UK's second marine reserve

THE UNITED KINGDOM now has two marine reserves.

Skomer Marine Nature Reserve consists of the sea bed and shore around Skomer Island and the Marloes Peninsula in Wales and includes 27 km of coast and 1500 ha of sea-bed.

Skomer Island is already a national nature reserve and is one of the most important seal breeding sites in south-west Britain.

Source: Oryx

The collector

A WELL KNOWN SCIENTIST and bird breeder, Jesus Estudillo Lopez, has been arrested for attempting to smuggle 22 rare and protected birds out of Brazil.

Dr Estudillo, a Mexican and a respected member of the international scientific and bird community, is one of the world's leading experts on cracids, a group of pheasant-like birds which includes many endangered species. He has bred a number of the cracids in his breeding centre in Mexico.

Estudillo was boarding a flight for Mexico City when his luggage was checked to reveal the birds.

Source: Traffic Bulletin

Steller sea lions threatened

THE US FISH and Wildlife Service has officially placed the Steller sea lion on the threatened list after a dramatic decline in the species in Alaska.

Several possible causes are given for the decline: commercial fishing may be reducing the sea lion's food source, and sea lions are getting drowned in nets.

Source: Endangered Species Technical Bulletin

Ivory market declines

A WWF REPORT, The Effects of Trade Moratoria on International Commerce in African Elephant Ivory, has found that prices and demand for ivory are steady or falling in the EC, US, Middle East, Africa and most of Asia, with the exception of Japan.

However Japan has adhered to the ban and last year confiscated 30,000 unfinished ivory name seals believed to have been loaded in Hong Kong. In the US the $100 million a year market has collapsed and in China (which exempted itself from the ban until January 1991) the largest ivory factory now employs only six out of the 600 employees who worked there.

Although some illegal killing of elephants continues in Africa, Kenya has announced that poaching is down by 90 percent from the first quarter of 1989.

Source: WWF News

Aussie Subantarctics for World heritage

AUSTRALIA'S FEDERAL Department for the Environment has been preparing a World Heritage nomination for Australia's subantarctic islands, including Heard, MacDonald and Macquarie.

Unfortunately the nomination is stalled at present by the Premier of Tasmania, Michael Field. Mr Field wishes to put the proposal before a World Heritage Community Advisory Council, which includes the Tasmanian Chamber of Mines and the Mountain Cattlemen's Association, to gauge "broad community support" for the proposal.

These same organisations oppose anything to do with World Heritage nominations on mainland Tasmania, have no legitimate interests in the subantarctic and are hardly qualified to assess World Heritage values.

Perhaps the New Zealand Government should join in with a joint nomination for our subantarctic islands and Macquarie, which are all in the same biophysical region.

Source: Wilderness News

Shark conservation

THE POPULAR IDEA that a dead shark is a good shark must vanish according to the UK's Fauna and Flora Preservation Society.

The question of shark conservation is mounting worldwide with huge increases in catches of sharks in a number of fisheries. In the United States, for example, shark mortality over the past 10 years has every year passed the maximum sustainable yield (estimated at 16,250 tonnes) by an average of 5900 tonnes per year. One of the factors driving the increased kill is the Asian demand for shark fins. (see *Forest & Bird* November 1990).

Source: Oryx

A Saudi State of Affairs

ONE OF THE least publicised effects of the Gulf War is the waste generated by a modern army. By now the deserts of Saudi Arabia will be littered by millions of non-biodegradable plastic water bottles and food packages.

Each day the hundreds of thousands of US troops are getting their three daily rations of pizzas, hamburgers and hot dogs served in plastic "MRE" (Meals Ready to Eat) packages. These plastic bags are extremely durable. MRE packs discarded during the 1983 Grenada invasion could still be found littering the island years later.

To heat the food, individual plastic bagged servings are designed to be stuffed into yet another plastic bag called a Flameless Ration Heater (FRH) containing a magnesium flare that can heat the food to 100 degrees in ten minutes. The FRH packs can be used just once.

Source: Earth Island Journal

Death of a Conservationist

WHEN CHICO MENDES was murdered in 1988 the world mourned the senseless death of a committed conservationist. The suicide of Thai conservationist Seub Nakhasathien in September last year was not so widely publicised, but nevertheless it rocked a nation where conservation has become a major issue.

For a week crowds gathered to pay their last respects. Media coverage was beyond expectation. Over 2000 people attended the funeral service. Thailand's King and Queen, in an unprecedented gesture of respect for a common man they had never met, sponsored the last two days of Seub's funeral rites.

40-year-old Seub killed himself because the pressures of trying to enforce conservation measures had become too great: illegal loggers had placed a price on his head, and his dream of turning the Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary – described as the richest tropical forest in mainland South-East Asia and in line for World Heritage status – into a well protected, well managed sanctuary had turned sour.

However, Seub's sacrifice may not be in vain. His death has drawn attention to the enormous difficulties facing conservationists and the Seub Nakhasathien Foundation has been set up to provide financial support for Thailand's underpaid rangers and other forest protection workers.

Source: The Ecologist

Recycling Woes

A FAILED ATTEMPT by McDonalds in the USA to introduce a recycling scheme for its polystyrene packaging illustrates the difficulties of cutting down the waste stream – and how recycling schemes are very much a patch-up job.

In the face of pressure from environmentalists, McDonalds started a pilot recycling scheme for the polystyrene packages, billions of which have ended up in landfills. Its polystyrene suppliers had agreed to invest $US16 million in seven recycling plants, which would turn the used packages into plastic resin pellets, which in turn would become everything from video cassettes to plastic flower pots to garbage baskets.

However environmental groups opposed the venture on the grounds that the ground up containers would not be recycled into new spoons, cups and plates (forbidden on health grounds by the US Food and Drug Administration). At best the recycling plans would transform one percent of America's plastic litter into "permanent" plastic furnishings and fixtures.

Source: Forbes