

INTERNATIONAL

World population growth faster than predicted

In its 1991 report on world population the United Nations stated that population growth is even faster than forecast in 1984. Assuming, nevertheless, that there will be substantial and sustained falls in fertility rates, the global population is expected to rise from 5.4 billion to 10 billion in 2050. Given the critical connection between population growth and degradation of the global environment, The Royal Society in the UK and the US National Academy of Sciences have issued a joint statement urging scientists to examine these issues seriously and calling for a conference in early 1993.

Source: The Royal Society, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG, UK. Tel: 071 839 5561 ext 293/240.

Ramsar update

Costa Rica deposited its instrument of accession to the Ramsar Convention (on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat) on 27 December 1991 and designated two sites, Caño Negro and Palo Verde, for the Ramsar list. The Government of China announced its accession to the Convention on 20 February 1992, the 66th nation to do so. There are now 546 wetlands on the Ramsar list, covering a total area of 32,914,029 ha in 65 countries.

Source: *Ramsar News*, February/March 1992, 8.

World Heritage update

The World Heritage Committee inscribed six new natural sites

at its meeting in Tunisia on 9–13 December 1991: Shark Bay, Australia; Ujung Kulon National Park and Komodo National Park, Indonesia; Air Ténéré Nature Reserve, Niger; Danube Delta, Romania; and Thungyai-Huai Kha Khaeng, Thailand. Eight sites were given 'World Heritage in Danger' status: Srebarna Nature Reserve, Bulgaria; Mount Nimba, Guinea/Côte d'Ivoire; Rio Platano National Park, Honduras; Manas Wildlife Reserve, India; Amistad, Panama; and Plitvice National Park, Yugoslavia. The World Heritage Convention has 122 signatories, with the recent addition of Cambodia, Ireland, St Lucia, San Marino and Solomon Islands.

Source: *IUCN Bulletin*, March 1992, 4.

New TRAFFIC offices

The TRAFFIC Network has four new offices. Regional offices have been set up for East/Southern Africa, based in Lilongwe, Malawi, and for South East Asia, based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. New national offices are in Taipei, Taiwan, and Delhi, India.

Source: *TRAFFIC Bulletin*, 12, 31.

Iguana society

The International Iguana Society is dedicated to the preservation of the biological diversity of iguanas.

Details: Finca Cyclura, Route 3, Box 328, Big Pine Key, Florida 33043, USA.

EUROPE AND NORTH AFRICA**Seal hunt subsidized**

Hunters from Norway and Russia aimed to kill 60,000 seals

this year, an increase over the 1991 quota of 51,000. The seals involved are 9000 hooded seals *Cystophora cristata* and 11,000 harp seals *Phoca groenlandicus* on the pack ice off Greenland, and 40,000 harp seals in the Barents Sea. Norway subsidizes the hunt, believing that the seals must be controlled because they compete with the fishing fleets. Critics of the hunt say there is no scientific basis for the quota, seals are not important predators of fish taken for human use and that declining fish stocks in the North Atlantic are the result of overfishing. The International Council for the Exploration of the Seas, which has advised on catch limits for seals since 1985, has never had enough information on numbers of hooded seals to estimate a sustainable quota and last year, did not have enough data to recommend a catch level for harp seals, which have suffered steep declines in the last decade.

Source: *New Scientist*, 28 March 1992, 14.

Logging threatens boreal forests

The Finns and Russians are jointly planning to log primary forest on the Russian side of the frontier. These forests support populations of brown bear and wolves that may be vital for the survival of these species in Finland. Conservationists say that at least some areas should be spared from logging to preserve the dispersal routes for animals from Russia to Finland and Sweden. The extent of the planned logging in European Russia is large enough to seriously affect the degree to which the European boreal coniferous zone remains in a natural state. The Finnish consultancy, Jaakko Pöyry Oy, has drafted a master

forestry plan and, while details have not been made public, available information suggests that vast areas of untouched forest will be opened up for the first time.

Source: *Suomen Luonto*, 51(2), 40.

Lapland's forests poorly protected

Only 10 per cent of forests in Finnish Lapland are protected and even then the Finnish Wilderness Act permits controlled logging. The Ministry of the Environment is to endorse the first logging schedules in the next few years and even now trees up to 500 years old are being felled in Lapland to be converted into sawn timber or pulp. The forests are also being damaged by sulphur emissions from Russian smelters and no headway has yet been made in dealing with this problem.

Source: *Suomen Luonto*, 51(2), 20–29.

Estonia adds marine extension to park

Estonia, which has 13 protected areas, has expanded the Lahemaa National Park by the addition of 470 sq km of sea.

Source: *Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas Newsletter*, January/February/March, 3.

Lithuania's new parks

The Lithuanian Republic has designated four new national parks: Zemaitija, Kursiu Nerija, Trakai and Dzukija. Zemaitija National Park protects meadows and forests in north-west Lithuania; Kursiu Nerija National Park protects dunes along the Baltic coast; Trakai covers the old capital of Lithuania; and Dzukija comprises woodland and marsh-

land in the south of the country. Source: *European Bulletin: Nature and National Parks*, 1992, 30, 42.

Hungry Muscovites fell forest for potatoes

Food shortages in Moscow are threatening the forests of Losinskii Ostrov National Park on the edge of the city. People are cutting down trees to plant potatoes.

Source: *New Scientist*, 4 April 1992, 6.

Park for Byelorussia

Byelorussia's first national park will embrace the entire 876-sq-km eastern part of the Bialowieza Forest, with an additional 900-ha buffer zone. Work is under way to define boundaries and prepare management plans. Colleagues from Bialowieza National Park in Poland are helping; they hope to enlarge their own park, thus creating a transfrontier conservation area.

