

NEW YORK  
ZOOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT 1988-1989



AFRICAN ELEPHANT ALERT

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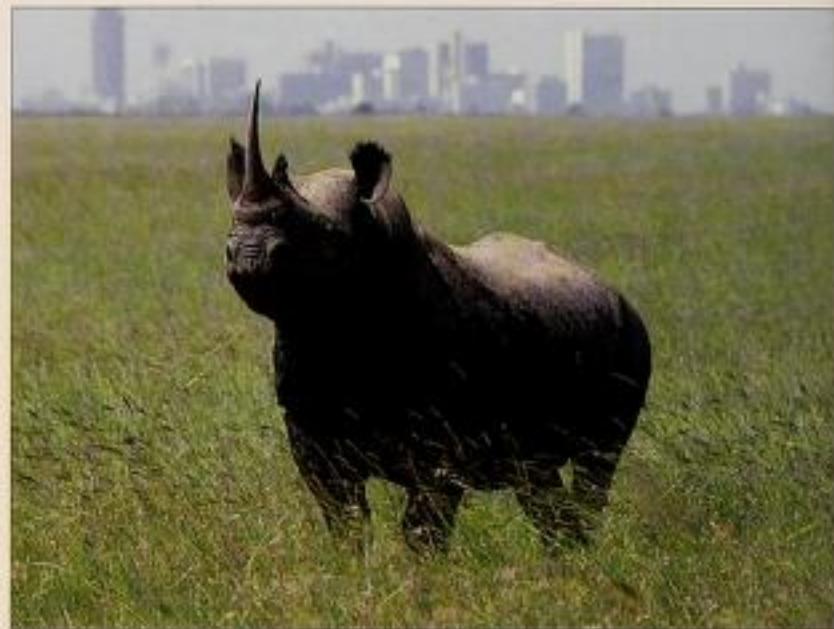
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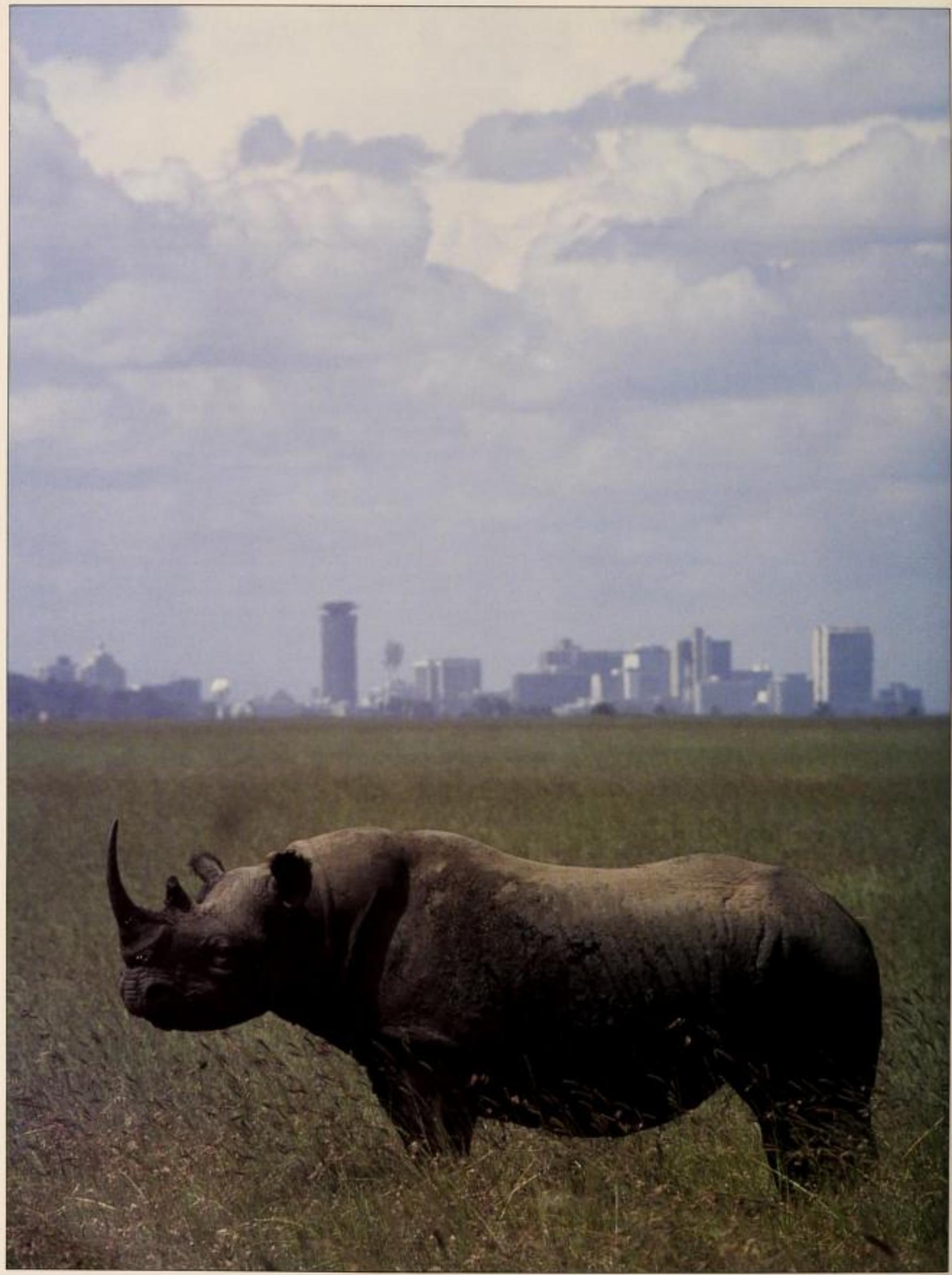
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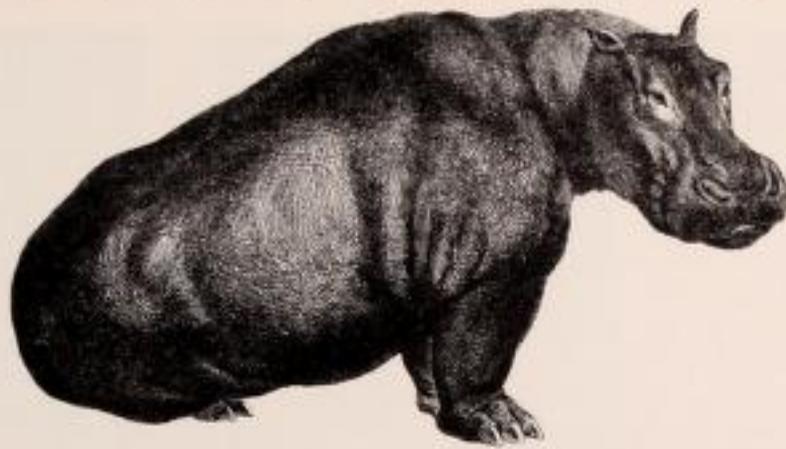
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# WILDLIFE CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL



udyard Kipling tells a tale of how the elephant got his trunk, down by the bank of the great, grey, green, greasy Limpopo River, in a tangle with a crocodile who bit the young elephant's nose and, holding on tight, pulled and pulled and pulled. Taken aback though he was, the elephant's child found that his new trunk was indeed a great help. With it he could pick up grasses from the ground or reach green leaves in the trees. It was a godsend really, a blessing that greatly enhanced the elephant's survival abilities.

If only the elephant's tusks had turned out to be a blessing of similar proportions.

## African Elephant Alert

In days past elephants roamed the earth vulnerable only to the dangers that threaten any animal in the wild. Their tusks, as well as their trunks, are useful in removing the bark from trees, in uprooting bushes, in digging for water, and in jousting with rivals during breeding season.

Today the age of the elephant may be coming to an end. Fewer than 50,000 remain in Asia. In barely one decade the elephant population in Africa has been cut in half, to about 600,000 today. Humans, in their zeal for status or sexual prowess are responsible for the demise of these majestic animals. Elephant ivory commands a high

price for jewelry and trinkets, particularly in Hong Kong and Japan. The supply comes from poaching that is horrendous in its magnitude and brutality.

Even so, one might contend that a sufficient number of elephants remain to carry on into the future. But this may not be so. Elephants learn from other elephants about their territory and about appropriate foods to eat. They learn these things from the members of their matriarchal social group, from their mothers and aunts and sisters. Recently, poachers have been killing not only the older large bulls, but the older matriarchs, and young males and females of any age with tusks weighing only a pound or two. This means that the leaders and teachers are being wiped out. Herds of very young animals now wander the plains without guidance. And young motherless calves almost never survive.

