

FFPS and forest conservation

With the destruction of the world's forests being one of the most pressing and publicized conservation issues, it is satisfying to be able to report some good news about one of Africa's most important forests. As regular readers will know, the FFPS, through the Mountain Gorilla Project, has been active in forest conservation work in the Virungas in Rwanda for the past ten years, and for the last two has also helped finance forest protection in Uganda's Impenetrable Forest and in the Ugandan section of the Virungas.

With the gorillas of these forests now safer than they have been for 20 years the FFPS is seeking to extend its efforts to forests in Zaire. That country's mountain gorillas and their habitat are being protected by projects supported by the European Community, the World Wide Fund for Nature, and Frankfurt Zoological Society, but Zaire also has an unknown number of eastern lowland gorillas scattered over a vast area in remote and isolated pockets. The forests of Eastern Zaire are generally so poorly known that FFPS decided that more must be found out about them in order to direct our conservation effort effectively. Although we use the gorilla as the focal species in this part of Africa, the forests are home to many other species, some of them also threatened, and all will benefit from conservation activities.

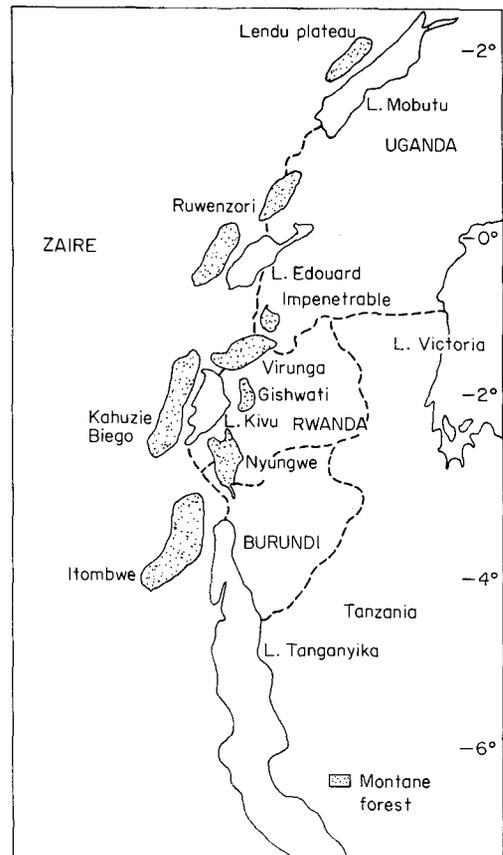
Itombwe forest, to the west of Lake Tanganyika is one such forest. Surveys in the 1950s and 1960s revealed it to be the most important single forest for bird conservation in Central Africa, as well as harbouring an unknown number of gorillas. Since then, partly because of the political turmoil in the 1960s, no firsthand information had come from this crucial region, but there were rumours that it was very degraded.

In the middle of last year an FFPS team, consisting of Roger Wilson and Mike Catsis, jointly funded by FFPS and WWF International, was the first scientific expedition to set foot in Itombwe for 30 years. They were fearful that they would find little of interest remaining, but that proved to be far

from the case. The forest is still in superb condition, virtually uninhabited and very large. In fact it is probably one of the largest tracts of montane forest in Africa and much of it is in the transition and lower montane zones that have been severely affected by deforestation elsewhere. Its conservation value for birds seems intact and the presence of gorillas was confirmed in widely separated localities.

This is a discovery of major importance, but the forest has no conservation status and is not likely to escape for long the pressures affecting the other montane forests in the region. Ways of conserving this area are now being examined, and the greatest contribution that FFPS can make through the coming year is to pursue this project vigorously.

Editor.



Principal montane forests in eastern Zaire, Rwanda and south-western Uganda.

CITES, Lausanne 1989

When the final decision was made on transferring the African elephant from Appendix II to Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora in Lausanne, Switzerland, on 17 October 1989, the delegation of Tanzania welcomed it as a victory for the elephant, rather than one for the supporters of the proposal, or indeed as a defeat for the opposers. While it is true that, had that proposal been lost, the future for the species would be even bleaker, any rejoicing must be tempered by the fact that the support was not unanimous.

