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International

Soviet/Japanese bird treaty ratified

The Japan–USSR convention on migratory birds, which was signed 15 years ago, was due to be finally ratified on 16 December and made official on 20 December 1988 when Soviet and Japanese foreign ministers met in Tokyo. It is Japan's fourth international convention for the protection of migratory birds; the others are with the US, Australia and the People's Republic of China. Others are planned with South Korea and South East Asian countries. The new convention prohibits the capture of migratory birds, places controls on the import and export of endangered species, provides for information exchange and joint research, and for protection of stopping-off points and habitats of protected species.

Japan Environment Monitor, 31 December 1988.

New Ramsar sites and members

Egypt, which ratified the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention) on 1 October 1986, has proposed its first two sites, Lake Bardawil and Lake Burulus. Bolivia and Guatemala acceded to the Convention on 9 March and 5 April 1988, respectively, and Guatemala has proposed seven sites; Guamuchal, Guija, Atitlan, Laguna de Yolnabaj, Laguna de Lachua, Llanura de inundación del río la Pasión and Laguna el Tigre-el Repasto. Vietnam, Malta and Venezuela have all become signatories in recent months, bringing the total number of contracting parties to 52. *Ramsar*, October 1988, 7.

Bonn Convention recommends cetacean conservation

The Second Conference of the Parties to the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals was held in Geneva from 11 to 14 October 1988. The Conference agreed to include the North and Baltic Sea populations of seven small cetaceans within Appendix

II of the Convention, which will require members to co-operate with one another to conserve them. The Conference also passed a resolution directing its Scientific Council to give priority to a global review of the conservation status of these animals, with a view to making further additions to Appendix II at the next conference in 1991. The international protection for dolphins and porpoises is particularly welcome since they are not protected under the International Whaling Convention.

Topical Issues, NCC, January 1989, 9.

Tuna boycott to help dolphins

European conservation groups pressing for a boycott against yellowfin tuna, which is caught by encircling dolphins and causing them to drown, gained a victory when the largest supermarket chain in Austria, Konsum Oesterreich, halted all purchases and sales of the tuna in December 1988. In addition the Austrian Minister of Commerce declared support for the campaign to stop the setting of purse seine nets around schools of dolphins in the eastern tropical Pacific. Tuna industry officials from the US visited Europe to lobby against the boycott campaign, focusing on Spain, a huge tuna market.

Monitor, 19 December 1988.

Boycott cripples Icelandic fisheries

The international anti-whaling boycott campaign against Icelandic fish has cost

the nation more than \$50 million in lost export contracts, according to a leading Reykjavik newspaper (28 January 1989). Iceland's small-scale fishing industry has been seriously crippled by the loss of shrimp export contracts to West Germany and in January the city council of Husvik adopted a resolution calling on the federal government to ban whaling. The largest shrimp company plans to sue the Minister of Fisheries and the Government for bringing economic ruin on it by refusing to comply with the IWC moratorium on commercial whaling.

Monitor, 6 February 1989.

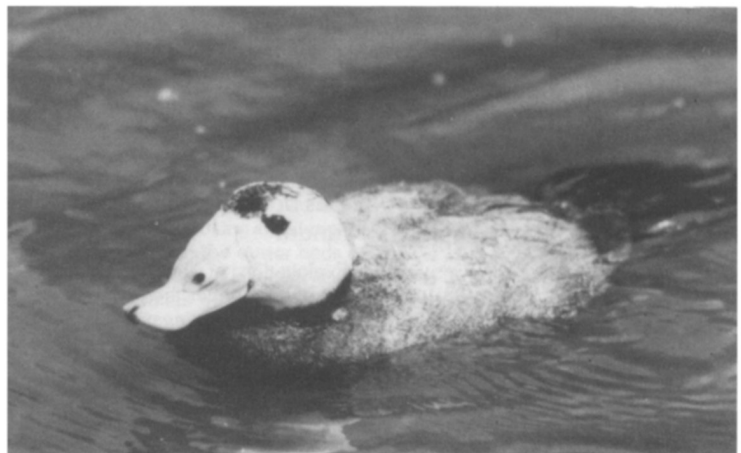
Greenpeace confronts Japanese fleet

Japan's whaling fleet was intercepted by Greenpeace in Antarctica in late January. A minor collision occurred when a Japanese boat tried to move the Greenpeace vessel *Gondwana* with a grappling hook and Greenpeace's activities in trying to prevent the whalers landing a whale drew charges of 'terrorism' from a high Japanese government official. After a week the *Gondwana* resumed its mission as a supply ship for Greenpeace's Antarctic base.

Monitor, 6 February 1989.

Recovery plan for white-headed duck

The International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB), the



White-headed duck (*Joe Blossom, Wildfowl Trust*).

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Wildfowl Trust (UK) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are jointly undertaking a Recovery Plan for the white-headed duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, whose population in the western Palaearctic is estimated at fewer than 10,000 individuals and is probably declining. The project aims to gather all available information on the status and ecology of the species and prepare an Action Plan to ensure the protection of key sites, the improvement of habitat and the international co-ordination necessary to stop the decline in numbers. This Recovery Plan is being developed as a model for future projects. *IWRB News*, January 1989, 10.

WWF Grants for island plant conservation

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is making available a small number of grants for work on conservation of island plants. These are intended for: the rescue of individual threatened endemic plants; sustainable utilization of island endemic plants; creation of protected areas for clusters of threatened endemic species and/or unique vegetation types; and assessment in the field of which species or vegetation types are endangered. Details from WWF-International, Avenue du Mont Blanc, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland.

Piano technicians oppose ivory keys

Delegates to the Piano Technicians Convention Council have approved a resolution opposing the use of ivory in the manufacture or restoration of pianos. The resolution, noting that the very existence of the largest land mammal is threatened, also supported a ban on all trade in ivory.

Animal Welfare Quarterly, Fall/Winter 1988/89, 11.

Europe and North Africa

Regional aid threatens wildlife sites

The EEC's £35-billion regional aid programme could damage irreparably some of Europe's best remaining wildlife habitats, according to a joint report by the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Institute for European Environmen-

tal Policy. Community regional aid has already gained a reputation for encouraging environmental damage by funding winter sports developments, hydro-electric schemes and fish farms. The new funds could inflict further damage by inappropriate developments in sensitive areas.

