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Dr Dian Fossey 1932–1985

The brutal murder of Dian Fossey last Christmas sent a shockwave through the scientific community, but it did not come as a complete surprise to those who knew her. Since the start of her gorilla fieldwork 19 years earlier, she always did her utmost—without regard for personal safety—to thwart the activities of poachers, wood-cutters, cattle herders, and other illegal encroachers in Africa's oldest national park. Conservation, however, was not her original objective.

In January 1967 she began a study of mountain gorillas that looks set to continue long after her death. Probably the greatest single contribution she made to our knowledge of what she termed 'the greatest of the great apes' was to develop techniques for their habituation. With a mixture of submissive body language and contentment vocalizations, she won their trust and confidence and thus observed their intimate social life in greater detail than ever before. This research gained her a PhD at Cambridge University in 1976 and became the subject of her book *Gorillas in the Mist* (Houghton Mifflin, 1983). Her habituation techniques are now the basis of the highly successful gorilla tourism, which plays such a key role in the Mountain Gorilla Project, and the long-term records of the Karisoke Research Centre, which she established, provide an incomparable legacy for the scientists who now succeed her.

But it was her approach to conservation that generated controversy. She set up a US charity, The Digit Fund, to back what she termed 'active conservation'. Like the front-line members of Greenpeace, she was prepared to take direct action to protect animals at risk (even without the legal authority to do so). Her ideas were often criticized for being dangerously short-sighted, but as long-term plans for the gorillas' survival evolve, most would now acknowledge that without Dian Fossey's dedication, there would be few, if any, mountain gorillas roaming the Virungas for which to make long-term plans.

Ian Redmond, Director, The Digit Fund Inc.

FFPS's gift of binoculars

Until the late 1970s China's attitude to its wildlife

was often negative; it was considered best to kill animals where they were of potential damage to crops or livestock. Times have changed, and now central and provincial governments are fervently trying to save what is left.

Major Ian Grimwood, FFPS Vice-President, visited Yunnan in 1984 and was impressed with the efforts of the Yunnan Provincial Forestry Bureau in Kunming, which is responsible for wildlife and ecosystem conservation in the area. It has a relatively low human population and much undisturbed wildlife habitat, ranging from low-altitude monsoon forests in the south to snow-covered peaks rising 6700 m along the border with Burma and in the north. Since 1980 the Forestry Bureau has established 22 nature reserves to protect all the Province's indigenous fauna. So far 15 reserves are staffed, and the Bureau hopes to raise its number of employees from the present 1000 to 2000 as soon as possible.

One of the most valuable reserves is Xishuang Banna Reserve, which covers 200,000 ha near the Laotian border. Its forests contain tiger, leopard, clouded leopard, golden cat, gaur, muntjac, green peacock, silver pheasant and great, brown and Indian pied hornbills, to mention only a few. There is a genuine effort being made to protect the integrity of the reserve, but the Bureau is short of vehicles and equipment that would make its work easier.

At Major Grimwood's suggestion, FFPS used the Oryx 100% Fund to donate six pairs of binoculars to the Xishuang Banna Reserve staff in recognition of their efforts to save the wildlife of the region. The letter reproduced here records their appreciation.

The Forestry Department of Yunnan Province,
Kunming,
Yunnan, People's Republic of China.

Fauna and Flora Preservation Society,

Respectable ladies and gentlemen,
The six pairs of binoculars, contributed by all of you, have been passed on to our department by our Forestry Ministry. Our department has delivered the binoculars to the national preservation regions of Xishuang Banna, where they

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Binoculars donated by the FFPS are helping Yunnan Provincial Forestry Bureau staff in their conservation work.

are in use now. We express our heart-felt gratitude to all of you for your great help.

Oryx 100% Fund Grants

At its meetings of 4 March 1986 and 21 May 1986 the FFPS Council approved the following grants:

4 March

- £750** to Jane Madgwick (London, UK) for the Somalia Research Project study of riparian forest. The project will consist of a detailed ecological survey and the production of a management plan to recommend conservation priorities for this threatened habitat.
- £750** to Dr Tim Caro (Cambridge, UK) for the printing of a tourist map of the Serengeti National Park, Tanzania, to be sold to provide information for tourists visiting the Serengeti and to act as an additional source of revenue for the Tanzania National Parks.
- £600** to Dr Julian Caldecott (Sarawak, Malaysia) to produce a conservation leaflet for hunters in Sarawak, which will explain the provisions of the law relating to hunting, protected species and protected areas with the object of relieving hunting pressure on threatened species and wildlife populations.

