

Multimillion dollar award for integrating environmental protection into post-tsunami recovery in Aceh Province, Sumatra

The earthquake and tsunami of December 2004 devastated Aceh's society, economy, infrastructure and institutions, especially along the west coast. In this narrow coastal belt communities and agricultural lands abut protected forests and karst mountain ranges. These forested areas include the Gunung Leuser National Park and Ecosystem in the south, and the Ulu Masen Forest Complex in the north. This area is unique, comprising the largest remaining contiguous forest (3.3 million ha) and harbouring the richest assemblage of biodiversity in South-east Asia, including tigers, elephants, rhinos and orang-utans. These areas also provide ecological services vital to Aceh's recovery, including water, flood prevention, erosion mitigation and climate regulation.

Large-scale housing reconstruction and infrastructure repairs have created an unprecedented demand for timber that could lead to widespread, uncontrolled logging of protected forests. To address this problem an environmental and forest protection project fully consistent with the Aceh Reconstruction Master Plan was proposed by Fauna & Flora International and the Leuser International Foundation. This Master Plan, which enumerates strategies and actions to conserve the Leuser Ecosystem and other protected areas and watershed protection forests, was developed by the Government of Indonesia through a multi-stakeholder consultative process, with technical support from the World Bank and other donors, and adopted as national law in April 2005. The Government endorsed the project concept to the Aceh Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency in June 2005. The Agency endorsement, secured 2 months later upon submission to the Multi-Donor Fund set up after the tsunami and administered by the World Bank, means that project priorities are consistent with the Government of Indonesia's policies and strategies for rebuilding Aceh to improved standards.

In February 2006 the project was awarded GBP 10 million (USD 17.5 million) from the Multi-Donor Fund to integrate environmental protection into post-tsunami reconstruction. The project will be located in Aceh under the supervision of a Steering Committee including the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency, the Governor of Aceh, the Multi-Donor Fund and responsible

Provincial Government technical agencies. Fauna & Flora International and the Leuser International Foundation, who both have a long history of working in Aceh, will implement the project. The grant is unusual because the one-off environmental award is distinct from the World Bank's normal environmental grant-making. The new project will help the people of Aceh rebuild their lives without destroying the things they depend on.

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Hope for the forests and people of Liberia through community forestry

In early December 2005 an international workshop on community forestry in Liberia paved the way for mobilizing a democratic transition in the nation's forestry sector. The workshop, coorganized by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), and the Liberia Forestry Development Authority, with support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), brought together nearly 100 participants representing a cross-section of stakeholders involved in the forestry sector. Four productive days of discussion in plenary and working groups resulted in a consensus set of priorities and actions that were captured in the form of a declaration endorsed by all participants.

The declaration emphasized the need for harnessing Liberia's forest wealth to reach all Liberians by aligning community interests with industrial exploitation. The social, legal and institutional framework for this will benefit from experiences elsewhere on the continent. The Forestry Development Authority (FDA), which has hitherto operated as a commercial parastatal, is working on a new Forestry Policy that will embody commercial forestry, community forestry and conservation. Major donors such as the World Bank, USAID, and the European Union are working with international organizations such as Conservation International and Fauna & Flora International within the framework of the Liberia Forest Initiative to help develop relevant technical and human capacity needs. This will depend on the lifting of the UN sanctions imposed on the forestry sector for the last 4 years.

A major assumption for espousing community forestry within the FDA is that community empowerment will be an important driver of community development in a country that is emerging from over a decade of civil conflict. For empowerment, communities must have access to and sustainable use of assets available to them, including those of their forests. Studies carried out earlier by CIFOR and ICRAF researchers revealed a great potential for community development through sustainable management of forest resources. Deliberating on these studies and other information presented by a wide range of stakeholders in Liberian forestry, the workshop recognized the need to incorporate a wider range of environmental issues in analysis and debate on biodiversity conservation, agriculture, land use, and natural resource management. Of particular significance for Liberia's forests is the prospect of safeguarding unique assemblages of endemic and threatened Upper Guinean flora and fauna, as well as maintaining important environmental services that have both local and global values.

