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Comment

To save — or not to save

In last month's *Bulletin* we reported that an appeals court in the US had ruled against the completion of a \$116 million dam in Tennessee on the grounds that the dam would imperil the existence of a small fish, the snail darter, which is protected by the Endangered Species Act.

The fish may be a small one, but the issue raised is a large one. Indeed it has been taken up by the *New York Times*. The newspaper first points out that the case is not the only one of its kind: "In Maine a \$600 million hydroelectric project is being held up by the discovery in the affected area of a rare and not-too-fragrant plant called the furbish lousewort. And in California efforts are being made to sequester a few acres of land to protect the habitat of some endangered species of butterfly."

The paper goes on to say: "If lawmakers could foresee all contingencies, they would surely have prohibited Federal projects that threaten endangered species — *except* for a tuft or two of furbish lousewort, a few snail darters or even an El Segundo blue butterfly. Since the law makes no such exceptions, however, the courts must interpret the intent of Congress, or Congress must amend the law or the Executive must remove the inconvenient flora and fauna from the list of endangered species. Each brand of government has its chance to keep a good and necessary law from endangerment by absurdity."

Is the *New York Times* right? Is the argument sound? First it must be said that this problem could only have arisen in the United States and has been brought about by a (comparative) excess of virtue. No other country has such a stern and upright law. Added to which the American environmental lobby is highly informed and active. Endangered species thus have a better chance of being a) noticed and b) protected if they have taken up settlement in the US. All the same this is not so much a local American problem as a matter of principle — and principles know no frontiers.

The question is this: if it is known that a particular action will result in the extinction of a particular species, should that action be halted? And if so, are there

(Continued on back page)

Atlantic ridley in deep trouble

Only the most urgent measures can now save the Atlantic ridley turtle. Last year a mere 256 females came ashore to breed at Rancho Nuevo in the Gulf of Mexico — virtually the only nesting site for this turtle in the world. The speed and extent of the population crash is shown by breeding estimates for previous years: 1940 — 40,000; 1970 — 2000; 1974 — 1200. (The mature population is probably just over four times the number of nesting females.)

The cause of this catastrophic decline? The shrimp fleet based at Port Isabel, Texas. Twice the size it was in 1960, the fleet is the largest of its kind in the world. And its "incidental take" (accidental catch) of Atlantic ridleys is rapidly killing off the species.

What can be done? What *is being* done? The US National Marine Fisheries Service is developing a turtle-excluder net. The prototype promises to be almost 100% effective.** This is excellent. But will the shrimp trawlers use the new net? US law as it stands could compel US vessels to do so (and also foreign trawlers in US waters).

Persuading non-US trawlers to use excluder nets may well prove difficult. But this is a problem which will mainly affect other species of turtle. For the Atlantic ridley the big problem is not that — it is *time*. The excluder net is not expected to be perfected and in production for another two years. (Would more funds speed the process? If so, they should be found. The present budget is only \$70,000 p.a.) Two years from now there may be no Atlantic ridleys to save. Crash action is essential.

Appeal to Mexican President

Mexican law protects the species on the nesting beach. But stronger measures are clearly needed. Professor Archie Carr, co-Chairman of IUCN's Marine Turtle Group, has written to the President of Mexico urgently requesting that a 20-mile stretch of the Rancho Nuevo shore be declared a National Sanctuary and that the sea area up to 10 miles offshore be banned to all shrimp trawlers from April to the end of July. To reinforce this plea Professor Carr has suggested that others should write to the President in similar vein. IUCN's Survival Service Commission has done so.

Of all turtles the plight of the Atlantic ridley may be the most desperate. But turtles are being "incidentally" drowned in large numbers in very many parts of the world. Off the coast of Surinam green

turtles, leatherbacks and olive ridleys are being snared in the nets of Japanese trawlers. Biologists in Thailand have reported massive drownings in the Gulf of Siam. Leatherbacks are being caught off West Malaysia — and the Malaysian government is now building a large shrimp fleet of its own. Drownings are occurring in the South China Sea and southern Philippine waters. Last year trawlers were out in strength in the Torres Straits between Papua and Queensland — and the green turtle rookery there collapsed. Loggerheads are being taken off the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida. And so it goes on. For turtles almost everywhere the oceans are becoming increasingly perilous.