£500 to Margaret Dickinson (Ipswich, UK) to carry out a survey and collect specimens of orchid species of the Solomon Islands, which are currently under-recorded, with the objectives of highlighting areas that should be preserved to facilitate conservation of orchid species and of contributing to the production of an Orchid Flora for the Solomons.

£500 to Adrian Barnett (London, UK) for his Rio Mazan 1986 project to survey, map and produce a management plan for an area of tropical montane forest in Azuay Province, Ecuador.

21 May

£480 to David Stubbs (London, UK) for the implementation of management procedures for the conservation of Hermann's tortoise *Testudo hermanni robertmertensi* in the South of France. The project aims to halt the current population decline of this species and eventually to restock depleted areas.

£400 to David Balharry (Aberdeen, UK) and The Aberdeen University Ecological Expedition to conduct a survey at Lake Junin, Peru, of the puna grebe *Podiceps taczanowskii* and the giant edible frog *Batrachophrynus macrosomus*. The survey will provide information on the status and requirements of these species and recommend appropriate management policies to ensure their survival. It will also carry out an analysis of water quality and pollution levels.

£400 to Andrew Laurie (Cambridge, UK) to establish a long-term project on the ecology and conservation of the takin *Budorcas taxicolor* and its habitat in Bhutan. The findings will be taken into consideration in governmental planning of conservation measures for Bhutan.

£350 to Robert Kelsh (Cambridge, UK) for a study of lowland tropical rain forest, Sarawak, Malaysia, with particular reference to hornbill species, to be carried out by the Cambridge Sarawak Rainforest Expedition 1986.

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£300 to George and Lory Frame (Gland, Switzerland) to carry out transect surveys of carnivores in the Serengeti ecosystem of Tanzania with an emphasis on African wild dog *Lycaon pictus*, resulting in the formulation of an effective management plan. The work is complementary to the Serengeti Wildlife Research Institute monitoring programme.

The FFPS Bat Project

The main preoccupation of the 'bat people' in the FFPS office for many months past has been National Bat Year. When, at the beginning of 1985, the decision was made to launch Bat Year on 29 January 1986, it was appreciated that preparation time was rather short. As 1985 crept on, mild panic was detectable in the eyes of the already overburdened Bat Conservation Officer, Tony Hutson, and London Bat Officer, Simon Mickleburgh. A successful Bat Year seemed more within reach when at the last minute the FFPS was able to appoint Joan Tait as Bat Publicity Assistant—made possible by a grant from the Nature Conservancy Council, The World Wildlife Fund and the Vincent Wildlife Trust. Now, more than halfway through, Bat Year seems to have been more successful than anyone had hoped, thanks not only to the FFPS bat staff, but to the dedicated members of the bat groups scattered throughout Britain. Below, Joan Tait describes some of the highlights.

National Bat Year

As I was hanging upside down in the Natural History Museum in London sewing the ceiling of the audio-visual tent the day before the opening of the 'Bats' exhibition, a museum warder looked up at me thoughtfully. A short time before he had watched us labelling the 'bat-dependent' plants—bananas, plantain, breadfruit, tequila, guavas, vanilla and others. He asked, 'Do bats really do all that? I never thought much about bats; now I'll need to look at them with a lot more respect.' In the weeks that followed, many people were possibly as surprised as the expressive warder to learn how bats affect their own lives. According to museum staff, our six-week-long exhibition was

very popular and was viewed by about 30,000–40,000 people.

At FFPS, one measure of bat popularity has come in the form of at least 1600 letters of general enquiry, hundreds of telephone calls and many more specialized enquiries. Much of the upsurge in bat popularity and the success of National Bat Year can be attributed to the extraordinary amount of press coverage that bat groups and bat fans throughout the country have been able to stimulate. There was a total of 10,643 column-inches (about 300 yards or 270 m) of newsprint that the FFPS has been aware of between January and June. Radio and TV coverage, too, has been extensive, both within Britain and internationally, with coverage by the BBC World Service, a variety of European radio stations, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Bat goods have proliferated: stickers and badges to festoon yourself and your car, bat mobiles to decorate your home, Christmas cards and a bat jigsaw puzzle for the young, and bat-enhanced mugs.

