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ROC Assists New Flying Tigers to Protect Endangered Wildlife

Friends of Animals (FoA) today announced receipt of a \$70,000 contribution from the Republic of China on Taiwan to assist anti-poaching air patrols in Africa.

The money will be used to complete construction and to deploy a second specially-designed patrol aircraft as part of FoA's " Flying Tigers " air patrol project. The project's first aircraft is now on patrol protecting wildlife in Mole National Park, Ghana.

"Friends of Animals has found that well-planned air patrols can be extremely effective in protecting wild animals from commercial poaching gangs," said FoA president Priscilla Feral. "Air patrols are very efficient, especially in habitats like northern Ghana, where grass that grows 8 to 10 feet high easily conceals poaching gangs from ground patrols, but makes them completely vulnerable to air patrols."

Ms. Feral said air patrols now being conducted by FoA in Africa are linked to mobile park ranger units on the ground by VHF radio. "Our air cue patrols over pre-planned sectors of the park and when suspected poachers or poaching camps are located, their position is immediately radioed to the ranger units on the ground," she said. "The ranger units then use GPS satellite navigation receivers, also supplied by FoA, to guide them directly to the poachers. The FoA aircraft remains on station above the poachers until the park rangers arrive to investigate or arrest."

"Friends of Animals is especially grateful to the Republic of China, because this contribution will enable us to put another airplane on duty protecting wild animals," Ms. Feral said. "And even more important than catching poachers who have already killed animals, the second aircraft will be very useful as a deterrent that discourages people from killing wild animals."

The FoA president explained that much of the Flying Tigers project involves community relations. "Our air crews visit villages where suspected poachers live, and give free airplane rides to village elders and chiefs. They see for themselves how easy it is to see people hiding in the tall grasses, and how fast the airplane can travel. They then help us to spread the word around their villages-- air patrols make poaching

a very risk business. This type of warning alone can reduce poaching by 80%, or more, in many areas."

The Flying Tigers take their name from air squadrons also sponsored by the same Republic of China government during the Second World War.

Interpol has determined that illegal trade in wildlife-- elephant ivory, parrots, chimpanzees, rhino horn, exotic leathers and furs, and other contraband--is valued at least at \$400 million a month. "But the Interpol calculations do not establish numbers cruel in this business," Ms. Feral said. "Nor does it measure the biological consequences. Many wildlife populations have already been exterminated. The earth itself is being impoverished by greedy people."

"Friends of Animals believes in putting assistance right into the field. We are helping wildlife agencies in habitat countries to meet the enormous challenges of international syndicates that have targeted commercially valuable animals. We put our own resources right between the poachers and the animals they are trying to kill or trap," she said.♣

(source : FoA Press Information, Feb. 28, 1997)

Formosan Black Bear Discovered at Yushan National Park

On March 14 of this year, 50 seconds of amateur video footage was taken of Taiwan's largest protected species--- the Formosan black bear. This proves that the Formosan black bear still exists in Yushan National Park as a result of the ROC's conservation efforts.

Li Pei-chen of National Tunghua University's Graduate School of Natural Resources was taking part

in "Lakula Creek Water and Fish Resources Survey" commissioned by Yushan National Park, when she spotted and recorded the Formosan black bear. This is the first time in 50 years that such a sighting has been made. Personnel at the Yushan National Park Headquarters were particularly excited and said that their efforts to repopulate the species to the park were having an effect.

The Formosan black bear is the largest protected species indigenous to Taiwan. The animal hasn't been seen for over half a century and previously researchers relied on local aborigine descriptions, traces of the bear in the mountains, and scratch marks found on trees to establish the bear's status. In an attempt to record the bear, the park headquarters previously hid video equipment in the forest and, two years ago, offered prize money of NT\$50,000 for photographs of the black bear, but to no avail.

The Formosan black bear that Li Pei-chen filmed from a distance of around 50 meters is drinking water and looking for food at the creek's edge. It is around 150 cm tall and covered in black healthy fur. Li says that at first she thought the bear was a human being, but when she noticed it was totally black in color and crawling on all fours, she instantly recognized it as a Formosan black bear. After watching her for a while, the bear ignored Li and continued searching for food. The film footage taken lasts 50 seconds.

