

International**New Parties to CITES**

Macedonia is the latest country to have acceded to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of Wild Fauna. Its accession came into force on 2 October 2000, making it the 152nd party to CITES. Source: *CITES Secretariat*, 27 July 2000.

New parties to the Ramsar Convention

The following countries have recently joined the Ramsar Convention – Belarus, Sierra Leone, Benin, Tanzania and Libya. This brings the number of parties to the Convention to 122.

Source: *The Ramsar Newsletter* (2000), 31, 6–7.

US ratifies treaty to safeguard endangered sea turtles

The United States has become the seventh nation to ratify an international treaty designed to ensure the continued survival of the six endangered species of sea turtle found in the Western Hemisphere. The Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles is the first international agreement dedicated solely to raising standards for the protection of sea turtles. To bring the treaty into force, the Convention must be ratified by eight countries. So far, seven nations – Venezuela, Peru, Mexico, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador and the US – have ratified it. Under the Inter-American Convention, participating countries agree to conserve sea turtle habitat, protect nesting beaches, limit intentional and accidental capture, prohibit international trade in sea turtles and their products, and support sea turtle research. Additionally, the Inter-American Convention provides an effective solution to one of the major causes of sea turtle mortality – accidental capture and drowning in shrimp nets. Each member nation has agreed to require the use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) by its shrimp fishing fleet.

Source: *Environmental News Service* (2000), 13 October.

New Ramsar sites designated

In the past 9 months, 16 new Ramsar sites have been designated in nine countries world-wide. These include the Lagunas de Guanacache in Argentina, a 200-km long system of linked lagoons and marshes; Baixada Maranhense Environmental Protection Area in Brazil, a 1.7 million ha area of seasonally flooded coastal lands; Punta de Manbique in Guatemala, an area on the Caribbean coast including marshes, swamps and marine and terrestrial habitats; Sheedvar Island in Iran, a small sandy and rocky island in the north-central Persian Gulf of international importance for breeding marine turtles and waterbirds; and the Thames Estuary and marshes in the United Kingdom, a 5500-ha complex of brackish floodplain, grazing marsh ditches, saline lagoons and intertidal mudflat and saltmarsh.

Source: *The Ramsar Newsletter* (2000), 31, 5–6.

Earth Summit to be held in 2002

At the eighth session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD), held from 24 April to 5 May 2000, it was agreed that a follow-up meeting to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) should be held in 2002. The 'Rio plus 10' event, for which a definitive name has not yet been chosen, would focus on the implementation of Agenda 21 and of the various environmental conventions and agreements including an analysis of barriers to full implementation. The event would aim to attract participation from the highest levels of government as well as the private sector, non-governmental organizations, youth groups, the scientific community and other major groups identified by Agenda 21, inviting their participation not only in the event but also throughout the preparatory process. In addition, 'Rio plus 10' would have the potential to increase the level of commitment to sustainable development by governments and civil society partners.

The venue for the event has not yet been selected.

Source: *Unasylva* 202 (2000), 51, 67–68.

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund launched

A new \$US150 million fund, designed to better safeguard the world's threatened biological hotspots, was launched on 1 September 2000 as a joint initiative of Conservation International (CI), the World Bank, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). CI, the World Bank and the GEF each plan to commit \$US25 million to the Fund over the next 5 years. The remaining \$US75 million will be sought from other donor agencies.

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund focuses primarily on biodiversity hotspots – regions where an estimated 60 per cent of all terrestrial species diversity are found on 1.4 per cent of the earth's land surface. The Fund's areas of focus during its first year of operations will be on the hotspot regions of Madagascar, West Africa and the tropical Andes. In each subsequent year, the Fund will invest in a minimum of five additional critical ecosystems. Funding will be awarded exclusively to civil society groups working to protect biodiversity. (For further details see Grants and opportunities, pp. 86–87.)

Source: *Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund*, 1 September 2000.

Action Plan to save the world's parrots

After more than 5 years of research, the first Action Plan to save the world's parrots has been published. Of the world's 330 known parrot species, some 94 (28 per cent) are listed as globally threatened. Many are threatened by trade: between 1990 and 1994 almost 2 million parrots were known to have been traded on the world market. Other threats include introduced species, habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation, and hunting of birds for food. The Action Plan recommends increasing the current knowledge of parrots, raising public awareness of threats facing them, and preventing illegal trapping

and trade. At the same time, it recognizes the complex biological, social, political and economic factors associated with parrot conservation.

Source: *World Birdwatch* (2000), 22(3), 3.

Two new species of whale identified

The Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) has identified two new species of right whale. To date, the scientific community has been aware of two whale right whales species, the Northern right whale and the Southern right whale. In July 2000, however, the IWC announced that there are in fact two species of Northern right – the North Atlantic and the North Pacific.

A WWF report warns that the North Atlantic right whale is the most endangered great whale in the world, with a global population of 300. Despite a ban on killing right whales, which has been in force since 1935, numbers are reportedly falling every year. Recent birth rate figures are low, with six new calves reported in 1998, three in 1999 and only one in the 2000 calving season. Although part of the problem can be attributed to a declining birth rate, 90 per cent of all unnatural deaths are the result of being struck by ships.

Source: *WWF News* (2000), Autumn, 3.

Europe

New method for conserving pond terrapins

The pond terrapin *Emys orbicularis* is endangered in its northern range, which covers Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Germany, Poland, the Kaliningrad region of Russia, Lithuania and Latvia. Predators are one of the greatest threats to the survival of young pond terrapins. In addition, early frosts (i.e. those that occur before there is protective snow cover) in the northern range pose a significant threat to their survival because young terrapins over-winter close to the surface. In a recent study in southern Lithuania, 24 hatchlings were taken from pond terrapin nests in the Kuculichkis reservation. The young turtles were grown in captivity at 25–27 °C and fed daily over the winter in order to accelerate their development and to

enable their release back into the Kuculichkis reservation the following summer. After 6 months the animals reached a mean carapace length, which is comparable to the natural growth of approximately 3 years. Seventeen pond terrapins were released successfully. This method could be applied to save small, endangered populations of pond terrapins across their range.

Source: Meeske A-C *et al.* (2000), *Salamanca (Rheinbach)* 36(2), 89–102.

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Royal Navy issues guidelines for cetaceans

In the UK, the Royal Navy has issued guidelines aimed at protecting the habitat and breeding grounds of over 27 different species of whales, dolphins and porpoises that have been recorded in the coastal waters of the North-eastern Atlantic. During the mating season of July through September, all military vessels will aim to minimize disruption to marine mammals. Measures to achieve this include crossing breeding grounds at a slow and steady speed and taking care to avoid any wake or any unpredictable movements. Care is also to be taken to avoid separating groups, particularly mothers and calves as well as minimizing noise. Some Royal Navy exercises take place in coastal waters, although antisubmarine and anti-aircraft exercises are usually in deep (>1000 m) water. Noise disturbance from sonars is usually worse in these deep-water areas.

