

6 Oct Dec 1979

Conservation

Successful protest stops Zambian rhino hunting safaris

Soon after the launch of its major international campaign to safeguard the world's five rhinoceros species, World Wildlife headquarters in Switzerland learned to its horror that safari operators in Germany and Holland were offering European hunters the chance to shoot rhinos in Zambia.

Mr Niels Halbertsma, WWF Director in Holland, turned undercover agent to investigate the offers of the Zambia safaris — and discovered from Amsterdam's Chassorbis tour operator that trips to shoot rhino there "could be arranged". Similar tours offered in Cologne, Germany, advertised the chance to shoot elephant, lion, and leopard, as well as rhino. In Southern Africa, they said, the trophies could include white rhino, and other big game in Botswana, Namibia, and Tanzania. The company, Kettner, carried advertisements in major hunting magazines in Germany.

"At a cost of 30,000 - 40,000 Dutch guilders (US \$15,000-20,000) for a permit to shoot an average six animals, with the amount inclusive of air fare, this was quite a bargain," said Mr Halbertsma. "The idea of safari-hunting endangered animals is an insult to conservation and is in direct opposition to WWF's all-out efforts to save these species."

WWF protested strongly to the Government of Zambia, and was immediately reassured by the Minister of Land and Natural Resources, the Hon. Clement Mwananshiku, that a total ban had been placed on the hunting of rhinos and that no licenses to shoot the species in Zambia would be issued in future. Meanwhile, the Dutch operator Chassorbis announced that it would stop such tours with immediate effect. Company spokesman J.E. van Lingen also gave an undertaking to WWF that no endangered species of any kind would be hunted on future safari trips organised by Chassorbis anywhere in the world.

West Indian Fauna Conservation Programme

For some time now, the Parque Zoologico Nacional of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, has been specializing in the breeding and study of Hispaniolan fauna. This long-term project, under the Programme of Native Fauna, involves the study in both the captive and wild states of the following genera: *Solenodon*, *Plagiodontia*, *Amazona*, *Aratinga*, *Oxyura*, *Dendrocygna*, *Phoenicopterus*, *Cyclura* and *Crocodylus*.

At the present time, ZOODOM is initiating a new programme for the breeding, conservation, and study of endangered West Indian mammals, birds and reptiles. The institution hopes soon to establish a permanent centre to provide Dominican and foreign biologists specializing in these species an opportunity to study them — something that is not available at present.

We are requesting support from all interested institutions to help us establish the centre, by providing specimens — either donated, on breeding loan, or exchange — of any West Indian fauna in their collection. We feel that this is a good opportunity for the conservation of many endangered Caribbean species, and we urge you to give us your support. Institutions interested in participating in or co-operating with this programme, please write to:

J.A. Ottenwalder, WEST INDIAN FAUNA, Dept. Zoology, Research and Conservation, Parque Zoologico Nacional, P.O. Box 2449, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Jersey-bred pink pigeons return to Mauritius

Two male pink pigeons reared at the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust were returned to their homeland at the end of September. This very important step should lead, before too long, to the reintroduction of this extremely rare bird to its forest home on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius.

When, in January 1977, it became known that the total population of this beautiful pigeon had reached an all-time low of some 30 individuals, the Mauritius Government approached Gerald Durrell, the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust's Honorary Director, and requested him to arrange the capture of sufficient birds to set up a captive breeding programme. Durrell's personal assistant, John Hartley travelled to Mauritius in March 1977 and after several weeks managed to trap eight birds. These were divided into two groups: one stayed in Mauritius at the government breeding station and the other was taken to Jersey. A total of 27 pink pigeons have now been bred in captivity.

The two birds sent to Mauritius are both males and will be exchanged in due course for two females. The transfer of birds between the two captive colonies is very important to help ensure that in-breeding does not take place. A trial re-release was carried out with one bird in 1977 and coloured identification rings were placed on its legs. This individual has been observed on several occasions since, and has been accepted back by the remaining wild flock. Much of the work being carried out in Mauritius is being done by Yousoof Mungroo, the Conservation Officer, who received twelve months' training with the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust.

— 26 September 1979

WWF signs Agreement with China

The World Wildlife Fund has reached an agreement for co-operation in conservation with the People's Republic of China. The agreement called for the immediate establishment of a WWF-China Committee of six members — three from WWF International and three from the recently formed association for environmental sciences of the People's Republic of China. The WWF-China Committee will co-ordinate links between conservation organisations and authorities in China and WWF worldwide contacts. It will initiate high priority projects in China and will co-ordinate action for their implementation.

The agreement was signed by the Vice-Director of the Environment Protection Office of the State Council, Mr Chu Ge Ping, and the Chairman of WWF International, Sir Peter Scott, who described it as a "truly historic occasion for world conservation". Sir Peter led a five-member WWF delegation to China — the first non-governmental conservation organisation ever to receive an official invitation from the Chinese Government.