

governing industry, suggesting a further relaxation of controls that have already proved ineffective.

Source: IUCN *Arborvitae* (2000), 15, 2.

Poaching threat to wild asses in Turkmenistan

The world's only autochthon population of Turkmenian wild asses *Equus hemionus kulan*, known as kulans in South Turkmenistan's Badkhyz Reserve, is near to extinction. At the time of Turkmenistan's independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991, the kulans in Badkhyz numbered 5000–6000 individuals. In 1998, their number had decreased to 2400. According to information from local biologists, the kulan population is now estimated to number a few hundred animals. The primary cause of this decline is poaching for bush meat, which takes place both within and beyond the reserve. Poachers include the army – posted along and inside the reserve boundaries in order to protect the border between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Iran – and local people. Kulan meat is cheaper than mutton and in great demand on the black market. Little support is received from the authorities (police, local administration, army, ministry of environment and politicians) to stop the poaching in spite of the fact that the kulans are listed in the *Red Data Book of Turkmenistan*.

Source: Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZSCSP), Munich (2000). Sent by Dr G. Neumann-Denzau, Project Coordinator ZSCSP. E-mail: denzau@t-online.de; www.zgap.de

New funding for protected area in Tajikistan

The year 2000 marked the 60th anniversary of the formation of the Tigrovaya Balka Zapovednik, one of the only nature reserves on the planet to protect a desert-tugai (riparian forest) arid subtropical ecosystem. The reserve is located in the south-west of Tajikistan, where the Pyandj and Vakhsh rivers meet on the border with Afghanistan. In recognition of the anniversary, the government of Tajikistan allocated substantial funds to conserve and restore this protected area. The funding has enabled the employment of forest rangers as part of an integrated conservation programme for the reserve.

Source: *Ecostan News* (2000), 7(1), 9–10.

North Africa and Middle East

Egyptian government seizes illegal ivory consignments

According to the Elephant Trade Information System managed by TRAFFIC, the Egyptian government did not report a single ivory seizure in the 10-year period, 1989–1999. However, between September 1999 and early April 2000, the Egyptian authorities made nine separate seizures of worked and raw ivory from traders and tourists leaving the country. The seizures included 79 tusks, weighing 173 kg, which were confiscated from an Egyptian trader in Aswan. According to the trader, this raw ivory came from 'Sudan and other countries'. Other information confirms that ivory tusks continue to be imported into southern Egypt from Sudan, a long-established trading route.

Source: Martin, E. (2000), *Pachyderm* 28, 56–57.

Sub-Saharan Africa

African rhino populations increase

Numbers of the two species of African rhinoceros, the black rhino *Diceros bicornis* and the white rhino *Ceratotherium simum* continue to increase in the wild according to new estimates prepared by International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) African Rhino Specialist Group. There are now more rhino in Africa than at any time since the early to mid 1980s. In 1999, African rhino numbers in the wild reached just over 13,000, up from 8300 in 1992. Most of the increase can be accounted for by the rapid growth in the number of southern white rhino. The balance between white and black rhino has shifted, with 79 per cent of African rhino in the wild in 1999 being white rhino, compared with 30 per cent in 1984. Black rhino numbers in the wild have increased from a low of around 2450 in 1992 to just over 2700 in 1999. Numbers of two of the six African subspecies remain low, however, with only 10 individuals of the western black rhino remaining scattered across northern Cameroon.

Source: IUCN-World Conservation Union and WWF, 7 August 2000.

Results of bush meat survey published

TRAFFIC conducted a 2-year review on trade and use of wild meat in Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The study investigates the use of wild meat in central and eastern Africa, its economic value to rural communities and the impact of harvest on protected areas and individual species valued in the trade. A total of 23 surveys were conducted from 1997 to 1998, including both rural and urban areas, and approximately 6000 respondents contributed to the project. The study found that a wide variety of species – from insects, rodents and birds, to duikers, elephants and impalas – are hunted regularly throughout the areas studied. Among the majority of people interviewed, bush meat is recognized as a valued resource and consumed regularly. For example, in Kitui District, Kenya, c. 14 kg of bush meat per household is consumed by 80 per cent of the households each month; and in the Kweneng rural area of Botswana, 46 per cent of households consume at least 18 kg of bush meat every month.

Source: TRAFFIC *Dispatches* (2000), 14, 1, 14.

Zoological Society of San Diego backs bush meat crisis

In August 2000, the Zoological Society of San Diego announced a multipronged plan to raise public awareness for the bush meat crisis in Central and West Africa. The Society aims to aid an international effort to end illegal African bush meat trade and reduce legal consumption to sustainable levels. Apart from implementing education and awareness schemes at the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park, the Society has also started a field study in Cameroon on the drill *Mandrillus leucophaeus*, one of Africa's most endangered primate species. In addition, the Society will join the Bush Meat Crisis Task Force, a worldwide network and steering committee comprised of conservationists representing nearly 30 zoological organizations, animal welfare advocates and medical researchers.

Source: San Diego Zoological Society, 15 August 2000.