

# Briefly . . .

## International

### France withdraws reservations

France has withdrawn all its reservations on CITES Appendix species: green turtle *Chelonia mydas*, hawksbill turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata*, black caiman *Melansuchus niger*, African slender-snouted crocodile *Crocodylus cataphractus*, Nile crocodile *C. niloticus*, estuarine crocodile *C. porosus*, and West African dwarf crocodile *Osteolaemus tetraspis*.

*TRAFFIC Bulletin*, January 1985

### World Heritage Convention

New Zealand ratified the World Heritage Convention on 1 October 1984.

### Internationally important wetlands

Several Italian wetlands have been declared to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention: Valli da Mincio and Paludi di Ostiglia in Mantua Province; Torbiere d'Isèo in Brescia Province; Palude Brabbia in Varese Province; and the Vendicari Nature Reserve in Sicily.

*Council of Europe Newsletter*, 84-11

## Europe and North Africa

### Harp and hooded seal import ban continued

The European Parliament has voted overwhelmingly in favour of a continuation, for an indefinite period, of the import ban on the skins of baby harp and hooded seals, which came into effect on 1 October 1983, initially for a two-year period.

### Whales follow music to freedom

Hundreds of white whales *Delphinapterus leucas* trapped in the Bering Sea by ice since mid-December were freed in February by a Soviet icebreaker and lured into open waters through a 12-mile (19-km) channel by classical music. About 40 whales had died since they were trapped, despite efforts by workers from Chukotskiy Peninsula to feed them and to keep some areas ice-free.

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 February 1985

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### Sea eagle population rising

The white-tailed sea eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* population in Finland has risen for the fourth consecutive year: 29 young fledged in 1984. The most productive area is Åland Island in the Baltic Sea.

*Council of Europe Newsletter*, 85-2

### University destroys wetland, faces charges

Uppsala University in Sweden faces criminal charges made by the State County Administration after draining and ploughing a wetland of great historical and biological interest. The University ignored the protests of conservationists.

*Sveriges Natur*, 1/85

### Strict laws to save broadleaves

In a bid to save Sweden's last remnants of broadleaved woodland, new legislation makes it illegal to replace it with conifers and to fell deciduous trees without permission.

*Council of Europe Newsletter*, 85-1

### Sweden's sea eagles need more trees

The Swedish Society for the Conservation of Nature's white-tailed sea eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* project, launched in 1971, has resulted in a great improvement in nesting success and 25 birds fledged in 1984. Meat is provided at 100 sites in winter to help young birds and to assure eagles of non-toxic food. As the population continues to expand, there may be a severe shortage of nesting sites; modern forestry is eliminating all old trees.

*Sveriges Natur*, 1/85

### Denmark protects coastal strip

Denmark has decided to protect a 350-ha (865-acre) coastal strip, Sydager, on the Øresund Strait on the outskirts of Copenhagen to facilitate conservation of the landscape and the birds.

*Council of Europe Newsletter*, 84-11

### No motorway through butterfly forest

After a public inquiry, the inspector criticised the UK's Department of Trans-

port for its cavalier attitude to landscape and said that the proposed Oxford-to-Birmingham extension of the M40 motorway should in no circumstances be routed through Bemwood Forest, a renowned butterfly site.

*New Scientist*, 20/27 December 1984



Arabian oryx calf at London Zoo (Michael Lyster/Zoological Society of London).

### London Zoo's first Arabian oryx calf

The first Arabian oryx to be born at London Zoo, in January 1985, is the great great grand-calf of Caroline, the oryx that London Zoo donated to the World Herd in Phoenix, Arizona, USA, 21 years ago. Now that the World Herd numbers more than 300, and two successful releases have been made in Oman and Jordan, some animals are being dispersed to other zoos. London Zoo received the parents of the new calf from East Berlin Zoo.

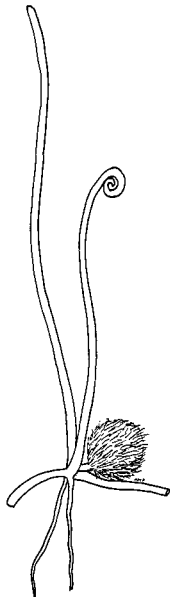
### Plant thieves prosecuted

In January, two British dealers in aquatic plants were fined £250 each and ordered to pay costs for taking 100 plants of the water-soldier *Stratiotes aloides* from a nature reserve in Norfolk. This is the first prosecution under the section of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 that gives protection to wild plants.

*Nature Conservancy Council*

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Pillwort: a fern under threat.

## Search for pillwort

A project has been launched to establish the distribution, status and conservation requirements of pillwort *Ptilularia globulifera* in the UK. It has disappeared from many wetland sites in the last 50 years and is threatened by pollution and land-drainage. The survey is a contribution to both the IUCN/WWF Plant Programme and the Wetlands Programme. Details: A.C. Jermy, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

## Farmers to be paid for traditional farm methods

An experimental scheme has been set up jointly by the UK Countryside Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to encourage farmers to maintain traditional grazing marshes on the Norfolk Broads. Farmers opting to join the three-year scheme will be paid £5 per year for each acre (0.4 ha) grazed according to specific guidelines.

