



## Parrot Crisis

PARROTS are among the most threatened group of birds, according to the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP). About a third of parrot species (103 species) are causing concern and 77 are in grave danger of extinction.

ICBP has launched a World Parrots in Crisis campaign to try and avert mass extinction of parrots. Two factors contribute most to the parrots' problems: their rainforest homes are being logged at a high rate, and the beautiful birds are sought after as pets. A pair of rare Spix's macaws may fetch as high as \$80,000.

The Council is campaigning for a complete ban on the import of the 103 threatened species into the EEC. It would also like to see officials crack down on the wasteful parrot trade. In 1986 more than 600,000 parrots were traded worldwide and 80 percent died before they reached pet shops.

New Zealand's parrot species are some of our most threatened. They include the extremely rare kakapo, and the threatened kaka, kea and parakeet.

## Diesel Pollution Solutions

SWEDISH CAR MANUFACTURER Volvo has invented a filter which reduces soot and other harmful particles from diesel exhaust by at least 80 percent. Buses and delivery vehicles are a major source of this kind of urban pollution because of their frequent stopping and starting. When accelerating or climbing up a hill, large amounts of soot particles are released.

The filter becomes full after 500 kms, after which it is plugged into an external electricity supply to burn off the soot with the aid of a platinum catalyst.

## Environment vs Arms

THREE of the world's top environmental problems could be solved if just 9 percent of the world's annual military spending was channelled into saving the environment, according to the Worldwatch Institute. This would amount to \$US774 billion, and should be spent on protecting soil from erosion, deforestation and energy efficiency/renewable energy.

The independent Worldwatch Institute says governments need to reassess their view of security. It points out that military power costs so much that it drains resources needed to protect the environment and may dramatically reduce national security.

Ethiopia is a good example: \$50 million a year spent in the 1970s to offset desertification would have headed off the 1985 famine, which in the end cost \$500 million in relief measures. Meanwhile the Ethiopian government was spending \$275 million a year on its war against secessionist movements in Eritrea and Tigre.

The Institute looked at a number of trade-



*The orange-fronted parakeet, a colour variety of the yellow-crowned parakeet species. While not under threat to the same extent as other New Zealand parrots, this parakeet's numbers have been reduced in line with the reduction in native forest cover.*

offs between military and environmental spending. One of the most telling is the money that should be spent to stop Third World desertification (\$4.8 billion over 20 years). That's the equivalent of two days of global military spending.

## Thatcher's Image Undone

MARGARET THATCHER'S RECENT CLAIM to "greenness" has been found wanting after it was revealed she is to refurbish reception rooms at 10 Downing Street with Brazilian mahogany. "Despite the Prime Minister's call for an end to destruction of the Amazon rainforest, the purchases for the White and Blue Room were personally ordered by Mrs Thatcher," said the *Sunday Times*.

## Whales for Sale?

THE COMMERCIAL WHALING MORATORIUM is to be reviewed this year, fueling fears that Japan, Iceland and Norway will win the right to take whales for commercial reasons. Japan in particular has always been adept at gaining support from small and vulnerable nations.

However, those fears are balanced by the fact that there is a good core of conservationist commissioners on the International Whaling Commission, and a three-quarters majority is required to get the moratorium

overturned.

The sad news to come out of last year's census of the great southern hemisphere whales is that the blue whale population, at between 200-1100 individuals, may be too low for recovery. Other figures which give no cause for optimism are: the fin whale (2000), the sperm whale (10,000) and the humpback (4000).

## Hydrogen – Car Fuel of the Future?

HYDROGEN is being touted as the car fuel of the future, but much depends on the way it is produced. Hydrogen's advantages are that it emits no carbon dioxide or sulphur dioxides, two gases which are major contributors to the greenhouse effect and acid rain.

Hydrogen is most easily made by electrolysis of water, but if the electricity used in the process is coal or oil-fired, there is no benefit to using the fuel. The Washington-based World Resources Institute argues that the electricity to make hydrogen could come from sunlight.

If a hydrogen-fuelled car was driven for 16,000 km a year, it would need 280 sq ft of solar collecting area. In the United States that is the equivalent of 0.5 percent of the country's entire land area to provide for every car.