



Bulletin

INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE
AND NATURAL RESOURCES · 1110 MORGES · SWITZERLAND

NEW SERIES VOL. 9 · NO 3

MARCH 1978

PUBLISHED WITH THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OF UNEP, UNESCO AND WWF

CITES bites—twice

Last November the secretariat of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) was told by WWF-Austria that an Austrian dealer, Mr Horst Blaich, appeared to be conducting an illegal export business in endangered species from Madagascar—a party to CITES. However at that stage proof was lacking. Early in December the CITES secretariat and WWF-Austria both informed the Madagascar Management Authority of their suspicions. The missing proof came when Mr Blaich advertised in a West German magazine offering various species for sale, including the Appendix I Madagascar boa, *Sanzinia madagascariensis*. Madagascar took immediate action. Mr Blaich was expelled from the island on 17 December.

A Canadian citizen returning recently from Peru with 12 margay skins (the margay, *Felis wiedii*, is a spotted cat listed in Appendix II) was required by the Canadian customs to produce an export permit. He therefore wrote to the Peruvian Management Authority which in its reply to the Canadian Management Authority—both countries are parties to CITES—said that the margay is protected in Peru and that an export permit could not be granted. The Canadian buyer was obliged to surrender the skins and to give the date of purchase and the name and address of the dealer.

Relieve for Fraser Island—mining banned

Dillingham Corporation is withdrawing completely from mineral sandmining in Australia. The withdrawal follows a federal ban on all further mining on Fraser Island and the decision by the government of New South Wales to prohibit mining in the state's national parks. Dillingham's managing director explained that about 75% of the company's leases were in national parks and that the state and federal banning orders (described by the company's executive vice-president as "unprecedented reversals of long-standing policy") made it uneconomic for Dillingham to continue its Australian mining operations.

Commissions meet to clarify roles

The first-ever meeting of Commission chairmen and their deputies took place in Morges on 31 January—2 February. The meeting was called to clarify the role of IUCN's six Commissions ** and hence to improve their effectiveness. Between them the Commissions can draw upon the advice of over 700 scientists. But if this formidable body of expertise is to be properly harnessed and put to work on behalf of global conservation, then the various functions and tasks of the Commissions must be more sharply defined than they have been hitherto. This is particularly urgent now that IUCN's World Conservation Strategy is beginning to take shape. A first draft of the Strategy has been published and clearly the Commissions will be playing a big part in its development.

Discussion ranged over a great many issues and there was general agreement on what needs to be done. One issue was money. The conservation movement owes its strength to the voluntary tradition—a tradition which continues to sustain much of IUCN's work. But in a world of escalating costs, few Commission members are able to give their time and talents entirely free. In any case conservation today extends into so many areas of activity that experts from quite other fields often need to be hired. Funding of the Commissions must be stepped up in line with present-day requirements.

Lack of finance is not the only problem. Four of the six Commissions do not have a full-time executive officer; terms of reference for some of the Commissions are not clear; the time allowed for a particular undertaking—bearing in mind the geographical scatter of membership—is not always sufficient; and there is not enough liaison between Commissions.

On this last point it was agreed that with the growing complexity of conservation, the territory of each Commission inevitably overlaps with that of others. The regular meetings of each Commission should therefore be attended, where appropriate, by representatives of other Commissions and inter-Commission meetings should be arranged. At the same time each Commission should ensure that its list of members and their areas of expertise are circulated to the others—and all should make sure that matters relevant to other Commissions are referred to them. Close liaison is essential if the reports of the Commissions to IUCN's Council are to have a professionally solid base, so enabling the secretariat to perform effectively.

The six Commissions draw upon different disciplines and adopt different approaches. While this serves as a valuable corrective to one-track thinking, it can sometimes lead to duplication

(Continued on page 19)

Biosphere reserve for Mexico

By Presidential decree of 8 December 1977 over 2,600,000 hectares of Lacandona forest in southern Mexico have been declared a forest reserve; future exploitation will thus be controlled. And within this huge area the decree also establishes a biosphere reserve, *Montes Azules*, of some 330,000 hectares. IUCN has sent a congratulatory letter to the President of Mexico.

The decree is the result of continuous efforts by Mexican conservationists and ecologists on behalf of the country's last large rain forest—which is also the most

northerly one in Latin America. In *Montes Azules* agriculture and livestock will continue to be permitted but only in that portion of the reserve which has already been deforested.

