

INTERNATIONAL

Saudi Arabia joins CITES

Saudi Arabia acceded to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on 12 March 1996 (effective on 10 June 1996), bringing the total number of parties to 131.

Source: *Traffic USA*, April 1996, 19.

Conflict over forestry

The Netherlands has delayed a plan to import timber from the Western Australian karri *Eucalyptus diversicolor* forests. A report compiled by scientists in the Netherlands claims that more research is needed into the effects of forest management before the forests can be claimed sustainable and concludes that importing West African azobé is more environmentally sound than importing karri. Australia's Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) says that its management is equal to the best in the world, while timber workers in Western Australia claim that azobé forests in Cameroon are being lost at a rate of 80,000 ha a year. The Conservation Council of Western Australia says that 51 species of birds and mammals are dependent on hollows in karri trees.

Source: *New Scientist*, 8 June 1996, 5.

EUROPE

Decline of European forests

One tree out of four shows clear signs of damage in Europe, according to a 1995 report published jointly by the Commission of the European

Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The report is based on the results of surveys of 178.4 million hectares of forest in 32 countries. Defoliation or discoloration – caused by unfavourable climatic conditions, infestation by insects or fungi, forest fires and atmospheric pollution – was found to affect 26.4 per cent of trees.

Source: *Naturopa Newsletter*, No. 95-3, 3.

Lynx hunt

Norwegian hunters shot 84 lynx in February and March 1996. This did not exceed the authorized quota of 104 lynx but may be nearly 20 per cent of the estimated 400–500 total population (see *Oryx*, 30 [3], 167). The hunt was opposed by conservation organizations, but lynx kill thousands of sheep every year and a project is under way to look at options for reducing predator–livestock conflicts.

Source: *Cat News*, Spring 1996, 17.

Call for fishing ban

Greenpeace is calling for a ban on industrial fishing in ecologically sensitive areas of the North Sea in response to declining fish stocks and the suspected effects on seabirds and seals. More than half the weight of fish caught in the North Sea is for industrial products such as oil and fishmeal for livestock. A supermarket chain, Sainsbury's, has joined a multinational company, Unilever, in banning the use of fish oils obtained from industrial fishing in their products. Greenpeace is also asking for an emergency recovery plan to be agreed.

Sources: *Habitat*, May, 3; June, 5–6; *BBC Wildlife*, June 1996, 69.

Ban lifted on nets

The Scottish Office lifted its 35-year ban on the use of large-mesh (over 250 mm), monofilament nets in Scottish waters in November 1995, despite recent studies that demonstrated that fisheries using similar nets in other waters captured large numbers of seabirds and cetaceans in addition to the target fish species. The Marine Conservation Society claims that this may breach several international conservation agreements to which the UK is a signatory.

Source: *Marine Conservation*, Summer 1996, 6.

Welsh marine reserve

The Menai Straits in North Wales is to become the UK's fourth national marine nature reserve. It will cover over 9300 ha and has a diverse range of benthic habitats and species, as well as providing nesting and feeding sites for many birds.

Source: *Marine Conservation*, Summer 1996, 7.

Red kites poisoned

Four red kites *Milvus milvus* have been found dead as a result of deliberate poisoning and a fifth bird is being analysed to determine cause of death. The birds were part of a scheme to reintroduce red kites to England.

Source: *Habitat*, May 1996, 3–4.

Timber scheme illegal

The UK Timber Trade Federation is demanding changes to a scheme designed to encourage British stores to sell only ecologically sound timber, claiming that it is an illegal barrier to trade under both British and European law. The scheme aims to persuade

manufacturers and retailers to use only timber that has been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Some of the biggest names in British retailing, have committed themselves to selling only FSC-certified timber because it is a standard applicable world-wide. *Source: New Scientist*, 18 May 1996, 7.

Unnecessary bird kill

The Scottish Office is licensing the killing of birds to protect salmon despite there being no proof that the birds do serious damage. In 13 years 568 licences have been issued to fishing organizations to kill 4946 goosanders *Mergus merganser*, 3730 red-breasted mergansers *M. serrator* and 4420 cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo*. All three species are protected by the UK's Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which permits them to be killed under licence to prevent 'serious damage to fisheries'. *Source: New Scientist*, 18 May 1996, 11.

New marine parks for France

France is setting up two new marine parks: the Mer d'Iroise Marine Park, comprising the seas around the island of Sein and the Ushant archipelago, and the Corsican Marine Park (Gulf of Porto), covering a marine area of 300 sq km and a coastal area of 150 sq km between Piana and Calvi. *Source: Naturopa Newsletter*, No. 96-1, 3.

Reintroduction success

A beaver *Castor fiber* reintroduction project in Switzerland spanning nearly 40 years has been successful.

Today 350 beavers are known where 10 years ago there were an estimated 130. Good habitats are scarce and work is required to upgrade and interconnect the remaining areas for beaver colonization.

Source: Naturopa Newsletter, No. 96-1, 4.

New Italian national parks

As part of the European Nature Conservation Year 1995, Italy created five new national parks: Gargano (1190 sq km), Gran Sasso e monti della Laga (1480 sq km), Maiella (740 sq km), Cilento e vallo di Diano (1850 sq km) and Vesuvio (500 sq km). This increases the number of parks in Italy to 16, covering 5360 sq km.

Source: Naturopa Newsletter, No. 95-3, 1.

Czech forests protected

The new Czech Republic Forest Act No. 289/1995 came into force at the start of 1996. It is the first law to deal comprehensively with forest management and contains restrictions designed to further nature conservation on the use of forests.

Source: Naturopa Newsletter, No. 96-4, 3.

New Spanish toads

Genetic and morphological analysis of two Spanish midwife toad populations have revealed a new species. The Andalusian midwife toad *Alytes dickhilleni*, which is found in the eastern Sierras Béticas, Andalucía, had remained undetected due to its similarity to the common midwife toad *Alytes obstetricans*, but it is bulkier with longer limbs and a light-coloured triangle on its head. A second toad *A. o. almogavarii*, from Aragón and Cataluña in the north-east is

now believed to be a subspecies of the common midwife toad, which is found throughout northern Iberia, north into Germany and in Morocco. *Source: BBC Wildlife*, June 1996, 18.

Gallocanta protected

A complaint to the European Commission against the ploughing of 40 ha of natural saline grassland in Gallocanta Important Bird Area in Spain has resulted in an agreement to protect the area. It is hoped that it will soon have an official management plan.

Source: BirdLife in Europe, May 1996, 5.

Aragón's flora

A 2-year study of flora sponsored by the Aragón government in north-eastern Spain has resulted in a list of 200 threatened species and the identification of several sites of special botanic interest. Many species need recovery plans. *Source: Quercus*, June 1996, 15.