Source: *European Bulletin: Nature and National Parks*, 1992, 30, 41.

Glacier national park in Norway

Jostedalbreen National Park, Norway's 18th, has been established by royal decree. At 1230 sq km it is the fourth largest in Norway. The Jostedalbreen glacier covers about half its area and 95 per cent of the park is mountainous.

Source: *European Bulletin: Nature and National Parks*, 1992, 30, 41.

Dolphin deterrent

Researchers in Britain have discovered that attaching fish-sized sonar reflectors to fishing nets may be a humane way to deter dolphins from swimming into nets whose filaments are too fine to be detected by the

dolphin's sonar system. Experiments by David Goodson of Loughborough University of Technology and Margaret Klinowska of Cambridge University, showed that dolphins did not mistake the reflectors for fish and chase them, but halted about 100 m away and after bombarding the net with acoustic signals swam round it and away.

Source: *New Scientist*, 11 April 1992, 18.

Poland passes conservation law

New nature conservation legislation in Poland provides for the establishment of landscape parks, landscape protection zones and national park buffer zones. It also allows for compensation to be paid to landowners whose activities are constrained because their land is within a national park.

Source: *European Bulletin: Nature and National Parks*, 1992, 30, 41.

French turtle regulations

France has ratified several international conventions under which sea turtles are protected but, until recently, had not met its resultant obligations by translating them into law. Then in 1991 it published regulations protecting five species of marine turtle in France, Guadeloupe and French Guiana. Martinique has been excluded from the regulations but conservationists are starting a turtle awareness programme there with financial assistance from the EC.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, April 1992, 11–12.

Italian hunting law pleases hunters

New Italian hunting legislation was passed in January.

Although it was drawn up after a public referendum in 1990, which found that existing regulations were regarded as too lax, the new legislation appears to make things worse. Under the new law the hunting season closes earlier, 31 January rather than 10 March, but regional authorities have the right to grant exceptions. They may also authorize netting for capturing decoys and are allowed to change the boundaries of non-hunting parks. Three birds have been added to the list of huntable species and penalties for shooting protected species have been reduced. The law has been welcomed by hunters and condemned by conservationists.

Source: *World Birdwatch*, March 1992, 4.

AFRICA

National park decree in Nigeria

A decree (Government Notice No. 210) was published in Lagos on 26 August 1991 establishing five national parks and a board to control and manage them. The parks are Chad Basin National Park, 580 sq km, comprising Chingurmi-Duguma Game Reserve, Hadejia/Nguru Wetlands and Bulatura Oases; Cross River National Park, 2800 sq km, comprising Okwangwo Forest Reserve, Oban Group Forest Reserve and Boshi Extension Forest Reserve; the Gashaka-Gumti National Park, 5950 sq km, consisting of Gumti, Gashaka and Serti Game Sanctuaries; Kainji Lake National Park, 5340 sq km, comprising Borgu Forest Reserve and Zugurma Game Reserve; and Old Oyo National park, 2500 sq km, consisting of Upper Ogun River, Oyo Ile and Old Oyo Game Reserves. The

decreed also lays down penalties for killing, injuring and capturing animals and for a number of other offences. When the parks were forest/game reserves they were the responsibility of state governments and had become run down due to lack of funds. Control now passes to the federal government.

Source: *The Nigerian Field*, April 1992, 2–3.

Water hyacinth reaches Victoria

Water hyacinth *Eichhornia crassipes*, which has spread from South America to 60 countries and is the world's most troublesome aquatic weed, has reached Lake Naivasha and Lake Victoria. It has been in the region since the 1950s but has been restricted to ornamental pools and city ponds.

Infestations in Lake Naivasha, about 100 km north-west of Nairobi, were reported in 1988 and in Lake Victoria in 1989 in the Ugandan portion. It is spreading and may have an impact on the lake's endemic fish populations. A survey is needed urgently to assess the extent of the problem and the need for control measures.

Source: *Swara*, 14(6), 8–10.

Progress on Pemba fruit bat

The future of the Pemba fruit bat *Pteropus voeltzkowi*, found only on the small island of Pemba close to the coast of Tanzania, has given rise to major concern (see *Oryx*, 25, 110–112). Now the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar has given Ole Seehausen and Phoenix Zoo approval to catch 12 individuals for captive breeding and for a further survey to assess conservation needs. The captive

bats and their progeny would remain the property of Pemba and local people will be trained to manage the conservation and education programme already under way.

Source: *Bat News*, January 1992, 6.

New roads in Zaire's forests

Despite political turmoil in Zaire, work continues on the surfacing of a road from Goma to Béni, which will pass through the Virunga National Park. The project is supported by the World Bank and is apparently being undertaken without any study of its environmental impact. The future of another road, from Kisangani to Bukavu, which was planned to pass through the middle of the Kahuzi-Biéga World Heritage Site, is in doubt now that the German Development Bank has announced that it is halting the project. The road would benefit people who are at present virtually cut off from the outside world, but there are fears that it would also result in an influx of people from the densely populated eastern highlands and haphazard destruction of the forests. The IUCN has suggested an alternative, albeit more costly, route avoiding the national park.

Source: *IUCN Forest Conservation Programme Newsletter*, January 1992, 8.

Drought threatens Zimbabwe's hippos

Hippos and other wild animals are starving to death in south-east Zimbabwe during the worst drought in living memory. It is predicted that 90 per cent of the wild animals in the lowlands round Gonarezhou National Park will die in the dry season from April to

November. The Lundi River has remnant pools but there is no grazing and Gonarezhou's hippo population of 200 is at risk; 13 carcasses have already been found. Game rangers are trying to save animals by herding them into pens using helicopters but the cost, added to that of feeding them, is high. Crocodile farms are having problems in keeping their animals alive and zebras have been transported to ranches in the north.

