



representative populations of most, or perhaps all, the animals that were to be expected. However, slim hopes that the Sumatran rhinoceros would be found in the area were not realized.

The forest is important for more than just the animals: when conserved as a wildlife sanctuary, it will continue to give vital cover to the catchment areas of eight rivers. Without its protective 'sponge' effect, serious fluctuations in the water levels would occur, causing dangerous flooding at times. In addition, dramatic erosion of the thin soil on the hillsides could be expected together with subsequent harmful siltation of the rivers.

A government-appointed Commission of Enquiry is recommending that Lanjak-Entimau be gazetted as the state's second wildlife sanctuary, thereby increasing the land within parks and sanctuaries to about 2 per cent of Sarawak's total land area. The survey has confirmed the wisdom of that decision and will eventually pro-

vide the Forest Department with a blueprint for the management of what will be the biggest single park or sanctuary in the state. A draft management plan has already been produced as a result of the survey and the final version should be ready this year.

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Plants and Man

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Many governments of developing countries consider that croplands and pastures are more valuable than forest, so they harvest the most valuable timber, turn the smaller trees into charcoal, and burn the rest. Often the whole forest is razed to the ground and burned. Not only does the timber thus become a non-renewable resource, but many other valuable species are lost, for only a handful of scientists know what these valuable non-timber species are, and only rarely has the information been made available to governments.

Ethnobotanical literature provides extensive documentation of the utility of plants for man, much of it based on knowledge accumulated by primitive cultures over the centuries. Most of these plants are being used only very

locally today, although they have the potential to become major national or international resources. For example, the bacaba palm *Oenocarpus bacaba* in Colombian Amazonia produces an oil that is chemically indistinguishable from olive oil; each mature tree produces up to 60lb of edible fruit and the trees grow well in semi-forested plantations. As the price of olive oil has increased 800 per cent since 1972, this palm has great potential as a crop species. In fact it should often be possible to demonstrate that a given hectare of forest is more valuable maintained intact as a source of forest products than converted to farmland.

The SSC has set up an Ethnobotany Specialist Group to explore ways in which ethnobotany can benefit con-

ervation. The chairman is Dr Richard Evans Schultes, Director of the Harvard Botanical Museum. Ethnobotany is concerned with man's interactions with and utilization of the plant kingdom, drawing on botany, anthropology, biochemistry, medicine and agricultural sciences. One reason for establishing the group is to provide economic reasons for saving the world's rapidly disappearing tropical forests, source of many of the world's useful plant products.

One of the new Group's tasks is to organize the vast ethnobotanical literature in a meaningful and useful way. The first project is to do this for the South American tropical forest literature and produce a catalogue of plants with economic potential, which can then be used to generate lists for particular countries or regions. This will be done by the junior author in conjunction with Dr Schultes and funded by WWF-US. The catalogue will also be fed into the computer at SCMU, in Cambridge, England, where it will serve as a red data book for

economically valuable tropical forest plants. Used in conjunction with data on the habitats of endangered animal species, it will thus provide powerful arguments to show the long-term value of tropical forest and other natural ecosystems, and the need to institute more effective programmes for their conservation.

Such activities fall in with the objectives of the World Conservation Strategy, especially large-scale preservation of genetic diversity and sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems. The Group is also developing links with Cultural Survival, an organization concerned with endangered groups of man. This will lay the foundation of a strategy for salvaging ethnobotanical data from disappearing primitive cultures.

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Relict Population of Marsh Deer Found

A relict population of marsh deer *Blastocerus dichotomus* has been discovered near the city of Porto Alegre in Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil. Its major population in Mato Grosso state, Brazil, is rapidly declining, as George Schaller described in *Oryx*, November 1978, pages 345-351. It is extinct in Uruguay and, until this recent discovery, was considered so in Rio Grande do Sul. The newly found population consists of between four and eight individuals which have somehow managed to survive in a marshy area surrounded by rice and corn fields. They appear undisturbed by human presence and have been seen grazing in plantations and on hillsides far from the marsh. This, the largest of the South American cervids, was once common in the central part of the continent but poaching, habitat loss and competition with domestic cattle have decreased its numbers so much that it is listed as vulnerable in the IUCN Red Data Book.

Peregrine Success in USA

Four pairs of peregrine falcons reared by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and released in the eastern US are now breeding in the wild. In 1981, ten young hatched in four eyries, three on the New Jersey coast and one in New Hampshire, of which seven fledged; three were killed by a raccoon. Three other released pairs were also seen and were expected to breed in 1982, and at least 12 other single birds. In a similar programme in the west, captive-bred birds were released in the Rockies and almost 90 per cent survived and dispersed. But young birds put in the eyries of wild falcons were preyed on by golden eagles and great horned owls, and six out of 21 were lost.