



TECHNICAL BULLETIN

Issue 15 2009

EXTINCTION DENIED PROGRAM

■ Klipkop Wildlife Sanctuary

By Julie Blair

The Wildlife Land Trust is pleased to welcome the Klipkop Wildlife Sanctuary in the Gauteng province, South Africa, as our newest international member.



Klipkop is the result of a unique alliance between land owners. In 1998, the reserve started at a mere 400 ha. It was the combined lands of three property owners who lived adjacent to each other. They removed boundary fences, erected game fences around compounds, and 'leased' the land to the association they had formed for management purposes.

Over time, through the participation of further land owners and property acquisition, the reserve has grown. Now, more than 2,200 ha of land is dedicated to environmental and wildlife preservation. What makes Klipkop particularly special is its location on *bankenveld* — a rare and increasingly endangered type of grassland found only on the interior plateau of South Africa.

Bankenveld is a transitional vegetation that shares characteristics with the high veld grasslands, low veld savannas and flora of the Drakensberg and Kalahari regions. It is characterised by rocky hills and ridges. Klipkop is aptly named — in Afrikaans it literally means 'stone head'.

The rocky terrain is ultimately what has helped save Klipkop. Located in a rural area, many have tried their hand at agriculture and farming. Slasto mining was also a feature of the area in the 1970s, when irregularly-shaped slate flooring was in fashion. The constant threat of urban expansion is, however, ever present. South Africa's valuable mineral resources also keep mining companies 'knocking on the door'.

The transitional nature of the bankenveld vegetation makes Klipkop a biodiversity *hotspot* (in one of the world's 34 global biodiversity *hotspots*). Bankenveld's biological diversity is second only to that of the world famous fynbos of the Cape Floristic Region. As the Wildlife Land Trust already has active involvement in this area through the Flower Valley project, Klipkop is a very ecologically valuable and logical inclusion in the network of sanctuaries.

We have documented over 450 vegetative species and 175 avian species on Klipkop. Game (predominantly buck) has been progressively reintroduced over the years with species indigenous to the area. We are, of course, delighted when we find many of the smaller mammals, reptiles and insects often overlooked by 'mainstream' conservation efforts. There is so much more to South African wildlife than just the 'Big 5'. Species do not exist in isolation.

Klipkop has recently been recognised in provincial awards for its biodiversity and wetlands management practices. We are, however, particularly honoured to be accepted into the Wildlife Land Trust's international network of sanctuaries. We look forward to playing our role in the protection and preservation of grassland habitat.

For more information about Klipkop, please visit www.klipkop.co.za



Blesboks. Photo © Brendan Cockroft, 2006.

■ Will climate negotiators squander chance to save forests?

HSI and fellow members of the *Ecosystems Climate Alliance* (ECA) have been alarmed that the negotiating text for the Copenhagen climate agreement for the mechanism to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) **has lost focus on forest protection and is instead risking a perverse outcome whereby the industrial logging sector would receive carbon subsidies for doing little better than business as usual.**

To avoid dangerous climate change we need finance to flow to indigenous peoples and local communities in developing countries to protect the world's remaining intact natural forests and not to flow to industrial logging operations that will degrade them, just at slower rates.

As the Australian contingent of the ECA, HSI and The Wilderness Society have managed to find an ally in the Australian Government in promoting language that would see the REDD mechanism refocus on forest protection. HSI has previously been successful in helping the Australian Government make REDD one of its three priorities for the UNFCCC negotiations, and promoted our case through a new policy paper tabled in Bonn (HSI Special Bulletin — *REDD: Must focus on protecting intact forests if it is to help avert dangerous climate change and avoid LULUCF perversities*, authored by HSI consultant Alistair Graham). http://www.hsi.org.au/editor/assets/climate_change/HSI_forests+climate_TB.pdf

Continued page 2



■ Will climate negotiators squander chance to save forests? (continued from page 1)

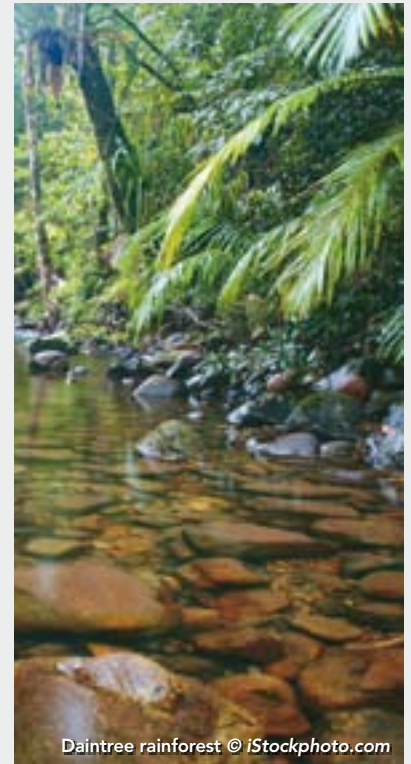
After a number of high level government climate talks in New York and the G20 in Pittsburgh, the UN climate talks moved to Bangkok in October, and will be followed by a session in Barcelona in November, before culminating in Copenhagen in December. HSI and the ECA will be attending all these meetings to ensure language for forest protection and safeguards for biodiversity and the rights of indigenous people and local communities survive the remaining negotiating rounds through to Copenhagen.

The Ecosystems Climate Alliance (ECA) is an alliance of environment and social NGOs founded in December 2008 committed to keeping natural terrestrial ecosystems intact and their carbon out of the atmosphere, in an equitable and transparent way that respects the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. www.ecosystemsclimate.org

Australian forests in the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme

HSI has commended Malcolm Turnbull and the Coalition for seeking the inclusion of credits for 'avoided deforestation' in the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Land clearing is, after all, the fourth largest source of greenhouse emissions in Australia. Currently the Government is only proposing to include credits for landholders that establish new plantations on their properties as a voluntary opt in measure. HSI considers it just as valid for the Government to find a way for the CPRS to provide landholders with positive incentives to voluntarily forego opportunities or rights they may have to clear the existing native vegetation on their properties. HSI commissioned advice from the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) on amendments required to the Government's bills to give landholders such positive incentives to retain native vegetation and we are now in discussions with the Opposition and the Government on our proposed amendments.

Dr Tom Lovejoy, President of The Heinz Centre for Science, Economics and the Environment (and past adviser to the President of the World Bank) also visited Australia during September, and undertook media for HSI in support of the inclusion of credits for 'avoided deforestation' in the CPRS (and also strong controls on illegal and unsustainable timber imports).



Daintree rainforest © iStockphoto.com

■ Another court room win for PNG's forests



Buerger's tree kangaroo.
© Timmy Toucan.

In Issue 13 of this *Technical Bulletin* series, we brought you news of a Papua New Guinea Supreme Court win by the *PNG Eco-Forestry Forum*, overturning rights given illegally to timber company Rimbunan Hijau to log 800,000 hectares of virgin rainforest in the **Kamula Dosa forest area in the Western Province** of PNG. Despite this success, the PNG Eco-Forestry Forum has had to take further action, successfully seeking a court injunction against the PNG *Office of Climate Change* and the *Lands Department*, over issuance of a carbon trade license and special agricultural lease respectively over the **Kamula Dosa forest** concession.

The Forum's press release announcing the win is reproduced below. Their action has been very timely with recent news of Australian-linked "carbon cowboys" abusing PNG landholders rights, and implicating both the PNG and Australian governments¹. HSI has been privileged to provide modest financial support for the Forum's legal activities.

"Friday, 5th June 2009

Press Release: Court stops carbon deal

The National Court has issued injunctions to stop the Office of Climate Change and the Department of Lands from taking any further steps to issue rights over the forests of Kamula Doso in Western province.

¹ "Canberra funded carbon dealers", Ben Cubby and Marian Wilkinson, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9/9/09.

The injunctions were sought by the PNG Eco-Forestry Forum which is disputing the allocation of logging rights over Kamula Doso to Rimbunan Hijau in a judicial review case started in 2006.