The Guardian, 27 March 1989.

Demand for ivory ban

The European Commission has asked member states to follow a US lead in banning ivory imports from Somalia. The US ban came into effect in February and allows the US Administration also to ban ivory imports from Hong Kong and Japan if they import from Somalia.

The Guardian, 25 February 1989.

Protection recommended for reptiles and amphibians

At a meeting in December 1988 the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) asked Greece to protect western Milos and the wooded areas in Evros and to control the collection of the rare Milos wall lizard. Italy was asked to protect sites for Ursini's viper, the Italian agile frog and common spadefoot toad and Spain to ensure protection of the habitats of the Balearic midwife toad, Lilford's wall lizard and Ibiza wall lizard, and to continue the breeding programme for *Gallotia simonyi*, the giant lizard of the island of Hierro in the Canary Islands. Austria was urged to protect Ursini's viper and the Federal Republic of Germany and Denmark were asked to ensure the conservation of the fire-bellied toad.

Council of Europe, 22 December 1988.

Gas boom brings problems to tundra

Exploitation of the vast reserves of natural gas under the tundra of northern Siberia is causing problems for local nomadic people and the reindeer on which they depend. The town of Nadym is booming but the development is destroying the tundra. Some Soviet scientists also fear drastic environmental consequences from planned underground pipelines full of warm

gas, which could melt permafrost and cause the sea level to rise. Concerned people are especially angered that the Politburo has decided to press ahead with gas exploration in the northerly Yamal peninsula, the last great pipe-free zone, without waiting until environmental scientists had finished their studies. The Yamal is home to 500,000 reindeer and 5000 wandering Nentsi herders.

The Wall Street Journal, 23 December 1988.

New USSR conservation institution

The recently appointed USSR State Committee for Environment Protection will in future deal with all problems associated with conservation. Its address is 11 Neжданова Street, Moscow 103009, USSR.

Naturopa newsletter - nature, 88-11, 3.

Protecting rare fish

Some of Sweden's rarest freshwater fish and their habitats are to be protected in a new project launched by the World Wide Fund for Nature in association with the Museum of Natural History, Stockholm, the National Board of Fisheries' Institute of Freshwater Research, and the Environmental Protection Board. The species involved include stone loach *Nemacheilus barbatus*, spined loach *Cobitis taenia*, sunbleak *Leucaspis delineatus* and gudgeon *Gobio gobio*.

Acid Magazine, December 1988, 12.

Algal bloom no lasting effects

The algal bloom that killed marine life along the Norwegian coast in May 1988 (*Oryx* 23, 37) has not had any long-term devastating effects. Researchers at the Norwegian biological observation station near Arendal on the south coast report that much of the marine life that was apparently exterminated returned after only six months. One year-class of cod was lost because the cod were spawning at the time of the algal tide. *Fishing News International*, January 1989, 9.

License to kill geese

Farmers on Islay, Scotland, have been given licences to shoot Greenland

Oryx Vol 23 No 3, July 1989

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white-fronted geese *Anser albifrons* because of claims that crops were threatened. There are only 21,000 of the species left, 7000 of which winter on Islay.

The Guardian, 5 April 1989.

Virus continues in seal colonies

The reappearance of sick and dead seals off Britain's coast in late March and early April raised fears that a recurrence of the 1988 epidemic could coincide with the pupping season. Three dead and one sick common seal *Phoca vitulina* were washed ashore in Norfolk and a sick young grey seal *Halichoerus grypus* appeared on the Isle of Man where it later died. It was suspected, but not confirmed, that the animals were suffering from phocine distemper, which killed 17,000 common seals around Britain and Europe last year.

New Scientist, 8 April 1989, 21.

Severn Estuary an SSSI

The Severn Estuary in the UK has been notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC). The site extends from Purton in Gloucestershire to the mouth of the estuary between Lavernock Point, South Glamorgan, and Brean Down, Somerset, and includes extensive areas of saltmarsh, sand and mudflats along over 160 km of coastline. The estuary is among the ten most important for wading birds in Britain and is especially significant for dunlin *Calidris alpina*, supporting over 10 per cent of the British wintering population. Conservationists are concerned about the likely effects of a proposed tidal barrage on the river, which would greatly reduce the tidal range and completely alter the estuary's physical and biological characteristics. The area has also been proposed for designation as a Ramsar site and as a Special Protection Area under the European Commission Bird Directive.

Nature Conservancy Council, 9 February 1989.

Large blue news

The reintroduction of the large blue butterfly *Maculinea arion*, which became extinct in Britain in 1979, appears

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to be going well, although it will be some years before success can be certain. About 75 adults emerged in 1987 and laid 2030 eggs despite bad weather; these survived well to produce 150–200 adults in 1980 and then laid over 4500 eggs in another poor summer. A translocation of 16 females and 43 caterpillars was made to a second nature reserve and future plans are to establish one new colony a year as long as suitable sites and stock are available. The research has been extended to cover four other species of large blue that are threatened in Europe; all have similar life cycles, but each has different ecological requirements that can only be defined by research.

NERC News, January 1989, 21.

Coast protected

The North Norfolk Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest in the UK has been designated as a Special Protection Area (as defined by the EEC 'Birds Directive') and as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Parts of this coast were originally designated under the Ramsar Convention in 1976. The site comprises over 7000 ha of coastal habitats—intertidal sand and mudflats, saltmarsh, dunes and shingle, coastal lagoons, reedbeds and grazing marsh—and includes several existing reserves.

Nature Conservancy Council Press Release, 20 January 1989.

Norfolk Broads national park

On 1 April 1989 the Norfolk Broads became UK's 11th national park.

Daily Telegraph, 4 February 1989.

TBT ban having positive results

The July 1987 ban on the sale and use of tributyltin (TBT) antifoulants for boats is already producing encouraging signs of recovery in the oyster beds of England and Wales. TBT concentrations in the waters of many estuaries with high yachting activity have fallen to at least one-half of 1987 levels. An oyster ground in Essex, closed in the mid-1970s because of problems with shell-thickening and poor growth associated with TBT contamination, has re-opened successfully with 400,000

Pacific oyster spat laid on the ground in late 1987 having now almost reached market size. Meanwhile, the US Organotin Anti-fouling Paint Control Act became effective on 16 December 1988 and this legislation is likely to increase the development of TBT-free products.

