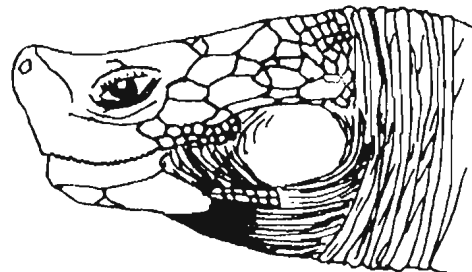


IUCN/SSC FRESHWATER CHELONIAN GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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Number 2
 July 1981

NEW DELHI MEETINGS

The IUCN Species Survival Commission met at New Delhi (February 19-25) immediately preceding the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (February 25 to March 8). Seven FCSG Members attended - S. Biswas (India) P. Kannan (India), R. Mittermeier (U.S.), Mohamed Ali Rheza Khan (Bangladesh), E. Moll (U.S.), P. Pritchard (US) and R. Whitaker (India). IUCN/SSC - The FCSG met on the evening of 19 February to discuss problems and action on the conservation of turtles in the Indian region. In brief, turtles are being heavily exploited as food in some parts of India (e.g. West Bengal). Even in areas where turtles are seldom eaten, they are still collected and shipped to the markets in West Bengal or in the case of Bangladesh to Japan or Hong Kong. The biggest obstacle to conservation action is the sparsity of current knowledge on distribution and abundance of the various species. Little field study has been done on Indian turtles in last fifty years. Promoting and conducting status surveys of the Indian turtles was recommended as a highest priority objective for the FCSG action plan. In this regard, some action has already been taken. Mr. S. Biswas reported that the Zoological Survey of India is awaiting approval from the government to begin a turtle survey project. Mr. P. Kannan has begun research into the distribution and relationships of turtles on the Ganges River. Mr. R. Whitaker has begun collecting data on the status of turtles in southern India. Rheza Khan has begun similar research in Bangladesh.

An additional action at the meeting was to appoint Rom Whitaker as regional coordinator for the Oriental Region.

CITES-- Some 400 delegates, including 53 of 67 party nations, 16 non party nations, and 70 non governmental organizations participated at the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

CITES is a treaty designed to prevent trade in endangered species and to monitor trade in other species which are considered vulnerable to exploitation. Parties to this treaty meet biannually to discuss and modify the treaty. One important function of these meetings is to update the appendices of the treaty which list those species recognized as endangered (App. I), threatened (App. II) or of a special concern to a party nation (App. III.) These appendices now include 477 mammals, 911 birds, 342 reptiles, 16 amphibians, 24 fish, 45 molluscs, 38 insects and several hundred plant species.

Of particular interest to the FCSG, Dermatemys mawii a large riverine turtle from Mexico and Central America was added to Appendix II. Declining numbers of Dermatemys in markets where it was abundant 10 to 20 years ago suggest that this species has been a victim of over exploitation. Concern for the species has been expressed in print by Alvarez del Toro, Iverson and Mittermeier (1979 Oryx, 15(2): 171-172). Although proposed for Appendix I by the USA, the FCSG supported an Appendix II listing for the following reasons:

1. The trade in the species has been largely local and not subject to provisions of CITES.
2. A number of questionable species have been listed as Appendix I in the past. To maintain the credibility of listings on this Appendix, it was felt that the status of nominated populations should be studied prior to listing. (a status survey of Dermatemys has been given highest priority on the 82/84 Action Plan).

Peter Pritchard speaking for an Appendix I listing pointed out that even though there was little international trade in Dermatemys, the name was being falsely used on shipments of sea turtle meat from Mexico. Dr. Pritchard pointed out that an Appendix I listing would prevent this.

In related actions of CITES the previously unlisted Geometric Tortoise, Pseudemys geometricus was listed on Appendix I. Listings of both the Australian Flatback Chelonia depressus and Australian populations of C. mydas were upgraded from Appendix II to Appendix I.

Ranching of endangered species was an important issue at these meetings. Sea turtles and crocodiles figured prominently into these discussions. A prorranching argument is that most developing nations are not going to expend money and effort to save a species unless it is economically profitable to do so. It is, contended that farming operations producing skins and food from endangered species will aid in their survival by reducing pressure on wild populations. Opponents feel that such operations rather than reducing demand on wild populations increases it by creating and expanding markets for the product.