The Formosan black bear (*Selenasctos thibetanus formosanus*) is a special Asian variety native to Taiwan. It is the largest land animal on the island of Taiwan. The bear feeds mainly on leaves, young shoots, fruit, and insects, and forages for food mainly at dusk or in the evenings. The bear does not hibernate and is good at climbing trees. The bear reaches a height of between 120 and 150cm tall, and a weight of

around 200 kilograms. It is covered in thick black fur and is distinguished by a white "V"-shaped patch of fur on its breast.♣

Nature Preserves and Zoos Closed

The Council of Agriculture (COA) of the ROC Executive Yuan yesterday confirmed that the ROC is suffering an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. The COA reported to the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) that Taiwan is an affected area. In addition, the COA informed the Bureau of Commodity Inspection and Quarantine and the Board of Foreign Trade to stop ratifying export certificates for cloven-hoofed animals and their frozen meat products.

Yangmingshan National Park is the first national park to have its nature preserves declared closed. Due to the proximity of Yangmingshan National Park to the Taipei metropolitan area, the park headquarters have taken the emergency decision to close Lu-tzu-keng Nature Reserve. In the future it is possible that other infected areas will be closed and all park personnel will be forbidden from entering these areas. To prevent the spread of the foot-and-mouth virus, Yushan National Park Headquarters have decided to forbid the entry of any person, including national park staff, into the national park area. Taroko National Park also recently closed off all nature preserves and temporarily ceased processing applications from persons wishing to enter these conservation areas, which account for an area of 60,000 hectares, or around two-thirds of the total area of the Taroko National Park. Kenting National Park is worried that the herds of Formosan sika deer that it has spent many years of hard work to repopulate will become infected. So far, however, there have not been any signs to

suggest that the deer have been infected. Sheipa National Park does not currently fall within the infected area, but in order to prevent the spread of the disease, the park has also closed off several conservation areas within the park. A small handful of scenic spots are still open. The Taipei Municipal Zoo and Hsinchu Municipal Zoo have also closed for disinfecting to prevent hoofed animals at the zoo becoming infected by visitors or other animals. The zoos will remain closed until the foot-and-mouth outbreak is under control.

Foot-and-mouth disease is an acute highly infectious viral disease, and is host specific. It only affects hoofed animals, including cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, deer, etc.. The Formosan sika deer, Formosan Reeve's muntjac, Formosan serow, Formosan wild boar, and Formosan sambar, which inhabit Taiwan's national parks, are also at risk. The symptoms of the disease are vesicular eruptions in the mouth, the mucous membrane around the nose, between the toes, and on the tips of the hooves. Foot-and-mouth disease is not directly transferable from animals to humans, but humans that come into contact with the virus may act as a carrier and infect other hoofed animals.♣

Mining Not Welcome in National Parks

After numerous meetings, the Construction and Planning Administration (CPA) of the Ministry of the Interior finalized the draft proposal for the "Guidelines for Management of Mining in National Parks." According to that draft, any mining party that acts against public interests by engaging in prospecting or mining activities that destroy the natural environment will without exception be refused the right to mine. The CPA will also report to the Executive Yuan on the more

than 20 National Park mining cases that have been or are currently being applied for in the hope that the Ministry of Economic Affairs will reconsider these cases and annul or reject mining rights.

The question of whether or not mining should be allowed in national parks has always been a point of conflict between economic and conservation interests. The Ministry of Economic Affairs believes that if mining rights are already defined, that right should be upheld and not annulled for the sake of it. The CPA, however, believes that since national parks have been established, based on the concept of ecological conservation, mining should naturally be banned; once mining rights expire, they should be repealed and not extended. Otherwise the aim of establishing a national park will be severely compromised.

The "Guidelines for Management of Mining in National Park Areas" will represent a huge change from current methods. Industrialists wishing to apply for mining rights will be required to obtain the agreement of the authority responsible for the land in question before they can be granted mining rights. Thus, the draft declares that even if an application were ratified to extend mining rights before an area became designated a national park area or an application for a new mining area were ratified, etc., the national park administration concerned should act according to the law and make its opinions known, based on its right to manage the park environment. Furthermore, mining bodies should consider these opinions when they review their annual work schedule for that particular mine. In other words, if the national park administration does not approve mining, then mining bodies should not allow mining to take place.♣

The ROC's First Conservation Credit Card

On August 6 of the year 1996, The Chinese Natural Resource Conservation Association and Dahan Commercial Bank signed a contract to agree to formally cooperate and issue a "Natural Resource Conservation Credit Card" in November, with the aims of serving society by increasing awareness about the need to conserve natural resources, and to assist the government to promote the concept of conserving natural resources.

