



FIG. 1. Groups of local schoolchildren being useful in clearing-up or conservation work.

Some farmers will only allow the planting to be done in hedgerows, whereas others set aside corners of fields in the hope of forming small woodland areas.

Trees and woodland areas all over the country are being felled to provide land for farming, roadways, and buildings for housing or industry. Unfortunately there is not always compensatory replanting, or, if there is, it is often delayed for far too long. There are numerous buildings throughout the country, many being in inner city areas, which could be renovated for housing or industrial needs, but instead are just neglected and remain eyesores.

If we do care about our Environment, we have to make drastic changes now. Our building industry should be encouraged to look more closely at the possibilities of renovating derelict buildings, or at least build new properties on derelict land instead of constructing new housing estates in our fast-disappearing countryside. However, there are numerous other areas throughout the County where planting could take place. The majority of roadside verges and roundabouts only boast vegetation such as grass and wild flowers; yet given the chance, the same verges would be capable of supporting trees and shrubs.

Tree-planting would help to reduce the ugliness and bareness of our roadways, and planting with shrubs would also provide more habitats for our animal wildlife, as well as constituting natural screens for unsightly buildings, refuse tips, quarries, etc. At present I am working on two major projects in the County of Cheshire—mainly tree- and shrub-planting, though currently they are only at an

experimental stage. For the past 18 months I have been carrying out surveys on a 36-miles' (c. 58 km) stretch of a dual carriageway (one of our main tourist routes) and drawing up plans for planting its verges, embankments, central reservations, and roundabouts—mainly to help construct more wildlife habitats, but also to help to create a better, scenic route for tourism.

While carrying out my surveys I have come across some problems where trees have been planted by local people thinking they were doing the 'right thing', but what they had not taken into consideration was the fact that they had planted the wrong species of trees for that area, or had planted trees where, in one case, if they became established, they would block out one of the most scenic views in all Cheshire!

Some tree- and shrub-planting has already taken place on a four-acres' (c. 1.6 ha) 'roundabout', which is to be turned into an unofficial Nature reserve. Already it has attracted many species of flora and fauna. We hope to be able to finish off planting trees in time to mark this European Year of the Environment (EYE).

I am also carrying out surveys on 30 acres (c. 12 ha) of Liverpool University farmland, where we hope to re-establish all of the original hedgerows which have been replaced by fencing. This work, hopefully, will be carried out soon—to a Woodland Management Plan which has already been drawn up. I was asked by the University to have a look at an ex-Council refuse tip which they had recently acquired but had no actual use for. This we turned into a Nature reserve, which was officially opened by a local bigwig to coincide with National Tree Week 1986. Numerous trees have already been planted on the tip and further planting is under way. The reserve is visited frequently by groups of local schoolchildren who also help in conservational tasks such as tree-planting and digging out derelict poles etc. (Fig. 1). These school age-groups range from six years upwards.

It is gratifying to note and warmly acknowledge the success we have had in obtaining grants and gifts of materials and money towards realization of our various projects as encouraged by your Journal—including generous support from our County Council who seem to appreciate what we are trying to achieve. Let us hope that more and more people will even join in such enterprises—not just in Cheshire but also in other counties and countries all over the world where such rehabilitation of Nature cries out to be done and can bring such tangible rewards.

BARRY R. JACKSON
Cheshire Landscape Trust
Goldsmith House
Hamilton Place
Chester CH1 1SE
England, UK.

Proposed 'Debt for Conservation' Plan

Examples of a severely degraded ecobiome—tropical dry forest—will be given a new lease on life by a 'debt for conservation agreement' between the Costa Rican government, environmentalists, and the international banking community, according to Costa Rica's Minister of Natural Resources and Mines, Dr Alvaro Umana. Tropical biologists believe that the conservation of this tropical dry forest (which contains a considerable proportion of the genetic diversity of the region) is critical, for although it once covered much of the Pacific coast of Central America, only about 2% of it remains today.

Costa Rica's Guanacaste region retains a small portion

of intact primary tropical dry forest, currently protected in Santa Rosa National Park. The Costa Rican National Park Service proposes to use this original 'seed source' to restore over 70,000 hectares of degraded pastureland to tropical dry forest, but it needs money to buy the land and pay for the management of the proposed 'Guanacaste National Park'. It is here that the 'debt for conservation' plan may come into play. Dr Umana has suggested '... that the (conservation) donors who want to help preserve our natural heritage should use their dollars to buy some of Costa Rica's debt.'

