

## The Oryx 100% Fund

### Reports received

*Bolivia '88 (Project No. 88/8/2).* A team from Oxford University spent 7 weeks in areas of forest in the Pando department of northern Bolivia that had been censused for primates in 1987 by a team from the same university. The primary object was to survey the trees, with a subsidiary goal of additional primate censusing. The report presents vegetation descriptions of the sites as well as species lists and ethnobotanical information from local people. Several species are new records for the area, including a little known mahogany *Cabralea canjerana*, which has excellent timber characteristics. The primate study used a different method from the 1987 census but gave similar estimates of population densities and reinforced the general trends noted then. The report also mentions that in the summer of 1989 an Oxford University/Imperial College expedition visited the same study area to carry out further botanical work and discovered the presence of true mahogany *Swietenia macrophylla*, the most important timber species in Latin America. It is suffering from logging throughout its range and such unexploited populations should be protected. The report suggests that the study area could be suitable as an extractive reserve; local people already depend on sustainable harvesting of rubber and Brazil nuts, but the forest is threatened by agricultural development, resettlement, roads, ranching, mineral extraction and logging.

*Economic appraisal of land-use options in Okomu Forest Reserve, Nigeria (Project No. 88/33/15).* This 3-month study was undertaken to appraise three different forms of land use in Okomu Forest Reserve in Nigeria. The oil palm plantations were financially attractive but had the very high environmental costs characteristic of commercial monocultures: irreversible loss of forest biodiversity, removal of forest functions, and pollution of air and water. Given that there are areas of suitable land available elsewhere it appears sensible that further commercial plantations are allocated on land outside reserves. *Taungya*

*crop/tree plantation* is a method of employing shifting cultivation of food crops on cleared land followed by planting trees in pure stands for future logging. The food crops yield relatively high returns but the return from the trees depends on which species are planted. Since the conversion of forest land for farming and monoculture tree planting results in environmental degradation through declining soil fertility and loss of biodiversity this method should be discouraged. There have been several attempts to abolish this system of land use, but local farmers have resisted them vigorously. However, in 1989 no new areas of previously unfarmed forest land were set aside for this system.

Selective logging combined with the sustainable use of secondary forest products offers potentially the highest financial rewards of all three systems considered even though the full financial and environmental benefits of this system are likely to be undervalued. However, in recent years forest compartments have been allocated for timber extraction before the period of natural regeneration is completed, which severely undermines the sustainability of the system.

*Cambridge Sarawak Rainforest Expedition 1986 (Project No. 86/12/5).* Similajau National Park, near Bintulu, Sarawak, was gazetted in 1979 on account of its breeding turtles, but it had never been surveyed comprehensively. From 6 August–16 September 1986 a joint University of Cambridge/National Park and Wildlife Office of the Sarawak Forest Department team visited the park with the main aim of compiling a bird inventory. The results are published as ICBP Study Report No. 31. The bird community was found to be fairly typical of coastal dipterocarp forest and 187 species were recorded including some that are threatened. The 29 species of mammals that were also seen appeared to be at low densities, except for the Bornean gibbon *Hylobates muelleri*, which appeared common and widespread. Hunters' camps, trails and animal skulls were evidence of the hunting pressure to which the wildlife is exposed. Another problem for wild animals may result from disturbance caused by the recent opening of the

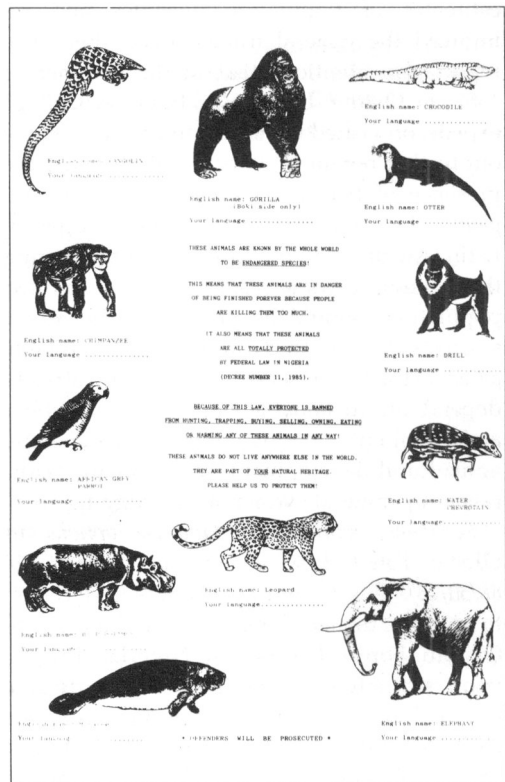
park to visitors. The most important priority is the development of a management plan; other recommendations include stationing guards and erecting signs to combat poaching, conducting a turtle survey, developing tourism, managing the surrounding reserve in a way sympathetic to the needs of large birds and mammals that may cross the park borders, and assessing whether the park is large enough to support viable populations of Bornean gibbons, wrinkled hornbills *Rhyticeros corrugatus* and Bornean bristleheads *Pityriasis gymnocephala*.

