

Viewpoint

Conservation problems in the third world

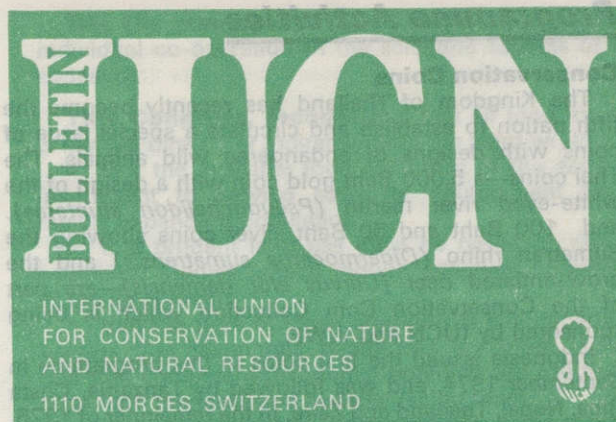
In many developing countries, recently, there has been much talk—and some action—about conservation. New and often drastic laws are being enacted. Some political leaders have taken up the banner of conservation and they want to achieve progress—fast! Many groups have sprung up devoted to the cause of conservation and, generally speaking, there has been much turmoil over various conservation issues. They have so attracted interest and aroused emotions that the local press and other information media have picked them up, and in some countries hardly a day passes without a strong statement denouncing various malpractices or demanding radical remedies.

Some political leaders who have actually promoted drastic action have been highly commended by the conservation world at large, particularly from within the richer industrialized countries where for years there has often been a feeling that their own governments are much too slow and too timid to take the radical measures that are called for. But in some cases, after the first impulse to acclaim these daring leaders of the third world—apparently able to bypass cumbersome bureaucratic procedures—and credit them with sweeping reforms, a certain disillusion has set in whenever it has been found that achievements have not matched initial expectations. Of course, there have been spectacular successes, but there have also been disappointing failures.

As long as there was merely *talk* about intentions and broad policies favouring conservation—as long as actual conservation action did not imply a major reorganization of the government machinery, major allocations of new expenditure, and, above all, curtailment of the exponential phenomena associated with economic growth—the cause of conservation was generally popular, and all conservationists whatever their persuasion acclaimed the welcome changes and pledged their unequivocal support. They contributed to the movement not only by supporting the policies and efforts of conservation-minded leaders, but also, in many places, by systematically and sometimes violently attacking or otherwise denouncing those official and private institutions that did not follow suit.

Inevitably this created resentment. Conservationists were accused of being irresponsible and unrealistic. It was said they opposed policies aimed at generating new jobs, agitated against industrial development, disregarded the poor and hungry and the landless farmers, or lobbied against such traditional practices as hunting. Moreover, it did not help that conservation was often presented as a movement imported from other countries, notably from the West; nor that it was promoted by the more intellectual and well-to-do sections of society, and by city-dwelling supporters motivated more by their emotions than by a coherent understanding of the many interacting factors.

National parks cannot be understood, created, or even less managed, with a pen or a degree, and certainly not by wishful thinking. Public awareness of conservation and all its implications cannot be acquired in a matter of days or weeks. It is obviously extremely difficult to have the best of both worlds when it comes to meeting the demands of economic growth, with its impact on natural resources, its energy consumption, pollution and other negative influences, on the one hand—and on the other, the need to maintain natural areas, or aim at a state of relative balance between man and the environment, or indeed, to promote diversity and keep options open for future generations. There can hardly be any sympathy for those protecting the last remnants of natural areas and the wildlife within them, when there is an ever growing population of poor and landless peasants and



NEW SERIES Vol. 6, No. 10 OCTOBER 1975
Published with the financial assistance of UNESCO; issued monthly

when agricultural production does not keep pace with population growth.

What then are the best avenues for taking advantage of the good will of prominent political leaders, without risking the backlash described above?

Obviously it is not generally possible to promote measures which are too radical. To do so is to risk losing the support of key administrative agencies, whose cooperation is essential. At this stage, it appears that the best solution is to find some worthwhile conservation actions in which different conservation groups can work *together*, such as conservation education publications, training courses for guards or park guides, the construction of a visitor centre, the design of nature trails in some of the parks, and similar devices that provoke little disagreement. To be sure, they will not solve a country's conservation problems, but they will certainly help conservation organizations with different terms of reference to work jointly towards a common objective. Perhaps, and this may be even more useful, they will help prevent jealousy between conservation organizations that compete for prestige and finance. There will be less of a tendency for any organization to consider as unfriendly any other body which calls itself "conservationist" if it does not exactly preach and practice the same—often radical—solutions.

