

## DISCOVERIES



Satellites are being used to track loggerhead migration.

### RETURN OF THE LOGGERHEAD

A YOUNG LOGGERHEAD sea turtle, carrying a sophisticated satellite transmitter attached to its shell, returned in early June to the Chesapeake Bay after a 2,000-mile journey to Florida and back. Researchers at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science of the College of William and Mary initially obtained the 90-pound turtle in October 1989 from a Maryland fisherman who had rescued the animal after it became entangled in one of his nets. After attaching the transmitter to the loggerhead's shell, the researchers released it in Maryland's Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and followed it via satellite as it headed south to Cape Canaveral. A second juvenile loggerhead was also tagged and released, but it has remained in waters off Key Largo, Florida.

The VIMS scientists,

John A. Keinath and John A. Musick, have spent several years refining the satellite tagging method. They first experimented with satellite transmitters in May 1989, following a female leatherback turtle who constructed nests on several different Caribbean islands. But the researchers don't know yet if that is common sea turtle behavior.

Source: Virginia Institute of Marine Science

### PARTRIDGE PAIRINGS

AMONG GRAY PARTRIDGES, it's not the macho male that gets the girl. Rather, it seems to be the most vigilant male.

Jens Dahlgren, of Sweden's University of Lund, found that female gray partridges don't choose males with any particular physical characteristics. While studying the birds to learn what they do prefer in mates, he noticed that males seem to crane their necks and look around

more than females do.

To test whether this vigilant behavior was important, he constructed two aviaries, one screened from the outside world, the other open. Females definitely preferred males from the open enclosure, birds that were watchful and kept a



A vigilant gray partridge

### INDIA: POACHERS KILLING RHINOS BY ELECTROCUTION

POACHERS IN ASSAM, A STATE IN NORTHEASTERN India, have found a horrifyingly effective way of killing rhinos: electrocution. High-voltage power lines run through two of Assam's protected areas: Kaziranga National Park, home to about 1,250 greater one-horned (Indian) rhinos; and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, where some 60 of the rhinos live. The poachers hook wires onto the power lines to draw current into them; then they suspend the wires about three feet above paths used by the rhinos at night to reach grazing fields adjacent to the protected areas. At the end of 1989 and beginning of '90 seven rhinos were electrocuted when they touched the live wires.

As soon as the rhinos die, the poachers cut off their horns, which they take to middlemen in nearby villages to smuggle out of the country to eastern Asia. In Singapore and Taiwan the wholesale price of Indian rhino horn has climbed to almost \$7,000 per pound. In Assam the middlemen offer poachers nearly \$3,000 per pound, an enormous sum in this impoverished state. A total of 58 rhinos were killed in Assam in 1989, the highest number since 1983.



Indian rhinoceros and baby

good lookout for danger.

According to Dahlgren, having a more-vigilant mate would allow the female more time to forage, and the better fed she is, the more likely she is to rear a large brood of chicks successfully.

Source: *New Scientist*

### LEMURS—A NEW SPECIES AND A REDISCOVERY

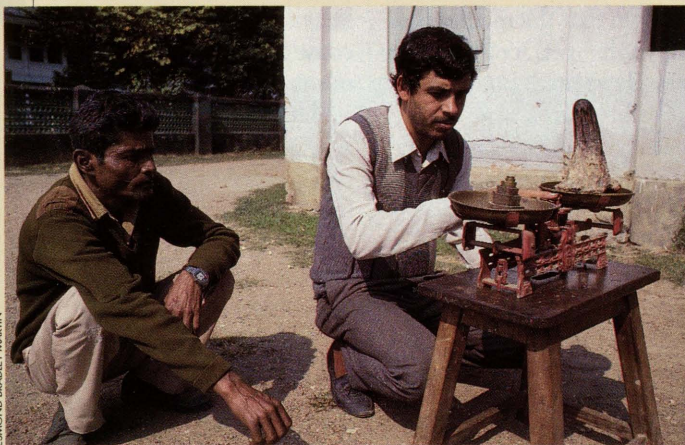
EVEN AS THE FORESTS OF Madagascar are being slashed and burned at an alarming rate to provide farmland and fuel, scientists are discovering new lemur species, and rediscovering "extinct" ones there. Tree-

dwelling primates, lemurs live only on Madagascar, where they evolved over millions of years in isolation from the African mainland.

In late 1987, Elwyn L. Simons, director of the Duke University Primate Center in Durham, North Carolina, found a new spe-

cies now known as the golden-crowned sifaka. Simons named the lemur *Propithecus tattersalli*, after British primatologist Ian Tattersall, who photographed one of the animals in 1974 but was unable to determine if it was a distinct species. The golden-

## RHINO WATCH



### Indian park officer weighing poached rhino horn

To combat poaching by electrocution, wildlife officials have had the underbrush cleared beneath the power lines, and guards patrol along the lines regularly. But the guards lack adequate equipment, including night-vision binoculars, radios, and modern firearms. Even if caught, the poachers and middlemen invariably plead not guilty and escape conviction. Members of an extremist group called the United Liberation Front of Assam, eager to win popular support by fighting crime, are taking matters into their own hands: To date, they have murdered at least three poachers and a middleman.

Sources: Esmond Bradley-Martin and Lucy Vigne, WWF International

### VIETNAM: RESERVE FOR RARE RHINO

ONE YEAR AGO GEORGE SCHALLER, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION International director for science, and three Vietnamese researchers found solid proof that the Javan rhino still existed in Vietnam. They estimated that perhaps 10-15 of the animals survived near the Dong Nai River, in the Budang district of Song Be Province. This year Le Dien Duc, of the University of Hanoi, and other biologists surveyed Budang and two other districts with WCI support to identify the rhino's range and recommend areas for protection. On the basis of reports from local

people that five or six rhinos live along the Dong Nai in Budang, the Song Be government has set aside about 66 square miles for a rhino reserve. In the Cat Tien district there are six or seven animals, and Duc and his colleagues are proposing that a reserve be created there too.

The only other place where this most endangered of Earth's five rhino species is known to exist is Ujung Kulon National Park, in Java, where there are about 50.

Source: WCI

### ZAIRE: FOR WHITE RHINOS, GUARDED CONDITION IS GOOD NEWS

UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYES OF 180 WELL-MOTIVATED guards, the world population of northern white rhinos jumped nearly 20 percent last year with the births of four babies to the rhinos in Zaire's Garamba National Park. Now numbering 26—up from a mere 15 in 1983—this subspecies of the white rhinoceros survives only in the 3,000-square-mile park. It once ranged through five countries in Central Africa.

The heavy poaching that nearly wiped out the subspecies (and that, along with habitat destruction, disease, and drought, has reduced all rhino populations by 85 percent in the past 25 years) came to a halt in Garamba six years ago, when a vigorous rhino protection program was launched. The Zairean government, with the help of conservation groups, increased the number of guards, raised their monthly salaries from \$4 to \$16, and provided uniforms, better equipment, and other benefits and pay incentives.

Muhindo Mesi, the park warden, plans to pursue yet another approach to save the rhinos in Garamba: actively courting the support of the 100,000 or so people living around the perimeter of the park, through a conservation education program and, possibly, by improving goat and sheep herds to reduce the temptations for villagers to come into the park for meat.

Source: *The New York Times*

Compiled by M. Helbok