The particular point of contention at the convention was whether to allow trade in ranched species listed on Appendix I. The consensus was that ranched populations had to be delisted to Appendix II prior to trade. To qualify a nation must submit evidence that wild populations will not be further depleted and that the ranched products will be marked so that they will not be confused with wild animal products.

The committee charged with preparing an identification manual of threatened species for customs officials displayed a sample of their accomplishment-the completed portion on tortoises. A sample of the English version is appended. Relative to reptiles, other sections being prepared include identification guides to the skins of crocodiles, snakes, island iguanas and monitor lizards.

FCSG ACTION PROGRAM 1982/84

Our list of priority projects for 1982/84 was submitted to the Species Survival Commission in early May. I want to thank all of the members that responded to my 20 March memorandum and provided recommendations for additions and deletions from the old list (Newsletter #1). All suggestions were considered but as there were some conflicting opinions, I took the responsibility of making compromises.

A copy of this list has been appended to the newsletter. It will also be published along with the IUCN/SSC Action Programme. (The IUCN/SSC Grey Book). As Richard Fitter, Chairman of the SSC Steering Committee has stated, "Inclusion on the Action Programme carries no guarantee of funding, but the Programme will constitute a shopping list of desirable projects." He also pointed out that inclusion of a project in the programme should be a good recommendation for most

grant-giving bodies.

Now that the needed projects are listed, the FCSG must find personnel and funds to carry out these projects. I encourage the members to prepare abstracts (See Newsletter #1 for form) of any needed project (listed or not) and submit copies to myself and your regional coordinator:

Australian Region - Fred Parker

Nearctic Region - Jack McCoy

Neotropical Region - Russ Mittermeier

W. Palearctic + Ethiopian Region - Charles Blanc

E. Palearctic + Oriental Region - Rom Whitaker

The coordinators and I will use these abstracts to search for potential sources of funding. Periodically I will be publishing lists of potential funding agencies for conservation related topics. One of the best internationally is World Wildlife Fund. WWF has chapters world wide. Appended is a list of addresses for their offices in each region and the proper format for applications. Be sure to keep your coordinator and ~~me~~ informed of any proposals that you submit. Ideally provide a copy of the proposal and if you desire I will write a letter giving the FCSG endorsement for any project on our action plan.

PUBLICATIONS

The FCSG has begun a series of contributions for the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society publication - Oryx Papers dealing with the conservation of freshwater turtles and their relatives are eligible. The first of the series, Misc. Contribution No. 1 of the IUCN/SSC Freshwater Chelonian Specialist Group, is entitled Rare Brazilian Sideneck Turtle and was submitted by Mittermeier, Rhodin, da Rocha e Silva and Araujo de Oliveira. This contribution was published in the 1980 Oryx 15(5): 473-475.

Those wishing to submit papers in this series should send their manuscripts to me and if acceptable I will assign them a number in the series.

Other recent publications of interest include:

Burbidge, A. 1981. The ecology of the western swamp tortoise Pseudemydura umbrina (Testudines: Chelidae). Aust. Wildl. Res., 1981 (8): 203-223.

Groombridge, B. 1981. World Checklist of Endangered Amphibians and Reptiles Nature Conservancy Council. London.

(Wildlife Advisory Branch, Nature Conservancy Council, 19/20 Belgrave Square London SW1X 8PY, UK)

Lindsey, D. (Ed.) 1981. Endangered and threatened plants and animals of Virginia. Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Blacksburg, Virginia.

McDiarmid, R. (Ed.) 1978. Amphibians and Reptiles. Vol. 3 in Peter Pritchard (Ed.), Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida. University Presses of Florida. Gainesville.

REGIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Australian -

Fred Parker reports that Dr. Andrew Burbidge and an assistant are currently working on two projects concerning the endangered chelid Pseudemydura umbrina. With funding from the West Australian Government, they are monitoring wild populations and have begun a captive breeding program. If captive breeding is successful, the next step is reintroduction into the wild.

