

EDITORIAL

The first issue of *Fauna and Flora News* was sent out with members' copies of the April issue of *Oryx*. The decision to transfer news of the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society projects and activities from *Oryx* to a newsletter was made for several reasons. One of these was to allow us to publish more papers. With the journal serving both individual members and institutions, we felt that it was unfair to allocate too many pages to FFPS business. On the other hand, we often felt frustrated at not being able to give members a comprehensive account of the work that they help to support.

A few months ago one member wrote to complain that we 'do not do enough for flora'. In fact, our plant programme at the time was bigger than it had ever been. It was our failure to get that message across to the membership that needed to be remedied rather than our conservation priorities.

The second reason for the newsletter, therefore, was to improve communication with our members. We hope that the first issue gave members a much clearer impression of our activities. The second issue will appear with the October *Oryx* and we are currently considering the possibility of making the *News* quarterly in future. We want members to enjoy it, to find it useful and to show it to their friends. We would also welcome feedback and suggestions for improvement.

We also felt the need of a newsletter to use as a promotional tool, especially in seeking partners from the world of business and commerce to support our work but also in attracting new members. We hope that it will serve this purpose well.

While *Oryx* will no longer carry news of the Society's business as a regular feature, it will remain the journal of FFPS and will continue to draw attention to areas of involvement and activity where these are of wider concern.

An example of this is the tragic civil war in Rwanda. While the human suffering there is immense and we can do nothing to help, we are doing our utmost to ensure that the work to protect the mountain gorillas in the Virunga volcanoes continues. This is best done by ensuring that the guards and other park personnel, who undertake the day-to-day work,

continue to be supported to the maximum extent of our capabilities.

The Society has been actively involved in conservation in Rwanda for many years, most recently jointly operating the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) with the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) and the World Wide Fund for Nature. José Kalpers, who is the IGCP co-ordinator, was based in Rwanda's capital, Kigale, and until the recent outbreak of killings was able to continue his work there despite a long period of political uncertainty. However, along with other expatriates, he was evacuated from Kigale in April and is working temporarily from the office of the AWF in Nairobi.

Between 28 April and 8 May, José visited the Zaire side of the Virungas to see what could be done from that side of the border to keep the work going in Rwanda. The area around Kinigi, where the headquarters of Rwanda's Parc National des Volcans is situated, was reported to be relatively quiet and no recent fighting had been reported from the forest where the gorillas live. However, guard patrols had ceased – due to lack of funds and the perceived dangers – and there was concern that the gorillas would be threatened by a possible increase in snares set for antelopes. The priority was to find a way to get money across the border to pay the salaries of the park personnel and to boost morale so that the vital patrols could be resumed. Fortunately the border was still open to limited movement, although expatriates (with the exception of a few humanitarian aid workers) were not permitted to enter Rwanda from Zaire, and José was able to find a way to get funds into the park. As I write this at the end of May José is spending another 10 days on the Zaire side of the border, ensuring funds are still getting to where they are needed and finding additional ways of supporting the project staff through this difficult time.

Editor

The IGCP partners are running an appeal to meet the additional funds needed to pay park staff and provide essential equipment. If you can help please fill in the form enclosed in this issue of *Oryx*.