Wildlife Conservation International has taken up the cause of the elephant and the rhinoceros more urgently than ever before. Last year's rhino rescue campaign, designed to publicize and combat the plight of this extremely endangered animal, has taken a strong step forward. In Kenya's Nakuru National Park WCI is working to establish a rhino sanctuary where rhinos will be protected by fences and trained guards. In Zimbabwe, which has a relatively large population of vulnerable rhinos,



## WCI IN AFRICA

The most dramatic and urgent WCI initiatives in Africa are part of a collaborative effort to halt the poaching of elephants and black rhinos, an effort in which WCI Director *David Western* and other WCI scientists are playing key roles (see more on page 35). Regional WCI programs in two areas—*East African Savannas* and *African Forests*—included 43 projects in 17 countries at the end of the fiscal year.

In Kenya, where Western serves as coordinator for the savannas program assisted by WCI Conservation Officer *Christopher Gakabu*, projects are underway in several parks and reserves. Fencing has been erected along the north side of Nairobi Park, and *Helen Gichobi* is studying the effects of gradual insularization on park ecology. *Fred Waweru* is working with seventeen translocated black rhinos in Lake Nakuru Park. And *Lucy Muthee* and *Wesley Henry* are concerned with the impact of tourists on Maasai-Mara.

In Tanzania, Senior Staff Zoologist *Patricia Moehlman* continues her definitive field study of *jackals*. Still the key advisor in monitoring Ngorongoro Crater Conservation Area, she now plays a similar role in Ruhaha, Tarangire, and Lake Manyara national parks. She is also surveying wild asses in *Somalia* to help establish management options for the species and its ecosystem.

As advisor to the Ethiopian Wildlife Conserva-



*Elephant poaching destroys matriarchal groups, depriving young elephants of protection and guidance as they grow up.*

tion Organisation, Associate Research Zoologist *Chris Hillman* directs conservation research, training, and education throughout *Ethiopia*, including Bale Mountain National Park. He is now based in the capital, Addis Ababa.

Rain-forest projects, coordinated by *William Weber*, stretch across equatorial Africa from Sierra Leone in the west through Zaire to Rwanda. Among them are two that received major funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) during the year. One is *James Powell's* long-term biological inventory and training program in *Cameroon's*

WCI is supporting anti-poaching patrols using planes and other tracking equipment.

WCI Director Dr. David Western, who coordinates WCI's activities in East Africa, is now concentrating his attentions on elephants as well as rhinos. The emergency is already upon us. The elephants are being killed at the rate of 100–200 per day. During this past year Dr. Western has been instrumental in efforts to have the African elephant upgraded to Appendix I, the endangered species list, of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species, known as CITES.

Dr. Western and other conservationists have also had success in their efforts to impose a worldwide ban on ivory. President George Bush has declared that importing ivory to the United States from any country is now illegal. All twelve member countries of the European Community, including Great Britain, which still controls Hong Kong, have also imposed a ban. Even Japan has an



nounced that it will curtail imports. The CITES listing would provide a means to implement the ban.

In Africa the ban is questioned by some countries, notably Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa, that use earnings from ivory sales to support conservation activities. Poaching, though, is motivated by greed. And Dr. Western emphasizes that, "elephants are more valuable as a continuing source of tourist income than they are as a finite resource plundered by indiscriminate poachers."

WCI and other organizations in the African Elephant Conservation Coordinating Group recently drafted a comprehensive campaign to stop what some have called elephant genocide. The goal, as stated in the group's working document, is, "to stem the drastic decline in the African elephant by stopping the illegal ivory trade" and targeting certain areas as elephant reserves. Other elements of the campaign include political activism directed toward the many varied governments involved, and education of the public, both in Africa and around

*Elephant remains left by poachers in the Central African Republic.*



extremely diverse *Korup National Park*. Powell's previous pioneering work with *manatees* and coastal zone management is being continued in Ivory Coast by *Kouadio Akoi*. The other is the Nyungwe Forest Project in *Rwanda* under *Rob Claussen*, with *Amy Vedder* in an advisory role, which also involves biological inventories and training, as well as tourism development and local education. In June 1989, the project organized and hosted, with the Rwandan government, a five-day regional workshop on "The Conservation and Management of Afromontane Forests" that was attended by 65 conservation professionals from *Rwanda*, *Burundi*, *Zaire*, and *Uganda*.