Source: *New Scientist*, 18 April 1992, 9.

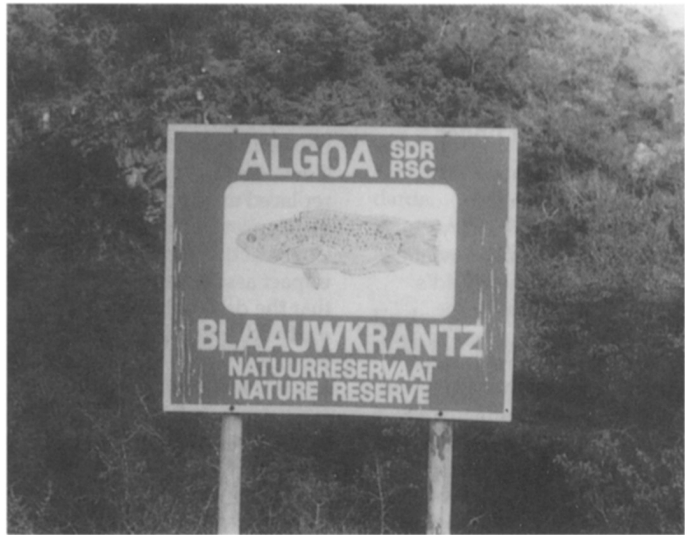
Reserve for a fish

The Algoa Regional Services Council in the eastern Cape, South Africa, has set aside a small reserve for one of the country's threatened fish. The Eastern Province rocky *Sandelia bainsii* is listed as vulnerable in the *South African Red Data Book* and occurs only in parts of four river systems where it is threatened by water abstraction, pollution, sedimentation and the introduced water fern *Azolla filliculoides*. The new reserve, which is being cleared of the invasive plant by volunteers, is on the Blaauwkrantz River, a tributary of the Kowie and is believed to be the only reserve set aside specifically for a species of the Anabantidae (a family of fish capable of aerial respiration).

Source: *Labyrinth, Newsletter of the Anabantoid Association of Great Britain*, No. 62, April 1992, 1-3.

Multipurpose park in the Richtersveld

South Africa has established the Richtersveld National Park in Cape Province. It took 18 years to complete negotiations to protect the 1624-sq-km area, which is renowned for its



Notice declaring a fish reserve in South Africa, believed to be the first anywhere for a member of the Anabantidae.

mountain scenery and endemic vegetation, particularly its succulents. Local communities have a contract to use the park and be involved in its management.

Sources: *Veld & Flora*, March 1992, 14-21; *Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas Newsletter*, January/February/March 1992, 3.

Protea project

The Protea Atlas Project, launched in 1991, will run for 10 years. Under the auspices of the National Botanical Institute and the University of Cape Town anyone with an interest in South African flora may participate and the information collected will be used to formulate conservation measures for these spectacular plants.

Source: *Veld & Flora*, March 1992, 27.

Mauritius enforces turtle protection laws

The Fisheries Protection Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture in

Mauritius seized 150 kg of illegally caught fish and four marine turtles from Hassenjee Cold Storage in Port Louis on 20 November 1991. Laws protecting fish and turtles had previously been poorly enforced but now the Unit is intent on investigating traders.

Source: *L'Express* (Port Louis), 20 November 1991.

Seychelles army personnel poach turtles

According to reports from fishermen and other local people, army personnel used a boat owned by a senior army officer to catch 20 turtles off Mahe in the Seychelles on 9 January. The police were informed but later said they had no record of the incident. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries imposed a total ban on turtle captures on 6 December 1990 and fishermen, who say they had witnessed similar violations before, say they will not now respect the ban.

Source: *Regar* (Mahe, Seychelles), 21 February 1992.

ASIA (EXCLUDING INDO-MALAYA)

Rare merganser under logging threat

The Bikin River in the Khabarovsk and Primorye regions of the former Soviet far east is probably the world's main breeding site for the scaly-sided merganser *Mergus squamatus*. This rare duck is threatened there by a joint Soviet/Korean logging contract to remove mature spruce trees from thousands of square kilometres of the upper reaches of the river near Ulunga. Hunting and increasing disturbance from river traffic are also problems. The establishment of a strict nature reserve in the Bikin Valley has already been suggested by Soviet scientists and this will be part of an Action Plan for the species being developed by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

Source: *IWRB Threatened Waterfowl Research Group Newsletter*, November 1991, 11.

Japan dams last wild river

The Japanese Government has cleared the way for the completion of the dam that will tame the Nagara River near Nagoya, the last free-flowing river on the country's main island of Honshu. The dam's main backer is the Ministry of Construction, which says that the project is the only way to prevent flooding. Opponents, who include mainstream Japanese organizations usually reluctant to speak out against the government, say the dam is unnecessary, will block the migration of salmon and will destroy habitat for clams and other wildlife. Work started in 1988 and is due to finish in March 1995 but the campaign

against the dam continues. In 1990 the Director General of the government's environment agency added his voice to the protest but his agency is less powerful than the Ministry of Construction. Now he has been replaced and the new director has approved the Ministry of Construction's environmental impact assessment, which says that the dam will have 'no seriously adverse effect on natural ecology'.

Source: *New Scientist*, 11 April 1992, 8.

