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Viewpoint

Something for our critics to ponder

Advocates of conservation are often vigorously criticized, especially in highly industrialized societies, for holding so steadfastly to viewpoints which seem to be contrary to the trend of social or economic needs.

We have been called obstructionists, and worse, for urging caution in approval for such projects as the trans-Alaskan oil pipeline, or the proliferation of nuclear-fired power plants, offshore oil wells, strip mines, larger airports, colonization schemes in tropical rain forests, super highways, dams and scores of other projects which result in environmental degradation.

In the words of some highly placed officials, we do little good and enormous harm once our interests go beyond such relatively "harmless" activities as holding scientific meetings, writing textbooks, bird watching and making lists of endangered species. Presumably, wider concerns should be none of our affair, but left entirely to the good judgement of politicians, businessmen and those governmental agencies which are the official guardians of the public's interest in resource use.

Conservationists also are criticized for views which seem simple-minded to people who have never known anything under their feet but hard surfaces. To hear these critics, it would seem the real world is paved or walled, trees confined to tubs or planting margins, animals to feedlots or zoos, and wild nature to worthless and unknown or, at best, backward, places. To suggest that there are paramount values in wilderness, for instance, in the views of many seemingly intelligent people would be *a priori* evidence of a feeble mind.

Indeed, throughout a large part of the world the dominant drives are destruction of wilderness and consumption of basic resources at ever-increasing rates, in the process of which economic growth and relative prosperity – and even something called "the good life" – have resulted for part, but far from all, of the world's people.

Some conservation advocates have challenged the economic theories of increasing use and continuing growth as invalid for the long term. For decades they have warned of coming troubles, urging moderation in the consumption of non-renewable resources – including land – and care in the harvest of such renewable resources as fisheries and forests.

In general these warnings have had few receptive listeners and many critics.

Where rational use of resources – in the full realization that these resources are limited in supply – has been conservation's rallying cry, many of our critics have advocated precisely the opposite action.

Where conservation has demonstrated the ecological truth that diversity results in strength, many critics have advocated systems of monocultures, in human activity

as well as in agriculture. Even in the field of ideas, diversity has been shunned and contrary opinion persecuted.

Where conservation has urged that development programmes, fully conceded to be necessary in many cases, take ecological considerations into account in the planning stage, the critics usually have ignored this advice, in spite of ample evidence that to do so imperils the success of the programme concerned. Ironically, when a programme goes sour, ecologists usually are the first experts called in to find a remedy.

Where conservation has urged societies to keep open options for future resource use and not to foreclose choices for coming generations, our critics have advocated policies that will preclude such choices.

Where conservationists have proved the destructive effects of chemical pollution, critics seem quite willing to accept this destruction as the price – but only part of the price, it must be reminded – of so-called economic growth and expansion of markets, or simply of business as usual.

A few decision-makers have listened to these warnings, but in general they have paid little attention. Far too many people have held to the belief that technology and science would miraculously produce substitutes in good time. This has yet to be convincingly demonstrated.

And now the world has come face to face with the bitter reality of an energy crisis. This is a reality with sufficient impact to convince even the most skeptical that there are limits to growth.

One would hope the lessons of this crisis would be taken to heart by those who make the decisions that shape our world. These are the lessons of nature and they extend to the societies of men and the systems they create with the same force as they work in the natural world.

Ecologists know that when a group of living things becomes too successful – in terms of numbers, at least – it tends to destroy itself by the sheer weight of its mass and inability to satisfy its needs for food and habitat. Has mankind become too successful?

Ecologists know that there is strength in diversity. Have our enormously complicated economic systems become too rigidly dependent on a few raw materials? Have we put too many of our eggs in one basket? Do we rely too heavily on too little? Are we attempting to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps?

Sadly, the answer appears to be "yes" to all these questions.

For at least 20 years conservationists have warned of serious trouble ahead in the matter of energy use and production. These warnings have been borne out, and the future appears grim indeed for a large part of the industrialized world.

Conservationists must reiterate that there are no easy answers, no panacea, no magic replacements for exhausted resources that can issue from factories or laboratories.

