

July - Dec. 1989

Ferrets for the future

"If we can identify a species, however small the population, and if we have adequate commitments from governments, then the science we have at our disposal today can ensure the survival of that species," according to the leader of the SSC Captive Breeding Specialist Group, Ulysses S. Seal, Professor of Ecology and Wildlife at the University of Minnesota.

Speaking at this year's SSC meeting, Professor Seal cited the successful campaign to save the black-footed ferret.

"There were only 17 of these ferrets in the wild in 1985. To save the species from extinction, all of them (slightly more females than males) were transferred from Meetsete to a captive breeding facility in Sybille, another Wyoming town. Today there are 124 black-footed ferrets in captivity. By 1991 we expect to have 500 of them and we should be releasing most of them back into the wild in Wyoming and eventually in six other states.

Fear for rhinos

Dr Seal told the gathering of the plight of the Javan rhinoceros, fewer than 70 of which survive today. He said the Javan rhino was "polygamous, probably lives 25 years,



Black-footed ferrets *Mustela nigripes* (photo: WWF/B. Radcliffe).

has a single calf, first breeds at about the age of seven, has 16-month gestation, and a three-year minimum interval between births if the calf survives."

Conceding that it will be difficult to save the Javan rhino, Dr Seal reported on a "population viability analysis" that assessed the risk of extinction and indicated practical proposals for "developing viable, self-sustaining populations within the historic range of the species."

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Asian elephant centre opened

IUCN has launched a new Asian Elephant Conservation Centre at a June meeting in Bangalore (India).

The centre will promote implementation of the conservation action plan which has been developed by the IUCN/SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AESG). It will set up an advisory service on elephant conservation and management for governments and NGOs within the range of the species, and make the considerable expertise of the AESG more readily available.

The new centre will initially have two full-time staff, and will be coordinated by Dr R. Sukumar, the Deputy Chairman of the AESG. IUCN is most grateful to the Centre for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science and to the Bombay Natural History Society for providing the necessary institutional support, and to WWF-International for providing the

funds for the first three years of operation. IUCN has started seeking the larger funds needed to put the centre onto a permanent footing.

Venezuela launch

The new Species Conservation Action Plan for Venezuela was launched on 15 June by the Fundación para la Defensa de la Naturaleza (FUDENA), an NGO member of IUCN.

The plan, which FUDENA hopes will be the first stage in the development of a National Conservation Strategy for Venezuela, originated in a workshop held during the 62nd meeting of the IUCN Species Survival Commission in Caracas in April 1987. The subsequent development of the plan by FUDENA staff members Cecilia de Blohm and Glenda Medina Cuervo included extensive inputs from conservationists in Venezuela and from other SSC members overseas. Publication was made possible by a generous grant from World Wildlife Fund - U.S.

This Action Plan represents the most comprehensive attempt so far to look at species conservation priorities on a national level in South America, and it represents a good example of how IUCN Commissions can collaborate with local institutions in these countries. FUDENA will now be undertaking a major fund-raising programme to put this important plan into action.

Copies are available from FUDENA (address below). □

Bombay Natural History Society

This IUCN member is one of the oldest scientific societies in India, and is recognized as an authoritative source of information on the fauna and flora of the subcontinent. Field work is currently under way on migration and population structure of Indian birds, and on endangered species of wildlife and their habitats. The Society is especially active in efforts to conserve the Asian elephant.

The Society's facilities include a library and research collections. It also offers a range of activities and advice for the public, including birdwatching, wildlife photography, fishing, and field trips.

Address: Hornbill House, Shahid Bhagat Singh Road, Bombay 400 023, India.



Fundación para la Defensa de la Naturaleza (FUDENA)

Founded in 1975 and a member of IUCN since 1980, FUDENA is a private, non-profit association of prominent Venezuelans interested in conservation of the country's natural environment. Its aims include the study and protection of habitats, protection of fauna and flora (with emphasis on threatened species), and environmental education.

Address: Apartado 70376, Caracas 1071A, Venezuela.