The Natural Resource Conservation Credit Card is the first such card to be issued in Taiwan and will be aimed at people who care about saving natural resources and will operate under the slogan, "One card for a lifetime's conservation." Card holders who use their card will automatically donate 0.2 percent of what they spend to a mutually established natural resource conservation fund. Currently a special account is being set up at the Dahan Commercial Bank in the name of the Natural Resource Conservation Foundation Preparatory Committee. Once donations reach NT\$10 million a formal application to establish a foundation will be made.

The main aims of establishing a Natural Resource Conservation Foundation are: 1. Working alongside the promotion of government natural resource conservation and environmental protection policies; 2. Uniting scholars and experts' efforts to research and survey natural resource conservation and environmental protection; 3. Promoting education and guidance in natural resource conservation and environmental protection; 4. Promoting academic and experience exchange between domestic and overseas, including cross-strait, natural resource conservation and environmental protection groups; 5.

Actively participating in meetings and activities organized by various international natural resource conservation and environmental protection organizations; 6. Issuing educational materials and publications on natural resource conservation and environmental protection; 7. Establishing natural resource conservation and environmental protection scholarships for poor students; 8. Undertaking other work related to natural resource conservation and environmental protection issues. ♣

Exotic Animals in Taiwan

Trend for exotic animal and plant species is on the rise. Scholars warn that the introduction of exotic species will affect the ecology of Taiwan.

Many people buy exotic pets because they are interesting or cheap. Despite efforts by the Council of Agriculture (COA) to completely prohibit pet shops from importing live reptiles and amphibians, these small animals can still be brought into Taiwan by tourists or ship crews. Once these strange creatures lose their novelty, their fate is the same as that of the hundreds of stray cats and dogs, they are simply set free or discarded. One such example is the Brazilian red ear turtle (*Chrysemys scripta elegans*), which is easy to care for and cheap. Once their owners tire of them, they are simply set free at will. The Brazilian red ear turtle breeds rapidly and lives to a very old age. If they are allowed to reproduce and over-populate, natural means of turtle population control will be unable to solve the problem. Another problem is the threat posed by *Salvinia molesta*, an aquatic plant that spreads at the same terrifying rate as water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*). This *Salvinia molesta* is famous throughout the world for the speed at which it grows, and it has already created terrible destruction in a number of places. Currently this plant is being grown

by gardeners in Taiwan as an ornamental pond plant. Many consumers simply see it as a plant that is easy to grow and not the menace that it is. Finding a way to prevent this aquatic plant from wreaking havoc on the Taiwan ecology will pose a great test to scholars and government. ♣

The ROC Conservation Web Sites

The Internet has become an important part of modern everyday life for people around the world. Exchanging information and increasing our knowledge has become easier with the Internet. A number of ROC conservation web sites have been established to provide people with better means to understanding the current state of conservation in the ROC.

1. <http://www.coa.gov.tw> ----- The Council of Agriculture of the Executive Yuan.

The Council of Agriculture of the executive Yuan (COA) is the principle authority in the ROC responsible to natural conservation of areas other than the national parks. This web site lists ROC conservation laws and provides the latest conservation information.

2. <http://www.tesri.gov.tw> ----- Taiwan Endemic Species Research Institute (TESRI).

The Taiwan Endemic Species Research Institute is a conservation organization that we introduced in our Vol.4 No.4 International Conservation Newsletter. The most special feature of this web site is an introduction with ample illustrations, of biology and habitats of species endemic to Taiwan, including a list of Taiwan's protected species, in both English and Chinese. This site also gives introductions to local and foreign conservation groups.

3. <http://www.gio.gov.tw> ----- Government Information Office of the Executive Yuan.

This web site can be accessed in many languages, including Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish. This web site gives information about ROC's conservation efforts and the laws concerning conservation.

4. <http://com5.iis.sinica.edu.tw:8000/~cwbf> ----- Chinese Wild Bird Federation.

The Chinese Wild Bird Federation has gathered ornithologists and people concerned with the survival of bird species to introduce the current state of bird conservation in the ROC. The web site is available in Chinese and English, and includes a number of beautiful bird illustrations.

5. <http://wagner.zo.ntu.edu.tw/sos>-----Society of Stream, ROC (SoS)

The Society of Stream of the ROC's web site was designed to discuss the ecology of Taiwan's streams and waterways. It introduces the geographic, geological, cultural, meteorological, and the flora and fauna aspects of Taiwan's streams, as well as the endemic and endangered species in the stream. In addition, the web site also provides information about laws concerning streams, including tourism, water conservancy, and conservation. Although the web site is currently only available in Chinese, the society hopes to provide Chinese and English services in the future. The contents of the International Conservation Newsletter will also appear at this web site.