Marine Pollution Bulletin, January 1989, 2.

Rare sheep breed makes a recovery

The Oxford Down, largest and heaviest of the Down breeds of sheep, has been removed from the priority list of endangered breeds of British farm animals, because it is no longer in danger.

Daily Telegraph, 20 January 1989.

New Institute of Conservation

The University of Kent at Canterbury in England has agreed to establish an Institute of Conservation and Ecology, building on the success of the Ecology Research Group led by Dr Ian Swingland. Dr Swingland, an FFPS Council Member, set up the Ecology Research Group five years ago and all its costs have been found from external sources. It has developed successful diploma courses in Ecology and in Endangered Species Management, the latter in association with Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust. The Institute aims to develop Kent's research programmes in conservation and ecology, to undertake consultancy work, and to provide short courses in specialized areas for Directors of Wildlife and National Parks overseas, in conservation management, in species conservation, in wildlife accountancy, in statistics and in ecological briefings for bankers and other professionals.

New protected zone in The Netherlands

The Krammer–Volkerak region has been classified as an environmental protection area. Its 3300 ha include marshland and shoals, and thousands of waders, geese and ducks use the site, including large numbers of shelducks *Tadorna tadorna*, knots *Calidris canutus* and turnstones *Arenaria interpres*.

Naturopa newsletter-nature, 88–12, 2.

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Beavers back

Three pairs of beavers *Castor fiber* from the Federal Republic of Germany have been reintroduced into the Biesbosch, which at 7000 ha is one of the largest natural regions in The Netherlands, after being absent for over 150 years. This is the start of an operation aimed at reintroducing 15 pairs.
Naturopa newsletter—nature, 88–12, 3.

Sea-eagle breeds in Czechoslovakia

The white-tailed sea eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* disappeared from Czechoslovakia as a breeding species in the 1850s, but small numbers continued to winter in the Trebon area, now a biosphere reserve, in the south. Since 1976 winter feeding stations have been established and young captive-bred eagles from Germany have been released in the natural reserve of Velky Tisy. On 28 April 1986 the first nest was found and two chicks were reared. In 1987 a further two were found, from three of which six young fledged.
World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls, Newsletter, No. 9, 8–10.

New Czechoslovak parks

The Government of Czechoslovakia created two new national parks in 1988. Slovakian Paradise National Park covers 19,763 ha, of which 17,571 ha are forest. It has a buffer zone of 13,011 ha. The Mala Fatra National Park covers 19,892 ha, with a buffer zone of 26,532 ha, and is situated in the northern Krivonska Mala Fatra Mountains. Both parks contain an outstanding variety of protected, rare and endangered flora and fauna. Mammals include several bat species, wild cats, otters, brown bear, lynx and chamois. There are 98 protected bird species and 43 protected plants.
European Bulletin, Nature and National Parks, 1988, 74–76.

Dams in Greek parks

Plans by Greek electricity authorities to build two dams pose a major threat to the Pindos and Vicos Aaos National Parks, which are 25 km apart but are linked by the valley of the Aaos river. The dams will adversely affect the core

zone of Pindos National Park and the peripheral zone of Aaos National Park. Much damage has already been done to the parks by illegally built service roads to the dam sites and in 1988 a final decision was made to go ahead with the dam in Pindos. Implementation of the Aaos plan is still undecided.
European Bulletin, Nature and National Parks, 1989, 27, 13–14.

Turkish wolf hunt

In early 1989 Turkish hunters were using helicopters to shoot wolves driven to attack sheep because of unusually cold weather in their mountain habitats.
The Guardian, 1 February 1989.

Liquidambar lives on

Recent efforts by the Turkish Forestry Service to conserve the highly valued *Liquidambar orientalis* are proving effective and should ensure its long-term future. This attractive tree, now confined to south-western Anatolia in Turkey with a small outlying population in Rhodes, is well known for the medicinal and cosmetic properties of its latex. In the period 1968–1979 heavy exploitation for local use and export resulted in hundreds of trees being damaged and land clearance for agriculture destroyed many more. The Turkish Forestry Service has recently taken measures to protect remaining stands from overexploitation and land clearance. They include controls on the volume of latex tapped, creation of reserves and a reintroduction programme. Thousands of healthy seedlings have been raised already.
Threatened Plants Newsletter, December 1988, 9–10.

Progress with turtle conservation in Cyprus

The Turtle Conservation Project in Cyprus, started by the Fisheries Department in 1978, is making progress. The hatchery at Lara now yields an admirable 70 per cent hatching rate. Eggs of the two species that nest in Cyprus—green turtle *Chelonia mydas* and loggerhead *Caretta caretta*—are collected and reburied if they are in vulnerable situations, others are left undisturbed and protected from fox predation by cages. About 3500 hatchlings

are being tagged and released each year. In addition about 100 turtles from 1 to 6 years old are being kept in sea cages in Paphos Harbour and in special tanks for research.

Marine Turtle Newsletter, January 1989, 4–6.

Marine park off Alicante

A marine park has been set up in the small archipelago of Tabarca off the coast of south-eastern Spain. The sea bottom around the main island (80 ha) and the nearby small islets is of great ecological and biogeographical interest; for species with tropical affinities it is the northernmost limit of their distribution in the Mediterranean. The park was formally established on 15 June 1988 and is to be organized as a multi-purpose park with areas given over to reinforced protection, to experimentation, to small fisheries and to tourist activities where compatible with conservation.

Marine Pollution Bulletin, January 1989, 4–5.

Africa

Parrot smugglers jailed

The Ghana Government has slapped severe prison sentences and fines on the six people involved in an attempt to smuggle 2000 endangered grey parrots *Psittacus erithacus* from the country. A US bird importer who attempted to conceal the birds in the passenger compartment of a plane en route to the US was sentenced to nine months hard labour. Also sentenced was an executive member of the Ghanaian Wildlife Association, who was fined \$75.00 and sentenced to five years with hard labour, a customs officer, sentenced to three years, and a wildlife exporter, who must pay a fine and serve two years. The driver of the truck that transported the birds to the airport and the tractor driver who conveyed them to the plane were sentenced to two years and six months, respectively.
Animal Welfare Institute Quarterly, Fall/Winter 1988/89, 9.

