

Briefly . . .

INTERNATIONAL

New Ratifications

Forty-four nations have ratified the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the latest being Malaysia, Venezuela and Egypt. Denmark, Poland and Iceland are the 19th, 20th and 21st parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

Pahlavi Environmental Prize

The 1978 \$50,000 International Pahlavi Environmental Prize has been awarded jointly to Dr Mohamed Kassas, Professor of Plant Ecology at Cairo University, and a member of the IUCN Board, and Thor Heyerdahl, the Norwegian explorer.

IUCN General Assembly in USSR

The 14th General Assembly of IUCN will be held in Ashkabad, Turkmen SSR, from September 27 to October 5.

BRITISH ISLES

Wildlife TB Probe

The Nature Conservancy Council has launched a research programme on the implications of tuberculosis in badgers and other wildlife. This is because it is still not certain that no other factor is concerned in infecting both badgers and cattle in Gloucestershire, Cornwall and other parts of the West Country.

Returning Fish

After a 60-year absence, lampreys have been reported in the River Trent. In the Thames estuary a long-spined sea scorpion and a worm pipefish have been discovered, making 95 new species of fish found in the river since 1964.

Railways and Environment

British Rail, which controls 11,000 miles of public land, has set up an Environmental Panel to advise on conservation of both 'the national railway heritage' and the 'unique ecological habitat' along the tracks. Panel members include BR Board Member and former NCC Chairman Sir David Serpell.

Egg Collectors Fined

Two Sussex men found near the nest of a red kite *Milvus milvus* with maps, climbing gear and padded egg boxes have been fined a total of £500. There are 100 red kites remaining in Britain, all in Wales, including 30 breeding pairs.

EUROPE

Less Oil Pollution in the Baltic

Oil pollution killed 3.2 birds per square kilometre in the Baltic off Poland in 1974-75, compared with 10 per sq km in the earlier seventies. Noting a similar improvement in Danish waters, the *Danish Review of Game Biology* has attributed the cleaner Baltic (once the oiliest sea in the world) to increasing oil prices, better recycling methods, more public interest, and better control and surveillance.

Exotic Seaweed Keeps Spreading

The Japanese brown alga *Sargassum muticum*, first found on the Isle of Wight in 1973, has now spread as far west as Plymouth and to the north coast of France, despite the 1976 eradication programme in which some 450 tonnes were collected.

Political Protest

Within weeks after a Finnish Government Committee recommended the creation of 42 new national parks and 16 nature reserves, reports began to come in of intentional destruction in the proposed areas. Old stands of forest were cleared, roads and cottages built and peatlands ditched. Opponents have criticised national parks as 'socialisation of property'.

No Pictures

The German Society of Animal Photographers has agreed not to photograph endangered birds in or near their nests, and the German Section of the ICBP has asked magazine editors to reject any such pictures.

The Compleat Hunter

Besides having to know about guns, dog-handling and other hunting matters, West German applicants for a hunting licence must now also answer questions about nature conservation, farming and forestry.



Highway Deaths

Every day one large and 15 small animals are killed on the highways of Alsace and Bas-Rhin, and a working party is studying the threat to wildlife posed by traffic, farm machinery, high-voltage cables and other dangers.

Bears in Sweden

Bears *Ursus arctos* in Sweden, recently feared to be nearly extinct, now number about 600, according to a survey. Each year 10–15 may be legally shot.

Ibex in Switzerland

There are now about 10,000 reintroduced ibex *Capra ibex* in Switzerland—of which 300 were culled in 1977.

Greek Stork Census

An ICBP census has turned up 2508 pairs of nesting white storks in Greece. Of 1438 questionnaires returned by primary schools, 566 reported the presence of storks and 872 their absence.

Postcards for Seals

Members of the Society for the Protection of the Wadden Zee have sent 25,000 postcards to the Netherlands Parliamentary Secretary of State responsible for nature conservation, in a campaign to prevent the local extinction of the common or harbour seal *Phoca vitulina*.