## Estate purchased for national nature reserve

The Nature Conservancy Council has bought Moy Estate, Inverness-shire, Scotland, for a national nature reserve.

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The land covers 3940 ha (9736 acres), mainly within the Creag Meagaidh SSSI (see *Oryx*, April 1985, page 110).  
*Nature Conservancy Council*

## Endangered plants in the High Street

High Street stores in the UK are selling thousands of plants that may be endangered in the wild. Among them are: a snowdrop *Galanthus elwesii* and *Cyclamen mirabile*, whose collection in thousands from the wild in Turkey may be threatening their survival.  
*New Scientist*, 7 March 1985

## Belgian frog society

A new society, RAINNE, has been set up in Belgium for the protection and study of amphibians and reptiles. It will establish nature reserves for threatened species.

Address: RAINNE, Société Wallone d'herpétologie, 23 rue D. Belleflammen, B-4610, Beyue-Hensay, Belgium.  
*Council of Europe Newsletter*, 85-2

## New mountain reserves

France has created two new nature reserves in the Carença massif (Pyrénées Orientales) on the Spanish frontier, which together cover 6000 ha (14,826 acres) and contain golden eagles *Aquila chrysaetos*, capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, wild boar *Sus scrofa* and wild cat *Felis silvestris*.  
*Council of Europe Newsletter*, 84-11

## Marmots escape drowning

At the Grand-Maison barrage (Isère), the Rhone-Alps Federation for Nature Protection proposed to rescue 200 hibernating marmots by digging them out of their burrows behind the dam. The French electricity authority, however, agreed instead to stop the inflow of water from 1 December until the spring.  
*Sites et Monuments*, 108

## Call to stop serving frogs' legs

The WWF organisations in Germany and Switzerland have called on their countries' food and hotel industries to stop selling frogs' legs to avoid ecological disaster in Bangladesh and other Asian nations (see *Oryx*, October 1984, page 201). By the end of 1984, 250

West German restaurant and hotel owners had agreed to stop serving frogs' legs. The Government of West Germany has recommended that two species of frogs *Rana tigrina* and *R. hexadactyla* be listed on Appendix II of CITES.  
*WWF News*, 32

## Court victory for conservation: continuation—and a correction

Following WWF-Austria's successful court action against the Government, which halted work on the dam at Hainburg (not Hamburg as stated on page 112 of the April issue of *Oryx*), Austria's 250 leading scientists in ecology-related disciplines have formed an association to continue the fight against the construction of the dam and hydroelectric plant on the Danube outside Vienna.  
*WWF News*, 33

## West Germany ratifies Bern Convention

The Federal Republic of Germany ratified the Bern Convention on 13 December 1984.  
*Council of Europe Newsletter*, 85-2

## Wolf protected

The grey wolf *Canis lupus* is to become a protected animal in Spain following the country's ratification of the Bern Convention.  
*Daily Telegraph*, 15 February 1985

## Italy pays to clean up watercourses

Italy's Council of Ministers has earmarked a record 1100 billion lire for decontaminating watercourses and lakes, and for other ecological projects.  
*Council of Europe Newsletter*, 84-11

## A threatened Maltese bat cave

A group of people dressed as bats led a march called by the Ornithological Society of Malta in March to protest against the blocking of the entrance to a cave, Ghar il-friefet, home of up to 400 lesser mouse-eared bats *Myotis blythi* and of ecological, geological and archaeological importance. Earlier representations by conservationists to the

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authorities to stop the residential development threatening the cave were ignored and the cave entrance had been blocked by rubble. Members of eight associations involved in the protest sent an open letter to the Prime Minister requesting the setting up of a board empowered by Parliament to safeguard the environment. As a result of the publicity that the protest attracted, construction work has now stopped and further developments are awaited.

*The Ornithological Society of Malta*

## Turkey plans porpoise survey

Turkey is planning to census the harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* and the common dolphin *Delphinus delphis* populations in the Black Sea. Turkey halted the capture of these animals for meat and oil in early 1983 after unfavourable publicity and intends to resume it only when safe levels of harvest have been estimated.

*Newsletter of the Cetacean Specialist Group* (of IUCN/SSC), 1

## A new swallow

A new species of swallow, the Red Sea cliff swallow, has been discovered by Hilary Fry and Don Smith on a coral reef in the Red Sea near Port Sudan. It is believed to have died when colliding with the lighthouse on the reef. It has been named *Hirundo perdita*.

*New Scientist*, 28 February 1985

## Africa

### East African marine convention

Nine eastern African states (Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania and Reunion) have agreed on a treaty committing them to co-operate in fighting marine pollution and in protecting their coastlines and the endangered species found there. A convention will be signed in the Seychelles or Somalia in mid-1985.

*Ecoforum*, 9, 6

### Weevils brought in to battle

South African conservationists are awaiting the results of the latest effort to eradicate the silky hakea *Hakea sericea*. This Australian member of the Protea

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family was introduced to the Cape of South Africa in the 1830s, and is one of the greatest threats to the survival of the mountain fynbos, smothering large areas of native plants. Trials with the hakea fruit weevil *Erytenna consputa* showed that it can destroy up to 85 per cent of the hakea's annual fruit crop, and in 1984 8000 weevils were dropped from a helicopter over 16 hakea-infested sites in the south-west Cape.