Sahel's rain best for years

In 1988 rainfall in parts of the Sahel was the best for 15 years, Lake Chad spilled

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over into its northern basin and Lake Fitri became a permanent lake once again. The serious droughts since 1968 have had serious consequences for some migratory birds: whitethroats *Sylvia communis* and sand martins *Riparia riparia* have suffered population crashes, for instance. Resident waterfowl have fared better, moving between major basins to exploit seasonally available water. Lake Chad, for example, is normally too deep for many waterfowl, but in drought years its shallower waters support large numbers. *IWRB News*, January 1989, 6.

Conservation potential in CAR

A forest study in the Sangha-Economique Prefecture, south-western Central African Republic (CAR), has revealed that this region of dense forest has great wildlife conservation and tourism potential. None of it is protected but there are substantial populations of lowland gorilla and probably the last major population of forest elephants in CAR. The current limited selective logging, which creates a mosaic of herbaceous secondary growth, is beneficial for gorillas if subsequent poaching can be controlled. The BaBinga Pygmies are willing to participate in a conservation plan and the area has been proposed to the government as the Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Wildlife Sanctuary. Although the government has recently banned the hunting of elephants, professional poachers have discovered the area and the ill-defined borders with Cameroon and the Congo make smuggling easy. It would be ideal if the three countries were to co-operate to form a reserve straddling the borders. Carroll, R.W. 1988. *Mammalia*, 52, 309-323.

Ivory Coast elephant plan criticized

Six elephants from Natal were flown into Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in December and taken by truck 250 km north to Abokouomekro Park, which is being set up by President Houphouët-Boigny. The park will cover 650 sq km and be completely enclosed by a 2.7-m-high fence. Detractors say it is too ambitious and that the 4000 animals planned to be imported from South Africa and elsewhere will either die or be killed by poachers. *The new Briefly*

park will cost over one thousand times more than what is spent on the country's eight national parks and critics say that little is being done to protect what remains of the Ivory Coast's native animals.

Star (Johannesburg), 21 December 1988; *West Africa*, 23-29 January 1989.

Tanzanian ivory seized

Two game wardens and two other Tanzanians were arrested after being found with 89 elephant tusks in a vehicle in Namini village, southern Tanzania. *The Guardian*, 10 April 1989.

Ambassador's ivory

A container of poached ivory belonging to the Indonesian ambassador in Tanzania was seized by police in Dar es Salaam in January as the ambassador prepared to board a British Airways plane to London, Abu Dhabi and Singapore. The container held 184 raw and 24 partly worked tusks, 82 carved figures, necklaces and walking sticks. There were also 16 ostrich eggs, 2 mounted gazelles, zebra skin handbags and carved African hardwood. Tanzania's elephant population declined from 185,000 in 1977 to 87,000 in 1987 and, although Tanzania has banned the internal ivory trade, illegal hunting threatens to wipe out the country's remaining herds in the next five years. *Environmental Investigation Agency*, 17 January 1989.

Rhinos to be dehorned

The Department of National Parks in Zimbabwe intends to dehorn a particularly vulnerable population of white rhinos *Ceratotherium simum* in Matabeleland. *Zimbabwe Wildlife*, December 1988, 3.

Carving up the Kalahari

Effective patrolling of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve's 52,000 sq km has always been difficult given the scant resources of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP), but limited access once afforded the wildlife considerable protection. However, in the last nine years, three diamond exploration companies (DeBeers, SelTrust/BP, and Falconbridge Botswana) have built more than 2500 km of good tracks

through the Central Kalahari and Khutse Game Reserves in order to gain easy access to prospecting and drilling sites. As the prospectors move on, the poachers with trucks and rifles move in. Wildlife now stampede at the mere sound of a distant vehicle. With more prospecting leases being issued each year the following measures should be taken immediately: exploration companies should be required to close disused roads and restore the land by ploughing and possibly reseeded; all leases should include requirements for reclamation of physical developments or reseeded; alternative means of reaching sampling and drilling sites should be used whenever possible; if a road is considered essential it should be agreed in consultation with the DWNP. These recommendations have been accepted in principle but no action has been taken so far to incorporate them into prospecting leases.

Kalahari Conservation Society Newsletter, December 1988, 8.

South Africa cracks down on poachers

Following accusations that it supports the world's largest black market in ivory and rhinoceros horn, South Africa has begun a crackdown on the traffic by making a series of arrests and seizures of horn and tusks. In March provincial conservation officials approved draft legislation raising the penalty for first-time convicted smugglers to \$40,000 from \$600 with up to six years in prison and this was backed by the government, which has also committed money to restore the moribund police antipoaching unit.

Chicago Tribune, 12 March 1989.

More fish endangered in South Africa

The index of endangered fish species in South Africa and SWA/Namibia has risen by 78.6 per cent since 1977, according to the latest issue of the *South African Red Data Book on Fishes*. Twenty-four freshwater and estuarine species have been added to the list of threatened species, 12 of them endemic. Some of the new listings result from more knowledge rather than increased threats. Two species listed in 1977, both redbin minnows, have been removed since their distribution is more

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widespread than originally believed.
Quagga, Spring 1988, 17.

Another new lemur from Madagascar

A new species of lemur has been discovered in the forests of north-eastern Madagascar by Elwyn Simons of Duke University, North Carolina, USA. It has been named *Propithecus tattersalli* after Ian Tattersall who first saw a population of this lemur in 1974, but failed to recognize it as distinct from the diadem sifaka *P. diadema*. The new lemur, also known as Tattersall's sifaka or golden-crowned sifaka, is estimated to number about 100, but its habitat has become very restricted and fragmented by deforestation. Its most distinguishing features are its short, predominantly white fur, its very furry prominent ears and the golden-orange crown.
New Scientist, 25 February 1989, 41.

Reunion reintroduction

The shrub *Ruizia coradata* was reintroduced on the Island of Reunion on 1 December. Seedlings were produced by artificial fertilization from the last two surviving plants.
Naturopa newsletter—nature, 88–11, 3.

