

**Twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES**

The Twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP 12) to CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) was held in Santiago, Chile over 3–15 November 2002. Key issues that dominated the agenda were trade in ivory, and the broader issues of trade in marine fish and timber species. The discussions took place within the context of increasing recognition that biodiversity conservation should be linked with poverty alleviation in policy formulation and implementation. In his opening speech the CITES Secretary General, Willem Wijnstekers, stressed the need for this link to be demonstrable within the work of CITES.

The proposals submitted to CoP 12 by the main protagonists in the African elephant debate were similar to those presented at CoP 11 in Kenya in 2000. The southern African range states requested permission for a reopening of a regulated trade in ivory for their Appendix II listed populations, while Kenya and India called for all African elephant populations to be returned to Appendix I. Many predicted that Santiago would provide a re-run of the Nairobi meeting, where behind-the-scenes negotiations led to the withdrawal of the most controversial proposals and the status quo was left largely intact. But in Santiago the proponents of a regulated ivory trade were on stronger ground, and three southern African countries were eventually granted permission, subject to restrictive conditions, for one-off sales of ivory stocks.

One of the reasons for this change was the outcome of the fifth meeting of the African Range State Dialogue that was held immediately before CoP 12. The meeting was attended by 24 of the 37 range states, and it resulted in an unprecedented degree of consensus. With the exception of Kenya, all the other range states agreed to support versions of the proposals from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe for one-off sales of ivory stocks, followed by annual quotas. While Kenya subsequently called the consensus into question and alleged that undue pressure had been exerted by the CITES Secretariat, it received little support for this view. The level of agreement amongst the African states undoubtedly influenced the other Parties when the issue came up at CoP 12 itself.

The proposals from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe were considered in alphabetical order. At the start of the debate, Botswana produced an amended version of its proposal, and amended it further in the course of the discussion. The effect of these amendments was to remove the provision for annual quotas and to tighten the conditions for the one-off sale. The conditions require that only ivory from government owned stocks (excluding seized ivory) can be sold and that there will be no sale before May 2004 and in any event not before Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) has reported on the baseline information. In addition, the Standing Committee must confirm that these and other conditions have been satisfied.

All the proposals needed a two-thirds majority in order to pass. The Botswanan proposal was narrowly accepted (59/26, 21 abstentions). The debates on the other southern Africa proposals, which were amended to bring them into line with the Botswanan proposal, were shorter. The proposals from Namibia (65/28, 22 abstentions) and South Africa (64/24, 25 abstentions) were passed. The Zimbabwean proposal was rejected (57/54, 7 abstentions), a casualty of the economic and political problems in that country.

A Zambian proposal to 'downlist' their population to Appendix II and to have a one-off sale, was defeated. The joint Kenyan/Indian proposal to 'uplist' the southern African populations to Appendix I was ruled by the Chair to be no longer admissible in the case of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa (because of the decisions that had already been made). Kenya/India withdrew their proposal in relation to Zimbabwe.

Another factor, in addition to the greater consensus amongst African states, which may be influencing the debate on the ivory trade is the progress of two CITES programmes, the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) and MIKE. Both ETIS and MIKE emerged from the CoP 10 in Harare in 1997, the first meeting at which decisions were taken to allow one-off sales of ivory stocks. These programmes have the potential to allow for more informed decision making by the Parties and to build capacity within range states. ETIS is the more advanced, and its report to CoP 12 identified domestic ivory markets as important indicators of the illegal international trade in ivory. MIKE has been slower to get going and it has only been put into place across Africa in the last 18 months. The next step is to start to

implement it in Asia, and while some reservations were expressed there prior to CoP 12, many of these concerns appear to have been assuaged. MIKE received widespread support from the Parties in Santiago.

Two unanswered questions are left by CoP 12. Firstly, will the provisionally agreed one-off ivory sales actually take place, or will the Standing Committee rule that the requisite conditions have not been met? Secondly, will the greater consensus amongst African range states and the achievements of MIKE and ETIS lead to an enduring change in the way elephant conservation and the ivory trade is debated within CITES?