New Spanish national park

Spain has designated 400 sq km of Mediterranean forest, Sierra del Chorito in Cabañeros as a new national park. The area includes the second biggest colony of black vultures *Aegypius monachus* in Europe and two pairs of Spanish imperial eagle *Aquila heliaca*. *Source: BirdLife in Europe*, May 1996, 5.

Mediterranean action plan

The contracting parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution have adopted a number of amendments to the Mediterranean Plan of Action. The convention now

includes the concept of sustainable development and a new protocol on specially protected areas and biological diversity in the Mediterranean. *Source: Naturopa Newsletter*, No. 96-1, 2.

NORTH EURASIA

Russian primary forests threatened

The US Government is financing logging by private companies in Russia's primary forests in Siberia and the Russian Far East. Forty-seven environmental groups in the USA and Russia have expressed concern about the environmental consequences to forest habitats, endangered species, biodiversity programmes and the fate of indigenous human populations. *Source: Cat News*, Spring 1996, 7-8.

War and wildlife in Georgia

Large mammal populations have plummeted in Georgia since independence was declared in 1989 and civil war in the early 1990s. Former weapons of war are now being used to hunt wildlife in protected areas. The Noah's Ark Centre for the Recovery of Endangered Species has been established by a group of concerned scientists in Georgia, to tackle the problems. In 1995 they persuaded President Shevardnadze to order poachers out of a major national park and to sign the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. They believe that the only hope for some species lies in captive breeding and release and they are training wolves *Canis lupus*

reared in captivity to hunt and to avoid humans; so far six have been released.

Source: Wildlife Conservation, March/April 1996, 12.

Protected areas in Belarus

In 1994 Belarus adopted the Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories and Sites and proposed to establish eight new protected areas. Now Belarus has four protected areas, the newest created in 1995, covering 1.5 per cent of the total area. A special agency for Protected Areas and Forestry Management has been established and a special inspection force of police and forest rangers is effectively combating poaching. Environmental education has become a priority and the problems facing protected areas are discussed widely in the media.

Source: Russian Conservation News, Spring 1996, 5.

NORTH AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST

New Turkish reserve

One of the best wetlands for birds in Turkey has been designated a Strict Nature Reserve following campaigning by conservationists. An area of 6787 ha of the Eregli marshes is to be protected after years of degradation due to pollution and decreased freshwater input. The area provides important stop-over and breeding habitat for many waterbird species including pygmy cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, white pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* and white-headed duck *Oxyura leucocephala*.

Source: BirdLife in Europe, May 1996, 6.

New area of ornithological importance

A visit to the little-known Aktas Lake on the Turkey-Georgia border discovered breeding colonies of white pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, the critically endangered Dalmatian pelican *Pelecanus crispus* and over 700 velvet scoters *Melanitta fusca*, a previously unknown portion of the relict Turkish population of this predominantly boreal duck species. The Turkish nature conservation organization DHKD is now pressing the Turkish government to declare the area a national park. *Sources: BirdLife in Europe*, May 1996, 6; *World Birdwatch*, June 1996, 2.

White-winged flufftail Sighting

The white-winged flufftail *Sarothrura ayresi* has been spotted in Ethiopia, the first recorded sighting there since August 1984 despite many searches. Very little is known about the bird, which is known only from Ethiopia and South Africa. Three pairs were seen at the site in the Sululta marshes where the species had last been recorded in the country. The site is under threat from a proposed dam to provide water for Addis Ababa.

Source: Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society Newsletter, May 1996, 2-3.

New species for Ethiopia

Archer's lark *Heteromirafra archeri*, previously found only in a small area of Somalia, was observed in Ethiopia for the first time in April. It was the first sighting anywhere since 1955. The species, which is endangered, is a small, brown, bird of grassland and open

habitats and is notoriously difficult to identify, but this sighting is well supported by photographic evidence and a detailed description.

Source: *Ethiopia Wildlife and Natural History Society Newsletter*, May 1996, 1.

Bald ibis hit by illness

The last breeding population of the northern bald ibis *Geronticus eremita* was reduced by 17 per cent in 1 week in May by a mystery illness, which killed 38 of the birds in western Morocco. The symptoms suggest poisoning by a toxic substance.

Source: *New Scientist*, 13 July 1996, 5.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Wetland refugia for fish

Introduction of the Nile perch *Lates niloticus* coincided with the decline of many indigenous species in Lake Nabugabo, Uganda. Research has found that adjoining wetlands may provide refuge for prey species. Lagoons and a stream separated from the lake by marsh vegetation and papyrus swamp maintain populations of fish no longer found, or found only in greatly reduced numbers, in the lake. This suggests the possibility that species thought lost in Lakes Victoria and Kyoga may survive in wetland refugia, thus allowing the possibility of recovery of populations with effective management.

Source: *Conservation Biology*, April 1996, 554–561.

Turtle-safe trawlers

Trawling in Kenya is threatening turtles as well as

putting pressure on fish stocks and causing a decline in shrimp catch. The Turtle Conservation Committee in Kenya, comprising representatives from Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, Fisheries Department, Coast Development Authority, Baobab Trust and some hoteliers and individual conservationists, has, in collaboration with trawler companies, started to develop measures aimed at minimizing incidental capture of sea turtles in trawl nets, including the use of Turtle Excluder Devices to allow turtles to escape from nets.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, April 1996, 17–18.

Conservation Fund in Zimbabwe

A new National Parks Conservation Fund has been set up in Zimbabwe to ensure that all money earned by the parks is returned directly to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management rather than go into the government's central treasury. Zimbabwe's parks are a major tourist attraction. More than 1.4 million tourists visited Zimbabwe in 1995 and tourism accounted for 6.6 per cent of the country's GDP that year. The Fund is part of a World Bank plan to reorganize the Parks Department to be more efficiently managed and more profitable.

Source: *African Wildlife Update*, June 1996, 4.

Park rehabilitation in Angola

The Kissama Foundation is working to restore Angola's national parks, starting with ambitious plans to rehabilitate and reintroduce wildlife to Quiçama National Park.

Animals will be brought by boat from South Africa and released directly in the park from the Cuanza River estuary.

Source: *African Wildlife Update*, June 1996, 1 & 7.

Flamingos in southern Africa need help

Action is required to save populations of greater flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* and lesser flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* in southern Africa. Estimates indicate a population decline in both species of about 40 per cent over 15 years. The flamingos breed sporadically at only two locations in southern Africa – the Makgadikgadi Pans in Botswana and Etosha National Park in Namibia – and only three major breeding events have taken place in 40 years. Because Namibia supports most of the flamingos in southern Africa, conservation strategies would be most effective there. In Etosha, a small island surrounded by a water-filled depression would allow up to 4000 pairs to breed.

Source: *Conservation Biology*, April 1996, 504–513.