INDO-MALAYA

Small gain for bustard

Rulers of Dubai will no longer be allowed to hunt the houbara bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* in Thatta district, Sindh province, Pakistan. A petition brought by SCOPE (Society for the Conservation and Protection of the Environment) against the Sindh Government for permitting the hunt, which is against the Sindh Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1972, was upheld by the Sindh High Court.

Source: *Natura*, WWF Pakistan, Winter 1992, 23.

Thailand passes new wildlife law

Thailand's Wildlife Preservation and Protection Act 1992 was passed by the National Legislative Assembly and published in the Royal Gazette on 28 February. It requires owners of 'preserved and protected species' of wildlife or carcasses to register them with the Forestry Department within 90 days from 29 February. Penalties for non-compliance are up to 4 years' imprisonment, or a fine of 40,000 baht, or both. The Forestry Department has issued

a new list of 15 preserved species including, Sumatran rhinoceros, Javan rhinoceros, kouprey, goral, serow, Gurney's pitta, sarus crane, marbled cat, tapir, and dugong. Hunting of preserved and protected species is prohibited as is trading in them, except for those born in captivity.

Source: *Bangkok Post*, 3 April 1992.

Fish exports banned

Thailand's Fishery Department banned the export of 200 species of fish and coral-reef fishing on 6 February 1992. The moves, which are in response to CITES regulations, are being opposed by exporters of marine fish who claim that they are breeding some species in captivity. While these claims are being investigated the Department is considering banning the export of a further 50 species of fish and declaring marine conservation areas to protect dugongs and mackerel breeding grounds.

Source: *Bangkok Post*, 7 February 1992.

Thailand logs on

Because the Thai Forest authorities are failing to stop illegal logging, a group of villagers in Lampang Province has set up a traffic checkpoint, which appears to have stopped the movement of illegal timber through their community. Now the group is seeking official support from the Lampang governor but is determined to carry on the vigil with or without support. Although all commercial logging concessions were revoked 3 years ago, destruction of forest in Thailand continues. Local officials have been involved in aggressive tactics used by developers to acquire public

forest land to build resorts and golf courses. The import of timber from Burma and Cambodia has also encouraged illegal logging in the border areas; timber from Thai border forests is disguised as imports with the help of some corrupt officials.

Source: *The Nation*, 5 February 1992.

Sweet pollution has devastating effect

Molasses seeping from a sugar mill in March caused massive pollution along 160 km of rivers in north-east Thailand. Fish stocks were devastated in three tributaries of the Mekong River: Nam Pong, Chee and Mool. Recoveries of fish will be hindered by the construction of the dam on the Mool River 5 km upstream from the Mekong, which will prevent colonization of fish from the Mekong itself. The Mekong and its tributaries are home to 141 species of fish. Source: *New Scientist*, 9 May 1992, 7.

Philippines to preserve remaining forests

The Philippine Government has banned logging in virgin forest and residual forests situated over 1000 m above sea level and on slopes greater or equal to 50 degrees. The Senate has also recently approved a legislative proposal to totally ban commercial logging for at least 30 years commencing in 1992, but this is not yet law. Source: *TRAFFIC Bulletin*, 12, 69.

NORTH AMERICA

Mass arrests for walrus slaughter

Twenty-nine people in Alaska have been charged with illegal hunting of walrus, polar bears,

seals and sea otters. As a result of a 2-year undercover operation by federal agencies. The US Fish and Wildlife Service says that at least 80 more people may be arrested as a result of the walrus killings, which were carried out to provide ivory for the tourist trade.

Source: *Los Angeles Times*, 16 February 1992.

Cod crisis in Canada

Canada cut 1992 cod quotas from 185,000 tonnes to 120,000 tonnes in March, admitting that stocks in the North Atlantic are dangerously low. According to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) there are only 780,000 tonnes of cod ready to spawn this year compared with 1.1 million tonnes last year. The DFO says that fishing quotas were set too high in the 1980s, against its own advice. The government minister responsible for fisheries blames overfishing by Spanish and Portuguese boats just outside Canada's 200-mile limit and increases in the population of harp seals. These claims have been refuted by the European Commission and a Greenpeace fisheries specialist, respectively. Source: *New Scientist*, 7 March 1992, 8.

Polluted lakes lead to eagle deaths

Eight of 12 bald eagles *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* hatched last year on the Ohio shore of Lake Erie died within weeks from a syndrome linked to toxic chemicals in their food. In addition, a 2000-nest colony of ring-billed gulls *Larus delawarensis* on the lake failed to hatch a single chick. Both eagles and gulls were probably poisoned by PCBs, which have caused deaths among other Great Lakes birds.

Environmental groups are urging the governors of Ohio and Michigan to stand firm in the face of industry's attacks on the new Great Lakes initiative, which commits all Lakes states to stricter water quality standards.

Source: *International Wildlife*, May-June 1992, 27.

Endangered Species Act under debate

The US Endangered Species Act is due for reauthorization for a further 5 years in 1992 and is under attack from those who see it as a waste of time and money on animals that will disappear anyway or because it affects economic development. Whether the Act is reauthorized intact, or with stronger or weaker provisions, the Fish and Wildlife Service has more endangered species business than it knows what to do with. By early 1992 668 US species had been listed and another 100 had been accepted but not published in the Federal Register. About 500 species are on hold because the Service has not had time to list them and another 3000 are viewed as potential candidates but their status has not been investigated. The Interior Department's Office of the Inspector General reports that the backlog could disappear in 48 years at the current rate of progress and that recovery plans for all these species would cost \$46 billion over 10 years. Source: *Outdoor News Bulletin*, 17 January 1992, 3-4.