Asia

New environment ministry for Israel

The Israel cabinet decided on 25 December 1988 to establish a Ministry of the Environment. Members of the Environmental Protection Service will form the nucleus of the new office.
Israel Environment Bulletin, Winter 1989.

Difficult winter for Siberian cranes

Siberian crane *Grus leucogeranus* numbers at China's Poyang Lake Nature Reserve, which reached record heights in December 1988, fell unexpectedly soon after, from 2000 to 400. Low rainfall and excessive draining of the reserve's lakes for fishing caused the birds' main feeding areas to virtually dry up and the birds moved into unpro-

tected areas, where conservationists were worried that they might be shot or poisoned.
WWF News, January/February 1989, 1.

China renews tree campaign

China wants every able-bodied person aged between 11 and 55 years to plant five trees a year to save the country's floundering campaign to grow more trees. Only about one-third of the citizens who should be taking part in the campaign, launched in 1981, are doing so, and timber is being used up more rapidly than it is planted.
New Scientist, 18 March 1989, 29.

Prospects for South China tiger

Chinese zoo officials and scientists are very concerned about the future for the South China tiger *Panthera tigris amoyensis* and are seeking collaboration from overseas organizations to help save it. The wild habitat is fragmented and the expansion of the human population means that wild individuals are coming into contact with humans more frequently. It is speculated that perhaps 30–50 animals remain in the wild and the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group has proposed sending an experienced tiger field worker in 1989 to identify potential protected areas and assess the population. The primary hope for the tiger seems to be a vigorous captive-breeding programme; Chinese zoos hold 32 animals regarded as genetically pure and no foreign zoos are known to hold the subspecies.

Tiger Beat, Newsletter of the Tiger Species Survival Plan, January 1989, 1–2.

Last ditch attempt to save Shiraho

Japanese scientists have for the first time become involved in the international protest over the fate of one of their country's last unspoiled coral reefs. Eight researchers began work in March surveying Shiraho reef on Ishigaki Island at the southern end of the Japanese archipelago, in a last-ditch attempt to dissuade the government from building an airport on the site. Although local groups have fought the airport plan for years and IUCN has urged the

Japanese Government to build the airport elsewhere, few biologists in Japan have wanted to become involved in political issues. However, the participants in the current survey, organized by the World Wide Fund for Nature in Japan, include six of the country's leading researchers in the field.
New Scientist, 18 March 1989, 28.

Indo-Malaya

Pure buffalo need protection in India

The wild buffalo *Bubalus bubalis*, classified as vulnerable, has disappeared from most of its range and only a few scattered herds survive, from India to Indochina. In India an estimated 1000 wild buffalo remain in patches of riverine forest in Madhya Pradesh and Assam. Because most of these forests contain feral domestic stock, which breed with the wild populations, H. K. Divekar considers only the 100 buffalo in the Bastaar region of Madhya Pradesh to be pure, but they are in danger from poachers and forest destruction. He recommends that tribal people be appointed as guards in Indravati National Park and the Bhairamgarh, Pamed and Uddanti Sanctuaries, and that steps are taken to ease pressure from humans and cattle, and to prevent hunting.

IUCN/SSC Asian Wild Cattle Specialist Group Newsletter, Spring 1989, 4–5.

Malaysian forest people get support from overseas

Some rain forest action groups have started a boycott campaign on all Malaysian products until the rights of the tribal people in Sarawak are respected and the logging of their forests ceases. In Australia demonstrations are being held at airports as people board Malaysian Airlines flights and there have been blockades of ships bringing timber from Sarawak. Between 27 November 1988 and 21 January 1989 122 Penan and 6 Kelabit were arrested in Malaysia under a new law that makes interference with logging a criminal offence, even if timber concessions have been granted on tribal lands. In Sarawak 3 ha of forests are being logged every minute to supply 30 per cent

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of the world trade in tropical sawlogs, mainly to Japan, Taiwan and Korea. *World Rainforest Report*, No. 12, 6–9; *Survival International*, February 1989.

Sanctuary-to-be being raided

Illegal hunting of endangered animals is rampant in a 2525-sq km area of primary mountain forest in Tak province, western Thailand. Government officials, market hunters, restaurant suppliers, Mae Sot townspeople and road construction workers have all been implicated in the slaughter, which has been made easy by a new 165-km road linking Mae Sot and Umphang District. The Cabinet has approved the designation of the area as Umphang Wildlife Sanctuary, but this has not yet been announced in the Royal Gazette and so protection lacks legal weight. *The Nation*, 8 February 1989.

Palms on the brink

Two umbrella leaf palms, *Johannesbeijerinia lanceolata* and *J. magnifica*, both endemic to Peninsular Malaysia, are among the nation's 23 threatened palms. The first is known from one locality in a Virgin Jungle Reserve in Selangor, which could have its status changed to that of a forest reserve and be logged, like all the surrounding forest. *J. magnifica* also grows at Selangor and is found at two other sites in Negri Sembilan, which have been heavily logged. One site is accessible from a road and, since palm collectors published details, commercial collectors have been collecting the fruits, a threat to the continued existence of the species. *Malayan Naturalist*, August 1988, 15–16.

Banteng buffalo conflict

The Baluran National Park in East Java, Indonesia, was established mainly to protect the banteng *Bos javanicus*, but a recent survey found that 150 banteng are having to compete with buffalo *Bubalus bubalis*. In 1985 276 buffalo were removed from the park and given to local people, but in 1987 buffalo numbers in the park had risen again—to 1200. A further 800 buffalo are to be removed in the next few years, starting



Milky storks; a significant population has been found in Sumatra (ICBP).

in August 1989. *IUCN/SSC Asian Wild Cattle Specialist Group Newsletter*, Spring 1989, 5–6.

Sumatra survey finds storks

At least 1000 active nests of the milky stork *Mycteria cinerea* were discovered in previously unknown breeding sites in an aerial survey of Sumatra in the winter of 1988–1989. The total world population of milky storks is estimated at only 5000. The area of mangrove swamp concerned also supports viable populations of several other threatened birds, including spot-billed pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*, lesser adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* and white-winged wood duck *Cairina scutulata*. *World Birdwatch*, January–March 1989, 3.