Community forestry in Liberia is a unique opportunity to demonstrate the link between science and development for effective management of forests. Communities are keen to explore options that will enhance their rights over forested lands, help them build assets and generate income from enterprises. These options need to be based on models that will help generate practical knowledge for communities and stakeholders to use. These include research on options for forest and tree enterprises, institutional arrangements, environmental service payments, improved land productivity, and integrated landscape management. Community forestry may help create pathways out of poverty in a country that has suffered years of civil strife, and whose population is largely disenfranchised.

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India's tiger crisis

There has recently been a spate of media reports about the tiger crisis in India. The crisis came to the world's attention when an Indian journalist highlighted the fact that no tigers had been seen in the high profile Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan since June 2004. This tiger crisis is, however, nothing new. In the early 1970s the

Indian government, with support from international conservation organizations, set up dedicated tiger reserves. With strict enforcement backed by able leadership in the government the tiger made a remarkable comeback in the wild during 1970–1990. The recent news reports have, however, drawn attention yet again to the conservation of India's tigers.

This new tiger crisis has arisen since the early 1990s. The most significant threats to tigers are the degradation and fragmentation of habitat and decline of prey species. India's new economic policy initiated in the early 1990s, essential for the well-being of people but lacking appropriate environmental controls, has led to the permanent degradation or loss of many wildlife habitats. In addition there is a shortage of staff in tiger reserves, which are facing increased anthropogenic pressures in the form of human induced fire, livestock grazing, legal and illegal logging, poaching of the tiger for trade, and retaliatory killing. In recent years there has also been a lack of political will to conserve wildlife.

In addition, government protection agencies and several multilateral aid agencies have shifted their focus from field conservation to rural developmental activities, placing massive rural development funds into tiger reserve budgets. This has shifted the focus of reserve staff from protection of tigers and their habitat to rural developmental work, leading to the collapse of anti-poaching activities, and large scale corruption and mismanagement of tiger and other wildlife reserves in the name of development (see also *Oryx*, 37, 402). In response to the crisis the Indian government set up the Tiger Task Force, which submitted its report *Joining the Dots* in August 2005. Unlike most government agencies the Task Force showed transparency by placing the report on the internet (<http://projecttiger.nic.in/TTF2005/index.html>).

The report acknowledges that inviolate spaces need to be maintained for tigers away from incompatible human uses, and recommends incentive driven resettlement of people in certain areas within 1 year. The suggested time period is, however, impractically short. The report suggests that revenue for tiger reserves could come through charging for the watershed services provided by reserves and recovering costs from forest and tourism based industries.

In December 2005, following the TTF report, the setting up of a National Tiger Conservation Authority was announced, under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Environment and Forests. The Authority will comprise biologists, social scientists, members of parliament and a senior government official, and will set guidelines for tiger reserves including scientific monitoring, disease surveillance, eco-development and community participation. The report also recommended that an

improved model for tiger monitoring is required to replace the current discredited pugmark methodology. Government-led nationwide tiger, prey and habitat monitoring is now underway using encounter rates and pellet and vegetation sampling.

India has >300,000 km² of potential tiger habitat and is estimated to have over half the world's wild tiger population. In prey rich habitats in India tigers can attain densities of up to 20 tigers per 100 km². It will, however, take political will and commitment to solve this so-called new tiger crisis.

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Bocourt's terrific skink of New Caledonia is not extinct!

Bocourt's terrific skink *Phoboscincus bocourti* was described as *Eumeces bocourti* in 1876 by Paul Louis Antoine Brocchi based on a single specimen collected in c. 1870 (precise date unknown) by a French botanist, Benjamin Balansa. Balansa, however, never visited the collection site, the Isle of Pines, and mostly prospected on the eastern coast of Grande Terre. The species is dedicated to Marie-Firmin Bocourt, a French zoologist. The holotype, with a total length of 59.5 cm and a snout-vent length of 27.5 cm, was deposited in the collection of the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle (Paris, MNHN 3029) on 28 October 1872. This lizard was considered extinct as no observations had been made since the holotype was collected (A.R. Bauer & R.A. Sadlier, 2000, *The Herpetofauna of New Caledonia*. Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles). With its elongated, curved and sharp teeth this giant species was considered to be a predator of lizards and perhaps also of birds.

