News and Views

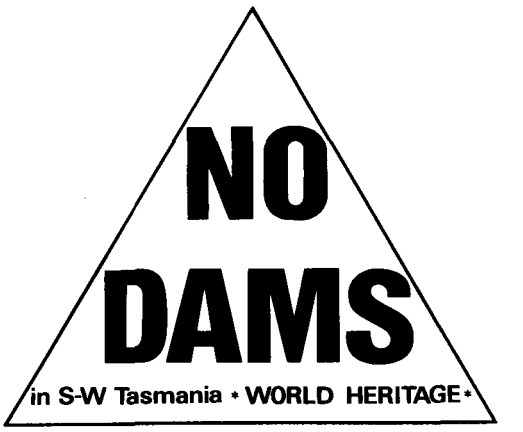
The World Heritage Convention and wildlife conservation

The arrest of David Bellamy, botanist and ffPS Vice-President, together with other conservationists in January 1983 brought the World Heritage Convention into the news. Those arrested on a World Heritage Site, South West Tasmania, were protesting against the construction of the Gordon-below-Franklin Dam which would flood part of one of the last three temperate rain forests on earth. Conservationists protested against the proposed dam long before the Western Tasmanian National Parks were listed in December 1982, but it was the listing that provoked international outcry against the dam and contributed to the decision of the new Australian Government in early 1983 to stop its construction.

It seems timely to examine the World Heritage Convention, its strengths and implications for conservation of wildlife throughout the world. Adopted at the General Conference of UNESCO 1972, the Convention came into force on 17 December 1975, establishing a system for recognising and protecting areas forming part of man's cultural and natural heritage which are of outstanding natural value. The 'common heritage' concept underlying the Convention includes both natural and man-made features; of the 136 sites included in the World Heritage List by May 1983, 39 were listed wholly or primarily because of their outstanding natural values.

Each Party to the Convention is responsible for proposing potential World Heritage Sites on its own territory and from these the World Heritage Committee, consisting of elected representatives from 21 Parties, makes its selection each year. Among the criteria the Committee uses for selection purposes perhaps the most important from the point of view of wildlife conservation is that which states an area should be listed if it contains 'the most important and significant natural habitats where threatened species of animals or plants of outstanding value from the point of view of science or conservation still survive'. It means that an area is eligible simply because it is an important habitat for a species threatened with extinction even if it has no other notable features at all. The application of this criterion, however, could present problems for it implies that some species are of outstanding universal value while others are not. How can such judgements be made when so many unknown species of insects and plants may have more exciting and useful values than the larger mammals that are well known to science and are unhesitantly judged by many as of 'universal value'? Neither the Convention's Operational Guidelines nor the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) (which must be consulted on matters relating to natural heritage sites) have attempted to provide a solution to this problem but, in practice, the Committee appears to assume that all species are of outstanding universal value. For example, although Virunga and Kahuzi-Biega National Parks in Zaire were listed because they contain important habitats for the mountain gorilla, Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve in Guinea was included at least partly because of its importance to less well known endemics such as the viviparous toad and the dwarf African otter shrew. And, taking a wider perspective, Darien National Park in Panama was listed in part because 'scientific opinion is that thousands of species remain to be discovered, and that many of these will prove to be endemic'.

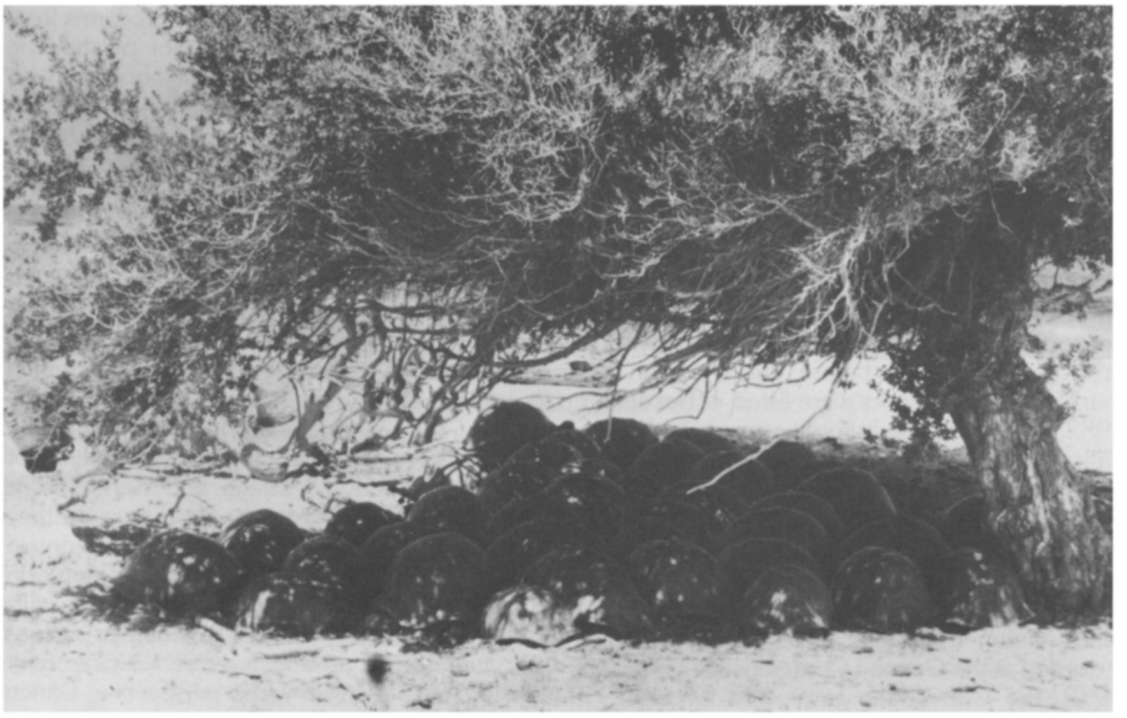
Once a site is listed the Party on whose territory it is situated is obliged to protect it. Many sites are already protected by national legislation but if they are not, an 'action plan outlining the cor-