UEA Mexico Expeditions 1988 and 1989 (Project Nos 88/12/4 and 89/59/29). These reports detail the studies undertaken by two University of East Anglia teams to assist the Institute of Natural History, which manages a number of ecological reserves in Chiapas, Mexico. The work consisted of vegetation mapping, and compiling botanical and ornithological inventories in the vicinity of El Triunfo reserve, which was established to protect the largest areas of cloud and montane forest remaining in Central America. Much undisturbed forest was found on the land outside the actual reserve and part of the Institute's work is gaining the co-operation of local people to ensure that this is managed sensitively.

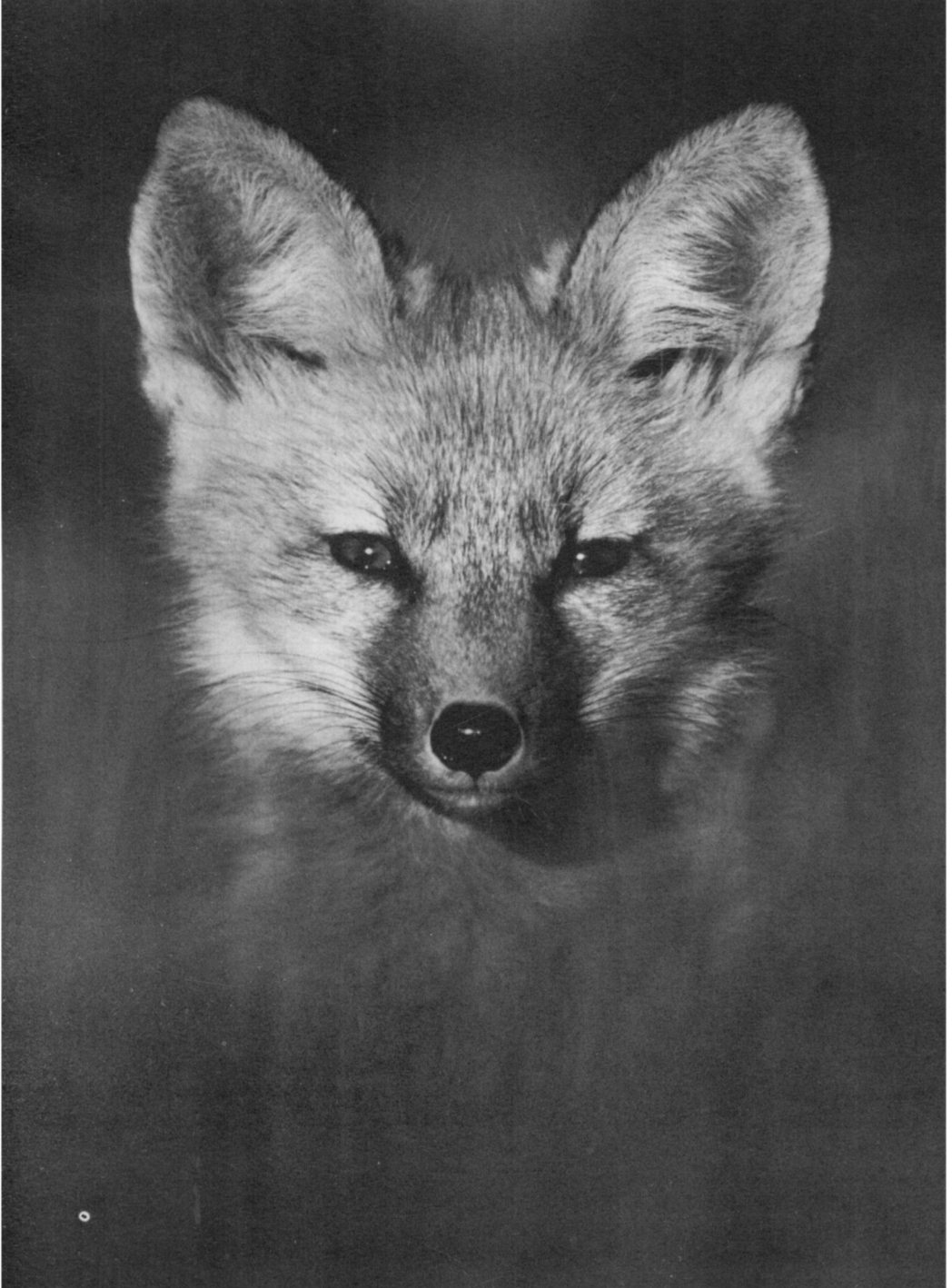
*Giant Weta Captive-Breeding Programme* (Project No. 87/55/23). New Zealand's Department of Scientific and Industrial Research Ecology Division received a grant in 1988 for a captive-breeding project for two species of giant weta—the Mahoenui giant weta *Deinacrida mahoenui* and the Kaikoura giant weta *D. parva*. After applying for the grant a large population of Mahoenui giant weta was found in a 300-ha area of gorse and the Department of Conservation has bought and fenced part of it as a weta reserve. Firebreaks were bulldozed clear and wetas rescued before the operation were released into other conservation areas. The species proved difficult to breed in captivity but success was finally achieved in January 1990 when 100 eggs laid 10 months previously hatched. The key to success seems to have been to keep the wetas outside in shade houses