56 species listed – 56 more proposed

During August-October 1991 56 species – 11 animals and 45 plants – were listed under the US Endangered Species Act. They include two fish – the

endangered razorback sucker *Xyrauchen texanus* from parts of the Colorado River basin and the threatened gulf sturgeon *Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi* from scattered locations in Louisiana – and three native molluscs, as well as 40 endangered endemic plants from Hawaii. During the same period another 56 species were proposed for listing.

Source: *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, September/October 1991, 4–11.

Turtle deaths result in new dredging rules

Dredging operations in the spring and summer of 1991 killed 60 marine turtles in the south-east USA. On 12 August 1991 the Centre for Marine Conservation and other groups filed a notice of intent to sue the Army Corps of Engineers for violating the Endangered Species Act. On 1 September the National Marine Fisheries Service drafted a new biological opinion for dredging activities in the south-east, restricting the use of hopper dredges to December–March. Pipeline and bucket dredges, which are not known to harm turtles, will still be allowed all year round.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, January 1992, 27.

Seal virus reaches eastern US coast

The virus that killed almost 20,000 grey seals *Halichoerus grypus* in the North Sea in 1988 has now been identified in grey seals, hooded seals *Cystophora cristata* and harbour seals *Phoca vitulina* along the eastern seaboard of the US. In December 1991 biologists at the Boston Aquarium found antibodies to phocine distemper virus in 14 of 47 stranded seals, but none showed signs of the

disease. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported eight cases of the disease in April, most on Long Island, and is now monitoring seals along the entire coast.

Source: *New Scientist*, 11 April 1992, 12.

River to flow again

The US Bureau of Reclamation is to restore year-round flow to a 32-km stretch of Wyoming's North Platte River for the first time in 35 years. Since the late 1950s releases from Glendo Dam have been stopped in winter to store water for irrigation. The aim is to establish a trout fishery and improve habitat for wildlife.

Source: *International Wildlife*, May–June 1992, 28.

Plan to restore fish stocks

The New England Fishery Management Council has proposed a plan to restore offshore fish stocks seriously depleted by overfishing. It will limit the number of days fishermen may catch cod, haddock and yellowtail flounder with the aim of reducing the cod and yellowtail catch by 50 per cent in 5 years and the haddock catch by half in 10 years.

Source: *International Wildlife*, May–June 1992, 28.

Loons die from lead

Evidence is growing that lead weights from fishing tackle may be responsible for a decline among loons (divers, *Gavia* spp.) in North America. A 10-year study by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in the Midwest suggests that more than 30 per cent of loon deaths may be caused by ingesting lead weights and Mark Pokras at Tufts University has found

lead weights in 60 per cent of loons he has autopsied. Lead weights are known to cause deaths in other birds, such as Gulf Coast herons and pelicans. Source: *International Wildlife*, May–June 1992, 28.

Road rerouted to avoid bladderpod

Populations of Missouri bladderpod, an endangered endemic plant of limestone glades in Missouri, were threatened by a proposed highway realignment around the town of South Greenfield. The state Highway Department used information provided by the Nature Conservancy, a voluntary organization, to select a route avoiding all known populations of the plant and agreed to revegetate the limestone roadcuts with topsoil retained from the disturbed area.

Source: *Biodiversity Network News*, 5(1), 7.

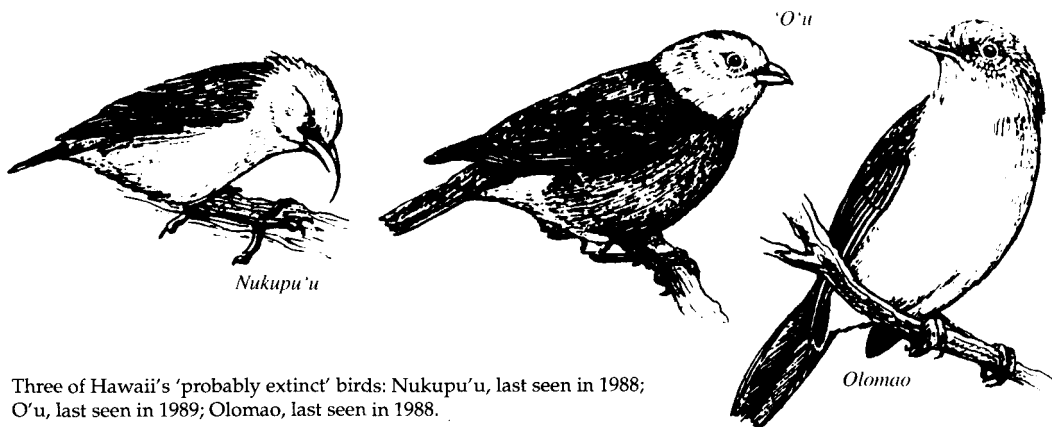
California condor restored to wild

On 14 January two captive-bred California condors *Gymnogyps californianus* were released less than 160 km from Los Angeles in Ventura County, California. The releases occurred 5 years after the last California condor was removed from the wild in an effort to save the species from extinction. There are now 50 birds in captivity.

Source: *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, November/December 1991, 1 & 15–16.

Last bid to save squirrel habitat fails

Environmental groups in the US have lost their final bid to stop the University of Arizona building an observatory on the only habitat of the endangered Mount Graham red squirrel



Three of Hawaii's 'probably extinct' birds: Nukupu'u, last seen in 1988; O'u, last seen in 1989; Olomao, last seen in 1988.

Tamiasciurus hudsonicus grahamensis. A federal judge ruled that under a 1988 law passed by Congress, which waives Endangered Species Act restrictions on the first phase in a project, construction may proceed on the first three of seven planned telescopes. Monitoring of the squirrel's status will be required before work can begin on the second phase.
Source: *International Wildlife*, May-June 1992, 27.

