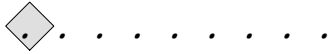


INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

NEWSLETTER

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Workshop on Conservation and Public Awareness of Otters

An international workshop on the conservation and public awareness of otters was held from December 9-10, 1999 at the National Museum of Natural Sciences, Taichung, Taiwan. The workshop was cosponsored by the ROC Council of Agriculture, the Taipei Zoological Society, the Japan Environment Corporation, IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group (OSG) Asian Section, the Otter Research Group Japan, the National Museum of Natural Sciences, Yushan National Park, and SWAN International. Researchers, educators and media workers from more than a dozen nations attended the workshop.

In addition to introducing the status of otter populations around the world, the workshop also gave examples of successful education programs to increase public conservation awareness. The roles of zoos and the media in conservation and education programs were also discussed. Other major topics included:

- Difference in the conservation and public awareness strategies of Europe and Asia.

- The effectiveness of promoting otter conservation work through eco-tourism.
- Planning conservation education methods for particular target groups.
- The use of advertising and marketing methods to undertake conservation education.

After hearing about the current state of otter conservation and conservation education work in Asia, participants concluded that information regarding otter populations in Asia was still relatively scarce. Research into finding suitable methods and strategies for Asian otter conservation and education is also needed. Participants recommended the following:

1. Conservation education should be planned according to specific cultural groups due to the wide diversity of Asian culture;
2. Areas like North Korea, Kampuchea, Bhutan, Burma, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia that have relatively little otter research and survey information should begin otter research and survey programs;
3. Contact should be made with mainland Chinese scientists and government officials to understand the status of otters in China;

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4. Members of the OSG should increase their efforts to confirm the status of hairy-nosed otters (*Lutra sumatrana*) in Thailand following the success of the Royal Forest Department of Thailand at re-discovering the species.

The workshop generated lively discussion and ended with a call for further implementation and diligence in the work of wildlife conservation education. ♣

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1999 Workshop on Trade in Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles in Asia

From December 1-4, 1999, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and TRAFFIC jointly held the Asian Conference on Chelonians in Kampuchea. During the meeting, it was pointed out that Asia has a high chelonians utilization rate and that many species are frequently traded. Due to high chelonian consumption in mainland China, Macao and Hong Kong, almost all fresh water turtle species in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand were being sold for human consumption and some species even faced extinction. Furthermore, because most nations were data deficient in terms of turtle ecology and trade statistics, no strategy exists to counterbalance this situation.

During the conference, the ROC's National Museum of Marine Science and Technology assistant researcher Dr. T. H. Chen presented a paper entitled "The Current Status and Utilization of Chelonians in Taiwan." In addition, Professor H. C. Chang of the China Medical College presented a paper entitled, "The Use of Turtle Shell in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)." Taiwan was the only Asian nation capable of presenting accurate reports on the status of indigenous chelonian ecology, breeding and trade statistics. Thus Taiwan's conservation activities received the praise of international conservation groups.

During the conference, it was reported that trade in soft-shell turtles was still relatively widespread in mainland China, Hong Kong and

Taiwan, while hard-shell turtle consumption took place mainly in South China and Hong Kong. Chelonian sources were widespread and varied according to market demand and port regulations. Currently, most chelonians are transported by land with major trading centers in Bangkok, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Taiwan. It was reported that the number of chelonians transported to South China was clearly on the rise. The trend for turtle jelly, which is a popular delicacy in Hong Kong, has recently spread to Taiwan.

Professor Chang pointed out that there was no difference in the use and efficacy of plastron and carapace. He said that, if TCM practitioners accepted both types of turtle shell in their applications, this would reduce the amount of shell needed by the TCM industry. In addition, he said there was no difference in the medicinal properties of shells from artificially farmed turtles and those of turtles caught in the wild. Professor Chang went on to say that even if reliable sources of medicinal alternatives to turtle shell were available (for instance medicinal herbs or other ingredients), it would still be difficult to eliminate the ancient tradition of using turtle shell in TCM. He said that, at best, such alternatives could only reduce the demand for turtle shell. At present, chelonian consumption is relatively rare in Taiwan. Furthermore, soft-shelled turtles can easily be bred in captivity. Therefore, Taiwan's chelonian utilization rate does not pose a threat to wild turtles. However, the number of chelonian groups found in the wild is diminishing severely due to industrial development and the destruction of chelonian habitats.



The Third International Symposium on Trade in Bear Parts

The Third International Symposium on Trade in Bear Parts took place on October 26-27, 1999 in Seoul, South Korea. The symposium was co-organized by TRAFFIC East Asia, South Korea's Ministry of the Environment, and the IUCN/SSC Bear Specialist Group. About 100 stakeholders from disparate professions and cultures attended the meeting to discuss the many complicated and sometimes controversial topics related to bear trade.

The symposium was divided into six main topics, including worldwide bear conservation, the status of regional bear conservation, bear trade statistics, the state of bear farms, the outlook for bear use and projects to find alternatives to bear products, etc.