In such a strategy there is a niche for every conservation organization regardless of its terms of reference, its source of funding and the qualifications of those who are involved in running it. If such a spirit of cooperation and friendly criticism existed, the government entrusted with the natural resources of its country should find in turn ways of fully taking advantage of the goodwill generated, by delegating some responsibilities, creating advisory bodies that include representatives of non-governmental groups, and similar measures.

If non-governmental conservation bodies fail to seize such opportunities, they may ultimately lose the support of the very political leaders that have backed their cause and whom they have so warmly acclaimed as pioneers. In fact, many political leaders are particularly prone to sense changes, and once they are aware that their original conservation attitudes are more a liability than an asset, they will switch to other, more popular issues.

It is high time that present and potential conservation-minded political leaders in the third world—and elsewhere—be surrounded and advised by the best qualified conservationists who are able to plan and execute realistic policies and actions that have a chance of succeeding. Some of their solutions may perhaps not be as stringent as the situation warrants, but they will have the merit of rallying the majority of governmental and private institutions to the cause of conservation. Time is running short, and too much radicalism, hesitation, bickering and in-fighting among the few qualified conservationists could prove to be catastrophic and lead to the destruction of the very resources they want to save for future generations.

Gerardo Budowski

Programme Activities

Conservation Coins

The Kingdom of Thailand has recently become the fifth nation to establish and circulate a special issue of coins with designs of endangered wild animals. The Thai coins—a 5,000 Baht gold coin with a design of the white-eyed river martin (*Pseudochelidon sirintarae*), and 100 Baht and 50 Baht silver coins showing the Sumatran rhino (*Didermocerus sumatrensis*) and the brow-antlered deer (*Cervus eldi siamensis*)—are part of the Conservation Coin Collection which is being sponsored by IUCN and WWF.

Indonesia issued the first coins in this programme in September 1974, and was followed by Tanzania, Costa Rica, Nepal, Thailand and Zaire. In the remainder of 1975, conservation coins will be issued by Mauritius and Venezuela. (The coins of Zaire and Venezuela will be available only in the issuing countries until 1976 when they will become available to collectors around the world.)

The issuing countries have taken all steps necessary to ensure that the new coinage qualifies as true legal tender of the state. In addition to circulating the coins, which promotes the need to protect endangered animals in the country, the coins are sold to coin collectors around the world. The premium over face value which collectors pay for rare coins provides financing for practical conservation programmes. Almost half a million dollars have been paid to participating countries for local conservation projects.

The Conservation Coin Collection is the first instance in which a number of states have co-operated to issue legal tender coins in support of the same cause. All of the issues authorized to date have been designed and struck at the Royal Mint of the UK, which strikes the coinage of more than 60 governments around the world.

The coins are now being sold to collectors by a network of major international numismatic agents headed by the English firm Spink and Son Ltd., who are also acting as advisers to IUCN, WWF and the participating governments.

Information on acquiring coins issued in the Collection can be obtained by writing to IUCN/WWF Coordinator, 20 Harcourt House, 19 Cavendish Square, London W1M 9AB, UK.

Research priorities for cetaceans of threatened or indeterminate status

In 1974, the SSC/IUCN Whale Group compiled a list of international research priorities for stocks of large cetaceans that had previously been exploited but were now protected by the International Whaling Commission, and for small cetacean stocks that were believed to be under heavy exploitation from direct or incidental catching (*Bulletin*, Volume 5, No. 6).

Interest and activity in the proposed International Decade of Cetacean Research are now being revived, and it is essential that cetacean populations known or suspected of being under some threat of extinction figure prominently in the programme. The Whale Group's list of priorities is therefore published below as a timely contribution to current discussion on this topic.

Large cetaceans

More information is required on the following stocks, which are listed here in order of priority, by hemispheres:

Northern hemisphere

gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*) in Asian waters; black right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) in eastern North Atlantic; Greenland right whales (*Balaena mysticetus*) in eastern North Atlantic; black right whales in eastern North Pacific;

humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in all oceans.