Hope for the future does not lie in the panic reaction of further environmental destruction and minor modification to the policy of "business as usual", which appears to be one immediate response to the crisis.

Genuine hope lies only in the imperative and urgent necessity that men and nations honestly begin to practice conservation in all its creative aspects. Realigned priorities, a genuine end to waste, significant retrenchment in levels of consumption, recycling, environmental restoration and repair, and careful planning in all we do must now be the goal in societies where men have long

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Iceland joins IUCN

The Government of Iceland has advised the IUCN Director General of Iceland's adherence to the Statutes of the Union. Iceland thus becomes the 35th state member of IUCN.

forgotten the feel of the earth under their feet. Ultimately mankind must find the way to live in dynamic balance with the only source of his own strength, which is the natural world.

As they always have, conservation's critics will no doubt call these actions simple-minded and too radical for the "practical" needs of today. No conservationist would suggest they will be easy to accomplish, especially where so much major effort has been spent in opposite directions. Nevertheless, these are ideas whose time is long past due.

Can the world afford further delay? Perhaps – but only at the risk of enormously greater disruption and difficulty when the start is finally made, as inevitably it must.

Robert I. Standish

Conferences and Meetings

International symposium on Amazonian wildlife and fresh-water fisheries

An international symposium organized by the Programme on the Tropics of the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IICA-Trópicos), in cooperation with the Brazilian Institute for Forest Development (IBDF, the official government agency for forestry, wildlife and national parks), and the Brazilian Agency for Fishing in the Amazon (SUDEPE), took place in Manaus, in the heart of the Amazon, 25 November to 1 December.

The meeting was attended by 105 scientists and administrators including representatives of the various agencies of Brazil dealing with Amazonian problems. Heads and specialists from official wildlife and fresh-water fishery departments of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, as well as other scientists from Universities, research institutes and private individuals, participated. Also present were three experts from FAO. IUCN was represented by Dr. Gerardo Budowski, who was invited to present a special paper entitled "Conservation and Management of Wildlife and Natural Areas in the Amazon".

The meeting examined the state of knowledge on wildlife and fisheries in the Amazonian area discussing over forty papers. Fifteen recommendations were also approved, the most relevant points being summarized as follows:

- Control of illegal traffic and trade through rivers and other commerce channels.
- The prohibition of introductions of exotic species without previously exhaustive research: measures to restrict the spread of alien species already introduced were also commended.
- The strict control of biocides and pollutants, including the need of an impact study before use; the symposium considered that "agent orange" which had been extensively used in Viet-Nam as a forest killer and presently being experimented with in the Amazon, should be absolutely prohibited.
- Signing and ratification of the Washington (1973) Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora is considered urgently necessary.
- Cooperative effort to produce a catalogue of Amazonian species presently harvested, with an appraisal of the status of populations.
- Preparation of lists of endangered species of the Amazon, following the classification system designed for the IUCN Red Data Books, and their inclusion in the Washington Convention.
- The provision of natural areas of substantial size in all colonization or agrarian reform programmes, as reserves for wildlife and possible breeding centres.
- The establishment of appropriate systems of national parks, natural areas and equivalent reserves for all Amazonian countries to ensure the preservation of adequate and representative samples of the Amazonia

USA signs the World Heritage Convention

On 7 December, the United States deposited with UNESCO instruments of its ratification of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. This is the first ratification of the Convention.

The Convention was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in Paris 16 November 1972. For a report on details of the Convention, see IUCN Bulletin 4 (2) p. 6.

for purposes related to education, research, gene pools, and whenever the conditions make it possible, tourism; in this connection it was requested that FAO, UNESCO, IUCN and WWF support assistance requests that will arise from Amazonian countries with this objective in mind.

- Steps towards planning and establishment of national parks in frontier areas.
- Prohibition against declaring any wild animal a "pest" without prior exhaustive research and, assurance that in such cases where a species is declared a pest, control is carried out through accredited government agencies.
- Setting up of breeding centres by qualified institutions. Convening of a meeting between representatives of Amazonian countries and concerned international organizations to achieve the most efficient coordination in relation to conservation and management of Amazonian wildlife and fisheries.

The full proceedings will be published by IICA-Trópicos.