Protection for reefs, but not enough

Flower Garden Banks, which are 110 nautical miles off the coast of Texas, are about to be declared a marine sanctuary, almost 20 years after they were identified as a potential protected area. The only true coral reefs in the northern Gulf of Mexico and the northernmost coral reefs in the Western Atlantic, they are relatively pristine and species rich. Conservationists are unhappy, however, about the proposed boundaries, which divide the area into two, leaving an open unregulated passage between the two atolls. The surrounding area is rich in oil and gas and the boundaries appear to have been set to accommodate

drilling and transportation. There is also a proposal from Texas Pipeline Inc. to build a pipeline through the passage.
Source: *Marine Conservation News*, Winter 1991, 13.

Good year for some turtles

The years 1990 and 1991 were the best years on record for loggerhead turtles *Caretta caretta* in Florida, where 90 per cent of US turtle nests are laid. There was good news also for Kemp's ridley *Lepidochelys kempii*, the world's most endangered turtle, which produced 1012 nests at the main nesting beach at Rancho Nuevo, Mexico, more than in any year since 1978. About 130 Kemp's ridley nests were also found south of Rancho Nuevo. While marine turtle nesting cycles fluctuate, the increases do coincide with 2 years of the use of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) in shrimp nets.
Source: *Marine Conservation News*, Winter 1991, 9.

Tide of extinction must be halted

Hawaii has perhaps the world's largest number of species teetering on the brink of extinction, according to a recent

report. For example, of its 140 native bird species, 70 are extinct and of the remaining 70, 30 are endangered. Twelve are down to such low numbers that they may be beyond recovery. Nearly two-thirds of forest cover has been lost and of the 150 natural communities remaining 85 are considered critically endangered. Much is already being done but not enough to reverse the tide of extinctions.
Source: *'Elepaio*, January 1992, 1 & 4-6.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Mexico introduces TEDs

From September 1992 Mexico's fishing fleets in the Gulf of Mexico and in the Pacific will use turtle excluder devices (TEDs) to reduce the rate of incidental turtle capture.
Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, April 1992, 24.

Flamingos breeding area in danger

Environmentalists in Mexico are concerned for the safety of the Rio Lagartos wetlands refuge on the Yucatan Peninsula after an American

tank barge *STC 007* sank, carrying a cargo of 5000 barrels of fuel oil and 20,000 barrels of asphalt. The spill resulted in a slick of 310 sq km and although clean-up operations started immediately, winds and currents made it difficult. The Rio Lagartos wetlands form part of a national park, which is a flamingo breeding area.

Source: *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, April 1992, 179.

Taiwan company to log Nicaragua's forest

The Nicaraguan Government is planning to give a Taiwanese company a 374,848-ha logging concession encompassing one-eighth of the country's remaining forest. At the same time Taiwan announced that it is lending Nicaragua \$30 million to help pay off its foreign debt. There is strong local opposition in the Atlantic coast region and the Nicaraguan Government has been accused of selling the national environmental heritage. The Natural Resources and Environment Institute Director has responded by saying that the logging would create 4000 jobs and \$15 million in investment in the first 2 years' of logging. The Taiwanese company will log 17,000 ha annually on a 20-year rotation, claiming to use 'sustainable logging' techniques and re-foresting half the concession.

Source: *World Rainforest Report*, October–December 1991, 5.

SOUTH AMERICA

Park extended out to sea

The Laguna de Tacarigua National Park in Venezuela was extended in October 1991 by 5 nautical miles seaward of the beach where three species of marine turtle – loggerhead

Caretta caretta, hawksbill *Eretmochelys imbricata* and green turtle *Chelonia mydas* – breed, and where some turtles have been drowned in trawl nets operating close to the beach. The entire park now covers 391 sq km. The regulations are being reinforced with control, monitoring and educational programmes: a new building is being erected for park rangers, courses in sea turtle biology and monitoring are being run for park personnel, and a sea turtle guide is being published for members of the public.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, January 1992, 7.

Forests under threat in Guyana

South Korea has obtained a logging concession covering 10 per cent of Guyana. While guarantees have been given that sustainable management practices will be used, the Guyanese authorities will find it difficult to monitor such a large area. Earlier, the UK Beaverbrook Foundation bought the national forest company, Demerara Woods, together with a 50-year lease on 4440 sq km of forest to form part of the Beaverbrook-controlled United Dutch Group (UDG). A group of Dutch scientists, funded by UDG, is working in the forest to ensure sustainable logging, sustainable being defined as for the purposes of timber production. The techniques might include 'refinement and liberation', which can mean poisoning all trees other than the long-lived and valuable greenheart *Ocotea rodiaei*. At the same time a 5-year Programme for Sustainable Tropical Forestry has been adopted by the Global Environment Facility, a fund established by the World Bank and the UN Development Programme. It aims to develop

techniques for sustainable exploitation of tropical forest that can be used around the world. There will be a research and training centre in Guyana's capital, Georgetown, and a 3400-sq-km rain-forest reserve near the Brazilian border. However, a road through the reserve is due to be opened soon and this will open up large parts of the country's interior for the first time.

Sources: *IUCN Forest Conservation Programme Newsletter*, February 1992, 10; *TRAFFIC Bulletin*, 12, 69; *New Scientist*, 21 March 1992, 15.

