongia penicillata* has been removed from the threatened species list in Australia following a successful recovery programme. Once ranging over half of Australia, by 1975 this small marsupial was restricted to three tiny pockets in the south-west of Western Australia. Now, after controlling introduced foxes, it thrives in six sites in West Australia and on three islands and two mainland sites in South Australia.

Source: *Species*, No. 26–27, 26.

### Dugong hunt ban

The Darumbal Aboriginal group has signed an agreement

to stop hunting dugongs *Dugong dugon* along Australia's Great Barrier Reef, following reports of recent population declines. The Darumbal people traditionally hunt dugongs for meat and oil but studies have shown decreases of up to 80 per cent in 10 years. Dugongs are threatened by habitat loss, hunting and incidental drowning in commercial gill nets and nets designed to protect swimmers from sharks. The Australian Nature Conservation Agency is preparing a conservation strategy for this species, now regarded as critically endangered. Sources: *New Scientist*, 10 August 1996, 5; *BBC Wildlife*, September 1996, 57.

### Breeding disaster for petrel

New Zealand's most endangered bird, the taiko or magenta petrel *Pterodroma magentae*, has had a disastrous breeding season. Taiko on Chatham Island produced five to six eggs in January 1996, the best yield ever recorded. None of the nests produced chicks, however, and the eggs are thought to have been predated. In nine seasons a maximum of three chicks have been raised successfully. The total population is estimated at 45–150 individuals and is especially precarious owing to slow breeding, predation by introduced species, inaccessibility for protection and a lack of local skills for transfer to predator-free sites.

Source: *Forest and Bird*, August 1996, 6–7.

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## OBITUARY

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Jean-Paul Galland, responsible for plant conservation in the French Ministry of the

Environment and a member of the IUCN/SSC European Plant Specialist Group, died, aged 36 in the Boeing 747 crash on July off New York. Among his achievements he created a network of botanic gardens in France and its overseas territories, set up a system of regional plant protection and was active in biodiversity, being a major contributor to France's Biodiversity Action Plan. *Source: Species*, No. 26–27, 29–30.

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## NEW GROUPS

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### New plant network

Following a meeting in the Czech Republic in June 1996, a constitution and ground rules were approved for a new network for plant conservation in Europe. *Planta Europa* is now open for membership to European organizations whose primary aim is plant conservation or who can contribute to botanical knowledge. *Contact:* Dr Jan Cerovsky, AOPK, Kalisnická 4–6, CS 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic or Plantlife, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, UK.

*Source: Plant Talk*, July 1996, 14.

### New parrot group

The study of wild parrots in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania is to be the focus of a new special interest group, the BIRDS Australia Parrot Association. Formed within the Royal Australian Ornithologists' Union, the group will study some of the areas rarest species, the kakapo *Strigops habroptilus* and orange-bellied parrot *Neophema pulchella*, as well as more abundant species such as the galah *Eolophus roseicapillus*. *Contact:* Membership Officer, BIRDS Australian Parrot Association,

c/o RAOU, 415 Reversdale Road, Hawthorn Estate, Victoria 3123, Australia. *Source: Psittascene*, 3 August 1996, 12.

### New foundation for primate conservation

The Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation was created by the late Margot Marsh of La Jolla, California, a committed supporter of primate research and conservation. Its mission is 'to contribute to global biodiversity conservation by providing strategically targeted, catalytic support for the conservation of endangered nonhuman primates and their natural habitats'. The Board of Directors of the Foundation consists of three members, and an advisory group has also been created with an additional three members selected for their knowledge of the interests of Margot Marsh. *Contact:* Russell A. Mittermeier, Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation, 432 Walker road, Great Falls, Virginia 22066, USA; Fax: +1 (703) 759 6879. *Source: Neotropical Primates*, June 1996, 65–66.

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## PUBLICATIONS

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### *African Primates: Status Survey and Conservation*

*Action Plan* compiled by John F. Oates, (IUCN/SSC, 1996) deals with 64 primate species of continental Africa and is a fully revised edition of the action plan for primate conservation published in 1986. It is available from IUCN Publications Unit, 219 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, UK (£13.50) or Island Press, Box 7, Covelo, CA 95428, USA (\$20).

### Directory of Primatology

The third edition of the *International Directory of Primatology* (1996, 391 pp.), published by the Wisconsin Regional Primate Research Center, can be obtained from Larry Jacobsen, IDP Co-ordinator, Wisconsin Regional Primate Research Center Library, 1220 Capitol Court, Madison, WI 53715-1299, USA; Tel: +1 (608) 263-3512; Fax: +1 (608) 265-4729; e-mail: library@primate.wisc.edu

### *The Conservation of Whales and Dolphins – Science and Practice*, edited by Mark P. Simmonds and Judith D.

Hutchinson, University of Greenwich (ISBN 0-471-96561-8, 492pp), is available from John Wiley and Sons Ltd, Baffins Lane, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1UD, UK; Tel: +44 (0)1243 770216; Fax: +44 (0)1243 770432; e-mail: publicity@wiley.co.uk

### *The Exploitation of Mammal Populations*

This selection of papers from a conference organized by the Universities' Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) and the Mammal Society is edited by Victoria Taylor and Nigel Dunstone (ISBN 0-412-64420-7 415pp). It can be obtained for £39.50/US\$80.00 from UFAW, 8 Hamilton Close, South Mimms, Potters Bar, Herts EN6 3QD, UK; Tel: +44 (0)1707 658202; Fax: +44 (0)1707 649279.

