

News from Specialist Groups

ANIMALS

African Elephants and Rhinos

The Chairman, Dr David Western, presided at the Group's third meeting in Nairobi last December. Among subjects discussed was the CITES requirement that every piece of worked ivory must have documentation, involving a vast amount of paperwork that the Group thought was counter-productive. It was agreed to recommend that pieces of worked ivory weighing under one kilogram should be exempt. The Chairman has approached several international ivory trading associations about the possibility of setting up an Ivory Council to enable conservationists, traders and other interested parties to cooperate, and a meeting of prospective members was planned in Brussels.

Charles Mackie and Fraser Smith have started the Rehabilitation Project in the Garamba National Park in Zaire, and Kes Hillman is there monitoring the few remaining northern white rhino, for which the prospects are gloomy thanks to poachers. The last count is down to 9.

In Zambia the Save the Rhino Trust has been given sufficient funds to cover its anti-poaching activities for the next two years at least. In Gabon Richard Barnes is studying the forest elephant, trying to develop a methodology for counting elephants in tropical rain forest that can be adapted to other central African countries.

The first fruits of the Tokyo Ivory Arts and Crafts Association's gift of \$10,000 to the Group are in Esmond Bradley Martin's report on his field work in Botswana, where a very successful ivory industry has been built up since 1975. With 20,000 elephants in the country 'Botswana has more than enough to support this local industry', he says, and it is a rational use of a renewable resource. But poaching has increased, and 'it is imperative for the Department of Wildlife to tighten up its law enforcement'.

Other articles in this excellent *Newsletter* include a study of why elephants destroy woodland, by Hugo Jachmann and R.H.V. Bell, in the course of which they say, 'Most parts of Africa now consist of human settlement surrounding a few islands of wilderness, which are maintained by force of legislation in the form of conservation areas'.

African Equids

Lack of funds has prevented the Group from starting any major projects, writes the Chairman, Dr Hans Klingel. The Group's top priority is a 3-year project to discover the migration routes and dry season ranges of Grevy's zebra, but application to WWF has produced no funding at all; £500 is available from the ffpS Oryx 100% Fund. The second priority project, to capture Nubian wild asses for captive breeding, is not practicable at the moment because of the political situation in Sudan. Information on status, distribution and trends of the zebra and wild ass populations has been compiled from questionnaires returned by group members and correspondents, and a report will be available.

Grevy's zebra are affected by another drought in northern Kenya. The last two rains have failed in large parts of their range and the grazing situation is critical. The effect on reproduction and foal survival is being monitored in one area by a volunteer, but the overall impact can only be estimated. The Samburu nomads' general practice now is to block water holes, resulting in new distribution patterns for both Grevy's zebra and other wildlife in the area.

The Hartmann's mountain zebra taken from Namibia to the Canyon Colorado Equid Sanctuary in the USA early last year have started to breed and are doing well. Their wild counterparts enjoy the improved grazing situation after the end of a long drought.