Philippines to ban logging

In early 1989 the Philippine House of Representatives approved a bill banning tree cutting in all but 9 of the country's 73 provinces. Under the bill logging would be allowed only in provinces that are at least 40 per cent covered in forest. Enforcing the new legislation will be difficult because a multi-million-dollar industry is at stake. Anti-logging campaigners received death-threats; two priests campaigning

against logging in Mindanao have been killed. Most logging operations in the Philippines already violate one law or another, but they are protected by local army officers and politicians. Each year twice as many Philippine logs are smuggled into Japan as are legally allowed to be exported. Things may change, however; the WWF has just made its first debt-for-nature swap in Asia, buying \$2 million worth of discounted Philippines debt, and gave the proceeds to the Haribon Foundation for conservation and education programmes. *The Economist*, 18 February 1989.

Two bird rediscoveries

Schneider's pitta *Pitta schneideri* was rediscovered in rain forest at 2400 m on Sumatra's highest mountain, Gunung Kerinci, in August 1988. This Sumatran endemic has not been seen since 1977. In Sabah, on the island of Borneo, a healthy population of Bulwer's pheasant *Lophura bulweri* was found on previously unexplored Gunung Lotung, an outlier of Mount Kinabalu. Apart from one report of birds in a Sarawak sanctuary this is the only fresh information on this species for many decades. *World Birdwatch*, January–March 1989, 4.

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North America

The disaster the oil companies said would never happen

When the oil tanker *Exxon Valdez* hit Bligh Reef in Prince William Sound, Alaska, on 24 March, 11 million gallons of oil leaked out. It was North America's worst ever oil spill and has highlighted the inability of oil companies to respond adequately to such accidents. A week later the slick covered over 1.5 sq km of once pristine waters and thousands of animals, including some of the world's rarest species, were dying from the effects of the oil. The clean up has been beset by bad weather and poor organization. Less than one million gallons of oil have been recovered. As relief workers battled to mop up thousands of beaches and save as many animals as possible, a team of scientists has begun a five-year study on the effects of the spill on the area's ecology.
New Scientist, 8 April 1989, 20–21.

Bison herd in danger

Between 35 and 50 per cent of the 4200 bison in Wood Buffalo National Park, Canada, are infected with tuberculosis and/or brucellosis. It is feared that other bison and cattle in the area might become infected. Solutions being considered include killing most of the herd to leave a healthy breeding stock of about 100; fencing the park, which covers about 45,000 sq km in Alberta and Northwest Territories; and creating buffer zones to keep the infected bison from mingling with uninfected animals.
Vancouver Sun, 17 January 1989.

Bear poachers arrested

A poaching ring that involved the slaughter of more than 400 bears in north-eastern America has been broken, with the arrests of 23 people in five states. The bears were killed for their gall bladders, which are prized as aphrodisiacs in the East. The arrests were the culmination of a 2½ year investigation that tracked about \$50,000 in transactions and involved game officials from Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. In the course of the probe, officials bought dozens of pelts—including

those of a mountain lion and several bobcats—as well as 360 bear gall bladders.
The Washington Post, 25 January 1989.

Whooping cranes: success and a threat

The whooping crane population that breeds in Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park and winters in Aransas Wildlife Refuge is thriving; 136 birds achieved the autumn migration safely. The Gray's Lake flock of whooping cranes *Grus americana*, which consists of 12 or so individuals fostered to sandhill cranes *G. canadensis*, may risk death from avian cholera on their spring migration. Alamosa and Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuges in the San Luis Valley, southern Colorado, have become a reservoir for the deadly epidemic disease. In the winter of 1987–1988 a serious outbreak killed several thousand ducks and geese; the sandhills plus the whoopers, forced by food shortage to leave their wintering grounds in the Bosque del Apache refuge in New Mexico earlier than usual to begin their migration north, arrived in the San Luis Valley while the winter epidemic was still in progress. Attempts were made to control it by opening up more ponds by additional pumping and collecting contaminated carcasses. Fortunately there were no losses of whooping cranes, but the risk will con-

tinue in future years unless the waterfowl populations build up an immunity.
Audubon, January 1989, 18–27; *New Scientist*, 7 January 1989, 25.

Kirtland's warbler

The disappearance of a rare songbird from the forest of central Michigan will be an early sign that the greenhouse effect is altering the world's environment, say researchers from the University of California at Santa Barbara. Kirtland's warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii*, already down to about 500 birds, winters in the Bahamas, and returns to nest in jack pine trees between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. By early next century, according to the researchers, summer-time soils will be too parched for jack pine seedlings to take root. The pine, displaced at first by white pine and red maple, will eventually yield to treeless shrubland.
New Scientist, 28 January 1989, 34.

Genetic fingerprinting

For the first time, DNA fingerprinting is being applied to endangered species research. Led by Dr Oliver Ryder, CRES (Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species) geneticists are adapting the technique to investigate the relationships of the 28 Californian condors *Gymnogyps californianus* in existence. Knowing how closely related the condors are to one another is criti-



Kirtland's warbler – threatened by global warming (D. Roby and K. Brink/ICBP).

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cal to the future of the species. Pairing birds that are too closely related could result in unsuccessful hatchings or offspring that have difficulty reproducing. Eight condors at the Wild Animal Park are to be paired for the 1988–1989 breeding season, and two males were to be sent to Los Angeles in exchange for a female. These decisions were made after carefully reviewing factors such as the birds' ages, behavioural data, and findings from the DNA analysis.

CRES, 1988/89 Winter Report.

Dolphin deaths linked to red tide

Half the bottlenosed dolphins *Tursiops truncatus* off the Atlantic coast of the US between New Jersey and Florida died in the past three years after eating fish contaminated with toxins from 'red tide' algae *Ptychodiscus brevis*. These conclusions follow an 18-month investigation by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). More than 750 dolphins were washed ashore since July 1987 but NOAA officials estimate that as many as 3000 dolphins died.

The Washington Post, 1 February 1989.

Oil spill off Washington

About 200 seabirds died as a result of a damaged barge losing 875,000 litres of oil on 23 December 1988 off the state of Washington's coast. Another 2000 live oiled birds were taken for treatment at a cleaning centre at the Ocean Shores Convention Centre. Dead oiled birds were also washed up on the beaches of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and Oregon.