Source: *Marine Pollution Bulletin* (2000) 40(9), 723.

Action to conserve Spanish imperial eagles

The Spanish imperial eagle *Aquila adalberti* is endemic to Spain, where only 131 pairs are thought to remain in the wild. An emergency workshop held in Navacerrada in May 2000 agreed on a number of actions considered essential to conserve the species. These include approving a legally binding National Strategy for Conservation and regional recovery plans, measures to reduce the use of poisons, management of eagle habitats to boost rabbit numbers because rabbits are the eagle's most important prey, better liaison with landowners, action against threats such as electrocution by

power lines, development of a captive breeding programme and better public awareness. Without these actions, the future for the species is not promising.

Source: *Bird Life in Europe* (2000), 5(3), 5.

Foundation to help conserve birds in Malta

BirdLife Malta and the local Federation for Hunting and Trapping have agreed to set up a Foundation for the Conservation of Wild Birds, which is seen as an important milestone for bird conservation in Malta. The Foundation will be under the patronage of The Ministry of the Environment and, amongst other things, will establish a monitoring board for hunting and publish a countryside code of conduct. Additionally, the Hunting Federation will begin breeding quail *Coturnix coturnix* to encourage its members to refrain from shooting migratory birds. Enforcement of conservation law in Malta has always been difficult because of the powerful hunting lobby, but it is hoped that the participation of hunters in the monitoring board will make law enforcement less of a thorny issue politically.

Source: *BirdLife in Europe* (2000), 5(3), 1.

North Eurasia

Russian President abolishes Committee for Environmental Protection

On 17 May 2000, Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a decree abolishing the Federal Forest Service and the State Committee for Environmental Protection, which was responsible for both independent monitoring and testing of the environmental effects of natural resource development as well as enforcing environmental laws. Their functions were transferred to the Ministry for Natural Resources, which oversees development of Russia's oil, natural gas and other mineral deposits as well as water resources. The move was widely condemned both nationally and internationally because it is believed that it would inevitably result in a conflict of interest between the need for environmental protection and the management of natural resources. A further concern is the intention to 'simplify' the environmental rules

governing industry, suggesting a further relaxation of controls that have already proved ineffective.

Source: IUCN *Arborvitae* (2000), 15, 2.

Poaching threat to wild asses in Turkmenistan

The world's only autochthon population of Turkmenian wild asses *Equus hemionus kulan*, known as kulans in South Turkmenistan's Badkhyz Reserve, is near to extinction. At the time of Turkmenistan's independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991, the kulans in Badkhyz numbered 5000–6000 individuals. In 1998, their number had decreased to 2400. According to information from local biologists, the kulan population is now estimated to number a few hundred animals. The primary cause of this decline is poaching for bush meat, which takes place both within and beyond the reserve. Poachers include the army – posted along and inside the reserve boundaries in order to protect the border between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Iran – and local people. Kulan meat is cheaper than mutton and in great demand on the black market.

Little support is received from the authorities (police, local administration, army, ministry of environment and politicians) to stop the poaching in spite of the fact that the kulans are listed in the *Red Data Book of Turkmenistan*.

Source: Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZSCSP), Munich (2000). Sent by Dr G. Neumann-Denzau, Project Coordinator ZSCSP. E-mail: denzau@t-online.de; www.zgap.de

New funding for protected area in Tajikistan

The year 2000 marked the 60th anniversary of the formation of the Tigrovaya Balka Zapovednik, one of the only nature reserves on the planet to protect a desert-tugai (riparian forest) arid subtropical ecosystem. The reserve is located in the south-west of Tajikistan, where the Pyandj and Vakhsh rivers meet on the border with Afghanistan. In recognition of the anniversary, the government of Tajikistan allocated substantial funds to conserve and restore this protected area. The funding has enabled the employment of forest rangers as part of an integrated conservation programme for the reserve.

Source: *Ecostan News* (2000), 7(1), 9–10.

North Africa and Middle East

Egyptian government seizes illegal ivory consignments

According to the Elephant Trade Information System managed by TRAFFIC, the Egyptian government did not report a single ivory seizure in the 10-year period, 1989–1999. However, between September 1999 and early April 2000, the Egyptian authorities made nine separate seizures of worked and raw ivory from traders and tourists leaving the country. The seizures included 79 tusks, weighing 173 kg, which were confiscated from an Egyptian trader in Aswan. According to the trader, this raw ivory came from 'Sudan and other countries'. Other information confirms that ivory tusks continue to be imported into southern Egypt from Sudan, a long-established trading route.

Source: Martin, E. (2000), *Pachyderm* 28, 56–57.

Sub-Saharan Africa

African rhino populations increase

Numbers of the two species of African rhinoceros, the black rhino *Diceros bicornis* and the white rhino *Ceratotherium simum* continue to increase in the wild according to new estimates prepared by International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) African Rhino Specialist Group. There are now more rhino in Africa than at any time since the early to mid 1980s. In 1999, African rhino numbers in the wild reached just over 13,000, up from 8300 in 1992. Most of the increase can be accounted for by the rapid growth in the number of southern white rhino. The balance between white and black rhino has shifted, with 79 per cent of African rhino in the wild in 1999 being white rhino, compared with 30 per cent in 1984. Black rhino numbers in the wild have increased from a low of around 2450 in 1992 to just over 2700 in 1999. Numbers of two of the six African subspecies remain low, however, with only 10 individuals of the western black rhino remaining scattered across northern Cameroon.

Source: IUCN-World Conservation Union and WWF, 7 August 2000.

Results of bush meat survey published

TRAFFIC conducted a 2-year review on trade and use of wild meat in Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The study investigates the use of wild meat in central and eastern Africa, its economic value to rural communities and the impact of harvest on protected areas and individual species valued in the trade. A total of 23 surveys were conducted from 1997 to 1998, including both rural and urban areas, and approximately 6000 respondents contributed to the project. The study found that a wide variety of species – from insects, rodents and birds, to duikers, elephants and impalas – are hunted regularly throughout the areas studied. Among the majority of people interviewed, bush meat is recognized as a valued resource and consumed regularly. For example, in Kitui District, Kenya, c. 14 kg of bush meat per household is consumed by 80 per cent of the households each month; and in the Kweneng rural area of Botswana, 46 per cent of households consume at least 18 kg of bush meat every month.

Source: *TRAFFIC Dispatches* (2000), 14, 1, 14.