Legal ivory sale

Namibia's first internal ivory sale in 16 years was expected to end in early June. The 50 elephant tusks on sale were obtained legally from elephants that died from natural causes or were shot as 'problem animals'. Tusks confiscated from poachers were not on sale and the export of ivory in an unprocessed form is banned.

Source: *African Wildlife Update*, June 1996, 8.

Aristeas and beetles in South Africa's Cape

Two new species of *Aristea* (Iridaceae) discovered in the

south-western Cape of South Africa, have revealed new information about their pollination. Unlike most other members of the genus, which have deep blue flowers and are pollinated by bees, the two new species (provisionally called *A. cantharophilia* and *A. teretifolia*) have pale flowers with dark markings, orange anthers and pollen, and are pollinated by monkey beetles *Lepithrix* spp. It appears that the Cape flora is still incompletely known despite intensive investigations and a history of plant collecting going back some 250 years.
Source: Veld & Flora, March 1996, 17–19.

Traditional medicine threat to plants

The traditional medicine trade on the Witwatersrand in South Africa is a long-established and thriving industry, trading tonnes of medicinal plants (muti) from southern Africa and beyond. There are around 200 licensed muti traders and at least 150 hawkers selling herbs on the streets. More than 500 species are harvested for medicines. The area in which the plants are harvested has increased and there is growing concern that plant populations are under threat. Many of the most popular and most threatened species are slow-growing plants harvested for their roots.
Source: Veld & Flora, March 1996, 12–14.

Fynbos survival

Research has shown that it is possible to restore fynbos vegetation even after years of heavy invasion by alien species. The original vegetation can be restored by clearing alien plants, because most fynbos species produce seeds that

become buried in the soil and remain dormant for many years. Thickets of acacias and pines may harbour many fynbos species and, provided germination is stimulated, there should be good recovery of vegetation even after long invasion. This can be achieved by removing the canopy to expose the soil and may be improved by low-intensity fire, followed by control to prevent aliens re-establishing.
Source: Veld & Flora, March 1996, 24–25.

Controversial gift

The National Parks Board of South Africa has accepted a \$2.5-million contribution from The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), an organization opposed to elephant culling. The donation, which was accepted after 2 years of negotiations, was made on the condition that no elephants would be killed on land purchased with IFAW's money. The first of five annual instalments will go towards extending Addo and Marakele National Parks in order to enable the translocation of elephant family groups from Kruger National Park.
Source: African Wildlife Update, June 1996, 5.

Seychelles halts export of tortoises

The Seychelles Division of Environment (DoE) has stopped issuing CITES export permits for giant tortoises *Geochelone gigantea*, while a comprehensive tortoise census is undertaken. The results of the census will determine whether permits are granted again.
Source: Seychelles Nation, 16 May 1996.

Ploughshare tortoise theft

The future of the endangered ploughshare tortoise or angonoka *Geochelone yniphora* was threatened by the theft in May of two breeding females and 73 young from the world's only captive breeding centre for the species, 145 km from Baly Bay in Madagascar, the only place where the species occurs in the wild. Only six breeding females remain at the centre. The theft came soon after conservationists started to discuss preliminary boundaries for a special 40,000-ha reserve of protected tortoise habitat.
Source: African Wildlife Update, June 1996, 3.

Regional turtle meeting

The Western Indian Ocean Training Workshop and Strategic Planning Session for the conservation of marine turtles was held in Sodwana Bay, South Africa. The Western Indian Ocean is home to populations of five sea turtle species and their survival depends on collaboration between all the states in the region. It brought together representatives and scientists from Eritrea, Kenya, Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar, Mozambique, South Africa, Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles and France to address issues of regional concern for the conservation of sea turtles.
Source: Marine Turtle Newsletter, April 1996, 13–17.

SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

Mining threatens wildlife

Conservationists are worried that the exploitation of mineral resources is taking place with

little regard for many of India's most important wildlife habitats and for the indigenous people who still survive there. More than 40 national parks and sanctuaries may face exploitation from commercial interests. The Sarisha Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan has been denotified to allow mining, a third of the Melghat Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra has been turned over to forestry and dam construction, and the Radhanagri Sanctuary for gaur *Bos gaurus* is threatened by bauxite mining. A review of a massive World-Bank-supported coal project in North Karanpur has concluded that it violates the International Convention on Biodiversity. The project is to take place in an area well known for tiger, leopard, bear and elephant.

Source: *Cat News*, Spring 1996, 6.

Bhitarkanika saved

The Bhitarkanika region in Orissa state, India, which encompasses the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and Gahirmatha National Park, is home to a wide variety of plant and animal species, including the olive ridley sea turtle *Lepidochelys olivacea*. The area has been saved from Orissa Government development plans, which violated national environmental legislation (see *Oryx*, 29 [3], 163). A court case brought by conservation groups against the Orissa Government resulted in the Orissa High Court ordering construction activities for roads and jetties to be halted. In addition, the sanctuary is to be brought under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the World Bank will stop aid for commercial aquaculture in the region and sanction a fund for holistic eco-development, and the Central Government will be

allowed to initiate legal proceedings against all state officials responsible for violating the 1986 Environment (Protection) Act.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, April 1996, 1–2.

Langur faces local extinction

Phayre's langur *Presbytis phayrei*, once common in the forests of Tripura, north-eastern India, is in danger of extinction there. It numbers fewer than 900 individuals in scattered fragments of habitat. The major threat is human encroachment of the habitat due to a huge population increase (435 per cent over the last 50 years). A project assessing the effects of human disturbance on the ecology and conservation of the langur in Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary in southern Tripura aims to provide a sound understanding of the species and its problems, which Indian conservationists and officials can use to devise an effective conservation programme.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation*, March/April 1996, 9.

Towards sustainability for ornamental fishery

A project in Sri Lanka plans to set up a sustainable fishery for ornamental marine species involving exporters and collectors, representatives from conservation, fishery and environmental agencies, and others with an interest in marine resource management. An absence of reliable data on the status of populations in the wild has made control difficult, although the export and collection of hard corals, sponges, tube worms and some species of butterfly fish is prohibited.

Source: *Marine Conservation*, Summer 1996, 12.

Co-operation for tigers

The Second International Conference and Geographical Information System (GIS) Workshop to Assess the Status of Tigers was held in Thailand in January and attracted representatives of 11 Asian countries. The meeting made recommendations on poaching and illegal trade in tiger products; education and public awareness; human dimensions of tiger conservation: the needs of local people; and the Global Tiger Forum.

Source: *Cat News*, Spring 1996, 2–3.

Spoonbills up in numbers

A total of 456 black-faced spoonbills *Platalea minor* were recorded in a synchronized count of the birds' main wintering sites in Vietnam, Taiwan and Hong Kong in February. The count did not include birds that may have been wintering elsewhere in the region. The previous estimated world population was 400.