Despite the National Court already having issued an injunction restraining the PNG Forest Authority from allowing any logging in Kamula Doso two other government departments appear to have been independently trying to allocate rights over the forests to different parties.

Firstly, in November 2008, the Office of Climate Change issued a certificate granting the rights to 1 million tonnes of carbon from Kamula Doso to a company called Nupan Trading Limited. This certificate was issued despite PNG having no laws that allow trading in carbon rights and the Office of Climate Change not having obtained the informed consent of landowners.

Then the Minister for Lands, Puka Temu, gazetted a Special Agricultural Lease over the same forests in April this year — granting the rights to the forests to Tumu Timbers Limited. This was despite the rights to those forests already having been allocated in the previous deals.

"The forests of Kamula Doso belong to the local people but we now have three government departments, the Forest Authority, the Office of Climate Change and the Department of Lands all acting illegally in trying to give away those forests to three different companies" says Kenn Mondiai, Chairperson of the Eco-Forestry Forum.

"There could be no clearer example of the mismanagement of our natural resources and why our government cannot be trusted in international climate changes negotiations".



www.ecoforestry.org.pg

■ Conservation groups challenge wolf hunting

MISSOULA, Mont. USA — Conservation groups led by Earthjustice, (including **Humane Society International**), have asked a federal district court to block autumn wolf hunts in Idaho and Montana this year. The request came in an ongoing lawsuit seeking to restore federal Endangered Species Act protections to wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains until wolf numbers are stronger, the states develop an adequate legal safety net and connectivity between recovery areas is assured.

Idaho has authorized the intentional killing of 255 wolves in a wolf hunt, scheduled to begin Sept. 1. The authorized wolf killing via hunting in Idaho represents 30 percent of the last reported Idaho wolf population estimate, which was 846 wolves at the end of December 2008. Montana has authorized the intentional killing of 75 wolves in a wolf hunt, scheduled to begin September 15. Montana has authorized the killing of 15 percent of its last official wolf population estimate, which was 497 wolves at the end of December 2008. There were only 39 breeding pairs in Idaho last year, and just 34 in Montana.

The wolf hunting is in addition to wolf killing due to livestock conflicts, defense-of-property wolf killing and natural mortality. The hunting would occur throughout the states, including in core wilderness regions where wolves have virtually no conflicts with human activities. Idaho and Montana currently have no cap on wolf killing. For example, under Idaho law, there is no limit on wolf killing in defense of livestock. The combined loss of all these wolves threatens the recovery of the still-vulnerable regional wolf population in the northern Rockies.

Under the challenged U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wolf delisting rule, Idaho and Montana are free to reduce the wolf population down to 150 per state — a potential loss of roughly two-thirds of the region's wolves. The scheduled wolf hunts would cripple the regional wolf population by isolating wolves into disconnected subgroups incapable of genetic or ecological sustainability. The wolf hunts would also allow the killing of the breeding "alpha" male and female wolves, thereby disrupting the social group, leaving pups more vulnerable.

No other endangered species has ever been delisted at such a low population level and then immediately hunted to even lower unsustainable levels.

The decision to hunt wolves comes as Yellowstone National Park wolves declined by 27 percent last year — one of the largest declines reported since wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone in 1995. The northern Rockies wolf population also has not achieved a level of connectivity between the greater Yellowstone, central Idaho and northwest Montana areas that is essential to wolves' long-term survival.

Wolves are still under federal protection in Wyoming because a federal court previously ruled that Wyoming's hostile wolf management scheme leaves wolves in "serious jeopardy." The Fish and Wildlife Service in the recent past held that a state-by-state approach to delisting wolves was not permitted under the Endangered Species Act, but the federal government flip-flopped on its earlier position and this year took wolves in Idaho and Montana off the endangered species list while leaving those in Wyoming on the list. In addition to Wyoming, the states of Idaho and Montana have refused to make enforceable commitments to maintain viable wolf populations within their borders.

Earthjustice represents Defenders of Wildlife, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, **The Humane Society of the United States/Humane Society International**, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, Friends of the Clearwater, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands, Western Watersheds Project, Wildlands Network and Hells Canyon Preservation Council.



© iStockphoto.com / John Pitcher.

■ Endangered ecological community protected from development

Earlier this year, the NSW Government approved the development of a 596 turbine wind farm at Silverton, in the direct vicinity of an endangered ecological community nominated for legislative protection under the *NSW Threatened Species Protection Act, 1995* (TSCA) by HSI in 2008. The community, **Porcupine Grass — Red Mallee — Gum Coolabah hummock grassland / low sparse woodland on metamorphic ranges on the Barrier Range in the Broken Hill Complex Bioregion**, has a naturally restricted distribution, extending over a mere 250 hectares. Existing on such a small geographical area, the community is particularly susceptible to development, utility construction and other long term threats.

HSI was therefore pleased that despite there being no decision as yet on the nomination, the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change, and the proponent of the wind farm, Silverton Wind Farm Developments Pty Ltd, acknowledged the importance of the ecological community during the environmental impact assessment stage of the proposal. Accordingly, the proponent altered the proposal during the design stage and incorporated a range of controls into the project design.

To minimise the impacts of the development on the ecological community, the turbines will be placed outside of the community and access tracks will be diverted around its range, access tracks and cabling routes will be determined by a qualified ecologist, and a recovery plan, goat management plan, and vegetation management plan will now be implemented.



Porcupine grass — red mallee gum coolabah. Photo S. Sass.



■ News on HSI project support in Sumatra and Kalimantan

Sumatran orangutans under continued threat

A report from one of HSI's Indonesian project partners, Leif Cocks.

On a visit to Indonesia in July, Leif Cocks, President of the Australian Orangutan Project (AOP), was confronted with the continued decimation of the Sumatran orangutan's precious habitat.

"The destruction of high biodiversity forest in Sumatra's Bukit Tigapuluh landscape is happening before our very eyes," says Leif. "As a result the *critically endangered* Sumatran tiger, elephant and orangutan are rapidly progressing toward extinction."

The Bukit Tigapuluh ecosystem is located on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. It is severely threatened due to massive, ongoing forest clearing. A proposal by one of the world's largest paper corporations, Asia Pulp and Paper/Sinar Mas Group, is set to destroy the National Park's protective Buffer Zone and turn it into pulp paper production. To date the corporation has been at the fore of a number of high profile environmental disasters in Asia, resulting in some of its worldwide clients dumping the supplier for its unethical environmental practices.

The area under threat is the exclusive habitat for about 140 members of the *critically endangered* Sumatran elephant and is also home to Temara, a Perth Zoo-born orangutan released into the wild in 2006. Leif visited Temara whilst on his recent trip, as a part of an international program to establish a population of wild Sumatran orangutans. This program is coordinated by the Indonesian Government, the Australian Orangutan Project and Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) with involvement from Perth Zoo.

Approximately 108 other reintroduced former pet trade and orphaned Sumatran orangutans also live in the rainforest. Though Temara's protection is assured through local minders, large-scale deforestation now threatens to destroy the orangutan population that Temara was sent to join. Temara currently resides about one hour from the FZS station, situated inside the rainforest.

"We passed the jungle camp for Temara's trackers before we got to the tree where Temara was resting," Leif says. "I called for her and she responded to my voice immediately and climbed down the tree. I asked her to open her mouth, as she had been trained, and inspected her teeth, which appeared to be in good condition. I also checked her hair and body condition, both visually and by touch, and found that she was in excellent health. Her progress to date has been very good and is encouraging for the reintroduction program."

While seeing Temara again was one of the highlights of the trip, being confronted with the effects of Asia Pulp and Paper's activities in Bukit Tigapuluh ecosystem was a sickening low point.

"While travelling to the FZS Station and to a new sanctuary in the rainforest for orphaned and ex-pet orangutans that cannot live in the rainforest without assistance, we visited the so-called 'wildlife corridor' that APP has constructed through the Ex Dalek Esa Concession, where the FZS Station is located."

"The legality of this corridor, which is in effect a road and is used as such, is currently being disputed. We observed a constant stream of trucks loaded with rainforest timbers, travelling both day and night.