Cleaner Rhine

Rhine water samples taken at the Dutch border in 1977 show a large drop in mercury, lead and copper as a result of international pollution measures introduced in 1976. Meanwhile, the International Association of Rhine Water Boards has named the river's six chief polluters as, in descending order, the Mannheim cellulose works, Rhône Poulenc Alsace, Strasbourg cellulose works, Bayer Ag of Leverkusen, and the cities of Strasbourg and Basel.

NORTH AMERICA

Bald Eagle Comeback

After the 1977 breeding season the number of bald eagles *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* around Chesapeake Bay was the highest in 41 years. Surveys of 78 nests revealed 71 hatchlings, of

which 63 survived to the flying stage. This is nearly double the 1976 figure and typical of a general raptor revival since the banning of DDT and other pesticides.

Housing for Bluebirds

Rows of starling-proof birdhouses are offering new hope for the revival of the eastern bluebird *Sialia sialis*, whose populations have been drastically reduced since the introduction of the European starling in 1890. In one such project on the US East Coast, fledgling numbers rose from 80 in 1967 to 5000 in 1976. In Canada 7000 nesting boxes placed along a 2000-mile route produced some 8000 young.

Trumpeter Swans Increase

Trumpeter swans *Cygnus cygnus buccinator* at the Lacreek Refuge in South Dakota increased from 159 in 1976 to 191 in 1977, and others are nesting throughout South Dakota and in parts of Nebraska. All derive from 17 birds introduced to Lacreek in 1960–62.

Critical Habitats

The habitats of the following birds have been declared Critical Habitats under the Endangered Species Act: American peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus anatum* in northern California; palila *Psittirostra baileui* on Mauna Kea, Hawaii; and Cape Sable sparrow *Ammospiza maritima mirabilis* in southern Florida.

Coho Salmon in St Lawrence

Coho salmon *Onchorhynchus kisutch*, which spawn in rivers on the North American west coast and were first introduced to the Great Lakes in 1965, have begun to appear in the St Lawrence River, spawning grounds of the Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*. It is feared that in time the more aggressive coho could outcompete and replace the native species.

Black-footed Ferret's Breeding Problems

The black-footed ferrets *Mustela nigripes* at the Patuxent Research Center in Maryland, the only known captive specimens, are failing to breed because of old age and disease. Never numerous, the ferret was brought to near-extinction by widespread poisoning of its prey, the prairie dog.

Tule Elk to be Culled

The California Department of Fish and Game plans to cull 92 of the 700 protected

tule elk in Owens Valley because of overgrazing, although the Sierra Club and other conservationist groups favour translocation.

Endangered but not Endangered

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has created a new category of endangered species—captive self-sustaining populations (CSSPs)—to facilitate trade among zoos, circuses and various other kinds of animal breeders previously restricted by rules designed to protect wild populations. The 11 CSSPs include six pheasants—brown-eared *Crossoptilon mantchuricum*, Edwards's *Lophura edwardsi*, Swinhoe's *L. swinhoii*, bar-tailed *Syrnaticus humiae*, mikado *S. mikado*, and Palawan peacock *Polyplectron emphanum*—as well as tiger *Panthera tigris*, leopard *P. pardus*, jaguar *P. onca*, ring-tailed lemur *Lemur catta* and black lemur *L. macaco*.

Power Plant Stopped

Because it would destroy food sources of brown and rainbow trout by disturbing the flow of New Mexico's San Juan River, a power plant at the Navajo Dam on the Navajo Reservation will not be built.

Construction was halted by a US District Court, deciding in favour of a suit brought by the National Wildlife Federation, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and Trout Unlimited. Defendant was the US Department of Interior.

Five Fish Listed

Five fish found in Alabama, Tennessee, Virginia and North Carolina rivers have been listed as threatened: Alabama cavefish, slender chub, slackwater darter, spotfin chub and yellowfin madtom. In each case, pollution is the main cause of decline.