Source: *World Birdwatch*, June 1996, 4.

Adult saola sighted

A live adult female saola *Pseudoryx nghetinhensis* has been captured by villagers in Laos near the Nakai Nam Theun National Biodiversity Area. The species was first discovered by Western scientists in 1992. Only trophies of adults and juveniles of the species have been recorded in the past (see *Oryx*, 29 [2], 107–114).

Source: *Wildlife Conservation*, March/April 1996, 9.

Rediscoveries in Indonesia

Rufous-throated white-eye *Madanga ruficollis* and streaky-

breasted jungle-flycatcher *Rhinomyias addita*, birds endemic to the island of Buru, Indonesia, have been observed by biologists for the first time since the 1920s.

Source: *World Birdwatch*, June 1996, 5.

Otters in Indonesia

The first otter surveys in Indonesia have been carried out in 18 conservation areas in western Java. The status of the four species of otter that occur in Indonesia – Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra*, smooth-coated otter *L. perspicillata*, hairy-nosed otter *L. sumatrana* and small-clawed otter *Aonyx cinerea* – is poorly known but it appears that they are threatened by habitat destruction, pollution and hunting. Otters are not legally protected in Indonesia.

Source: *Newsletter of the Otter Specialist Group (Asian Section)*, December 1995, 7.

New flying fox

A new, as yet undescribed, flying fox *Pteropus* sp., was collected during a faunal survey of Mt Iglit on Mindoro in the Philippines by the Wildlife Biology Laboratory, University of the Philippines at Los Banos in March 1995. The new species is likely to be endemic to Mindoro and is believed to be the smallest member of the genus.

Source: William Oliver.

New cloud rat

A new species of bushy-tailed cloud rat discovered in Panay Island in the Philippines in 1990 (see *Oryx*, 27 [1], 47–48) has been named *Crateromys heaneyi*. It is 60 cm long including the tail, has long brown fur and is an agile climber. The discovery brings



The new flying fox from Mindoro in the Philippines (William Oliver).

the number of known species of bushy-tailed cloud rats to four – all from the Philippines. Source: *BBC Wildlife*, August 1996, 24.

EAST ASIA

Ivory seized in China

More than 725 kg of elephant ivory, valued at approximately \$840,000, was seized by Chinese customs officials in the southern city of Fuzhou in January. Seventy-two tusks cut into 133 pieces were hidden in a shipment of teak.

Source: *Traffic USA*, April 1996, 11 & 18.

Indian muntjac – a new subspecies in China

A systematic study of the Indian muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak* in Guangdong, China, has concluded that the population should not be included, as previously, in the

Himalayan subspecies *M. m. vaginalis*, but should be treated as a new subspecies, *Muntiacus muntjak guangdongensis*.

Source: *Acta Theriologica Sinica*, 16 (2), 28–29.

Ancient forests threatened in China

An acute timber shortage in China is threatening the future of the last two primeval forests in the Da Hinggan (Da Xingan) Mountains of Inner Mongolia and Heilongjiang province in north-east China. The forests, possibly the largest surviving in China, cover 40,000 sq km and are dominated by larch, pine, birch and oak. They are home to the Chinese merganser *Mergus squamatus* and black-billed capercaillie *Tetrao parvirostris*, both of which are scarce and restricted to north-east Asia. The Da Hinggan range is China's only site for many other threatened species. Source: *BBC Wildlife*, June 1996, 68.

Garden plant rediscovered wild in China

Arisaema candidissimum, a popular garden plant and a native of China, which was last recorded in the wild in 1932, has been found again. In 1993 a group of plant explorers located the green-and-white variant in Sichuan Province and in 1994 the pink-and-white form was rediscovered on a steep shaly slope in Yunnan Province during a garden society's expedition to China. Source: *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, May 1996, 108–111.

Last male Japanese ibis dies

The last male Japanese crested ibis *Nipponia nippon* native to Japan has died, aged 26, on

Sado Island. It had recently been paired with a 3-year-old female borrowed from China (see *Oryx*, 29 [3], 162). It is unknown if the five eggs that were laid are fertile.

Source: *Avicultural Magazine*, 1996, 102 (1), 42.

NORTH AMERICA

Boreal forest threatened

The biggest oil development scheme in the history of North America, is planned to start in northern Alberta, Canada. Over US\$25 billion is to be invested over the next 20 years to mine the Alberta oil sands. The area occupies a vast expanse in the boreal forest zone, already threatened by large-scale logging and oil and gas developments. The boreal forest, with its shallow soils, harsh climate and short growing season, is especially vulnerable to clearcutting and industrial development. In addition to the effects of oil-sand development on the forest – destroying carbon sinks, damaging biodiversity and increasing the emission of greenhouse gases – a planned pipeline will be routed through native prairie grasslands, a highly threatened ecosystem supporting more than 100 endangered species.

Source: *Taiga News*, May/June 1996, 5–6.

US Executive Order for wildlife refuges

On 25 March the US President issued an Executive Order (EO) defining the mission, purpose and priority public uses of the nation's 508 national wildlife refuges. It is the first EO affecting the system and defines its mission as 'to preserve a national network of

lands and waters for the conservation and management of the fish, wildlife and plants of the US for the benefit of present and future generations'. It also addresses habitat conservation, public use, partnerships and public involvement, and recognizes compatible wildlife-related recreational activities.

Source: *Outdoor News Bulletin*, 26 April 1996, 3.

Collaboration for ocean fish

Six US national and US-based international conservation organizations are collaborating to strengthen global, international and national management for large ocean fish. The Ocean Wildlife Campaign aims to conserve and restore large ocean fishes such as tuna, sharks, swordfish and marlins.

Source: *Elepaio*, April 1996, 23.

'Dead wood' logging

A bill currently being considered in the USA plans to allow logging companies to remove dead and unhealthy trees from government-owned forests in the western US. Proponents of the bill claim that the forests have suffered years of bad management and are over-crowded and full of dead and dying trees, constituting a fire threat and risking the spread of disease. Conservationists claim that this is giving the loggers a windfall in the name of forest health and that the bill is based on poor science and squanders natural resources.

Source: *New Scientist*, 29 June 1996, 8.

Decline in horseshoe crabs

Trade in horseshoe crabs, also known as king crabs, *Mesostomata xiphosura limulus*

from Delaware Bay, USA, has expanded dramatically since the early 1990s due in part to fishing restrictions on other species. The crabs are used as bait in fish traps. As the catches of crabs have increased there are indications of population declines on the beaches of Delaware and New Jersey, where they spawn in greater numbers than anywhere else in the world. The annual massing of horseshoe crabs in the region is of critical importance to the western hemisphere's migratory shorebirds who feed on the eggs of the spawning crabs. Conservationists have called for a moratorium on the catching of crabs, which has been endorsed by representatives of corporations such as Dupont and Mobil, but commercial fisheries claim that there is a lack of substantial evidence to support a ban.