Southern hemisphere

humpback whales in all oceans;

black right whales in all oceans;

blue whales (*Balaenoptera musculus*) in all oceans.

Small cetaceans

Studies need to be initiated or continued on the following species or stocks:

First priority group (species considered at risk throughout their entire range)

Indus dolphin (*Platanista indii*)

Dall's porpoise (*Phocoenoides dalli*)

northern bottlenose whale (*Hyperoodon ampullatus*)

Second priority group (species considered at risk in part of their range)

minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) in North-west Pacific and North Atlantic;

spotted dolphins (*Stenella cf attenuata*) in eastern tropical Pacific;

spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*) in the Pacific tuna fishery;

common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) in the Black Sea and the tuna fishery areas of eastern tropical Pacific;

common porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) in the Baltic and Black Seas and off west coast of Greenland;

long-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala melaena*) in Newfoundland waters;

white whales (*Delphinapterus leucas*) in certain areas.

Among the projects submitted to the Group for evaluation, the following were considered meriting priority for funding:

(a) Development of an externally visible whale mark for large cetaceans because of its potential value in a variety of population studies;

(b) Indus dolphin—a census and study to identify conservation requirements. It was suggested that comparative studies on the Ganges dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) might also be considered;

(c) Franciscana dolphin (*Pontoporia blainvillei*)—study of status in Uruguayan waters, which would complete an important series of investigations on this species.

(d) Investigation into the status of the Greenland right whale, blue whale, and narwhal (*Monodon monoceros*) in the ice regions of the north-eastern North Atlantic.

(e) Aerial surveys of humpback and right whale off western Australia.

Other subjects considered of importance but on which no specific projects had been submitted included: major co-ordinated studies of cetaceans and their oceanic environment; studies to ascertain the extent of direct and indirect catches of cetaceans presently unrecorded in statistics; preparation of field guides for identification of whales and dolphins; and a review of published and unpublished information on cetaceans in captivity.

Projects on the development of an externally visible whale mark and on the Indus dolphin were subsequently accepted for inclusion in the IUCN/WWF 1975 Conservation Programme and will be operational before the end of the year.

South Pacific Parks Conference proceedings appear

A report of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves held in Wellington, New Zealand, from 24–27 February 1975, has just been published for the National Parks Authority by the New Zealand Department of Lands and Survey. The meeting, which was sponsored by the Government of New Zealand in association with the South Pacific Commission and IUCN, was reported in the *Bulletin*, Vol. 6, No. 4, and the Recommendations of the Conference appeared as a special supplement to that issue.

The 229 pages of the Proceedings comprise a record of the proceedings, 5 keynote addresses, 19 situation reports and 4 papers by IUCN, including a draft of the Proposed Convention on Conservation in the South Pacific Region. There is an index of 12 pages to the Proceedings.

Conservation survey report published for Gran Canaria Provincia

The 155-page report resulting from the IUCN/WWF project, 'Conservation Survey of the Canary Islands' has just been issued. Edited by Günther Kunkel and published in July 1975 in Spanish by governmental authorities in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, the *Inventario de los Recursos Naturales Renovables de la Provincia de Las Palmas* was supported by the IUCN/WWF grant, directed by ASCAN (Asociación Canaria para Defensa de la Naturaleza), and a special grant from the Island Council of Gran Canaria.

The survey covers about half of the Canary Islands. It includes a critical appraisal of the flora and vegetation, avifauna, and marine life and coastal zones. Particular attention is given to physical factors, endemics and important native or established species, their distribution and frequency. A final section deals with sites proposed for protection, including terrestrial and marine ecosystems, all of which are described and mapped.

The price of the publication is 250 pesetas (US\$4.30) and can be obtained from ASCAN, Presidente Alvear, 50-20, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Islas Canarias, Spain.

New IUCN publications

The following new publications have just been issued: *Piano d'Azione come è Stato Approvato dal Convegno Internazionale 'L'Avvenire delle Alpi'*. IUCN Occasional Paper No. 13(1), 20 pp., in Italian, US\$3.00, including surface postage. Following publication of the Action Plan resulting from the International Symposium held at Trento, Italy, 31 August–6 September 1974, in French and German, this official Italian edition has recently appeared.

A Preliminary Classification of Coastal and Marine Environments by G. Carleton Ray. IUCN Occasional Paper No. 14, 27 pp., US\$3.50, including surface postage.