The FCSG welcomes John Cann who is a consultant for the Australian region.
 Johns address is: 26 Yarra Road
 Phillip Bay
 NSW 2036
 Australia

Nearctic -

John Iverson writes: Over the past year I have requested turtle locality data from over 200 of the world's museums. The acquisition, tabulation, and mapping of this data is the first step in the production of a field guide to the turtles of the world by Walter Auffenberg and me. I should have fairly comprehensive species locality lists compiled by the end of 1981. If a list for a particular species and/or country would facilitate your research, please do not hesitate to contact me after December.

Roger Wood recently completed several months field work in the Florida Keys working on mangrove terrapins Malaclemys terrapin rhizophorarum (listed as rare in the Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida Vol. III) Wood whose research was sponsored in part by EARTHWATCH and the Florida Audubon Society found that the terrapin does seem to be rare in US Southernmost keys but that they are not in any particular danger because most of their range lies within the boundaries of National Parks or Wildlife Refuges.

R. Bruce Bury and J.C. McCoy have applied to the U.S. Office of Endangered Species for support of a status survey of the endemic turtles at Cuatro Ciéngas in Coahuila, Mexico. They will visit Cuatro Ciéngas for a few days in August to survey the project.

Neotropical -

Newsletter # 1 reported that Dr. Garrett Clough planned to include a status survey of Pseudemys felis in his work on the Bahamian Hutia. Dr. Clough subsequently relinquished the turtle portion of the project to Dr. Perran Ross a member of the IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group. Dr. Ross visited Cat Island, Bahamas for two days (29-30 March). His observations are generally encouraging. Ross saw several turtles and a number of tracks representing at least a dozen different individuals. He also noted some human predation and habitat destruction which pose threats to the existing population. Ross plans to apply for funds to continue this project. He is preparing a report on the findings of this work to submit to the Journal Oryx as Mis. Contribution No. 2 of the IUCN/SSC Freshwater Chelonian Specialist Group.

Michael Seidel of Marshall University has submitted a proposal to WWF-US to study the status of the Puerto Rican Slider, Pseudemys stejnegeri. There is evidence that critical habitats for the species are being altered by human activities. Field work is needed to assess the effects of these alterations.

Two of our Brazilian members have recently submitted project abstracts.

1. Distribution and ecology of Hydromedusa maximiliana.
2. Status survey of Phrynops hogei.

Luiz Fernando Maceira De Padua has submitted:

1. Ecology and conservation of the giant Amazonian turtle (Podocemis expansa).
 2. Ecology and conservation of the. Muçua " Kinosternon scorpioides.
-

Western Palearctic and Ethiopian -

The FCSG welcomes Ian Swingland, chairman of the Tortoise Specialist Group as a consultant. Dr. Swingland's address is:

School of Continuing Education and Biological Laboratory
Rutherford College
University of Kent
Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NX
U.K.

Eastern Palearctic and Oriental Region -

Mr. S. Biswas and his son, B. Biswas have prepared a report on conservation problems with freshwater turtles in India. Although field data are scanty, information obtained from fishermen, riverside inhabitants and traders indicate that populations of freshwater turtles have steadily declined in the last fifty years. The catch in W. Bengal (historically one of the greatest areas of exploitation) has dwindled to the point that it is no longer profitable for fishermen to hunt turtle. Most freshwater turtles in the Calcutta Markets now come from Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The common species coming to the market are: Trionyx gangeticus, Chitra indica, Lissemys punctata, Kachuga dhongoka, K. tectum, Hardella thurji and Melanochelys trijuga. The report is presently being prepared as FCSG Misc. Contribution #3.

Dr. Rheza Khan reports two interesting finds from Bangladesh. The first is a specimen of Batagur baska that was recently donated to the Dacca Zoological Garden. The 51 cm turtle was originally collected in the Bangladesh Sunderbans approximately 325 km Southwest of Dacca. Although Batagur were abundant in the Sunderbans around the turn of the century, there have been no recent reports of the species in this area.

