

## NOTES, NEWS & COMMENTS

### 'Save Our Biosphere' Campaign for Wildlife Conservation

Through the 'Save Our Biosphere' stickers campaign projected by depicting a Pudding-pipe Tree (*Cassia fistula*\*), a Blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*†), and a Kashmir Deer or Hangul (*Cervus elaphus hanglu*\*\*), the Indian Society of Naturalists (INSONA) has endeavoured—also through its quarterly Journal *Environmental Awareness* and such allies as *Environmental Conservation*—to help sound the alarm on behalf of wildlife and its habitat at the global level. Yet wildlife has continued to be slaughtered for economic gain all over the world, and so INSONA has launched another campaign by bringing out greetings post-cards requesting people not to encourage trading in its skins and other products (Fig. 1). The present set—for which the Friends of the Earth must be thanked for permitting further use of their designs—concentrates on the Tiger, marine turtles (Fig. 2), crocodiles (Fig. 3), and the Zebras—to be followed we hope by cards on other endangered wildlife in the years to come. We wish to convey to the world due realization that, whereas the trees and wildlife can live without MAN, he cannot well continue without them!

#### Big Cats and CITES

We have *endangered* the Tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) on the Indian sub-continent through excessive hunting and destruction of its dry and thorny or alternatively moist deciduous semi-evergreen or evergreen forest cover and favoured grasslands. The situation is rendered the more delicate and dangerous by the fact that the surviving individuals are commonly too scattered to maintain viable breeding populations for the future. Yet formerly the Tiger's range extended right across Asia and involved no fewer than eight subspecies, while even as recently as a few decades ago the Tiger's survival status was not in doubt as many thousands still existed.

The WWF (World Wildlife Fund International) and several scientific conservation organizations have impressed on women how embarrassed they should feel to appear in public wearing the skins of Tigers, Leopards (*Panthera pardus*), Cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*), Jaguars (*Panthera onca*), or Ocelots (*Felis pardalis*). In the early 1970s, the International Fur Trades Federation was persuaded to give up trading in skins of Tigers, Clouded Leopards (*Neofelis nebulosa*), and Snow Leopards (*Panthera uncia*). Meanwhile, in the year 1970, a ban had been placed on the killing of Tigers and trading in their skins both inside and outside of our country. Commencing with this, 70 nations adopted CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), and consequently there are now strong controls in the trading of all striped and spotted cats' skins, in a wide range of other animal and plant species, and also in their products.

#### Turtles and Crocodiles

Marine turtles face commercial slaughter for their meat, shells, or oil, and their eggs are plundered when they arrive ashore for breeding. We also take the life of both the Marsh Crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*) and the Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), to turn them into handbags.

Numerous sea-turtles have been swimming in the Indian and Pacific Oceans for more than a hundred million years,

\* Fig. 1 on page 255 of our Autumn issue of 1982.—Ed.

† Fig. 1 on page 117 of our Summer issue of 1982.—Ed.

\*\* Fig. 1 on page 296 of our Winter issue of 1984, though an improved edition with more realistic coloration and a less-bare foreground is now available.—Ed.

## Season's Greetings



# SAVE OUR BIOSPHERE

#### Turtle

The trade in marine turtle products has helped cause a dramatic decline in their numbers. All of the known species of marine turtles are now recognised as endangered. By supporting the Friends of the Earth Endangered Species Campaign you can help to save the marine turtles by stopping the trade now.

FIG. 1. Left-hand half of the reverse side of one of the INSONA cards, the right-hand being reserved for address etc.

and are also found in the Atlantic. Among them the Olive Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) have adorned our beaches while nesting. But we have made inroads on their marine habitats and molested them even on remote beaches, so that their future survival is jeopardized.

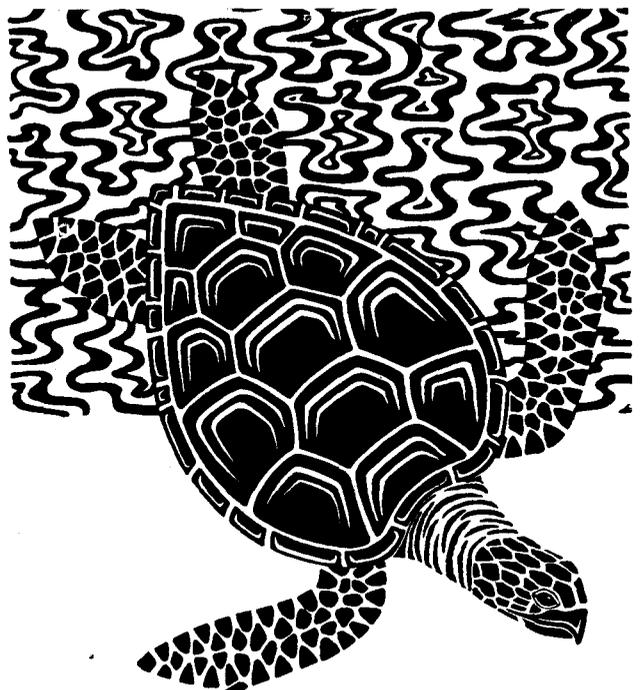


FIG. 2. Marine turtle—see also Fig. 1.

