

News from the Specialist Groups

MAMMALS

African Elephant and Rhino

The Group now has a regional structure. With Dr David Western as Chairman, Dr Chris Gakahu is Deputy Chairman, and together they are co-chairmen for the eastern African region. Dr David Cumming and Dr Stephen Cobb are vice-chairmen for southern Africa and for central and western Africa respectively. Dr Esmond Bradley Martin is vice-chairman, trade. Each regional group appoints a small advisory group of African members; the three for eastern Africa are Perez Olindo, lately Director of Kenya's Wildlife Conservation and Management Department, David Babu, Director of Tanzania National Parks, and Fred Kayanja, Chairman of Uganda National Parks. The next full Group meeting will be in July this year.

The Group's 'top priority' now is implementing the action plans drawn up by CITES, IUCN, WWF and WCI (World Conservation International) which draw heavily on the Group's plan devised at its Nyeri meeting in May 1988 — see the article by Amie Brautigam, page 5.

Asian Elephant

The underlying theme of Newsletter No. 3, edited by the Chairman, Lyn de Alwis, and the Executive Secretary, Dr Charles Santiapillai, is forest destruction and its consequences.

In the main article on the future for elephants in India, Professor Lahiri Chaudhury asks, 'Should we try to save all the elephants? Is this in fact a realistic proposition?' Forest loss in India has been enormous. 'One informed guess is that the natural forest cover of India today, the elephants' preferred habitat, would not exceed 6-7 per cent of the total land area and much of this meagre 6-7

per cent would be in the hills in the temperate and higher regions and beyond the normal range of elephants. Saving the Indian elephant is largely a matter of saving the scant residue of natural tropical and sub-tropical forest cover.' He concludes, 'If we can protect and manage, conserve, what we have even now ... we can move to an era of scientifically managed sustainable yield.'

For the first time representatives from China, Laos, Vietnam and Sabah attended a Group meeting, its third, held in Chiangmai in Thailand in January 1988. The Group reviewed its draft Action Plan and discussed the Asian elephant's current status.

Five workshops covered management of domestic and captive elephants, human-elephant conflicts, habitat conservation, conservation policies and the ivory trade. The meeting's recommendations included the resuscitation of the Asian Elephant Secretariat and the need to maintain the post of CITES Ivory Officer on a long-term basis.

The Newsletter praises the courageous action of the Thai Government in stopping ('though rather late') all logging in its forests, despite strong opposition from timber interests. Recent floods in southern Thailand had been directly linked to the misuse of land.

Antelope

In a 'Preview' of Part 3 of Rod East's Antelope Survey: West and Central Africa, in *Gnusletter* 8.1, January 1989, the Chairman, Dr Richard Estes, points out that this is the most populous part of the continent. In countries such as Ghana and Nigeria 'precious little wildlife survives outside the dwindling patches of primary and secondary forest', but in parts of the CAR, and the moist lowland forests of Gabon, Cameroon, northern Congo, south-west CAR and Zaire, 'rich



Asian elephants

Peter Jackson