In December 2003 during a field trip devoted to sea snakes on a small islet off Isle of Pines, I collected an individual of *Phoboscincus bocourti* measuring c. 50 cm total length. It was photographed, filmed and released. This finding shed new light on the possible survival of several other insular skink species considered extinct but that could be secretive animals (e.g. the Tongan giant skink *Tachygyia microlepis*, known only from the two type specimens; I. Ineich & G.R. Zug, 1997, *Cryptozoology*, 12, 30–35). After this unexpected finding the Direction des Ressources Naturelles of the South Province of New Caledonia requested that a trip be made to the same islet to determine the status of the terrific skink. During 2 weeks in November 2005 pitfall, funnel, wood and glue traps and metallic rodent traps were set, and a 400 m trail was cleared of leaves, branches and rocks so that it was

possible to walk on it silently day and night. However, only one additional giant lizard was collected, and later released. Its snout-vent length was 19 cm and its tail had the same length. Its colouration was intermediate between that of the December 2003 specimen and the juvenile illustrated by Bauer & Sadlier (op. cit.) in which Figure F of Plate 20 shows a juvenile of *P. bocourti* erroneously attributed to *Phoboscincus garnieri*, a species not present on the islet. This juvenile was found starving on a beach and I suspect it may have fallen from the claws of an osprey; unfortunately this specimen was not conserved.

The islet is relatively characteristic of the satellite islets off the Isle of Pines and is well preserved. It is uninhabited and people visit infrequently. Rats are abundant but lizard species other than the terrific skink are common. This, the only known population of Bocourt's terrific skink, does not appear to be directly threatened but it needs to be carefully monitored. It is possible that the terrific skink also occurs on other islets off the Isle of Pines, on Isle of Pines itself and even on Grande Terre, but this needs to be verified.

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Debilitating skin disease in blue sheep of Khunjerab National Park, Pakistan

In early December 1996 a Shimshali yak herder noticed that the wild blue sheep *Pseudois nayaur*, which share the high altitude winter grazing with the Shimshali herd of c. 1,000 yaks, near Sherlik on the Pakistan-Chinese border, were suffering from a debilitating and often fatal skin disease. In July 2000 David Butz, a social geographer on a visit to Shimshal village on the southern edge of the Khunjerab National Park, was told 'that many blue sheep were dying at high altitudes of some as yet undiagnosed disease'. The Shimshali herdsmen said they had seen an estimated 'several hundred' blue sheep carcasses on some of the more remote high altitude meadows near Sherlik during the early summer of 2000. Whereas healthy Blue sheep are very shy, the sick Blue sheep become indifferent to human approach and Dr Butz was able to take some photographs of affected blue sheep on the Pamir.

The herdsmen said that the disease did not appear to be seasonal and that it affected both sexes equally and all age groups. They considered that the blue sheep population, which they estimated to be c. 1,500, was declining as a result of the disease. The herdsmen suspected the disease had originated several years previously among

the blue sheep population living across the Shaksam river in China with which there is said to be some seasonal, cross-border interchange. They were concerned the disease would spread southwards to the blue sheep population on their side of the international border and would infect their domestic animals at the summer settlements south of the Shimshal Pass. Sympatric ibex *Capra ibex sibirica* and the Shimshali domestic sheep and goats (c. 5,000) and yaks (c. 1,000) do not as yet appear to be clinically affected.

David Butz passed this information to me in my capacity as the then chairman of the IUCN/SSC Veterinary Specialist Group and in April 2001 I visited Shimshal village with the help of the Aga Khan Rural Support Project in order to discuss the implications of the blue sheep disease syndrome with the Shimshali villagers. It was not politically possible at that time to visit the Shimshali Pamir to carry out a diagnostic investigation. However, in early 2005 it became possible to arrange for a sick blue sheep to be shot by a Shimshali hunter and buried in a glacier to await the arrival of a diagnostic team.