In his survey of Latin America's rain forests IUCN consultant, Dr Tim Whitmore, had identified this area as in urgent need of conservation (see *Bulletin*, July 1977). An IUCN project is being developed to help protect this important new ecological reserve—the first in Mexico's humid tropics.

News from Members

Zululand Game Reserves NOT being overdeveloped— says Board

Last December's *Bulletin* carried an extract from a speech made by Chief Buthelesi at the First World Wilderness Congress. The Natal Parks Board has written to say that it "totally refutes the suggestion that any of the Zululand Game Reserves are being overdeveloped". The Board states that since 1960 it has:

- limited the number of cars and buses allowed into the reserves;
- reduced tourist game-viewing roads by 25% in the game reserves of Hluhluwe and Umfolozi—and in the former reduced staff numbers and hence housing needs;
- built only one new house throughout all the reserves;
- placed the two new base camps for trailers in Umfolozi on the periphery of the wilderness.

The Board says that it is considering plans to increase the size of Umfolozi by 50% and that its recreation pro-

gramme (which is run in harness with its conservation programme) has succeeded in drawing people into certain coastal areas originally reserved as "places of public recreation" and away from the significant natural reserves.

New President for WWF-US

Mr Russell Train was elected President of World Wildlife Fund-US by the Board of Directors on 7 March. He succeeds Mr Francis Kellogg who had served since 1973. The Board has restructured the position of President and Mr Train is now full-time executive officer.

Mr Train has served three US Presidents in the judicial and executive branches of government. In 1970 he was appointed the first Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality and subsequently became Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, a post he held until January 1977.

At the public announcement of his presidency on 8 March the new President said: "There can be no long-term future for wildlife unless human problems such as malnutrition and overcrowding are

effectively addressed. The fate of wildlife is inextricably bound up with the future of human wellbeing."

Egypt accedes to CITES

Egypt acceded to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora on 4 January, thus becoming the 44th party to the Convention.

National Parks anniversary stamp

At the request of the French Minister of Culture and the Environment a commemorative stamp—value 1.25 French francs—is being issued on 15 April to mark the 15th anniversary of the first two national parks in France, la Vanoise and Port-Cros. On the same date an exhibition opens which lasts till 7 May. It will take place at *Centre administratif, Place Lefèbre, Hyères* and will feature animals and plants shown on the stamp and found in the Port-Cros National Park. Souvenir documents of interest to philatelists will be on sale during this time. Orders and enquiries should be addressed to: *Le Directeur, Parc National de Port-Cros, 50 Avenue Gambetta, 83400 Hyères, France.*

Trees curb desert growth—and so do some animals

Indra Kumar Sharma has been studying the wildlife of the Thar desert since 1964. He offers his own account of the causes of desertification and proposes some remedies.

The deserts in India are growing because the trees are not being allowed to. *Prosopis juliflora*, an exotic introduced about 40 years ago, is now well established locally and can withstand heavy cutting. All the same desertification around villages is getting worse. The principal desert trees and shrubs are used extensively for fuel, for building and for animal feed which is often sold to nearby towns as green fodder. Then again, grazing takes a heavy toll of perennial grasses, shrubs and herbs. Soil erosion from all these causes is growing alarmingly.

In dry regions crops are usually grown only during the rainy season. For the rest of the year the cultivated soil, bare of vegetation, is open to the winds. Strong winds are particularly common from April to June—a period which coincides with the spring ploughing and consequent loosening of the soil. Erosion is severe. Village carts and (increasingly) trucks make deep ruts in sandy soil and do a lot of damage.

Wild animals—makers or menders of desert?

Are wild animals desert-makers? In some ways, yes. Gerbils, for instance, burrow deep. The soil they scoop out

is mostly swept away by the rains. During the dry season, when vegetation is already sparse, they eat the green shoots of perennial grasses and herbs. But on the credit side, bushes grow faster where there are burrows. Why? Probably because the plants capture more rain and are fed nitrogen in the form of animal excreta.

To a lesser extent hares also are both destructive and helpful. They too devour perennial grasses and herbs. But some close grazing of grasses is useful. Without it, seeds of bushes and trees are strangled by dense overgrowth.

Cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep, often branded as desert-makers, are at the same time desert-menders. Certainly they eat enormous quantities of foliage and have a particular liking for *Prosopis juliflora*. But because they excrete the seeds intact, their feeding habits have helped to speed up the distribution of this and other trees.

Deer, hares, jackals, foxes, and bulbuls also "grow" trees in a similar way, while long-haired species like goats and sheep trap fruit-seeds in their hair and later rub them off against tree trunks and the like. A surprising amount of useful distribution occurs this way—different species having different floral preferences.