### *BirdLife in Europe*

A new BirdLife newsletter was launched at the BirdLife European Conference in June. It covers all the work of the BirdLife European Programme agreed by the European Partnership and replaces *European IBA News*.



## MEETINGS

**Second International**

**Symposium on Biology and Conservation of Owls in the Northern Hemisphere.** 5–9 February 1997, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. *Contact:* Dr James R. Duncan, Manitoba Conservation Data Centre, 1007 Century Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3H 0W4, Canada; Fax: +1 (204) 945 1365; e-mail: mbcdc@lic.gov.mb.ca

**Sixth Brazilian Ornithological Congress.** 24–28 February 1997, Belo Horizonte, Brazil. *Contact:* Dr Miguel Angelo Marini, Departamento de Biologia Geral - ICB, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil 30161-970; Tel/Fax: +55 31 4415 481; e-mail: marini@sagui.icb.ufmg.br

**Americas Regional IBA Workshop.** 24–28 February, Quito, Ecuador. *Contact:* BirdLife International, Oficina regional, Casilla 17-17-717, Quito, Ecuador; Tel/Fax: +593 2 468876; e-mail: birdlife@cipa.org.ec

**Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation.** 4–8 March 1997, Orlando, Florida, USA. *Contact:* Jeanette Wyneken, 1997 Sea Turtle Symposium President, Department of Biological Sciences, Florida Atlantic University, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton, Florida 33431-0991, USA; Fax: +1 (561) 367-2749; e-mail: jwyneken@acc.fau.edu

**First European Botanic Gardens Conference.** 2–5 April 1997, The Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK. *Contact:* Dr David Rae, Royal Botanic Gardens, Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5LR, UK; Tel: +44 (0)131 459

0446 ext 244, Fax: +44 (0)131 552 0382, e-mail: d.rae@rbge.org.uk

**Symposium on Marine**

**Conservation Biology.** 6–9 June, 1997, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. *Contact:* Dr Elliot Norse, President Marine Conservation Biology Institute, 15806 NE 47th Court, Redmond, WA 9805, USA; Fax: +1 (206) 883 3017; e-mail: enorse@u.washington.edu

**Tenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES).** 9–20 June 1997, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. *Contact:* CITES Secretariat, 15 Chemin des Anémones, CP 456,1219 Châtelaine, Gêneve, Switzerland; Tel: +41 22 979 9139/40; Fax: +41 22 797 3417, e-mail: cites@unep.ch

**1997 Meeting of the American Society of Primatologists.** 27 June–1 July 1997, San Diego, California, USA. *Contact:* Nancy Caine, Psychology Department, California State University, San Marcos, California 92096, USA; Tel: +1 (619) 752 4145; Fax: +1 (619) 752 4111, e-mail: nancy\_caine@csusm.edu

**Third International Symposium on Sturgeon.** July 1997, Piacenza, Italy. *Contact:* Dr Paolo Bronzi, ENEL spa-CRAM, via Monfalcone, 15 - 20132 Milan, Italy; Tel: +39 (2) 72243412; Fax: +39 (2) 72243496; e-mail: bronzi@cram.enel.it

**Third World Congress of Herpetology:** 2–10 August 1997, Prague, Czech Republic. *Contact:* Zbynek Rocek, Congress Director, Department of Paleontology, Geological Institute, Academy of Sciences, Rozvojova 135, 165 00 Praha 6 -

Suchdol, Czech Republic; Tel: +42 (2) 24311421; Fax: +42 (2)24311578; e-mail: rocek@gli.cas.cz

**First European Ornithological Union Congress.** 28–30 August 1997, Bologna, Italy. *Contact:* Dr Fernando Spina, Instituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica, Via Ca 'Fornacetta 9, 40064 Ozzano Emilia (BO), Italy; Tel: +39 51 65 12 111; Fax: +39 51 79 66 28.

**Seventh International Theriological Congress.** 6–12 September 1997, Acapulco, Guerrero, Mexico. *Contact:* Dr Rodrigo a Medellín, Communications Coordinator ITC-7; e-mail: ogaona@miranda.ecologia.una.m.mx

**Has the panda had its day? Future priorities for the conservation of mammalian biodiversity:** Fauna & Flora International/Mammal Society Symposium: 14–15 November 1997, Zoological Society of London, UK. *Contact:* Dr Abigail Entwistle, FFI, Great Eastern House, Tenison Road, Cambridge CB1 2DT.

**Second Workshop on Limnology and Waterfowl of the Working Group on Aquatic Birds of International Limnological Society.** 25–27 November 1997, Celestún, Yucatán, Mexico. *Contact:* Joseph Kerekes, Canadian Wildlife Service, 5 th floor, Queen Square, 45 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth, NS, B2Y 2N6, Canada; Tel: +1 (902) 4266356; Fax: +1 (902) 4264457; e-mail: Kerekesj@NS.doe.ca

Briefly is compiled by Catharine Baden-Daintree, who welcomes contributions.