The second and even more unusual find is a Cuora amboinensis. While looking for Varanus, with Rom Whitaker Rheza Khan found a Cuora crossing the road south of Chittagong (some 400 Km southeast of Dacca). This is the only record of species in Bangladesh and it is far west of the known range (i.e.- Tenasserim, Thailand etc.).

R. Whitaker and E.O. Moll have received word that the WWF has approved their request for \$1500 US to begin status surveys of riverine turtle in India.

The newsletter is supported by the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, World Wildlife Fund - U.S. and Eastern Illinois University.

PRIORITIES FRESHWATER CHELONIAN PROJECTS
1982/84

HIGHEST PRIORITY

Conservation of the endangered endemic turtles of the Cuatro Ciénegas Basin, Coahuila, Mexico (Terrapene coahuila, Trionyx ater, Pseudemys scripta taylori)

Current status and distribution of river turtles in eastern India

Conservation of Bahamian Pseudemys

Conservation status and ecology of Sternotherus depressus in Alabama

Status survey, ecology and conservation of Erymnochelys madagascariensis

Current status and distribution of the endangered chelid, Phrynops dahlii

Ecology and conservation of the Magdalena river turtle (Podocnemis lewyana) from northern Columbia

Status survey and management of the river terrapin, Batagur baska in south and southeast Asia

Ecology and conservation of the giant Amazonian river turtle (Podocnemis expansa) and related species (e.g., P. unifilis, P. sextuberculata, P. erthrocephala in Brazilian Amazonia)

Systematics, distribution and ecology of eastern and central Brazilian chelid turtles

Status survey of the Central American River turtle Dermatemys mawii in Mexico

Status and conservation of Trionyx triunguis in Israel

HIGH PRIORITY

Exploitation and status of Carettochelys insculpta in Papua, New Guinea

Ecology and conservation of Carettochelys insculpta

Conservation of Pseudemys alabamensis

Conservation status and distribution of the Key Mud Turtle, Kinosternon baurii

Distribution and status of the Arizona mud turtle, Kinosternon flavescens arizonense

Ecology and conservation of the Mucuã, Kinosternon scorpioides, in Brazil

HIGH PRIORITY (cont.)

Status survey of the painted terrapin, Callagur borneoensis and the Bornean terrapin, Orlitia borneensis in the Malay archipelego

Conservation of Graptemys flavimaculata

Distribution, ecology and conservation of Pelomedusa subrufa and Pelusios subniger

Ecology and conservation of the giant Amazonian river turtle (Podocnemis expansa) and related species (e.g. P. unifilis, P. sextuberculata) in Peruvian Amazonia

Ecology and conservation of the spiny turtle, Heosemys spinosa

Status survey of the big headed turtle, Platysternon megacephalum

Captive breeding of the endangered endemic turtles of the Cuatro Cienegas Basin, Coahuila, Mexico

Distribution and status of Kinosternon dunni in Columbia

Status survey of rare Mexican kinosternids

Distribution and ecology of Rhinoclemmys in Mexico

PRIORITY

Conservation and management of the Plymouth Red Bellied Turtle, Pseudemys rubriventris bangsi.

Distribution and status of freshwater turtles in northern Argentina and Uruguay (e.g., Platemys pallidipectoris, P. spixii, Pseudemys dorbigny and others)

Captive breeding of rare and endangered eastern and central Brazilian chelid turtles

Status survey of Pseudemys scripta on the Yucatan peninsula

Conservation status of Pseudemys stejnegeri on Puerto Rico

Status survey of the map turtles, Graptemys caglei and G. versa in Texas

Ecology and conservation of Podocnemis voglii in the llanos of Columbia and Venezuela

Distribution, ecology and conservation of rare and little known Rhinoclemmys in Central and South America (e.g., Rhinoclemmys nasuta, R. areolata R. pulcherrima ssp. etc.)