The Vancouver Sun, 27 December 1988 and 4 January 1989.

Central America

Guatemala's turtle hatcheries

Although the taking of sea turtles and their eggs has been prohibited in Guatemala since 1981, enforcement is virtually impossible under current

social and economic conditions. Nearly all turtle eggs (of olive ridley *Lepidochelys olivacea* and leatherback *Dermochelys coriacea*) are taken. In an attempt to mitigate this loss, eggs are collected in some areas by employees of the University of San Carlos and the Ministry of Agriculture and incubated in 11 hatcheries on the Pacific coast. Hatching success has been found to depend on shading in this hot climate; unshaded hatcheries had 0 per cent success. Palm leaf roofs were found to be most effective, cheap and easy to build.

Marine Turtle Newsletter, January 1989, 7–12.

Greening Guatemala

A US independent power producer, AES Thames, is spending US\$2 million to plant trees in Guatemala in order to offset the carbon dioxide emissions of one of its coal-fired power plants. The project has been worked out with the World Resources Institute and the money will help 40,000 smallholding farmers to plant 52 million trees over a 10-year period. It is the first attempt to slow the greenhouse effect by mitigating emissions of a coal-fired power plant.

World Rainforest Report, No. 12, 12.

Honduran endemic bird refund

The only bird wholly restricted to Honduras, the Honduran emerald *Amazilia luciae*, a small blue-and-green hummingbird, had not been seen since 1937 until in 1988 two field workers saw 20 or more and judged it to be common in the right habitat.

World Birdwatch, January–March 1988, 4.

New parks for Panama

Panama officially decreed two new national parks on 6 September 1988. La Amistad International Park and Isla Bastimentos National Marine Park have both been recognized internationally for their high biological diversity. La Amistad connects with Amistad International Park in Costa Rica and protects more than 2020 sq km of tropical forests, while Isla Bastimentos covers 142 sq km of coral reefs, mangroves and islands in the Bay of Almi-

rante in the province of Bocas del Toro. *CNPPA Newsletter*, October/November/December 1988, 3.

South America

No dams on the Xingu?

Brazil has dropped plans to build hydroelectric dams with a \$5000 million loan from the World Bank, which would have destroyed some of the rain forest lands of the Kayapo and other tribes. Instead Brazil has agreed to accept a \$4 million loan from the Bank to be spent on energy conservation and measures designed to protect tribal lands. Amazonian Indians, led by the Chief of the Kayapo tribe, attracted international attention when they convened at the forest village of Altamira in February to protest against the planned dams on the Xingu River.

The Guardian, 24 February and 29 March 1989.

Brazil's new plans to fight Amazon fires

Brazilian scientists say reductions in government expenditure are bringing important research projects in the Amazon to a standstill. Satellite data measuring the amount of forest burnt in 1988 are unprocessed because of a broken computer and 1989 budget cuts will make it difficult to carry out the second stage of the forest-fire monitoring programme, which uses satellite images to alert fire-fighting services. However, the Brazilian Government has also unveiled plans for a 1000-strong army to fight forest fires, equipped with helicopters, aeroplanes, boats and jeeps.

The Guardian, 10 March 1989.

Japan targets the Amazon

Having already depleted South East Asia's forests, Japanese corporations are now looking toward the Amazon to supply Japan's demand for hardwoods. They plan to build a road over the Andes to connect the Peruvian Amazon and the Brazilian state of Acre with the Pacific Coast. The scheme would open up some of the richest and most pristine areas of forest to

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Japanese clear-cutting. International outcry against the scheme has forced the Japanese Government to deny that it is financing the road, but conservationists are wary—the powerful Japanese timber companies are wealthy enough to finance it themselves. *Monitor*, 13 February and 6 March 1989.

Atlantic forests on fire

Brazil's few remaining Atlantic forests were being destroyed by thousands of fires on a 680-km stretch of coast, according to a government report on 6 March. Virtually all the forest in a Pataxo Indian reserve in southern Bahia was being burnt in a total of 78 fires and there was no possibility of controlling them. A fire in the adjacent Monte Pascoal National Park was under control, having affected 500 of the parks 14,000 ha. It is possible that some fires had been set deliberately by loggers in Bahia, illegally cutting timber in protected forests. An estimated total of 300 sq km of forest had gone. *The New York Times*, 7 March 1989.

Australia/Antarctica

Stick-nest rat reintroduction planned

Before European impact two species of stick-nest rats *Leporillus spp* were widespread in the southern arid and semi-arid zones of Australia. The lesser stick-nest rat *L. apicalis* is almost certainly extinct, the greater, *L. conditor*, survives only on the two small Franklin Islands of Nuyts Archipelago in the Great Australian Bight. About 1000 of these rodents live there among coastal boulders and limestone capping, or in dense scrub or the burrows of mutton birds. They are relatively secure despite predation from barn owls *Tyto alba* and black tiger snakes *Notechis ater niger*, but isolated populations are always vulnerable and in order to secure a better future for the rat a captive-bred population has been established on the mainland. There are plans to reintroduce the species to Reevesby Island when feral cats have been eradicated; St Peter's Island, recently acquired as a conservation park, is also being considered as a possible release site.

Wildlife Australia, Winter 1988, 18–19.

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Confusing decisions on Tasmania's forests

Australia's Federal Government has shied away from World Heritage nomination of Tasmania's pristine forests, choosing instead to negotiate a joint scheme of federal-state protection with the Tasmanian Government. The Federal Government is poised to grant massive concessions to the logging industry and is considering allowing logging in the northern parts of the Lemonthyme and part of Exit Cave Reserve, both identified as potential World Heritage areas. While some magnificent forests and wilderness areas have been identified for protection, others of equal significance have been inexplicably excluded. *Conservation News*, September/October 1988, 2.