Source: *Audubon*, May–June 1996, 77–81.

Red-legged frog listed

The Californian red-legged frog *Rana aurora draytonni* is now to be protected, after a year-long legal battle to list is as Threatened. This is the first species to be listed under the US Endangered Species Act since the US Government imposed a moratorium on listing species last year, claiming shortage of funds. The government was ordered to lift the ban after the Environmental Defense Center at Santa Barbara took the case to court. The red-legged frog survives in less than a third of its original range due to hunting, predation by introduced bullfrogs and reduced habitat. A total of 242 species are still awaiting decisions on whether they should be listed and the US Congress has now allocated \$4 million for this purpose, only

half the amount required.

Sources: *New Scientist*, 1 June 1996, 5; *Endangered Species Bulletin*, May/June 1996, 3.

Endangered to threatened for four-o'clock plant

Twelve years of recovery efforts for Macfarlane's four-o'clock *Mirabilis macfarlanei*, a large showy plant with clusters of magenta flowers, have removed this species from the brink of extinction and it has been reclassified from Endangered to Threatened, although it will continue to receive US Endangered Species Act protection until recovery is complete. Improved livestock grazing management, monitoring and research, and the discovery of additional plant locations have reduced the risk to this threatened species.

Almost 1000 plants are known on about 66 ha in 18 locations in Idaho and Oregon, USA, and the amount of occupied habitat represents a threefold increase due to new discoveries.

Source: *Endangered Species Bulletin*, May/June 1996, 26.

Oil spill damages US wildlife refuge

On 19 January the tug *Scandia* caught fire and with its tow – the barge *North Cape* – was beached on Moonstone Beach, Rhode Island in the immediate vicinity of Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge. The grounded barge released over 3,134,000 litres of oil into coastal waters, contaminating beaches and entering several coastal salt ponds along 14 km of coast. Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge provides habitat for several thousand migratory birds, including the threatened piping plover *Charadrius melodus*, and is a nursery area for finfish,

such as winter flounder *Pseudopleuronectes americanus* and striped bass *Morone saxatilis*. A total of 396 birds was known to have been killed as a result of the spill. The US Fish and Wildlife Service will be studying the impact of the spill on the piping plover's 1996 breeding season.

Source: *Endangered Species Bulletin*, May/June 1996, 28–29.

Cheetah birth by artificial insemination

On 3 November 1995 the Rio Grande Zoo in Albuquerque announced the first birth of a surviving cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* by artificial insemination. Cheetahs have not bred well in captivity and the Cheetah Conservation Fund and the Namibian Ministry of the Environment invited experts to examine cheetahs in the wild and to collect viable sperm from males. This was then cryopreserved and sent to the USA for artificial insemination.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation*, March/April 1996, 17.

Wetlands restored

An aquaculture project restoring wetlands in California has successfully transformed condemned landfill and abandoned mills into freshwater wetlands, while using them as part of a low-cost, low-technology sewage treatment process. Treated wastewater nourishes the restored wetlands on Arcata's industrial waterfront. The aquatic plants and micro-organisms take up nutrients and filter sediment from the water, purifying it before release into Humboldt Bay. More than 85 per cent of the original wetlands have been destroyed during the past century and Arcata's 62 ha of

restored freshwater and salt-water marshes are important habitats for fish, frogs and more than 200 species of birds.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation*, March/April 1996, 14.

Migration imprinting

Scientists at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Centre in the USA have imprinted a flock of 10 sandhill cranes *Grus canadensis* to follow a converted ambulance in order to teach them a 640-km migration route. While still in the egg the birds were played tapes of the engine and exposed to brood calls of mother sandhills. The cranes were led by the ambulance from an area near Flagstaff, Arizona to the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Reserve on the Arizona–Mexico border. It is hoped that the technique can be applied to captive-bred whooping cranes *Grus americana* to establish safe migration paths. The whooping crane's world population is approximately 320 birds, 159 of which are in captivity. Approximately 158 wild individuals still follow their traditional migratory route from Canada to Texas but they could be wiped out by a single disaster.

Source: *Audubon*, May–June, 1996, 20, 22 & 24.

Lures for murre

A project to restore populations of common murre or guillemots *Uria aalge* to Devil's Slide Rock off the California coast, USA, is using wooden or plastic decoys and recordings of the birds' calls to attract passing birds of the species and persuade them that the abandoned island hosts a safe and flourishing colony. The species disappeared from Devil's Slide Rock and several other islands

south of San Francisco after an oil spill in 1986.

Source: *Audubon*, May–June 1996, 82, 84 & 86.

Gorilla birth a first

The world's first test-tube western lowland gorilla was born at the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, USA, on 9 October 1995 after 10 previous unsuccessful attempts elsewhere. Sperm collected from an 11-year-old male at Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska, was used to fertilize eggs taken from a female at Cincinnati. Three embryos were transferred into the female and five were cryopreserved for the future. Source: *International Zoo News*, 43 (4), 262.

More restrictions on shrimp fishing

The USA will place restrictions and on imported shrimps, following a decision by the US Court of International Trade after a lawsuit, brought by US conservation organizations. From 1 May 1996 all countries that export shrimp to the USA must have reduced sea turtle mortality from shrimp fishing operations by 97 per cent, the level that can be achieved with the proper use of Turtle Excluder Devices on all vessels. Sources: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, April 1996, 31–32; *Fish Farming International*, May 1996, 24.

Grand Canyon flooded

The gates of the 220-m-high Hoover Dam on the Colorado River in the USA were opened in late March, sending water flooding into the Grand Canyon in an attempt to restore the canyon's damaged environment (see *Oryx*, 28 [3],

158). For 34 years the dam has altered the canyon's hydrology and affected the desert ecology. The March flood deposited nutrient-rich sediment along the sides of the canyon and recreated sandbars, beaches and back-water channels, helping to rebuild spawning areas and habitat for endangered fish.

Source: *Forest & Bird*, May 1996, 10.

Manatee deaths due to toxin

The cause of the deaths of 158 Caribbean manatees *Trichechus manatus* off the coast of Florida in March (*Oryx* 30 [3], 173) was the toxin produced by the red tide that has been affecting Florida for some time.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, August 1996, 55.

Saving the puaiohi

For many years the puaiohi *Myadestes palmeri*, a bird endemic to Kaua'i, Hawaii, was believed extinct. It was rediscovered in 1960 but a population estimated to be 175 in 1975 has now fallen to fewer than 50. A team is studying behaviour and will develop procedures for captive breeding. A US\$1 million forest bird breeding centre is under construction and techniques for hand rearing are being developed.

