

of the Endangered Basra reed-warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis* breeds in these marshes.

Source: http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2004/06/mesopotamia_marshes.html

Sub-Saharan Africa

Captive rhinos killed by overdose of iron

Black rhino populations are recovering, but the species is still rare in the wild. Attempts to breed black rhinos in captivity have been largely unsuccessful, with over half the animals in American zoos dying prematurely. Rhinos have died from chronic anaemia that veterinary surgeons believe was caused by high iron levels in the blood. This is exactly the opposite of the human situation where anaemia is caused by low iron levels. A study of rhino blood chemistry has shown that the red blood cells contain 50 times as much tyrosine as human red blood cells. Tyrosine is thought to protect against excess iron. In the wild rhinos browse on acacia that is low in iron and may be high in tyrosine. In captivity their diet may result in their getting higher levels of iron and lower levels of tyrosine. Scientists are now experimenting with different variations of the captive diet.

Source: *New Scientist* (2004), 183(2458), 12.

Ruwenzori Mountains are removed from danger list

The Ruwenzori Mountains National Park has been removed from UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger. The park had been originally listed because of civil unrest, lack of funding, poaching and encroachment, but the situation has now improved and park management has regained full control of the area. The Ruwenzori Mountains are home to over a quarter of Uganda's bird species and are the most reliable water source of the River Nile.

Source: *Africa Geographic* (2004), 12(7), 10.

Key area of primate diversity is protected in Rwanda.

The government of Rwanda has recently established the Nyungwe National Park in an area that is considered one of the world's most important for primate

diversity. The park contains 13 species of primates, 275 bird species and 260 species of trees and shrubs. Primates present in the park include chimpanzees, L'hoests monkeys, grey-cheeked managbaeys, owl-faced guenons and Angolan black-and-white colobus. Nyungwe and the neighbouring Kibira National Park in Burundi now form the largest block of protected rain forest in East Africa.

Source: *Wildlife Conservation* (2004), June, 10.

Sudan rebels responsible for ivory poaching in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Poachers linked to the Sudanese rebel organization, the Sudan People's Liberation Army, are killing elephants for their ivory in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The poachers have targeted the Garamba National Park near the border with Sudan, where a park official has estimated that only 14,000 elephants remain, compared to 90,000 before the civil war began in 1997. Despite ivory trade being banned under CITES, ivory is still being sold at the main tourist market in Kinshasa.

Source: *Africa Geographic* (2004), 12(5), 14.

Mugabe plan threatens black rhinos

The President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, has announced plans to nationalize all white-owned land, a move that could have a highly damaging effect on conservation in the country. Large areas of poorer farmland in Zimbabwe are registered as privately owned 'conservancies' where management of wildlife for tourism and hunting takes precedence over commercial farming. Some of these conservancies have been particularly important for the threatened black rhino, with most of the income for the areas coming from commercial hunting, which is still big business despite the current political situation. After nationalization the government plans a lease-back option but there is no guarantee that leases will be offered to the former owners.

Source: *BBC Wildlife Magazine* (2004), 22(8), 18–19.

Chilli peppers may be answer to reducing elephant damage

Areas surrounding the Liwonde National Park in Malawi have been devastated by raiding elephants that have destroyed crops and trampled people to death. A novel method of deterring elephants is now being tried.

The Chilli Pepper Production Project has been planting bird's eye chillies, grown for the European market, along the park fence on the eastern boundary. It is clear that elephants hate the chillies and avoid areas where the plants are growing.

Source: *Africa Geographic* (2004), 12(5), 14–15.

Ban on military aircraft flights to protect Cape vultures

New South African Air Force regulations have stipulated that military aircraft will no longer be allowed to fly within 25,000 feet (7.62 km) of Cape vulture colonies. The action follows information from local landowners who reported that military aircraft were disturbing Cape vulture colonies in the Magaliesberg area. The Endangered Wildlife Trust, who helped negotiate the agreement, hopes that commercial aircraft will follow suit; a collision between a vulture and any aircraft would spell disaster for all concerned.

Source: *Africa Geographic* (2004), 12(5), 15.

South Africa announces protection for Bird Island

Bird Island in South Africa is home to the world's largest gannet colony and contains several endangered and threatened bird species such as the roseate tern and the African penguin. It is also surrounded by reefs that are the habitat of many highly endangered reef fish species and abalone (perlemoen). A 24 nautical mile square zone around the island is to be gazetted as a marine protected area and the group of four islands, of which Bird Island is the largest, will be managed as part of the Greater Addo National Park. No fishing or diving will be allowed there.

Source: *Marine Pollution Bulletin* (2004), 49(1–2), 7.

New World Heritage Site for South Africa

The Cape Floristic Region in South Africa has been officially recognised as the country's sixth World Heritage Site. The region covers an area of > 553,000 ha and is one of the richest areas in the world for plants. It comprises eight separate protected areas that stretch from the Cape Peninsula, including Table Mountain, into the Eastern Cape. More than 9,000 plant species occur in the Cape Floristic Region, 6,000 of which are endemic.

Source: *Africa Geographic* (2004), 12(7), 10.