Of course nearly all turtle species are now in Appendix I of the Endangered Species Convention. And in most countries where turtles nest they enjoy — in theory — the protection of the law. But it seems plain that even if *direct* predation by man could be eliminated (which is very far from being the case at present), the *indirect* slaughter resulting from "incidental take" could prove sufficient on its own to make full recovery for several and perhaps all of these species a dubious prospect... unless. Unless *first*, the excluder net is speedily perfected and universally fitted. And *second*, the offshore areas of breeding beaches are until then banned to fishing during the nesting season.

**A perfect excluder net, by definition, catches no turtles. Must it also lose no shrimps? Ideally, yes — because otherwise it will be harder to "sell" to the shrimp industry. But if such a miracle of design does not prove possible, the industry should be persuaded that their loss is more apparent than real. Present trawling methods are too efficient for their own long-term good. Already there are signs that shrimps are being overfished. The latest indication comes from West Africa. With Russian trawlers operating there in a big way, fish have become scarce and expensive in the local markets. Not least shrimps. They now come in boxes marked "Made in Moscow".

News from Members

Deeds and dollars

The Game Department of Malaysia reports that over the next five years West Malaysia will be spending the equivalent of US \$8,000,000 on national parks, reserves and the conservation and management of wildlife. The Game Department also reports a great number of activities covering many species. A few are listed here.

Sumatran rhinoceros: a current study shows that the proposed Endau Rompin National Park holds between eight and fourteen animals, including a baby. It may well be the last viable breeding population of what is perhaps the world's most ancient extant family of mammals, dating back 30 million years.

Seladang (gaur): a two-year study is assessing habitat requirements so that management can be made more effective.

Elephant: elephants do damage and make enemies by breaking into plantations. A husband-and-wife team is experimenting with different ways of stopping them. The "winning" method will then be vigorously promoted.

Tiger: a four-year study of the causes of tiger mortality, the reasons for the decline in prey species and the factors affecting cattle lifting is under way. It is Malaysia's first-ever tiger study.

Tapir: a one-year study has been completed. Three tapirs were trapped, radio-collared and released. This provided valuable data about this little known animal.

River terrapin: an artificial hatchery was started in 1967. Since then about 2000 young have been released into the river Perak every year. A second hatchery was started last year in the State of Trengganu.

Birds: a law-enforcement project to protect the shore birds on the coast of Perak has had good results. Many species have increased in numbers — most notably the night heron.

The Wildlife Division of the Royal Forest Department of Thailand is receiving more government support. Its budget for 1977 is over \$900,000. This is more than double last year's figure, nearly 10 times the 1972 figure and 60 times the 1962 figure. A very healthy climb—even though still far less than the situation calls for.

Telling tourists the truth

The Wildlife and Nature Protection society of Ceylon has published a most excellent leaflet explicitly for tourists. It is packed with facts, splendidly designed and pulls no punches. The tourist is told: "You may think that Sri Lanka still has an abundance of nature-given resources. You are wrong. The natural systems of this country which you have come to admire and enjoy are daily being diminished in quality and extent and bear no comparison to what they were only 10 years ago."

The tourist is requested *not* to visit the national parks unless fascinated by wildlife—the parks are small and are suffering from too many visitors. He is

asked *not* to purchase trophies such as tortoise shell, leopard claws, crocodile and python skin, *not* to eat turtle soup or turtle eggs, *not* to fish with spear gun or net, *not* to buy pieces of coral or sea shell and *not* to accept venison in restaurants.

A negative approach? On the contrary, it is an eloquent plea that the tourist join the all-too-few who are defending Sri Lanka's heritage rather than the all-too-many who are despoiling it.