During the symposium, the CITES representatives responsible for bear issues pointed out that, at present, import and export statistics from a number of nations did not meet required standards and this was causing loopholes in the management of bear trade. Furthermore, it was found that hunters in some European nations, where traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is not typically used, were trading bear gall for their own profit. CITES said that the laws of 70% of CITES member countries were still insufficient to effectively control the import and export of endangered wild flora and fauna. Furthermore, nations were powerless to implement laws because international data exchange was insufficient. At present, CITES is seeking external

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funding to hold international training sessions, particularly on law enforcement, techniques for criminal investigation, etc. In addition, CITES hopes to stop illegal bear trade through effective public awareness and education campaigns.

During the symposium, animal welfare workers pointed out that the poor conditions in many bear farms were having a negative impact on the health and behavior of the animals. Veterinarians said that the repeated “milking” of bears for gall should be monitored to see if this activity affects the bear’s digestive system and other physical functions, causing illness. In response, the Mainland Chinese representative said that the environment at bear farms in China had been greatly improved. CITES said that humanitarian issues were not its main concern. However, CITES said that it would continue to assess conditions at bear farms from a scientific standpoint.

As for the use of bear gall and its alternatives, Korean pharmacists said that the use of bear gall should be limited to traditional medicine, not non-traditional health foods. Animal welfare people, however, pointed out that bear gall alternatives already existed and that they were equally effective. However, China’s representative said that each region should be allowed to determine for itself the acceptance of bear gall medicines and this should be respected.

In addition, participants said that the marketing channels for farmed bear gall were not clear, making it impossible to determine whether farmed bear gall was being used for medical or other purposes. Therefore, it was recommended that limitations should be made on farmed bear

gall users and that processes should be made more open.

Finally, it was pointed out that some bear farms capture bears from the wild for breeding to ensure a constant supply of bears. This affects local wild bear populations. The issue of whether or not the supply of farmed bear gall stimulates market demand and thus continues to pose a threat to wild bear groups was also put forward as a topic worth investigation.



The Tuna Industry’s Measures to Prevent Accidental Seabird Catches

The ROC and Japan’s tuna long line fishing boats account for 80% of the world’s tuna liners. Recently, the fishing activities of ROC and Japanese tuna long line fishing boats on open waters have once again become the focus of international conservation groups. International bird conservation groups said that they have received data that Taiwan’s fishing boats have been using fishhooks to mistreat birds.

In response to these accusations, the ROC authorities pointed out that Taiwan’s tuna industry, at the insistence of international conservation groups, has adopted positive measures to prevent the accidental capture of seabirds. To prevent seabirds from getting caught on fishhooks and affecting fishing operations, Taiwan’s fishermen use ribbons to scare birds and prevent them from trying to eat the fish bait. Since 1995, the ROC government has been researching the relation between the fishing industry and

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seabirds, and also began educating fishermen in ways to avoid accidentally capturing seabirds.

Researchers found that if fishing boats were equipped with automatic bait-throwing machines, this accelerated the speed at which fish bait sank into the water, reducing the possibility of seabirds trying to catch the bait and getting caught on the fishhooks. As the Indian Ocean is a region where albatross appear frequently, more than 90% of ROC tuna long line fishing boats operating in that area are equipped with automatic bait feeders. Furthermore, more than 30% of tuna liners operating in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans are also fitted with automatic bait-throwing equipment. In addition, the Fisheries Administration of the Council of Agriculture has published a booklet on techniques to prevent the accidental capture of seabirds, which gives guidelines for fishing operations.

In the future, the ROC will continue to research the connection between seabirds and the fishing industry, to adopt international fishing and conservation measures, and to educate fishermen so that they can help develop Taiwan's fishing industry while also conserving seabirds.



Pin-nan Project and the Black-faced Spoonbill

The region of Chi-ku, which is located in Tainan County in southern Taiwan, was listed as one of 52 Important Bird Areas (IBA) in Taiwan as part of the International IBA Program. As Chi-ku is not far from the designated location of the Pin-nan Industrial Zone, the area's future development has become the focus of local and

foreign conservationists. At the end of 1999, the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) of the Executive Yuan announced that it had passed an environmental impact assessment report on the Pin-nan Industrial Zone Project, ratifying the industrial development of the area within specific limits. This decision immediately provoked the criticism of international conservationists attending the International Seminar on Black-faced Spoonbills, held in Taiwan. They strongly recommended that the Taiwan government rescind permission to start development of the industrial zone in favor of letting eco-tourism take the place of industrial development in the area.

Representatives from BirdLife Asia and other conservationists at the seminar made the following statement: Chi-ku Wetlands is a globally important wetland and a habitat for more than 70% of the world's black-faced spoonbill. The authorities have not conducted sufficient assessment of the effect of the Pin-nan Industrial Zone Development Project, yet have ratified this development plan. Furthermore, the authorities have been unable to appropriate sufficient funds to develop Chi-ku as an area for eco-tourism to improve the local economy, while also conserving the environment. The statement requested that the Taiwan government carefully reassess the Pin-nan project. Furthermore, it called on international society to let Taiwan participate in the Rasmussen Convention on Wetlands so that the Taiwan government might list the habitat of the Black-faced Spoonbill as an Important International Wetland, according to the Rasmussen Convention, and thus establish a workable policy for the conservation of Taiwan's wetlands.