With new housing and office space nearly completed, the 20-year-old *Kibale Forest Project* in *Uganda* is moving in a new direction under *Andrew Johns* and *Isabirirey Basuta*. In cooperation with *Makerere University*, the project will maintain its traditional emphasis on research and training, with additional attention to issues concerning sustainable and multiple use management. In *Central African Republic*, the lowland gorilla study of *Richard Carroll* and *Michael Fay* has resulted in the creation of the *Dzanga-Sangha Reserve*. And in *Sierra Leone*, WCI's continued support of *John Oates* and the *Tiwi Island Project*, channeled through the local Conservation Foundation and the U.S. Peace Corps, may help to save, through edu-

cation and forest management, one of the few remaining areas of Guinean rain forest.

For WCI Associate Research Zoologists *Terese and John Hart*, studying the elusive *okapi* and its forest ecosystem in *Zaire*, improved protected status of the *Ituri Forest* remains a top priority. The Harts' work is complemented by their assistant *Rick Peterson*'s WCI study of agricultural immigration trends. Another assistant of the Harts, *Claude Sikubwabo*, established a second research camp near *Epula* and then became the first professional biologist in the government's Institute for Nature Conservation.

*Sikubwabo* also ran the *Zaire* component of the comprehensive *forest elephant survey* that is being conducted by teams under the direction of *Richard Barnes* in *Gabon*, *Congo*, *Cameroon*, *Equatorial Guinea*, *Zaire*, and *Central African Republic*. The survey, showing that up to half of Africa's elephants live in forests, will be crucial in the pan-African effort to save the species. □

#### WCI IN THE AMERICAS

Although WCI maintains a strong interest in two significant North American projects—the recovering population of *black-footed ferrets* in *Wyoming* and the *bumpback whale* conservation work of *Deborah Glockner-Ferrari* and *Mark Ferrari* in *Hawaii*—most New World support goes to three Latin American re-



gions. There are now 44 projects in 14 countries from Mexico to Argentina.

Under Archie Carr III, Florida-based coordinator of the *MesoAmerican and Caribbean Basin* region, encouraging progress has been made by WCI scientists in the rain forests and along the Caribbean shores of Central America, despite unsettled political conditions. In the cross-border *Greater Peten* region of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize, work continues toward the protection of vast tracts of pristine forest. *Ignacio March* is evaluating habitat in the area around *Calakmul, Mexico*, where UNESCO recently declared a forest biosphere reserve of 700,000 hectares. In *Guatemala*, *Milton Cabrer* is studying habitat use throughout the Peten, while *Maria Jose Gonzalez-Fuster* surveys the

*Scarlet macaws and other parrots are a focus of WCI efforts in Peru to protect Amazonian rain forests.*

status of the ocellated turkey, a key species in the area of *Tikal*.

Eventually, it is hoped that the Peten conservation region will extend into *Belize*, where ornithologist *Bruce Miller* is compiling ecological data in the areas of *Caracol* and *Rio Bravo*, and Carr has been a key figure in formulating a national conservation strategy over the past six years. The strategy also includes *Belize's 150-mile-long barrier reef*, for which the government may now declare a comprehensive management status. Carr and long-term researchers *Jacque Carter* and *Janet Gibson* have played important roles in these developments.

the world, so as to reduce the demand for ivory, in Europe, in the United States, and especially in Asia and Japan.

### All That Glitters Is Not Gold

Gold rush. These words conjure up an image of California in the mid-1800s, when pioneers were lured to the new world's west coast, pans in hand, hoping to make their fortunes. Today the gold rush is a phenomenon of the developing world, where gold fever is exceptionally damaging to the environment, and where it gravely threatens urgently needed conservation action.

Many areas in which WCI is actively working are now plagued by gold mining. These include the Ituri and Maiko forests of Zaire, the Nyungwe Forest in Rwanda, the Apaporis Forest of Colombia, the Ailao Mountain Reserve of China, the southern forests of Ecuador, and southeast Asian forests in Papua New Guinea and Kalimantan. However, as WCI Conservation Officer Lisa Naughton says, "the biggest boom in gold mining today is occurring in the Amazonian forests where hundreds of thousands of miners scrambling for gold are having a disastrous impact on the environment and native peoples."

Especially affected are river systems and the surrounding forests. All methods ultimately destroy aquatic ecosystems, whether it is simple panning by individuals, or the use of pumps and hoses or heavy equipment brought in by major enterprises, both national and international. The results are heavy sedimentation, lowered oxygen levels and raised temperatures of the river water. Mercury, often used in on-site processing, poisons the rivers and the animals dependent on aquatic organisms. The surrounding forest is depleted of game due to