*African Wildlife*, 38, 6

### Roan reintroduction

Roan antelopes *Hippotragus equinus* are to be reintroduced to the mountainous area of the Transvaal Waterberg. They are descendants of 24 antelopes captured 16 years ago by the Transvaal Division of Nature Conservation and taken to the Percy Fyfe Nature Reserve near Potgietersrus. The reintroduction project was initiated by Lapalala Wilderness, which is making available 23,000 ha (56,833 acres) of habitat by combining two private nature reserves.

*Quagga*, 8

## Asia (excluding Indo-Malaya)

### Black-necked cranes

A survey has revealed more than 700 black-necked cranes *Grus nigricollis* in China; they are listed by the Government for top-priority protection.

*XINHUA*, 26 January 1985

### 458 panda rescue groups

Starvation still threatens China's giant pandas, as their main food, arrow bamboo, continues to flower and die. In 1984 Chinese conservationists rescued 30 starving and diseased pandas; of these, 13 recovered and were released, eight are still in captivity, and nine died during treatment. The Government has allocated four million yuan annually until 1986 for the rescue operation; there are already 458 rescue groups in Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansue Provinces, with 4000 staff.

*XINHUA*, 21 December 1984

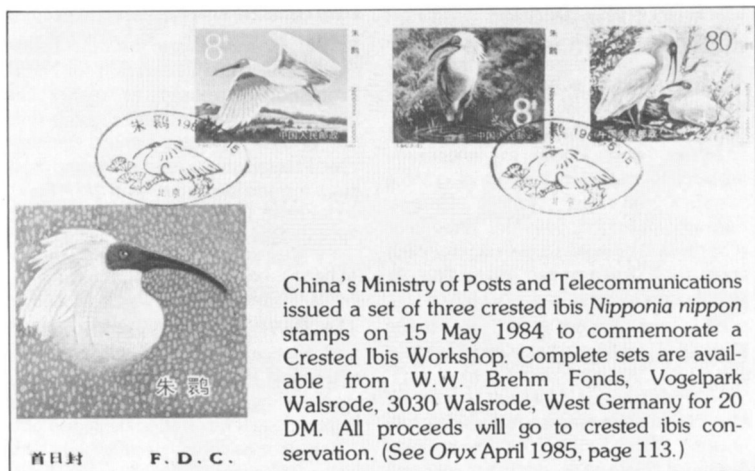
### World's largest crane flock?

A group of Chinese ornithologists and members of the International Crane Foundation counted 1350 great white cranes *Grus leucogeranus* at the 24,000-ha (59,300-acre) Boyang Lake Bird Sanctuary in Jiangxi Province on 13 January 1985. It is believed to be the largest flock of cranes in the world; in 1984 840 cranes were counted in the Sanctuary, which was set up in 1983.

*XINHUA*, 13 January 1985

### Elephant numbers increase in China

Elephant numbers in Xishuangbanna Nature Reserve in Yunnan Province have increased to 200 since the Chinese Government expanded the Reserve from 40,000 ha (98,840 acres) to 200,000 ha (494,200 acres) in 1982 and banned hunting. The Government



China's Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications issued a set of three crested ibis *Nipponia nippon* stamps on 15 May 1984 to commemorate a Crested Ibis Workshop. Complete sets are available from W.W. Brehm Fonds, Vogelpark Walsrode, 3030 Walsrode, West Germany for 20 DM. All proceeds will go to crested ibis conservation. (See *Oryx* April 1985, page 113.)

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compensates local people for any damage to crops or domestic animals caused by wild species from the Reserve, which also contains tiger and clouded leopard.

XINHUA, 1 November 1984

## Prison for dolphin killers

In June 1984, two fishermen were sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a peasant sentenced to one month's detention for killing three whitefin dolphins *Lipotes vexillifer*.

XINHUA, 13 June 1984

## Pit viper boom

The population of pit vipers on Snake Island (1 sq km, 0.386 sq mile) has grown to 10,000 since the island, south of Liaodong Peninsula in China, became a nature reserve in 1980. The local government now patrols the island to enforce the hunting ban on pit vipers, whose venom is used in the treatment of cerebral thrombosis.

XINHUA, 3 May 1984

## Industrialisation destroying dolphin habitat

The baiji, or whitefin dolphin *Lipotes vexillifer* is in serious trouble in China, despite protection. Collisions with boats and accidental entanglement in fishing gear have reduced its numbers to 200–700, and it is now restricted to a few places in the middle and lower reaches of the Changjiang (Yangtze River) where industrialisation is causing habitat deterioration. Scientists at the Institute of Hydrobiology at Wiehan have started a captive-breeding programme, but results so far are not encouraging; river dolphins are very difficult to maintain in captivity.

*Newsletter of the Cetacean Specialist Group* (of IUCN/SSC), 1

## Indo-Malaya

### Crane-hunting plummets

Wildlife officials in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province say that the laws introduced in February 1984 in an attempt to protect migrating great white cranes *Grus leucogeranus* have reduced crane-hunting to one-third of

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its previous level. Wildlife officials are now trying to encourage the crane-hunters to put more effort into captive-breeding of the cranes they do catch.