Zoological Society of San Diego backs bush meat crisis

In August 2000, the Zoological Society of San Diego announced a multipronged plan to raise public awareness for the bush meat crisis in Central and West Africa. The Society aims to aid an international effort to end illegal African bush meat trade and reduce legal consumption to sustainable levels. Apart from implementing education and awareness schemes at the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park, the Society has also started a field study in Cameroon on the drill *Mandrillus leucophaeus*, one of Africa's most endangered primate species. In addition, the Society will join the Bush Meat Crisis Task Force, a worldwide network and steering committee comprised of conservationists representing nearly 30 zoological organizations, animal welfare advocates and medical researchers.

Source: *San Diego Zoological Society*, 15 August 2000.

Possible extinction of a West African red colobus monkey

A new study provides the first documented case of the likely extinction in the twentieth century of a widely recognized primate taxon. During surveys in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in 1993–1999, the researchers were unable to find any surviving populations of Miss Waldron's red colobus monkey *Procolobus badius waldroni*, a primate taxon endemic to the forests of this part of West Africa. The researchers conclude that this monkey is probably extinct or that no viable population of this subspecies remains. Hunting by humans rather than habitat loss has almost certainly been the primary cause of the monkey's extinction. Many of the protected areas visited by the researchers, especially in Ghana, still contained relatively large areas of habitat suitable for red colobus, which can live at high population densities. Hunting has probably been exacerbated by the greater access to forests, resulting from logging activities and by the growth of human populations in the area formerly occupied by the red colobus.

Source: Oates *et al.* (2000), *Conservation Biology* 14(5), 1526–1532.

Wildlife populations decline in the Masai Mara

Between 1977 and 1997, all non-migratory wildlife species in the Masai Mara ecosystem, Kenya, declined by 58 per cent. This decline ranged from 49 per cent in small brown antelopes to 72 per cent in medium brown antelopes. Among individual wildlife species, the decline ranged from 52 per cent in Grant's gazelle *Gazella granti* to 88 per cent in the warthog *Phacochoerus africanus*. Declines of over 70 per cent were recorded in buffalo *Syncerus caffer*, giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis*, eland *Tragelaphus oryx* and waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*. Only elephant *Loxodonta africana*, impala *Aepyceros melampus* and ostrich *Struthio camelus* did not show any significant population change.

Over the 20-year period, livestock did not decline significantly in numbers, although livestock and cattle populations did decline significantly between 1983 and 1988. Land use and vegetation changes, drought and poaching are considered to be the main factors contributing to declines in wildlife, whereas livestock declines

during the 1983/1984 period were because of drought.

Source: Ottichilo, W.K. *et al.* (2000), *African Journal of Ecology* 38, 202–216. Contributed by Michael Hoffmann, Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK. E-mail: michael.hoffmann@zoology.oxford.ac.uk

Donation to Lusaka Agreement Task Force

On 13 April 2000, the Deputy Director of the Chinese Forestry Department (COA) donated \$US60,000 to the Lusaka Agreement Task Force based in Nairobi, to express the Republic of China's support of African nations' efforts to fight wildlife crime. The task force, established in 1992, is a wildlife law enforcement body developed from a cross-border international agreement between six African countries. The Lusaka Agreement gives wildlife law enforcement officers the power to arrest wildlife criminals without being restricted by national borders. Moreover, it enables the task force to co-ordinate cross-border investigations into wildlife crime, helping to curb illegal trade in Africa's endangered fauna and flora.

Source: *International Conservation Newsletter* (2000), 8(2), 5.

Seal harvesting quotas to increase

The International Fund for Animal Welfare expressed deep concern for the recent announcement by the Namibian government that it will expand its seal harvesting industry. The government announced plans to increase seal harvesting quotas in the year 2000, arguing that a rapidly increasing seal population in Namibian waters posed a threat to the local fishing industry. Namibia's hunting quota in 1999 was for 30,000 seal pups and 5000 seal bulls. According to the last census conducted in December 1997, the total seal population was estimated to be 905,000.

Source: *Marine Pollution Bulletin* (2000), 40(8), 65.

World's largest Transfrontier Conservation Area planned

Following a meeting in Harare in May 2000, the ministers responsible for natural resources in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe declared their intention to consolidate plans for what could become the biggest Transfrontier

Conservation Area (TFCA) in the world, covering 100,000 sq km. The Gaza–Kruger–Gonarezhou TFCA will incorporate wildlife areas and communal lands in Mozambique's Gaza Province (66,000 sq km), Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park and adjoining communal lands (10,000 sq km), and South Africa's Kruger National Park and the adjacent privately owned reserves (22,000 sq km). Although signature to the Agreement has been delayed because of the Zimbabwe elections, it is reported that political will exists at government level in all three countries to establish this important initiative.

Source: *Peace Parks News* (2000), 1.

Oil spill affects penguins

On 23 June 2000, a 141,000 tonne ore carrier sank in Cape Town's Cable Bay. The wreck site is 40 km south-east of Dassen Island and 15 km north of Robben Island where, a few weeks earlier, counts revealed that the two islands contained, the largest and third largest breeding colonies of the endemic African penguin *Spheniscus demersus*, respectively. The first oiled penguins were seen on Robben Island on the day the ship sank. Within 2 days, the main penguin landing area on Robben Island was covered in oil. Within 2 weeks, 23,000 oiled penguins had been taken to the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds. In addition, 20,000 penguins were saved from oiling by transporting them to Port Elizabeth and letting them swim back to Cape Town. Three of the penguins were fitted with satellite transmitters and their progress back to the islands was tracked. The first reached Robben Island on 18 July, 18 days after its release.

Source: *Africa – Environment & Wildlife* (2000), 8(7), 14.

New species of *Rafnia* identified

Rafnia is a genus of legume plants that is almost entirely restricted to the fynbos, with the exception of *R. elliptica*, which extends into the southern part of KwaZulu-Natal. The taxonomy of the genus was last reviewed in 1862 and a recent study by Gael Campbell-Young at the University of Witwatersrand identified five new species and seven new subspecies of the plant. Whereas 22 species had been distinguished previously, 19 species and a total of 31 groups (taxa) are now described. The new

species include *R. crispa*, a rare, small shrublet up to 0.4 m tall; *R. rostrata* subsp. *rostrata*, an erect shrublet up to 0.4 m tall; *R. vlokii*, a robust much-branched shrub that grows up to 2 m; *R. alata*, a relatively rare, clump-forming much-branched shrub up to 0.4 m tall; and *R. globosa*, a rare, erect multi-stemmed shrub up to 0.6 m tall. Details and distributions of these new species and subspecies are to be published in a formal revision of the genus in a forthcoming issue of the *South African Journal of Botany*.

Source: Campbell-Young, G.J. (2000), *Veld & Flora* 86(3), 122–123.

