

## African Elephant & Rhino

The Group has worked out a Five-Point Plan to save the black rhino. To support this, Wildlife Conservation International, the conservation arm of the New York Zoological Society, of which Dr David Western is Acting Director, has established a Rhino Rescue Fund 'to prevent the black rhino's imminent extinction'. This year, says Dr Western, is the last chance to save the four or five significant populations which are needed to preserve the species' genetic diversity.

The five points are: to protect or move the last pocket of animals in West Africa, in Cameroon and Chad; to send anti-poaching reinforcements to save 500 rhinos in the Sebungwe Reserve, in Zimbabwe, one of the two largest populations; to set up a new sanctuary in the Aberdares National Park, in Kenya, to save the last forest rhinos, and another in northern Tanzania, and to root out the smuggling network shipping rhino horn to Asia.

In *Pachyderm* No. 8, Iain Douglas-Hamilton presents two tables of elephant statistics, one giving the most recent estimates, country by country to the end of 1986, and the other a comparison of successive estimates for selected areas.

## Insectivores, Tree & Elephant Shrews

The Chairman, Dr Martin Nicoll, reports: The Group has started work on an African Action Plan for Insectivores and Elephant Shrews, edited and compiled by Martin Nicoll and Galen Rathbun, using information solicited from ITSES members and other researchers. We plan to have a first draft by May 1st, 1988, in time to supply information for the general Action Plan for African species currently being compiled by SSC.

ITSES members have also recently supplied revisions for the new edition of the IUCN Red Data List of Threatened Animals being compiled by the CMC at Cambridge. While the status of the taxa covered by the Group remain unknown owing to lack of field information, the 1986 list of eight species will be considerably expanded, giving the three orders the attention they deserve.

Two conservation projects are being drawn up which ITSES will support as much as possible. Dr Jose Ottenwalder in the Dominican Republic is developing a programme for solenodon research and conservation, and Dr Martin Nicoll is submitting a project for research on the rare Madagascar aquatic tenrec, *Limnogale mergulus*, which it may be possible to begin in 1988. Two other aquatic species being considered for conservation action are the Mount Nimba otter shrew *Micropotamogale lamottei* and the Pyrenean desman *Galemys pyrenaicus*.

The Group still seeks qualified members in Asia and Africa, and the Chairman would welcome suggestions.

## Lagomorphs

Newsletter No. 7, January '88, reports on the conclusion of Andres Duthie's research on South Africa's endangered bushman hare *Bungolagus monticularis*, that clearing of riverine vegetation is a continual threat, and calls for the establishment of a reserve to include significant amounts of this vital habitat.

The Newsletter also includes a report by Michael Dooley that the endemic Tres Marias cottontail *Sylvilagus graysoni* on the Mexican islands of that name is declining and 'worthy of endangered status' — he got a promise from the Director of the penal colony that hunting would be stopped; reports on the distribution and systematics of rabbits *Sylvilagus* of west-central Mexico, and research in Britain on rabbit populations, damage assessment and control.

## Mustelids and Viverrids

Group Chairman Roland Wirth reports progress on the three species mentioned in his last report (*Species* 8, Feb. 1987) as being of particular concern.

The Malabar civet *Viverra civettina*, once feared extinct, has been found and identified by Dr G. U. Kurup of the Zoological Survey of India after prolonged searches. This was a considerable success for Dr Kurup, who is a member of the Group. This large civet had not been confirmed for more than 50 years in its formerly wide range in Kerala and Karnataka.

A field survey of the Liberian mongoose *Liberiictis kuhni* was planned to start in December, led by Dr Mark Taylor from the Royal Ontario Museum and funded by the Museum and the Metro Toronto Zoo, with help also from the Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations in Munich, FRG.

A search for the newly described giant striped mongoose of Madagascar *Galidictis grandidiensis* is planned and some funds obtained by Dr Martin Nicoll (Insectivore Group Chairman), to include also the sympatric southern subspecies of the narrow-striped mongoose *Mungotictis decemlineata lineata*.

Three more species which the Group regards as 'almost certainly among the most threatened mammals on earth' are the Colombian weasel *Mustela felipei*, the Sokoke bushy-tailed mongoose *Bdeogale crassicauda omnivora* and Lowe's otter-civet *Cynogale lowei*.

The weasel, a semi-aquatic, was only described in 1978 and only known until recently from two specimens collected in the Cordillera Central of Colombia. Now a third has been found in a museum in Ecuador. A survey is urgently needed, particularly in view of the possibility of a major hydroelectric project near Popayan, the locality of one of the collected specimens.