Source: *Forest & Bird*, May 1996, 10–11.

Plan to end tuna ban

The US government may lift its ban on tuna from Mexico, Venezuela and nine other countries, imposed more than 10 years ago because of the number of dolphins killed in fishing nets. Since then these countries have developed

techniques to make fishing safer for dolphins and the number of dolphins killed by fishing nets has fallen dramatically.

Source: *New Scientist*, 25 May 1996, 10.

Parrots get reserve

The future of the endangered maroon-fronted parrot *Rhynchopsitta terrisi* may be secured by the opening of the El Taray Sanctuary reserve in Mexico, which includes the largest nesting cliff and feeding habitat for this species. About 100 pairs of the parrots use the site, about one-quarter of the total known breeding population. The species occurs only in pine-clad mountains within a 320-km stretch of the Sierra Madre Oriental in Mexico. Source: *World Birdwatch*, June 1996, 4.

Olive ridley recovers ...

A steady increase in the number of nests laid at La Escobilla beach in Oaxaca, Mexico, indicates that the population of olive ridley turtles *Lepidochelys olivacea* is recovering. A general decline in nesting was observed until 1988 when 55,730 nests were laid. A total ban on hunting was proclaimed in 1990 and between May 1994 and February 1995, 718,800 nests were counted.

Source: *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, April 1996, 5–6.

... and so does Kemp's ridley

Kemp's ridley turtle *Lepidochelys kempii* shows signs of recovery at its primary nesting beach at Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas, Mexico, where numbers of nesting females have been rising for the

past 8 years. There were 748 nests in 1987 and numbers have increased steadily, to a record 1429 nests in 1995
Source: Marine Turtle Newsletter, April 1996, 2–5.

Manatees rescued

A group of Caribbean manatees *Trichechus manatus* in the almost dry San Juan Lake in the drought-stricken state of Chiapas in south-east Mexico, were fed with grass by villagers in March and April last year. In May the Chiapas state authorities captured 17 manatees and released them in Catazajá Lake. The state authorities are now planning an education and research programme on the manatees.
Source: Sirenews, April 1996, 11.

Bird kill investigation

The North American Commission on Environmental Cooperation has been asked by several conservation organizations to investigate a massive bird kill in Guanajuato, Mexico. An estimated 25,000–35,000 migratory birds died between October and December 1994 at the Silva Reservoir 314 km north-west of Mexico City. The cause of the disaster is still being debated, but it is suspected that it may have been pollution by heavy metals and pesticides followed by botulism introduced by rotting bird carcasses.
Source: Wildlife Conservation, April 1996, 16.

CENTRAL AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

Tourism threatens caves

A major golf, housing and commercial development on

Bermuda could destroy marine caves and underground salt-water lakes, which contain 25 critically endangered endemic invertebrates. The caves are extremely vulnerable to sewage, fertilisers and pesticides seeping through porous rock. The site of the development, associated with Marriott Hotel, Castle Harbour, lies directly above two of Bermuda's most important caves, linked to others through underground channels. The development will also fragment Bermuda's largest contiguous woodland. A special development order was issued for the scheme, bypassing normal planning procedures and pre-empting the developer's environmental impact assessment. The Bermudan conservation group, Save Open Spaces, is petitioning to have the entire scheme thrown out.
Source: BBC Wildlife, June 1996, 72–73.

El Yunque threatened by development

Puerto Rico's Caribbean National Forest (El Yunque) has been preserved since 1903 as a 113-sq-km US national forest – the only rain forest in the system and refuge for a number of endangered species, including the endemic Puerto Rican parrot *Amazona vittata*. It is now under threat from urban encroachment and increased tourism. Construction of private homes, hotels, a golf course, new roads, an expanding prison system, banana fields and a landfill have been built on a US-government-approved buffer zone and the development is spreading to the forest boundary. Non-indigenous species, including cats and dogs, have been introduced and water consumption

has increased, drying up creeks within the forest.
Source: Audubon, May/June 1996, 18 & 20.

SOUTH AMERICA

Paramos threatened

Developments are threatening the paramos (high-altitude grasslands) in Colombia. The damage is caused by: construction of luxury housing near Bogotá; rural development requiring the building of tracks for vehicles; and potato and sheep farming. Many paramo plants are disappearing and only 10 per cent of the system remains in pristine condition. The paramos have a vital water-regulatory role and if they are lost Colombia will lose half of its water supply and flooding will be an increasing problem. Environmental legislation protecting these areas is not being enforced and the key to conservation appears to lie with education and persuading farmers to preserve parts of their lands.
Source: New Scientist, 29 June 1996, 35–37.

New marmoset

A new marmoset has been described from the southern Amazon between the Tapajos and Madeira rivers in Brazil. It has been named *Callithrix sateri* after the Sateri people on whose land it was discovered.
Source: BBC Wildlife, August 1996, 26.

More muriquis

The muriqui or woolly spider monkey *Brachyteles arachnoides* has been found in a new locality – an 80-ha forest fragment in Ibitipoca State

Park, Minas Gerais, Brazil. The total known population of the species is estimated at about 700 and there is a pressing need for a translocation programme to save small, isolated and probably doomed populations. *Source: Neotropical Primates*, 4 (1), 23–25.

New Brazilian bird

A new bird species in a new genus has been discovered in Paraná State, on the southern coast of Brazil. The bird has a long tail, narrow beak, weighs about 10 g and is 14 cm long. Named *Stymphalornis acitirostris*, it shows some similarities to the antbird genus *Formicivora* but there are differences in the structure of vocal apparatus. The bird could already be endangered by human encroachment on to the swamp where it was found. *Source: World Birdwatch*, June 1996, 2.

Lear's macaw – a new location

A second population of Lear's macaw *Anodorhynchus leari*, thought to total 22 individuals, has been found in Brazil, several hundred kilometres from the only previously known population. *Source: World Birdwatch*, June 1996, 3.

A new brocket deer from Brazil

A phenotypically distinct brocket deer was discovered in 1992 in Sorocaba Zoo, São Paulo state, Brazil. It had come from Capão Bonito City, where some isolated Atlantic rain forest occurs. Morphological differences and chromosomal analysis indicate that the deer is distinct from other Brazilian deer species, supporting the

theory that it is a new species. The São Paulo Museum has skins labelled as *Mazama bororo* which came from the same locality as the new discovery. Investigations are continuing to assess the status of the new species but it is presumed endangered, adding weight to the need for protection of areas in south-east Brazil. *Deer Specialist Group News Newsletter*, March 1996, 3.

