

## Red Data Books

A review of the future policies of the Conservation Monitoring Centre and SSC needs in this field was promised. Various Position Statements and policy issues were discussed and action proposed, notably with regard to: Animals given as political gifts, the Cat Specialist Group's Cat Manifesto, and Position Statements on Introductions, Captive Breeding, and Orphan Gorillas.

## Plants

Enrique Forero explained the role of the IUCN Plant Advisory Group and its targets within the current IUCN Plants Programme. These were: To bring Botanic Gardens into the conservation movement with the Botanic Gardens Conservation Strategy and a newly established Secretariat; to prepare a book on *Plant Conservation: Principles and Practice*; the forthcoming *Plant Sites Red Data Book*, emphasizing what to do rather than what not to do; to conserve plants in tropical and subtropical countries, with emphasis on threatened habitats, and to work on a strategy for a Floristic Inventory of tropical rainforests. Dr Forero spoke about the 15 Plant Specialist Groups, eight of which are now active, and Clive Jermy (Ferns) and John Fay (North American Plants) raised other discussion points.

Sustainable wildlife utilization discussions, led by Bertrand des Clers and David Cumming, indicated the need to expand our activities. Some regional problems were tackled and actions taken, including letters of intervention from the Director General concerning the illegal collection of rare reptiles in Greece (see page 20); the low population levels of the Pyrenean ibex *Capra pyrenaica pyrenaica* in the Ordesa National Park in Spain; and the future of the Nietoperek Nature Reserve in western Poland.

The meeting drew to a close with a progress review, Group by Group. The final act was the announcement of the Top Twelve Endangered Animals and Plants — see page 21 — after which Gren Lucas thanked Peter van Bree most warmly for the excellent arrangements and the SSC Executive team for all their hard work in making the meeting such a success.

## Polar Bear Agreement

The Alaskan Inupiat and the Canadian Inuit, two native peoples, have made an agreement on the management of the polar bear population in the Beaufort Sea which they share, which the Polar Bear Group has warmly welcomed. See page 32.

The agreement includes the appointment of a joint commission (two representatives of each) to develop a Management Plan and ensure its implementation, organise research, establish quotas, and allocate the harvest. Management will be on a sustained yield basis; adequate technical information will be ensured and the wise use of polar bear products promoted.

The Action Plan is to establish harvest limits and regulate harvest numbers; ensure the protection of females and cubs, pregnant females and denning bears; establish a reporting system to collect critical information from harvested animals; and protect important habitat.

'A landmark action in terms of user groups developing plans for the wise and perpetual use of wildlife resources', is how the Polar Bear Group Chairman, Steven Amstrup, describes this very important agreement.

## Sumatran Rhinos in Sarawak

A joint Sarawak Forest Department and Earthlife Foundation survey team, led by David Labang and Julian Caldecott, has confirmed the existence of Sumatran rhinos *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis harrissoni* in a remote valley in the interior of Sarawak. Tracks and other definite signs were found on and after August 22 last year. Before this, there had been no confirmed records since the early 1950s, and the species had been assumed to be extinct in Sarawak, having been hunted relentlessly in the 1920s and 1930s to supply an export trade in its horns and other parts.

The Sarawak population seems to number in the range 5-15, and although presumably descended from a tiny group, breeding is continuing. The animals have at least 60,000 hectares of apparently suitable habitat to occupy. The Sarawak Government is determined to secure their survival: it has already deployed patrol teams to defend the area, raised the penalty for rhino poaching to two years' gaol with a M\$20,000 (ca £5000) fine, and proposed a large national park for the region. Further details may be obtained from: J. O. Caldecott, Earthlife/WWF-Malaysia, 7 Jalan Bukitani, 93200 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.

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## Sir Peter Scott

All SSC members will wish to congratulate Sir Peter Scott, CBE, DSC, SSC's Chairman Emeritus, on the award last year of WWF's highest honour, the Gold Medal, in recognition of his lifelong contribution to international wildlife conservation. Sir Peter was SSC Chairman from 1963 to 1980.

## SSC at Soesterberg 1986

In planning the Soesterberg meeting the SSC Steering Committee had felt that, as the meeting was to be in Europe, a review of the Commission's input into all international conventions, both existing and proposed, should be one focal point. As Dan Navid pointed out at the meeting, there are some 300 international legal instruments which effect species conservation (it is hoped to list these in a later *Species*), and needing our continued vigilance and action, in particular CITES, the Bern, Migratory Species, Ramsar, and World Heritage Conventions. He identified four levels of action for IUCN and SSC: the creation and drafting of conventions; monitoring; assisting implementation, and administration and an advisory role.

### The Major Conventions

Ralph Osterwoldt gave a brief history of the **Bonn Convention on Migratory Species**, which now has 21 Parties, though many more are needed, and covers both cyclical and periodic migration; particular concerns at present include European bats, white stork, Western European Anatidae, and certain dolphins; others coming up include kouprey and monk seal.

Dan Navid described the **Ramsar Convention**, which now has 42 Parties; the protocol (by which the Convention can be amended) has recently come into force. The Parties have identified 344 Ramsar wetland sites covering 20 million hectares. The meeting of the Parties in Regina, Saskatchewan, later this year, will be the most important so far, and SSC input will be particularly important in: drawing up criteria for important wetland areas; advising on wetland species management, and addressing celebrated 'Ramsar causes'.

Roger McManus spoke on **CITES**, which addresses the problems of trade in endangered species and now has 90 Parties. The Convention both permits useful trade and curtails damaging trade, and IUCN input is both essential and unique. In future this will be coordinated by the SSC Executive Office with the main action through the **SSC Trade Specialist Group (TSG)**, which at this stage has two principal objectives: to provide the Parties with the necessary basic information for amending Appendices, the TSG providing neutral analyses, and to help coordinate the IUCN recommendations.

Alastair Gammel and Simon Lyster. The **Bern Convention on European wildlife** was signed in 1979 and came into force in 1982 — see the article by Simon Lyster, page 15. The Standing Committee has been very weak in the enforcement of the Convention. NGOs can attend the annual meetings; if they did so in greater numbers, the Convention would become more effective.

This Convention has no reporting requirements, so it is difficult to know whether it is being enforced. IUCN has compiled a report detailing instances of non-compliance, especially from a habitat point of view, but some of the blame must rest with the conservationists who have consistently failed to pin their governments down. NGOs were urged to take instances of non-compliance to the Standing Committee.

### Action Planning

Simon Stuart reviewed the Action Planning process and priorities — see the article on page 11 — and several Chairmen described how their Specialist Groups functioned and how they developed their Action Plans: Russ Mittermeier (Primates), David Cumming (African Elephant and Rhino), Paul Goriup, giving ICBP's experience and Bertrand des Clers (Ethnozoology).