*WWF News*, 32

## Bringing back trees to the streets

Residents of Jakarta, Indonesia's largest city, have begun a major tree-planting scheme, using the native species that once grew in the area, but now exist only as street names. The scheme was initiated largely by students at the National University's Institute of Ecology.

*WWF News*, 32

## Thailand to reintroduce sarus cranes

Three pairs of sarus cranes *Grus antigone* were presented to HM Queen Sirikit, Patron of Wildlife Fund Thailand, by Dr Archibald, Director of the International Crane Foundation. The birds will breed in semi-captivity in Bang Phra Wildlife Sanctuary (see *Oryx*, January 1985, page 38).

*WWF News*, 33

## Select Committee on fauna and flora

The Select Committee set up by the Sarawak State Legislature to investigate the State's flora and fauna had its first meeting on 5 March. Under the chairmanship of the Minister for Forestry, it appointed five subcommittees—on mammals and birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians, flora, legislation, and finance—and stated that it would welcome the views of members of the public.

*Sarawak Tribune*, 6 March 1985

## Aphrodisiac banned

Singapore has banned sales of a tablet, advertised as an aphrodisiac, that contains ingredients taken from moose, reindeer and tigers.

*New York Times*, 24 February 1985

## Concern for dolphin in East Kalimantan

A survey of the Irawaddy River dolphin

*Orcaella brevirostris* in estuaries and lakes in East Kalimantan revealed only 100–150 individuals. There is concern that this population may be declining, perhaps because of competition with man for its food, and the Directorate General for Forest and Nature Conservation of the Forestry Ministry of Indonesia has proposed that Semayang Lake, where the dolphin still occurs, be made a national park. Local conservationists want Berambai Forest, which is the watershed of the lake, included in the park to protect the lake from water depletion and pollution.

*Newsletter of the Cetacean Specialist Group* (of IUCN/SSC), 1

## Problems for world's largest leatherback colony

In 1984, leatherback turtles *Dermochelys coriacea* made 13,000 nesting visits to a beach in Irian Jaya that was discovered during an aerial survey in 1981. Despite the Indonesian Directorate of Nature Conservation's commitment to conserve the turtles, problems face this nesting colony: introduced wild pigs eat eggs and hatchlings; the proliferation of outboard motors has made the beach accessible to egg-collectors; settlers are increasingly moving into the coastal areas; and the Directorate's local office is understaffed and lacks a boat to enforce protection.

*WWF Monthly Report*, January 1985

## Hope for crocodile

The captive-breeding programme for the endangered Philippine crocodile *Crocodylus mindorensis* started at Silliman University, Dumaguete City in the Philippines in 1980, now has 25 crocodiles, including 11 hatched in 1984. The three-year-olds are to be released in the Calavit Wildlife Sanctuary in northern Busuanga, Calamianes Group, where crocodiles were once found. There are also plans to investigate the suitability of an area in San Jose on Mindoro Island for release of two more. Once widely distributed throughout the Philippines, the species is today represented by a few scattered populations, comprising probably fewer than 100 individuals in total.

*WWF Monthly Report*, November 1984

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## North America

### Use of steel shot spreads

Nebraska became the first State in the US to require steel shot for all waterfowl hunting, beginning with the 1985 season. Iowa, Wyoming, Florida, Kansas and New Jersey are all expected to follow Nebraska's lead shortly.

*Grus Americana*, 24, 1

*National Wildlife*, 23, 2

### Florida panther crisis

Two Florida panthers *Felix concolor coryi* were hit by vehicles in 1984; one died, one is recovering. In October, a hunter shot a female panther in Corbett Wildlife Management Area and was later arrested. The future is not bright for the last 12–24 that remain: a Ford car test track is taking one square mile of their habitat; more than 6000 hunters hold permits for off-road vehicles in the swamp, and there are plans to turn the east–west road through the Everglades into a super-highway. State authorities are resisting funding to build animal crossings.

*Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, IX, 12

*Monitor*, 7 January 1985

### Whooping crane update

A record number of 14 young whooping cranes *Grus americana* was seen at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas in December 1984; the previous high number was 12 in 1976. There were also 69 adult cranes on the refuge and 30 cranes wintered in New Mexico, bringing the total number of whooping cranes alive, including captive birds, to 148.

### Computer programme helps rare gazelle

Speke's gazelle *Gazella spekei* may be extinct in its wild home, a plateau on the Somalia/Ethiopia border. There are reports that an Arab sheikh owns a few, and the only other known captive animals derive from four taken to St Louis Zoo in the US. Although this small herd increased, there were severe inbreeding problems until a Washington University geneticist devised a computer-generated breeding programme that would spread the genes of the four founders throughout the population

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and eliminate harmful pairings. Survival rates have improved, the harmful genes seem to be dying out, and numbers have increased to 34.

*Audubon*, 87, 1



Brown pelican in Everglades National Park, Florida, USA, one of the places where numbers are recovering (V.-J. Rey-Millet).

### Brown pelican recovery in some places

Brown pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* numbers have recovered sufficiently from the decline caused by DDT in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina, and northwards along the Atlantic Coast for the species to be removed from the US endangered species list. It is still endangered in Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, California, Mexico, Central and South America and the West Indies.