Dam Threatens Mussel

A proposed dam at Columbia, Tennessee, designed to flood 50 miles of the Duck River would wipe out populations of four rare mussels, one of which—the tan riffle sheel *Epioblasma walkeri*—is endangered, meaning that no Federal agency may do anything that would critically modify its habitat. It has declined mainly because of pollution from mines and municipal waste.

Canadian Mercury

Ontario's Lake Vernon, in the Muskoka Lake district, is Canada's most

mercury-polluted lake, with maximum readings of 10 ppm (0.5 ppm is considered the highest acceptable level in fish for human consumption). The Environment Ministry has not yet been able to identify the mercury's source. A recent survey found 163 waterways to contain mercury-contaminated fish.

Waterfowl Damage

The Canadian Government has budgeted \$1.5 million—a rise of \$1 million—as annual compensation to farmers whose crops are damaged by waterfowl. The Minister of State for Environment said that the compensation was part of Canada's obligation under the Migratory Birds Treaty with the US.

Strip Mining Controls

First introduced in the US Congress seven years ago, the Strip Mining Control and Reclamation Act has finally become law. Strip miners must now have permits and must restore land to its approximate original condition after the coal is taken. Though the law is weaker than many conservationists had hoped, it allows States to pass more stringent laws and prohibits them from passing more liberal ones.

Heritage

The US Department of the Interior has set up a Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, which, with the Fish and Wildlife Service, will supervise an international conservation programme.

Marine Mammal Convictions

Between January 1 1976 and June 1 1977 there were 12 convictions under the US Marine Mammal Protection Act, resulting in \$79,100 in fines and a total of 120 days in jail. Violations included trade in whale meat, dolphins, sperm oil, sealskins, whale-tooth scrimshaw and products containing spermaceti. The largest fine, \$32,500, was levied against Werner G. Smith Inc. of Cleveland, Ohio, on 430 counts of sale and export of sperm oil and spermaceti.

US Public Likes Trees

A US public opinion poll which offered a choice in national forests between increased logging and preserving trees in their natural state found 62 per cent for preservation and 28 per cent for logging. What the poll called 'Washington Thought Leaders' voted for preservation only by 38 per cent to 36 per cent.



LATIN AMERICA

Turtles Threatened as Park Shrinks

Brazil's only nesting ground of the leathery turtle *Dermochelys coriacea*, in the Camboios Reserve in the state of Espiritu Santo, has after years of safety from human predation become vulnerable again, because the reserve has been reduced from 6000ha to 3000ha and people will be allowed access to the beach. There is no alternative site for the turtles on the entire Brazilian coastline.

New Birds in Peru

A tiny, five-inch-high owl new to science—christened the long whiskered owl *Xenoglaux loweri*—has been discovered in a Peruvian cloud forest, and the white-winged guan *Penelope albipennis*, considered extinct since 1877, has been rediscovered in a new habitat of tall trees in dry forest, not in the mangroves where it formerly occurred.

Building in Iguazu National Park

The Argentine Government plans to build a hotel-convention centre complex on the edge of the cliffs overlooking the Iguazu Falls in the Iguazu National Park.

Guanaco in Appendix II?

The Government of Peru has proposed that the guanaco *Lama guanaco* should be added to Appendix II of CITES, the international trade convention. The guanaco is fully protected in Peru but not in either Argentina or Chile.

Haitian Desert

In 20 years the proportion of Haiti covered by forest has dropped from 80 per cent to nine per cent, roughly half of which is second-growth scrub. The country has suffered a severe four-year drought, and in 1977 rainfall was 68 per cent of normal.

AFRICA

Masai Leave Amboseli

The Masai, traditional inhabitants of what is now Kenya's Amboseli National Park, gazetted in 1975, have now moved outside its boundaries. They have been promised a fee of £K10,000 a year from the Government; a £K280,000 pipeline provides water for cattle outside the park, and a community centre contains a primary school, dispensary and shops. In addition they will receive £K23,000 from gate receipts at the park lodge which they own.