Conservation Notes

Resolutions of the XIIth International Botanical Congress, Leningrad

The XIIth International Botanical Congress was held in Leningrad, USSR, 3–10 July 1975. It was organized by the Komarov Botanical Institute, the Timiriazev Institute of Plant Physiology and the Main Botanical Garden, all of which are units of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, in co-operation with the All-Union Botanical Society, the All-Union Vavilov Research Institute of Plant Industry, the Leningrad Kirov Forest Academy and the Leningrad Zhdanov State University. The Congress was held under the auspices of the International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS).

The resolutions passed by the Congress are of considerable importance, and a number of them appear below.

We, the members of the XIIth International Botanical Congress meeting in Leningrad, call upon all nations and their governments to give the highest priority to the production of food and its effective distribution and storage, consistent with the principles of conservation and the need to preserve the genetic diversity of the earth's flora and fauna, to the end that the world's people may be adequately supplied with food now and in the future; and

We, the members of the Congress, pledge our individual co-operation in the scientific aspects of this endeavor.

This Congress, recognizing that all food for man is derived directly or indirectly from the plant world;

- that the available food resources of the earth are insufficient to provide adequate nourishment for its rapidly expanding population;
- that prudent land use must be based on rational ecological studies, which require adequate knowledge of the local flora;
- that the flora of many countries is still imperfectly known, that taxonomic handbooks are often lacking, and that competent taxonomic botanists are too few to cope with the tasks and material facing them;
- that a large number of plant species, some of which are yet undescribed or insufficiently known, are threatened by extinction through intensive land use and rapid technological change, and that many of these may be potentially useful for man;

Urges all governments, particularly those giving technical assistance to developing countries, to strengthen the training of taxonomic botanists and research in taxonomic botany, so that as much as possible of the richness of our plant world can be explored, saved from extinction where threatened, and utilized for improvements in agriculture, forestry, and rational land use in general.

This Congress, recognizing that in many parts of the world man's activities have caused

- a substantial decrease in productive natural ecosystems, with an associated loss of non-renewable plant resources;
- the extinction or severe reduction in the numbers of many plant species; and
- an increase in the area of man-made wastelands,

Bearing in mind that as long as the world's population grows and life-styles change, these trends will continue, resulting in progressive degradation of the vegetational cover of the earth which could lead to instability in the biosphere and ultimately affect adversely man's capacity to produce food and other commodities essential for his existence,

Recommends that research be expanded throughout the world

- on natural ecosystems and the changes brought about in them by the impact of man;
- on methods of protecting ecosystems from further degradation by man;
- on the problems of rehabilitating ecosystems that have already suffered damage where this is desirable in the interests of man's well-being.

This Congress, emphasizing the ultimate dependence of man on the plant world, noting the increasing speed with which species and ecosystems are still being destroyed by man,

Urges governments of all countries, particularly those situated in the tropics, to act rapidly and effectively

- to conserve wild plants in every way possible by the establishment and maintenance of ecosystem reserves and national parks, by the development of botanic gardens and other plant resource centers; and
- to instigate and encourage the exploration of and research on the plant resources of the world, upon which future beneficial developments in agriculture, forestry, and other plant usage depend.

This Congress, aware of the serious threat to the continued survival of many plant species arising from more intensive land use and the expansion and development of agriculture and forestry in all continents, yet deeply conscious of the need to preserve as much as possible the genetic diversity of the plant kingdom for the future economic, cultural and aesthetic benefit of mankind,

Welcomes the setting up by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources of an International Threatened Plants Committee and pledges support for its work throughout the world.

This Congress, mindful of the general lack of understanding on the part of the public of the natural laws governing our biosphere,

Urges those concerned with curriculum development in schools and universities throughout the world to extend and encourage the study of ecological principles and nature conservation.

Predator Symposium held at ASM annual meeting

In conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Society of Mammalogists, a Symposium on predators was held at the University of Montana, USA, on 19 June. Twenty papers from North America, South America and Africa were presented which dealt with predator-prey relationships, predator biology, management, and behaviour.

Abstracts of the papers are available from the Zoology Department, University of Montana, Missoula, USA. The price is US\$2.00.