Second scops-owl in Madagascar

A reassessment by Pamela Rasmussen and coworkers of the taxonomy of the scops-owls *Otus* spp. in the western Indian Ocean has concluded that two species exist in Madagascar. Their findings are published in the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists Club* (120, 75–103). There are marked differences between the songs and morphology of scops-owls in eastern and western Madagascar, areas roughly corresponding to the wet and dry zones, respectively. *Otus rutilus* (recommended common name rainforest scops-owl) is a common species in the eastern rainforests from sea level to 2050 m, whereas the more widespread *O. madagascariensis* (proposed common name Torotoroka scops-owl) is found in the dry western forests and in the central plateau. The taxonomic revision brings the number of scops-owls known from the western Indian Ocean region to eight.

Source: *World Birdwatch* (2000), 23(3), 5.

Surveys of lemurs in north-west Madagascar

The first study to assess the status and population density of lemurs between the Mahavavy and Betisboka Rivers in north-west Madagascar, has revealed the presence of six sympatric lemur species at Anjamena: *Cheirogaleus medius*, *Eulemur fulvus rufus*, *E. mongoz*, *Lepilemur* sp., *Microcebus murinus* and *Propithecus verreauxi coronatus*. Data suggest that large numbers of lemurs may still be found in some parts of the region, for example, 121 *E. f. rufus* individuals per sq km and 173 *P. v. coronatus* per sq km. The latter subspecies is not known to exist in any protected area, so Anjamena could serve as

an important addition to the protected area system of north-west Madagascar. Source: Muller, P et al. (2000), *African Journal of Ecology* 38, 248–257. Contributed by Michael Hoffmann, Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK. E-mail: michael.hoffmann@zoology.oxford.ac.uk

South and South-east Asia

Freshwater turtles in Asia under threat

According to a new report, the number of 'critically endangered' freshwater turtles has more than doubled in the last 4 years. Three-quarters of Asia's freshwater turtles are listed as 'threatened' and over half are considered 'endangered'. Freshwater turtles are heavily exploited in the region, primarily for food – softshell turtles being especially popular as a luxury food – and traditional medicine products. Imports of turtle shells into Taiwan alone comprise, on an average, over 30 metric tonnes each year. The report, which consists of proceedings from the Workshop on Trade in Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles in Asia, held in Cambodia in 1999, documents the threats facing the species and recommends actions to address the growing crisis. Workshop participants urged that all currently recognized turtle species native to Asia be listed in Appendix II of CITES and that some species be transferred to Appendix I of CITES, which would prohibit all international trade in the species (see also *Internet trading of protected species in Taiwan*). Source: TRAFFIC, 3 October 2000.

Memorandum of Understanding adopted for marine turtles

In July 2000, the text of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia was adopted. The MoU is the second of its kind to be concluded under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species. Twenty-four States were represented at the negotiation session, hosted by the Malaysian Department of Fisheries. The MoU puts in place a framework through

which the States of the region – as well as other concerned States – can work together to conserve and replenish depleted marine turtle populations for which they share responsibility. It acknowledges a wide range of threats to marine turtles, including habitat destruction, direct harvesting and trade, fisheries by-catch, pollution and other anthropogenic sources of mortality. In addition, the MoU recognizes the need to address these problems in the context of the socio-economic development of the States concerned, and to take account of other relevant instruments and organizations.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter* (2000), 90, 21.

Over-harvesting and illegal trade threaten the future of agarwood

A new report by TRAFFIC urges agarwood-exporting countries to address urgent problems related to management, trade controls and research to safeguard the future of this cultural and economic resource. Over 700 tonnes of agarwood from one species – *Aquilaria malaccensis* – was reported to be in international trade in 1997, with Indonesia and Malaysia being the main exporters. From 1995 to 1997, Indonesia reported exporting 920 tonnes, and peninsular Malaysia recorded over 340 tonnes over the same period. This does not include figures for Sarawak, which reached nearly 530 tonnes in 1998 alone.

Source: TRAFFIC, 9 August 2000.

India to clone cheetah

India is planning to clone the cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus*, with the goal of reintroducing the endangered cat into the wild. Cheetahs disappeared from the wild in India more than 50 years ago. Cloning will be carried out at the newly established Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES) in Hyderabad. Using the tools of modern biotechnology, scientists plan to produce the first cheetah clones within 5 years. The cheetah cloning project, for which an outlay of Rs 50 million (c. \$US535,000) has already been made by the government of India, is a collaboration involving the Department of Biotechnology, Central Zoo Authority, the Nehru Zoological Park and the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department.

There is a problem, however, – there are no Indian cheetahs. The Central Zoo Authority has been requested to obtain an Asiatic breed from Iran. If that does not work out, the government is hopeful that Iran will permit the Indian scientists to collect the genetic material from its cheetahs.

Source: *Environmental News Service* (2000), 24 October.

One-horned rhino population on the increase

The Nepalese authorities have claimed success in the conservation of the one-horned rhino *Rhinoceros unicornis*, which is believed to be one of the world's most endangered species. Numbers are reported to have increased by more than 25 per cent in the past 6 years. The latest census puts the number of one-horned rhinos in Nepal to more than 600. According to the Director-General of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal, the transfer of rhinos from an over-populated park in southern Nepal to another in the west helped to increase numbers. One-horned rhinos are only found in Nepal and the eastern Indian states of Assam and Bengal.

Source: *Zimbabwe Wildlife* (2000), July–September, 7.

Partnership established to monitor biodiversity in Nepal

A collaborative partnership has been established between the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, a leading NGO in Nepal and Resources Himalaya, an independent private conservation organization. The purpose of this partnership is to share spatio-temporal information on Nepal's biodiversity. An example of this partnership is the sharing of a geographical information system (GIS) database that provides baseline information for monitoring changes in the biodiversity of the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA). As Nepal's largest protected area, conservation of biodiversity in the ACA is of utmost importance. It contains some of the highest peaks in the world and covers two distinct climatic regions, which support 22 different forest types ranging from subtropical sal forest to perennial snow. Many rare and endangered species live in the ACA, including the snow leopard *Panthera uncia*, musk deer *Moschus* spp., Tibetan argali and

Tibetan wolf, as well as 38 breeding species of birds that are at risk in Nepal. Moreover, it is the only area in Nepal to contain all six species of Himalayan pheasants.

Source: *Habitat Himalaya* (2000), VII, 4.

New bat species found in Laos

Surveys for bats in central Laos led to the discovery of a small cave-roosting bat with large ears and large rounded flaps of skin on its nose, unlike anything previously known from Laos. Charles Francis of the Wildlife Conservation Society found the bat in a harp trap near the banks of the Nam Kading River. Initially, he thought it might be a new population of Ridley's roundleaf bat, but further examination showed that the bat was a new species. The new Lao roundleaf bat, formally described as *Hipposideros rotalis*, is one of several new bats found in the Ammanite Mountains and surrounding limestone outcrops.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation* (2000), July/August, 10.

