



*In order to study the habits and movements of rhinos – both black and white – the Parks, Game and Fish Preservation Board of Natal, South Africa is fitting two animals with miniature radio transmitters. Photo shows a hole being drilled in the posterior horn of a drugged rhino, prior to insertion of the transmitter. Signals from the radio can be picked up at a range of 2 km; the transmitter's aerial is accommodated in a groove which had to be made around the horn*

*Members of the Young Ornithologists' Club throughout Britain timed the start of the dawn chorus on one particular day in spring this year. Making allowances for 'local time' they found no significant differences between different regions of the country – nor, surprisingly, between clear or cloudy sky conditions. But they did make the interesting discovery that on the whole town birds start singing earlier than country dwellers.*

How do you tell one lion from another if you are studying their behaviour in the wild? Count the whisker spots (not all of which carry whiskers) between the animal's upper lip and nose, according to C. J. Pennycuik and J. Rudnai of University College, Nairobi. This interesting technique must now be added to those for identifying giraffes by their neck patterns and whooper swans by their bill patterns.

*Two American zoologists, D. M. Madison and C. Robert Shoop, fitted radioactive*

*markers to salamanders, took them 60 yards away from their home burrows at night, and tracked their movements with a Geiger counter. How did they navigate home again? Possibly by smell, as several of the animals climbed bushes and shrubs on the way back, which might have enabled them to sniff the air for tell-tale odours given off by the soil and vegetation around their burrows.*

An ecological study based in the desert areas of Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico will include sophisticated monitoring of desert fauna and flora and the testing of computer models of desert dynamics. These models, simulating natural conditions, will make it possible to forecast the future status of the desert as a result of man's manipulation of natural events such as changing the climate. Questions like how much grazing pressure a desert can tolerate before reaching the point of diminishing returns could be answered in this way. The study is part of the US contribution to the International Biological Programme, and will be conducted by a group of 60 scientists from different countries. Since 10 to 20 per cent of the world's land mass is desert, it obviously has important implications.

#### **WWF & IUCN**

A German ethnologist and zoologist, Dr Thomas Schultze-Westrum, has gone to Papua and New Guinea to carry out research on the possibility of creating a national park in the Papuan Gulf and Mount Bosavi area.

*Australian scientist Frank G. Nicholls has been appointed Deputy Director General of IUCN. His previous appointment was a United Nations assignment in Thailand, where he has spent the past 10 years involved in the establishment and operation of the Applied Scientific Research Corporation of Thailand.*

The British National Appeal of WWF has (at the time of writing) just about reached the half-way mark towards its 1970/71 target of £1 million. Outstanding is a £50,000 challenge by an anonymous donor to contribute this amount providing it is matched by another supporter.

*Ecologist Lee Talbot has stated that the rate of extermination of mammals has increased 55-fold in the past 150 years.*

An international conference on conservation will be held in Madagascar from 7 to 10 October in close co-operation with IUCN. Madagascar is a country of exceptional scientific interest, with its unique and unusual communities of plants and animals.

*New National Appeals of the World Wildlife Fund are to be launched in Norway and Sweden during the course of 1970. The Board of Trustees of WWF International has elected Guy Mountfort as a member of its Executive Council, and has elected the first woman to its board – HRH Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands.*

IUCN has formed a new Commission on Environmental Policy, Law and Administration. The former Commission on Legislation has been absorbed into the new Commission as a permanent committee, while new committees will be established soon on environmental policy and environmental administration. Chairman of the new overall grouping is Professor Lynton K. Caldwell of Indiana University.

*Stone marten, latest in our series of European wild animals photographed by André Fatras*

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It's the same the whole world over Department. Earlier this year two leading Russian conservationists complained, in a party newspaper, that leading officials of the country's Ministry of Agriculture were turning Russia's nature reserves into hunting parks for their friends.

*Contrary to our article in the March issue, Australia's Great Barrier Reef may not, after all, be threatened by the crown of thorns starfish. Professor Whitehead is reported as telling an international conference in Sydney that the starfish are only destroying a veneer of living coral - but not the basic structure of the reef.*

Mayor John Lindsay of New York City has signed an order prohibiting the sale of all products manufactured from alligator hide, while Governor Rockefeller has introduced two decrees prohibiting the sale of endangered species and of their skins in the State of New York.