Historic property deeded to IUCN

One of the two châteaux in Saint-Prex, about 4 km from Morges, has been given to IUCN by its owner, Dr. Oscar Forel. The property, known as "Le Manoir", dates from 1234, the time when Saint-Prex became a fortified town.

The building, situated in extensive grounds on the shore of Lac Léman, has three floors and includes a large audience chamber, several reception rooms, and nine bedrooms. It is an historic monument and is beautifully and appropriately furnished.

Dr. Forel, noted Swiss psychiatrist, is the son of Auguste Forel, famous for his researches in natural history. A devoted nature lover and conservationist, Dr. Forel has published two magnificent volumes of colour photographs (which he calls "Synchronies") based on his imaginative selection of small sections of the bark of trees which he has observed on his extensive expeditions throughout the world. These are then enlarged. Successful exhibits have been held in many cities of Europe (including the Soviet Union), and in the United States. Translations of the books have been made from the original French into English, German and Danish. The beautiful English version is titled: "Hidden Art in Nature. Synchronies", and was published in 1972 by Harper and Row, New York. It includes an introduction by Sir Peter Scott, a foreword by Jean Rostand, member of the Institut (France), an "avant-propos" by the author, followed by 54 "synchronies" of striking beauty and inspirational value.

"Le Manoir" has been the property of the Forel family for several generations. It has become known as a cultural centre through the holding of concerts and assemblies of artists.

IUCN plans to maintain "Le Manoir" in its present state and will in due course use it as a centre for conservation research where scholars can live whilst writing a book, as a place to conduct "rolling" seminars with a small resident core group and a sequence of visiting experts, and as the location for working meetings on conservation issues.

Dr. Forel will continue to use "Le Manoir" as his residence during his lifetime.

Programme Activities

International Symposium to seek Protection for Alpine regions

Increasing degradation of Alpine regions as a result of human pressures, and action plans to bring these destructive processes under control, will be the subject matter of an IUCN-sponsored International Symposium 11 to 17 May at Trento, Italy. Some 250 European experts will attend the meeting.

The fragile Alpine ecosystems are already suffering from ever-increasing construction of houses, roads, tourist facilities, and hydro-electric power plants and even industrial installations built without regard for ecological principles and the degrading effects of pollution. It is vital that the situation be brought under control so that future development does not destroy all that makes the Alps one of the most wonderful areas in the world.

IUCN, and its sister organization, the World Wildlife Fund, are organizing sponsors, along with the Commission internationale pour la protection des régions alpines (CIPRA), Euregio Alpina, l'Union internationale des associations d'alpinisme (UIAA), Italian Alpine Club (CAI) and the International Festival on Mountain and Exploration Films, Trento, Italy.

UNESCO and the International Federation of Landscape Architects are cooperating as sponsors of the symposium, as are the Secretariats of the Economic Commission for Europe of the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

Work programme for the Symposium is as follows:

Saturday, 11 May: General reports on human population, evolution of population patterns and causes of inequal distribution in the Alpine region; touristic implications.

An ideal zoning map of the Alpine regions to be protected will be presented.

Sunday, 12 May: General reports on biological impacts on the flora and fauna due to the intervention of man, including pollution phenomena.

General reports on physiognomic modifications of Alpine landscapes, agriculture, forestry, national monuments, erosion, hydroelectric power, public works, tourism, quarries, etc., with positive and negative effects.

Existing conservation measures and their effectiveness, including reserves and national parks will be reviewed.

Tuesday, 14 May: Reports on the present situation of legislation and administration in European Alpine countries in the fields of land management, land use and the protection of flora, fauna, national parks and reserves.

Wednesday, 15 May: Working group meetings on national parks and reserves, conservation of species, agriculture and silviculture, economic development, transport and settlements, tourism, and land use and zoning.

Thursday, 16 May: Formulation of conclusions of the Symposium, in the form of an action plan.

Friday, 17 May: Presentation and adoption of the action plan.

Expert joins IUCN for expanded information role

Robert L. Schiffer has joined the IUCN secretariat as senior member for external relations. He comes to IUCN from the United Nations Environment Programme, where he served as special adviser to the Executive Director, Maurice F. Strong.