In May 2005 K. Powell and myself, with David Butz and eight porters, made the 4-day trek from Shimshal village to the blue sheep areas at Arbob Purien, Shuijerab and beyond. We exhumed the shot blue sheep and collected diagnostic specimens. The specimens were examined at the National Veterinary Laboratories, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Islamabad, and with the assistance of Dr Qurban Ali a diagnosis of sarcoptic mange was made.

Several possible veterinary interventions have since been considered for the treatment of the wild blue sheep for their sarcoptic mange infestation. However, in view of the difficulty of access, the extremes of altitude and climate and the paucity of information about the blue sheep population, these interventions have been rejected as impracticable for the present. Because sarcoptic mange in wildlife is often associated with malnutrition, it is important that an environmental study of the herbivore carrying capacity (both wild and domestic) is carried out on the high altitude Shimshali Pamirs in the Khunjerab National Park. Concurrently the Shimshali herdsman are being advised to inject their livestock biannually with ivermectin, an intestinal parasiticide and sarcopticide. Funding has been secured for a Pakistani veterinarian to carry out the parasitocidal injections in spring 2006.

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Return of teal to Campbell Island

Campbell Island is New Zealand's southernmost subantarctic island at 52°S. The 11,000 ha island is an

uninhabited nature reserve and host to a variety of birds and marine mammals. One bird species, the flightless Campbell Island teal, had been thought to be extinct for nearly 200 years until a few birds were found on a steep islet off the island's west coast in the late 1980s. Some birds were taken away for captive breeding and now there are c. 200 Campbell Island teal in existence, virtually all tracing back to a single female. Campbell Island teal remains, however, the world's rarest duck species.

Before the birds could be successfully reintroduced to the island, New Zealand's Department of Conservation carried out the world's largest rat eradication programme, eliminating all the rats with helicopter dropped baits in the winter of 2001. In September 2004 the first 50 teal were taken back for release on the island, and in September 2005 a second batch of 55 were returned. At the same time 17 of the teal released in 2004 were screened for disease, as were other bird species on the island. All the teal were in excellent body condition, a testimony to the amount of food available on the island. Apart from blood profiles, the birds were tested for pasteurellosis, chlamydia, avian influenza and paramyxovirus, yersinia, campylobacter and internal parasites, and all results were negative. New Zealand's Endangered Yellow eyed penguin were found to be positive to *Mannheimia haemolytica*. Juvenile southern royal albatross chicks and adult black-browed mollymawks were also tested, and the blood parasite *Hepatozoon albatrossi* was found in albatross lymphocytes.

Moving around a subantarctic island is not easy. There are tracks but, despite only occasional visitors, the wet climate (it rains 320 days a year) and the low temperatures (average 6°C) mean that regeneration and natural track repair is slow. Footprints were still visible from the last visitors 6 months before.

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Planning a common educational strategy for Andean cat conservation

The Andean cat *Oreailurus jacobita*, which only inhabits the high Andes of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru, is one of the most threatened and least known cats in the world. In 2004 the Andean Cat Alliance published the *Andean Cat Conservation Action Plan*, which identified human persecution as the primary threat and listed the design and implementation of a global educational campaign as a priority for the long-term conservation of this rare felid.

To accomplish this goal an International Workshop on Conservation Education for the Andean Cat was

held on 14–16 November 2005 in Salta, Argentina. The meeting was organized by M.J. Merino and M. Lucherini (Universidad Nacional del Sur) and P. Perovic (Universidad Nacional de Salta) of Argentina in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Network, USA, BP Conservation Programme, UK, and Darwin Initiative, UK, and included the participation of C. Sillero-Zubiri, Chairman of the IUCN Canid Specialist Group and leader of the successful Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme. The workshop also received the full endorsement of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group.