*Department of the Interior*

### Permit to capture orcas invalid

In January, a federal court judge withdrew Sea World's permit to capture 100 orcas *Orcinus orca* in Alaska, finding that the National Marine Fisheries Service should have prepared a full environmental impact statement before issuing the permit in 1983.

*Monitor*, 28 January 1985

### Wilderness grows

New US legislation has added more than two million acres (810,000 ha) in California, Florida and Utah to the nation's wilderness system. The legislation includes three provisions long

sought by environmentalists: California's Tuolumne River was given Wild and Scenic River status, protecting it from conversion to a reservoir system; Mono Lake is protected; and phosphate mining is prohibited in Florida's Osceola National Forest.

*Audubon*, 87, 1

### Bottlenosed dolphin deaths—DDT and PCBs to blame?

Analysis of tissue samples from 27 dead bottlenosed dolphins washed ashore in California revealed extremely high levels of DDT and PCBs. The source of the toxins is not known; DDT was banned in the US in 1972 and PCBs in 1977. Suggested sources include the Pacific Basin countries, where DDT is still used, and sewage run-off from Pacific Coast cities in the US, where PCBs deposited in the soil several years ago may be leaching out.

*New York Times*, 22 January 1985

### Rewards for plant finds

The American Horticultural Society is offering financial rewards for finding any of the 240 plants that are believed to be extinct in the US.

*National Wildlife*, 23, 1

### Endangered species list grows longer

The US List of Endangered and Threatened Species was lengthened by 46 species in 1984, bringing the total to 828, of which 331 are found in the US. The Arctic peregrine falcon, the Utah prairie dog and the snail darter were moved from endangered to threatened listings, reflecting an improvement in their status.

*Department of the Interior*

### Oldest plant in the world gets reserve

The US Nature Conservancy plans an 11-acre (4.5-ha) reserve in the desert 80 miles (129 km) north-east of Los Angeles around a creosote bush estimated to be 11,700 years old and thus the world's oldest living plant.

*The Washington Post*, 10 December 1984

### Shrub just hanging on

The shrub *Gouania hillebrandii*,

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endemic to Maui in the Hawaiian Islands, survives only in a few places where feral goats and cattle cannot reach it, and where wind, soil and drainage conditions are unsuitable for competing exotic plants and damaging introduced insects.

*Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, IX, 12

## Vole, twice feared extinct, still lives

The Amargosa vole *Microtus californicus scirpensis*, twice feared extinct since its discovery in 1900, still survives in marshes near Tecopa, California, and has been listed as endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

*Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, IX, 12

## Mouse rescue saves only three

There was a determined effort to save the Perdido Key beach mouse *Peromyscus polionotus trissylepsis* in October 1984. Intensive trapping on a privately owned 4-acre (1.62-ha) site at Perdido Key in Alabama, due to be bulldozed for houses, yielded only three beach mice. The Fish and Wildlife Service are deciding whether to release them into safe wild habitat or to keep them for breeding. The species, proposed for listing as endangered on 7 June 1984, occurs only on the Alabama end of Perdido Key, where no more than 26 are believed to survive.

*Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, IX, 12

## California sea otter census

The southern sea otter *Enhydra lutris nereis* population in California was 1535 in 1984, according to a census by the State's Department of Fish and Game. In 1983 only 1163 adults and 122 pups were counted.

*Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, IX, 12

## Soda Lake and saltbush scrub

Soda Lake and an area of lowland valley saltbush scrub on the Carrizo Plain in California (2960 acres, 1200 ha) is the subject of a conservation management agreement between the US Nature Conservancy and the

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Bureau of Land Management. The lake draws huge concentrations of migrating birds, and 6500 lesser sandhill cranes winter there. The saltbush scrub is critically threatened in the State and, with adjacent grassland scrub, harbours three endangered species: San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard and giant kangaroo rat. The site has been proposed for federal designation as an 'area of critical environmental concern' and is the core of a planned 200,000-acre (81,000-ha) reserve, which includes a feeding area for the California condor.

*The Nature Conservancy News*, 35, 1

## Fight for right to grow meadow

A man in Buffalo, New York, is fighting for the right to grow a meadow instead of a lawn in front of his suburban home. He has been threatened with fines of up to \$1000 a day for violating a local authority regulation prohibiting undergrowth 'noxious or detrimental to health'.

*Sanctuary*, 24, 3

## Megamouth II

A second specimen of the megamouth shark *Megachasma pelagios*, which was first discovered off Hawaii and scientifically described in 1983 (see *Oryx*, January 1984, page 53), has been caught off the California coast. Marine scientists hope to preserve and display the shark in a Los Angeles museum.

*New Scientist*, 20/27 December 1984

## Warblers to be followed

The 1984 census of Kirtland's warblers *Dendroica kirtlandii* revealed 215 singing males, the same number as in 1983. It is planned to capture up to six birds in Michigan and release them in the Bahamas with radio transmitters attached so that more can be discovered about their winter habitat.

*Bird Watcher's Digest*, 7, 2

## Wolf-hunt suspended

Aerial wolf-hunting in Alaska has been suspended by the State Governor following a request by five of the seven members of the State's Board of Game asking for a re-evaluation of the wolf control programme.