The discussions on trade in commercially important timber and fish species shared common elements. In his opening speech Willem Wijnstekers emphasized that it is time for CITES to work on these major groups of species in trade, working alongside the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Tropical Timber Organization. But there is considerable resistance in principle, as reflected in the stances taken by various countries during the meeting. The main arguments against are that other organizations have greater competency, and that CITES should stick to traditionally defined 'endangered species' rather than promoting broader aspects of sustainable management. Despite these reservations, agreements on specific listing proposals reached in Santiago reflect a significant broadening of the Convention to embrace management of highly significant commercial resource species.

One such species is big leaf mahogany *Swietenia macrophylla*, the premier commercial timber of Latin America (see also *Oryx* 37(1), 85–90, 2003). Proposals to list this species in Appendix II of the Convention have previously been narrowly rejected at Conferences of the Parties in 1992, 1994 and 1997. As an alternative, various exporting countries placed their populations of big leaf mahogany on CITES Appendix III. A formal CITES Mahogany Working Group was established in 2000 and has considered a range of issues including implementation of Appendix III listing, silviculture and harvesting, and illegal trade. The Working Group proved to be a valuable Forum and made useful recommendations, but many felt that only a CITES Appendix II listing would provide a mechanism for international cooperation in sustainable trade in the species. Government delegates from the US and Europe, the main importing countries for big leaf mahogany, in supporting the listing proposal, emphasized that it would help to ensure a continued and sustained trade in the species and should not be construed as a form of trade ban.

It has taken 10 years for international agreement to be reached on *Swietenia macrophylla*, and the next challenge will be to make the Appendix II listing work when it comes into force at the end of 2003. International

recognition that CITES does have a valid role to play in relation to timber species is partly in response to the lack of any other international trade mechanisms for timber species, and the growing awareness of the level of illegality in the international timber trade. As a next step for CITES, the Plants Committee has been charged with developing listing proposals for additional timber species based on the evaluation of tree species using the new CITES Listing Criteria (see [http://www.unep-wcmc.org/species/tree\\_study](http://www.unep-wcmc.org/species/tree_study)).

Proposals to list the world's two largest fish species, the whale shark *Rhincodon typus* and basking shark *Cetorhinus maximus*, in Appendix II of the Convention were supported during the final plenary session of the Conference in Chile, overturning decisions earlier in the week to reject the proposals. Following lengthy discussions during the meeting it was generally agreed that CITES should be seen as a complementary, rather than conflicting, management mechanism to the FAO International Plan of Action for Sharks.

Although the proposal to list another commercially important fish species, the Patagonian toothfish *Dissostichus eleginoides*, was unsuccessful in Chile, a decision was taken by the Conference concerning trade in this species and supporting the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources in its efforts to eliminate illegal fishing for toothfish. In general the need for CITES to work closely with other international management and trade regimes for commercial fish was broadly recognized in Chile – perhaps paving the way for a more significant role in controlling the trade in declining fish stocks – as with timber – in the future.

For more information on the CITES CoP see <http://www.cites.org>

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### Turkmenistan launches its Country Study and BSAP

At a well-attended National Conference in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on 28 August 2002, the Ministry of Nature Protection formally launched three documents that help fulfil the Turkmen government's obligations as a Party to the Convention on Biodiversity. These were the *Turkmenistan Country Study on the Status of Biodiversity*, the *Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Turkmenistan* (also known as the BSAP), and *Sustainable Development in Turkmenistan, Rio +10. National Survey*.

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) were involved throughout 2001 and 2002 in the preparation of two

of these documents, the Country Study and the BSAP, both of which were funded by the Global Environment Facility via the United Nations Development Programme. The Country Study is a comprehensive review of the status of biodiversity in Turkmenistan, while the BSAP provides a framework for planning conservation activities and projects over the next 10 years. FFI assisted by guiding the 10-member national team through the process of BSAP development, facilitating action planning and strategy development workshops, reviewing the scientific content and quality of drafts and acting as editors on all final English language versions of both documents.