"Its construction has caused massive clearing of the rainforest on either side of the road. It was apparent that there was no protection for the environment or the forest along the road."

On this trip Leif, with senior other stakeholders, had several meetings including with the Governor of Jambi, the head of the Bupati (local govt.) of Tanjung Japing in which part of the Bukit Tigapuluh ecosystem is located, the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry, fellow Non Government Organisations in order to further proposals to save the Bukit Tigapuluh ecosystem for the long-term economic viability of the region, human rights and wildlife conservation.

"We are currently waiting on an environmental assesment of the ecosystem to be completed, after which we hope to develop partnership agreements for the protection of the endangered species that inhabit this area."

The Australian Orangutan Project supports over 2,000 orphan orangutans in care centres across Sumatra and Borneo. However, despite care centres taking in more and more orphaned orangutans every week and preparing them for reintroduction into the wild, endangered primates face the terrible outcome of not enough habitat remaining for their return.

The Australian Orangutan Project is active within the Bukit Tigapuluh Park and funds eight **Wildlife Protection Units** that protect the Park from illegal deforestation. One of these units is fully funded by **Humane Society International**¹. Through AOP, the Australian Government funded the initial development of the Wildlife Protection Units in the Park as a part of its Regional Natural Heritage Program.

Whilst the world awaits the outcome of the fate of the Bukit Tigapuluh and its orangutan inhabitants, we can only hope that continuous global pressure to stop this destruction will overcome the short-term financial goals of global corporations. For more information visit www.orangutan.org.au.

Human-orangutan conflict research

Since 2006, in a program jointly funded with the Born Free Foundation in the UK, HSI has been supporting ground-breaking research into human-orangutan conflict in Northern Sumatra, Indonesia (near the Gunung Leuser National Park). The program, led by Ph.D candidate Gail Campbell-Smith from the University of Kent's *Durrell Institute of Conservation Ecology* (DICE), was also supported by seven other non-government organisations and the *US Fish & Wildlife Service*. The program, which was completed at the end of 2008, highlighted, and gave a better understanding of, the nature and extent of the increasing competition between orangutans and humans for land and food, and provided potential solutions with local communities to reduce such conflicts. The program employed seven Indonesian field assistants over the two-year program period.

Subsequently, HSI and the Born Free Foundation funded an additional program in Northern Sumatra with Gail Campbell-Smith and DICE, which aimed to show that practical solutions to conflicts could be achieved. One example in which human-orangutan conflict was particularly apparent, was in an agroforestry area where villagers, regularly traveling to their fruit and rubber tree plantations (occupied by 16 critically endangered Sumatran orangutans (*Pongo abelli*)), often clashed with the animals, due in part to the bad condition of the many short, muddy tracks and roads. Therefore, the building and improvement of footpaths ('*setapak*') surrounding farmlands in the orangutan area of Batang Serangan was proposed, to better keep humans and animals apart.

The small building project was completed in 2009, with approximately 300 bags of cement being provided to three villages, with tracks and roads reconstructed by around 100 farmers, producing approximately 1 kilometre of renovated footpaths. Monitoring of the program will continue.

¹ In May this year, HSI joined AOP, South Australia Zoos, Dreamworld, Auckland Zoo and Australia Zoo, in an Open Letter to the media, calling upon the Australian Government to assist the Indonesian Government to develop the globally important Bukit Tigapuluh Landscape into a REDD project.

Further work in Sumatra and Kalimantan

HSI is also supporting a project in Sumatra and Kalimantan, entitled, “*The Programming of Learning Experiences: Orangutan (Pongo sp.) Reintroduction Projects in Sumatra and Kalimantan, Indonesia*”, being undertaken by Ph.D candidate Hannah Trayford, under the auspices of the Wildlife Research Group/Anatomy School at Cambridge University.

“The aim in this study is to explore how the programming of learning experiences influences the ape-human-forest relationships across three different orangutan (*Pongo sp.*) reintroduction projects in Sumatra and Kalimantan, Indonesia. It will take three approaches: (1) to explore how the rehabilitation environment influences orangutans’ cognitive and psychological capacity for reintroduction; (2) to investigate how behavioural adaptation demonstrated during rehabilitation translates into fitness after release to the wild; and (3) to explore how the experiences of nature, communities adjacent to each project receives, shapes their identity, attitudes, values, knowledge, prejudices, hopes and beliefs regarding conservation and development. The results can then be used to explore the coexistence between orangutans, the rehabilitation/reintroduction projects, and the human communities in which they are entrenched.”

Friends of the National Parks Foundation

HSI has been supporting the work of the Friends of the National Parks Foundation (FNPF) in Kalimantan for nearly 10 years. Drh. I Gede Bayu Wirayudha, Director of FNPF, introduces the organisation below:

“Friends of the National Parks Foundation is a proudly Indonesian NGO working to care for orangutans and wildlife and to preserve their habitat since 1997. Our work is holistic, encompassing wildlife, reforestation and community development and we are currently focused in two areas being Nusa Penida island off Bali, and Tanjung Puting National Park (TNTP), Central Kalimantan. Tanjung Puting is one of the jewels in Indonesia’s environmental crown and a UNESCO Man and Biosphere reserve. It is estimated to hold a population of around 6000 wild orangutans and 300 ex-rehabilitant apes reintroduced into the park over the last 30 years. The Park is also one of the last strongholds for the endangered proboscis monkey, and also hosts other endangered species such as the estuarine crocodile, false gharial, leopard cat and storm’s stork.

“Although Tanjung Puting is a National Park, the orangutans and other wildlife here are under severe threat. Illegal logging, encroachment and forest fire have impacted nearly 60% of the park, degrading prime habitat. The loss of mature trees, the continuing depletion of the forest and the subsequent fragmentation of home ranges and loss of food sources threatens the survival of orangutans and other species, and will kill the forest itself if not reversed. The Sekonyer River which flows through the park is polluted with mercury from illegal gold mines, and the poor water quality and reduced aquatic life has a direct impact on humans and animals that rely on the river for food and water. As natural resources previously available to villagers around the park are now depleted, issues are also arising with wildlife/ human conflict.”

FNPF undertakes an “*Integrated Conservation and Development Project*”, consisting of four major components: Forest Restoration & Protection; Jerumbun Forest Farming; Community Based Ecotourism and Park Protection; and Conservation Education. Their work has been recognised globally, reflected in previous financial support from the Australian Government (Regional Natural Heritage Program — RNHP), and the US Government’s Fish & Wildlife Service. The Commonwealth Government had viewed the FNPF initiative as one of the most efficient and effective programs funded under the RNHP. HSI has a long-term commitment to support FNPF in Kalimantan and Bali, and we are working with FNPF to extend and continue its reforestation programs.

STOP PRESS: As we go to press, FNPF staff are fighting fires in Tanjung Puting National Park, fires which are also threatening FNPF’s reforestation sites. HSI is providing financial assistance.



From top: Wildlife Protection Units in action in Sumatra; footpaths to avoid orangutan conflict in Sumatra; and fire fighting in Kalimantan.





■ Rising up to the challenge: HSI-Latin America

The following is a brief overview of the work program being undertaken by HSI's Latin American office, based in Costa Rica.

Jennifer Dinsmore reports:

With an area of approximately 21,069,501 km² (roughly 3.9% of Earth's surface), Latin America is a land of diversity, being home to 27 percent of the world's mammals, 37 percent of its reptiles, 43 percent of its birds and 47 percent of its amphibians.

But at the same time, 25 percent of its population lives on less than two US dollars a day, 23 percent do not have access to adequate sanitation and only 51 percent have access to sewers. As a result of such limited economic resources and the impoverished conditions of a significant portion of its population, the region as a whole it is still playing catch-up on issues that have long been taken for granted in developed countries, such as animal welfare.

HSI-Latin America works with a wide array of organisations and partners, both local and regional, to raise awareness about the importance of protecting animals and improving their welfare.

Wildlife protection

Indeed, the region's rich wildlife has long suffered from illegal commercial trade, with animals being regularly extracted from their natural habitat and then smuggled into other countries. In light of this reality, which is more widespread in border areas, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is of special relevance for Latin America as an instrument to ensure the adequate protection of wildlife.