Dam power condemned

The Tasmanian Wilderness Society is campaigning vehemently against the Tasmanian State Government's planned extension of a hydro-electric power scheme—a scheme which has already been mightily and needlessly destructive. Much of the magnificent mountain landscape which was Lake Pedder National Park and through which runs the river Gordon is now two vast artificial lakes—"all to produce power for which there is no market and which, in costing Pedder, was too expensive in the first place".

The extension of this project concerns the lower Gordon. It envisages the flooding of a further 250 sq km of wild gorges and forest and would involve the despoliation of the Franklin, a tributary of the Gordon and the last major wild river in temperate Australia.

A revealing quote from a recent issue of *Hydro News* (circulated to Tasmanians with their power bills) reads: "The Hydro-Electric Commission wants Tasmanians to use more electricity for cooking, lighting and heating. Revenue from such sales pays for the vital expansion and maintenance of the power supply system."

More money for UNEP

In Nairobi last month the fifth meeting of UNEP's Governing Council showed that governments are facing up to the fact that conservation costs money. Financially 1976 was UNEP's best year so far. Pledged income was \$24,300,000 and by 1 February this year the amount received was \$23,700,000—a shortfall of only 2½%.

UNEP has proposed that during the four-year period 1978—1981 the level of support should be raised to \$150 million or \$37½ million annually. A five-year figure of \$100 million had been set at the Stockholm Conference in 1972. The increase is intended to counter the effects of inflation and to ensure that the future programme is properly funded. While most delegates agreed with the new target figure, France and the United States considered it too high and Iraq said it was too low.

Fighting wildfire

What do the following lands (or large tracts of them) have in common: Australia, California, Chile, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, South Africa, Spain? Answer—mild rainy winters and hot dry summers. In other words, a Mediterranean climate. This means they also have in common the

annual problem of fires in forests and brushlands.

A symposium for land managers from these lands (and others with a Mediterranean climate) will be held from August 1-5 at Stanford University, California. The purpose is to exchange information and to develop a programme of cooperative research. The symposium will include formal presentations and workshops on such topics as the impact of wildfires on plants, animals, soils, mineral nutrients and other components of Mediterranean ecosystems. Different methods of fire control will be assessed.

Registration information may be had from: Professor Harold A. Mooney, Department of Biological Sciences, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305.

Parks conference

An informal conference for managers and staff of Europe's protected landscapes is planned for September 26—30. The aim will be to exchange information and seek answers to management problems in these areas. The cost is £48. Some translation into French and German will be provided where possible. For further details write to: Peter Townsend, Peak National Park Study Centre, Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbyshire, England.

Guyana accedes to Endangered Species Convention

The Republic of Guyana acceded to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora on 27 May, thus becoming the 36th Party to the Convention.

Job opening in Galapagos Isles

The Charles Darwin Foundation maintains a research station at Academy Bay in the Galapagos Islands. The present Director, Dr Craig MacFarland, will be retiring at the end of 1977 after four years service in the post and a successor is required from January 1978. The duties are mainly administrative, advising the Ecuadorian authorities on conservation problems, planning and supervising research, and assisting scientists from all countries who use the research station as a base for their investigations. The future Director should be a biologist, preferably with experience and interest in natural resources management. He would need a good working knowledge of English and Spanish.

The salary is US \$13,000 p.a., including living allowance for wife and two children; free housing and health insurance are provided.

Applicants for the post should write (sending the usual documents in triplicate) to the Secretary General of the Charles Darwin Foundation, Mr G.T. Corley Smith, Greensted Hall, Ongar, Essex, England.

IUCN Strategy

The programme for SE Asia reported on at length in the January 1977 *Bulletin* is making headway. The following summary singles out activities in Papua New Guinea, Malaysia and India.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA. The Ministry of Environment and Conservation is to introduce an important and far-reaching conservation bill. It will enable the Minister to declare any area a conservation area — while developers will have to show that their plans in no way harm the people or the environment. The onus of proof will be on them.

