

Conservation

International Zoo News No. 159

and World Wildlife Fund News



IUCN and the World Wildlife Fund have expressed concern at the level of Canada's annual Harp seal harvest. They have pointed out that although the Harp seal is not an endangered species, it is seriously depleted, which makes more urgent the need for effective management which conforms to sound principles of conservation. They emphasised the need for more and better information on the seals and their ecosystems, and noted with satisfaction that the Canadians had already initiated a research programme to meet some of the concerns of IUCN and WWF.

IUCN and WWF endorsed Canada's expressed policy to increase the depleted Harp seal population, but could not at this time accept that a harvest of 180,000 was consistent with this policy.

The 'single species' models used to arrive at this quota, they said, took insufficient account of the uncertainty in available data, important aspects of the Harp seal's biology, environmental factors, and the herd's relationship with other species — for example depletion of the seal's food stocks, including capelin, due to overfishing in Canadian waters.

In combination these factors could well affect the assessment of what is an acceptable level of harvest from the standpoint of recovery of the Harp seal population and the health of the marine ecosystem of which it is a part.

IUCN and WWF are also concerned that due to an increased kill by the potentially less controllable land-based hunt (as compared with the large vessel hunt), a significantly higher proportion of older seals was taken last year than in previous years. The models which determine the quotas are based on the assumption that only 20 per cent of the animals killed will be one year old or older. Last year the proportion was around 25 per cent. If this were to become a regular pattern of the hunt, the proportion of breeding animals would be reduced. This should be taken into account in fixing quotas.

IUCN and WWF also expressed concern at the status of the Hooded seal, about which much less is known and which may also be in need of stronger conservation measures.

World Wildlife Fund - February 1979

WWF Welcomes Ban on Rhino Imports in Hong Kong

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The World Wildlife Fund today congratulated the Hong Kong Government on its decision to ban the import of rhino products.

The ban was announced by Director of Agriculture and Fisheries, Mr. Ted Nichols, who said that several species of rhino were now scheduled under the Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance and that no more licences would be issued to import rhino horn or other rhino derivatives.

February 1979

Indonesia's Nature Conservation Service reports that anoa are nearly extinct in the Celebes Islands, because its habitat is disappearing as more and more rice fields are cultivated. Steps to protect the anoa may include plans to designate the largest of Central Sulawesi's protected forest areas as a national park, with the help of the World Wildlife Fund's grant of 75,000 US dollars over the next five years. Other protected species in the region are the babirusa, the Celebes ape and the Maleo bird..

The Crab-eating macaque is another species in need of protection, since the export trade is still increasing annually. Mr. Sugardjito of the National Biological Institute has called on the Indonesian Government and the Nature Conservation Service to protect the species and halt its commercial exploitation.

Indonesian Nature and Science Newsletter - January 1979

Surprise Royal Visit to the Sanctuary of the Arabian tahr

The Duke of Edinburgh — President of the World Wildlife Fund in Britain — made a detour during his recent visit to Oman, to go off the beaten track for a visit to the country's unique sanctuary for the Arabian tahr. His spontaneous visit came soon after a report to the Oman Government by scientist Dr. Paul Munton, recommending four more reserves for the tahr, which would give protection to about 950 animals.

The little-known and highly endangered goat has been the subject of a project funded jointly by WWF and the Oman Government, whose leader Sultan Qaboos bin Said has done much to promote wildlife conservation in his country. He imposed a hunting ban on the tahr in 1976.

Dr. Munton's report to the Oman Government is the result of a two-year study of the animal, which suggests reserves in Oman should eventually shelter the whole world population of tahrs — a total of about 1,750.

World Wildlife Fund - March 1979

Report on Wolf Workshop - Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Tucson, Arizona

The Mexican wolf has been extinct in the United States since approximately 1963 when the last individual of the subspecies *Canis lupus baileyi* was shot in Arizona. Recent studies, financed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Direccion de la Fauna Silvestre, Mexico, indicate that the Mexican population may not exceed fifty animals. Predator control programmes in the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Durango to protect cattle are the main causes for the wolf's decline.

At this workshop, held at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, the current status of the endangered Mexican Gray wolf and plans for its future management and recovery were discussed. Emphasis was placed on the establishment of a captive breeding programme and the feasibility of subsequent releases into parts of its former habitat or protected wilderness areas.

To assure pure lineage all suspected impure animals are excluded from the breeding programme and if maintained at the same institution, sterilization is mandatory.

Detailed reports were given on the ancestry of the majority of Mexican wolves held in captivity (ASDM, Tucson, Az.; Ghost Ranch, Abilene, N.M.; Living Desert State Park,