White nosed coati. HSI image.

In 2004, HSI started¹ to organise national and multinational workshops to improve the effective implementation of CITES in the region and to promote interagency and international cooperation and coordination. From 2004-June 2009, HSI trained over 600 representatives from the national police, customs and ministries of environment and agriculture. The workshops covered all aspects related to the Convention, including obligations of CITES Authorities, general implementation requirements, common fraud methods, border control processes and proper animal handling techniques.

¹ Partial funding for HSI's CITES programs was provided by the U.S. Department of State.

HSI has partnered with rescue centres in Latin America who treat over 3,000 animals every year, the majority of which are either endangered or threatened with extinction. To promote best practices at these rescue centres and improve coordination between the rescue centres and the government officials who confiscate animals and bring them to the rescue centre, HSI organized a capacity building workshop in May 2008. At the workshop, thirty-two government and rescue centre representatives were able to share experiences and participants learned best practices at ARCAS, one of the region's most effective rescue centres, in Guatemala.

Traditionally, customs and law enforcement officials in Latin America experience difficulty placing confiscated live animals into adequate rescue facilities, due to the lack of both appropriate infrastructure and funds to execute the legal requirements effectively. In addition, there is a lack of information among the local population about the importance of wildlife protection. In order to address this situation, HSI provides grants to regional rescue and rehabilitation centres to improve infrastructure and overall conditions, as well as to provide technical capacity for the professionals who manage the centres. HSI has disbursed approximately \$250,000 (USD) in grants, both for the support of rescue centres and educational campaigns to more than 20 organisations across the region. Educational activities and outreach campaigns designed to promote wildlife protection and deter possible wildlife extraction for trade or pet use have reached approximately a million people to date.

Faced with diminished economic conditions and lack of growth opportunities, many Latin American communities often engage in activities detrimental to the surrounding wildlife and their habitat, such as hunting and illegal logging. As a result, HSI also works with local partners across the region to develop community ecotourism programs as an economic alternative that highlights local wildlife and culture, and offers a sustainable source of income.

HSI's ecotourism program has reached numerous communities in the region. For example, in Costa Rica HSI works with Corcovado National Park to protect vital sea turtle nesting beaches and other important wildlife habitat by offering local communities various training opportunities. These include training community members to become tour guides and providing workshops on how to become small business operators, as an economic alternative to the sale of sea turtle eggs. At the Chacocente Wildlife Refuge in Nicaragua, HSI works with local community cooperatives to increase tourism to the refuge, and to train members of the cooperatives on basic hospitality skills and the importance of biodiversity protection.

Environmentally friendly agriculture

More than half of Central American cacao production takes place in isolated, rural areas on small-scale subsistence farms averaging fewer than twelve acres. These farms are also home to wildlife such as the two-toed sloth, the toucan and the howler monkey. HSI's cacao program², launched in 2003, encourages hundreds of Central American cacao producers to improve the conditions of their farms and consequently, contribute to environment and wildlife protection. Moreover, as a result of the program, producers will start to generate additional income and improve their livelihoods by marketing their products as environmentally-friendly.

Sustainable agricultural practices help protect the natural habitat of numerous endemic and migratory species of wild fauna and flora from environmental and human threats. HSI's environmentally-friendly production initiative benefits at least four hundred subsistence cacao producers in Nicaragua and Costa Rica by providing technical training focused on improving the quality of cacao pods, the efficiency of each producer's production system and the managerial capacities of each cooperative.

² Partial funding for HSI's cacao program was provided by the U.S. Department of State.



Cacao farmers preparing high quality cacao plants. HSI image.

The program also helps obtain environmentally-friendly certification standards, which will ensure that the wildlife and habitat in and around the cacao farms are protected.

In addition to technical training for producers, HSI's cacao program is also reaching out to at least 1,500 schoolchildren, through an educational campaign that includes the creation of an informational poster, a book and a series of workshops in local schools. The ultimate goal of the educational component of the program is to build the foundation of a new culture which respects the environment and the biodiversity that thrives in and around the cacao farms.

Farm animal welfare

Through its capacity building program, HSI works to train producers and other participants throughout the livestock production chain in order to improve the conditions and standards of care for farm animals. Humane handling results in more efficient production processes and better meat quality. In the face of broadening global markets, livestock producers have started to take a closer look at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the European Union standards in order to guarantee the continued exportation of their products.

Improved handling and transport of cattle provides benefits for the producers, the consumers and the animals alike. A recent study conducted by HSI and the industry determined that Costa Rican producers experienced an average economic loss of \$2.45 per carcass due to poor handling. The results of this study were subsequently promoted throughout the country, with HSI taking on the task of transferring the methodology and recommendations issued in the report.

Additionally, the Animal Welfare component of the capacity building program resulted in the formation of a Costa Rican national commission of graduates, and allowed HSI to provide technical assistance for the upgrading of one of Costa Rica's largest slaughter plants, as well as one of the country's main auction houses. This resulted in improved animal welfare standards for more than 400,000 animals every year.

Marine life

The protection of marine life is also an important part of HSI's work in Latin America. In the Dominican Republic and Peru, HSI is working with coastal communities to protect their resident dolphin populations through the promotion of sustainable dolphin watching. And at a recent meeting of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Committee on Fisheries, HSI endorsed a proposal presented by Costa Rica for the implementation of a global "fins-attached" conservation strategy, aimed at halting the cruel and wasteful practice of shark finning.

With support from HSI, Costa Rica, an unwavering opponent of whaling, reclaimed its seat at the International Whaling Commission (IWC) meetings in 2007 after years of debt. Starting in 2004, HSI and the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA) began working in the Costa Rican community of Tortuguero in an effort to protect the nesting beaches of sea turtles from the destruction inflicted by the community's stray animal population.

Disaster services and veterinary care

HSI and the HSVMA have also teamed up to bring relief to animals affected by natural disasters all across Latin America: in the wake of hurricane Dean in Mexico in 2007, following the 2008 eruption of the Chaitén volcano in Chile, and after the 2007 earthquake in Peru. Time and time again, HSI has brought assistance to countless animals, offering them food, shelter and care.

In remote areas in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Peru and Chile, communities have benefited from clinics organised by HSI and HSVMA, with local partners, aimed at providing working equines with much needed veterinary care, and introducing humane animal population control methods.

Latin America may have a long road ahead in the field of animal welfare and protection, but HSI will continue to rise up to the challenge and work for a brighter future for animals all over the region.



Environmental education classes in cacao program. HSI image.



■ Endangered woodland retains protection in NSW

An HSI nomination saw **Coolibah — Black Box Woodland in the Darling Riverine Plains and Brigalow Belt South Bioregions** protected as an endangered ecological community under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act* (TSCA) in 2003. In a decision that has cemented the protection of the community in NSW, the TSCA Scientific Committee has made the final determination to reject an application that would have seen the community removed from the endangered ecological communities schedule of the Act (proposed by the NSW Farmers Federation).

After examining evidence on clearing rates and the degree of clearing, including assessments based on satellite imagery, the Scientific Committee determined that the community is still facing a very high risk



Coolibah — Black Box woodland. Photo J. Benson.

of extinction in the near future. Covering between 1,030,000 ha and 1,250,000 ha, it has already reduced in extent by 61%, and continues to be threatened by land clearing and habitat fragmentation, heavy grazing, exotic weed species, and structural changes associated with ring-barking, poisoning and removal of trees.

The physical and biotic processes of Coolibah — Black Box Woodland are also highly dependent on adequate flooding regimes. The community has therefore suffered an extensive decrease in ecological function as a result of hydrological changes to floodplains from the development of river regulation infrastructure, widespread modification of floodplains by the construction of diversion banks, channels, levees, and drains, and the upstream extraction of water.

These threats have continued to take a toll on Coolibah — Black Box Woodland even though it has been acknowledged as an endangered ecological community in NSW since 2003. It is therefore essential that it remains protected by the TSCA and HSI commends the decision of the Scientific Committee to reject the proposal for its removal.