However even when this bill has passed through Parliament and become the law of the land, its provisions will not be imposed on the people. The intention by way of a big public education programme is to turn the Malesian land tenure system (for details of this, see January *Bulletin*) to good advantage and to make the people — through their tribal chieftains — partners in a truly “popular” conservation-cum-development movement.

This philosophy is enshrined in the Constitution which contains a set of National Goals. The Minister has said: “We believe that these National Goals provide the basis for the development of our country and collectively they form a deep commitment to the principle of ecodevelopment.”

MALAYSIA. Taman Negara National Park, one of the most valuable lowland forests in SE Asia, is now safe. The Ulu Tembeling Hydro electric project has been postponed indefinitely. The project would have entailed the flooding of about 125 sq km of the park. In June of last year, following representations from both IUCN and WWF, the Minister for Science announced that an environmental impact survey would be undertaken before they went ahead with the dam construction. In March of this year the project was—in effect—abandoned.

Less good news comes from the proposed Endau Rompin National Park, the last extensive block of natural forest in southern Malaysia and a final refuge for the elephant, seladang, rhinoceros and tiger. Two months ago it was discovered that in contravention of the Third Malaysia Plan licences for logging the core area had been secretly issued by the State authorities. Unhappily land tenure is State responsibility and the Federal Government is therefore powerless in the matter. The Malayan Nature Society, the Malaysian Zoological Society and WWF Malaysia have placed advertisements in the Malaysian press exposing these dealings. IUCN is keeping a watching brief. Joint representations by IUCN and WWF will be made.

INDIA — Western Ghats. A task force for the ecological planning of the Western Ghats has issued its first report. Concise, forceful and free of jargon, the report is a model of its kind. The task force was set

up under Mr Zafar Futehally in April 1976 by India's National Committee on Environmental Planning and Coordination. It has reported on three development projects.

One is the proposed construction of a dam and power house in Silent Valley, Kerala, perhaps the last near-virgin rain forest in India. The task force considers that the resulting environmental devastation would greatly outweigh the rather slender benefits. It recommends that the project be abandoned and the area be declared a Biosphere Reserve. The other two projects are concerned with iron-ore mining in the Western Ghats. While not so fullbloodedly opposed to these as to the first project, the task force enters a number of well-documented environmental caveats.

But the report is less concerned with specific development projects than with a careful examination of the ecology of the Western Ghats, the need for skilled management and the predicted (and present) effects of different forms of development. The overriding importance of the Ghats lies in their beneficial influence on the climate and rainfall of almost the entire country — an influence which would be, and already has been, severely diminished by ignorant destruction. “The task force is convinced that without the ecological regeneration of the Western Ghat region there can be no economic salvation for the millions of people living in the vast adjoining region (east of the Western Ghats) which the administrators call the ‘chronically drought-prone areas’ and the geographers call the ‘rain shadow region’. We believe that the people of this area, particularly the four-fifths of them who live in villages, cannot be saved from the clutches of chronic poverty and recurrent droughts without restoring the forest and vegetation which have been destroyed in the past.”

For reasons of climate, topography and soil, land use should be confined to forestry and allied occupations. “The task force is firmly opposed to any further release of land for agriculture because suitable lands on the gentler slopes have already been released and the remaining areas are known to be unfit for supporting agriculture on a long-term basis... But tea and coffee do less damage than seasonal crops. Apart from anything else planters are in a position to make suitable investments in soil conservation practices, and both tea and coffee plantations ensure that the area is well covered by trees at all times of the year.”

For development projects that are deemed necessary, the task force “deplores the fact that, in spite of the establishment of Land Use Boards and Environmental Committees at State level, environmental assessments are not made and giant projects are commissioned without an environmental impact statement being available”. It also makes the essential point (which has yet to gain universal acceptance)

that “the social and ecological costs of projects must be borne by the companies concerned and cannot be passed on to the nation at large”.

