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More Conservation Efforts should Be Made

During the past year, the Council of Agriculture (COA), in implementing the Amendment to the Wildlife conservation Law (WCL), announced new protected habitats: two islands in the north (Mian Hua Island and Hua Ping Island), the Formosan landlocked salmon habitat, the Se Tsao, Tatu Hsi Waterbird Refuge, and the Penghu Green Turtle Conservation Area. Several workshops were also held to strengthen the conservation awareness and law enforcement ability of county and metropolitan conservation officials, prosecutors and the customs.

Currently underway and scheduled for future completion are the following projects: Updating and publishing new protected species lists, a new round of registration for ivory products, drawing up laws on the keeping, breeding and management of wild animals, the establishment of a conservation police force, and so on.

Representatives of the COA expressed hopes that an important point of future conservation work would be the development of a conservation ethic through education. For adults, there would be an emphasis on social education to develop an understanding of

environmental conservation; for children and teenagers, work on incorporating these principles in educational materials and books has already started. The goal is to take people from understanding nature, to appreciating nature, to protecting nature, so that in the future sustainable development can be achieved.

International Symposium on Traditional Chinese Medicine and Wildlife Conservation

This symposium was held by TRAFFIC East Asia on October 31, 1995, in Hong Kong. Representatives of Chinese medicine practitioners from mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Korea attended, together with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and other conservation NGOs. The goal of the symposium was to provide an opportunity for representatives from Chinese medicine and wildlife conservation groups to communicate. The former had an opportunity to express their views on wildlife protection, so that the two groups could arrive at a mutual understanding and formulate protection policies. During the symposium, mainland scholars introduced mainland policy on Chinese medicine, its research, and current development; explaining the protection, development and breeding of animals and plants used in Chinese medicine, including the captive-rearing of deer for musk and bears for gall bladder. Representatives from Singapore and Hong Kong emphasized the importance and positive aspects of Chinese medicine, and expressed the view that the notoriety of rhino horn and tiger bone were to blame for a mistaken impression of Chinese medicine. They hoped that prohibition of such materials would solve this problem. However, no simple answers were given to the following questions: 1) Are captive or manmade alternatives acceptable, and are they less effective? 2) How to estimate the actual demand for these products used as foods or medicines? 3) How to raise the population numbers of scarce species that cannot be raised in captivity?

The IUCN North East Asia Regional Members Meeting

The IUCN North East Asia Regional Members held their first regular meeting in Tokyo. Madam Akiko Domoto, a member of the House of Councillors, and member of IUCN, chaired the conference, which was attended by groups from Japan, Korea, mainland China, Hong Kong and the ROC, together with observers, the Director General and the secretary of IUCN.

The conference began with reports on conservation work from each of the groups, and an introduction by the Director General about the topics and resolutions of the last IUCN meeting. The Director General encouraged members to discuss important topics of conservation work in the North East Asia region.

Topics covered in the conference included: the promotion of national parks and the establishment of conservation areas in the North East Asia region, a forum on biological diversity and discussion on priorities in conservation work and women's influence on conservation work. Other themes discussed were the strengthening of biologically diverse conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, traditional medicine and the planning and promotion of conservation areas.

The Fourth CITES Asian Regional Conference

The fourth CITES Asian Regional Meeting was held from October 17-20 in Tokyo, Japan, and was chaired by CITES representatives from Japan and Thailand.

Members from 18 countries were present, with representatives from outside the region coming from the US, Hong Kong, Cambodia and Burma. Eight NGO's were also present, with total numbers of

participants exceeding 110. The main topics covered in the conference were: 1) reports by animal and plant committees, 2) results of implementing CITES resolutions including tiger and rhino products, illegal trade in whales, sharks and other animals, 3) conservation of other animals: the Tiger Trust discussed topics on tiger conservation, the EIA discussed research on bear gall bladder and use in Chinese medicine of animals and plants, 4) other items included: the Israeli representative suggested re-selection of the Asian Region Representatives to Standing Committee; and the animal and plant committee representatives; and suggested creation of an international group to monitor wildlife protection unit to control smuggling and trade, endangered species, animal products, and regulations. The resolutions were deferred to the next Asian Regional meeting and the 10th CITES Conference.

The conference concluded with international conservation groups suggesting the following be gradually incorporated as important topics for CITES attention: international timber trade, international conservation of fish stocks and trade in wildlife products in traditional medicine.

No More Freedom to Fish

The 1995 UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks approved a treaty on protection and management of the fishing industry. Whether internationally or between the Taiwan Straits, this has a great impact on the ROC.

This international treaty includes coastal management obligations and conservation of fish stocks outside 200 nautical miles limiting fishing catches of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. Each fishing nation should participated in regional fishing industry groups to set regulations and quota. Signatory nations should be prepared to allow boarding by officer of other signatory to investigate possible illegal fishing. This treaty has serious

implements for ROC fishing boats in the far Pacific, as well as for Mainland China.