Mr. Schiffer's appointment is part of an intensified effort to expand IUCN's role in public education and information on the need to initiate and achieve rational management and protection of the world's environmental resources. Undertaken in cooperation with UNEP, this

effort is also designed to add strength and support to relationships with its members, particularly in assisting them in their efforts to create a popular awareness of conservation issues and of the need to implement conservation policies based on ecological principles.

Mr. Schiffer was a member of the original secretariat that helped prepare the Stockholm Conference, and he continued as a member of UNEP after it was established by the UN General Assembly. Earlier he served with the United States Mission to the United Nations, and the United States Mission to the Organization of American States.

In addition to UNEP, he was associated with the UN in other capacities. His articles have appeared in numerous publications, and he was also a by-line reporter for The New York Times. He was the editor of "Looking Outward: Years of Crisis at the United Nations".

A new journal: Environmental Conservation

A new international journal, Environmental Conservation, will begin publication next spring in Geneva with the collaboration of IUCN, ICFE and the support of the World Wildlife Fund. Professor Nicholas Polunin will edit the new quarterly.

The publication will be "devoted to maintaining global viability through exposing and countering environmental deterioration resulting from human population pressure and unwise technology."

To assure the highest levels of currency and scientific accuracy, Dr. Polunin will have the active support of more than 30 Advisory Editors who, between them, will cover all the main subjects and international agencies involved.

Subscription rates are as follows:

For individuals whose institutions are already subscribing at the full rate (see below), SFr. 60 or US\$ 20 per annum, or SFr. 150 or US\$50 for 'foundation' subscribers by the end of 1974 for the first 3 volumes.

For institutions (including libraries), organizations, government agencies, and scientific and other departments, SFr. 120 or US\$ 40 per annum or SFr. 300 or US\$ 100 for 'foundation' subscribers by the end of 1974 for the first 3 volumes.

Further information can be obtained from the Circulation Manager, Environmental Conservation, IUCN Secretariat, 1110 Morges, Switzerland.

Conservation notes

Greenland planning world's largest national park

The Northeast Greenland National Park – Greenland's first national park and without question the world's largest – is expected to be established soon to virtually cover the northeast third of the island continent. The area lies between Petermann Glacier in the northwest and King Oscar Fjord in the southeast and includes the land and sea in between. The park will be set up under a new protection law, now being prepared in Greenland, which is meeting with much interest both there and in Denmark.

On 9 October 1973, Dr. Christian Vibe met with the local Greenland Council at Godthåb to discuss the extension and borders of the park. Agreement was unanimous by the 17 members of the council.

The next step will be action by the Danish Parliament to pass the Greenland Protection Act. This is expected this winter. After that park administration and rules for activity in the park will be decided and brought into force.

It is expected that the park will attract many tourists in the future. It will, of course, provide excellent research

opportunities in the fields of zoology, botany, archeology and climatology.

Parts of the area have relatively luxuriant vegetation and good habitats for polar bears, musk ox, lemmings, arctic hare, ermine, arctic fox and many important species of birds, especially the barnacle goose and pink-footed goose, gyrfalcon and snow owls.

Northeastern Greenland is a principal breeding area for polar bears and one of the last areas where the East Greenland Atlantic walrus can be seen. The oldest trace of musk ox and man in this area is dated at about 5000 years ago. The last reindeer disappeared around 1900 and the arctic wolf around 1934.

All the park area is uninhabited, except for one airfield, Mestersvig, on King Oscar Fjord, two coastal weather stations, Daneborg and Danmarkshavn, and the police sledge patrol "Sirius".

Including inland ice, land and surrounding sea the total area is about 700,000 sq.km.

In addition, three reserves are planned for seals, polar bears and sea birds, to be established in 1974. These are located on the Blossville Coast on the east coast, and Melville Bay and Carye Island on Baffin Bay in the northwest.

At the present time, according to the 1973 UN List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves, the world's largest park is Wood Buffalo in Canada. This contains 44,807 sq.km.

