

## A conservation success

In May this year Fauna & Flora International's Indigenous Propagation Project celebrated its first bulb harvest. High in the Toros Mountains in Turkey, villagers harvested the bulbs of snowdrops *Galanthus elwesii* and aconites *Eranthis hyemalis* that they had grown with guidance from project staff.

The project was launched 5 years ago to find solutions to the conservation problems caused by the collection of wild bulbs in Turkey. Hillsides were being stripped and bulb populations were becoming depleted, even locally extinct, to satisfy the horticultural markets of Europe and North America. The villagers themselves were not receiving much benefit from the trade, with most of the profits being made by exporters in Turkey and the Netherlands. They were having to climb further and further up steep mountain slopes in search of unexploited sources of bulbs. The propagation project is providing local people with a greater, more reliable and sustainable income as well as taking the pressure off wild populations and their habitats.

The project has also been working in other ways – with governments, other non-governmental organizations and traders – to reduce the exports of wild-collected bulbs. As a result, between 1989 and 1996, exports of wild-collected bulbs from Turkey fell by over 60 per cent – a difference of 45 million bulbs – but, as so often happens in the wildlife trade, as one wild source becomes unavailable or difficult to exploit, another is found. Last year at least 6 million wild-collected snowdrops were exported from Georgia (in the former USSR) via the Netherlands. This is why, as well as initiating grass-roots projects in the countries of origin, we are also putting energy into other ways of promoting sustainable trade. Persuading consumers to buy bulbs from sustainable sources is one way and we have just produced *The Good Bulb Guide* (the 3rd edition in the UK, and the first in the USA in partnership with the American Horticultural Society). More details of the project are contained in the October issue of *Fauna & Flora News*.

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## In this issue

Harvesting artificially propagated bulbs is a form of sustainable use that no one would object to but there is still much heated debate going on about the sustainable (or unsustainable) use of wildlife in general, as some of the contributions in the News and Views section reveal.

Positive news is always a pleasure to publish and this issue contains a report of a new development for the critically endangered pygmy hog in India. Another piece of good news concerns the endangered Tibet red deer. This subspecies was feared by some to be extinct, but a survey in October 1995 found survivors in south-east Tibet. Most are in scattered remnant herds but one viable population was discovered in high rolling hills where there are good prospects for its conservation. Moves have already been made to establish a reserve for the deer in co-operation with local people.

Work in Madagascar has revealed that previously unstudied ring-tailed lemurs living high in the Andringitra Massif appear to be a well-differentiated and isolated population. Whether the differences between these animals and ring-tailed lemurs elsewhere represent a geographic variant or a new taxon remain to be determined.

A subspecies of Arctic fox that lives only on Mednyi Island in the Commander Islands is the subject of another paper. Numbers have fallen to dangerously low numbers, apparently because of disease, and a unique intervention is taking place there to try to save the population.

*Oryx* itself could not survive without the enormous help it receives from its Editorial Board and other referees. We are grateful for all that they do. In a move that is long overdue, we are listing in this issue those people who have been kind enough to review papers submitted to *Oryx* between 1 January 1995 and 31 July 1996. In future years this will be a regular feature in the October issue.

Jacqui Morris,  
Editor

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