

KENYA

Kenyan forests to be felled

The Kenyan government has decided to clear 10 per cent of its forest cover to resettle the 'landless' despite widespread public protests and legal interventions. Critics fear the scheme aims to divert land to politically-favoured individuals ahead of next year's elections. The destruction of these essential water catchments and felling on slopes will adversely affect agricultural and fisheries activities downstream. An estimated 170,000 acres of forest is to be chopped, the majority from the Mau Forest in the Great Rift Valley, the source of springs that feed the famous Rift valley lakes – Nakuru, Naivasha and Elmenteita. The local indigenous Ogiek community depend on the forest for their livelihood and have launched an international campaign to save their forest.

INDONESIA

Good news for the Javan rhino

The Ujung Kulon National Park on the Indonesian island of Java is home to the last remaining viable population of Javan rhinos, one of the world's rarest large mammals. The births of four baby rhinos (the total population is about 50) came after two consecutive years of zero growth and conservationists are hopeful that this could mean a stronger hold on survival for the species.

About five to eight Javan rhinos are believed to live in the Cat Tien National Park in Vietnam while there are none in captivity.

AFRICA

Last roar for the lion?

A new report by the African Lion Working Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature has warned that lions could disappear from West and Central Africa within a decade as their populations are too small and fragmented. The largest concentrations are two groups of 200 each in Cameroon and along the borders of Mali, Senegal and Guinea. Most other populations number only about 50. Lion experts believe that to prevent inbreeding, at least 100 breeding pairs, or over 500 lions, are needed in one population. Hans Bauer of Leiden University, a member of the group, has been working in Cameroon for many years and believes that there are between 10,000 and 30,000 lions throughout Africa, of which there are only 2,000 in all of West and Central Africa. Lions need large tracts of land and demands from agriculture and livestock are usurping and fragmenting their habitat.

ANTARCTICA

Cleaning up Antarctica

Up to 330,693 tonnes of waste is believed to be lying on and under the ice of Antarctica, left



PETER SANDISON

behind over the course of decades by exploration teams from over 40 countries. These wastes include oil, chemicals, batteries and other toxic substances. Australia has committed to cleaning up its share of the waste from its Casey station on the icy continent. It aims to ship the waste back to Australia for disposal in 240 cargo containers, after which the containers will be offered to other nations wishing to clean up their act.

VIETNAM

Cuc Phuong highway approved

The Vietnamese administration has approved a proposal to construct part of the Ho Chi Minh highway through the Cuc Phuong National Park. Wildlife groups say that the highway will pose a serious threat to the park's endangered species, which includes the critically endangered Delacour langur, tiger and elephant. The project authorities had to choose between upgrading an existing road through the park and constructing a new one skirting the park. The latter option, though environmentally better, would cost more, hence was not considered. The Ho Chi Minh Highway will run 1,690 km. from Hanoi in the north to Ho Chi Minh City in the south.

MOROCCO

Global warming and starvation

Global warming could cause a

30 per cent drop in food crop harvests in the next 100 years, according to a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report. The figures pertain to the world's key food crops such as wheat, maize and rice. The report suggests that cash crops such as coffee and tea will also be vulnerable to global warming. This could cause many farmers to move to higher altitudes intensifying pressure on forests. The report was released at the climate change conference in Marrakesh, where most of the world's nations were meeting to discuss the implementation of the Kyoto treaty to curb greenhouse gas emissions. The US, the world's biggest greenhouse gas polluter, withdrew from the Kyoto treaty earlier this year.

BRAZIL

Deni Amazon lands saved

The Brazilian government has agreed to formally recognise the rights of the Deni Amazon Indians over their traditional lands, over 15,000 sq. km. of jungle in the southwest Amazon. Of the 580 Indian territories in Brazil, only 360 have been formally recognised. The formal recognition now prohibits all industrial activities, such as logging and mining. This represents a significant victory in the battle to save the Amazon.





On the cover

The Indian chameleon *Chamaelo zeylanicus* relies on its ability to adapt to its environment for survival.

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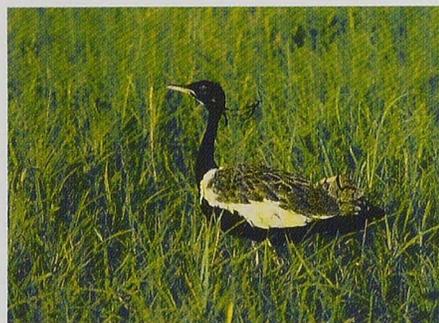
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Call of the wild
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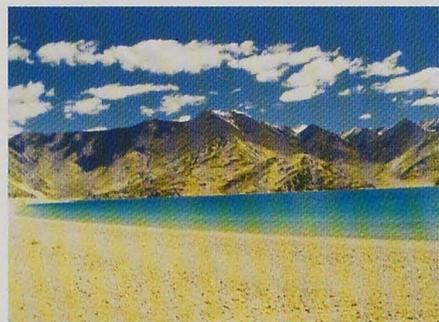
44 Cover Story
The Year That Was

Sanctuary takes a look at the highs and lows of 2001. A year that saw the mass poaching and poisoning of elephants was also witness to pathbreaking moves to protect marine species such as sharks and corals. Though there was plenty of bad news, there are signs of hope for those who know where to look.



22 The Bengal Floricans of Dudhwa

Probably the most endangered member of the bustard family, the Bengal Florican is now restricted to a few pockets in northern and northeast India. Dr. Asad Rahmani has spent years studying these birds and documenting their struggle for survival. Happily, he reports that the florican is doing well in Dudhwa, but fears for the survival of this grassland species outside Protected Areas unless its grassland habitat is safeguarded from encroachments, agriculture and plantations.



28 Lakes of Ladakh

Katie Sahiar Dubey writes of the highland lakes of Ladakh. These largely-pristine ecosystems host an array of endangered bird and animal life, from the delicate Tibetan gazelle and the regal wolf to the endangered Bar-headed Goose and Himalayan marmot. Heavy tourism and border disputes with China threaten to undermine the serenity of this Himalayan citadel. The author warns that this fragile ecosystem must not be exposed to unregulated tourist traffic.

Contributors



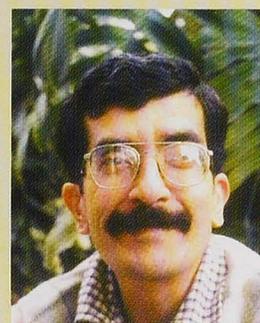
Katie Sahiar Dubey

Freelance journalist and nature writer, she is an active member of the BNHS and loves travelling to wilderness areas. **28**



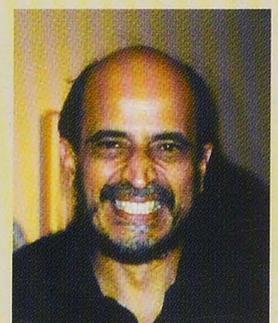
K. Yoganand

A researcher with the Wildlife Institute of India, he is currently preparing a conservation plan for the sloth bear in India. **34**



Ranjit Lal

A natural history writer with a special leaning towards birds, he has written several fiction and non-fiction books. **40**



Darryl D'Monte

President of the International Federation of Environmental Journalists, he writes on issues of environmental rights. **52**