

# Preservation Of Wildlife In Bangladesh

By Shaikh Mohammed Ali

CONSERVATION means basically to husband the natural resources of a country, and maintaining a controlled ecological balance. This awareness is very much universal. More so perhaps as we approach the end of this rather eventful century; in the face of depleting resources in all their varied forms—geological, flora and fauna etc.

A study of World Wildlife was undertaken by the United Nations almost two decades back around 1958, and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) was organised in 1962.

Various authorities calculate that there are approximately 1.4 million full species of animals in the world, and during a period of 2000 years more than 200 species of birds and animals have become extinct; most of these have been exterminated within the last ¼ (half) century. It won't be entirely out of context, one hopes, to set out here the very high degree of awareness that other nations are showing in this regard. The United States Congress through legislation confirmed a varied list of species that come under the Endangered Species Act of 1973:

SPECIES:	ENDANGERED			THREATENED		
	U.S.	Foreign	Total	U.S.	Foreign	Total
Mammal .....	35	215	250	1	3	4
Birds .....	65	144	209	1	—	1
Reptiles .....	8	46	54	—	—	—
Amphibians .....	4	9	13	—	—	—
Fishes .....	30	10	40	4	—	4
Snails .....	—	1	1	—	—	—
Clams .....	22	2	24	—	—	—
Crustaceans .....	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insects .....	6	—	6	2	—	2
Totals .....	170	427	597	8	3	11

While an off hand census may have been taken of our numerous birds and mammal species, and by way of research perhaps a little surface scratching done since independence, other countries and some in this South East region have gone way ahead in classification (taxonomy) and entomological work namely: Australia and New Zealand where a research boom has been going on for some years now in ecology, distribution, breeding, physiology and embryonic diapause. The Wildlife Research Division CSIRO, Canberra has listed 800 species of Avifauna (Birds) 350 species of Amphibia-Reptila (Reptiles) 10,000 species of Lepidoptera (moths-butterflies) 200 species of Anura (Frog) 19,000 species of Coleoptera (beetles), 15,000 species of Ants, 145 species of Isoptera (Termites), not to speak of research on Koala (Native Bear), Kangaroo, Wallaby, Marsupial Mouse, Paulagierid (Possum) etc.

Bangladesh has a total land area of 54,501 square miles (Census 1951). Of this total area approximately 89.35% (54,141 sq. ml) is land, and about 0.65% (4,500 ml) of water. The surface feature or topography includes highland in the North, while the midland can be defined as the Gangetic plains, running all the way down to the mouth of the Ganges delta (Bay of Bengal) with a good part of the South-Eastern region being hilly. The total Forest area is estimated to be 8594 square

miles divided between the North Eastern region of Sylhet district and the South Eastern region of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Dense tropical forests in both regions still abound in both flora and fauna. It has to be remembered, however, that the minimum afforestation area, for any country, as prescribed by FAO is 20.3%. The Haor/Beel (Wetlands) area in the whole country is placed at about 8000 square miles spread over the districts of Sylhet, Mymensingh, Pabna and Rajshahi. Animal biologists estimate the bird and animal population to be around 108.5 million in Bangladesh. Wildlife Fauna species are numerically classified as: Birds 600, Mammals 76, and Reptiles 58 distinct species.

Wildlife conservation, however, isn't totally a new concept in Bangladesh. For as far back as the 19th century it was felt that some measure of fauna preservation was needed to save wildlife from extinction. Thus the Elephants Preservation Act was passed by about the end of the 19th century when an alarming decrease in their population was observed. That was followed by the Wild Birds and

derbans, the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Sylhet. Again a few years later during 1970-71 the WWF Fund in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) sent two experts to study the Tiger situation in Bangladesh. In the light of their findings the first two expedition teams, and the tiger experts separately submitted their reports to the government.

Thus after independence the Bangladesh Wildlife Preservation Society (BWPS) came into being in March 1972 and soon after got itself affiliated with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) with the avowed object of creating mass consciousness about the national heritage of wildlife and its conservation; and not any too soon either. As wildlife carnage was at its height in the decade 1958-1968. Government accorded formal recognition by giving wildlife conservation legal sanction, by promulgating the Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation) Order 1973. The First Five Year Plan of November 1973-78 carried a provision for the establishment of sanctuaries, Reserves and Parks for the fostered growth of animal fauna in the country, and as such a financial allocation of Tk. 2.06 crore was made in the Plan.