The Taiwan Market for Bear Gall Bladder(I)

Since 1990, Taiwan's Wildlife conservation Law (WCL) has prohibited the import, export, possession, trade, exchange or display for sale of bear gall bladders from all species except the American Black Bear. To further regulate the trade, the Board of Foreign Trade (BOFT) has since 28 October 1994 made import and export of all bears and bear parts subject to approval by the Council of Agriculture (COA). However, since conclusively distinguishing the gall bladders of protected species from those of the American Black Bear is impossible even with laboratory analysis, enforcement of the law is problematic.

Monitoring Taiwan's market for bear gall bladder is further complicated because the TCM community in Taiwan talks in terms of three types of bear gall bladder. "True bear gall bladder" refers to whole gall bladders from bears. "Farmed bear gall bladder" refers to bile in powdered form from farms in china. "Miscellaneous bear gall bladder" comes in whole or powdered form, but originates from pigs, water buffalo and other non-bear species. This nomenclature puts previous trade data in question.

For example, researchers found that 30 of 34 TCM shops in Taipei in 1991 claimed to sell bear gall bladder at prices ranging from US\$8 per gram to US\$30 per gram. However, they did not ask which of the three categories of bear bile the 30 sellers stocked.

In another example, BOFT and the Republic of China Customs reported the import of 8520kg of bear gall bladders into Taiwan from 1975 to 1985. Extrapolated, that amount equals approximately 137500 bears or perhaps one-sixth of the world's bear population in that 11-year period. However,

another researcher examined those imports and found that 6586kg (79.8%) of the 8520kg were actually of the "miscellaneous" sort made up of pig and/or water buffalo gall bladders. The mistaken identity was further documented by a dramatic price differential between the miscellaneous gall bladders (US\$15-18 per kilogram) and those imports thought to be genuine gall bladders from bears (US\$773-4200 per kilogram). Revised import figures, if correct, mean that Taiwan imported an average of 152kg of bear bile per year from 1975-1985, making it a significant consumer of bear bile but nowhere near the magnitude first assumed.

Another complicating factor that has been documented in Taiwan and other countries is authenticity of so-called "true bear gall bladder". Laboratory analysis of 78 bear gall bladder samples taken from TCM shops in Taiwan showed that 29 (37.17) were from bears, while four (5.13%) were a mixture of bear and pig bile, and 45 (57.69%) were not from bears. It is interesting to note that the ratio of bear gall bladders to non-bear gall bladders in Taiwan is similar to that documented in Hong Kong. Both were close to one-third authentic versus two-thirds counterfeit. Similar testing in North America showed that 74% of 489 items analyzed from Canada were from wild bears, while 49% of 871 samples seized in the United States were from bears. A test of gall bladders seized in law enforcement operations in California found only 10% to be from bears. (in the next issue)

Wild Bird Society of the ROC

The Wild Bird Society of the ROC (WBSC) was founded in 1987 and currently has about 2000 members in clubs representing three cities and four counties. The WBSC has three main goals: to conduct research on birds and other natural resources; to promote conservation of birds and their wild habitats; and to provide recreational and educational activities for members and the public.

1. Research by the WBSC

Research into the bird resources of Taiwan by the WBSC has focused on banding of migrants, study of raptors, threatened and endangered species and their habitats. The WBSC has taught field survey methods to member clubs.

From 1986 to 1993, over 30,000 birds were banded (90% are shorebirds). All banding data is processed through the banding center. Information exchange with foreign colleagues is increasing. The Raptor Information Center (RIC), established 1991, coordinates research, has established a resource library and publishes information on raptors. Spring and fall raptor migration counts have been conducted for five years. The RIC is now studying the rare resident Indian Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malayensis*). A five year study of Black Kites (*Milvus migrans*) near Keelung Harbor in the northeast is in its third year. The RIC wants to study other endangered residents and cooperate with China and Japan in studying migrating species.

Since 1991, CIBA Vision, Inc. has sponsored research and bird censuses along the Tamsui River of northern Taiwan, including the Kuantu wetland. The Wild Bird Data Bank of Taiwan, sponsored by the Council of Agriculture, collects information on distribution, habitat, breeding, etc. of Taiwan's wild birds. In each season, birds are counted at selected sites. After one year, about one-third of the island has been included with plans to expand coverage. The increasing ranges of introduced species are being entered into a data base to assess the impacts on local species. The WBSC has begun to study the wild bird trade and hopes to assist authorities with identification of birds at customs.