As a former Soviet country currently reforming its economy and undergoing severe structural changes, Turkmenistan will be seeking to collaborate with external donors in order to find the financial resources to implement the conservation activities identified in its BSAP.

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### Recent conservation developments in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India form an archipelago of some 306 islands and 206 rocky outcrops stretching 700 km from north to south in the Bay of Bengal. The Islands have a total land area of 8,249 km<sup>2</sup> and are narrow and hilly, with a maximum altitude of 732 m. Annual precipitation is 3,000–3,500 mm, and the natural vegetation consists principally of tropical evergreen forest. Geographically, faunistically and floristically the Islands are 'closer' to Burma and Thailand than to the Indian mainland. The Islands are internationally recognized by IUCN as retaining exceptionally rich rainforests, mangroves and coral reefs, which are of national and global significance because of their high diversity and endemism. The rainforests are considered to be as equally important as the other two key Indian rainforest areas, in the Western Ghats and Northern Assam. About 2,500 species of flowering plants have been described from the Islands, of which 223 (14%) are endemic. Of the 52 species of mammals, 33 are endemic species or subspecies (63%). There are 244 species of birds, of which 96 taxa are endemic (39%), and 76 species of reptile of which 24 taxa (32%) are endemic. The reefs are the richest in India, with c. 200 identified species of coral. In addition, the Islands harbour six distinct native groups (four Negrito tribes on the Andamans: the Jarawa, Onges, Sentinelese, and Andamanese; and two Mongoloid tribes on the Nicobars, the Shompen and the Nicobarese).

However, in spite of their isolation, the indigenous ecosystems and inhabitants of the Islands face a number of growing threats, including logging and clearance of forest for agriculture, compounded by uncontrolled immigration from the Indian mainland. In April 1997 Fauna & Flora International started a Darwin Initiative project, *Protected Areas Management Planning in the Andamans*, to assess these threats and suggest solutions. The project was run in collaboration with two Indian partner organizations, the Andaman & Nicobar Environmental Team (ANET) and the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA). It ended in October 2002, with the publication of a book, *Sustainable Management of Protected Areas in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, which sets out a coherent overall strategy for biodiversity conservation, and a CD-ROM compilation of scientific literature on the Islands.

The project has contributed extensively to the knowledge of the biodiversity of the Andamans, with detailed faunal and floral species inventories for three National Parks: Mount Harriet National Park (South Andaman Island), Saddle Peak National Park (North Andaman Island) and Rani Jhansi Marine National Park (covering the islands of John Lawrence, Henry Lawrence and Outram and surrounding waters in Ritchie's Archipelago). Many species and subspecies of mammals and reptiles were recorded for the first time on the Andamans, and a new species of frog was discovered in Mount Harriet National Park and named after Charles Darwin: *Rana charlesdarwinii*. Threat assessments and management recommendations were made for these three key National Parks. As a follow-on activity ANET is currently helping the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Forest and Wildlife Department to write management plans for these protected areas, so that Darwin Initiative fieldwork results and recommendations will be directly incorporated into management on the ground. The Forest and Wildlife Department has also appointed ANET to write a management plan for Great Nicobar Island.

Project activities and workshops have resulted in a marked increase in awareness of conservation issues in the Islands, both amongst the general public and the Forest and Wildlife Department. A remarkable spirit of cooperation and synergy was achieved during a workshop to discuss protected area management in the Islands, held at Port Blair in July 2001, with the local Member of Parliament strongly supporting conservation recommendations, and the Admiral in charge of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Coastguard and Navy offering the use of his ships and air wing to support the Department of Environment and Forest, and ANET, in the course of patrols and surveys.