The workshop participants represented seven teams working to increase public awareness and acceptance of the Andean cat in the four range countries. Delegates shared experiences, discussed achievements and problems, and finally agreed on a common educational strategy to support the conservation of this felid through the participation of local communities. The strategy will be summarized in a manual for environmental educators that will include specific formal and informal activities and tools targeted at audiences ranging from school students to adult local inhabitants and the general public. Many of these activities and tools have been tested over the last 5 years by the EduGat programme of The Soul of the Andes project in Argentina. This innovative and highly participative approach will help maximize the efficiency of available resources and may set an example for similar conservation initiatives.

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New carnivore species in Borneo may not be new

In December 2005 WWF staff claimed to have discovered a new, mysterious carnivore species in the dense, central forests of Borneo (http://www.panda.org/news_facts/newsroom/index.cfm?uNewsID=52960) and the information appeared widely in the media. However researchers failed to mention that the mysterious animal looks like the poorly known Hose's palm civet *Diplogale hosei*, a similarly shaped and coloured forest viverrid occurring in the northern part of Borneo.

Comparison with recent pictures of this species (*Small Carnivore Conservation*, 30, 18–19, & 31, 3–5) reinforces this identification. The WWF authors did not provide any information on the height of the camera trap, which would have given an indication of the size of the animal. Apart from size, the only diagnostic feature that may differentiate this animal from Hose's civet is the colour.

However, this can be affected by the flash of the camera-trap. Also, colour variation in carnivores is common and has been described in palm civets (*Mammal Review*, 34, 307–310). As the head cannot be seen entirely in the photographs, identification as another viverrid or cat species, such as the bay cat *Catopuma badia*, cannot be excluded. The WWF authors wrote that local naturalists did not know this species, and that Hose's civet has never been recorded in the Indonesian part of Borneo. Although its range was for many years believed to be restricted to a small area in Sarawak, it has now been discovered in Sabah and Brunei (*Small Carnivore Conservation*, 30, 18–19) and could therefore also occur in central Borneo.

Discovering an unknown carnivore species in this area remains possible. However, we believe that the authors did not adequately rule out having photographed an existing species. Surprisingly, these pictures were taken in 2003 but were not widely circulated within the small carnivore specialist community to check the identification. The camera-trap photographs do not provide sufficiently strong evidence and diagnostic features for claiming that is a new species.

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Fire seriously damages Flower Valley

A high-profile Fauna & Flora International project has suffered in one of the many fires sweeping the southwest of South Africa. Flower Valley, a globally important area of fynbos located in the Cape Floristic region's Agulhas Plain, was purchased by FFI in 1999 and has become one of the largest exporters of wild-harvested fynbos flowers in the Cape, thus safeguarding the survival of this unique habitat and providing nearby communities with an important livelihood. At the beginning of February 2006, however, a fire that started in Elim swept through Flower Valley, burning 65,000 ha and destroying 50% of productive fynbos. Fortunately no lives were lost and the only buildings destroyed were a few small sheds, but water and electricity cables were damaged. One of FFI's partners in the area was less lucky, however; the award-winning Grootbos Private Nature Reserve lost its new forest lodge when the thatched roof caught fire. Rebuilding of this lodge is already underway, and it is set to reopen in August 2006.

Despite the damage to Flower Valley's fynbos, staff are investigating ways to keep local people employed, and are sourcing flowers from other parts of the Cape in order to maintain the delivery of fynbos to its customers. The fynbos will recover over time, and in the long-term the effects of the fire may be positive, as many of the invasive alien species that were threatening the region's biodiversity were destroyed along with the fynbos. FFI is now working with its partners in the area to put together a case for emergency funding from the South African government focusing on alien clearance, investment in jobs, monitoring, ecotourism and fire alert and control systems.

New records for Lowe's servaline genet from the Eastern Arc Mountains of Tanzania

The Eastern Arc Mountains, stretching from southern Kenya to south-central Tanzania, are of outstanding biological value due to the high concentrations of endemic and threatened species. Surveys in these mountains continue to document new species and to extend the known ranges of other species. Recent surveys in the Udzungwa mountains have documented a new primate (see *Oryx*, 39, 370–374, & below) and shrew species as well as the presence of Jackson's mongoose *Bdeogale jacksoni*, previously only known from Kenya. The carnivore Lowe's servaline genet *Genetta servalina lowei* was previously only recorded from the Udzungwa Mountains. Here we report two first records of this subspecies from two other Eastern Arc Mountain blocks, the South Nguru Mountains and the Uluguru Mountains. These records considerably expand the known distribution of this cryptic carnivore.