Damselfly needs help

The small endemic Australian damselfly *Hemiphysalia mirabilis*, probably the oldest living species of Odonata, is restricted to a few sites in Wilson's Promontory National Park in Victoria. Until a colony was discovered there in 1985 it was presumed extinct. Research since has indicated that active conservation is needed. Particularly worrying is that only six adults were found at one of the three sites in 1987–1988. This may have been due to a controlled burn to maintain nearby heathland, which also had the effect of improving cattle access to the water; the damselfly habitat was badly damaged. The researchers have recommended excluding cattle from the site, creating an additional firebreak to protect the swamp, searching other swampy areas of the park for *Hemiphysalia*; considering reintroducing the damselfly from one of the remaining sites and undertaking more research to clarify the insect's habitat needs and life history pattern.

Sant, G.J. and New, T.R. 1988. The biology and conservation of *Hemiphysalia mirabilis* Selys (Odonata, Hemiphysaliidae) in Southern Victoria. *Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, Technical Report Series* No. 82, 35 pp.

Crab comes to Coorong

The European shore crab *Carcinus*

maenas has appeared in the Coorong, South Australia, and could have adverse ecological effects if it becomes established. It was recorded in South Australia 10 years ago but had been restricted to the Outer Harbour, West Lakes and Port River areas of Adelaide; it was thought unlikely that it would spread further naturally due to unsuitable habitats along the coast, but that it could be introduced to other areas by ships. It is not known how the single specimen found at Coorong arrived there (most shipping in the area is recreational). While *C. maenas* may not be of ecological significance in the degraded marine habitats around Adelaide, its potential effect on the fauna of the Coorong is unknown. It has the potential to become a major predator in the Coorong and could alter the ecology sufficiently to affect local fishing.

Zeidler, W. 1988. *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, 112, 181–182.

Bid to save New Zealand's forests

In a move to save New Zealand's rain forests, conservationists there are calling for an export ban on indigenous woodchips and unprocessed timber, which could be achieved by a simple amendment to the Customs Act. The woodchipping industry did not arrive in New Zealand until the late 1960s and has gained a foothold only by taxpayers' subsidies, but it is the main threat to the country's remaining forests and the native wildlife they contain. Exports have risen sharply since 1984, most of the increase coming from clear felling native forest on private land and most being exported to Japan.

Forest and Bird, November 1988, 3–4.

Wrybill plover reserve

New Zealand's first riverbed reserve has been officially gazetted, safeguarding a 10-km stretch of North Canterbury's Ashley River for the threatened wrybill plover *Anarhynchus frontalis*. The population of this species is estimated at 3000–4000 and the Ashley River is its northernmost breeding ground.

Forest and Bird, November 1988, 9.

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Call for fur seal cull

Fishermen at Kaikoura, New Zealand, have proposed the culling of fur seals, claiming that they compete for commercial fish species. However, analysis of fur seals' diet has shown that 90 per cent of their food is squid, barracouta and octopus.
Forest and Bird, November 1988.

Blue duck's future looks better

On 18 October 1988 New Zealand's Central Districts Catchments Boards decided to halve the amount of water taken from the Wanganui River headwaters to feed the Tongariro Power Scheme. The decision is particularly good news for the blue duck *Hymenolaimus malacorhynchus*, which lost about 75 per cent of its central North Island habitat when the power scheme diverted waters from virtually every waterway flowing from Tongariro National Park. Recent Conservation Department surveys showed that numbers of blue duck on one of Wanganui's tributaries dropped by two-thirds since the waters were diverted.
Forest and Bird, November 1988, 6–8.

Introduced wasps bring hardship to the kaka

The kaka *Nestor meridionalis*, a forest-dwelling parrot from New Zealand, is not breeding successfully in South Island according to recent studies. Once abundant throughout the country, today they live in small numbers only in the larger remaining forests. In the beach forests of South Island the kaka have to expend more energy extracting insect larvae from wood than they recover from this vital protein source. Most of their energy requirement usually comes from honeydew produced by scale insects, but introduced wasps take so much of the honeydew that there is not enough left for the kaka. Since introduced possums and deer have reduced the vegetation diversity of the forests (possums, for example, have killed many of the mistletoes, whose flowers and fruit are alternative foods for kaka), the kaka probably do not achieve a good enough condition for breeding. The solution may be to introduce a wasp parasite or to provide an extra food source for the kaka that is not attractive to wasps. The loss of the

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forest is also a threat and they should be protected.
Forest and Bird, November 1988, 8–19.

Oceania

PNG bans log exports

The Government of Papua New Guinea has begun to take drastic steps to protect its forest resources from foreign exploitation. By June 1989 they had banned the export of logs of 10 tree species; by 1991 no more new log export permits will be issued and exporters will be charged higher fees. The bans are aimed at protecting high-quality timber from rapid depletion and at encouraging local processing and the export of sawn timber. Proposed changes to the country's forestry laws were expected to produce strong reaction from the timber industry.
PNG Post-Courier, 17 March 1989.

A new tree kangaroo

A newly discovered tree kangaroo in the remote Torricelli mountains of the East Sepik Province in Papua New Guinea needs urgent conservation action. It is extremely rare, with a population in the low hundreds and almost certainly declining. It inhabits only the mossy forests near the summits of those mountains and its habitat is estimated to be only about 27 sq km. It is further threatened by a new road being built in the area. The new species is the largest endemic Melanesian mammal and has thick, black fur, a short face and a very short tail. It was discovered in July 1988 by Dr Tim Flannery (Sydney Museum, Australia) and Lester Seri (ranger-biologist with the Environment and Conservation Department).
PNG Post-Courier Weekend Magazine, 17 March 1989.

Obituary

His Highness the Maharaja of Baroda—Lt Col Fatehsingh Rao Gaekwad—died on 1 September 1988. He was a committed conservationist, his numerous achievements including saving the Nilgiri tahr, implementing Project Tiger and Project Snow Leopard, founding the Wildlife Institute of India, saving Silent Valley, protecting primates and



Some of Norfolk Island's endemic insects are featured on a recent stamp issue: *Lamprima aenea*; *Insulascirtus nythos*; *Caedicia araucariae*; *Thrincofhora aridela*.

influencing the decision-makers in enacting India's wildlife legislation. He headed the World Wide Fund for Nature-India and served on the Indian Board for Wildlife. He travelled extensively, establishing fruitful contacts with leading international conservationists, decision-makers and industrialists. He was a member of numerous learned societies and scientific organizations, including the FFPS.