A significant additional achievement has come about through a key project partner's involvement in an

Indian Supreme Court process. In November 2001 all logging was temporarily banned in the Islands as a result of a complaint lodged by several non-governmental organizations about timber extraction in a Tribal Reserve on Little Andaman. The Supreme Court appointed a one person Commission of Enquiry, consisting of Shekhar Singh of the IIPA, to investigate the state of conservation in the Islands and make management recommendations. In May 2002 the Supreme Court accepted and enacted into law 45 out of 47 of the Commission's recommendations, which drew heavily on the results of the 2001 Port Blair workshop. These included the closure of the Andaman Trunk Road that cuts through the Jarawa Tribal Reserve, the phased reduction of sand mining from beaches, the cessation of all commercial logging, and the removal of illegally settled forest encroachers. It is widely felt that the 2001 Port Blair workshop was instrumental in allowing the Supreme Court Commission to arrive so quickly at a decision, because it had already gathered all the key stakeholders together and allowed them to voice and discuss their opinions in an official public forum. This is an all-too-rare example of conservationists' recommendations becoming rapidly incorporated into legislation. It is hoped that non-governmental conservation organizations and the Forest and Wildlife Department will now be able to capitalize on the Supreme Court decision and pursue conservation initiatives in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands backed by strong legal support from the highest court in the land, in order to secure the biodiversity of these remarkable islands for future generations.

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### Black rhino translocations into Malawi

In 1987 an optimistic estimate was given of 25 black rhinos *Diceros bicomis* occurring in Malawi, but in 1990 the species was officially declared extinct when Malawi's last black rhino was poached in Mwabwi Game Reserve. However, as reported in *Oryx* 32(1), 21 (1998), thanks to a project initiated by J&B Circle and supported by J&B Care for the Rare marketing campaign, a pair of black rhinos (Justerini and Brooks) were translocated from South Africa into Liwonde National Park in 1993. In June 1997 Justerini gave birth to a male calf Jet, and in September of the same year, Brooks broke out of the specially guarded and fenced Rhino Sanctuary into the main Park. He was recovered by the Kruger National Park capture team and returned to the sanctuary. This operation was again funded by J&B Circle and J&B Care

for the Rare. A further pair of black rhinos (Julia and Bentley) were brought into Liwonde in November 1998 and placed in an adjoining enclosure, and in the following year Justerini gave birth to her second male calf, Rydon.

A major set back in the project occurred when the fence between the two sanctuaries was removed in November 1999. The carcass of Brooks was discovered, probably killed by Bentley, around April 2000. Chimpanje and Chimwemwe, a breeding pair of black rhinos arrived in October 2000 and were placed in a third adjoining enclosure, and the aircraft that brought them in was utilized to send Jet to South Africa in order to forestall any further territorial fatalities.

The successful birth of Julia's first calf (as yet unsexed) in January 2001 was offset by another tragedy when the remains of Chimwemwe, containing a foetal calf, were discovered in May 2001. It is believed that her death was due to stress during translocation. However, Justerini gave birth to her third calf around October 2001, and Julia is expected to calve around April this year. Overall it is felt that thanks to the ready cooperation and assistance of several organizations and the dedicated work of a small number of volunteers, a valuable and viable breeding population of the Critically Endangered black rhino has been re-established in Malawi.

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### Darwin project discovers pink-billed parrotfinches in Fiji

A new project funded by the Darwin Initiative (see <http://www.darwin.gov.uk>) has just discovered a new population of pink-billed parrotfinches *Erythrura kleinschmidti*, endemic to Fiji. So few parrotfinches have been seen in the last few years that BirdLife International and IUCN have classified it as globally Endangered (see <http://www.birdlife.net/species>). In 4 days of fieldwork in December 2002 the project recorded 1–2 birds on 11 occasions, more than were recorded in the whole of the preceding decade!

Fiji has 88 native breeding bird species, of which 57 are terrestrial species and 27 are endemic to Fiji. Of these, one is Critically Endangered, two are Endangered and eight are Vulnerable – 41% of the endemic species. The two main threats are alien invasive species and forest loss. Fiji is biogeographically intermediate between the larger, species-rich Melanesian islands and the small, depauperate Polynesian islands. Like Polynesia, Fiji lost many species to pre-historic predation by both humans

and introduced alien invasive mammals, notably rats and cats. More recently, introduction of the small Indian mongoose *Herpestes auro-punctatus* to the larger islands has caused the extinction of the endemic bar-winged rail *Nesoclopeus poecilopterus* and the extirpation of other ground-nesting birds. Like Melanesia, Fiji retains relatively large areas of forest under traditional tribal ownership. This gives an opportunity to plan large conservation areas, but only through developing the interest and commitment of the landowners.