*Scientists called in by the new industrial city of Jurong, in Singapore, had a hard time finding water anywhere off the southern side of the island republic that was sufficiently unpolluted for coral to grow. However, they have found one place - the small island of Blakang Mati. Now the idea is to create a tourist attraction out of a coral garden complete with underwater restaurant and viewing tunnel. If pollution should start to kill off the coral, plans are mooted to grow coral farther away and graft it into position at Blakang Mati. But wouldn't it be better to try to beat the pollution problem?*

Lesotho's first National park - Sehlabathebe National Park - has been established. Located on a 8,500-foot-high plateau it contains various mammals as well as birds such as the bald ibis and the lammergeier.

*The wildlife management school at Garoua, Cameroun, is scheduled for completion this year. The first of its kind in West Africa, its aim is to train French-speaking African students in wildlife management and related subjects.*

The Frankfurt Zoological Society has donated two fully equipped Land-Rovers to the Game Division of Northern Tanzania, at Arusha. They will be used in the constant war against poachers, which East African governments are taking seriously. As an example of strict measures employed in Tanzania, one man was imprisoned for three years for illegally owning a leopard skin, while a businessman involved in the trade was fined 'several thousand pounds'.

*Wildlife conservation in Uganda has suffered a sudden and tragic blow with the death of Francis Katete, Director of Uganda National Parks, in a car accident.*

Canadian trapper Andy Tyson, known for many years as the 'wolf man', has died. Ontario's Assistant Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests, Keith Acheson, knew him well and described him as the best wolf-trapper Ontario ever had. 'His countless friends will never forget him,' said Acheson. What about the wolves?

**The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust has announced its categories for 1971 Travelling Fellowships. Of the 12 categories at least two will be of particular interest to naturalists: 'Protection of the Natural Environment' and 'Exploration and Adventure'. These fellowships are open to any UK citizen of any age or sex. To take advantage of this unique opportunity, write for application form to: Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, 10 Queen Street Mayfair, London W1X 7PD. Note - applications have to be completed by 6 November.**

In the second issue of the new British publication *The Ecologist* an American biogeologist states that by the year 2000 man will have mined all the world's estimated deposits of platinum, silver, gold, lead, zinc, tin, and uranium 235. In addition, by the year 2042 we shall have used up all the available crude oil, natural gas, helium, copper, and tungsten.

*A resolution recently adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe noted that labels on pesticides should list the active ingredients, and carry instructions concerning the method of use and transport, hazards for fauna and flora, and safe disposal of waste material and empty containers.*

Sign of the times note. A growing shortage of Russian and Persian beluga caviar is causing prices to rise as high as £30 a pound (compared with £25 a year ago and £20 five years ago). Catches of sturgeon are falling off because of pollution of the Caspian Sea and the rivers where the fish spawn.

*Are we going to suffocate ourselves - or not? An article in Audubon magazine says that we are literally blotting out the sun by air pollution. Control of air pollution is not necessary just to make it easier for us to breathe, but to preserve the very sources of life - sunlight and oxygen. One expert told the authors that if we continue at our present rate, 'in twenty years we shall find ourselves in global gloom' with no hope of survival. But scientists writing in another American journal, Science, claim that they have been unable to detect any noticeable change in oxygen levels since 1910, and that even if all known fossil fuels were burned, less than three per cent of available oxygen would be used . . . which would thin the atmosphere by an amount equivalent to living at 200 feet instead of sea level.*

## **NATURAL HISTORY**

Dr Lev Fishelson, of Tel-Aviv University, reports in *Nature* that a fish living among the coral reefs of the Red Sea can change sex as required to maintain the correct balance of males to females. The species - *Anthias squamipinnis* - normally arranges matters so that the vast majority of individuals at any time are females, thus ensuring maximum reproductive potential. If female fish are kept in a tank without a male, one of them will gradually change sex over a two-week period. But it seems that the mere sight of a male will prevent any females from swapping roles.



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