*Ecology USA*, 11 March 1985

## Farmland pollution harming wildlife

Up to 200,000 ha (494,200 acres) of Californian farmland may be taken out of production because water draining from the fields is polluting underground water supplies. The State's Water Resources Control Board has given the Federal Government, which has been dumping the polluted water into Kesterton Wildlife Refuge, three years to clean up. In 1982, biologists discovered that fish could not survive in the refuge, and that birds hatched there were often deformed.

*New Scientist*, 7 March 1985

## Cattle, rodents and grass threaten tree

Hawaii tree cotton *Kokia drynarioides*, a small tree with large red flowers, has been listed as endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Only 15 individuals are left: it is palatable to cattle, its seeds are eaten by introduced rodents, and an exotic plant, fountain grass *Pennisetum setaceum*, has recently invaded its habitat.

*Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, X, 1

## Reward scheme working

Colorado's 'Operation Game Thief', in which citizens are rewarded for reporting wildlife law violations, has paid out \$140,000 in cases involving more than 400 poachers since it began in 1980. The reward fund, however, has dropped to \$2000.

*Los Angeles Times*, 22 February 1985

## Bat and fish cave protected

The US Nature Conservancy has bought 15 acres (6 ha) of Ozark's Springfield Plateau in Arkansas, which contains the only entrance to Cave Spring's Cave. The cave houses the largest known population of the threatened Ozark cave-fish *Amblyopsis rosae* and a maternal colony of endangered grey bats *Myotis grisescens*, whose guano supplies the stream with essential nutrients for the fish. The Nature Conservancy will transfer the site to the Arkansas National Heritage Commission for management.

*The Nature Conservancy News*, 35, 1

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## Central America

### Seagrass planting success

Jamaica has successfully replanted seagrass at 18 coastal sites where it had disappeared due to heavy-metal pollution, sewage, oil and hot water from power stations. The seagrass meadows help control beach erosion, trap sediment and provide a feeding ground for fish. Fishermen are already fishing again in the replanted areas.

*Earthscan Bulletin*, 8, 1

### Rabbit habitat shrinking

The volcano rabbit *Romerolagus diazi*, whose range is restricted to three volcanic sierras around Mexico City, appears to have disappeared from many sites because of erosion of its grass and pine-forest habitat due to encroaching agriculture, urban sprawl and tourist development.

*BBC Wildlife*, 3, 4

### Cuba: last stronghold for woodpecker?

The Cuban Government, anxious to protect the ivory-billed woodpecker *Campephilus principalis*, has invited Lester T. Short, Chairman of ICBP's Piciformes Group, to search eastern Cuba for the species. There have been 12 reliable sightings in the last decade, but none recently. There have been no confirmed reports of the species in the US and it is feared that its close relative, the magnificent imperial woodpecker *C. imperialis*, endemic to highland pine forests in western Mexico, is extinct.

ICBP: Piciformes Group

### War games in national park

Panamanian conservationists called on the Panamanian Defence Force to cancel joint war games with the US planned for January 1985. The exercises, involving 10,000 US troops and an unspecified number of Panamanian soldiers, would damage the 'only wildlife refuge in the region of Azuero, today a national park'.

*New York Times*, 31 December 1984

### New reserves for Belize

Belize passed legislation establishing two new nature reserves in November

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and December 1984: Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary is an inland lagoon system covering 20–25 sq miles (52–65 sq km), critical for waterbirds in the dry season; the Cockscomb Basin Forest and Jaguar Reserve, approximately 150 sq miles (390 sq km) will protect jaguars, peccaries, armadillos, margay and ocelot. Belize's Ministry of Natural Resources, the Belize Audubon Society, Wildwings Foundation and the New York Zoological Society all played important parts in the establishment of the reserves.

Byron Swift

*Animal Kingdom*, 87, 6

### Whale-watching not harmful so far

Whale-watching activities in San Ignacio lagoon in Mexico do not, so far, seem to be harming the grey whales *Eschrichtius robustus*, but long-term monitoring is necessary to assess any cumulative effects of water-borne noise and stress on reproduction. Whale-watchers are excluded from the upper lagoon, used by nursing whales, but a new scallop fishery is ignoring regulations.

*Newsletter of the Cetacean Specialist Group* (of IUCN/SSC), 1

## South America

### Last forests need saving

The highland forests of the Pedra Branca massif, in Murici County in north-eastern Brazil, should have high priority for conservation, according to a WWF report. They constitute the largest surviving forest in north-eastern Brazil, 1500–2000 ha (3700–5000 acres) are in good condition, and they contain 80 per cent of the endemic or endangered birds of the region. The lowland forest in Alagoas State, on the other hand, has been severely ravaged; two of its endemic birds, the bearded bellbird *Procnias a. averano* and razor-billed curassow *Mitu m. mitu* are on the verge of extinction.