The debate on the elephant proposal lasted for days and by the time the vote could be delayed no longer there were three amendments as well as the original proposal. Zimbabwe proposed a secret ballot, seconded by Botswana and Zambia, but this failed to raise general approval and the four votes were conducted by roll call, which added to the drama. The first two votes were on amendments from a group of seven southern African countries and a group of three Central African countries respectively, both amendments being to allow these countries to retain their elephants in Appendix II. Both were lost; the first by 20 votes in favour, 70 against, with one abstention, the second by 8 votes in favour and 83 against. Next came the unchanged proposal to put all African elephant populations on Appendix I, put forward by Austria, The Gambia, Hungary, Kenya, Tanzania and USA. This received a simple majority (53 in favour, 36 against and 2 abstentions); since a two-thirds majority is required for approval this was insufficient to carry it.

Finally came an amended proposal from Somalia, one of the countries that had originally proposed the transfer of all African elephant populations to Appendix I. While retaining the original proposal, and thus ensuring a moratorium on the ivory trade, it contained a guarantee that, under certain circumstances yet to be defined, the elephant populations of some countries could be returned to Appendix II. Despite the fact that

this was not a substantive change from the original proposal, the Somali proposal was accepted by a vote of 76 in favour, 11 against and four abstentions.

Botswana, Burundi, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe all announced their intentions of taking a reservation on the elephant, which would mean that they could continue trading ivory with other countries doing the same and with countries not Parties to the Convention. Of these only Zimbabwe and perhaps Botswana have healthy populations of elephants and good management systems for them. All Burundi's ivory stocks are of illegal origin and any continuing trade will also make it impossible to prevent illegal ivory being smuggled into the countries still continuing trading outside the Convention.

Now a panel of experts is to work on criteria for the future transfer of some elephants back to Appendix II, which could happen as early as the next CITES meeting. Meanwhile, now that the species is on Appendix I, a resolution, adopted in Buenos Aires in 1985, bans trade in elephant products unless they were obtained before the species was put on any Appendix – in the case of the elephant this applies to any ivory acquired after 26 February 1976, when the African elephant was first put on Appendix III by Ghana. A move to overturn this resolution, so that some Parties could trade in ivory acquired more recently, was defeated by a large majority. Since the Convention allows continued trade in ivory for 90 days after a decision on Appendix I listing, a resolution was put forward by the UK calling on Parties to help make the listing effective by publicizing it and taking domestic measures to ban the trade in advance of the 90-day period. This was adopted.

The next few months should make clearer whether these decisions will make the elephants more secure. Meanwhile there remains the problem of illegal trade to contend with and it is a great pity that those countries that claim to have healthy and even increasing elephant populations could not see their way to voting for the proposal. It would have meant a small sacrifice for them: in losing the revenue from internationally traded ivory they could

be seen to be being penalized for other countries failing to protect their elephant stocks and of yet others being unable to stop the illegal trade in ivory. And yet, had they supported the need for the blanket listing as the only way left to attempt to control the illegal trade, they might have gained more support for their own positions. Appendix I listing does, after all, allow culling and domestic use of meat, skin and ivory as well as trophy hunting, which is the most profitable way to 'sell' ivory. Now it is up to the consumer, for while the demand for ivory exists the trade will go on.

Although the elephant dominated the 7th Meeting of the Parties, other species also now benefit from new listings. The mammals listed on Appendix I included seven species of fruit bats of the genus *Pteropus*, with other species of *Pteropus* and the related genus *Acerodon* being listed on Appendix II. The sloth bear *Melursus ursinus* and the Mexican population of the brown bear *Ursus arctos* (which is probably extinct), were included in Appendix I, while other populations of brown bears were included in Appendix II (except for those in the USSR). Transferal from Appendix II to I was agreed for four cats (ocelot *Felis pardalis*, tiger-cat *F. tigrina*, margay cat *F. wiedii* and lynx *Lynx pardinus*), and Jentink's duiker *Cephalophus jentinki*.

Birds listed in Appendix I were: three members of the Psittacidae (*Amazona tucumana*, Illiger's macaw *Ara maracana* and salmon-crested cockatoo *Cacatua moluccensis*); the white-eyed river martin *Pseudochelidon sirintatae*; and the black-breasted pitta *Pitta gurneyi*. The rhinoceros hornbill *Buceros rhinoceros* and the banded pitta *Pitta guajana* were included in Appendix II.

