

It is hoped to obtain a great deal of new information on the origins and interrelationships of these pigs when Alistair MacDonald, a Group member, this year starts on a 4/5 year project, under the aegis of Operation Raleigh, visiting the Moluccas and neighbouring islands, together with anthropologist Roger Cox, who will investigate traditional hunting practises among the surviving tribal societies and their dependence on wild and domestic pigs.

Primates

The Primate Group, chaired by Dr Russ Mittermeier, as befits the evolutionary status of its subjects, leads the field with a seventh substantial profusely illustrated issue of its newsletter and journal *Primate Conservation*, edited by Isabel Constable.

Madagascar, with its unique lemur fauna, is arguably the most important single primate territory in the world, so it is excellent news that a group of Malagasy professors and researchers have founded the Groupe d'Etude et de Recherche sur les Primates, with the aim of promoting research on, increased public awareness of and more adequate protection for the embattled primates of Madagascar. Other important lemur-related news includes sightings of aye-ayes *Daubentonias madagascariensis* in the Forêt de Analamazoatra (Périnet), well south of their present known range; the creation of the Beza-Mahafaly Special Reserve in south-western Madagascar; the discovery of both indris *Indri indri* and diademed sifakas *Propithecus d. diadema* in Zahemena, the island's largest, but little visited, rainforest reserve, north-east of Tananarive; and the preparation of a conservation programme for the Andohahela Reserve in the south of the island, near Tolagnaro (Fort Dauphin).

From mainland Africa comes news of the publication of the Group's *Action Plan for African Primate Conservation: 1986-90*, obtainable from WWF-USA; the Nigerian Conservation Foundation's adoption of the Okumu Forest Reserve, with its endangered primate, the white-throated guenon *Cercopithecus erythrogaster* as a priority project; and Kenya's new stamp featuring the endangered DeBrazza's monkey *C. neglectus*. Other African news includes the discovery of an important new Barbary macaque *Macaca sylvanus* locality at Oued el Abid, where it coexists with its chief predator, the last surviving leopard *Panthera pardus barbatus* population in Morocco; and plans to ensure the future of the Karisoke Research Center in the Parc des Volcans, Rwanda, after Dian Fossey's tragic death.

From Asia come reports on the status of the ten species of primate in Bangladesh and their

forest habitat, the effects of the 1982/3 El Nino on primates and their forest habitats in East Kalimantan, and the conservation of the Japanese macaque *Macaca fuscata* on the island of Yakushima 60 km south of Kyushu.

From the Neotropics there are reports on the Community Baboon Sanctuary in Belize, where black howler monkeys *Alouatta nigra* are called baboons; a survey of the monkeys of the Yucatan peninsula in tropical Mexico; the conservation status of the white uakari *Cacajao calvus calvus* and the buffy saki *Pithecia albicans* in Amazonian Brazil; and the ecology of primates in a reserve on the Pacaya river in Amazonian Peru.

Asian Rhinos

Much attention was given to the plight of the Sumatran and Javan rhinos at the Group's meeting last October in Jakarta, Indonesia. Sumatran rhinos were estimated at 700, Javan only 50-60, all in Ujung Kulon National Park.

It was agreed that the primary objective in captive breeding must be to keep as many animals as possible in as wide a range as possible. Rhinos in doomed habitats and populations that were no longer viable should be used to reinforce, not replace, *in situ* conservation; where rhinos are threatened the first priority must be to identify the threats and if possible improve the situation before recommending removal for captive breeding. The meeting discussed rhino status country by country and identified priorities for action.

In the Group's first Newsletter the Chairman, Lyn de Alwis, draws attention to Mohamed Khan's 'fantastic success' in immobilising and translocating 48 elephants across water in Malaysia on specially constructed rafts.

Sirenians

In *Sirenians* No. 6 the Chairman, Dr Helene Marsh, reports from Australia that an aerial survey over 31,288 sq km of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park showed 8106 ± 1125 dugongs. She is 'cautiously optimistic' about the future. 'A number of sanctuary areas have been established where the dugongs should be totally protected ... Legal Aboriginal hunting only occurs at two communities with a combined take of about 40 dugongs a year'.