Wildebeest Explosion

In 1977 some 1.3 million wildebeest migrated between the Serengeti and the Mara Reserve in Kenya, an increase of more than a million since the early 1960s, and 1.5 million are expected in 1978. Many biologists believe that a population crash is imminent.

Coal Under Kruger

Part of a recently discovered seam of high-grade coking coal lies under the north-west corner of Kruger National Park, and the South African Ministry of Mines has announced its intention to prospect it. However, the National Parks Act states, 'No prospecting or mining of any nature shall be undertaken on any land included in a park', a protection which the Chairman of National Parks Board has said he will not hesitate to use.

Loggers, Elephants and Farmers

Control of logging in Ghana has passed from the Forestry Department to the Department of Game and Wildlife, following complaints from farmers that logging operations in the Bia Game Production Reserve were driving elephants on to their land.

Large Mammals at Lake Manyara

A 1975 survey of large mammals in Tanzania's Lake Manyara National Park has shown the following population changes since 1970: elephant down from 427 to 386; hippopotamus up from 10 to 151; zebra up from 75 to 156; rhinoceros up from 23 to 35; giraffe up from 60 to 66; impala nearly doubled from 451 to 985; buffalo up from 1793 in 1973 to 1823.

Black Rhino Decline

In 1977 there were 1800 black rhinos in Kenya, compared with 11,000 in 1968. The Customs and Excise Report for 1976 lists exports of 3339kg of rhino horn, representing some 1200 animals.

Somalis Raid Rhinos

Somali poachers have killed the only two bulls and a pregnant female of the introduced white rhinos in Kenya's Meru National Park.

Luangwa Buffalo

Having been nearly wiped out by the disastrous rinderpest epidemic at the end of the 19th century, buffalo *Syncerus caffer* in Zambia's Luangwa Valley are now plentiful and comprise 39 per cent of local hunters'

kill. Most of this regeneration has happened in the past 15 years.

Serengeti Predator Increase

Early results of a census by the Serengeti Research Institute show that since the early 1970s there has been a substantial increase in hyena, lion, jackal and bat-eared fox in the Serengeti.

ASIA

End Seen for Malaysian Forests

Malaysia's Deputy Premier, Datuk Mahathir Mohamed, has warned the National Forestry Council that at the present rate of logging Malaysia's forests will be gone by 1990, and timber will have to be imported. The country is now losing forests at a rate of 680,000 acres a year, and in the past 20 years has replanted only 540,000 acres.

Migrating Raptors

Observers in north-eastern Turkey, at the eastern end of the Black Sea, have discovered a concentration of migrating raptors that exceeds figures for the Bosphorus and the Straits of Gibraltar combined. From August 17 to October 10 1976 they saw an estimated 138,000 honey buzzards, 205,000 steppe buzzards, 5775 black kites, and smaller numbers of imperial, short-toed and lesser spotted eagles, Levant sparrowhawks and marsh and pallid harriers, as well as a few long-legged buzzards, sakers and red-footed falcons.

Siberian Crane Transfer

Eggs of captive Siberian cranes, whose known world wild population is only 56 and is declining, have been taken from the International Crane Foundation Headquarters in Wisconsin to the nests of common cranes in Iran, in the hope of establishing a new colony, and a new wintering ground, that will save the species. The present colony, which winters in India and China, is suffering because one of its resting places on migration, Afghanistan's Lake Ab-i-Estada, is losing water to irrigation projects. Ab-i-Estada has, however, now been listed as a wildlife sanctuary.

Breeding Cages for Rare Ibis

Special cages are being installed on cliffs beside the Euphrates River in Turkey in the

hope that the endangered waldrapp or bald ibis *Geronticus eremita* will transfer its breeding colony there, free from human disturbance. In 1953 some 1300 were recorded at the existing colony in the nearest village, Birecik, but by 1977 the number had fallen to 34.

Falconry and Conservation

A Foundation for Falconry and Conservation has been established in Abu Dhabi, under the patronage of the President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahaya. Its projects will include studies of waterfowl migration and the ecology of raptors.