Five reptiles were added to Appendix II: *Dracaena paraguayensis*, Chinese crocodile lizard *Shinisaurus crocodilurus*, Indian rat snake *Ptyas mucosus*, Indian cobra *Naja naja* and king cobra *Ophiophagus hannah*. The much sought after coelacanth *Latimeria chalumnae* was transferred from Appendix II to I as were hard corals in the orders Scleractinia, two families of Athecata, Coenothecalia and Stolonifera.

A report on the plant listings appears below.
Editor.

Progress for plant conservation in Lausanne

The strong foundations that were laid for the conservation of plant species threatened by trade at the FFPS-sponsored first meeting of the CITES Plants Committee in 1988 showed their value at the recent CITES meeting in Lausanne. While there are many more plants than animals listed on the Appendices to the Convention, relatively few resources are devoted world-wide to countering the problems facing internationally-traded plant species. Nevertheless, the small CITES Plants Committee, which met virtually throughout the 2-week meeting in Switzerland and on which the FFPS is represented, continued to make good progress.

Following extensive research and campaigning over the last 2 years, with the FFPS playing a leading role, two new genera of bulbs – *Sternbergia* (winter daffodils) and *Galanthus* (snowdrops) – were added to Appendix II. The *Galanthus* proposal, which had been drafted by the FFPS, was put forward by the US delegation, an example of the international co-operation that is becoming a feature of the work of the CITES Plants Committee. Two whole genera of tropical slipper orchids, *Paphiopedilum* and *Phragmipedium* were added to Appendix I, as were a number of endangered Madagascan species of *Euphorbia* and *Pachypodium*.

Airplants – bromeliads of the genus *Tillandsia* were again considered by the Plants Committee. The threat to the survival of many species from collection of enormous quantities from the wild was first brought to the attention of CITES in an FFPS report prepared for the previous full meeting of the Parties. While some artificial propagation is now taking place there are still alarming reports of once-common Central American species becoming virtually impossible to find and trees being felled with the sole purpose of stripping them of their epiphytic *Tillandsia*. It is clear that more research is needed. Also a problem in Central America is that facing the palm genus *Chamaedorea*, which includes the common house-plants known as parlour palms (usually

Chamaedorea elegans). A proposal to add certain species to the appendices had to be abandoned due to the considerable problem of distinguishing between them. This is a problem taxonomists and conservationists are going to have to address. In addition to a number of rare species threatened in the wild by specialist collectors, the floristry trade currently accounts for up to 350 million *Chamaedorea* leaves annually, mostly from Mexico, but also from Guatemala and Costa Rica.

The enforcement problems resulting from difficulties of identification are by no means restricted to *Chamaedorea*. They are going to be a major obstacle to the use of the Convention in controlling and monitoring the trade in threatened timber species. Until now CITES has largely ignored the timber trade, but with a newly formed Tropical Timber Action Group, it is to be hoped that the Plants Committee will begin to seriously get to grips with this enormous and highly complex issue. Time is rapidly running out for many timber species and the habitats that are lost with their felling. It is here that the CITES Plants Committee is facing its greatest responsibility yet.

Bearing in mind the enormity of the tasks ahead, it is heartening to note the slowly increasing interest in these plant-trade issues, which the FFPS has been taking seriously for a long time. Congratulations are due to the US office of TRAFFIC, which has recently appointed a full-time research botanist. Indeed the TRAFFIC network across the world is now playing an increasingly important role, as are groups such as the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge, UK, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, Washington, DC, USA. The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, has also recently strengthened its team working on plant-trade research. Nonetheless, flora conservation continues to lag behind its faunal counterpart.

Mike Read, FFPS Botanical Consultant.

A novel way to save an eagle

The Philippine eagle *Pithecophaga jefferyi*, with a total estimated population of 300 individu-

als, is gravely threatened. Each eagle pair requires around 100 sq km of forest and attempts to protect the habitat have largely failed: its rain-forest home is being destroyed at the rate of 2 ha every 5 minutes and at current rates it will not be long before all the rain forest will have disappeared below an altitude of 1500 m, which is the eagle's upper limit.

Some national parks contain eagles, but unfortunately national park status alone does not protect the habitat. Large areas of Mt Apo National Park, for example, have been overrun by settlers. The headquarters of the Philippine Eagle Conservation Programme Foundation (PECPF) lies on the perimeter of the park and a breeding programme is under way there, using birds that have been confiscated from local people and that are wounded or otherwise unfit for return to the wild. The station currently holds 12 eagles. Although to date only one bird has laid a fertile egg and the embryo died in the shell, there is hope for successful breeding. Even if this does not happen, the station has a considerable educational value.