Car-sticker used in the campaign against the Gordon-below-Franklin Dam.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605300024911 Published online by Cambridge University Press

News and Views



Giant tortoises sheltering from the midday sun on Aldabra Atoll in the Seychelles, which was listed as a World Heritage Site in 1982 *(A.M. Hutson)*.

World Heritage Sites listed wholly or primarily because of their outstanding natural values:

Tassili N'Ajjer National Park in Algeria;
Los Glaciares National Park in Argentina;
Kakadu National Park, The Great Barrier Reef, The Willandra Lakes Region, the Western Tasmania Wilderness National Parks and The Lord Howe Island Group in Australia;
Nahanni National Park, Dinosaur Provincial Park and the Burgess Shale Site in Canada;
the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador;
Simien National Park in Ethiopia;
Tikal National Park in Guatemala;
Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve in Guinea;
Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve in Honduras;
Tai National Park in Ivory Coast;
Sagarmatha National Park in Nepal;
Darien National Park in Panama;
Bialowieza National Park in Poland;
Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary and Niokolo-Koba National Park in Senegal;
Aldabra Atoll in the Seychelles;
Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania;
Ichkeul National Park in Tunisia;
Mammoth Cave National Park, Olympic National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, Redwood National Park, Everglades National Park and Yellowstone National Park in the USA;
Durmitor National Park, Plitvice Lakes and Lake Ohrid in Yugoslavia;
Virunga National Park, Garamba National Park and Kahuzi-Biega National Park in Zaire;
and Kluane National Park/Wrangell and St Elias National Monument, which were nominated jointly by Canada and the USA.

Parties to the World Heritage Convention

Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Holy See, Honduras, India, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, Tanzania, Tunisia, USA, Yugoslavia, Zaire and Zimbabwe.

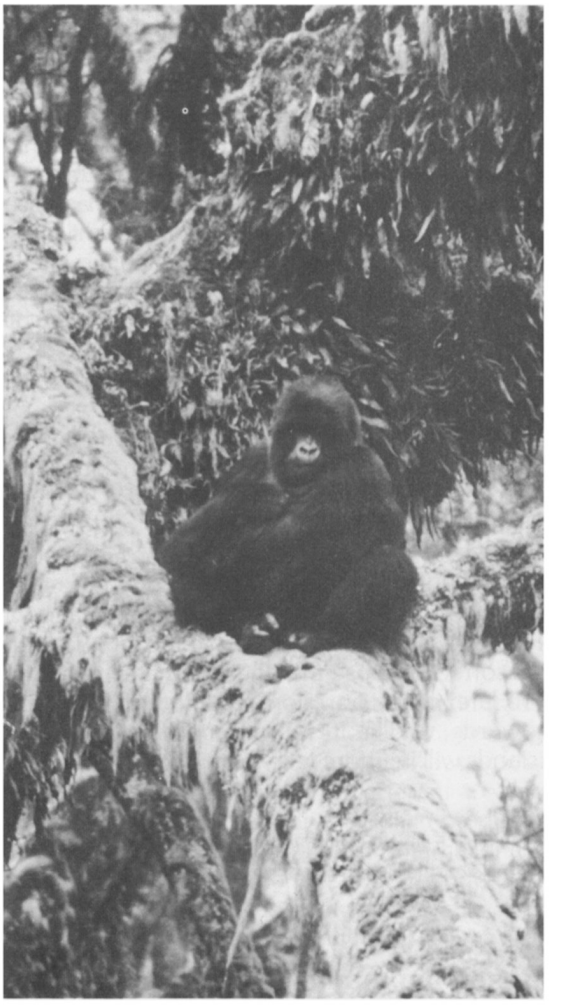
https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605300024911 Published online by Cambridge University Press

rective measures required' must be submitted and if these are not taken within the proposed time the property will be considered by the Committee for delisting. A site can also be delisted if it has deteriorated to the extent that it has lost those characters which determined its inclusion. No site, however, has yet been deleted from the list, or even proposed for deletion.