First tigers photographed in Cambodia

Using automatic infrared-triggered cameras set along suspected wildlife paths, a team of researchers led by the Wildlife Conservation Society and the World Wildlife Fund have photographed tigers for the first time in Cambodia. Leopards *Panthera pardus*, clouded leopards *Neofelis nebulosa*, marbled cats *Felis marmorata*, sun bears *Helarctos malayanus*, Asian elephants *Elephas maximus*, dholes *Cuon alpinus* (Asian wild dogs) and two species of wild cattle – gaur *Bos gaurus* and banteng *B. javanicus* were also photographed. Their surveys reveal more than 60 varieties of large mammals, including eight primate species and six cat species. In addition, in Kirirom National Park surveyors sighted the elusive spotted linsang *Prionodon pardicolor* – a slender cat-like carnivore – the first time this species has been recorded in Cambodia.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation* (2000), September/October, 11.

Cambodia and FAO implement anticrime project

The Cambodian government and FAO have established a new project to fight corruption and uncontrolled illegal logging. The Forest Crime Monitoring and Reporting Project will introduce inde-

pendent monitoring systems to help track illegal logging and trade of forest products. The project is funded by the UK and Australian governments, through the UNDP. The FAO will provide technical training and advice to Cambodia's Forestry Department and Ministry of Environment in their efforts to set up inspection teams to monitor logging and trading activities.

The most innovative aspect of the project is the involvement of an independent watchdog organization – Global Witness – the British-based environmental and human rights group. Under a separate project agreement, Global Witness will oversee and verify monitoring of forestry activities and subsequent enforcement by police and the military. The arrangement is unusual because Global Witness has long been a critic of the government's forestry policies. International organizations have heralded the partnership as a strong indication of Cambodia's new commitment to reversing the country's past record of extensive logging.

Source: *Forest News* (2000), XIV(1), 4.

Indonesia plans to curb expansion of timber mills

The Indonesian government has recently proposed stopping all further development of ordinary plywood mills because of the growing shortage of logs. The government has revealed that the annual demand for raw materials in the timber industry has reached 63.5 million cubic metres whereas the available log production is 35 million cubic metres. Much of the shortfall is presumed to come from illegal logging operations and log thefts.

Source: *Forest News* (2000), XIV (2), 11.

Endemic Sangihe bird named

A review by Pamela Rasmussen and co-workers in the Oriental Bird Club's journal *Forktail* (16, 69–80) of the taxonomy of the black-crowned white-eye *Zosterops atrifrons* from the islands of eastern Indonesia has recommended that the white-eye complex be considered as more than one species. Of these, the form found on the small island of Sangihe has been given full species status and named the Sangihe white-eye *Zosterops nehrkorni*. This species differs in many respects from others in the group, most obviously in its bright pinkish bill and legs, and in its ecology

and vocalizations. On the basis of field observations, it is apparent that this species is very rare and it is recommended for immediate listing as 'critically endangered'.

Source: *World Birdwatch* (2000), 22(3), 5.

New boats to counter illegal fishing in the Philippines

Eleven fibreglass patrol boats have been acquired by the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources to patrol 10 coastal areas of the country. Purchased with funds from the Asian Development Bank and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, these boats will become a major factor in the department's law enforcement efforts against illegal fishing and other unlawful exploitation of the country's natural resources. The boats will be used primarily in the waters of Manila Bay, Hundred Islands, Quezon Province, Malampaya in Palawan, Bicol, Cebu, Pamitikan Island, Basilan and Surigao. Source: *Marine Pollution Bulletin* (2000), 40(7), 568.

East Asia

China/Mongolia international wild camel workshop

An international wild camel workshop was held in Beijing from 29 to 31 August, 2000 and was attended by vice-ministers of the environment from China and Mongolia as well as by delegates from both countries. The world's known wild Bactrian camel *Camelus bactrianus ferus* habitat is contained in five separate areas within China and Mongolia. A joint Letter of Intent was signed to further wild camel protection in both countries. In addition, a total of 28 scientific, management and education resolutions were adopted, including a resolution to establish a new nature reserve in the area in Gansu province of China. This currently unprotected area borders the Great Gobi Reserve 'A' in Mongolia, and is an important feeding site for the wild camel populations. The Convention for Migratory Species (CMS) in Bonn has given its full backing to the proposed new nature reserve.

Source: *Wild Camel Protection Foundation Newsletter*, 4 September 2000.

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web: www.wildcamelprotectionfoundation.org.uk

New giant panda survey

China's State Forestry Administration has announced that it is to carry out a new survey of giant pandas *Ailuropoda melanoleuca*. The last survey, conducted more than 10 years ago by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Chinese government, found about 1000 pandas left in the wild. The State Forest Administration and WWF teams will walk more than 30,000 miles in the mountains of three provinces. The results are expected in 2002. Meanwhile, a survey in January 2000 in Sichuan's Qingchuan county revealed that logging had reduced panda habitat by one-third since 1987.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation* (2000), July/August, 12.

Chinese crested tern – first sighting for 10 years

The Chinese crested tern *Thalasseus bernsteini* was thought to be extinct, but in June 2000 an individual was spotted at the Matsu Islands Gull Refuge in Taiwan. This Refuge was formally announced in January 2000 and is home to at least 250 different bird species. The wildlife photographer who discovered the species was able to make observations of the bird's breeding activities, the first time this had been carried out. It is estimated that there are eight individuals within the refuge. Four nests were discovered in 2000, each of which contained a single healthy chick. Since it was discovered in 1863, there have only been five recorded observations of the species. The tern is the rarest member of the Laridae family, and there are thought to be fewer than 100 individuals world-wide. Source: *International Conservation Newsletter* (2000), 8(3), 1–2.

Internet trading of protected species in Taiwan

The internet is being used increasingly to conduct wildlife trade. In Taiwan, the Wildlife Protection Unit has recently uncovered a number of cases involving the trade of internationally protected turtles on the internet. The species being traded include the Madagascan spider tortoise *Pyxis arachnoides*, Aldabra giant tortoise *Geochelone gigantea*, African spurred tortoise *G. sulcata*, Indian and

Burmese star tortoises *G. elegans* and *G. platynota* and the yellow turtle *Clemmys mutica*. This trade may be related to a current trend in Taiwan for keeping tortoises and turtles as pets.

Source: *International Conservation Newsletter* (2000), 8(2), 6.