Council of Agriculture (COA) chairman, Mr. Lin Shiang-nung, met the president of BirdLife Asia and other leading conservationists. He said

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that the COA would designate a protected area for black-faced spoonbill populations at Chi-ku as soon as possible. Lin said that he hoped that the goal of economic development in the context of environmental protection could be achieved.



The Third Conference on the Marine Environment

At the end of November 1999, the Institute of Zoology of the Academia Sinica, Business Council for the Sustainable Development of the ROC, Taipei Sea World, the National Museum of Marine Biology Aquarium-Preparatory Office, the National Museum of Marine Science and Technology-Preparatory Office, and the United Daily News Group jointly held the Third Conference on the Marine Environment in Taiwan. The theme of this year's conference was "Recovering Marine Biodiversity in Taiwan." The aim of the conference was to get the concept of marine biology and the importance of conserving marine biodiversity across to general public through non-academic lectures, seminars and still displays. It is hoped that, through the conference, Taiwan's residents would gain a better understanding of local marine species and ecosystems and help protect Taiwan's marine environment.

The conference encompassed issues related to natural, cultural, and legislative aspects of marine conservation and law enforcement. Specific seminar topics and discussions included: sustainable development, from the aspect of the ecology; changes in Taiwan's marine environment and ecology; the importance of

marine bioiversity, using coral reefs as an example; the importance of marine bioiversity, using mangroves as an example; algae, endangered sharks, and more.

The following recommendations were made at the conference:

1. To set up more marine reserves and establish effective management of reserves.
2. To conserve and repopulate endangered marine species.
3. To resolve the problem of fish data management.
4. To reduce or eliminate the release of polluted effluent in the sea.
5. To implement marine conservation measures and strengthen coastal control and management.
6. To establish a national-level agency for marine affairs.



Environmental Impact of Earthquake and Post-quake Conservation Issues

Following a devastating earthquake on September 21, 1999, SWAN International and the Society of Streams held a meeting of experts from various fields and officials in November to discuss the effect of the earthquake on Taiwan's environment and to highlight public awareness of post-quake conservation and reconstruction issues. In particular, the meeting focussed on the impact of inappropriate development on the

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environment. The meeting proposed alternatives for future public construction and development works.

Discussion at the meeting focussed on important issues related to conservation of terrestrial and aquatic environment and key points in conservation research. Issues of terrestrial environment included the restoration of barren areas generated by the earthquake, a review of how reopening mountain roads might exacerbate the disaster situation in mountain areas, and a review of the development of hillside areas for agricultural purposes. Discussions of the aquatic environment focussed on the effect of the earthquake and post-quake restoration efforts on stream environments, a review of dams, check-dams and reservoir fish ladder, and how to deal with landslide lakes formed by land movement during the earthquake.

As for future key points in conservation research, participants recommended that research into restoration ecology and the long-term monitoring of ecosystems be improved. Suggestions for increasing public awareness of environmental issues emphasized the importance of understanding how the earthquake had altered the physical appearance and geology of the regions affected and the effect on the environment. Such understanding could serve as a base for further conservation education to enable the public to gain a deeper understanding and respect of the environment.



Conservation News

Thanks to International Groups for Earthquake Relief Efforts

SWAN International wishes to express its deepest thanks to all the international agencies and groups that provided assistance and encouragement following the major earthquake that hit central Taiwan on September 21, 1999.

In particular, *SWAN* wishes to thank the Mammalogical Society of Japan for its donation of JPY\$110,000 towards earthquake relief and reconstruction efforts in central Taiwan. The donation was accepted on behalf of the people of Taiwan by the Council of Agriculture and entered into the 921 Earthquake Relief Fund of the Executive Yuan.

Thanks also go to Dr. Robert N. Cleaves, the president of Wilderness Conservancy of the United States, who personally donated US\$10,000 to the American Red Cross Taiwan Earthquake Relief Fund to help with relief efforts.



Dr. Jane Goodall Visits Taiwan Again

Acclaimed naturalist Dr. Jane Goodall visited Taiwan for the fourth time from November 10 to 14, 1999, bringing international friendship and goodwill in the wake of the September 21 Earthquake in central Taiwan. The aim of Dr. Goodall's visit was to not only learn about the

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progress of Taiwan's "Roots and Shoots Program," which is being promoted by the Jane Goodall Institute Taiwan, but also to visit areas worst affected by the earthquake and to bring hope and encouragement to the victims.

Dr. Goodall gave three talks in central Taiwan, mainly encouraging Taiwan's citizens by urging them not to give up hope. She also opened an exhibition at the National Museum of Natural Sciences in Taichung entitled "Treasuring Nature—An International Exhibition of Nature Photography." At the same time, Dr. Goodall launched her new book "Reason for Hope" and a biography written by her mother entitled "Daughter of Nature."

The Jane Goodall Institute Taiwan called on members of the "Roots and Shoots Program" to help earthquake relief efforts by accompanying 1,500 children from earthquake disaster areas on a tour of the National Museum of Natural Sciences, bringing a ray of hope to their lives.



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