

expensive and time consuming. For example, a recent survey of 2452 species of birds, butterflies, large moths, woody plants and small mammals in 50 forests in Uganda took 5 years and cost £600,000. Scientists seeking a cheaper method developed a computer program to calculate the combination of forests that would contain the greatest number of different species while adding up to a fixed total area of land. The program counted species that appeared in more than one forest only once. When asked to consider only birds or only butterflies, the program accurately selected the group of forests with the greatest overall diversity.

Source: *Nature*, 394, 472.

#### Value of *Brachylaena* woodlands in Tanzania

A 3-month survey funded jointly by Fauna & Flora International's 100% Fund, the UK Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the World Nature Association in previously unstudied *Brachylaena* woodlands in the Usambara Mountains, Tanzania, found at least four threatened and near-threatened birds, four threatened mammals and one possibly endemic snake. Educational work with villagers in conjunction with foresters from the East Usambara Catchment Forest Project resulted in an agreement to protect the sites from further degradation.

Source: FFI files.

#### Baby boom for mountain gorillas

Ten mountain gorilla *Gorilla gorilla beringei* births have occurred in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) since the onset of civil unrest in early 1997. Mountain gorillas, with a worldwide population of about 600, are found only in Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Many of the births in DRC have occurred in families that have been disturbed in the past 3 years as a result of the conflict in the region. The park authorities in partnership with the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) are rehabilitating park buildings and re-equipping park guards; training park staff to monitor the status of the gorilla groups and to protect them against poaching; and

working with communities surrounding the parks to help protect the mountain gorilla's remaining habitat.

Source: African Wildlife Foundation, 16 June 1998.

Web: <http://africanwildlife.org>

#### Mountain gorillas shot

Two Critically Endangered mountain gorillas *Gorilla gorilla beringei* were killed by poachers on 3 September 1998 in the Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo. It appears that armed poachers hunting monkeys for food killed them and fled when they discovered they had shot gorillas. The bodies were discovered during a regular patrol of the International Gorilla Conservation Programme.

Source: African Wildlife Foundation, 17 September 1998.

Web: <http://africanwildlife.org>

#### Coelacanth decline in Grand Comore

The coelacanth *Latimeria chalumnae* population at Grande Comore Island, western Indian Ocean, fell from 230–650 in 1991 to fewer than 300 in 1995. The estimates were based on counts of individually recognized fish in an 8-km stretch of coastline representing 9 per cent of the total suitable habitat at the island. The local artisanal fishery is probably responsible for the decline and conservation measures should focus on providing fishermen with fishing alternatives.

Source: *Conservation Biology*, 12(4), 759–765.

### South and South-East Asia

#### Flood affects Kaziranga National Park

The Kaziranga National Park, Assam, India, a World Heritage Site and main stronghold of the great Indian rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*, was badly affected by floods in 1998. There were three periods of flooding starting in June 1998, but the third, from 3 to 8 September, caused the deaths of large numbers of animals, either by drowning, or being killed by people or vehicles. Thirty-two rhinos drowned and four were poached. Five elephants, 20 wild buffalo, 400 hog deer, 8 swamp deer, 10 Sambar, 14

wild boar, 5 hog badgers, 1 bear and 9 porcupines also drowned. On National Highway No. 37 on the southern edge of the park, vehicles killed 1 elephant, 28 hog deer, 3 wild boar, 2 hog badgers, 1 fishing cat, 2 cobra, 1 python and 2 civets. During the flood 47 animals were rescued including 1 rhino calf, 42 hog deer, 2 swamp deer, 2 wild boar and 1 elephant. The last flood in KNP was in 1988, in which the deer population was badly affected and the hog deer population crashed to almost 50 per cent. Efforts have been initiated by the government to restore the damage caused and additional grants have been provided.

Source: Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Beltola Guwahati-781 028, Assam, India.

#### Mangrove rehabilitation in the Indus Delta

A massive campaign of rehabilitation of mangroves in the Indus Delta in Pakistan was started in 1995 to repair the damage caused by: massive reductions in freshwater flow, silt and nutrients in the Indus as a result of dams and irrigation systems; over-browsing by camels; over-harvesting of fuelwood, construction material and fodder; and pollution. Now about 12,000 ha of mangroves have been restored, mostly using *Avicennia marina* raised from seed and transplanted as saplings, but also *Rhizophora mucronata* planted as propagules directly at the site.

Source: *World Conservation*, 2/98, 19.

#### Arming farmers not the answer to elephant problem

A Minister in the Sri Lanka Government has proposed that an armaments factory be set up in order to supply firearms to farmers so that they could defend themselves and their crops from wild animals in general, and elephants in particular. In a letter to the Sri Lankan *Daily News*, Charles Santiapillai and Jayantha Jayewardene said the plan was ill conceived, ill timed and insane. Already 120–140 elephants are being killed each year in Sri Lanka as a result of conflict with humans. About 30 people are killed by elephants each year, but a far greater number, 2200, are killed on the roads. Santiapillai