

participants from overseas joined 29 Chinese to discuss baiji problems. One of the sites is a 21 km oxbow of the river, the other a closed off 2 km long channel between two islands. Both have official and local support — at the second site a large statue of the river dolphin has been put up in front of the city guesthouse, the local brewery produces 'baiji beer' with a baiji on the label and the words '*Lipotes vexillifer*' on the cap, and there are plans for an educational programme. The Workshop report will probably recommend that both these reserves should be set up to give the best chance of success, ensure against some disaster and promote genetic diversity.

Deer

Dr Chris Wemmer, Group Deputy Chairman for the Americas, reports on a field study of the eld or brow-antlered deer *Cervus eldi* on Hainan Island, China, the furthest east they are known to have occurred, and also the species' only island population. Knowledge of it dates back to earlier this century, when its subspecific status was reviewed by Oldfield Thomas and R.I. Pocock. Mr Yanling Song is making the field study in the Datian Nature Reserve, and reports that these deer are smaller than those of the mainland population, and the antlers very simple with no palmation of the beams as earlier reported. A 1986 census revealed about 150 deer in the lowland second growth forest of the reserve. Their breeding season is similar to that in other parts of the range and in captivity, with fawning from September to January. The deer feed predominantly on grass during the monsoon, and browse during the dry season.

African Elephant & Rhinos

At the Group's four-day meeting in the Luangwa Valley, Zambia, last July, special attention was paid to assessing the current priorities for conserving the black rhino, now the less numerous of the two African rhinos, reports the executive Officer, Raoul du Toit. The need to do this arose from the continuing precipitous decline in black rhino numbers, now estimated at under 4000, compared with more than 60,000 in 1970 and about 12,000 in 1980. The Zambezi Valley of Zimbabwe emerged as the most important remaining refuge for black rhino, but is constantly threatened by commercial poachers from Zambia, who shoot them at the rate of one a day despite maximum effort by the thinly-stretched Zimbabwean anti-poaching forces. Poachers have already virtually exterminated the stock of black rhino in the Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania, once the largest in Africa.

In his Chairman's Report, Dr David Cumming points out that this poaching is sustained by a mafia-like alliance between corrupt politicians,

corrupt officials and corrupt businessmen, and that unless this alliance can be suppressed by political action at the highest level, in effect by heads of state, the black rhino is doomed as a wild animal in the quite near future. Dealing with this 'mafia' is the Group's highest priority.

Other important priorities for Group action emerging from the Luangwa Valley meeting are: the preparation of a conservation strategy for the black rhino in the field, encouraging efforts to co-ordinate the breeding of existing captive northern white rhinos, continuation of the forest elephant study, action to reduce the demand for rhino horn in North Yemen and East Asia, and encouraging Interpol to take ivory smuggling more seriously.

A study of the West African pygmy elephant problem by Dr David Western, the Group's Vice-Chairman, has made two important discoveries. The so-called pygmy elephants are in fact juvenile forest elephants, which have grown their tusks precociously. On the other hand, there are indeed two forms of elephant in the forests of West Africa: a smaller one, the true forest elephant, subspecies *cyclotis*, and a larger one, a hybrid between *cyclotis* and the ordinary bush elephant, subspecies *africana*. What is especially surprising is the degree to which these hybrids enter the forests, and the remarkable overlap this causes between the two subspecies, to the extent indeed that it may no longer be possible to sustain their subspecific status.

Mustelids and Viverrids

The Group's new Chairman, Dr Roland Wirth, reports: After its reconstitution in June 1986 the Group is now working to identify priorities on a global scale. Starting with the Oriental Region we have so far identified some 30 species and subspecies whose status needs to be checked.

The taxonomy of many viverrids and mustelids is still poorly understood, and for southern Asia we have listed some additional 30 species of at present uncertain taxonomic validity, that will almost certainly need attention if their validity as separate biological entities is confirmed.

Each species and subspecies has been placed in one of five categories A to E: High Priority for Conservation Activities; High Priority for Status Survey; Medium Priority for Conservation Activities; Medium Priority for Status Survey, and High Priority for Taxonomic Research. So little is known about many mustelids and viverrids it would be impossible to place many of them in one of the RDB categories, Endangered, Vulnerable and Rare.