Buying Life for Ridleys

In 1977 the Madras Snake Park and the Central Marine Fisheries Research Station bought 14,546 olive ridley turtle eggs from collectors who had taken them from the beach between Madras and Kapakkam. They were put in the Snake Park hatchery, from which the young will eventually be released. Every year 90 per cent of the eggs on the beach are taken by human collectors, dogs and jackals, in that order.

Indus Dolphin Increases

Indus dolphins *Platanista indi* in the world's only dolphin sanctuary, 130 km of the Indus River between barrages at Sukkur and Guddu, have increased from 50 to 198 since the sanctuary was established in 1974. Before that populations were declining because dams and barrages on the river isolated and concentrated the dolphins (which are blind and navigate entirely by echo-location) and made them easy prey for fishermen.

Marco Polo Sheep Permits

Afghanistan has increased the number of annual Marco Polo sheep hunting permits from 10 to 16.

Rain Forest to Become Plywood

The 30,000-ha Sikundur area—the largest patch of lowland forest in Sumatra's Gunung Leuser Reserve and the home of Sumatran rhino, clouded leopard, orang-utan and tiger—has been conceded by the Indonesian Government to a plywood factory.

Elephants in Thailand

There are 2600–4450 wild elephants in Thailand, according to a 'guesstimate' by Jeffrey A. McNeely and Boonsong Lekagul.



ANTIPODES

Canberra's Whaling Inquiry

The Australian Government has set up an official inquiry into Australia's policies on whales and whaling. Its chairman is Sir Sydney Frost, a former Chief Justice of Papua-New Guinea. He has been asked to report by September if possible, in particular to determine whether Australian whaling should continue or cease.

Swamp Antechinus Refound

A small insectivorous marsupial, the swamp antechinus *Antechinus minimus maritimus*, has been rediscovered in South Australia after a disappearance of 37 years. The nominate subspecies *A.m. minimus* is fairly common in Tasmania and on a few small islands, but the collection of three specimens of *maritimus* in the Canuda National Park equals the total of previous records of the mainland race.

Rare Bird Habitat Threatened

The New Zealand Minister of Lands has given permission for clear-cutting of North Island's last remaining habitat for saddleback and blue-wattled crows, the semi-flightless birds that need to climb trees in order to launch themselves. To the Royal Forest and Bird Society's protests, the Minister replied that, as both species were protected by law, the loggers 'won't be allowed to harm the birds.'

Magenta Petrel Sighted

An ornithological expedition to Chatham Island has sighted and photographed three magenta petrels *Pterodroma magentae*, a bird known only from fossils and one specimen found dead on a South Pacific island 110 years ago.

Chatham Island Robins Moved

Seven of the nine remaining Chatham Island robins, three pairs and a single male, have been taken from Little Mangere Island to Mangere Island, after the vegetation was deemed sufficiently restored to receive them. Two males remain on Little Mangere, and a pair which have not been seen since 1975 may still survive there.

OCEANS

Can Fine Print Save Palau?

All relevant US laws and treaties are being scrutinised by the US Natural Resources Defense Council for clauses which might prevent the construction of a supertanker superport in the Palau Islands (*Oryx* February 1977, p.417). WWF, which has earmarked \$250,000 to help prevent the project, is sponsoring an independent study to show the Palauans the port's probable consequences and demonstrate alternatives.

Marianas Mallard Nearly Extinct

The population of the Marianas mallard *Anas oustaleti*, believed to be a hybrid between the mallard and the spotbill duck, is estimated at 2–25. The mallard, which once ranged throughout the Marianas Islands, including Guam, Rota, Saipan and Tinian, has declined because of a combination of hunting and wetland drainage.

Giant Sea Star in Galapagos

A five-armed sea star with an arm radius of 415mm, the largest ever recorded, has been found in Tagus Cove, off Isabela in the Galapagos. The only other known specimen of *Luidia superba* was collected in 1888 off the coast of Colombia.