HSI has also nominated this community for protection at the national level through the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999*. A decision is due by December 2010.

■ Ecological communities prioritised for EPBC listing assessment

Three endangered ecological communities nominated by HSI, the **giant kelp forests of the east and south coasts of Tasmania**, the **Macquarie Marshes in NSW**, and **Robertson Basalt Tall-Open Forest in NSW** have been included on the Federal Government's Finalised Priority Assessment List (FPAL) for 2009. These communities will now be assessed for inclusion on the list of protected ecological communities under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999*.

In Australia's waters, underwater habitats dominated by the **giant kelp *Macrocystis pyrifera*** are found only off the east and south coasts of Tasmania. The three dimensional structure of the kelp creates a unique and dynamic ecosystem that is one of the most spectacular in temperate waters. Supporting an abundance of marine fauna, these kelp forests are of immense ecological significance, providing shelter and habitat for fish species, molluscs, bryozoans, polychaete worms, echinoderms, sponges, and crustaceans such as crabs, isopods and amphipods.

One of the most important wetlands in Australia for waterbirds, the **Macquarie Marshes** have suffered extreme devastation from the lack of water flow in the Murray-Darling river system. The southern Macquarie Marshes are now almost completely destroyed.

Likewise, the area in the northern region has experienced major losses of habitat from reduced flooding, resulting from the construction of dams and other flow-diverting earthworks, and poor management of the Macquarie River. This nomination has prompted the examination of the broader ecological community to which the Macquarie Marshes belong, and the assessment will now include additional wetlands in the **Darling Basin** such as the **Narran Lakes** and the **Gwydir wetlands**.

Robertson Basalt Tall-Open Forest was originally nominated by HSI in 2003, and has now been included in a broader assessment of the **Southern Highlands Basalt Forests**. This assessment will now also encompass the **Mt Gibraltar Forest and Southern Highlands Shale Woodland complex**. A final decision on this ecological community is due in 2011, and those for the giant kelp forests and Macquarie Marshes are due in 2012.

Also added to the FPAL for 2009 were the **Lowland Subtropical Rainforest on Basalt Soils & Alluvium in North East New South Wales & South East Queensland**, and the **Riffle/Pool/Bar River Community of the South Eastern Queensland Bioregion**.



■ Mound springs protected as National Heritage

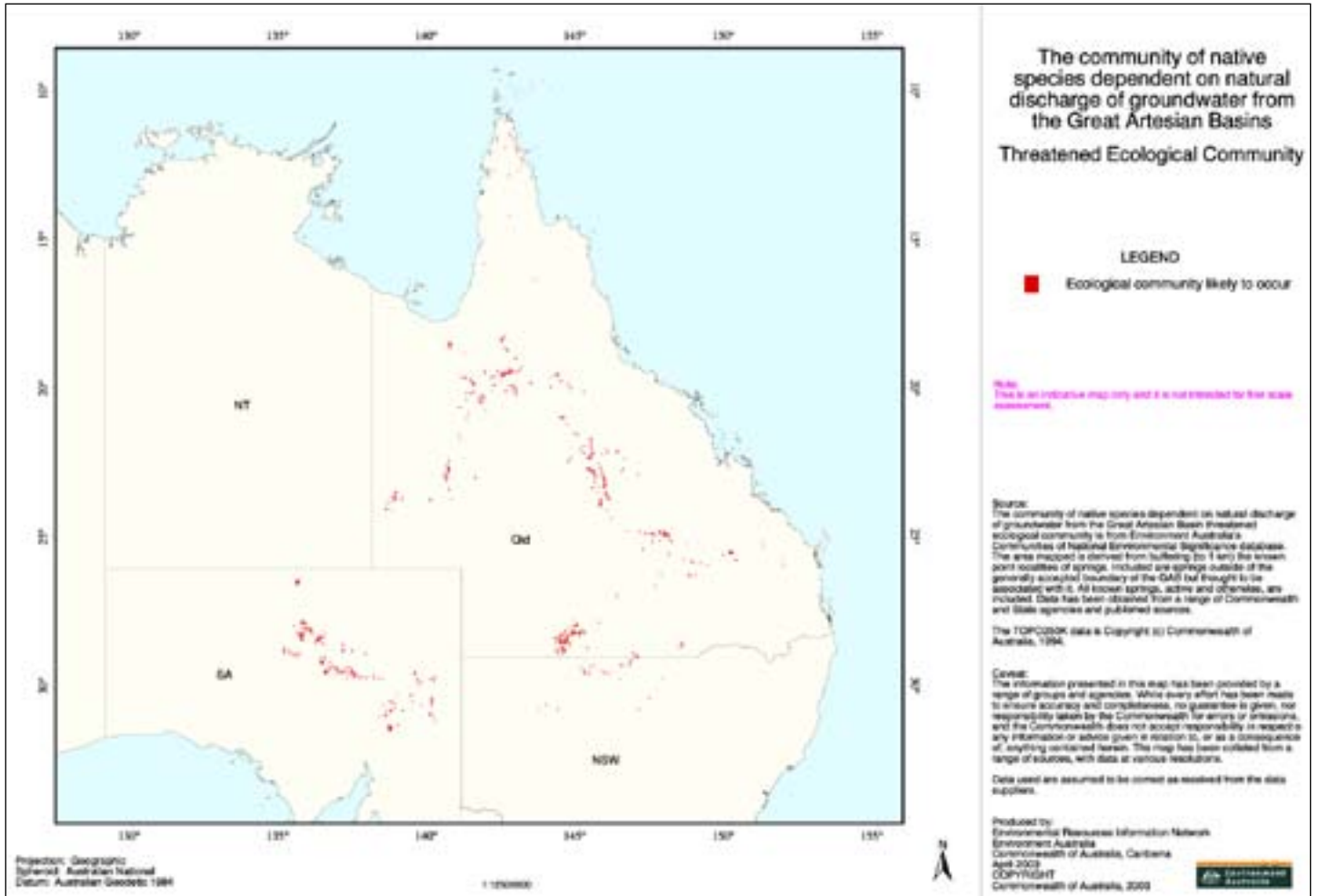
August saw the inclusion of two **mound spring complexes** on the *National Heritage List* under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999* (EPBC). Mound springs are formed when calcium and salts from mineral-rich waters are deposited by groundwater flows. Combining with sand, mud, and plant debris, these deposits then settle around the outflow of the spring, forming mounds that give the appearance of small volcanoes. Both mound spring complexes provide an important refuge for unique assemblages of plants and animals that are not found anywhere else in the world.

Located approximately 300 km south-southwest of Mount Isa in Queensland, and extending over an area of 400m by 500m, **Elizabeth Springs** was added to the National Heritage list for its extraordinary natural and evolutionary qualities. This complex forms part of the largely extinct **Springvale supergroup of springs in the Great Artesian Basin**. As groundwater movement rates are so slow in the Basin, moving between only one and five metres per year, some of the water in the centre of the Basin has been dated at more than one million years old. *The community of native species dependent on natural discharge of groundwater from the Great Artesian Basin*, which includes Elizabeth Springs, was listed as a threatened ecological community in 2001 following an HSI nomination (see the distribution map below). Key mound spring communities had been prioritised for assessment by the Australian Heritage Council in 2004.

Also part of the **Great Artesian Basin**, the **Witjira-Dalhousie Springs** in South Australia is a supergroup that extends over more than 50,000 hectares and contains approximately 60 springs. This complex was included on the National Heritage list for its natural qualities and indigenous significance. Located around 250 km southeast of Alice Springs, the Witjira-Dalhousie Springs are the northernmost springs in South Australia. The complex is truly unique as a geological formation in Australia, demonstrating the artesian spring's system on a massive scale. Associated with numerous traditional stories and songs, the Witjira-Dalhousie Springs are an integral part of Aboriginal history and life in northern South Australia.



The Bubbler Mound Spring, Wabma Kadarbu Conservation Park, South Australia. Photo Marj K.



