



CFCs phase out

WEST GERMANY has announced it will become the first nation to completely ban the production, sale and use of chlorofluorocarbons, chemicals that destroy the earth's essential ozone layer. By next year, CFCs will be gone from aerosol sprays and eliminated from all products, such as coolants and refrigerants, by 1995. The date is five years ahead of the target set by the Montreal Protocol, and four years ahead of New Zealand's stated goal.

Source: *Earth Island Journal*

Bad for business

THE BUSINESS Roundtable, a global organisation founded in the United States during the Richard Nixon days to counter the influence of organised labour, has successfully scuttled a US proposal for stricter pollution sentences.

The measures would have set sizeable fines as well as jail terms for executives convicted of causing pollution. However, following a meeting between high level executives from the Roundtable and the US Attorney, the tougher sentence proposal was shelved.

The members of the secretive Roundtable are all household names, and some of them are the world's worst polluters, which may explain their opposition to stiff fines and jail sentences. Among those named as the top twelve contributors to global pollution by the *Earth Day Wall Street Action Handbook* are DuPont, Shell, British Petroleum, Monsanto and Kodak.

In New Zealand the Business Roundtable has demonstrated its distaste of stronger environmental protection. It successfully fought to hold over the Resource Management Bill.

Source: *Earth Island Journal*

Great White sharks – How rare?

THE GREAT WHITE shark of *Jaws* fame may well be a threatened species, according to fisheries scientists.

Because of the great white's ecological significance as a top-level predator, scientists are keen to discover more about them. At present little is known, other than they may live to 100 years and become mature about 9-10 years.

In recent years reports of people encountering the sharks in South Australia have dropped off noticeably, leading to the conclusion that the species is declining. One problem with trying to conserve great whites is overcoming human fear of the sharks. However, according to the US Navy Shark Attack File, a worldwide average of only 28 shark attacks have occurred each year since 1940 and fewer than 35 per cent were fatal.

Source: *Oryx*

Favourite feline foods

CAT LOVERS might never be able to view their pets in the same light following a survey of the eating habits of domestic cats in an English village.

The scientists who carried out the study pointed out that most other studies of the effects of cats have focused on feral cats (for example, the impact of feral cats on New Zealand birds has been devastating). Few had investigated the impact of domestic cats.

In the unusual study, cat owners were asked to collect the remains of prey that their moggies brought home. Plastic bags contain-

ing the specimens were collected weekly over a one-year period and the contents analysed.

The results: In the UK at least, domestic cats – no matter how well they are fed – may be the major killer of small birds and mammals in urban and suburban environments. The scientists estimated that domestic cats kill at least 20 million birds a year in Britain. The figure could be a lot higher as an American study has showed that cats bring home only about half their catch.

Source: *Natural History*

Books Received

The Handbook of New Zealand Mammals, edited by Carolyn King (\$69.95, Oxford University Press)

The new *Handbook of New Zealand Mammals* will prove a disappointment to those readers expecting some lead from New Zealand's mammal scientists on the control or eradication of introduced animals. The editor's introduction describes New Zealand as a "vast natural laboratory for observing the processes of adaptation" and the opportunity of observing mammals both in their own and in an alien environment as "irresistible to the evolutionary biologist....Mammalogy in New Zealand is a young science, but its horizons are wide."

In a year where there has been a public outcry at the destruction of our forests by possums, the notion that New Zealanders might be willing to accept their country as a laboratory for alien pests seems out of place. People are becoming more aware of their natural heritage and less tolerant of its destruction by introduced mammals.

Despite presenting good data on mammals, the authors draw unsubstantiated conclusions or ignore key items when commenting on the environmental significance of various species. For instance, the fact that wapiti (and red deer) threaten the survival of the takahe in Fiordland is not mentioned; it is incorrectly claimed feral horses have not destroyed plant cover in open grassland; there is a ludicrous call for a thar reserve in the Southern Alps at a time when this destructive alpine goat continues to spread.

The section on stoats portrays them as fairly innocuous; yet more than 40 percent of their diet is birds and predation by them has been directly implicated in the decline of the yellowhead. Dr King claims that on the mainland there are only two threatened bird species that run the risk of stoat predation. By my count there are at least 11 such threatened bird species on the mainland. (yellowhead, takahe, yellow-eyed penguin, Westland black petrel, black stilt, red-crowned parakeet, Hutton's shearwater, North and South Island kaka, NZ dotterel, banded rail). This list does

not include reptiles, invertebrates and bats.

Despite the problems with the introduction and certain other sections, the book cannot be dismissed out of hand. It is the first comprehensive reference of native and introduced mammals since 1950, and does provide a mine of information on mammal distribution, habitat, social behaviour, reproduction, predators, parasites and diseases in its 600 pages. Reviewed by Mark Bellingham, RFBPS Field Director.

A Land Apart, by Michael King and Robin Morrison (\$49.95, Random Century (NZ) Ltd).

In many ways Chatham Islanders are a people apart as well as living on a land apart: the present day small population can trace their ancestry to Moriori, Maori, German, British and American forbears. The book records a change of attitude towards the natural resources of the islands which augurs well for the future; nature tourism will play an increasingly significant part in the Chatham's economy.

Land Evaluation For Nature Conservation (\$32, K.F. O'Connor, F.B. Overmars, M.M. Ralston).

This New Zealand application of scientific principles of nature conservation, land evaluation and reserve design is long awaited. The project was originally started at the former Biological Resources Centre by Fred Overmars and has come to fruition with the guidance of Kevin O'Connor and Mary Ralston of Lincoln University. It will prove to be an extremely useful guide and reference for conservation planners, and managers within government departments, local government and conservation groups. It will also be a useful reference for the public when they have to provide comment on management plans and the new regional and district plans under the Resource Management Act. Available from DoC Science Publications PO Box 10-420, Wellington, or Centre for Resource Management, Lincoln University, PO Box 56, Lincoln, Christchurch.