The report points out that tribesmen have been living in the region for thousands of years without depleting the forests. It suggests that the Forest Department make use of their knowledge and expertise — while guaranteeing them fair wages and amenities.

The Ghats are also a rich storehouse of botanical wealth and they harbour a wide range of animals, birds and fish. More Asiatic elephants live there than in any other region—about 4000. Numbers, though, are being affected by loss of habitat.

The task force (whose support IUCN showed great acumen in sanctioning and likewise WWF in funding) will shortly be issuing a further report which will recommend a system of nature reserves in the region. It is to be hoped that it will be acted on; for as the present report puts it, “the ecological stability of the Western Ghats is crucial to the economy of peninsular India”.

Briefs

Kenya ends game hunting. Kenya has banned all game hunting. In future those on safari will only be allowed to shoot with cameras.

World Bank head urges population curbs. Mr Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank, foresees a world of massive poverty, stress, hunger, crowding and frustration, unless tough anti-natal measures are taken now. He suggests direct disincentives such as “various public services on a graduated scale; more to parents with few children, less or none at all to parents with many children”. The World Bank will become more active in attempts to curb population growth.

Moscow bans wild flower picking. In the Moscow region wild flowers may no longer be picked. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* reports that in the Soviet Union one out of every five species of wild flower is in danger of disappearing.

T-shirts go anti-nuclear. President Carter has given his views on “fast breeders” and Friends of the Earth UK are right behind him. As part of their anti-nuclear campaign they are marketing a T-shirt. “The only safe Fast Breeder is a rabbit” reads the message. Shapely ladies are right behind it.

Peru protects wildlife and habitats — but. New wide-ranging laws covering all aspects of conservation (including hunting) are now in force in Peru. This extensive legislation is the first of its kind in the nation's history. So far, very good. *But* it seems the Government has granted permission to a foreign dignitary to shoot two Andean deer and two Spectacled bears. Both species are on the endangered list. Strong protests have been made.

Comment (continued)

any exceptions? Obviously the issues raised are too complex to allow of any short and snappy answer. Here and now a brief airing of the problem is all that can be attempted.

It is true that the progress of evolution has been marked by — has indeed depended on — a myriad extinctions in every realm of organic life. Yet wilful extinctions by man are very different. In the first place, natural extinctions are (generally) due to failure to adapt to natural changes. But species made extinct by man are not "failures"; they were serving some function in the natural balance till *unnatural* changes intervened. In the second place, when man knowingly wipes out a species, he is not so much taking a leaf out of nature's book as burning the book (or that particular page of it) unread.

This last point was made by Dr Thomas Lovejoy, Director of Programmes for the World Wildlife Fund US, in a letter to the New York Times taking issue with that paper's stand on this subject. Dr Lovejoy pointed out that our knowledge of the biology of our planet is so pitifully small that it is "hard to say what *good* a snail darter may be, but then wouldn't one have been considered mad in suggesting the need to conserve cowpox before Pasteur or Penicillium molds before Fleming? And what if the rubber tree had been allowed to go extinct before the 19th century?"

In this area of general ignorance, only sure knowledge is that a species, once extinct, cannot be recreated. It is certainly lost for good. And certainly that will sometimes be bad. *Patrick Allen*

Vicuña—fourfold increase in seven years

In 1970 vicuña numbered at most 15,000. Today, thanks to vigorous and effective conservation, the figure is 60,000—45,000 in Peru, up to 10,000 in Argentina, over 3000 in Chile and 2000 in Bolivia. Over the years both IUCN and WWF have been actively involved in the efforts to save this llama-like species which lives in the high Andes and is the bearer of the world's finest wool.

The vicuña's present population, although healthy by recent standards, is nothing to what it once was. In the days of the Incas its numbers in Peru alone may have been as high as 1½ million. The wool was prized by the Incas as the "royal fleece" and the vicuña were herded and sheared. This highly efficient management system was destroyed by the Conquistadors — along with the civilization supporting it. But the most disastrous (and very nearly fatal) period in the vicuña's history was in the '50s and early '60s of this century when about 400,000 were slaughtered to supply the luxury markets of North America and Europe.