A new WLT sanctuary: Brynmawr



Brynmawr is a sanctuary of 122.3 acres near Lithgow, NSW. Protecting a range of native habitats, Brynmawr is now a member of the **Wildlife Land Trust** global network of sanctuaries.

Adjacent to the Janolan-Hampton State Forest, Brynmawr features a diverse vegetation community, with 87 plant species already identified on the property. These include eucalypts such as snow gum, scribbly gum, brown barrel, ribbon gum and candle bark gum, as well as a range of understorey species and grasses such as kangaroo and tussock grass. In addition to the snake orchid which is listed as Endangered under the EPBC Act, the property also contains a range of other orchid species such as leopard, tiger, hyacinth, slipper tongue, musky caladenia, and donkey orchid.

Brynmawr provides habitat for an abundance of reptile, bird and mammal species. Snakes such as copperhead, red bellied black and mainland tiger snakes are present, as well as a number of frog, skink and lizard species. There are 40 bird species that inhabit the property including the gang gang cockatoo that is listed as Vulnerable in NSW, and a range of mammal species including wombats, platypuses, echidnas and ringtail possums.

Owners David and Suzanne Alder are managing Brynmawr as a protected area for the release of wildlife, and are developing a wildlife care and rehabilitation centre on the property for injured animals, particularly wombats.



Christmas Island pipistrelle. Photo © Lindy Lumsden.

Christmas Island set for National Heritage assessment, but still an ecosystem in disarray

In early July, in recognition of the island's heritage values, Commonwealth Environment Minister Peter Garrett announced that the whole of **Christmas Island** was to be given priority for assessment for potential listing on the *National Heritage List*. HSI welcomes this assessment, and hopes that it will be successful in order to provide greater protection for the island's unique ecosystems.

As one of two Australian Heritage Council (AHC) members responsible for natural heritage assessments at the time, HSI Director Michael Kennedy (along with Dr. Denis Saunders) prioritised Christmas Island for assessment in 2005. The island was also earmarked as a priority by HSI in 2009¹, while 12,200 hectares were transferred to the *Commonwealth Heritage List* in early 2004, at the start of the new EPBC (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999*) heritage regime. The assessment was triggered by the Minister, and not by a public nomination.

On the 1st July Peter Garrett, the Federal Environment Minister announced a rescue plan for Christmas Island's ecosystem, which included a mission to capture the remaining **Christmas Island pipistrelle bats**² for captive breeding, in addition to the establishment of captive breeding programs for two reptile species. This announcement followed the release of the Christmas Island expert working group's interim report on the island, which found that *'the island's conservation problems are pervasive, chronic and increasing'*. Christmas Island's unique ecosystems are some of the most scientifically documented high oceanic islands in the world, recognised through its inclusion within Conservation International's Sundaland biodiversity *hotspot*³. Unfortunately, on September 7th, Minister Garrett announced that, *"A four-week rescue mission by eight Australian and New Zealand bat scientists has failed to capture any Christmas Island pipistrelle bats"*. This was a dark day for biodiversity conservation in Australia.

Given the extraordinary value of the island's ecosystem, the findings of the above interim report, which notes that *'the extremely high biodiversity values of Christmas Island are in a perilous state'*⁴, are of great concern. HSI supports the preliminary recommendations of the expert working group report that better environmental governance of the island is required and that management action needs to be taken to prevent further biodiversity loss. In view of Christmas Island's unique ecosystem and the serious issues facing it, HSI has recently submitted its comments to government regarding the proposed phosphate mining expansion on Christmas Island. *In this submission, we call for the government to reject the proposal in light of the island's high heritage and biodiversity values.*

¹ *Conserving Australian Landscapes Beyond the National Reserve System — Developing Terrestrial Natural Heritage Priorities and Using the EPBC Effectively* (Lambert J, and Kennedy, M): Humane Society International *Special Bulletin*, January 2009. http://www.hsi.org.au/editor/assets/admin/HSISpecialTB_Jan09.pdf

² The Christmas Island pipistrelle bat was successfully nominated by HSI for the Commonwealth's *Endangered Species Protection Act, 1992*, in 1999.

³ <http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/hotspots/sundaland/Pages/default.aspx>

⁴ Revised Interim Report, Christmas Island Expert Working Group to Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, 28 June 2009 <http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/publications/christmas/pubs/revised-interim.pdf>



■ Private Land Conservation Grants announced

HSI's **Wildlife Land Trust**, in conjunction with the *Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife*, the *Paddy Pallin Foundation*, the *NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change*, the *Nature Conservation Trust of NSW* and the *Diversicon Environmental Foundation*, recently announced the recipients of this year's "Private Land Conservation Grants".

Open to properties within NSW that are covered by a perpetually binding conservation covenant, and administered by the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, this program provides funding from \$500 up to \$3,000 to enhance the conservation efforts of privately owned properties across the state.

With a total of \$50,000 available, this year saw 21 voluntary conservation agreement holders receive Private Land Conservation Grants for outstanding efforts on their properties to restore native vegetation, manage weeds, and enhance the habitats of endangered species. \$30,000 was allocated in the previous year to 17 projects. The next funding round will open in May 2010.

HSI congratulates WLT member Garth Dixon on receiving a grant to control serrated tussock grass in threatened **powerful owl** and **red-tailed black cockatoo** habitat, on "**Ooyella**" sanctuary.



Following are the other recipients of the grants for 2009.

- Ken Rubeli of "**Mundhuk Wildlife Refuge**" in Dungog
To remove native grape vine to allow regeneration of **rainforest**.
- Christian Alexander and Dorothea Holtmann of "**Omaru**" in Niangala
To remove riverbank weed for the endangered **Booroolong frog** and installation of nest boxes for threatened **yellow-bellied gliders** and **masked** and **powerful owls**.
- John and Lois Prior of "**Cedar Ridge**" in Condong
To control weeds in high conservation value **rainforest**.
- Derek Skingle of "**Sandy Pinch**" in Goolmangar
To control lantana for the threatened "**Thorny Pea**" *Desmodium acanthocladum*.
- Esme Wood of **Galston**
To install a silt fence and control weeds along a rocky creek bed to prevent spread to endangered **Turpentine-Iron Bark forest**.
- **Croome Reserve**, Shellharbour City Council
To remove weeds to protect the endangered **Illawarra Greenhood Orchid** *Pterostylis gibbosa* and *Chorizema parvifolia*.
- James and Patria Cameron of "**Yallaroo**" in Tooraweenah
To thin regenerating Callitris pine to protect *Phebalium nottii*.
- Rod and Alexandra Tuson of "**Kennedy Park**" in Mount David
To control weeds for the threatened **purple copper butterfly** *Paralucia spinifera*.
- National Parks Association of NSW for "**Wheeler Creek**" in Beacons Hill
To control weeds along a cliff line for the threatened **powerful owls**, **heath monitors** and **red crowned toadlets**.
- Vicki Powys of "**Rocklands**" in the Capertee Valley
To control weeds to protect **Box Gum Woodland** and associated fauna.

- Vivian Heriot of "**Warrawee**" in Wyndham
To install nest boxes for the threatened **barking owl**, **yellow-bellied glider** and **large-footed mouse-eared bat**.
- Arnold and Mary Vayo of "**Vineyard Haven**" in New Italy
To produce tree identification signs educating visitors about the enhanced growth of flora and the protection of fauna.
- Ken Rippin and Maria Barbieri of **Rowlands Creek**, Uki
To control weeds in high conservation value **rainforest**.
- Lawrence Ernst of "**Calmhaven**" in Woodburn
To restore habitat for the threatened **glossy black cockatoo**, **bush hen** and **barking owl**.
- Garth Dixon of "**Ooyella**" in Ainslie
To control serrated tussock grass in threatened **powerful owl** and **red-tailed black-cockatoo** habitat.
- Ray and Susan Pitstock of **Mangrove Mountain**
To control whisky grass and lantana for the threatened **spreading guinea flower** *Hibbertia procumbens* and *Tetratheca glandulosa*.
- "**Ben Ricketts Environmental Preserve**" in Jamberoo
To control weeds in high conservation **Tree Fern Swamp** and produce plant identifier markers and pamphlets for an educational walk.
- Wayne Stokes and Marcia Macartney of "**Marway Conservation Area**" in Tumbarumba
To control weeds and manage pests for the threatened **powerful owl** and **gang gang cockatoo**.
- John Eggert of **Beechwood**
To control weeds in high conservation value forest for the threatened **turquoise parrot**, **barking owl**, **powerful owl**, **masked owl**, **sooty owl**, **spotted-tailed quoll**, **eastern false pipistrelle**, **common bentwing bat**, **brush-tailed phascogale**, **koala**, **grey-headed flying fox**, **yellow-bellied sheath-tail bat** and the **greater broad-nosed bat**.
- Victoria Black of "**Bundari, Mt Evernden**" in Rockley Mountain
To spray serrated tussock grass in habitat containing threatened **Silver-leafed Mountain Gums** and koalas.
- Donald Edwards of "**Treehaven**" in Uki
To control weeds in lowland subtropical **rainforest** and adjacent **koala** habitat.