AUSTRALASIA/ ANTARCTICA

Concern for hare-wallaby

Of the four *Lagorchestes* spp. (hare-wallabies) in Australia, two are extinct, one has undergone massive declines and the fourth, the spectacled hare-wallaby *L. conspicillatus*, is the only one that remains widespread. It is still common on Barrow Island, Western Australia and still occurs in parts of Northern Territory and Queensland. It has disappeared, however, from the MacDonnell Ranges of Northern Territory and has become rare in mainland Western Australia. Possible causes of the decline include introduced predators and competitors, climatic changes and changes in fire regimes. The species should be regarded as 'vulnerable' and properly managed reserves are needed.

Source: *Wildlife Research*, 1991, 18, 501–519.

Beetle trade worries

Trade in certain groups of insects in Australia, especially beetles, has escalated in recent years. It is illegal to export

insects without a permit, which is issued only for the purposes of scientific research or for captive-bred individuals or for a specimen taken in accordance with an approved management programme, but the ease with which beetles can be sent through the post make it difficult to enforce the law. One species of particular concern is *Phalacrognathus muelleri*, which is one of Australia's most striking and colourful beetles and is eagerly sought by collectors. It is restricted to tropical forest in north-east Queensland where the larvae live in rotting logs, from which they are removed and reared. However, an entomologist/dealer in north Queensland has apparently succeeded in breeding this beetle in captivity; 16 permits for 182 specimens have been issued by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service for export of captive-bred specimens.

Source: *TRAFFIC Bulletin*, 12, 41–48.

New marine park protects loggerheads

The Queensland Government has declared the Woongarra Coast near Bundaberg a marine park to protect sea turtles and fringing reefs. The park covers about 23 km of coast between the Burnett and Elliott rivers and extends 3 nautical miles out to sea. It protects Mon Repos, Australia's major mainland nesting beach for loggerheads *Caretta caretta*.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, April 1992, 28.

Frogs and cassowaries protected in Queensland

Native species of frogs of the genera *Taudactylus* and *Litoria* have been listed under Queensland's Fauna

Conservation Act 1974 because of concern about interstate trade in these taxa. It is believed that several shipments of wild frogs were being sent to the southern states of Australia every month. The cassowary *Casuarius casuarius johnsonii* has been declared 'Permanently Protected Fauna' under the same act, meaning that an open season cannot be declared for the species and only the Minister for Environment and Heritage may grant a permit for the taking or keeping of specimens.

Source: *TRAFFIC Bulletin*, 12, 36.

Mass turtle kill in Fog Bay

Investigation of 100 turtles found dead on beaches led to the discovery that a single fishing vessel in Fog Bay, Northern Territory, Australia, killed an estimated 300 sea turtles between 15 and 30 November 1991. The vessel was fishing for sharks, removing only the fins and discarding the bodies, using 2000 m of monorail net set about 4 km offshore. The Northern Territory Government placed an immediate ban on all negatively buoyant gill nets with a mesh size greater than 25 cm. Legal action was not taken against the skipper of the vessel because he was not in violation of any conditions of his licence and legislation relating to incidental catches was not in place. Fog Bay is in the soon-to-be gazetted Beagle Gulf Marine Park, for which a management plan has yet to be formulated.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, April 1992, 5–6.

A new marine reserve for New Zealand

New Zealand established Kapiti Island Marine Reserve in December 1991. It covers more

than 20 sq km between the Paraparauma–Waikanae coast and Kapiti Island off the extreme south-west coast of North Island. It protects four marine communities including the spectacular boulder and reef systems on the exposed western coast of Kapiti. The reserve will benefit many fish species and dramatic recovery of depleted marine life is expected.

Source: *Forest & Bird*, February 1992, 2.

New hope for goat eradication

Six feral goats captured by hunters leaping from helicopters, fitted with radio transmitters and then released at strategic points in Mount Aspiring National Park in New Zealand, enabled hunters in helicopters following the radio signals to locate and shoot 61 goats. The use of 'Judas' goats, which relies on their gregarious behaviour to lead them to elusive herds, has been used successfully in Hawaii and Australia but a previous trial in New Zealand failed when the goats died. With feral goats ranging across about 16 per cent of the country, many of them difficult to locate on foot, the new method offers hope that goats can be eradicated from areas where they are destroying native vegetation and competing with native foliage-eating birds. The main constraint of the method is its high initial cost.

Source: *Forest & Bird*, February 1992, 3.

Cabbage tree disease identified

Scientists have identified a micoplasma-like bacteria that has been killing cabbage trees *Cordyline australis* in New

Zealand since 1987. It is feared that 90 per cent of cabbage trees in the northern third of North Island could be dead within 5 years. Other scientists say that the cause is more likely to be the result of environmental change, such as increased ultraviolet radiation through depletion of the ozone layer. The research team is now attempting to identify the agent responsible for transmitting the disease; a possible culprit is the Australian passion vine hopper, whose numbers have increased considerably in the last 20 years. *Source: Forest & Bird*, February 1992, 4.

Captive breeding success for Campbell Island teal

A small population of the Campbell Island teal *Anas Aucklandica nesiotis* survives only on Dent Island, having been exterminated from Campbell Island (c. 600 km from New Zealand) by rats. The prospects for this smaller flightless version of the New Zealand teal, *A. a. chlorotis*, were not good and a decision was made to establish a captive population. Three males and one female were caught in 1984 but the captive female refused all the drakes. In 1990 a team caught seven more teal, including two apparently established pairs. They are now at the National Wildlife Centre in New Zealand and there is hope that they will breed. *Source: Wildfowl*, 42 (1991), 145–148.