Lord Hurcomb

Lord Hurcomb, Vice-President of IUCN from 1954 to 1960, died on 7 August 1975 at the age of 92. Active in the conservation of nature for many years, he held many leading positions: President of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves (1951-61), Member of the Nature Conservancy (1953-62), serving as chairman in 1961, Founder-President of the Council for Nature (1958) and President of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (1962-66). He was also Trustee of the World Wildlife Fund British National Appeal.

In 1960 Lord Hurcomb was made an Honorary Member of the Union. On the occasion of his election, the Union expressed its gratitude for Lord Hurcomb's sound advice and wise counsel. We note with deep regret the passing of this dedicated supporter of IUCN who played such an important role in its direction during its early years.

World Wildlife Fund News

Joint Director General for World Wildlife Fund

Mr. Charles de Haes has been appointed Joint Director General of the World Wildlife Fund alongside Dr. Fritz Vollmar, who has been with the Fund since 1962.

Mr. de Haes, a senior business executive, has been closely associated with high-level fund raising for the World Wildlife Fund for the past five years, and has recently been a Consultant, as well as Honorary Adviser, to the President, H. R. H. The Prince of the Netherlands.

Dr. Vollmar will deal with conservation matters, in which close liaison is maintained with IUCN, and with relations with governments, international organizations and other conservation organizations. Mr. de Haes will deal primarily with fund raising and public relations, finance and administration.

Book Reviews

Goodland, R.J.A., and Irwin, Howard S.

"An ecological discussion of the highway construction program in the Amazon basin." *Landscape Planning* 1 (2-3): 123-254. 1974.

Although it is not customary to review journal articles in the *Bulletin*, this article is book-length and the discussion, which includes over 400 references, is comprehensive. There are sections on the history of the road system and Amazon development in general, deforestation and land-use systems, human ecology and nosogeography (geography of disease), as well as an excellent section on Amerindians, a subject of obvious concern to the authors. In fact, there is a remarkable table of the various known tribes with an analysis of the impact that highways have or are likely to have on them. Chapters on flora and vegetation, fauna and faunation, with notes on endangered species, industry (notably mining) and a conclusion complete this 132-page study. The information is extremely valuable to Brazilians—even if not too palatable to some—as well as to the 'Amazon watchers' throughout the world, and the authors are to be congratulated on their attempt to bring this information together.

Unavoidably there are omissions, the most important in my view being the lack of information from countries neighbouring Brazil which possess large regions of the Amazon basin, particularly Peru, Colombia and Venezuela. The conclusions and recommendations of the international symposium on Amazonian wildlife and freshwater fisheries held in Manaus in November 1973 are, unfortunately, not included.

Some of the authors' suggestions are speculative. Excessive faith seems to be placed in the introduction of certain species of plants and animals, as well as in breeding local wildlife species. The rearing of river turtles, practiced at one time by Indians, is today at an experimental stage, and if such activities depend on wilde eggs, they could deplete the local stock instead of relieving pressure on wild species. The same applies to crocodiles.

The authors note (p. 159) that when all 'varzea soils'—alluvial soils subject to annual floods, apparently the only ones suitable for agriculture—are identified, they may total less than one per cent of Amazonia, although this modest percentage represents 50,000 sq. kms.

Data on natural or artificially induced grazing of savannas on the llanos in Venezuela and Colombia, which generally have better soils (derived in part from the young Andes), show a very low average carrying capacity, and there is no reason to believe that the Amazonian savannas will do better; rather, the contrary.

Exportation of ornamental fish deserves further analysis, as the export industry from the Amazon amounts to many millions of dollars a year. To quote only US\$ 15,000 for 1957 is misleading (p. 164).

Perhaps the weakest part of the article refers to forestry, and the statement (p. 161) that progress is being achieved towards rational forest use is questionable.

These criticisms are minor and should not overshadow the great usefulness of the paper. If they are brought out here, it is only because critics of those advocating caution in opening the Amazon are waiting for small mistakes to undermine any large scale conservation effort. They may also help the authors publish a more refined account of their accumulated experience, hopefully with a good table of contents, an index, and a more convincing series of conclusions.

Gerardo Budowski

IUCN BULLETIN

Published monthly by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources with the financial assistance of Unesco. Unesco Subvention 1975 DG/2.1/414/41.

All material may be reprinted unless protected by copyright. Signed material reprinted should bear the author's name. The Editor would appreciate two copies of any reprinted material.

Authors interested in submitting material for publication are invited to write to the Editor.