



## New evidence on ozone depletion

RECENT DATA collected by NASA reveals that ozone depletion over the last decade has been occurring at twice the rate, over a wider area and for a longer period of time than previously predicted.

While ozone loss is highest in the southern hemisphere, the extent of depletion in the northern hemisphere has also reached dangerous levels with measurements over Britain last winter recording an 8 percent thinning of the ozone layer which persisted into early spring.

Under the terms of the Montreal Protocol, an international treaty designed to halt ozone destruction, production of CFCs is to continue for another 9 years and the manufacture of their substitutes, HCFCs until 2040. The HCFCs still contribute to ozone depletion and global warming. The industry, dominated by multinational companies DuPont and ICI, continues to pour millions of dollars into research and

development of their use, while proven non-depleting alternatives like ammonia and propane – which do not offer the same profits as they cannot be patented – are ignored.

Source: *The Ecologist*

## It's not easy being green

HOT ON THE HEELS of the helpful green guides with advice on the simple things you can do to go easy on the earth, comes a more daunting recipe to ecologically responsible lifestyles entitled "50 difficult things you can do to save the Earth".

Some of the more challenging items on the list are: dismantle your car, don't have children, have your power supply disconnected, plant a tree every day, don't own pets, liberate a zoo and try to live on the world average income of \$US1250 a year for just a month.

Source: *Earth Island Journal*

## NZ flatworm - wanted dead or alive

A FLATWORM native to New Zealand, *Artioposthia triangulata*, has shot to notoriety in Ireland and Scotland as the arch enemy of the earthworm. The above caption featured on a recent poster distributed amongst garden societies in Scotland as researchers attempt to map the spread of the murdering import. Thought to have been accidentally imported into Ireland in 1963 in a shipment of potted plants, the flatworm has flourished in the cooler northern climate. Back at home its inability to survive in temperatures above 20°C confines it to forested areas, but in Britain it seems to be adapting to a wide range of habitats and could pose a major threat to horticulture and gardening. One study of a field near Belfast showed a 75% decline in earthworm numbers three years after the flatworm was introduced.

Source: *New Scientist*



## Pelicans threatened

LATE LAST CENTURY, the white Dalmatian pelican – the world's largest – numbered in the millions in Europe and Asia. Since then, the impacts of habitat drainage, nesting disturbance and persecution by fishers have drastically reduced its population. Only a few hundred pairs remain.

This year, 35 pelicans were discovered in two colonies in Albania. Unfortunately, 36 eggs in these nests were either sterile or pricked, presumably by nearby fishers who consider these birds to be competitors. Karavastas lagoon, where the pelicans were discovered, is Albania's most important and last intact wetland which meets the criteria for Wetland of International Importance, according to the Ramsar Convention. It is currently threatened by plans to reclaim the lagoon for agriculture. ICBP are seeking the inclusion of the lagoon in the adjacent Divjakes National Park.

## Albatross assisted

THE SHORT-TAILED ALBATROSS once nested in huge numbers on southern Japanese islands, but by 1949 it was considered extinct as the result of 60 years of relentless hunting by feather collectors. Fortunately a tiny colony, of less than fifty birds, was found on Torishima Island in 1951 and the Japanese Government gave

full protection to the species. Conservation management of the colony has been successful and the population now stands at almost 500 birds.

In 1988 a second tiny nesting colony was confirmed at the Senkaku Island group, where adults had been seen since 1971. In March this year at least ten chicks were at the second colony, which is now estimated to consist of about 75 birds.

## Gulf aftermath

THE OIL SPILL resulting from the Gulf war is the world's worst at about 7 million barrels. Thousands of grebes and cormorants have been killed, and in some areas up to 75 percent of wading birds, particularly plovers, godwits and sandpipers, were affected by oil. A total of 20-50,000 birds of 53 species were thought to have been oiled by March, but significant numbers of migratory species were still to arrive in the Gulf. There is particular concern about the future of the Socotra cormorant as its numbers were already in decline before the war.

The war oil spill has highlighted the threats faced by birds in the Arabian Gulf. The marine ecosystem continues to be threatened by serious oil spills, which are commonplace. Rapid coastal development in Saudi Arabia has already grossly modified up to 40 percent of the Gulf coast.

## Antshrike rediscovered

ICBP report that the western antshrike, a complete mystery for more than fifty years, has been rediscovered in eastern Ecuador. At least seven birds were found in January 1991 at altitudes greater than 1600m on the undisturbed forested slopes of a volcanic peak, Mt Sumaco.

## Chinese gull habitat destroyed

IN CHINA Saunders' gull is seriously threatened by reclamation of its wetland nesting sites for shrimp, reed and rice farming. The full population is estimated to be 2000 individuals. One nesting site of about 130 pairs was driven out by reclamation last year, while the largest known nesting colony of more than 1000 birds is scheduled for development in a project funded by the World Bank. Only one other nesting site is known.