



Bison reprieve

THE WORLD'S LARGEST bison herd will not be eradicated after all. The Canadian Government has rejected the advice of its own environmental assessment panel, which had recommended killing the bison in Woods Buffalo National Park, Alberta, because some were infected with brucellosis and tuberculosis, supposedly endangering neighbouring cattle.

The announcement came days after an internal memorandum drafted by employees of Parks Canada, the responsibility federal agency within the Department of Environment, was leaked to the press.

The memo pointed out that killing all the bison would be impossible, that it was poorly reasoned and that it would harm the integrity of Canada's national park system.

Source: *Oryx*

Teak wars

THAILAND'S BAN on logging within its own borders has had unfortunate consequences in neighbouring Myanmar (formerly Burma) where their forests are still largely intact.

Since the 1989 ban, Thai logging companies have received concessions to cut more than 350,000 Myanmar trees a year. As a result, an area that had known only small-scale logging using elephants and rivers for transport was penetrated by a network of roads that allows easy access to heavy logging machinery.

The target in the forests is teak, prized by boatbuilders, carpenters and furniture makers who appreciate the attractiveness of the hardwood. Rainforest Action Groups around the world are calling for a boycott of all tropical timber products imported from non-sustainably managed forests, a policy also promoted by Forest and Bird.

Source: *Sierra*

Falcons take cover

THE US AIR FORCE has plans to study the impact of low-flying jet noise on wildlife by flying F-16 and F-111 fighter jets over the nests of endangered peregrine falcons in Alaska's Yukon River Valley.

The University of Alaska-Fairbanks has accepted \$800,000 to run a three-year study to videotape the falcons' reactions as jets scream by 30 metres above their nests. If the birds survive the test the Air Force will argue for a change in existing US Fish and Wildlife Service rules that prohibit strafing and evasive manoeuvre training over hundreds of environmentally sensitive areas around the country.

Source: *Earth Island Journal*



Two-thirds of birds declining

AT THE 20TH World Conference of ICBP meeting in New Zealand last year it was reported that two-thirds of the world's 9000 bird species are in decline and more than 1000 are threatened with extinction.

Sierra Leone – the Gola rainforest

RAINFOREST DESTRUCTION in Sierra Leone has been more thorough than in most other West African countries. Only about 4 percent of the land is now under forest compared to 60 percent originally.

Between them, ICBP and the UK Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), with the agreement of the Sierra Leone Government, are attempting to conserve the 750 km² Gola Forest Reserves in the country's south-east.

The lowland forest is a critical region for at least nine of the world's most endangered species, including the white-necked picathartes, an extraordinary bird with a strange name and looks to match.

Conservation of the forest will not be easy; local people depend on it for their livelihood. A first step will be to decide on those areas where some logging can be allowed, against areas which are to be strictly protected as nature reserves, and where neither hunting nor logging can be permitted.

Saving the magpie robin

IN 1981 staff from the New Zealand Wildlife Service went to the Seychelles to eradicate

cats and give the rare magpie robin a chance of survival.

At that point the robin's population was just 20. Despite the successful battle against predators, however, in the decade since the bird's numbers have risen to only 22.

The magpie robin's problems bear echoes of those experienced by New Zealand birds. Over thousands of years the species became a confiding ground feeder in a land with no rats and no cats. It lays just one egg, like many New Zealand birds.



Today the magpie robin is restricted to just one island in the Seychelles group, Fregate. ICBP have prepared a report showing why the magpie robin is not succeeding, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is funding the rescue programme.

This will involve increasing territory quality, providing additional nesting sites and establishing a second population on another island.

Solomons Survey

LOGGING CONCESSIONS have been granted on most of the forest in the Solomon Islands, placing many of the Solomons' 72 endemic bird species at risk.

An International Council for Bird Preservation expedition was recently mounted to survey the bird populations on some of the islands. Its report is sobering: the islands of Kolombangara and Ghizo have had their forest cover drastically reduced and as a result a number of bird species are threatened such as the Kolombangara warbler, Heinroth's shearwater, the Solomons sea eagle and Nicobar pigeon.

On the 3000 km² island of San Christobal (Makira), all the endemics were recorded in reasonable to high numbers except for the San Christobal mountain rail which appears to be not only rare but also elusive. San Christobal is still largely primary forest but action is urgently needed to head off logging.

Argentine rainforest protected

ICBP is to help manage 5000 ha of rainforest in north-east Argentina, which is being bought as a result of an appeal by the environmental charity, The Earth.

The rainforest, which featured in the film *The Mission*, is located in Misiones Province, biologically the richest area of Argentina, and supports at least three species of birds currently threatened with extinction. Large areas of the forest are poorly known, and it is believed that further survey will turn up more threatened bird species.

ICBP and the leading Argentine conservation group Fundacion Vida Silvestre Argentina (FVSA) are already actively involved in other conservation projects in the region. It is hoped this initiative will be the first in a series that will secure the protection of critically threatened areas of rainforest in Misiones.