Tree worship

In India religious sentiment is often a help to conservation. Banyan and peepul trees are grown in every village. They

are sacred trees and it is the villagers' religious duty to see that they are watered during the dry season and in times of drought. Cutting the branches is considered an unpardonable sin. In some communities the khejari (*Prosopis cineraria*) is also a sacred tree. The seat and symbol of the goddess Banyasa, it grows to a huge size. The sacred basil, *Ocinum sacrum*, is a house plant everywhere in India and treated with reverence.

For many Indians all life is sacred. This religious feeling, if blended with new knowledge, would be a very powerful force for conservation. In schools and through the mass media people must be made aware of the problems. The heads of religious and village communities should be brought in to assist. In every district an area should be set aside as a nature reserve. Regional research stations should study local desertification problems and regional nature clubs should enlist voluntary workers. Overgrazing should be checked by rotation grazing and by keeping numbers to within the carrying capacity of the pasture. Green belts on one-season farms would reduce soil erosion during the dry season. In the deserts, hardy trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses should be planted—particularly *Prosopis juliflora*. This tree plays a very efficient role in countering desertification.

Many of the solutions to desertification are obvious to scientists and naturalists. On their own, though, they can do little. But they and the villagers, acting together, could do a great deal—starting with trees. "Grow trees, don't cut them" should be the message.

Books

Le castor et son royaume

by Maurice Blanchet

Ligue Suisse pour la Protection de la Nature, 242 pp, 55 half-tone plates, 8 sketches, 13.50 Swiss francs

This is a summary of 20 years of observation of the Rhone beaver in its natural surrounds in the South of France, where a healthy population still thrives, and in Switzerland where the animal has been successfully reintroduced—thanks chiefly to the inexhaustible efforts of Maurice Blanchet. The book is pleasantly written (in French) and richly informative. Two sources of disappointment: the statement that the biotopes of the beaver are becoming rare in Switzerland and the fact that certain reintroduction schemes were badly prepared and were carried out in an uncoordinated fashion. The result has been a heavy loss in specimens.

A sad note to end with. Mr Blanchet died last January at the age of 62, shortly after the publication of his book.

Ecology and behaviour of nocturnal primates

by Pierre Charles-Dominique

Duckworth, 277 pp, 40 half-tone plates, 66 charts and line drawings, £12.50

Years of detailed study, carried out by a variety of methods, have made possible a number of original observations relating to five nocturnal prosimian species in Gabon, equatorial West Africa. Analysis of diet, of stratification in the forest and of behavioural adaptations show how these primates—three bushbabies, the potto and the angwatibo—have evolved ecological strategies which enable them to survive in a highly complex and competitive environment.

Mammals in tropical forests tend to be nocturnal and the rainforests of Gabon are no exception. Surveys to date have identified 120 mammal species; of these,

70% are strictly nocturnal and a further 10% are active both night and day. Observation of nocturnal species poses problems which the study in question solved by the use of special techniques—in particular, radio tracking.

In this painstaking and valuable piece of research one can only voice one regret. The sole oblique reference to conservation is "this region is still remote from the transport network to be exploited by forestry companies, and the human population density is very low". But surely here is one of the few regions of the world where conservation plans could be made and laws enacted *before* a problem arises. In the end this is simpler and cheaper and more effective.

Naturgeografiske regionindelning av Norden

NU. B 1977-34, Gotab, Stockholm, 113 pp, 30 line drawings, tables and maps, 7 pull-out colour maps

Under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers the authors of this excellent report on "Norden"—Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden—outline an approach to the classification of natural geographic regions. The classification is by way of geology, geomorphology, climate, plant life, animal life, soil profiles and land use. The working group ended up by using vegetation as the fundamental criterion because it provides both the food base for animals as well as reflecting general soil conditions.

The report supplies a basis for park-system planning and should be of interest to anyone involved with the application of systems such as Udvardy's Biogeographical Provinces of the World (IUCN Occasional Paper 18). The main text is in the Scandinavian languages. There is an English summary and the charts and diagrams can be readily understood. Jan Abrahamson of the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment and a member of IUCN's Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas is one of the six authors.

Rezerwaty przyrody w Polsce

by Zygmund Czubinski, Jadwiga Gawłowska and Kazimierz Zabierowski

Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 528 pp, 39 half-tone plates, 12 pull-out maps "Nature reserves in Poland" is a 1977 product of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The book deals comprehensively with the problems of safeguarding nature in the country's 645 "strict" and "partial" reserves. In the former, interference by man is forbidden; in the latter, economic activities are allowed so long as they do not conflict with the purposes of the reserve. Poland also has 13 national parks but the book is not concerned with these—they are covered by other publications.