Distribution and conservation status of Rheodytes leukops in Australia

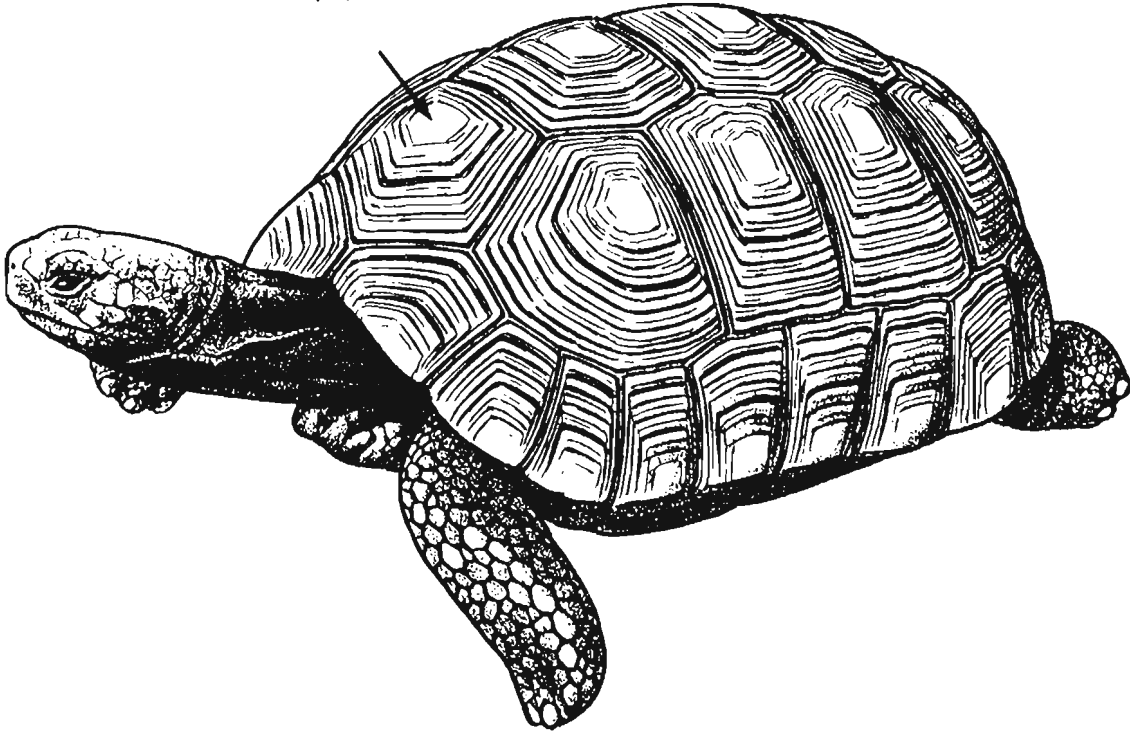


Geochelone denticulata

(Linnaeus, 1766)

- Common names:**
- engl.: Yellow-foot Tortoise, South American Tortoise, Brazilian Giant Tortoise, Hercules Tortoise, Jaboty Tortoise, South American Forest Tortoise
 - esp.: Morrocoy (Colombia and Venezuela), Motelo (Peru), Jabuti (Brasil) and Tortuga de patas amarillas
 - fr.: Tortue dentelée, Tortue de l'Amérique du Sud
 - de.: Waldschildkröte
 - ital.: Tartaruga (Testuggine) denticolata

- Scientific synonyms:**
- Testudo denticulata* Linnaeus, 1766
 - Testudo tabulata* Schoepff, 1792



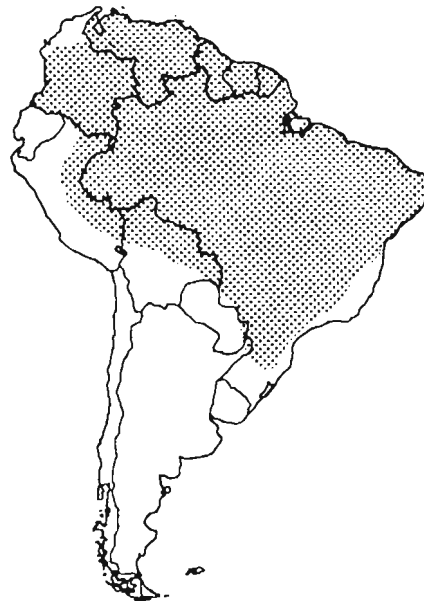
Characteristics:

- Adult:*
- Carapace:** Markedly elongate, flat topped, posteriorly flared; sometimes with dominant growth lines on individual scutes.
 - Nuchal shield:** absent
 - Supracaudal shield:** undivided
 - Color:** Brown, with a blurred yellow spot around the areola of each shield. Ground color of the soft parts is blackish; the scales of the head and limbs can be bright orange or orange-yellow.