The sum of Tk. 6 lakhs was sanctioned exclusively for the preservation of Tigers in the Sunderbans.

The following definitions, and the outlines of the development scheme embodied in the First Five Year Plan give a clear picture of the shape of things to come: 1. Establishment of Tiger Sanctuaries in the Sunderbans—3 Nos. 2. Establishment of Elephant Sanctuary in the Kassalong—Research Forest of Chittagong Hill Tracts—1 No. 3. Establishment of Water-fowl protection centres at: a) Dacca—5 Nos. b) Mymensingh—3 Nos. c) Comilla—2 Nos. d) Sylhet—29 Nos. e) Other districts—10 Nos. total 49 Nos. 4. Establishment of Wildlife Sanctuaries in Chittagong—2 Nos. Chittagong Hill Tracts—1 No. total 3 Nos. 5. Establishment of Game Reserves in: a) Cox's Bazar—3 Nos. b) Chittagong H. Tracts—1 No. c) Sylhet—2 Nos total 6 Nos. 6. Establishment of estuarine Crocodile Reserve in Sunderbans—1 No.

Sanctuary: A part or whole of a forest where wildlife may thrive, breed and live in its natural surroundings without any form of human encroachment poaching trapping deforestation or afforestation of any other form of disturbance in their natural habitat.

Reserve. By a reserve is meant a particular Zone (Forest) where on obtaining permission during the open season one may shoot wild animals over a particular period of time and of specific variety and not all types indiscriminately.

Park. The outer boundary which skirts a sanctuary, where naturalists and zoologists may see wildlife from (Continued on page 6)

## Higher Studies Abroad

— S. Hossain

EVEN after two or three decades of independence many students in developing countries continue to banker after attaining education in West European and American universities. The concept of advanced studies is still associated with educational institutes in industrialised countries. The Federal Republic of Germany, among other developed countries, enjoys good reputation for its academic and scientific education. In the summer semester of 1977 about 800,000 students were enrolled at the universities of the Federal Republic, among whom about 50,000 were from foreign countries. This is a substantial number particularly keeping in view the serious difficulty of learning a new language before pursuing studies at a German university. The foreign applicants must have a command of German to enable them to understand and follow classes and to work with the German text books. All classes in German universities are held in German.

The German Exchange Service, known as DAAD has prepared a study which throws light on the problems facing foreign students, particularly those coming from Asian and African countries in the pursuit of studies in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The DAAD report has made specific mention of the type of education the Asian students receive in their countries of origin. This study has attempted to identify the barriers which foreign students face in the course of their education and training in Germany and which the universities in the host country do little to break down.

The fact that the education system in developing countries is usually modelled on the British or French patterns makes it extremely difficult for the foreign students to pursue their studies under the German education system.

### RECOGNITION OF CERTIFICATES

One of the chief problems the foreign students face is that of recognition in the Federal Republic of the certificates and degrees attained in their own countries of origin. In

the case of those students whose degrees are not fully recognised, this means additional semesters and courses, with the result that studies exceed the normal course and minimum length of duration. This frequently leads to dis-appointments and causes many students to break off their studies in Germany and instead proceed to England or America to continue their studies. The foreign students are, therefore advised not to leave for the Federal Republic before being sure about the recognition of their degrees.

A similar difficulty arises when foreign students after completion of their studies return home and find that the certificates and degrees awarded them in West Germany are not recognised in the countries of their origin. This is a point which has yet to be settled.

Duration of studies: The duration of studies varies from course to course. The foreign applicant who intends to take up a complete course of studies must inquire about the minimum course of studies before entering a German university. The minimum course of studies may exceed in the case of those foreign students who are required to attend a German language course before being allowed to pursue actual studies. The longer duration also involves complications arising from the alienation from country, financial upkeep society and family.

According to new regulations all foreign students wishing to study in the Federal Republic must be in a position to support themselves and their studies financially. Foreign students can no longer count on being able to finance their studies by undertaking part-time work. The Aliens laws in general prohibit foreign students from taking up gainful employment. Furthermore, proof of financial support is required from all applicants before a residence permit can be issued.

Return to the country of origin: After completing their studies foreign students must leave the Federal Republic. Foreign students cannot expect to be able to take up permanent employment in Germany. (Continued on page 6)