*WWF Monthly Report*, January 1985

### Crab fishery threat to sea mammals

The crab fishery in southern Chile may be drastically reducing populations of dolphins and small whales, which are

caught for bait. Particularly affected are Commerson's dolphin *Cephalorhynchus commersonii* and Peale's dolphin *Lagenorhynchus australis*. Some companies use fish-based artificial bait provided by Japanese fishermen, but shipping delays or bait shortages also lead fishermen to kill South American sea lions *Otaria flavescens* and fur seals *Arctocephalus australis*. There are no legal requirements for the crab fishery to keep records of bait used.

*Newsletter of the Cetacean Specialist Group* (of IUCN/SSC), 1

### Town makes rain-forest gift

The Municipal Council of Ouro Preto do Oeste in Rondônia has donated 138 ha (340 acres) of rain forest adjacent to the town to Brazil's National Institute for Research in the Amazon for a reserve for ecological research. Rapid deforestation is occurring in Rondônia and the reserve's proximity to the town will help guard against invasion by squatters.

*Environmental Conservation*, 11(3), 273–274

### Golden lion tamarins

One of the 15 captive-bred golden lion tamarins *Leontopithecus rosalia* released into Poço das Antas Reserve in Brazil gave birth in December 1984, the first captive-bred mother to give birth in the wild. The tamarins have split into two groups and have settled well. More releases are planned.

*BBC Wildlife*, 3, 4

### Tourism dilemma

Ecuador faces a problem in deciding future moves in the development of tourism in the Galapagos Islands. The potential to increase tourism exists and would bring in foreign currency, but it is feared that it would threaten the wildlife of the islands.

*Fishing News International*, 24, 2

### New TRAFFIC office

A new TRAFFIC office is to be opened in Montevideo, Uruguay. The Director will be Juan Villalba Macias, former Technical Advisor of CITES for Uruguay. The office will monitor wildlife trade in South America and work with the region's governments to establish

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# Briefly . . .

better trade controls.  
*Focus*, 6, 6  
*TRAFFIC (USA)*, 6, 1

## Australia/Antarctica

### Kangaroo cull

Australia has set a kill quota of 1,986,000 kangaroos for 1985. The Kangaroo Protection Society says this is too high; the total population of large kangaroo species could be as low as eight million, and illegal killing may equal the legal kill.  
*Monitor*, 25 February 1985

### Plant vs Parliament

The button wrinklewort *Rutidosia leptorrhynchoides*, an endangered plant restricted to three places in Australia—south-west of Melbourne, in Canberra, and in Queanbeyan, NSW—was cleared from Capital Hill in Canberra to make way for Australia's new Parliament House. The National Botanic Gardens collected seeds before building work began and may replant when it is complete.  
*Wildlife Australia*, 21, 4

### Egg-smuggling increasing

Customs officers in Australia fear that smuggling of fertile birds' eggs may be increasing; the chances of detection for the egg-smuggler are much slimmer than those for the smuggler of live birds. In September 1984, wildlife officers of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife caught two US citizens cutting down a tree to obtain eggs from a red-tailed black cockatoo *Calyptrorhynchus magnificus*. They also had 29 galati *Eolophus roseicapillus* eggs, three long-billed corella *Cacatua tenuirostris* eggs and two red-tailed black cockatoo eggs. They were fined \$1200 and ordered to pay costs.  
*Technical Bulletin, Fund for Animals Ltd*, 11

### Cowie-collection threat

Several species of cowrie shell occurring only in the waters of south-west Australia are believed to be under threat from over-collection. Although the Wildlife Protection Act places strict controls on the export of native cowries, they are apparently easily evaded by

*Briefly*



One of a series of postcards produced by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in its campaign against illegal wildlife imports and exports. There are also posters, and leaflets in 17 languages.

posting the shells overseas. In addition, since the management programmes under the Act, which came into force in May 1984, have not yet been formulated, the Minister for Home Affairs and Environment has announced his intention to permit 16 dealers to export, for a period of 6 months, consignments of shells of native species.  
*Traffic Bulletin*, VI, 5

### Snake smuggler charged

A Dutchman was arrested at the airport in Melbourne, Australia, in January 1985 and charged with attempting to smuggle Australian reptiles. Five lizards of two species and 13 snakes of four species were found in his luggage. He was committed for trial on 11 February but no date was set. This is the second prosecution to take place under the Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982.  
*Threatened Species—Conservation Alert*, 11

### Controversial road damaging reef

The erosion following the controversial road-building in rain forest in the Daintree River area of North Queensland has caused silt deposition on the fringing reefs off Cape Tribulation. The reefs, part of the Great Barrier Reef, are now considered seriously threatened and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has decided to investigate, one year after the Federal Minister for the Environment asked for a report on

siltation. Conservationists claim the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act could be used to close the road.  
*Threatened Species—Conservation Alert*, 11

### One new gastric brooding frog . . .

A new species of gastric brooding frog was found in Queensland in January 1984. It has been named *Rheobatrachus vitellinus* (*vitellinus*, derived from the Latin for 'of the yolk of an egg', refers to the colour of the underside of its hind limbs) and occurs in fast-flowing creeks in rain forest in Clarke Ranges in the vicinity of Eungella National Park, about 800 km north of the known geographic range of its close relative, *R. silus*. Both species brood their young in their stomachs and give birth through their mouths.  
*Mahony, M., Tyler, M.J. and Davis, M.* A new species of the genus *Rheobatrachus* (Anura: *Leptodactylidae*) from Queensland. *Trans. of the Royal Society of South Australia*, 108, 3-4, 155-162