The new project, *Identifying sites of global biodiversity conservation importance for the Fiji Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan*, is using the pink-billed parrotfinch and other threatened and endemic birds as biodiversity indicators. It is a 3-year project managed by BirdLife International in partnership with the University of the South Pacific (USP). Working together with other conservation organizations in Fiji to help the government achieve its Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP), the project will develop registers of sites of global biodiversity importance for use in planning a network of conservation areas. Three project staff plus staff from partner organizations, including USP and the National Trust of Fiji, will undertake literature surveys and fieldwork, and promote site-based conservation to communities and governments. All published data on threatened terrestrial biodiversity, including reports from local stakeholders, will be collated. At priority sites with inadequate data, fieldwork will be undertaken to research their biodiversity value, focusing on endemic birds. The survey teams will also investigate the conservation threats to the sites, the attitude of local communities towards conservation, and initiate community awareness exercises. All sites meeting the criteria for biodiversity importance will be included in a register for use in Fiji's BSAP and the Fiji National Trust's National Heritage Register. BirdLife will then work with land-owning communities, government, non-governmental organizations and donors to promote conservation action in selected priority sites. Hitherto, Fiji has had very little capacity to undertake terrestrial conservation work, and the main aim of the project is to enthuse and train Fijian conservationists to lead this work themselves.

The pink-billed parrotfinch is endemic to forests in the wet eastern part of the main Fijian island of Viti Levu. As a threatened endemic with beautiful plumage (as well as a remarkably large bright pink bill!), this species is a suitable flagship for awareness and education work. The project has discovered that although unobtrusive, it has a distinctive call, which has enabled the team to find the species at a further three sites. At one of these sites, Vilikesa Masibalavu, the Project Coordinator, managed to hear, find and then show a pink-billed

parrotfinch to intrigued village youths. The project will return to this community and use this species in raising awareness about their forests, its endemic and threatened biodiversity, and its conservation. More information on the project can be obtained at <http://www.birdlife.org/pacific>

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### Great ape conservation fund for orang-utan protection

Although orang-utans, which live only on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo, have a strictly protected status, their wild populations have decreased dramatically during the last 20 years. This decline has been caused by habitat destruction, hunting, and illegal trade of young individuals. The distribution range of the Sumatran orang-utan *Pongo abelii* is largely restricted to northern Sumatra (but see *Oryx* 37(1), 49–52, 2003), whereas that of *Pongo pygmaeus* in Borneo is fragmented in relatively small areas in the east, south-west and centre of the island. The largest Bornean orang-utan population is found in the south-west of the island where Gunung Palung National Park and its surrounding forests have been confirmed as the most viable habitat for this great ape. This is due to the diversity of habitats in Gunung Palung, which allows the orang-utan population to migrate between swamp, peat, lowland and montane forests to track different fruiting seasons.

Although habitat destruction, forest fragmentation and a growing human population threaten the long-term viability of the orang-utan population, the capturing of orang-utans poses the most immediate threat. This threat was recognized at the orang-utan reintroduction and protection workshop held on 15–18 June 2001 in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan. During the workshop it was recommended that in order to promote the enforcement of both habitat and orang-utan protection, it is necessary to develop patrol units specializing in orang-utan protection. These units could be modelled on the rhino and tiger patrol units in Sumatra, which place a high priority on combatting illegal capture, both through preventive action and through community education programmes.

Because there have been no functioning patrol units, and no collection of data on poaching or law enforcement in Gunung Palung National Park, an initiative has been taken to support the establishment of a model programme for Orang-utan Protection and Monitoring

Units in Gunung Palung. The project on the establishment of the Units will be funded by the Great Ape Conservation Fund. The Units will provide immediate support to the Park authorities to take action to detect, prevent and deter orang-utan capture in and around protected areas, and to halt and deter illegal logging activities. The Orang-utan Protection and Monitoring Units will be trained by a team from Sumatra who have experience with patrol units for rhino and tiger. Selective members of the Units will also be trained in the collection of field data and in the monitoring of habitat changes.

