World Bank Receives National Wildlife Federation Award

The World Bank has received the National Wildlife Federation's 1981 Special Conservation Award for its leadership in promoting environmentally-sound economic development. The award was made at the Forty-sixth Annual Meeting of the Federation, held earlier this year in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The National Wildlife Federation, with 4.5 million members in the US and throughout the world, was founded in 1936, and now ranks among the largest of the world's non-profit, nongovernmental organizations dedicated to the environment.

In making the award, the Federation cited the World Bank for its well-established record of incorporating appropriate measures for protecting the environment in the projects which it finances. The citation said: 'Perhaps better than any other institution, the World Bank represents the idea that economic and environmental goals do not have to conflict. The World Bank pursues its business goals and at the same time insists on vigorous attention to resource management and the environment. Indeed, the Bank maintains that development is not worth while unless it is based on solid environmental planning and a global perspective.'

The World Bank's Environmental Adviser, Dr James A. Lee, accepted the award on behalf of the Bank's President, A.W. Clausen.

Environmental Nature Note: African Rock Python and Thomson's Gazelle

The African Rock Python, *Python sebae*, is one of the most widely distributed pythons in tropical Africa, being found from just south of the Sahara southwards to the Transvaal (Sprent, 1970). It occurs throughout Uganda and is particularly abundant on the islands of Lake Victoria (Pitman, 1938).

Pythons feed on frogs, toads, mice, rats, and other mammals, being able to take prey larger in size than their own bodies. They neither chew nor tear their food but swallow it whole. The African Rock Python, which reaches a maximum length of only 17¾ ft (5.4 m), has been known to swallow a fully-grown, horned Thomson's Gazelle (*Gazella thomsoni*), such as can run at more than 60 k.p.h. Post-mortem it was found that the victim's spine was fractured in four places. The pelvis and one thigh were also broken, and the prey was so distorted that the ribs on one side protruded through the other side of the body. The swallowing process can take as long as 90 minutes. When a freshly-killed pig weighing 40 kg was presented to another species of python measuring 20 ft (6.1 m) in length, it was swallowed whole.

The method employed to kill large prey is to ensnare and suffocate it by coiling around and tightly squeezing the victim until it dies (Fig. 1).

Pythons and many other snakes have a series of modifications which enable the mouth to be widely distended to accommodate prey larger than themselves. These modifications are basically three but may be enumerated as follows:

1) Anteriorly, there is an elastic ligament joining the two mandibles (jaws).
2) There is loose attachment of the bone joining the skull and the jaw (the quadrate).
3) Bones of the roof of the mouth move (the palate bones).
4) The teeth are slender and point backwards, to prevent the food from slipping forward when once swallowing has begun.
5) Lack of a breastbone, so that the ribs are free ventrally and the thorax can be dilated.
6) Between the scales on the back and sides of the body there is soft, elastic skin which permits wide distension.
7) The gullet (oesophagus) and stomach have thin and easily-stretched walls.

Fig. 1. *Python swallowing a fully-grown, horned Thomson's Gazelle in a Uganda National Park.*