Seychelles Tourist Policy

The President of the Seychelles, France Albert René, has announced that hotel-building will be controlled and a ceiling of 4000 a year put on the increase in tourist arrivals. He said, 'We want to prevent the commercialisation of our culture and conserve the beauty of our country'.

NEW PARKS AND RESERVES

The Nature Conservancy Council has bought 70ha of oak forest at Arrundle on the north slopes of Strontian Glen, Argyllshire. This forest is typical of the oak woodland which once covered most of the West Highlands.

The Gloucestershire Trust has leased three acres at Whiteshill, near Stroud, as a reserve for the greater and lesser horseshoe bats that inhabit an old stone mine there.

Neusiedlersee and the Güssinger Fischteiche (Fishpond), both in Burgenland,

are the first areas in Austria to be designated as part of the European network of biogenetic reserves. The former is known for fauna and flora typical of the Pannonian steppes, and the latter for its rare birds and plants.

A 150-ha estate in the Lombardy plain has been left as a legacy to the Italian WWF Association by Ulisse Cantoni, a local manufacturer. The only habitat of many animals in the region, it will be declared a nature reserve and named after the donor.

Part of the island of Skiathos and the Nestos river valley in Macedonia have been declared 'aesthetic forests' and placed under the protection of the Greek nature conservation law.

The Wildlife Society of South Africa has leased a farm 90km north of the centre of Johannesburg to be developed as an urban nature reserve and stocked with hartebeest, wildebeest, springbok, cheetah and possibly rhino.

The county government of the Hawaiian island of Maui has proclaimed a humpback whale sanctuary in the offshore waters where the whales mate and calve every year. The humpback, which has made no apparent recovery since the 1966 IWC moratorium on it, has recently been much harassed by whale-watching tourists.

With the addition of the adjoining Slagbaai estate, the Bonaire National Park in the Netherlands Antilles has gained an important feeding ground for flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber* and one of the last refuges of the amazon parrot *Amazona barbadensis rothschildi*. The park now covers 5000 ha.

PERSONALIA

Dr Michael Brambell, Curator of Mammals for the Zoological Society of London and FPS Council member, has been appointed Chairman of the UK Scientific Authority for Animals, succeeding Professor V. C. Wynne-Edwards.

Harold Eidsvik of Parks Canada has been seconded to the IUCN for two to three years. He will serve as Executive Officer of the Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas.

Dr Hendrick Hoeck, of Colombia, has succeeded Dr Craig MacFarland as Director of the Charles Darwin Research Station in the Galapagos Islands.

President Daniel Oduber of Costa Rica and Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman have been elected Members of Honour of the World Wildlife Fund. President Oduber was cited for his role in the creation of national parks and reserves, and the promotion of wise land use, and Sultan Qaboos for initiating Arabian tahr and marine turtle conservation programmes.

Professor Rudolf Schenkel, who with his wife, Dr Lotte Schenkel-Hulliger, has devoted his life to the study and preservation of rhinoceroses, in particular the Javan rhino at Ujung Kulon Nature Reserve, has been awarded the 1977 WWF Gold Medal.

Russell E. Train, President of WWF-US and former head of the Environmental Protection Agency, has received the 1977 \$150,000 John and Alice Tyler Ecology Award.

Dr Christopher Tydeman has joined the British National Appeal of WWF as Staff Biologist, replacing David Black.

Dr Fritz Vollmar, First Executive Officer of WWF International, has been appointed Executive Director of the World Scout Federation. He had served 14 years with WWF, since its foundation.

The fourth ICBP Delacour Medal has been awarded to the veteran ornithologist Dr Yoshimaro Yamashina, founder of the Yamashina Institute of Ornithology in Tokyo, a moving force behind several Japanese-Soviet migratory bird treaties.

OBITUARIES

Ernest Kleinwort, an International WWF Trustee, Vice-President of the British National Appeal and member of the WWF Executive Council from 1968 to 1974, died on November 3 1977.

Senator Lee Metcalf of Montana, Congress's leading conservationist and a former member of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission and the National Forest Reservation Commission, has died, aged 66.