rather than inside in cages, to supply live rather than cut plant material and to use a sprinkler on occasional nights. As a good population of the other weta has also now been found on conservation land and is not considered under immediate threat, captive-breeding attempts were not pursued for this species. It is believed that the technique developed for the Mahoenui weta would also work for this species were it ever deemed necessary to breed it in captivity.

Alison Ballance, recipient of the grant, writes that it was pleasing to announce the success with the wetas on New Zealand television's national news; public interest in giant wetas is continuing to grow and it is heartening to learn that these insects are such good flagships for invertebrate conservation.



This is part of a leaflet for hunters in Cross River State, Nigeria, advising them of the species that are protected and why it is important to respect the law. It was prepared with the help of the Oryx 100% Fund (Project No. 88/55/26).



Wendy Shattil's portrait of a fox cub in the suburbs of her home-town of Denver, USA, made her the overall winner in the Wildlife Photographer of the Year 1990 Competition. Report on page 60.

**Study tour of West Malaysia**

Dr David Chivers, FFPS Vice-Chairman, is leading a 2-week study tour to the forests of the Malay Peninsula from 7 to 21 September 1991. The itinerary will include visits to mangrove, hill dipterocarp and submontane forests and there will be opportunities to observe the behaviour of birds and primates (gibbons, langurs and macaques). Other mammals—cats, elephants, pigs and deer—may also be seen or heard. The ecology of these animals will be studied as well as their relationship with humans as the forests are increasingly exploited. Consideration will be given as to how such forests may be protected or managed for sustained yields of a wide variety of forest products. Further details of the tour can be obtained from: Adult Education Study Tours Ltd, Granville House, 49 The Mall, Faversham, Kent ME13 8JN (Telephone 0795 539744).

**British Gas Wildlife Photographer of the Year 1990 Competition**

The competition, sponsored by British Gas and organized by BBC Wildlife Magazine and The Natural History Museum in association with the FFPS, attracted a total of 9000 entries from 38 countries. Wendy Shattil was the overall winner with a portrait of a fox cub shown on page 59. She wins the British Gas award—a bronze trophy of an ibis—and a 2-week holiday to Belize, provided by Programme for Belize. The exhibition of winning and commended photographs is at the Natural History Museum, London from 29 November to 31 January 1991. After that it will tour the UK and can be seen at the following venues:  
 1–28 February: Zoological Museum, Tring;  
 10 March–14 April: Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh and Hull Town Docks Museum, Hull;  
 21 April–26 May: Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge and Margrove Heritage Centre, Saltburn, Cleveland.

Details and entry forms for the 1991 competition can be obtained from Helen Gilks, Wildlife Photographer of the Year

Competition, c/o BBC Wildlife Magazine, Broadcasting House, Whiteladies Road, Bristol BS8 2LR, UK (Telephone: 0273 238166).

**Members' meetings**

On Thursday 31 January 1991 film-maker Michael McKinnon will show his film, *The Mountain Barrier*, and talk about the making of the popular series, *Arabia—Sand, Sea and Sky*. The meeting will be held at the Zoological Society of London. See insert in this issue for full details and booking form.

For information about local group meetings, please write to the appropriate address given below, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

*Bristol and the West of England Group*

Ian Redmond, c/o BBC Wildlife Magazine, Broadcasting House, Whiteladies Road, Bristol BS8 2LR.

*Cambridge Group*

Dr C. Harcourt, 70 Victoria Road, Cambridge CB4 3DU.

*Edinburgh Group*

Roger Wheeler, Edinburgh Zoo, Murrayfield, Edinburgh EH12 6TS.

*North-West Group*

Nick Ellerton, Chester Zoo, Caughall Road, Upton, Chester CH2 1LH.

*Oxford Group*

David Macdonald, Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS.

**FFPS moves back to London**

From January 1991 the FFPS secretariat will be housed at 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR, UK. The new offices have been made available by the Royal Geographical Society.