The mechanism works as follows: Anyone, including the

international environmental donor, can currently buy one US dollar of Costa Rica's debt for 25 cents from international banks that are eager to recoup losses. The Costa Rican Central Bank has agreed to pay 75 cents on the dollar for debt notes (in Costa Rican currency)—if—the money is put into conservation projects. Thus, the donor stands to get triple the value of his investment, and Costa Rica buys back some of its debt—at the same time keeping the money in the country.

Another 'debt for trees' agreement was recently reached in Bolivia, where the government agreed to establish three conservation areas totalling 3.7 million acres (approx. 1.7 million hectares) in exchange for notes of US \$650,000 face-value purchased by Conservation International, an organization based in Washington, DC.

The Central Bank of Costa Rica recently approved the proposed 'debt for conservation plan'. According to Dr Umana, one of the first projects to use the plan may be the proposed Guanacaste National Park. The Minister is currently working with WWF and Conservation International to raise one million US dollars, in order to purchase more than three million dollars' worth of debt and apply it to conservation in Guanacaste and other areas. This, however

does not end the problems. 'The impact of the plan on overall debt is small', says Umana. 'This is not a way to pay the entire debt of the third world; instead, it is a way to help conservation, not only for Costa Rica, but for all the world.'

This method of relieving debt and aiding conservation was discussed at the 17th General Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), in San José, Costa Rica, 1–10 February 1988.* More than 500 natural resource managers from around the world attended to discuss conservation issues and develop new approaches—*inter alia* to such issues as this 'debt for conservation'.

H. WHELAN
IUCN General Assembly
Ministerio de Recursos Naturales
Energía y Minas, Apdo. 10104
San José, Costa Rica.

* See the account in a forthcoming instalment of our Conferences & Meetings section.—Ed.

An Opportunity for Poster Designers, Publishers, and Enthusiasts

Posters, or wall-charts, are used very frequently and widely nowadays to inform the general public about coming events, or to focus attention on various topics and issues. 'Ecoposters' are used so to disseminate conservation messages, and to inform and educate the public in awareness of Nature, wildlife, and environmental issues.

The fourth triennial exhibition of Ecoposters was opened to the public in Czechoslovakia during November 25 1987 to January 31 1988, in the town of Zilina, in northwestern Slovakia. During those several weeks visitors could admire the artistic spirit, creativeness, interpretation of conservation, and ecological messages, that were displayed. Interesting also was the selection of topics, and the quality of the print representing different aesthetic and other criteria.

There were more than 200 posters displayed, most of them being of Slovak or Czech origin. But the organizers received and exposed posters also from no fewer than 22 other countries, including USSR, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Poland, German DR, FR of Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, United Kingdom, France, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Austria, Japan, USA, Canada, Honduras, and Brazil.

The exhibition was accompanied by a competition for those designers, authors, or publishers, who were represented by posters at it. The committee of organizers judged all the posters that were received and exhibited and decided to recognize some selected ones by giving them awards.

The next, fifth, triennial exhibit of Ecoposters (or Ekoplagát, as they are called in Czechoslovakia), will be opened in November 1990. So, do not hesitate to participate there with samples of your own posters. Your intention to contribute to the next exhibition and secure space should be notified preliminarily to the undersigned, address given below. Then you can expect further instructions on a printed leaflet. And, if you would like to arrange a similar exhibit of those well-proved means of conservational and environmental education in your own country or region, you can ask at the same address for some Ecoposters from Czechoslovakia on loan or exchange.

JÁN KLEINERT
Klokočova 7
CS-97401 Banská Bystrica
Czechoslovakia.

'INSONA Conservation Award' for Environmental Achievement*

Under its Patron-in-Chief HH Fatehsingh P. Gaekwad, the Indian Society of Naturalists (INSONA), with headquarters in Baroda, India, has instituted an Environmental Awareness Fund to honour a schoolchild every year for outstanding achievement in the field of environment. Nominations are accordingly invited (names and descriptions of their work) for the 'INSONA Conservation Award' of 1988 for environmental achievement, to reach the General Secretary at Baroda not later than 5th June 1988. No child should nominate himself/herself, but his/her institution must do so on his/her behalf.

The award being established to extend INSONA's tributes to endeavours/successes achieved in the service of the global environmental cause, the recipient each year will be presented with Rupees one thousand in cash and a memento. The recipients shall ultimately become an integral part of INSONA's cause for human well-being through

* Although this award was evidently intended for the school children of India, it seemed such an excellent idea that we are now happy to be able to announce that it is to be available henceforth to schoolchildren of all nations.—Ed.