■ Helping to protect Asia's tortoises and freshwater turtles

The **Asian Turtle Program (ATP)** in cooperation with our local partner, **Education for Nature — Vietnam (ENV)** has produced a short film on Asia's tortoises and freshwater turtles. The 15 minute Vietnamese language film aims to raise awareness amongst front line forest rangers and law enforcement officers about the crisis facing Asia's turtles as a result of hunting and trade to meet the demand mainly from China for specialty foods and traditional medicines made from turtles.

The new film introduces the audience to the basic ecology of turtles, highlighting how wild turtle populations are particularly vulnerable to decline when adult turtles are removed from the population due to the reproductive strategy of turtles as long-lived species. The film then focuses on the illegal trade of turtles, noting how improved access to markets, communications, and more relaxed trade across borders has resulted in the widespread and systematic decline of turtles across much of Asia.

Hosted by Vietnamese turtle expert, Bui Dang Phong of the Cuc Phuong Turtle Conservation Center, Phong explains to the audience how their efforts to protect turtles are important, and provides specific recommendations for dealing with major turtle confiscations from trade.

The "Asian Turtle Crisis" film is part of a package that will soon be distributed to wildlife protection authorities throughout the country. The package will also include an electronic field guide to tortoises and freshwater turtles of Vietnam, to help law enforcement officers with identification of turtles that are seized. The package sent to provincial law enforcement units will also include a range of awareness materials such as a poster, activity and story books for younger children, and the Lucky Turtle board game.

Since 1998, the ATP has carried out Asian Turtle Crisis workshops for law enforcement officers from 31 of Vietnam's 62 provinces, as well as at eight major National Parks and Nature Reserves. Law enforcement training workshops include modules on turtle ecology, the trade, how to deal with confiscations, and turtle identification. However, these workshops have only reached an estimated 600 forest rangers and other law enforcement officers to date.

This new film and electronic identification manual were developed in order to significantly increase the number of law enforcement officers that the ATP could reach by producing an electronic "workshop" that could be transferred from computer to computer, down to the local district and protected area level.

"Although the materials may not have the same impact as meeting rangers face-to-face, we believe that it is a cost effective way to reach many more people much more quickly," says Douglas Hendrie of the Asian Turtle Program.

"The film lays out the problem and shows front line rangers what they can and should do, while the ID manual will help them identify what they have, and enabling them to better enforce the law where listed protected species are concerned."

Hendrie notes that making resources available to the people that are on the front lines of protection is an essential step in the process of improving protection for turtles, and where ten years ago law enforcement officers in the provinces did not have access to computers, making information available electronically is both possible and efficient.

The Asian Turtle Program has been working to protect Vietnam's turtles since 1998. Major programs include development of the region's first Turtle Conservation and Rescue Center at Cuc Phuong National Park, training of students and young professionals on turtle research and conservation, and field programs aimed at in situ protection for some of Vietnam's most critically endangered species. ATP partner organisation, ENV, works to raise awareness at the local and national level about turtles and their protection needs, and cooperates directly with law enforcement agencies on wildlife crime cases involving turtles.

"The ATP wishes to thank the **Humane Society International** for their ongoing support for our efforts to protect Vietnam's tortoises and freshwater turtles. Without the support of HSI and its constituents, much of our success to date would not have been possible."



Rafetus swinhoei. Photo by Doug Hendrie.

■ Consumer survey on food labelling

There is a bewildering array of vague and undefined labelling terms currently used on animal products, such as caged, grain fed, free-range, open range, and bred free-range. The complete absence of standardised definitions for these labelling terms leaves them open to interpretation and misuse by producers, and results in confusion in the marketplace.

Without adequate truth in labelling laws and regulations, consumers are not in a position to make informed purchasing decisions.

To demonstrate the need for consistent national standards and definitions on animal products, HSI has developed an online consumer survey that will gauge the understanding of the Australian public to the suite of labelling terms currently in use.

The survey is available at <http://bit.ly/BwboA> or follow the links from our website.

Later this year, the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council will be meeting to undertake the most comprehensive review of food labelling law and policy in recent times. HSI hopes to feed the results of the consumer survey into the Ministerial Council deliberations to bring about tighter controls on animal-welfare labelling, and ultimately have them direct Food Standards Australia New Zealand to develop a nationally consistent labelling scheme that only permits the use of a limited number of legally defined terms on animal products.

Please circulate the survey through your networks.



Marine conservation updates:

Marine debris plan



They say good things come to those who wait. Nine years after HSI nominated **marine debris** as a *Key Threatening Process* and six years after it was listed on the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999* (EPBC), The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) has finally published a *Threat Abatement Plan for Marine Debris* — only 3 years after the statutory deadline for such a TAP. Of course, HSI and all the threatened wildlife that suffers from marine debris ingestion and entanglement should not have had to wait

that long but now that it is finally in place, HSI asks that the mitigation strategies committed to in the TAP be well funded and that state and territory governments give it their full cooperation so that action can get swiftly under way. HSI certainly welcomed Minister Peter Garrett’s speech at the World Oceans Conference where he reached out to neighbouring countries to collaborate in tackling this cross border threat to the marine environment.

EPBC shark listings a step closer

National protection for the threatened **dusky shark** (*Carcharhinus obscurus*) and **shortfin mako** (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) is a step closer with the government including these species on their Finalised Priority Assessment List for 2009. Nominated for protection under the EPBC Act by HSI and the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, these species are in decline on both a national and global scale. As migratory species crossing the high seas and national jurisdictions, they are extremely vulnerable to continuing global threats.

Among the slowest-growing and latest-maturing of known sharks, in Australian waters, **dusky sharks** are most at risk from over fishing, bycatch and shark meshing programs. Despite plummeting breeding stock levels, there are still currently seven recognised commercial shark fisheries targeting this species in Australia.

Also globally threatened, populations of **shortfin mako sharks** have been decimated from both directed fishing for their high value meat and fins, and by-catch in longline fisheries directed at pelagic species such as tuna and swordfish. Declines of as much as 96% have been witnessed in the western and central Mediterranean, while populations have dropped by 50 – 70% in the north and south Atlantic.

The government is due to complete their assessment of the shark nominations in September 2011.

Albatross conservation left in the lurch

The Rudd Government is in danger of losing Australia’s excellent reputation as a leader in albatross conservation. Work to reduce the impact of international fisheries on albatross species (the most endangered group of birds in the world) appears to have been sacrificed as a result of budget cuts suffered by the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry. The Department of Environment Water, Heritage and the Arts is similarly constrained in this area with great uncertainty over long term funding for the National Albatross and Petrel Recovery Plan. At a stakeholder meeting with DAFF in the lead up to the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) HSI was told the Australian government no longer had the resources to champion initiatives to reduce the capture of albatross, sharks and turtles by the Commission’s longline fleets.

The CCSBT fleets are responsible for killing approximately 10,000 albatross and petrels a year and the Australian Government has until now been a leader in trying to negotiate including bycatch mitigation measures with the other CCSBT government in the face of resistance from Japan.