In the nick of time action was taken. In 1965 Peru established a National Vicuña Reserve at Pampa Galeras. WWF

Letters

Ecodevelopment and population

From Dr Colin Bertram

Sir, Ray Dasmann expresses his *Thoughts on ecodevelopment* with his usual wise percipience, except in one vital respect. He makes no reference to the human demographic dilemma, unless in his search for "answers" he deliberately is seeking a reaction from the readership. He sagely asks "How do we change from a life-destroying, planet-eating existence to new ways that will be ecologically sustainable and socially rewarding?" Dominant among the answers to his query must be the control of human numbers.

Our reckless and predatory practices would be bad enough if our population were stable, but in fact it is doubling in every generation of our kind. In IUCN we fight a desperate rearguard action, striving to conserve the planet's variety of animal and plant life and ecosystems. We

and IUCN gave support to an international conservation programme. Intensive public education made use of all possible "tools" — press, radio, cinema, lectures, car stickers and so on. Other vicuña countries established reserves and trade controls. The United States and Britain banned vicuña wool imports. Now the vicuña population in the main Peruvian reserve is over 30,000, compared with 1700 twelve years ago, and a vicuña wool, meat and skin industry is being set up for the benefit of the poor people of the high Andes.

Sadly this success has not been without its toll. Game guards at Pampa Galeras have been killed and wounded in clashes with poachers.

Thai dam project threatens national park

IUCN and WWF have jointly urged the government of Thailand to reconsider plans for four irrigation dams in the vicinity of the Khao Yai National Park. The dams would cause extensive and destructive flooding of the eastern part of the park, which contains Thailand's last remaining significant rain forest.

The intended artificial lakes are unlikely to improve on the present water outflow to surrounding farmlands which is regulated by the forest. Furthermore the loss of the forest would accelerate the runoff of water during the rainy season. Farms would be at risk from floods, while soil erosion in the steep valleys might be serious.

Four years ago this same project was put forward and then abandoned — following representations to the government. In their letter of April this year, IUCN and WWF have expressed "considerable concern" at its revival. They have also offered to assist the government in obtaining an environmental impact study. So far no such study has been undertaken.

must struggle on until our excessively dominant and greedy species achieves stability in its own population.

The harsh fact is that real improvement in the quality of life for our multitude would be far more probable of attainment if (after further inevitable decades of increase), stability could be achieved at, say, the pre-war level, that is at about half of what we are today. Remember that it is within our technological competence to limit and to stabilize by means which are humane.

Let IUCN, by deliberate policy and outspokenness, openly strive with others to educate the world to this reality. There is no positive advantage in still greater numbers of ourselves: even the pre-World War II billion (2×10^9) was already ample — and dangerous enough for the environment.

G.L.C. Bertram
St. John's College
Cambridge, England.

Ray Dasmann writes: I agree — but I can't mention the population problem every time I open my mouth.

New President for WWF

John Loudon, a Dutchman and a distinguished international businessman, has been elected President of the World Wildlife Fund. His wide sphere of interests includes the Chairmanships of the Board of Governors of the Atlantic Institute for International Affairs, and the Board of the European Institute for Business Administration.

Mr Loudon succeeds Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, the Founder President, who retired after 15 years on completing his last term of office at the end of 1976.

On the brink

The Javan tiger is on the brink of extinction. There are now only four of five survivors according to a survey by WWF in association with the Indonesian Government. The tigers are in the nature reserve of Meru Betiri on the mountainous southern side of the eastern tip of Java. But prey are very limited and in any case the tigers have to compete with leopard and wild dog. A post-survey management plan has been produced in the hope that the Javan tiger may yet be saved.

The nearby Bali tiger is now considered extinct and recent surveys in Iran and eastern Turkey found no signs of the Caspian tiger. Conceivably it still survives in the mountains of northern Iraq.

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