

# Specialist Group Updates



Unsubstantiated reports of as many as 17 black rhinos

Uzbekistan in 2001, and as a result we are now starting to receive submissions of Red List assessments for a number of taxa endemic to this region. In addition, the Uzbekistan team involved in the project is responsible for the translation of the *IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria* into Russian (with assistance from IUCN Moscow), which in turn enabled the compilation and production of *The Red Book of the Republic of Uzbekistan* published in March 2003. The Red List Programme extends its congratulations and thanks to Dr. Elena Kreuzberg-Mukhina (SSC Regional Vice-Chair for Central Asia), Dr. Alexander Kreuzberg and Dr. Elena Bykova, who played key roles in these initiatives.

Craig Hilton-Taylor, Caroline Pollock

## Wildlife Trade Programme

The publication, *Guidance for CITES Scientific Authorities: Checklist to assist in making non-detriment findings for Appendix II exports*, was the culmination of several years work and a series of workshops. Published in time for the 12<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP 12) to CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), it was mailed to all CITES Scientific Authorities in January 2003. The electronic version is available on the SSC website at: <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/pubs/CITES/guidance.htm>. This publication arose from a collaboration with the CITES Secretariat, supported by the Taiwan Council of Agriculture and the US State Department voluntary contribution to IUCN. It aims to assist those Parties that are having difficulties in assessing whether or not harvest for international trade is likely to be detrimental. It provides a qualitative list of questions about species biology, management and tenure of harvest and protection of species for CITES Authorities to consider when making a so called "non-detriment finding". Following COP 12, the program has also spent some time disseminating

results to Specialist Groups and identifying areas where particular Groups might assist Parties in facilitating CITES implementation.

In January, representatives of the CITES Secretariat met the SSC Executive Committee and emphasized the opportunity for Commission members to provide support to Parties in developing adaptive management approaches based on appropriate monitoring of harvest impacts on both plant and animal species. Consequently, Specialist Groups dealing with species in use or trade might consider developing and disseminating technologically appropriate monitoring methods to help local communities, private

landowners, and statutory agencies in their obligations to ensure that any harvest from the wild is non-detrimental. Much use of wildlife occurs at the local level, often beyond the reach of state agencies and over-use of particular taxa can lead to switches to the use of other wildlife taxa as populations become depleted. Providing appropriate mechanisms for communities to gauge the impact of their harvest on local populations may empower them to make choices about alternative resource use before it is too late. Ensuring that needs for food, medicine or livelihood generation can be met through sustainable use of wild species can help generate incentives to maintain that species in the wild.

The Precautionary Principle Project consortium (involving IUCN Species Programme, IUCN Regional Office for Southern Africa, IUCN Environmental Law Centre, Resource Africa, Flora and Fauna International and TRAFFIC International) entered a new phase in January, with the employment of Dr. Rosie Cooney as the project coordinator. Rosie brings to the project a background in international environmental law and conservation biology. The project, formally entitled "The Precautionary Principle and Environmental Governance: Sustainable Development, Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation", was initiated with support from IUCN's 3 I-C Fund, which aims to stimulate innovation, integration, information and communication. The project is now moving ahead to raise the remaining support needed for its planned activities over the next three years. Rosie is currently developing a project website, and collecting literature, information and contacts to develop a comprehensive situation analysis looking at the impacts of use of the precautionary principle. She would welcome examples of application of the Precautionary Principle in natural resource management and conservation, where analysis of the outcomes of such application is possible, and in particular whether or not the observed outcome conformed to expectations or provided some surprises!

Alison Rosser, Mandy Haywood

## African Rhino

In *Species 38*, I reported on a novel initiative by Cambell Scott and Hubert Planton to undertake another survey in Cameroon to confirm whether a nucleus for a viable population of western black rhino (*Diceros bicornis longipes*) still remains, and to dart and radio-collar any rhino seen. Encouragingly, following a recent visit to Cameroon, Cambell reports that there have been unsubstantiated reports from local scouts of as many as 17 animals in eight different areas that had previously not been surveyed. Cambell and Hubert plan to use rhino dung DNA analysis to determine the number of different individuals surviving.

Cross-boundary translocation and re-establishment of black and white rhinos continues with the first phase being the re-introduction of black rhino into North Luangwa National Park, Zambia and 21 white rhino onto Chiefs Island.

The Group (as a consortium partner) continues to give technical direction and input to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Programme for Rhino Conservation. In March 2003, the second SADC Rhino Recovery Group Meeting was held in Maun, Botswana, at the same venue as the third SADC rhino range States meeting. Development of the WILDb rhino database continues, and the new RHINO 2.0 population estimate software has just been field tested in Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park and is scheduled for release in June. The first of a number of SADC sponsored "Scene of the Crime" training courses took place in Namibia in May.

The next updated version of the Group's successful modified "Sandwith" rhino monitoring training course for field rangers is also currently being produced with joint SADC and US Fish & Wildlife

Service funding. This course will form the basis of the next SADC "training of trainers" course, which is likely to be held in Pilanesberg National Park, South Africa later this year. The UK's Darwin Initiative has also recently announced that it will, over the next four years, fund Kenyan efforts to build rhino monitoring capacity and assist Kenya

Wildlife Service's Rhino Programme implement and institutionalize a system of annual black rhino status reporting. This project will also develop a black rhino carrying capacity model for Kenyan conditions to aid decision-making. The Group's rhino monitoring training course will form the basis of courses to train trainers in



Seed dormancy workshop

Kenya. The next meeting of the SADC Rhino Management Group will take place in June 2003 and one main activity will be to revise the South African National Black Rhino Plan. Specialist Group members have been, and continue to be, involved in all the above initiatives.

Finally, the Group would once again like to thank WWF's Africa Rhino Programme and WWF-US and WWF-SA for their support, which continues to allow the Specialist Group to function and be productive.

Martin Brooks, Chair

## Australasian Plant

### Recovery Conference

*Recovery: A decade towards a biodiverse future* was the theme of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation's Fifth National Conference and Conservation Techniques Workshops. Held in Geelong, Victoria in February 2003, the conference was hosted by the City of Greater Geelong.

Over 160 delegates from across Australia as well as New Zealand, Indonesia and the UK met to discuss current issues and developments in the recovery and conservation of Australia's threatened plants, communities and populations. Neglected and challenging plant groups including cryptogams and island floras featured in several presentations and workshops. A previously thought to be extinct species, *Geranium* Sp 1, received a greatly increased profile in the local and broader conservation community alike, as the feature species of the conference.

In addition to the papers and posters, a series of Conservation Techniques Workshops were held over two days, to allow delegates to further tap the expertise of the assembled specialists. This also provided an unprecedented injection of expertise into the region, enabling members of community groups to learn practical skills and the latest cutting-edge science. Twenty workshops were held on a range of subjects such as seed storage and gene banks, ecological genetics, cryptogam survey techniques, and assessing rarity and the risk of extinction.

The revision of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation's *Guidelines for the Translocation of Threatened Plants in Australia* was the focus of a workshop designed to enable input into the review of this document, published in 1997. Comments are currently being sought on the revision, prior to redrafting by a working group, and

We welcome your examples of application of the Precautionary Principle