Smuggled ivory seized in Taiwan

On 5 May 2000, the Keelung Customs Bureau in Taiwan seized 332 smuggled elephant tusks weighing a total of 2160 kg, the largest haul of smuggled ivory since 1994. The ivory had been shipped from Douala in Cameroon in a consignment identified as wooden planks. Closer inspection found the ivory buried under the piles of planks. In April 2000, the same Bureau seized three tusks weighing 26 kg found in a consignment of coir palm.

Source: *International Conservation Newsletter* (2000), 8(2), 4.

North America

Endangered species legislation – a priority for Canadian government

Following lobbying from thousands of Canadians, the federal government has made the introduction of an endangered species law as one of its top priorities. Government officials have received more letters, faxes, phone calls and petitions of support for endangered species legislation than any other environmental issue.

Source: *Nature Canada* (2000), Spring, 37.

Major seizure of wildlife products in Canada

On 2 May 2000, approximately \$C1.4 million worth of furs and other animal products were seized at Beaver Creek border crossing in Canada's Yukon Territory. The goods were seized from two American citizens attempting to transport the products into Canada from Alaska. The CITES-listed species in the shipment included bobcat *Felis rufus*, lynx *Lynx canadensis*, river otter *Lutra canadensis*, wolf *Canis lupus*, alligator *Alligator mississippiensis* and python (*Boidae*). Most of the skins had been manufactured into clothing products for retail sale.

Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), 3(2), 13.

Co-operation between environment groups and forest product companies

Four British Columbia coastal forest product companies and four environmental groups are co-sponsoring work on development of a proposal for a conservation-based ecosystem approach to temperate rainforests on the central and north coast of British Columbia. Scientific and technical work will be developed in discussion with governments and local stakeholders, and the framework will be tabled in autumn 2000 with coastal Aboriginal leaders, the Central Coast Land and Resource Managing Planning process (LRMP), the government and other decision-makers. The ecosystem management framework being developed will encompass the range of ecological, cultural and economic values found in the area. The forest product companies involved in the initiative are Canadian Forest Products, Fletcher Challenge Canada, Western Forest Products and Weyerhaeuser, and the environmental groups are Greenpeace, the Sierra Club of British Columbia, the Rainforest Action Network (RAN) and the Coastal Rainforest Coalition (CRC).

Source: *The Gallon Environment Letter* (2000), 4(33).

US ratifies Convention to Combat Desertification

On 20 October 2000, the US Senate ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in those countries experiencing serious drought/desertification, particularly in Africa. This is the first Treaty arising out of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 to be ratified by the US that can be implemented fully. The UNCCD is a unique environmental treaty because it addresses the factors that drive rural populations to adopt unsustainable land use practices. It aims to promote effective action that reverses land degradation through innovative local programmes and supportive international partnerships.

Source: *Natural Heritage Institute*, 20 October 2000.

Latest additions to the US Endangered Species Act

A number of plant and animal species have recently been included in the US Endangered Species Act. Plants that are

now listed as endangered include Baker's larkspur *Delphinium bakeri* and yellow larkspur *D. luteum* native to California; the Willamette daisy *Erigeron decumbens* var. *decumbens* restricted to the Willamette Valley in Oregon; the rough popcornflower *Plagiobothrys birtus* from the Umpqua Valley in Oregon; the Wenatchee Mountains checker-mallow *Sidalcea oregana* var. *calva* from the Wenatchee Mountains in Washington; Gentner's fritillary *Fritillaria gentneri*, another Oregon rarity; and the Zapata bladderpod *Lesquerella thamnophila* from Starr and Zapata counties in Texas. Two animal species have also been added to the endangered category: Fender's blue butterfly *Icaricia icarioides fenderi* from the Willamette Valley and a distinct population of California bighorn sheep *Ovis canadensis californiana* in the Sierra Nevada.

Source: *Endangered Species Bulletin* (2000), 25(1-2), 25-27.

Caiman species downlisted

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has reclassified the yacare caiman *Caiman yacare* (also known as *Caiman crocodylus yacare*) from its present endangered status to threatened under the US Endangered Species Act. This became effective on 5 June 2000. The FWS also listed the common caiman *Caiman crocodylus crocodylus* and the brown caiman *C. c. fuscus* as threatened because of their similarity in appearance. The yacare caiman is found in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia whereas the other subspecies have wider distributions from Mexico to South America. All are listed on CITES Appendix II.

Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), 3(2), 14.

Added protection for toothfish

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the US has proposed new conservation and management measures to address illegal and unregulated fishing of Patagonian (*Dissostichus eleginoides*) and Antarctic toothfish (*D. mawsoni*). The species has become a popular restaurant dish under the name of 'Chilean sea bass'. Much of fishing for these species is managed internationally by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). The CCAMLR currently has a Catch Docu-

mentation Scheme (CDS) to monitor international trade. The proposed new measures would require submission of a catch document to NOAA. Dealer permits would be required for import, export and transshipment. Each CCAMLR member would also be required to ensure appropriate examination of import and export documentation to ensure that these account for all toothfish contained in any shipment. Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), 3(2), 17.

US supports shark finning ban

On 6 June 2000, the US House of Representatives voted to outlaw shark finning, a practice that kills 60 000 animals a year in the Pacific Ocean. The fins are sold both in the US and overseas. A pound (c. 500 g) of dried shark fin can fetch up to \$US265, whereas a bowl of shark fin soup can cost as much as \$US100. The bill would not ban the sale of fins, but would prohibit landing or possessing them without the entire shark carcass in all US federal waters. As most fishermen do not have the space to store the carcasses, this would effectively ban most finning. The number of sharks killed only for their fins has increased dramatically in recent years. In 1999, 57,286 blue sharks were finned in the Central and Western Pacific fishery, compared with 2289 in 1992. Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), 3(2), 17-18.

Memorandum of Understanding to conserve North American plants

On 27 June 2000, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) announced a MoU to protect North American native plants. The US is home to 735 threatened or endangered plant species. Under the agreement, the FWS and the CPC would work together to support conservation of endangered native species and their habitats, identify potential for conservation partnerships, encourage participation of the CPC in FWS recovery plans, support appropriate research and education, and assess collaborations between the CPC, FWS and other partners.

Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), 3(2), 18-19.

Leading house builders in the US to end use of endangered woods

Centex Homes, and Kaufman & Broad, the two largest house builders in the US, have agreed to eliminate the use of wood from 'endangered' forests, phase in certified wood alternatives, implement wood-use efficiency measures in new house construction and identify non-wood alternatives. Particularly targeted are woods from old growth Douglas fir, hemlock, lauan and mahogany forests. The two companies together build more than 40,000 houses a year. An estimated 72 per cent of all lumber in the US is used in house building.

Source: *Forest News* (2000), XIV(2), 11–12.