The backbone of the raising of bat consciousness is the constant flow of locally organized bat walks and talks. There have been literally hundreds of both of these up and down the country, attracting people of all ages and types. Numbers have sometimes been hard to handle—a recent bat walk in Scotland attracted 160 people. To help a party of deaf children on a bat walk, Queen Mary Instruments made a light that plugs into a bat detector and flashes with the bats' calls. There have also been Ceilidhs, barbecues, wine-and-cheese parties, boat trips, barn dances, fun-runs and a concert—all designed as publicity, fund-raising and educational events.

Young bat enthusiasts have been active too, building bat boxes, helping with bat counts and carrying out the 'Battitudes' survey organized by WATCH, the junior branch of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation.

There are 19 copies of the FFPS's six-panel bat exhibition scattered around the country, including 10 produced with funding from the Nature Conservancy Council and World Wildlife Fund (Heinz Ltd) for bat group use. Judging from the

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clamouring of groups and other organizations, this was far short of the demand.

Bat Year has hit a few snags. The bat box and grille sponsorship schemes have not attracted much support so far, although there has been no major national publicity for them yet. Perhaps people who are captivated by the idea of bat boxes want one in their own back-garden rather than within a more public scheme. The building and buying of bat boxes for use on private land or for the large number of independent local schemes has boomed, showing an interest in and concern for bats. Similarly, while the FFPS grille fund has not been well supported, many groups have had considerable local help in improving existing sites or even in creating new sites, such as the proposed purpose-built bat tunnels in London and Kent.

In summary, halfway through Bat Year we find that summer fairs and county shows are not complete without a bat stall, so we must be getting something right. A highlight of the year will come on a certain Saturday afternoon in October at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, when David Attenborough, David Pye and others will talk about bats. A BBC special montage of film will be shown and professional actors will read a selection of bat literature. There will also be an exhibition of bats in art and antiques. Please come and help celebrate National Bat Year (see next column).

Joan Tait, Bat Publicity Assistant, Fauna and Flora Preservation Society

Winning wildlife photographs exhibited

The winning entries in this year's Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition, which was sponsored by the Prudential Assurance Company Ltd in association with BBC Wildlife Magazine, the FFPS and the British Museum (Natural History), will be displayed at the British Museum (Natural History) in London from 28 November 1986 to 1 February 1987. More than 7000 entries were received this year from 28 countries, and 25 per cent of entries were from overseas. Details of the 1987 competition will be

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available from BBC Wildlife Magazine, Broadcasting House, Whiteladies Road, Bristol BS8 2LR, UK, early in 1987.

Members' meetings

London meetings

Saturday 11 October 1986

'Bats for an afternoon' at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank Centre, London, introduced by Sir David Attenborough (film schedule permitting). Full details of this entertaining and unusual event were given in the insert in the July issue of *Oryx*. Please order tickets from the Box Office, Royal Festival Hall, London. Telephone 01-928 3191.

Monday 8 December 1986

'The birds and other wildlife of the South Atlantic', a joint British Ornithologists' Union/FFPS meeting. See insert in this issue of *Oryx* for details.

Cambridge Group

Friday 14 November 1986

Tony Smith from the Cambridge Bat Group and Bob Stebbings of the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology will talk on bats, and films will be shown. There is a buffet at 6.00 pm and the meeting starts at 7.30 pm. Details from David Chivers, Sub-Department of Veterinary Anatomy, Tennis Court Road, Cambridge CB2 1QS. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

North-West Group

Friday 21 November 1986

David Chivers will talk on 'Gibbons and rain-forest conservation' at Chester Zoo. Tickets cost £3.50 and include a buffet supper. Full details are available from Nick Ellerton, telephone 0244 380280.

Request for back issue

Due to an unexpected increase in circulation, the January 1986 issue of *Oryx* is now out of stock. If any reader has a copy that is no longer required, the FFPS would be glad to receive it.