2. Protection and conservation

The WBSC, with other groups, lobbied the Legislative Yuan for protection of wild animals and their habitats, culmination with the 1989 Wildlife Conservation Law. The WBSC cooperated with the Taiwan Provincial Department of Agriculture and Forestry in producing reports on bird protection. In

1990 the club edited a handbook of investigations into the wild animal resources of Taiwan for the Provincial Forestry Bureau. The WBSC sponsored workshops on bird conservation in cooperation with many government agencies. The club created posters and booklets on protecting Taiwan's bird for the Council of Agriculture. The WBSC also initiated a letter-writing campaign to the ROC government to encourage protection of the wintering habitat of the Black-faced Spoonbill, and individuals from all over the world responded.

The WBSC has published many books in Chinese describing the birds and habitats of various areas around Taiwan, for example: Bird Resources of the Lanyang River Nature Reserve, 1989; Bird Resources of the Tatu River Mouth, 1989; Guide to the Birds of the East Coast Scenic Area, 1990; and an Introduction to Coastal Wetlands of Taiwan, 1992.

3. Recreational and educational activities

Birdwatching has become more and more popular. In recent years, local clubs making up the WBSC have sponsored birdwatching activities on Sundays at nearby sites, attracting over 14,000 people a year. Sometimes trips of a few days take people to more remote areas, with a total of about 4,000 having participated in these trips. Since the fall of 1991, about 40,000 people have watched birds during the migration periods. International birdwatching trips have been conducted to mainland China, Nepal, Thailand, Bali, Borneo, Australia and Japan. These trips are open to both members and their friends.

Conclusion:

In the past, Taiwan was condemned for the use of drift nets by its fishing industry. International pressure was successful in convincing the government to phase out that practice, formally banning it from January 1, 1993. International concern has been expressed over the future of the Black-faced Spoonbills (*Platalea minor*) of which over two-thirds of the remaining population (200 birds) winter in Taiwan County in southwest Taiwan. Development interests are opposed to the establishment of a reserve for

these highly endangered birds, but pressure from conservation groups, academics and the international community may yet convince the government to give formal protection to their wintering habitat.

Conservation News

The Construction and Planning Administration has continued construction of dikes at Danhai New Township in northern Taiwan, causing opposition amongst environmental protection groups. The groups pointed out to the COA that the Danhai New township dike construction causes damage to the rare green turtle's foraging sites.

Many NGO's pointed out that the COA should be concerned that the coastal habitat of the green turtle is being damaged. An ecological survey on the green turtle conducted by the National Ocean University also pointed out that because the northern coast consists of reef areas, there is an abundance of coral and seaweeds, and the water is shallow, therefore the area is an important foraging site for the green turtle. According to material gathered at Wangan, the green turtle has been active in the northern Danhai coastal area for at least five and a half months at one time, evidence that the area is an important foraging ground for the species. (Sep. 9, 1995)

The COA indicated that, in order to respect the culture and traditional festivals of Taiwan's aborigines, they would allow them to hunt. However, only ordinary wild animals may be hunted and protected species may not be touched.

The open season for hunting will be in accordance with traditional festivals, each tribe may only apply twice, and each period cannot exceed 7 days annually. Application for hunting activities can be made to the relevant county government offices, and only in respect of traditional festivals. (Sep. 9, 1995)

The injured black-faced spoonbill rescued by fishermen in July has been cared for by the Taiwan Endemic Species Research Institute for a month. The bird is almost fully recovered, is now in molt, and should be able to fly by the end of the year.

Professor Liu Hsiao-ru of the Institute of Zoology at the Academia Sinica and researchers of Taiwan Endemic Species Research Institute have decided to use a radio tracking device and to return the bird to the flock at the winter resting ground. After the bird, fitted with the tracking device, returns to the flock, researchers can identify its resting place in Taiwan, its food sources, and its breeding ground when it leaves Taiwan, and many other answers on the birds ecology. (Sep. 14, 1995)

Due to changes in the domestic and international fishing industry, the Council of Agriculture has decided to disassemble the Fisheries Bureau and establish a fisheries Committee.

The COA's new administration for the fishing industry is firstly in response to last Novembers United Nations marine law pact on Straddling Fish Stocks, passed in August of this year, and is concerned with making one of the worlds most active fishing nations, Taiwan, face strict international requirements on the fishing industry. Secondly, it must manage the effect of relations with mainland China on the fishing industry. The local local regulatory body must face and solve both these questions. Thirdly, if Taiwan wants to enter GATT, the regulation of the fishing industry and protection of the development of the fishing industry are important issues. (Sep. 14,1995)

The period after the Mid-Autumn Festival (Sep. 9 this year) is the best for climbing Yushan, but nowadays those who make the climb have less and less chance of seeing Swinhoe's pheasant.