There are advantages for the Party concerned in including a protected area in the World Heritage List. The added status may bolster protection for an area which is protected in name but is threatened in fact, e.g. Darien National Park is protected by Panamanian law but the IUCN advised its inclusion because the park was under pressure from the north and south for a wide range of purposes, and awarding World Heritage status would help Panama in its effort to establish firm political control over the area. A Party may also apply for a grant from the World Heritage Fund to secure the protection, conservation, presentation or rehabilitation of sites. Each Party contributes to the Fund at a level of one per cent of their regular contribution to the regular budget of UNESCO. Non-parties may also contribute; Austria and the Netherlands have both done so. At present the Fund is US$2,372,716 in surplus.

Although the limited staff available to the World Heritage Secretariat and the IUCN limits the number of nominations which can be approved in any one year there is no formal limit on either the total number of sites included or on the number of properties any state can submit.

The Convention, with its 71 Parties and a surplus in the World Heritage Fund, has enormous potential as a legal conservation instrument. There are, however, some countries which have not yet acceded to the Convention: of these Madagascar, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea are particularly rich in outstanding natural areas, and China, Japan, the UK and the USSR are notable from the point of view of the money they would contribute to the Fund or because of the large areas within their control. If these countries were to accede to the Convention the sites eventually included in the World Heritage List would be a truly representative and comprehensive selection of the most outstanding natural sites on earth.



The Virunga National Park in Zaire was listed primarily to protect mountain gorillas *(A.H. Harcourt)*.

The Shackleton Report on the Falklands

Before April 1982 the best advice on conserving wildlife resources in the Falkland Islands was to leave them alone. Apart from overgrazing the tussac grass in certain areas, and disturbance to a few of the numerous seal, sea-lion and sea-bird colonies, there were few adverse factors. The economic stasis imposed by the submerged sovereignty conflict between Britain and Argentina was an almost ideal conservation

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605300024911 Published online by Cambridge University Press

device. Now, if the Government takes the Shackleton Report* seriously, things will start to move. There is, too, the presence of the large military garrison whose policy towards conservation has so far been exemplary. From the start, the Services have shown a real determination to conduct their occupation of the islands so as to do the minimum harm to the seal, sea-lion and seabird colonies, as well as to the important tussac grass, peat-bog and sand-dune habitats. If the Falklands really were developed along Shackleton lines (and will the British taxpayer underwrite such development indefinitely?) it would be essential to set up the two institutions suggested by Shackleton, if the wildlife resources were not to be harmed. These are an Environmental and Resource Management Committee in the islands, and a Falklands Islands Scientific Research Agency in the UK. It is, however, odd that the Shackleton Report does not mention either of the two voluntary organisations already in the field, the Falkland Islands Trust in the islands and the Falkland Islands Foundation in the UK. There is reason to suppose that the committee repented, too late, of the omissions, and that official policy towards wildlife resource conservation in the islands will in future take them into account.

Richard Fitter

**Falkland Islands Economic Study 1982* Chairman: The Rt Hon. Lord Shackleton KG PC OBE. HMSO, £7·80.

Resolving man-elephant conflicts

Throughout Asia, human populations are pressing more closely on elephant habitat and man-elephant confrontations are increasing. At an International Workshop on Elephant Management, in India in December 1982, Mr Parimal Mitra, West Bengal's Minister for Forests and Tourism , said that the resulting hostility is leading to 'an ever-increasing clamour for extermination of this magnificent animal'. The workshop examined a variety of non-destructive methods of repelling marauding elephants including the use of taped tiger calls combined with tiger-urine-scented rags. A 'chase without capture' method has been successful in north Bengal; it involves riding tame elephants, *khoonkis*, towards a marauding herd. The herd's leaders, remembering the capture of young elephants using *khoonkis* in past years, flee. It was suggested that permanent groups of *khoonkis* in threatened areas could keep marauding herds away. Another method, using high-energy electric fencing has been successful in protecting West Malaysia's oil palm plantations. The meeting considered that this method could provide valuable additional protection along the trenches and barricades already in use, and recommended that it should be tested in different habitats and conditions.

The workshop, recognising that the Asian elephant is endangered, made a number of recommendations including monitoring elephant populations (there are believed to be only about 30,000–40,000 remaining, of which 15,000 are in India), estimating the carrying capacity of sanctuaries and linking fragmented habitats by establishing forest corridors and keeping them free from disturbance. India and the neighbouring Himalayan state of Bhutan are now discussing the establishment of a corridor linking North Bengal, Assam and Arunachal where one of the largest contiguous Asian elephant populations survives.