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### The Javan hawk-eagle in Gunung Halimun National Park

The Javan hawk-eagle *Spizaetus bartelsi* is a rare crested eagle endemic to Java that depends on remaining patches of primary forest. Its population in the wild is threatened by illegal poaching, habitat degradation and the use of pesticides for agriculture. Gunung Halimun National Park is the largest remnant montane forest block on Java and is believed to harbour the highest population of this Endangered eagle. In order to support the conservation of this flagship species, the Fauna & Flora International-Indonesia Programme has collaborated with the Research Centre for Biology of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, the Division of Gunung Halimun National Park of the Ministry of Forestry, and the Biodiversity Conservation Project in Indonesia (Japanese International Cooperation Agency, see <http://www.bcpjica.org>) to implement some of the activities prioritized in the Javan Hawk-eagle Recovery Plan. The activities include identifying the species' local distribution and preferred habitat, regular population monitoring at certain sites, and capacity building. There are 14 localities in the Park that have been identified, mostly primary forest (see *Berita Biologi*, 5, 649–657, 2001). Regular population monitoring has been conducted since 2000, and has recorded important information on the home range size of juveniles and age at first moult. Capacity building to improve skills for monitoring and protection of the Javan hawk-eagle population was carried out by providing field training to 12 rangers, 5 national park staff and 6 local community members. The training was also assisted by the raptor expert from the Asian Raptor Research and Conservation Network through the framework of the Biodiversity Conservation Project in Indonesia.

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### New and improved internet resources

The *Global Trees Campaign*, a partnership between Fauna & Flora International and UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre, now has its own website at <http://www.globaltrees.org>. Over 8,000 tree species, 10% of the world's total, are threatened with extinction, and destruction of woodland and forest and unsustainable felling of valuable timbers are causing the loss of many important species. The Global Trees Campaign aims to save the world's most threatened tree species and their habitats through information, conservation and wise use. The campaign focuses on trees as flagship species for conservation of ecosystems and landscapes, and enables local people to carry out rescue and sustainable use operations. The Global Trees Campaign is working in partnership with organizations around the world to save threatened trees.

At <http://wcs.org/humanfootprint> the Wildlife Conservation Society presents a new, comprehensive map of the human 'footprint', or "patterns of human influence across the land's surface." The map adds together influences from population density, access from roads and waterways, electrical power infrastructure, and land transformation such as urbanization and agricultural use. Recently published in *Bioscience* (52(10), 891–904, 2002), the study reveals that human beings "directly influence more than three quarters of the earth's land-mass". The data on which the study is based is available at [http://www.ciesin.columbia.edu/wild\\_areas](http://www.ciesin.columbia.edu/wild_areas)

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London, UK has made two important internet tools available: *ePic* and the *Kew Library Catalogue*. *ePIC*, the electronic Plant Information Centre (<http://www.kew.org/epic>) allows searching for plant information across four databases held at Kew: the *International Plant Names Index*, bibliographic data in the *Kew Record of Taxonomic Literature*, information about the economic uses of plants in the *Survey of Economic Plants of Arid and SemiArid Lands*, and the *Living Collection* of c. 30,000 plant taxa. The *Kew Library Catalogue* (<http://www.kew.org/library/catalogue.html>) makes Kew's collections available to a worldwide readership for the first time.

*BDGEOPRIM*, a *Database of Georeferenced Occurrence Localities of Neotropical Primates*, developed at the Department of Zoology of the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, is a georeferenced data base of 5,631 locality records for 18 genera, 110 species and 205 species and subspecies of primates for 21 countries in the Neotropical region. The development of this database was made possible by the support of the Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation. *BDGEOPRIM* can be accessed at [http://www.icb.ufmg.br/~primatas/home\\_bdgeoprim.htm](http://www.icb.ufmg.br/~primatas/home_bdgeoprim.htm)