Swinhoe's pheasant is Taiwan's most unique bird, rare and shy, and difficult to observe. In 1966, together with the Mikado pheasant, it was put on the international list of species facing extinction, drawing the attention of domestic and international protection agencies. Recently, destruction of the central mountain areas wildlife habitats has meant that its survival is under serious threat. The Yushan National Park management entreats those concerned to place greater importance on the protection of Swinhoe's pheasant.(Sep. 14, 1995)

Pintung County's Fangliao Police Branch found that Sun Chiu Pi-yun had hunted and killed about 100 brown shrikes, and was in possession of bird trapping equipment. After the case was tried, she was fined NT\$1,000,000(about US\$37,000). The fine was the largest amount ever recorded for bird hunting.

Each year when migratory birds come to Kenting, in the southern part of Taiwan, local people set traps to catch the brown shrike. The law enforcement units believe that punishment in the past was too lenient, and was no deterrent to bird hunters, so the conservation authority decided to impose a fine of NT\$10,000 for each bird.

Public prosecutor Tang Hsien-heng said that this heavy fine was imposed to prevent wild animals being killed in a breach of the law. He also appealed to the public not to break the law. (Sep. 19, 1995)

One of Taiwan's largest butterflies, the Orchid Island Birdwing Butterfly, has been successfully bred by the Provincial Taiwan Special Wildlife Research Conservation Center, from butterfly eggs taken from

Orchid Island. The Orchid Island Birdwing Butterfly is a tropical species and was the species most commonly seen on Orchid Island, but in recent years, due to road building, land cultivation, and pasturing of cattle and sheep, it's numbers have declined. In 1970 it already faced extinction, and the government declare it as one of the most endangered species in 1978. According to surveys by the Conservation Center, only 50 individuals were discovered on Orchid Island. With the success of the breeding program, the Birdwing Butterfly should have a better chance of survival. (Sep. 19, 1995)

Recently, Taiwan's Si Tsao Wildlife Refuge was host to a flock of northern phalarope (*phalaropus fulicarius*) flying south for the winter from southern Siberia. The flock gathered in salt fields near the nature reserve. The Taiwan Wildbird Society said that every year around September they flock together to fly south to avoid the winter, after passing through Taiwan, they continue to fly south to the Pacific. Then in February they return again to Siberia, passing once more through Taiwan. (Sep. 19, 1995)

On October 7 and 8, Taiwan took part for the first time in the WORLD BIRDWATCH '95, watching eagles in Kenting, as 100 other countries around the world were also bird watching.

Taiwan has recorded three families, and 27 species of raptor, amongst which at least 10 types are migratory visitors; especially during autumn when they come south either singly or in flocks, crossing the Central Mountain Range and neighboring mountains to flock in the south, presenting a stunning sight.

During the autumn, Taiwan's migration of raptors is at its peak, and during October in Kenting the Gray-faced Buzzard Eagle and Chinese Sparrow Hawk,

two of the most famous of these migratory species can be seen. At the same time, in other parts of the island, other migrating birds of prey can be seen. (Oct. 5, 1995)

The Fifth Conference of the South-East Asian Zoological Parks Association was held for three days from 17 October, 1995 at the Taipei Municipal Zoo.

Twenty zoos and aquariums from the South-East Asian region are part of the Association, including Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Japan and the Philippines. Experts from these countries all took part in the annual conference. Themes discussed at the conference included the protection of endangered species, breeding and breeding control programs. Taipei Municipal Zoo also invited international animal protection experts to give guidance on breeding species facing extinction, with the goal of protection for such species. (Oct. 17, 1995)

The first national park with the protection of historic sites and buildings as its main objectives, Kinmen National Park, was established on October 19. Kinmen is the sixth national park to be established after Kenting, Yushan, Taroko, Yangmingshan, and Sheipa. The latest national park covers an area of 3,780 hectares, and is the smallest of the national parks, covering only about a quarter of the island, i.e.: Gunintou (northwest of Kinmen), Taiwushan (center of Kinmen), Guwangshan (southwest of Kinmen), Mashan (northeast of Kinmen), Lieyu (Hsiaokinmen islet).

Kinmen has a sub-tropical land climate and a changeable marine climate, and is a resting place for many species of migratory birds; more than 230 species have been recorded, the highest density in Taiwan, making Kinmen an important bird watching area. (Oct. 19, 1995)

The Construction and Planning Administration plan for 'Renewing Farm Villages' proposed for Wuling farm, located in the Sheipa National Park, has already decided locations for army veterans' housing, but due to the sites proximity to the landlocked salmon's habitat and the site's area of 2.5 hectares, the Environmental Protection Agency and Sheipa National Park Headquarters are both opposed to the plan; their reasons being that the landlocked salmon, an endangered protected species, and the protection of its scarce habitat should take precedence over expanding residential areas. (Oct. 31, 1995)

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