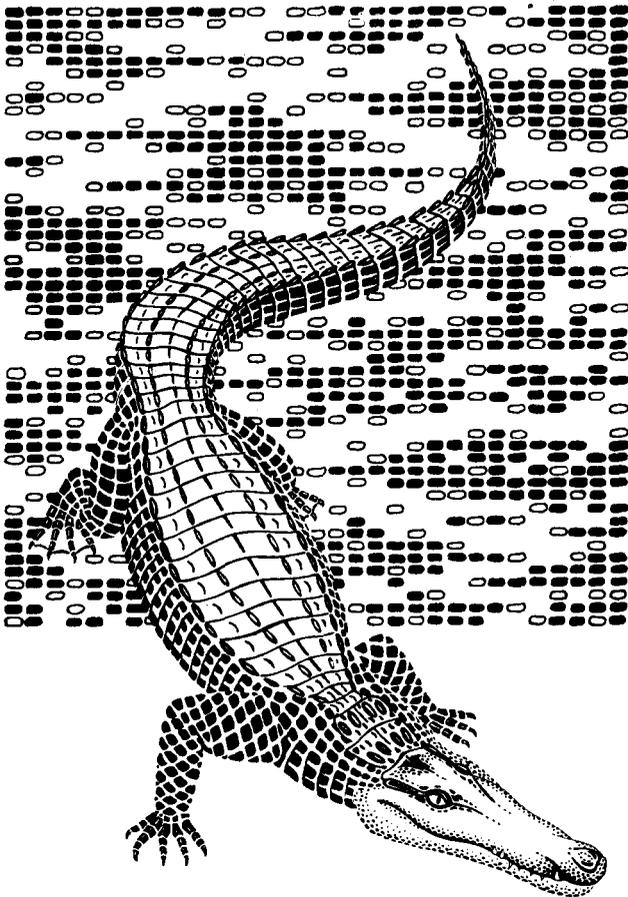


FIG. 3. INSONA card of an endangered crocodylian. The reverse side indicates that 21 of 23 known species of crocodylians are now recognized as endangered. 'The trade in crocodylian products [having] helped cause a dramatic decline in their numbers.'

In the Caribbean, marine turtles are harpooned, and such pressures have caused their populations to collapse. In Surinam and elsewhere, the eggs of turtles are collected in the proximity of the ocean, and find such flourishing markets in tropical countries for their supposed aphrodisiac values that they fetch more money than hens' eggs.

The Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) is now one of the most endangered species of sea turtle because of the commercial demand for its 'tortoiseshell' and also for its stuffed entire juveniles which enter the US and Japanese markets illegally. In the absence of the Hawksbill, young Green Turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) become the targets of souvenir manufacturers, who capture them before they reproduce their species, killing them to cater to the needs of uninformed tourists.

#### Zebra and INSONA

The trade in Zebra (*Equus zebra*) skins has helped to cause a dramatic decline in their numbers. Grevy's Zebra (*Dolichohippus grevii*) is vulnerable, mostly because of illegal hunting, though it seems that stopping the trade in skins of these species can be the only hope for their survival.

It is much to be hoped that these modest attempts initiated through INSONA will not only meet with success at the local and national levels but also be most welcome in all the countries involved, as wildlife knows no geographical frontiers. Our activities to save threatened wildlife should also render service to the great general cause of saving The Biosphere for Man's and Nature's well-being.

The stickers and cards are available, against a donation, to serve the cause of our Asian efforts for the *World Campaign for The Biosphere*. Please extend your generous support through communicating with the undersigned General Secretary of INSONA who is also the Founding Editor of *Environmental Awareness*.

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### Sukhomajri—An Example of Effective Conservation

'All our fertile farmlands were once here,' said Shri (Mr) Daulat Ram, a senior member of the village, pointing to one of the deep gullies running helter-skelter in that region (Fig. 1). Lying at the foothills of the Shivalik range of the Himalayas in Ambala district of Haryana (India), the little village of Sukhomajri has lost several hectares of its productive land over the years through the ravages of flash-floods. But now the village is self-sufficient and stands as a testimony of united efforts towards conservation. The Hindi word 'Sukhomajri' can mean either of two things: 'prosperous little village' or, with a slight change of inflection, 'dry little village'. The village of Sukhomajri has already lived as a dry little village, but now for the last decade has been a prosperous little village.

The original problem was the rapid sedimentation of Lake Sukhna in the administrative area of the model city of Chandigarh, capital at once of both Punjab State and Haryana Region. The Lake would have vanished in a few years had not the city fathers embarked on a costly dredging programme to save it. Shri P.R. Mishra, director of the Chandigarh Centre of the Central Soil and Water Research and Training Institute, recognized the ultimate cause of the problem and launched an ambitious project of watershed conservation in the catchment area of Lake Sukhna. Pursuing this programme, he systematically worked his way back from Chandigarh to the head of the watershed, some 15

kilometres away, and there he found Sukhomajri, where he noticed a particularly vicious little watershed that was flooding and destroying agricultural lands.

Mr Mishra was convinced that this was the right place to begin work. The village, he recalls, had been a model of disaster. In 1975, with support from the Ford Foundation, Sukhomajri had been singled out for special conservation efforts towards controlling the silting of the lake in Chandigarh. It was difficult to convince the villagers, but Daulat Ram somehow saw a ray of hope in Mr Mishra's contentions and between them they convinced the people about the conservation programme. Deciding to do something, he created a check-dam to stop downstream destruction. When the dam was in place, a sizeable body of water accumulated behind it. That this water could be used for irrigation was enough to gain the cooperation of the local villagers.

Sukhomajri village, spanning 100 hectares and housing about 70 families, had not a single tree worth the name nine years ago. It did not even have a well for meeting its drinking-water requirements. The nearly 450 villagers, mostly belonging to the Gujjar tribe, spent their energies in searching for better pastures for their cattle. Nearby hills were scoured by villagers in need of grass and firewood. All these activities resulted in the loss of some 900 tonnes of soil per hectare per year, which was the source of enough