Of the two Asian viverrids listed in the 1972-1978 RDB, the Sulawesi palm civet

endemic plants of Raoul Island were now recovering after the removal of goats.

Other topics include:

a report of two expeditions to Thailand by the Chairman to study a highly endangered small (10-15) goral *Nemorhaedus caudatus evansi* population;

a note by F. Roucher on the only endangered subspecies of chamois *Rupicapra r. carthusa* in the Chartreuse massif in the French Alps, where hunters have opposed the creation of a park or reserve, but have agreed to stop shooting chamois for several years;

a discussion of problems associated with introduced chamois and Himalayan tahr *Hemitragus jemlahicus* in New Zealand;

a survey by Mrs Fiona Maisels, of Edinburgh University, Scotland, of the ecology of the Cyprus mouflon *Ovis orientalis ophion*, now known to be an ancient human introduction, whose total population has not yet been estimated;

a report from Dr R. Valdez, of New Mexico State University, on the conservation of the desert bighorn *Ovis canadensis mexicana* in Sonora, Mexico, where 20 animals put on the island of Tiburon in 1975 have increased to 125;

an account of the controversy over the siting of the winter olympics in Alberta, one of the favoured sites, Mount Allan being the range of one of the few remaining large, secure groups of bighorn sheep *Ovis canadensis*;

a note by Dr D.J. Bullock, of the University of St Andrews, Scotland, on the status, management and conservation of feral goats in Britain and Ireland; and

a note by C. Tisdall, of the Economics Department, University of Newcastle, NSW, on the economic potential of feral goats in Australia, including cashmere production in Western Australia.

Cats

Cat News No. 5, edited by Chairman Peter Jackson, reports that the Group celebrated the Chinese Year of the Tiger by holding a meeting in Minneapolis, USA, in April, immediately before the Tiger Symposium (see p.17). At this meeting members worked on a draft Manifesto for Cat Conservation, intended as an introduction to the International Strategy for Cat Conservation, (expected early in 1987).

Many interesting facts emerged from the meeting, e.g. tiger sightings have increased in Kanha National Park, India, since baiting to attract



them for tourists had ceased; there are now 25-30 lions in zoos considered indistinguishable from the Atlas lion *Panthera leo leo*, which has been extinct in the wild for fifty years; and two reintroduction sites have been identified in northern Florida for the Florida panther *Felis concolor coryi*, now down to 20-30 individuals in the wild.

Peter Jackson reports on the symposium on jaguar and other wildlife utilisation which he chaired at Manaus, Brazil, also in April. Unlike the leopard, the jaguar cannot coexist with man, so when its forest habitat is destroyed, as is happening on a large scale throughout Latin America, the jaguar goes too. It has, for instance, been eradicated from vast areas of its former range in Brazil, where it will become extinct if it is not more effectively protected. Indeed, scientists who have studied the status of the jaguar predict a gloomy future for its everywhere in the absence of better protection. Jaguar status and conservation problems in Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela were also discussed; in the llanos of southern Venezuela private landowners have been persuaded to create jaguar reserves and numbers have actually increased.

Cat News also contains reports on the first successful scientific in-depth study of the elusive snow leopard *Panthera uncia*, in Nepal by Rodney Jackson and Gary Ahlbom, financed by WWF-USA; on a survey of the lesser cats in West Bengal and Sikkim by Dr Biswas of the Zoological Survey of India, which showed the leopard cat *Felis bengalensis* to be widespread, but yielded only a few sightings or reports of the marbled cat, *F. marmorata*, the fishing cat *F. viverrina* and the golden cat *F. temmincki*; and on the reintroduction of the lynx *F. lynx* in Switzerland, where, having been extinct for some 80-90 years, there are now some 50 animals at large in the northern Alps.

Cetaceans

Two sites on the Yangtze river suggested for semi-captive breeding of the baiji, the Chinese river dolphin *Lipotes vexillifer*, were shown to the participants in the Dolphin Workshop in Wuhan, presided over by Group Chairman Dr Bill Perrin, in October/November last year. Nineteen