The workshop expressed grave concern over two projects which would destroy elephant habitat: the Teesta Valley hydroelectric project would destroy 6000 ha of forest in North Bengal and cause man-elephant conflict; and secondly, Manas-Saukosh and Teesta-Brahmaputra Link Projects, which would nullify all the conservation efforts made so far in this region, covering Bhutan, Assam and West Bengal—the last habitat of the Asian elephant in North India, which also harbours a large number of endangered species. On a more positive note, an appreciation was made of the decision by the Karnataka State Government to prohibit tourist development on elephant migration routes in national parks.

China exporting more wildlife to Japan

China is now exporting tremendous quantities of wildlife and wildlife products to Japan, writes Tom Milliken of TRAFFIC (Japan). Until the mid-1970s China's trade in wildlife and wildlife pro-

ducts was mostly small and erratic but in recent years there has been a dramatic increase in certain kinds of wildlife trade: live plants, live animals, musk, deer and elk skins, raw fur skins, and live monkeys. Official Japanese Trade Statistics, however, do not provide information at species level—a major shortcoming from the standpoint of accurate analysis. The category 'live animals', for example, includes birds, reptiles and amphibians, and is calculated in kilograms rather than numbers.

Trade in 'live animals' has increased 60 times since 1977, rising from 3889 kg to 239,506 kg in 1981. Travellers leaving China from Shanghai have reported hundreds of bamboo cages containing small animals waiting to be exported to Japan. During the last decade the largest trade volume in live monkeys was in 1972 when 134 were exported. Between 1974 and 1979 China exported monkeys only once, in 1975, but exports resumed on a steady basis in 1979 and have increased each year since; in 1981, 117 monkeys were imported by Japan from China. Some Chinese monkeys may have also entered the trade via Hong Kong. According to the International Primate Protection League's September 1981 Newsletter, Sui Wai Nam Enterprises of Hong Kong has offered monkeys of Chinese origin for export, having received a letter of appointment from the Guangzuou Branch of the Oriental Scientific Instruments Import and Export Corporation.

Japanese imports of live plants, which include trees, shrubs, roots, cuttings and slips, from China has steadily increased, from 6000 kg in 1977 to 48,000 kg in 1981, but existing statistics provide no insight into the trade other than the weight involved.

Musk imports have shown dramatic increases. In 1978, 12 kg entered the trade; in 1981, 240 kg were imported, an amount surely in excess of that China can produce through her successful ranching programme. In years past, evidence indicated that musk derived from the CITES Appendix 1 Himalayan race in Tibet entered international trade through dealers operating illegally in neighbouring Katmandu, Nepal where an export ban has been in effect since 1973. However, in 1981, Japanese imports of Nepalese musk suddenly dropped to 25 kg after having averaged 166 kg a year since the ban. While there is a possibility that this is a result of the international focus on Japan's questionable trade with Nepal, Michael Green, IUCN's chief musk deer researcher reports that Chinese musk has flooded the market. Musk originating from China and reputedly of ranched origin is being sold in pod form in Hong Kong, which would mean that the animals are being killed, a rather drastic measure for operations that are promoted as sustainable yield utilisation.

Deer and elk skin imports from China increased steadily, from 107,000 kg in 1974 to 439,000 kg in 1979, and the level has remained fairly constant since. It is not known which species are involved and how the skins are procured. The trade in furskins is the only area of wildlife trade that has been substantial throughout the 1970s but in 1977 there was a shift from tanned and dressed furskins to raw furskins and this has persisted. In 1981, 381,100 raw skins and 73,211 tanned or dressed skins were imported compared with 40,890 and 427,343 respectively in 1971.

According to John Burton the increase in trade with Japan almost certainly reflects the tightening of controls with Hong Kong, which during the early 1970s was a major importer of a wide variety of live animals and wildlife products. During this period TRAFFIC (International), which was administered by ffPS, reported on imports as diverse as Bewick's swans and pangolins entering Hong Kong.

An extinct tortoise rediscovered?

Two ageing tortoises living in semi-captivity on a sugar estate in Mauritius may be the only surviving individuals of a species endemic to the Seychelles and considered extinct there since the middle of last century. *Dipsochelys arnoldi* (some would regard it as *Geochelone arnoldi* since it is a member of the same genus as the Aldabra tortoise *G. gigantea*) has recently been described as a distinct species by Roger Bour from three stuffed specimens. He plans to visit Mauritius to check the identity of the two tortoises and if they prove to be *D. arnoldi*, to study them. If other individuals are discovered and breeding is possible they could be reintroduced to the Seychelles.