The authors state that mass tourism within the nature reserves has often

brought about degradation of the land and unfavourable changes in the plant and animal communities; they favour stricter regulation of tourism. They also consider that the protected areas of Poland should be increased—at present (July 1975) they cover only 0.48% of the country and more than two-thirds of this figure is accounted for by the 13 national parks.

The book includes large pull-out maps and an extensive bibliography. There are summaries in English, Russian and German which give data concerning the number, distribution and objectives of the various types of reserves. Information and research programmes are outlined for typical areas.

Rote Liste der gefährdeten Tiere und Pflanzen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland

Kilda Verlag, D-4402 Greven, West Germany

In West Germany the Federal Department for Nature Conservation and Ecology has brought out its first *Red List* of threatened species of animals and plants in the Federal Republic. These are classified in five categories ranging from "extinct" to "potentially endangered". The criteria used are not quite the same as for the IUCN *Red Data Book* because global criteria are too general for a restricted area like West Germany. — A revised and updated list will be published in due course.

Bibliographie sur la protection de l'environnement, l'écologie et l'écologisme

by Roland de Miller

Les Amis de la Terre, 117 Avenue de Choisy, 75013 Paris, 16 pp, 5 French francs (3 francs plus 10% carriage for orders of more than 10 copies)

In this very useful bibliography the most important conservation works existing in the French language are divided into 30 or more subjects relating to the environment and its protection. Although not exhaustive this 16-page pamphlet gives concise information and serves as a guide for research work and militant action. It also indicates the main periodicals dealing with the environment and provides some very useful addresses.

European national parks conference

An informal conference for managers and staffs of Europe's protected landscapes will take place on 25-29 September in Derbyshire, England. The aim is to exchange information and consider how conflicts can be resolved between visitors and the people that live and work in these areas. For further details write to: Peter Townsend, Peak National Park Study Centre, Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbyshire, England.

Commissions (continued)

of effort or to undue concentration upon fringe matters. Coordination of the work of the Commissions through the secretariat is therefore vital. It was agreed that the best method of achieving this would be through some kind of "Programme Committee"—perhaps along the lines of the Marine Steering Committee (see last month's *Bulletin*) which includes Commission representatives.

It was also agreed that the *Bulletin* should be used to report Commission affairs.

** IUCN's six Commissions comprise the Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas, the Commission on Ecology, the Commission on Environmental Policy, Law and Administration, the Survival Service Commission, the Commission on Education and the Commission on Environmental Planning.

Six national parks for Canadian arctic

Six substantial areas of arctic Canada will shortly become national parks if government plans are approved by the people of these northern lands. Traditional rights will be fully safeguarded. Mr Hugh Faulkner, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, has said: "The wilderness values of the land and its wildlife, and their importance to the Indian and Inuit people, would be

Migratory Bird Sanctuary.

Wager Bay is unusual for its diversity of arctic land and sea mammals. The latter include the beluga whale, the narwhal and ringed, bearded and ranger seals. The establishment of a national park might enable the bowhead whale to be reintroduced to a former habitat and given much needed protection there.

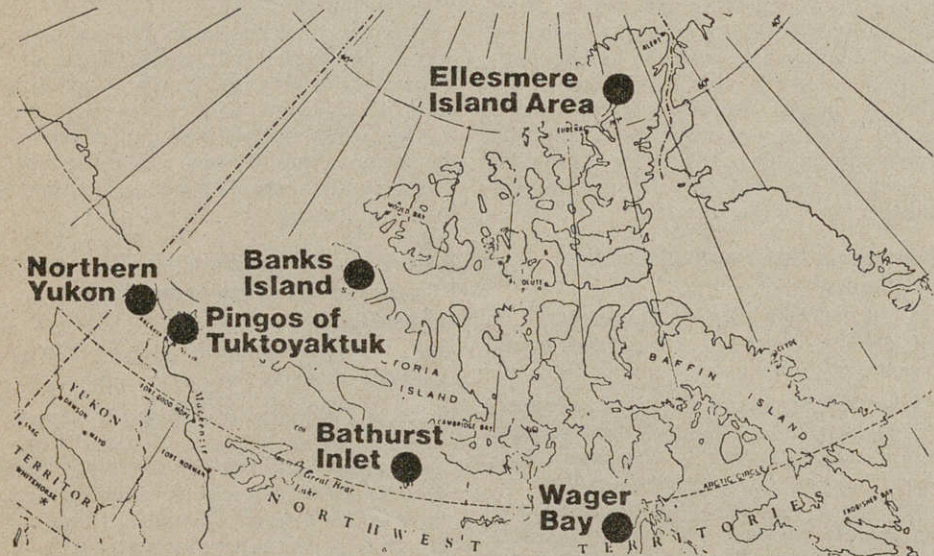
Northern Yukon has grizzly, black

the minimum necessary to preserve the values of the Northern Yukon. I am receptive to the possibility of accommodating a much larger area for preservation."