Far more importantly, PECPF is making efforts to preserve the eagle population in the wild. In 1985 an 'Adopt-a-Nest' programme was started and this may lead to protection of the habitat, at least in some places. The programme gives the public a chance to adopt a family of wild eagles and relies upon participation by local rural people.

Forest dwellers are encouraged to report nest finds to the PECPF office in Davao in person and their travel expenses are reimbursed. A member of the PECPF staff goes with the nest-finder to verify the existence of the nest. Such journeys are invariably only possible by foot and can take 3-4 days. They are also costly in that the local official has the right to assign guides, porters and security personnel, who all have to be paid, and on arrival in the nest-finder's village all the residents must be fed out of the verification team's rations.

On verification the nest-finder receives a staggered reward relating to the phase of the nesting cycle: 1000 Pesos for an egg in the nest; 1000 Pesos when the egg hatches; and 1000 Pesos when the eaglet fledges. Each phase is verified by a PECPF team before the

reward is paid, involving more travelling expenses. Thus the adoption fee must cover: per diems for nest-finders, field trips for up to four verifications; rewards for the three phases of the nesting cycle; and miscellaneous expenses such as adoption certificates, reports and photographs.

Currently the reward is given only to the nest-finder together with the adoption certificate bearing the name of the sponsor. There are plans to increase fees to include an amount to be given to the Sitio or Barangay leader for distribution to the local people or for use in a community project.

Since the programme started local people and concession workers have reported a total of eight occupied nests. Prior to this PECPF had spent hundreds of hours searching and had found only three. By the end of October 1988 10 nesting sites were under the protection of the plan. The scheme is clearly working and needs to be extended to the islands of Luzon, Samar, and Leyte, where the species still survives, but where no nests are known. In addition there are plans to have part of the Sierra Madre on Luzon where the eagle occurs made into a national park.

Source

Newsletter of the World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls, 6 June 1989, 2-5.

Wilderness – a new estimate

One-third of the world's land surface is still wilderness according to a study by McCloskey and Spalding (1989). They undertook an inventory to discover how much of the land surface of the planet is still predominantly influenced by the forces of nature and it is a first attempt to map such areas.

The methods employed – analysis of a common set of highly detailed maps of the globe to look for areas without permanent human settlement or constructions, and which are neither regularly cultivated nor heavily and continuously grazed – revealed 1039 tracts of wilderness totalling 48,069,951 sq km. Only blocks of at least 4000 sq km were identified because the time and resources necessary to

search for smaller blocks were not available, because the maps used (1:2,000,000 and 1:1,000,000) may not always show sufficient development detail for smaller blocks, because large blocks are probably of greater significance for ecosystem viability, and because 4000 sq km units are less likely to have been destroyed since the maps were published.

The 1039 wilderness tracts were located in 77 countries plus Antarctica and 108 countries did not appear to have any of these large tracts. The countries with the largest aggregations of empty quarters are the Soviet Union, Canada, Australia, Denmark's Greenland, China (Tibet), Brazil, Algeria, Sudan, Mauritania and Saudi Arabia. By climate and habitat 41 per cent of remaining wilderness is in the high arctic or antarctic, 20 per cent is in warm deserts, 20 per cent is in temperate regions, about 11 per cent is in the tropics, nearly 4 per cent is in mixed mountain systems, 3 per cent is in cold winter deserts, and only a fragment is in the island regions.

As a reconnaissance-level inventory, it offers a point of departure for others to attempt refined inventories in various parts of the world. Also, since at least half the remaining stock of wilderness is not self-protecting by its forbidding nature and since less than 20 per cent is being protected, the inventory also offers an opportunity to identify potential new protected areas so that our diminishing stock of large wild places does not just slip away.

Reference

McCloskey, J. M. and Spalding, H. 1989. A reconnaissance-level inventory of the amount of wilderness remaining in the world. *Ambio*, **18**, 221-227.

A new look for *Oryx*

The journal's new look has been designed by David Hibberd at Blackwell Scientific Publications to coincide with a new method of production. Desktop publishing technology is now being used for the typesetting and page layout of *Oryx*. This new move will increase efficiency and shorten the publication schedule, allowing us to publish more up-to-date news.