Servaline genets are forest dependent and nocturnal Viverridae that are predominantly confined to the forest belt of central and west Africa. Lowe's servaline genet was described from an incomplete skin found in 1932 in the Udzungwa Mountains of Tanzania. It was described as a separate subspecies because of its distinct pelage markings and provenance. Sixty-eight years later, in 2000 it was rediscovered during a live trapping study and finally photo-trapped for the first time in 2002. With the possible exception of a recently described subspecies from Zanzibar (*G. servalina archeri*), Lowe's servaline genet is the most isolated and least known of the servaline genets. Its distinctness and localized range are of conservation interest.

We conducted camera trapping surveys of Kanga and Nguru South Forest Reserves (in the South Nguru Mountains) and of Uluguru North Forest Reserve (in the Uluguru Mountains) during July–December 2005. The South Nguru Mountains include c. 250 km² of moist

forest at 500–2,400 m altitude. There were a total of 11,040 trap hours (460 trap days) across 14 trap sites (7 in each of the two Forest Reserves). Cameras were placed in submontane moist forest at 950–1,400 m. Lowe's servaline genet was photographed once, in Kanga Forest Reserve (5°57.74' S, 37°41.99' E) at 1,180 m at 23.37. The trap site was in a valley bottom near a permanent stream with discontinuous canopy cover but dense understorey and forest floor layers. Uluguru North Forest Reserve comprises 85 km² of moist forest at 800–2,340 m. We deployed 10 cameras for 9,816 trap hours (409 trap days). Cameras were placed in submontane and montane moist forest at 1,200–1,700 m. Lowe's servaline genet was photographed twice, on the same site, at 1,310 m (6°56.15' S, 37°42.36' E) at 18.50 and 22.58 on different days. The camera site had dense canopy cover and was near a permanent stream.

The new records for Lowe's servaline genet are over 220 km to the north-east and c. 140 km to the north north-east, for Nguru South and Uluguru Mountains, respectively, from the nearest known location for this subspecies in Mwanihana Forest (Udzungwa Mountains National Park). The new records have conservation and biogeographical implications. More research is necessary to determine whether this subspecies is present in other Eastern Arc Mountains, particularly the Rubeho and Ukaguru Mountains that lie between the Udzungwa and South Nguru Mountains. An analysis of the phylogeny of the species to determine the genetic distance between the three Eastern Arc populations and between these and the central Africa subspecies would also have considerable conservation relevance.

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Flagship Species Fund awards grant for research into the highland mangabey

As reported in Conservation News in October 2005 (*Oryx*, 39, 370–374), 2004 saw the discovery of the highland mangabey *Lophocebus kipunji* in Tanzania, the first new monkey to be found in Africa for 20 years. As a

result of this discovery a project has been set up, in part funded by the Flagship Species Fund Small Grants Programme, a joint initiative of Fauna & Flora International and the UK Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to survey three forests that constitute the maximum estimated range of the mangabey. One of the main aims of the project is to gather much needed information about the distribution, abundance and demographic data of this elusive species with the intention of providing a suitable assessment of the species' status for the IUCN Red List. A preliminary assessment of the mangabey's status by the IUCN Primate Specialist

Group has led to the species being categorized as Critically Endangered. The project, which is scheduled to run until June 2006, has already fulfilled one of its additional aims; a Tanzanian graduate has been recruited and is currently being trained in field and conservation skills. The project is also raising local awareness of the monkey among inhabitants of three villages within the Udzungwa Mountains, one of the areas where the mangabey occurs, through environmental education events and workshops. For more information about the Flagship Species Fund see <http://www.fauna-flora.org/about/fsf.html>