

FINNIDA has since 1979 provided limited support in the form of technical assistance, replacement of obsolete equipment and spare parts to Sikh Sawmills (SSM) Ltd in Tanga, which takes its raw material from natural forest mainly in the Amani region. During the past few years doubts have been raised within FINNIDA about the viability of the SSM activities. Forest inventories have shown that the forest resources are dwindling. Furthermore, there has been growing concern about the deteriorating watersheds and the unique fauna and flora of the area.

There would have been many strong reasons to justify a complete withdrawal of Finnish support to SSM. However, after careful consideration FINNIDA decided to maintain support until the situation has been thoroughly investigated. SSM is one of the very few enterprises providing employment in the Tanga region. Approximately 4000 people depend on the company for their daily subsistence. In addition, SSM produces products that are needed locally as well as providing packing materials for the foreign-currency earning tea exports.

Even if the Tanzanian authorities decided to close the mill, the destruction of the forest would continue. Almost 90 per cent of the Usambara forests has been destroyed during the last 100 years, and the impact of industrial logging has played a marginal role. Most experts agree that the main threat to forests today is the ever increasing need for agricultural land. In addition to this the Usambaras are creamed by a large number of pit-sawyers.

To secure the future of the natural forests in the East Usambaras FINNIDA is carrying out a comprehensive inventory of the East Usambaras with special reference to forest resources, watershed management, ecology and land use. A forest management plan will be prepared, to define the forest areas that need complete protection and to indicate the needs for silvicultural measures. The possibility of utilizing planted teak, myrsine and softwood will be investigated, and areas, if any, that still may be logged will be delineated. A monitoring system will be created to follow up the plan.

FINNIDA employed the consulting company FINNMAP-SILVESTRIA to perform these tasks.

The project is co-ordinated with NORAD and the activities of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).

By early 1988, when the project will be complete, the type of possible future support to forestry and forest industries activities in the Tanga region will be carefully considered. In the meantime everything will be done to minimize the impact of logging. The discontinuation of SSM logging activities has already been discussed at the highest level in Dar es Salaam and the matter is currently being reviewed by the Tanzanian authorities.

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Postscript

We have just received (30 July 1986) reports from Tanzania that, largely as a result of pressure from FINNIDA, the Forest Division ordered Sikh Sawmills Ltd to stop logging in natural forests. However, it seems that the company, which has been in the area for 50 years or so and which exerts strong political influence, has managed to get this decision reversed. The company now intends to log 450 hectares in the East Usambaras Forest Block, where much of the terrain is very steep and where there are only an estimated 1000–4000 hectares of intact forest left. Sikh Sawmills also operate in Uganda and Kenya and is obviously a major influence on the future of the forests of East Africa. The company seems willing to operate in flagrant disregard of local regulations and international opinion.

Editor

The cost of supporting the fur trade

Your Editorial (*Oryx*, XX, 2) provided a panacea for all the supposed ills of the fur trade. May I very humbly suggest that there are many sides to your argument, which you obviously happily ignored. As a trade we do not exterminate species as this would deprive trappers of a future. In fact, trappers are the best conservationists, not those who sit and examine statistics and pontificate on what is right and wrong.

Let us put this into perspective. The main cause of extinction is that the natural habitat of jungle cats, together with other wild animals, is being taken by humans as they develop more housing and factory sites. It has nothing to do with the fur trade.

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Moreover, we would question the motives of 'hysterical animal rights activists' who liberate animals from farms. Surely it is the activists and their methods that should be outlawed—not the fur trade.

As long as governments carry out conservation programmes to maintain viable populations of wild fur-bearing animals, there will always be skins as a byproduct. Why destroy an industry that provides employment for thousands of people worldwide, producing a product that gives warmth and pleasure to so many?

C.G. Thompson, Executive Officer, British Fur Trade Association, 68 Upper Thames Street, London EC4V 3AN, UK.

Food for ranched animals—species depredation?

While watching a recent TV programme on cetaceans I heard a passing comment on the serious harm done to some western Atlantic porpoise populations by the demand for flesh used to feed mink bred for furs. This aspect of animal-keeping has concerned me for some time.

Because exploitation of some animals is culturally accepted, and because large-scale killing of them in the wild may be harmful, the idea that they should be captive-bred or ranched on a commercial scale is seen as a satisfactory alternative.

This may be so where herbivores are concerned, but when the species kept in this way is carnivorous the problem of the source of food for an exceptionally large and localized population is usually ignored. Since this normally involves large quantities of other creatures acquired as cheaply as possible, it is likely to result in the exploitation of wild populations of some other, apparently more numerous, creatures.

There appears to be a determined effort on the part of many people, and hunting, shooting and fishing individuals in particular, to ignore the fact that constant surpluses do not exist under natural conditions. They may occur where predators are exterminated extensively and where ecosystems are seriously disturbed, but otherwise there are roughly balanced but fluctuating cyclical systems where everything depends on everything else for continued existence. You cannot systematically remove large parts of some populations without affecting other species, with the possibility of creating a widespread disruption with a knock-on effect.

If we are asked to applaud the organization of captive-breeding, farming or ranching of some species, then we must be certain that we are not condoning the initiation of potentially serious inroads on populations of other species.

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Acronyms and abbreviations used in this issue of *Oryx*

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation	NNR	National Nature Reserve
EEC	European Economic Community	NRA	National Resistance Army (Uganda)
ICBP	International Council for Bird Preservation	TRAFFIC	Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce
IPPL	International Primate Protection League	UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources	WWF	World Wildlife Fund