Hunting banned in Peruvian Amazon

On 3 October 1973, Peru placed an indefinite ban on hunting or capturing all spotted cats and the puma, all monkeys, the giant anteater, giant armadillo, giant otter, manatee and marsh deer in the Peruvian Amazonia, according to information cabled to IUCN by Dr. Marc Dourojeanni, Director of Forestry and Wildlife. The ban also applies to trade in products of the species concerned.

With Colombia and Brazil having similar legislation, it is expected that the decree will provide an adequate base for coordinating enforcement by the three countries against the still-thriving illegal animal and skin traffic through such ports as Manaus, Iquitos, and other export cities, and, hopefully, will discourage the activities of European, American and Asian importers who buy such products.

Varirata National Park, Papua New Guinea

The first national park in Papua New Guinea, Varirata National Park, was officially opened on 18 October 1973 by Mr. Albert Maori Kiki, M.H.A., Minister of Defence and Foreign Relations.

The park stands on the land of the Loiri people, who have cooperated with the National Parks Board of Papua New Guinea in the establishment of the park. At the opening ceremony, Mr. Dirona Abe, Chairman of the National Parks Board, stressed the importance of the "Welcome House" at Varirata which is in fact the visitor's centre. The design is based on traditional local houses and made with woven bamboo walls and Kunai grass roof.

Letters

Concerning Vampire Bat Control

A recent article in this *Bulletin* (Vol. 4, No. 9, p. 39) draws attention to what has been termed "an ecologically sound method of vampire bat control", a statement which is misleading since this method might ultimately lead to the extermination of this species.

The common vampire bat, *Desmodus rotundus* (E. Geoff.) is the most abundant species of the true vampire bats and also the least specialized since it feeds in-

discriminately on the blood of birds and mammals. This is probably the reason for its very wide geographical distribution extending from Central Mexico into South America as far as Uruguay. It has adapted itself to very different ecological conditions, even occurring at 3000 m. Its preference for easy prey is the reason why this species has become a scourge in cattle raising areas, where according to FAO reports, it causes losses in livestock production of some \$250 million a year. This high mortality rate is due to this bat being a carrier of rabies which occurs here in the form of *paralytic rabies*. Consequently, it is quite obvious that measures must be taken to reduce the bat population if cattle raising is to continue and to provide the country with a much needed source of protein.

Before discussing the recent and very efficient methods used for bat control, it should be stressed that this is entirely a man-made problem very similar to what is known as monoculture. The rearing or cultivating on a very large scale of a single species of animal or plant, inevitably invites their natural predators to concentrate in such areas; the abundant food supply increases their fertility and consequently their rate of population growth is considerably accelerated.

Not all common vampires are carriers of the rabies virus, but even in areas where they are uninfected, their constant bites may cause considerable losses in cattle through secondary infection of the wounds.

The biology of this species of bat is not yet entirely known. It roosts in a variety of places and when in caves, in the most inaccessible cracks. These bats congregate with many other species of insectivorous bats which must be spared. Therefore, a selective method has been worked out based on the observation that common vampires preen themselves and one another by licking their fur. The bats are caught in mist nets and their fur smeared with vaseline into which is incorporated an anticoagulant which causes internal hemorrhages leading to a rapid death of the bat. An alternative method consists in injecting the anticoagulant into the rumen of the cow from where it gets into the blood. The dose is too small to affect the cow, but sufficient to kill the vampire when it licks the blood.

This method destroys more than 90 percent of the vampire bat population without affecting other species of bats, yet it should not be considered as "ecologically sound". Subsequent observations based upon the presence of wounds on cattle, show that fresh bites reappear after a period of six months which implies that another population has taken over the roosts. A situation very similar to that seen when carrion crows, *Corvus corone*, L. are exterminated in a given area which is again later occupied by another population. Consequently such a thoroughly destructive method of bat eradication should be constantly controlled by biologists and further research on bat migration, fertility rate in nature and population densities should be pursued.

An ever increasing human population pressure and increasing needs for sources of protein, will inevitably lead to widespread extension of cattle breeding in South America and necessarily to the control of vampire bats in new areas. Even if today the total vampire bat population is enormous, the constant eradication of regional populations will inevitably lead to a marked decline and for this reason alone such methods should be under constant control before it is too late, and the survival of another interesting species of mammal be endangered.

Jean G. Baer

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