Other conservation web sites are mainly in Chinese. SWAN International currently only has E-mail facilities. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Our E-mail address is: swanint@tpts4.seed.net.tw. ♣

Conservation News

Taiwan's first educational wetland park, the Niao-sung Wetland Educational Park, established on Feb. 2 to the right of the main entrance to Chengching Lake in Kaohsiung County in south Taiwan.

The Niao-sung Wetland Educational Park occupies an area of two hectares and is inhabited by 18 genus and 28 species of birds, as well as 121 types of plant, and over 20 species of butterfly. The Kaohsiung Wild Bird Society rallied its members' support to create the Niao-sung Wetlands Educational Park under the slogan, "Realizing our Dream to Rebuild Chengching Lake --the Niao-sung Wetlands." Their activities included explanations of the area's ecology, the establishment of bird-watching areas, multimedia interpretation, and butterfly and firefly ecology display areas. Over 7,000 members of the public attended the event. The Kaohsiung County Government said that the creation of the Niao-sung Wetlands Educational Park is just the first step in wetland education. They say that in the future they will continue to promote plans to establish the Yong-Ann Wetland, mangroves, and the Ao-Gu Wetland. (Feb. 3, 1997)

Kenting National Park held a large scale release of Formosan sika deer (*Cervus nippon taiouanus*) into the wild on Feb. 1, 1997. It was the first time these animals were released directly into the nature park.

After the last wild Formosan sika deer in Taiwan disappeared in 1969 in east Taiwan, the Kenting National Park Headquarters began work to repopulate

Formosan sika deer in 1984. Thirteen years later, after a preparatory stage, captive breeding stage, semi-release and monitoring stage, since 1994 and 1995, 10 Formosan sika deer have been released into the wild making the current number of deer in and around the repopulating area almost 200.

On Feb. 1, for the first time Kenting National Park released 30 herds of deer directly into a wild environment outside the repopulating area at Sheding Park. This is the third and largest release into the wild. The herds include five stags, 17 doe, and eight calves. In addition, electronic monitoring equipment was attached to the necks of 12 adult deer so that their activities can be monitored. (Feb. 2, 1997)

The Introduction of Conservation Society ---- Beautiful Taiwan Foundation (BTF)

The Beautiful Taiwan Foundation was established in 1987. The Foundation not only cares for the environment and the conservation of the island of Taiwan, but it also fights for Taiwan's rights on the international stage. The chairman of BTF Daniel Yuan says, "We need to criticize less, and act more." This has become the motto of the foundation. It continually challenges itself to promote activities that meet current social trends and take concrete activities to make environmental and conservation issues part of everyone's lives by using new concepts and popular appeals.

For many years the Beautiful Taiwan Foundation has called on people to cherish their environment and protect wild animals. They have instigated a number of appeals, including the "Save Tigers" appeal; set up

conservation exhibits at Chiang Kai-shek International Airport, Taipei Songshan Airport, and Kaohsiung Hsiao-kang Airport; surveyed Taiwan consumers' use of rhinoceros horn; presented suggestions on government conservation policy; started "Save the Rhino" and "Say No to Swallows Nest and Shark's Fin" appeals, etc.. The foundation has also actively taken part in a number of international activities, including visiting the Fish and Wildlife Association of the US Ministry of the Interior to explain the conservation situation in Taiwan, attending a public hearing on "Rhino Protection" held by the US congress, visiting the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) to report on conservation in Taiwan, visiting WWF-USA to explain the conservation situation in Taiwan, and attending CITES meetings in 1994 and 1995, etc.

In the future, the Beautiful Taiwan Foundation plans: 1. to promote education and publicity on various environmental protection and conservation issues. In addition to the five conservation exhibits at Taipei and Kaohsiung airports, the Foundation also aims to set up two conservation exhibits at Kaohsiung International Airport to exhort ROC nationals not to eat, buy or use wild animals and their products when they go abroad. 2. to continue the work of promoting education about resource recycling and waste minimization, so that people take a responsible attitude and create a clean, natural, and beautiful environment for themselves and generations to come; 3. to follow up investigations into the pollution of rivers and coasts by medical waste. To call on the government to build medical waste incinerators and stamp out hospitals that illegally dump waste so that the public can safely enjoy Taiwan's beaches; 4. to take part in international environmental protection and conservation activities. In addition, to promulgate global conservation ideas and trends to let people understand the natural ecology and actively participate in conserving it.♣

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