### . . . and time up for another?

The gastric brooding frog *Rheobatrachus silus* has not been seen in the Conondale Ranges in Queensland since 1979 and, unless it is found by April 1985, the State's Forestry Department intends to log its habitat.  
*Threatened Species—Conservation Alert*, 11



# Briefly . . .

## Green turtle mass nesting

An unusually large mass nesting by green turtles *Chelonia mydas* occurred in islands off the northern tip of Queensland in Australia at the end of 1984. Researchers estimate that between 50,000 and 150,000 have nested. *The Washington Post*, 31 January 1985

## Conservation for often-ignored species

Tasmania's National Parks and Wildlife Service has taken a small but significant step towards conserving the State's invertebrates. It is funding a project officer for four months to identify, from existing knowledge, those invertebrates whose habitats are most at risk from land use practices and to make recommendations for conservation priorities and action.

## European plant smothers New Zealand forest

Old man's beard *Clematis vitalba* is a potential candidate for listing as a noxious plant in some areas of New Zealand. Introduced from Europe before 1930 as a garden plant, it has established in the wild and is smothering some native forests, especially in the Taihape Scenic Reserve. *Parkscape*, December 1984

## Island now goat-free

A goat eradication programme begun in the 1970s on Raoul Island in the Kermadec Islands group, 960 km north-east of Auckland, New Zealand, has been completed, and the native plants, which were threatened by grazing, are now regenerating. They include the Kermadec pohutukawa, the dominant tree, and two endemic tree ferns. Work is now concentrated on controlling exotic plants. *Parkscape*, December 1984

## Saddleback comeback

The rare saddleback *Creadion carunculatus* is making a comeback on rat-free Motukawanui Island in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand. Sixteen birds were transferred there from Hen Island in the Hauraki Gulf in 1983, and in 1984 three pairs reared young. The

saddleback was once common throughout New Zealand, but introduced predators and habitat destruction left populations on only a few offshore islands. *Parkscape*, December 1984

## Southernmost flowering plant record

The Antarctic hair grass *Deschampsia antarctica* and the Antarctic pearlwort *Colobanthus quitensis*, the continent's only two flowering plants, have been discovered, flowering, on Barn Rock 6842S 6732W in the Terra Firma Group. This is the southernmost world record for any flowering plant. The previous record for the hair grass was 40 km north on the Refuge Islands and for the pearlwort 58 km north, on Neny Island. *Smith, R.I. Lewis and Poncet, S. 1985. New Southernmost Record for Antarctic Flowering Plants. Polar Record*, 22, 139, 425–427

## Tropical plants in Antarctica

Tropical mosses and liverworts have been found growing at 10,000 ft (3048 m) on Mount Melbourne volcano in Victoria Land in Antarctica. The plants are believed to have established from windblown spores since the volcano erupted 175 years ago, and steam from the volcano keeps the small area around the plants at about 30C. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 January 1985

## People

S. Baber Ali, of Pakistan, has been appointed Chairman of the WWF International Council. He succeeds Sir Peter Scott who completed his term as Chairman on 31 December 1984 and who has been named Honorary Chairman of the International Council for life in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the WWF since its foundation.

Jesus Garzón, a Spanish biologist who created a conservation society in western Spain, has been awarded an IUCN Sir Peter Scott Merit Award. He was particularly commended for his tenacity and success in helping to establish the Monfrague National Park, thus

saving this important wildlife area from development.

Dr P. H. Greenwood and the Hon. Miriam L. Rothschild CBE were elected Fellows to the Royal Society on 21 March 1985. Dr Greenwood is Senior Principal Scientific Officer at the British Museum (Natural History), London, and is distinguished for his contribution to knowledge of many groups of bony fishes, especially his work on the Cichlidae of East African lakes. The Hon. Miriam Rothschild, distinguished for her work on insects, is a brilliant field naturalist who has made striking discoveries on insect behaviour, and is a dedicated conservationist.

Dr Lance McCaskill has been awarded the Sir Peter Scott award for conservation merit by the IUCN in recognition of his fight to save an endangered New Zealand endemic, the Castle Hill buttercup *Ranunculus paucifolius* (see *Oryx*, February 1982, page 209).

## Obituaries

Dr Ian Hofmeyr, wildlife veterinarian in South West Africa's Etosha National Park and committed conservationist, died in November 1984, aged 43. One of his most important contributions was the development of new capture techniques, which dramatically reduced the fatalities associated with the capture and translocation of large mammals.

Dr Nart Tuntawiroon was murdered in his office in Thailand shortly after his return from the IUCN General Assembly in Madrid in November 1984. His wife was also killed. Dr Tuntawiroon was a long-time opponent of his country's environmentally disastrous dam-building policy, and two years ago he persuaded the Cabinet to postpone work on the Nam Choan dam on the Mae Klong River.

## Correction

### Stink-bug error

On page 48 of the January 1985 issue of *Oryx*, a picture was wrongly captioned. The insects at the bottom of the page are not stink-bugs, but assassin bugs. Thank you, observant readers. *Editor*