The shapes and coloration of this species are extremely variable.

- Juvenile:*
- Carapace rounded:** anterior marginal shields noticeably denticulated. Areolae finely punctated. Color: nearly uniform yellow brown.

- Distribution:** Northern South America except Northern Colombia, south to Bolivia but not Paraguay, and to Espirito Santo but not Rio de Janeiro: *Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad, Venezuela, Windward Islands, Paraguay (?)*



Population: no data

Captive population: Fairly numerous, although survival rate low.

Trade: main exporting states: Guatemala, Panama, El Salvador
main importing states: United States of America, Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland

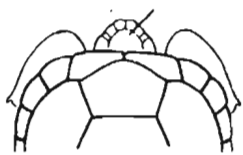
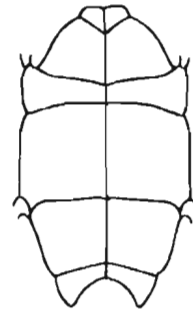
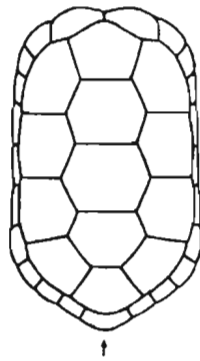
Trade volumes: 317 specimens recorded by CITES Parties in 1978, plus 35 shipments from Panama by USA in 1978
12 specimens imported by Switzerland from 1978 to 1979

Intraspecific variation: none

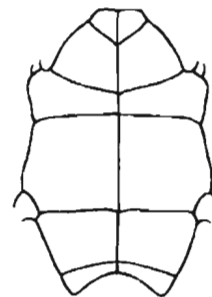
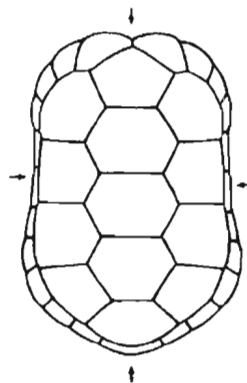
Similar species: *Geochelone carbonaria*



Geochelone denticulata



Geochelone carbonaria
(see A-301.011.003.001)



Carapace oblong, often dumbbell shaped. First marginals not denticulated.

Bibliography:

Williams, E.E. (1960) Two species of tortoises in Northern South America. *Breviora, Mus. Comp. Zool.* 120: 1-13

SUBMISSION GUIDE FOR IUCN/WWF PROJECT PROPOSAL
(Application for funds from WWF)

Please note: It would be appreciated if project proposals can be submitted in English in order to expedite the review process. Page limit should not be exceeded. Any essential additional information may be included as annexes.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Include the following information in this order (one page)*:

- Title
- Name of originator
- Name(s) of principal investigator(s)
- Project period
- Funds requested
- Endorsements (institutional and/or governmental)
- Abstract: a brief description of the project, including a brief statement of the goal, methods, expected results and how follow-up will be assumed (not more than 250 words).

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION (not more than 3 pages - approx. 1,200 words)

1. Conservation achievement (expected conservation results)

The applicant must define very clearly what are the objectives of the project, in particular what it is meant to achieve, in terms of immediate product or output, and ultimate conservation goals.

2. Justification

- a) Reason for IUCN/WWF involvement. Demonstrate that proposal falls within objectives of IUCN programme or deals with urgent conservation problems and will improve the conservation status of the species or habitat, or advances other conservation objectives.
- b) Other benefits of project, particularly for people living in the project area.

3. Background

- a) The scientific, legal, theoretical and administrative background of the project; description of project area (when appropriate).

* This general information summary must be accommodated within one page; it will be the principal initial information source for each project.