OCEANIA

Little hope for crocodile on Palau

The estuarine crocodile, *Crocodylus porosus* is the only crocodile species in Palau,

Caroline Islands, Western Pacific, and there are few left. Every major crocodile habitat was surveyed in 1991 and only 42 crocodiles were seen. There were only two viable populations, each consisting of 17 individuals. Between 1966 and 1981 an official crocodile extermination programme operated and now the only hope lies in setting aside sanctuaries and breeding animals in captivity to stock them. There are 41 captive crocodiles in Palau but the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is threatening to confiscate them because the owner collected them without its permission, although permission was gained from Palau wildlife officials. The US FWS declared *C. porosus* as endangered in 1979.

Source: Crocodile Specialist Group Newsletter, October–December 1991, 22.

MEETINGS

Otter Conservation in the UK. 14–15 September 1992, Cambridge. Organized by Intervet UK Ltd with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Mammal Society and Royal Society for Nature Conservation. This meeting was originally due to take place in July. *Contact: Patti Tudor, Kartupelis Associates, St John's Innovation Centre, Cowley Road, Cambridge CB4 4WS. Tel: 0223 421145.*

Second International Symposium on Turtles and Tortoises: Conservation and Management. August 1992 (dates to be set), New York. *Contact: New York Turtle and Tortoise Society, 163 Amsterdam Avenue, Suite 365, New York, NY 10023, USA. Tel: 212 459 4803.*

Second Portuguese and Spanish Meeting and Sixth Spanish Meeting on Herpetology. 24–27 September 1992, Granada, Spain. *Contact: Dr J. M. Pleguezuelos (Organizing Committee), Departamento de Biología Animal, Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad de Granada, 18071 Granada, Spain. Fax: 34 58 243238.*

Chemistry of Rain-Forest Plants and their Utilization for Development. 27–29 October 1992, Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatera, Indonesia. Jointly organized by Institute Technology Bandung, Andalas University, Bung Hatta University and UNESCO. *Contact: Professor Dr Sjamsul Arifin Achmad, Department of Chemistry, Institute Technology Bandung, Jalan Ganesha 10, Bandung 40132, Indonesia. Tel: 022 821103; Fax 6 22 243 8338.*

Waterfowl and Wetland Conservation in the 1990s. A Global Perspective. 12–19 November 1992, Florida, USA. *Contact: XXXV IWRB Executive Board Meeting, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BX, UK.*

Conference on Reintroduction Biology of Australasian Fauna. 19–21 April 1993, Victoria, Australia. *Contact: Dr Melody Serena, Healesville Sanctuary, PO Box 248, Healesville, Victoria 3777, Australia. Tel: 059 62 4022. Fax: 059 62 2139.*

REQUESTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Dolphin and whale research and education trips

Oceanic Society Expeditions seeks individuals to assist biologists with ongoing research on Pacific white-sided dolphins,

humpback whales and blue whales in Monterey Bay, California. An opportunity to study dolphin and whale behaviour, ecology, communication and distribution with excellent opportunities for photography and video. Seven-day expeditions in August, September and October 1992. No prior experience necessary. Fee required. Oceanic Society Expeditions is a non-profit organization dedicated to conservation and education relating to the marine environment. *Contact:* Oceanic Society Expeditions, Fort Mason Center, Building E, San Francisco, CA 94123, USA. Tel: 415 441 1106.



Pacific white-sided dolphin *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*. Oceanic Society Expeditions offers opportunities to study these and other cetaceans (Nancy Black).

Grants for field research

Earthwatch Europe offers grants of £5000–50,000 for field research starting in 1993 or later. The research must be labour-intensive, able to use non-specialist field assistants and at a post-doctoral level. Earthwatch wishes to encourage projects concerned with processes that shape the environment at local, regional and global levels, as well as those that focus on biodiversity and human impact.

Contact: Jane Corbett, Science Programme Director, Earthwatch Europe, Belsyre Court, 57 Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6HO, UK.

Field research opportunities for scientists

Operation Raleigh offers scientists an economical and relatively trouble-free means of conducting overseas field research. Raleigh provides full logistical support including food and internal travel, highly motivated teams of volunteers (aged 17–25 years), opportunities to conduct follow-up work

on subsequent expeditions, medical personnel and emergency evacuation cover. Raleigh requires field research projects suitable for support by Venturers with at least 1 month in the field, reports from the project and a commitment to contribute to a review seminar in the UK. Scientists interested in joining a Raleigh expedition should contact: Jonathan Cook, Research and Conservation Coordinator, Operation Raleigh, Alpha Place, Flood Street, London SW3 5SZ, UK. Tel: 071 351 7541. Fax: 071 351 9372.

Zebra Foundation

The Zebra Foundation for Veterinary Zoological Education has been launched to assist non domesticated animals world-wide. It will help veterinary surgeons anywhere in the world to gain additional experience or qualifications in wild animal and veterinary zoological medicine. The Foundation has been created by the British Veterinary Zoological Society, a specialist division of the British Veterinary Association.

Details: Mr Michael Fielding, Honorary Secretary, Zebra Foundation, 7 Mansfield Street, London W1M 0AT, UK.

Volunteers needed for turtle work in Greece

Volunteers are needed for sea turtle conservation projects on Zakynthos and Crete in the 1992 nesting season (25 May–10 October). The work is very demanding and the minimum work period is 3 weeks. *Application forms from:* Sea Turtle Protection Society, Solomou 35, GR-106 82 Athens, Greece. Tel/Fax: 30 1 3644146.

Information request: Guyanese fauna and flora

The environmental agency GAHEF in Guyana is compiling biodiversity databases but most of the information required is held by organizations and institutes overseas. Anyone who can help by sending copies of relevant reports on Guyana's fauna and flora is invited to contact Dr M. Johnston, GAHEF, Liliandaal, Greater Georgetown, Guyana.