Yellowstone to receive bio-prospecting fees

A federal court has ruled that Yellowstone National Park can receive royalties from a bio-prospecting agreement with the Diversa Corporation. Yellowstone's Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) is the first of its kind and sets a precedent that other national parks could follow. Under the agreement, Diversa will pay the National Park Service \$US100,000 over 5 years and 0.5–10 per cent in royalties for any commercial sales of a product developed from samples taken in the park. Revenues would be used for research and conservation purposes. Despite the ruling, the agreement remains suspended until the park completes an environmental assessment as required under the National Environmental Policy Act. It is not known when the assessment will be completed and Diversa has suspended research until this happens.

Source: *National Parks* (2000), July/August, 12–13.

Californian sea otter population increasing

A census of Californian sea otter *Enhydra lutris* populations undertaken in spring 2000 has shown that, after several years of decline, numbers are now increasing. The population is now thought to number 2300 individuals. The causes of the decline have not been established, and although this increase is encouraging it is not clear whether it represents a genuine upward trend. The fur trade in the 18th and 19th centuries resulted in a decline from an initial number of around 250,000 to a couple of thousand by the

early 1900s. Legislative controls in 1911 ensured a slow recovery, although there was another decline in the 1970s caused by increased mortality from entanglement in gill nets. The population again increased after more legislation was enacted, but the present decline began in 1995. Oil pollution is thought to be the major cause of the most recent decline. Sea otters are particularly vulnerable to oil pollution and it has been suggested that a single large spill in the vicinity of San Francisco could endanger the entire population.

Source: *Marine Pollution Bulletin* (2000), 40(8), 654–655.

Sequoia National Monument established

In April 2000, US President Bill Clinton announced the establishment of Sequoia National Monument in California, providing further protection to 34 groves of ancient sequoia trees. The new 133,000-ha monument on the slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains will protect trees from new mining claims and some timber harvesting, but much of the current activity allowed in the area will continue. Hiking, camping, fishing, river rafting, and other types of non-motorized uses will remain as will existing water rights, private access and special permits for grazing.

Source: *National Parks* (2000), July/August, 17.

Arroyo toad habitat controversy

In June 2000, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) proposed that almost 200,000 ha in southern California be designated as critical habitat for the endangered arroyo toad. The action follows a lawsuit filed by environmental groups, which charged the FWS with violating the Endangered Species Act by failing to protect the toads' habitat.

Arroyo toads prefer shallow pools and sandy stream surfaces. About 75 per cent of the original habitat has been destroyed by development, agriculture, recreational activities and the introduction of non-native species.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation* (2000), September–October, 18.

Alabama sturgeon listed as endangered

On 5 June 2000, the US Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Alabama sturgeon *Scaphirhynchus suttkusi* as endangered

under the Endangered Species Act. This species is a small, freshwater sturgeon found only in the Mobile River Basin of Alabama and Mississippi. A significant decline in population size and range over the past 100 years has been caused by commercial harvest, scientific collection and incidental catches. Added to these are problems of overfishing, habitat degradation and declines in water quality. The species' long-term survival is hampered by a lack of knowledge of its habitat and life history requirements. Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), 3(2), 16–17.

Army base receives conservation award

Fort Jackson, the largest Army training facility in the US, has received the military's Outstanding Conservation Award from the Secretaries of Defense and the Army. The forest in which army recruits used to train is now part of a protected ecosystem. In the past 3 years, the base – located on 21,450 ha in Columbia, South Carolina – reclaimed 40 severely eroded sites and converted more than 1600 ha to longleaf pine forests. The red-cockaded woodpecker *Dendrocopos nuttallii*, an endangered species, has since doubled its population in the area to 72 birds. Other rare animals, such as the big-eared bat, are also on the increase. In addition, the base habitat supports two endangered plants, the smooth coneflower and the only population of rough-leaved loosestrife in South Carolina.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation* (2000), September–October, 14.

Protection secured for critically endangered Oahu 'elepaio

The critically endangered Oahu 'elepaio, a native forest bird of Hawai'i, is benefiting protection under the US Endangered Species Act (ESA), thanks to a lawsuit brought by the Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund on behalf of the Conservation Council for Hawai'i. Sightings of the bird have plummeted in recent years and there are now thought to be 1500 birds remaining, occupying about 4 per cent of their historic range. The bird's listing as endangered under the ESA means that federal and state law now prohibit harassing, harming or killing the animal, including habitat modification that significantly impairs the bird's normal breeding behavioural

patterns such as breeding, feeding or sheltering. Areas of habitat for the bird have also been designated as 'critical', thus ensuring their protection from federal agency actions such as road improvement or military training. Habitat loss and degradation are currently the major threats to the species' survival. Source: *'Elepaio* (2000), 60(5), 42.

Central America and Caribbean

Caribbean protection agreement comes into force

An historic agreement to protect the fauna and flora of the Caribbean Sea came into force in May 2000, when St Lucia became the ninth Caribbean State to ratify the agreement. The Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol (SPAW) was created in 1990 by the 28 States of the Cartagena Convention and will protect species of fauna and flora listed in the Protocol's three Annexes, including all species of cetaceans, sea turtles, crocodiles and coral reefs. Countries that have recently announced their intention to ratify the Protocol include Belize, Dominica, France, Jamaica and the United Kingdom. The Protocol highlights the region's growing recognition of the need to conserve threatened, endangered and depleted wildlife species and to encourage sustainable management of coastal and ocean resources. Source: *Sea Wind* (2000), 14(2), 28–29.

CIDA to fund coastal zone management education in Cuba

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) will provide \$C750,000 for Dalhousie and St Mary's Universities to carry out a coastal zone management education project in Cuba. The scientists' expertise will be used to help protect the Cuban environment. Dalhousie's Marine Affairs Program will lead the project, collaborating with experts from Saint Mary's Geography Department, to help three universities in Cuba to establish a national interdisciplinary master's degree programme in integrated coastal zone management. This 5-year initiative will help Cuba to address environmental problems related

to rapid development activities in its coastal regions. The project is funded by CIDA as part of the University Partnerships in Cooperation Program, which supports development activities undertaken jointly by Canadian and developing country universities.

Source: *The Gallon Environment Letter* (2000), 4(33).

Egg smuggling threat to St Vincent parrot

All parties to CITES have been notified of the trade in eggs of the St Vincent parrot *Amazona guildingii* and been requested to alert their enforcement authorities to the problem. The parrot is a CITES Appendix I species native to St Vincent and the Grenadines. The total wild population is thought to number 500 birds. Current information suggests that eggs are being collected from nest trees during the breeding season from February to August and taken abroad for incubation. It has been suggested that there may be as many as 40 birds in one European country alone.

Source: *TRAFFIC North America* (2000), 3(2), 19.