HSI and the SBT Industry Association ended up funding seabird scientist Nigel Brothers to advise the Australian delegation at the CCSBT Ecologically Related Species Workshop in Korea in September (and the CCSBT Commission meeting in October). Reports back from the meeting suggest that the CCSBT is finally prepared to move forward on bycatch mitigation, so now is the time for Australia to step up its efforts and make some gains. HSI considers it vital that Australia resumes and strengthens its important work on bycatch mitigation at all the Regional Fishery Management Organisations it is involved with.

Picture: At Parliament House lobbying for albatross conservation and protection of SBT stocks are Brian Jeffries Australian SBT Industry Association, Nicola Beynon HSI, Glenn Sant TRAFFIC, Gilly Llewellyn WWF and Andrew Wilkinson Australian SBT Industry Association.



Compromises over whaling still loom large

HSI’s Senior Programs Manager, Nicola Beynon attended the Portugal meeting of the **International Whaling Commission (IWC)** in June in Madeira, as a NGO adviser on the Australian government delegation, and reports below on the current state of affairs.

A conservation program continues to inch forward at the International Whaling Commission (IWC), thanks to strenuous efforts by the Australian Government and despite resistance from the hard line pro-whaling countries. Australia donated an unprecedented AUD \$1.5 million to the Commission at this year’s annual meeting in Portugal for the Commission’s conservation initiatives. A welcome indication of the growing acceptance of the legitimacy of the conservation agenda came from the Government of Korea who called on pro-whaling countries to join the work of the Conservation Committee.

However, the Commission remains dangerously preoccupied overall with negotiating a compromise with Japan and Norway that would sacrifice the moratorium on commercial whaling, even though those countries are not giving any encouragement that they are prepared to make meaningful concessions themselves. It was agreed in Portugal that negotiations over the ‘Future of the IWC’ would continue intersessionally between now and the next annual meeting in Morocco in 2010. NGOs are extremely concerned

by the waste of money and time being spent on reaching a compromise that would be a disastrous outcome for the whales. We are also concerned the Commission allowed themselves the opportunity to take those negotiations behind closed doors away from the scrutiny of civil society.

In a worrying sign of compromises to come, the Commission is considering giving in to Greenland's requests to add humpback whales to its quotas for indigenous whaling despite a lack of evidence that the additional whales are needed to meet genuine subsistence needs. A decision on the request has been postponed to an intersessional meeting in December.

National network of whale and dolphin sanctuaries

HSI is calling for cooperation from states and territories with implementation of the Rudd Government's exciting election commitment to establish a national network of whale and dolphin sanctuaries. HSI expects work to be done to systematically identify the important habitats and migratory corridors for all whale and dolphin species and then for negotiations to begin with the states and territories to ensure they are strongly protected. It will also be necessary to devote considerable resources to the identification of important habitats and migratory corridors for less well known species to ensure their needs are also covered in the network. In the case of critical habitats we would be expecting sanctuaries to give IUCN category I or II level of protection.

■ HSI CEO meets with HH The Dalai Lama

Dr Andrew Rowan, CEO of Humane Society International, and several colleagues met with His Holiness, The Dalai Lama, for an hour in his office in Dharamsala earlier this year. His Holiness is a revered figure across the world and a champion of compassion. He agreed in the meeting to help spread the message that compassion for animals is important.



Hammerhead shark © iStockphoto.com / qldian.

■ Sharks proposals being considered for CITES

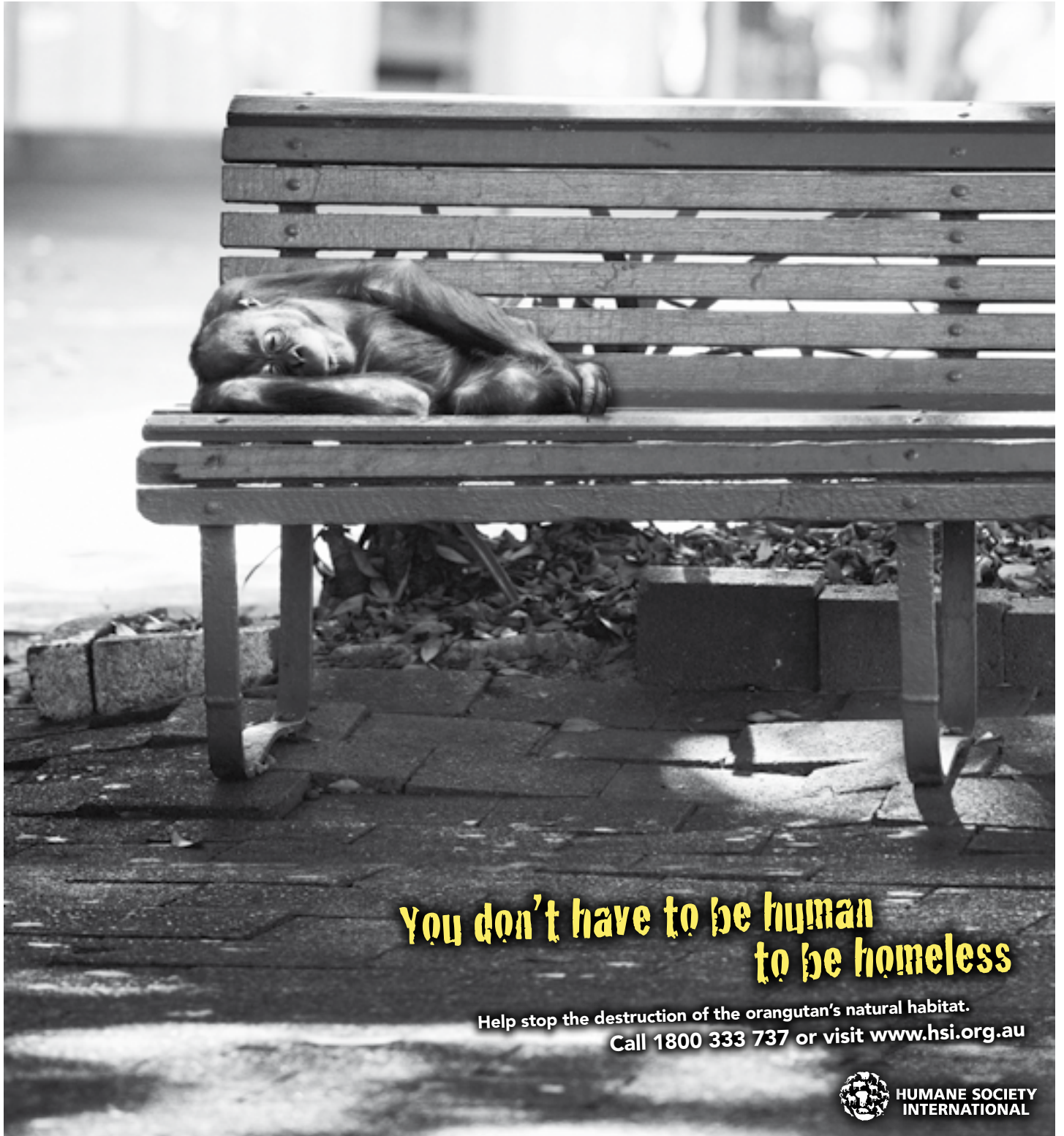
HSI has been working for some time in an effort to get a number of shark species proposed for listing at the forthcoming CITES Conference of Parties in March 2010, in Doha, Qatar (CoP15). Sharks as a group are inherently vulnerable to overfishing and associated trade as most grow slowly, mature late and produce few young. As a result, at the end of 2008 HSI wrote to the Australian government suggesting an extensive list of shark species for consideration for listing under the CITES appendices.

Recently many other countries have shown interest in proposing shark species, with the US currently consulting range states on a number of shark species, including **hammerhead sharks** and the **oceanic whitetip shark**. Disappointingly, it does not look as if Australia will be submitting any shark proposals, but we hope that they will step forward and co-sponsor the US shark proposals. In the past Australia has been a strong supporter of international shark conservation and HSI believes that by co-sponsoring shark proposals at CoP15, Australia will send a strong signal to the international community of its intentions on shark conservation.





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