New threats to Amazon

A new Brazilian law is threatening land preserved for the indigenous tribes of Brazil and gives further powers to loggers, ranchers and miners to exploit the Amazonian rain forest. Over 500 official challenges have been filed against 56 Indian reserves under Decree 1775, which came into force in January and which gives any Brazilian the right to challenge indigenous reserves, but it is estimated that the number may be closer to 2000, encompassing over 80 indigenous areas. Brazil's Labour Party has brought a case to the Supreme Court arguing that the decree is unconstitutional because the Brazilian constitution enshrines the rights of their 'first peoples' by guaranteeing them land that they have always occupied and that all challenges to Indian lands should thus be ruled null and void. The European Parliament has passed a resolution calling on Brazil to revoke the decree. *Source: BBC Wildlife*, June 1996, 71.

Vicuña trade resumes

Vicuña *Vicugna vicugna* fur will be sold legally for the first time since the species came under the protection of CITES in 1976. Indiscriminate hunting resulted in a declining population

earlier this century, reaching a low of 5000 by the mid-1960s. Pampas Galeras, the first vicuña reserve, was established by the Peruvian Government in 1966 and subsequently Bolivia, Argentina and Chile became involved in vicuña conservation. There are now 100,000 vicuña in Peru and about 60,000 elsewhere in South America. The Indians of the Andes have exclusive breeding protection rights for vicuñas and the Peruvian National Society of Vicuña Breeders will work with cashmere weavers to manufacture, market and trade vicuña products, harvested by live shearing. *Source: Wildlife Conservation*, April 1996, 10.

Bolivian park to double in size

The Noel Kempff National Park in north-eastern Bolivia is to be doubled in size by the acquisition of five areas of land, totalling 8900 sq km, making it the largest area ever protected through private initiative anywhere in the world. The park contains key habitat transition zones connecting the drier Gran Chaco with the Amazon Basin and contains a rich diversity of wildlife. *Source: Nature Conservancy*, July/August 1996, 31.

Tortoise near to extinction

The wild giant tortoise *Geochelone elephantopus* population of Cerro Paloma between Sierra Negra and Cerro Azul, southern Isabela in the Galápagos Islands, has declined to fewer than 20 individuals, including only two adult females. There are 11 tortoises from Cerro Paloma in the Arnaldo Tupiza Chamaidan Breeding and Rearing Centre. A molecular genetic study

indicates that the population is distinct from others on southern Isabela. The population was relatively intact until 1946–1959, when the penal colony of Villamal sent prisoners to hunt the tortoises for their oil.

Source: *Noticias de Galapagos*, March 1996, 2.

Goat damage

A feral goat population on the slopes of Volcán Alcedo, Isabela, Galápagos Islands, has grown to tens of thousands since the early 1990s, causing serious destruction of vegetation and threatening wildlife, in particular giant tortoises *Geochelone elephantopus*. A campaign was initiated in 1995 with the long-term objective of eradicating the goat population and monitoring vegetation and tortoise populations. Goats, thought to have been eradicated from Isla Pinta in 1990, have been observed on the island again. Hunting has been resumed and it is hoped that eradication will be successfully completed in the near future.

Source: *Noticias de Galápagos*, March 1996, 3.

Plant nursery in Galápagos

The Botany Group at the Charles Darwin Research Station in the Galápagos has constructed a plant nursery and native garden for several species of native and endemic threatened plants. Some of the plants will be used for reintroduction efforts. The first repatriation of a threatened plant species in the Galápagos – *Calandrinia galapagosa* from San Cristóbal – took place in 1995 and was successful.

Source: *Noticias de Galapagos*, March 1996, 2.

Hawks poisoned

Swainson's hawks *Buteo swainsonii* feeding at winter feeding grounds in the La Pampa region of Argentina, are being killed by organo-phosphate pesticides used in intensive crop cultivation to kill grasshoppers. As many as 20,000 hawks, which feed on the grasshoppers, have died, and there is concern for other insectivorous birds.

Source: *World Birdwatch*, June 1996, 2.

Darwin's fox distinct

Darwin's fox *Dusicyon fulvipes*, which is endemic to Chiloé island, Chile, was once assumed to be a subspecies of the chilla fox *D. griseus*. The discovery of a mainland population of Darwin's fox 600 km north of Chiloé Island living alongside chilla foxes and possibly culpeo foxes *D. culpaeus* suggests that Darwin's fox may be reproductively isolated. DNA sequence analysis indicates that Darwin's fox was probably an early inhabitant of central Chile and once had a wide distribution on the mainland. The discovery implies that greater significance should be given to the protection of this species and its habitat.

Source: *Conservation Biology*, April 1996, 366–375.

PACIFIC

Tax-free logging in the Solomons

A leaked forestry review of 1995, believed to have come from the recently axed Australian-funded Timber Control Unit, criticizes the Solomon Islands taxation

system and suggests that the country's leaders are benefiting from promotion of some of the worst, most unsustainable logging operations in the world. Somma, the logging company owned by the Solomon Islands' Prime Minister, benefited from nearly £1 million in tax exemptions in 1995 and £5 million of government revenue were lost through tax exemptions granted to 21 logging companies. In 1995 logging increased by 15 per cent in the Solomon Islands, but the amount collected as export duty fell by more than £2.5 million.

Source: *BBC Wildlife*, June 1996, 70.

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND/ANTARCTICA

Tasmanian fish may become extinct

The spotted handfish *Brachionichthys hirsutus*, which lives only in the coastal waters of southern Tasmania, Australia, may become the first known species of marine fish to become extinct since biological records began. It is believed that the Northern Pacific starfish *Asterias amurensis*, which was introduced 10 years ago in the ballast water of ships, is devouring the eggs of the handfish, whose populations have plummeted. There have been only four confirmed sightings in the past 5 years.

Source: *Aliens*, March 1996, 11.

Koala kill controversy

The population of koalas *Phascolarctos cinereus* on Kangaroo Island, south-west Adelaide, Australia, has grown to about 5000 in an area in-

adequate to support this number. The koalas, which are solitary animals, are defoliating and killing their food trees as well as suffering stress due to crowding. Many scientists are supporting a cull by shooting as the most environmentally sensitive option.

Source: *Forest & Bird*, May 1996, 11.

Frog disease

A rapidly spreading, epidemic disease is thought to be responsible for the disappearance of endemic, stream-dwelling frogs in the montane rain forests of eastern Australia. In 15 years at least 14 species have disappeared or declined by over 90 per cent. The pathogen responsible is very virulent and is probably alien to Australian rain forest. It is possible that recent declines of amphibian populations in other countries may be due to alien pathogens and that their spread is facilitated by human activities, such as trade in aquarium fish. Source: *Conservation Biology*, April 1996, 406–413.