Northern Ellesmere, despite its very high latitude, has pockets of sheltered and well watered areas where vegetation flourishes and animals thrive. Arctic hare in large numbers, muskoxen, Peary caribou, polar wolves and arctic fox can all be found and some 300 species of birds are known to breed there. Lake Hazen, the world's largest arctic lake, is one of the richest wildlife areas in the high arctic.

Bathurst Inlet has probably the largest population of peregrine falcon in the world and its caribou herd, numbering around 200,000, is the biggest in Canada. The inlet offers spectacular scenery—gorges, rapids, waterfalls and innumerable lakes and streams—and is one of the few known habitats of the rare northern wolfish.

The Pingos of Tuktoyaktuk are important habitat for arctic fox and other mammals. Pingos are one of nature's most curious phenomena. Low hills containing massive ice cores, their life cycle in geological terms is relatively short. Pingos form in lake beds in areas of permafrost when the thermal regime of the lakes is altered by natural processes. They grow to maturity over several thousands of years and decay eventually when the summits are ruptured and the ice core melts. Pingos may be dome-shaped, flat-topped or elongated. Some resemble volcanoes, complete with craters and lakes. Numbering well over 1000 in the Canadian North, pingos are almost entirely confined to the Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula where they protrude conspicuously from the rolling, lake-dotted tundra.



respected within any potential national park."

The proposed national parks are shown on the map. *Banks Island* has 4000 to 5000 muskoxen—the largest concentration in the world—and most of them will be within the national park. It is also the finest arctic fox range in Canada. The area is a significant moulting and staging ground for brent and snow geese and contains a designated

and polar bear and is among the finest raptor habitats in the arctic. Golden eagle, rough-legged hawk, bald eagle, osprey, gyrfalcon and peregrine falcon are all present. The proposed park is also an important calving area for caribou. *Herschel Island*, the Yukon's only island, contains more than 100 plant species including at least 17 major plant communities. Mr Faulkner has said: "The area identified by Parks Canada is in fact

Slaughter of birds of prey in Austria

In 1976 Austria gave full legal protection to birds of prey, thus bringing itself in line with nearly all European countries. Unfortunately the province of Lower Austria has relapsed into former destructive practices; district authorities are once again being allowed to decide for themselves whether birds of prey may be killed or not.

During the 1977-78 hunting season most districts in this province authorized the shooting of goshawks and buzzards—and in one district the killing of 30 goshawks and 48 buzzards was more or less ordered. It is feared that apart from these two species many other protected birds of prey have also been killed, because of the ignorance of hunters in distinguishing between one species and another. It is known that between 80 and 100 birds of prey of various species were killed at just one pheasant-rearing station.

Certainly hundreds and maybe thousands of raptors were shot in Lower Austria last autumn and winter—most of

them winter visitors from northern countries where they enjoy year-round protection. The responsibility for putting a stop to this retrograde practice lies with the provincial government which must be aware of the role of birds of prey in maintaining a balanced natural environment.

Of the 24 species of birds of prey which once bred in Austria 10 have been exterminated, 7 are high on the danger list and only 7 are still relatively numerous.

European list of threatened plants published

In its "Nature Conservation Series" (No. 14) the Council of Europe has published the *List of rare, threatened and endemic plants in Europe*. The Committee of Ministers recommends that the member governments:

— ensure adequate legal protection for all plants identified as endangered in the List with provision for licences to be issued for approved collection purposes;

- institute or complete national surveys of plants that are rare or threatened within their boundaries;
- establish nature reserves and other areas in which vegetation and flora are protected by law and stimulate the setting up of nature reserves by private bodies, with the long-term aim of ensuring that these various areas include all species in the List, thus contributing to the establishment of the European network of biogenetic reserves.

The List was prepared by IUCN's Threatened Plants Committee.

Published monthly by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources with the financial assistance of UNEP, UNESCO, UNESCO Subvention 1977/78 DG/2.1/414/45, and the World Wildlife Fund.

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