South America

Major forest corridor purchase in north-west Ecuador

Rainforest Concern, Fauna & Flora International and an Ecuadorian organization NYTUA, have recently purchased 5260 ha of pristine forest linking the Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve and the Awa Ethnic Reserve in north-west Ecuador. The area had been threatened by development for the oil palm industry. In the past year, world demand for oil palm had led to the loss of over 10,000 ha of forest in north-west Ecuador.

The area of forest purchased contains many endemic and threatened animals and plants including harpy eagle *Harpia harpyja* and Buffon's macaw *Ara ambiguus*. This land purchase is part of the northern phase of the Choco-Andean Corridor. The corridor aims eventually to link the cloud forests of the western slopes of the Andes near Quito with the lowland forests of the Choco region, which extend north-west to the coast and across the international border into Colombia.

Source: *Rainforest Review* (2000), Summer, 2.

Threat from development of Ecuador's mining industry

The Ecuadorian Government is probably to release information gathered as part of a World Bank-financed project called Prodeminca (Mining Development and Environmental Control Project). The main objective is to promote the development of Ecuador's mining industry, especially in the west of the country. This is to be accomplished firstly by 'modernising' Ecuador's mining and environmental legislation to make it more attractive to foreign investors, and secondly, by creating and disseminating a series of maps containing mineralogical information indicating the probable location of precious minerals including platinum, gold, silver, copper, cadmium, molybdenum and 29 other elements. Source: *Rainforest Review* (2000), Summer, 5.

Call to halt illegal fishing of Galapagos sea cucumbers

TRAFFIC is urging Ecuador to establish a rational use of sea cucumber following an increase in illegal trading after the closure of an experimental fishery in 1999. Sea cucumbers are marine animals related to starfish and are commonly traded in dried form. In the mid-1990s, a 4-year ban on fishing of Galapagos sea cucumbers was implemented. Following this ban, an experimental fishery was allowed in April and May 1999, which resulted in the harvesting of 4.4 million sea cucumbers and legal export of 122 tonnes from the Galapagos to mainland Ecuador. It was evident that illegal trading of sea cucumbers occurred when the fishery was closed and there are concerns that there will be continued pressure to open the fishery, which may lead to greater illegal fishing activity. TRAFFIC recommends that the Ecuadorian government impose a tariff on the harvesting of sea cucumbers in order that these funds could be invested in future conservation projects.

Source: *TRAFFIC*, 28 August 2000.

Australia/New Zealand/ Antarctica

Australia expands protected forest areas in New South Wales

The Government of New South Wales recently added 324,000 ha of forests to its system of protected areas along the state's south coast. This will create a continuous corridor of national parks and reserves stretching 350 km from the border with Victoria to the escarpment on the coast. As a trade-off, there is a set of 20-year timber supply agreements with forestry companies that make future restrictions on logging operations subject to compensation claims. This is the latest in a series of agreements between the state governments and the federal government, which recently passed legislation in support of Regional Forest Agreements to balance protection and utilization interests.

Source: *Forest News* (2000), XIV(2), 12.

Haven for Australia's sea snakes

The Australian government has announced the establishment of a Commonwealth Marine Reserve to protect one of the country's best-known havens for sea snakes. The Cartier Island Marine Protected Area is located in the Indian Ocean off Western Australia's Kimberley coast and was formerly a defence practice area. The Australian Minister of Defence has agreed to support this initiative by releasing the area so that it can be managed to ensure the long-term protection of its unique conservation values.

Source: *Marine Pollution Bulletin* (2000), 40(8), 653.

New Zealand government funds rodent eradication projects

New Zealand's Conservation Minister has announced a project to eradicate Norway rats *Rattus norvegicus* from Campbell Island in order that endangered species may be reintroduced to the island. Approximately \$NZ2.7 mil-

lion over 4 years has been secured for the project as part of the New Zealand's Biodiversity Strategy's \$NZ57 million allocation over the next 5 years to control invasive plants and animals. Once Campbell Island is cleared of rats, the Department of Conservation will return endemic birds such as the rare Campbell Island teal and the Campbell Island snipe to their former habitat. The conservation minister also announced that around \$NZ100,000 will be allocated towards protecting and restoring biodiversity on the Chatham Islands, with resources targeted to control weeds and prevent rodents from reaching vulnerable sites.

Source: *New Zealand Government*, 4 October 2000.

New population of short-tailed bats discovered

A small population of New Zealand short-tailed bats *Mystacina tuberculata* has been found in the Tararua Ranges north of Wellington. These threatened bats have previously been recorded only from Omahuta Forest, Northland, Rangataua Forest on the slopes of Mount Ruapehu and from Whenua Hou/Codfish Island off Stewart Island. Four bats were caught in mist nets in the Tararua Ranges and fitted with tiny radio transmitters. Radio tracking revealed that they were all roosting solitarily.

Source: *Forest and Bird* (2000), 297, 10.

New Zealand government bans logging on west coast

The New Zealand government has announced that it is bringing to an end logging on the west coast's publicly owned land. It has also announced a \$NZ189 million funding boost to biodiversity conservation for the next 5 years. One of the key projects being funded is the proposal for the establishment of kiwi sanctuaries to boost the survival of this species on the mainland. The ban on logging should result in the addition of 100,000 ha of lowland forest to the national parks and reserve system. The

key elements of the government's decision were abandonment of the proposed beech logging scheme, ending all rimu logging by March 2002, continuation of the heavy Buller logging until the contracted volume is felled and a \$NZ120 million package for the west coast as 'adjustment assistance'.

Source: *Conservation News* (2000), 119, 1-2.

New bird conservation campaign in New Zealand

A major bilingual (English/Maori) public awareness campaign (run jointly by the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society, Northland Maori and the Department of Conservation) has been launched to save the New Zealand pigeon *Hemiphaga novaseelandiae*. The pigeon is known locally by its Maori name, the kukupa and elsewhere as the kereru. The bird is in decline, largely because of predation, poaching, logging and the adverse effects caused by introduced predators on New Zealand's forests. Numbers have fallen by around 50 per cent in some parts of Northland during the past 20 years and at this rate of decline, birds could disappear altogether from the area within 10-15 years. The kukupa plays an important role in the health and survival of forest ecosystems because it disperses the large seeds of native trees.

Source: *World Birdwatch* (2000), 22(3), 4.

The *Briefly* section in this issue was written and compiled by Camilla Erskine and Simon Mickleburgh. Contributions from authoritative published sources (including reliable web sites) are always welcome. Please send to Simon Mickleburgh, Fauna & Flora International, Great Eastern House, Tenison Road, Cambridge, CB1 2TT, UK, or e-mail to simon.mickleburgh@fauna-flora.org