Native species cause problems in Australia

A report produced for the Australian Government claims that native species are being pushed outside their usual ranges by agriculture and posing a serious threat to biodiversity. The galah *Eolophus roseicapillus*, a cockatoo previously confined to river systems, has spread throughout the country due to the abundance of water on farms. These birds are competing for nesting sites and destroying the eggs of the native Carnaby's black cockatoo *Calyptrorhynchus (funereus) latirostris*, which has disappeared from a third of its range over the last 25 years.

Other problems highlighted by the report include massive loss of rain forest and total forest cover, the worst record of mammalian extinctions in the world and massive soil erosion. Source: *New Scientist*, 29 June 1996, 10.

New Zealand river saved

A proposal for a hydroelectric development involving damming and diverting the Rangitaiki River in New Zealand was rejected by Whakatane District and Bay of Plenty Regional Councils in February on the grounds that the probable environmental damage outweighed commercial benefits. It is thought to be one of the first times that local authorities have recognized the importance of the natural environment in rejecting a dam proposal. The power company has lodged an appeal with the Planning Tribunal.

Source: *Forest & Bird*, May 1996, 4.

Penguin decline

There has been a catastrophic decline in penguin numbers on the remote Antipodes Islands in the New Zealand subantarctic. Recent surveys have shown that both erect-crested *Eudyptes sclateri* and rockhopper *Eudyptes crestatus* populations have declined considerably since surveys in 1990; the erect-crested from 115,000 to 50,000–60,000 pairs and the rockhopper from 50,000 to fewer than 4000 pairs. These losses are mirrored in other rockhopper colonies in the Auckland and Campbell Island groups and if the rate of decline continues rockhoppers will become extinct in the New Zealand subantarctic within a few decades. The erect-crested

penguin is confined to nesting on the Antipodes and nearby Bounty Islands so the decline is of particular concern. The losses are thought to be due to increased temperatures which have affected the birds' food supply.

Source: *Conservation News (Forest & Bird)*, May 1996, 4–5.

New reserve in Otago, New Zealand

More than 8000 ha of high-altitude tussock grasslands, herbfields and wetlands will be protected as conservation land under a tenure deal covering Otago's largest and oldest pastoral leases. The area will protect the habitat of two species of endangered flightless chafer beetle and a number of threatened plants. The owner will still be able to keep stock on about half the land being transferred to the Department of Conservation, which will set stock levels and monitor ground cover.

Source: *Forest & Bird*, May 1996, 4.

New Zealand's 13th national park

Kahurangi, a new national park, was opened in May, extending over 4520 sq km of highly varied geology in north-west Nelson, New Zealand. The park has an extraordinary range of plants and birds, including about 100 plant species which do not occur anywhere else. Around 1000 plant species have been recorded, about 40 per cent of all the native plant species and 80 per cent of the alpinies. It is home to some of New Zealand's rarest birds, largest native spiders and giant snails *Powelliphanta* spp. The park was established after 5 years of negotiations and the proposal met with legal action from

electricity companies, Treaty claims and determined political lobbying.

Source: *Forest & Bird*, May 1996, 9.

Mainland island experiment

The 'mainland island' experiment in conservation management in the Mapara Reserve in Waikato, New Zealand, has been successful in increasing numbers of kokako *Callaeas cinerea*. The experiment involved treating a discrete environment as an island reserve, with intensive control of the bird's predators and competitors, and habitat restoration. Other sites have been established in this manner for restoring kokako populations and other threatened species, which have been successful. Kokako populations in other areas, however, continue to decline.

Source: *Conservation News* (*Forest & Bird*), May 1996, 6–7.

Sea lion kill closes squid fisheries

The number of Hooker's sea lions *Phocarcos hookeri* caught and killed in squid nets in the Auckland Islands, New Zealand, this year, exceeded the ministerially imposed maximum limit of 63 sea lions or 32 females (see *Oryx*, 30 [3], 176). Estimates for this year suggest that 104 sea lions had drowned this season, over 85 of these were females, most of which would have been pregnant and nursing a pup on-shore. The fishing industry disputed the number killed, delaying the closure. Ninety-five per cent of the world's population of the sea lions breed in the Auckland Islands and a sanctuary of 20 km is failing to protect the species.

Source: *Conservation News* (*Forest & Bird*), May 1996, 1.

Weta reintroduction

During March and April 60 Cook Strait giant weta (a bushcricket, family Stenopelmatidae), which became extinct on the New Zealand mainland in the 1930s, were reintroduced to Somes Island in Wellington Harbour. They were collected from Mana Island off the Porirua coast. They are the first threatened species to be transferred to rodent-free Somes Island since the Department of Conservation took over its management in 1995. A small population of Wellington tree weta has also been transferred to the island as part of a long-term plan to restore the island's original ecosystem.

Source: *Conservation News* (*Forest & Bird*), May 1996, 6.

PEOPLE

Carlos Hasbun has been selected for the United Nations Environment Programme Global 500 Roll of Honour for his conservation work in El Salvador. He established the local non-governmental organization, AMAR, and its sea turtle conservation programme, lobbied for the country's first wildlife conservation law, and established the National CITES Commission and the Salvadoran Zoological Foundation.

PUBLICATIONS

River dolphin newsletter

The first issue of *Rivodolphineus*, the newsletter of the Ganges River Dolphin Protection Committee, was published in March 1996. For further

information contact: R. S. Lal Mohan, Co-ordinator, Ganges River Dolphin Protection Committee, Conservation of Nature Trust, Calicut 673 005, Kerala, India.

MEETINGS

Expedition Planning Seminar.

9–10 November 1996, London, UK. Contact: Fay Hercod, Expedition Advisory Centre, Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR, UK; Tel: +44 (0)171 581 2057; Fax: +44 (0)171 823 7200; e-mail: f.hercod@rgs.org

Northern Indian Ocean Sea Turtle Workshop.

13–18 January 1997, Orissa, India. Contact: Dr P. Mohanty-Hejmadi, Vice Chancellor, Sambalpur University, Jyoti Vihar, Sambalpur 768019, Orissa, India; Fax: 91 674 481418, or Dr P. Plotkin, Drexel University, Dept of Bioscience and Biotechnology, 32nd and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA; Fax: 1 215 895 1273; e-mail: plotkipt@post.drexel.edu

V World Conference of Birds of Prey and Owls.

4–11 August 1998, Johannesburg, South Africa. Contact: Robin Chancellor, Hon. Secretary of the World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls, 15b Bolton Gardens, London SW5 0AL, UK. Fax: +44 171 370 1896; or Bernd-U. Meyburg, President of the World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls, Wangenheimstrasse 32, 14193 Berlin, Germany. Fax: +30 892 8067; or Gerhard H. Verdoorn, Chairman of the Raptor Conservation Group, PO Box 72155, Parkview 2122, Johannesburg, South Africa. Fax: +27 11 646 4631.