- b) Knowledge of related work, and the current status of related projects, including those of intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organisations (assign details to appendices if necessary).
- c) Disclosure of other support for project and project related activities. Full disclosure must be made of :
 - i. Other support for the project, either available or applied for, or other resources supplied.
 - ii. Other support for project related activities (please also detail briefly nature and scope of these activities).
- d) Proof or statement of having met all local permit requirements.

4. Local involvement and training

A statement of local involvement in the project such as any counter-part arrangement or governmental involvement.

Indicate if governmental and/or non-governmental organisations in the country in question support the project. Describe also in what way they would participate and/or how they would use the results.

If the project is carried out in a foreign country by expatriates, this must be justified. Indicate also in what way and to what extent local counterparts should be involved and trained.

5. Public awareness and conservation education

Indicate what measures in the field of public awareness and conservation education/information might be incorporated into the project so as to make its purpose understood by the local people and authorities to secure support for the project, and to promote the cause of conservation generally.

6. References

Give names and addresses of knowledgeable people who endorse the project, or who may write letters of recommendation on its behalf or on behalf of the investigator(s).

7. Literature

Literature cited in the text by alphabetical order (in appendix).

III. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

1. Personnel

- a) Give name, title and institutional affiliation of the person(s) who will carry out the project. A brief curriculum vitae (qualifications and personal histories) for each investigator should be appended.
- b) Name, title and address of the person or organisation responsible for the administration of the project.

2. Methods

- a) Investigation techniques which will be employed.
- b) A work plan and timetable, including statements of manpower requirements and identifying various phases, stages or tasks.

3. Budget

- a) Estimated project costs (showing currency and amounts) should be listed under the following categories (where applicable). Appropriate justification of each expenditure should be provided in the project description :
 - i. Contractor's consultancy fee (and man months)
 - ii. Travel and per diem (itemize)
 - iii. Equipment (itemize)
 - iv. Telephone, telex, postage
 - v. Publication costs
 - vi. Other (itemize)
- b) Desired payment schedule and method should be provided as follows :
 - i. Timing of payments - indicate by quarters of year.
 - ii. Bank account for payment - give name, address, telephone number and telex of bank, and name and number of account (alternatively payment can be made by mailed cheque).

1

MEMBERSHIP FCSG

The following were nominated to the IUCN Species Survival Commission as members for the FCSG. Those marked with an asterisk (*) have written letters of acceptance to the IUCN. If this record is in error please let me know. Also if you do not intend to accept the invitation let me know so that another specialist might be contacted.

Only changes or corrections in addresses have been typed all others are as published in Newsletter # 1.

P.S. The promised list of WWF organizations and addresses did not arrive in time to be included in this Newsletter. It will be mailed later.

AUSTRALIAN REGION

- * Mr. Fred Parker
- * Dr. Andrew A. Burbidge
Dr. John M. Legler
- * Dr. Anders Rhodin
- * Ms. Silvia Spring

NEARCTIC REGION

- * Dr. C.J. McCoy
- * Dr. R. Bruce Bury
- * Dr. John Iverson
- * Dr. Don L. Moll

W. PALEARCTIC-ETHIOPIAN REGION

- * Professor Charles I. Planc, Head
Laboratoire de Zoogeographie
Universite Montpellier III P.P.5043
34032 MONTPELLIER CEDEX-FRANCE
- * Dr. Walter Sachsse
- * Dr. Roger Wood
Dept. of Zoology
Stockton State College
Pomona, New Jersey 08246

NEOTROPICAL

- * Dr. Russell Mittermeier
Mr. Tomas Blohm
Dr. Karen Bjorndal
- * Mr. Luiz Fernando M De Padua
- * Dr. Peter Pritchard
- * Dr. Roberto da Rocha e Silva
Mr. Pekka Soini

E. PALEARCTIC ORIENTAL REGION

- * Mr. S. Biswas
- * Professor Huang Chu-Chien
Mr. P. Kannan
- * Dr. Kiew Bong Heang
Mr. Wirot Nutaphand
Professor Mohammad Ali Reza Khan
Mr. Siow Kuan Tow
- * Mr. Romulus Whitaker