Galen B. Rathbun gives an encouraging progress report on the development of a harness to enable dugong to be radio-tracked. Tom O'Shea writes on the use of satellites to monitor manatee movements in Florida, and describes an experiment in which a manatee was tracked for 162 days, with a renewal of the batteries after 60 days by a scientist snorkeling. 'Curious people'

Macrogalidia musschenbroekii appears not to be in any immediate danger. A Group member C. Wemmer and others found it more widely distributed than previously believed, and he and Watling (*Biol. Conservation* 35, 1986) conclude that if properly managed, the three important reserves in Sulawesi should provide adequate protection for its survival.

The other RDB species, the Malabar civet *Viverra civettina*, was feared to be extinct by 1972, but two sightings — by G.U. Kurup of the Zoological Survey of India in Kerala and Group member K.U. Karanth in Karnataka, were made in the late 70s. Kurup thinks the species still has isolated populations distributed over five different areas in the Western Ghats.

Two other SW Indian endemics, the brown palm civet *Paradoxurus jerdoni* (with two subspecies) and the Nilgiri marten *Martes watkinsi*, although not listed in the 1972-1978 RDB, are probably not much better off; the marten was already considered rare fifty years ago. A status survey of the SW Indian endemic mustelids and viverrids is one of the Group's highest priorities.

In Africa the Liberian mongoose *Liberiictis kuhni*, a monotypic genus endemic to a small area in Liberia, is of particular concern. The species has been under extreme hunting pressure for a long time, and the Group does not know of any sighting in the last ten years. A survey is urgently needed and A. Peal, Head of Wildlife and National Parks in Liberia, would welcome such a project.

Viverrids are the only carnivores in Madagascar, and although Malagasy viverrids have attracted more interest than viverrids from other regions they still remain very poorly known. A new striped mongoose *Galidictis grandidiensis* was described by Group Member C. Wozencraft (*J. Mamm.* 67 (3) 1986). Only two museum specimens exist and nothing is known at present as to the conservation status of the animal, or, for that matter, whether it survives at all.

Otters

The Group's European Co-ordinator, Dr Sheila Macdonald, reports on a working meeting of the European Section held in May 1986 at Kaposvar in Hungary.

In most European countries otters are seriously threatened — in Switzerland only one small population survives and that is as a result of a release. Hungary, however, is an interesting exception. There otters are numerous in some areas, even in lowlands with intensive agriculture. But many animals are killed by fish farmers and more information is needed about the otters' use of fish. The recommendations for Hungary

included a nation-wide survey to show otter distribution, studies on resource utilization, and an education programme. All countries were urged to adapt their legislation to conform to the Bern Convention.

Fabio Cassola, WWF Italy, last year published a complete field survey of otters in Italy which confirms that *Lutra lutra* is close to extinction there.

In Latin America Dr Claudio Chehebar has a National Geographic Society grant to continue work on *Lutra provocax* in Argentina. He is also starting a postal survey of *L. platensis* and *Pteronura brasiliensis*, reports the Deputy Chairman, Pat Foster-Turley.

The second edition of the Asian small-clawed otter *Aonyx cinerea* studbook is available from Susan Engfer, Santa Barbara Zoo, California. The AAZPA Asian Otter Species Survival Plan committee, under Pat Foster-Turley's direction, has published recommendations about pairings to facilitate captive breeding efforts.

Pigs and Peccaries

The Chairman William Oliver, reports that Group member Julian Caldecott has completed a 2½ year study of hunting and the ecology of hunted wildlife in the interior of Sarawak (Malaysian Borneo). This study, and the ensuing recommendations for a wildlife management strategy, centred on the bearded pig *Sus barbatus barbatus*, because that is by far the most important single prey species. Julian Caldecott's summary of his report and recommendations is on page 31. A follow-up study by Raleigh A. Blouch, another member, is in the planning stages.

With the assistance of Roland Wirth (Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations) and Mulhouse and West Berlin Zoo, Roger Cox has now returned to the Philippines to follow up on some of the recommendations arising from the previously reported project on the Philippine spotted deer *Cervus alfredi* and the Visayas warty pig *S. b. cebifrons* (see *Species* 6 January 1986). These projects comprise the initiation of a proposed cooperative captive breeding programme for *C. alfredi*, and a preliminary survey and development of a management plan for the proposed new reserve in the Mt Madja-as/Mt Baloy area of West Panay. Both projects are being implemented with the full cooperation and active participation of the Bureau of Forest Development. Julian Caldecott will assist with the development of BFD's proposed management plan to protect the most important surviving population of *C. alfredi* when he visits the Philippines in the project's early and later stages.