

Penguin deaths questioned

SIR—Reports that the penguins in the Falkland Islands are dying on a large scale and that this may be due to competition for food from fishermen or marine pollution seem premature. I happened to be watching birds at sea off the Falklands during the season of the recent rock-hopper penguin (*Eudyptes chrysocome*) mortality in both 1985 and 1986.

Most of the Falkland seabirds appear to benefit greatly from the activities of the fishermen, following their boats in hundreds of thousands to feed on the spilt fish and offal from deep-water species that would not otherwise be available to them, and their populations are obviously flourishing.

The penguins are usually difficult to see at sea, but although they frequent the same area along the edge of the continental shelf they do not normally appear to follow the fishing fleets, either because, being unable to fly, they have difficulty in keeping up, or because they appear to feed in roughly equal proportions upon plankton and smaller squid of the genus *Teuthowenia*¹ which the fishermen do not appear to catch yet, taking larger fish and

squid of the genera *Illex* and *Loligo* instead

The main difference between the two years in fact appeared to be that the southern summer of 1986 was unusually hot in the South Atlantic, with the result that among other things there was an influx of warm-water seabirds from the north, and the spring fires intended to remove the dead grass in the Falklands escaped control and burnt in the peat for months over areas of up to 6,000 acres, which one would have thought ought to be of much more concern to local naturalists. More penguins fed inshore than in 1985, possibly because the warm weather affected the growth or accessibility of their food at sea in the way that occurs when the warm current El Niño extends southwards off Peru in the Pacific.

A few dozen penguin bodies were seen both at sea and on the beaches, with more reported at the breeding colonies, but the number was not large by other standards⁶ for a population estimated at five million breeding birds⁷.

The main cause for concern appears to be that the huge breeding population on

Campbell Island, formerly the largest in the South Pacific and possibly the world, has already been declining on a much larger scale for over forty years⁸, though fortunately this appears to be offset by an increase on the islands off Tierra del Fuego (G.S. Clark *et al.* in preparation.).

Thus it would appear that the numbers of southern seabirds as well as those breeding in Britain⁹ have been fluctuating for longer and on a larger scale than there have been local overfishing and pollution problems.

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Turkey maligned

SIR—Nechemia Meyers (*Nature* 321, 801; 1986) claims that visas had been denied by the Turkish Foreign Office to Israeli scientists seeking to take part in the Subcommission on Triassic Stratigraphy's field workshop (of whose organizing committee we are members) in Western Turkey between 14 and 23 July 1986. It seems, however, that Meyers was not particularly well informed, for Dr Mordeckai Magaritz of the Weizmann Institute, to whom a visa had allegedly been denied, had left Israel before a visa could be issued to him. It was subsequently requested that his visa be sent to him in Milan, Italy, where he was attending the meeting on the Permian and Permo-Triassic boundary in western Tethys held in Brescia, Italy, between 4 and 12 July. The Turkish Foreign Office obliged him, thanks to the timely intervention of Dr Remzi Akkök, but Magaritz then claimed that it was too late for him, although it was certainly not too late to attend the meeting in Turkey. Two other Israeli scientists, Dr Baruch Derin and Dr Tuvia Weissbrod, not only obtained their visas, but also attended the Turkish field workshop. One thus wonders whether there really was any difficulty associated with the visa that prevented Magaritz from coming to Turkey.

Turkey is indeed cautious about issuing visas to foreigners for scientific work and visits. The reason for this is a long history of scientific plunder, first made famous by Heinrich Schliemann, mainly in such

fields as archaeology, epigraphy and mineralogy, to which this country has been subjected. This has harmed not only Turkey but also science itself. No particular nation has therefore been immune to close scrutiny in this regard by the Turkish Foreign Office and there is no reason why Israelis should be an exception.

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African lakes

SIR—You published a year ago (*Nature* 315, 19; 1985) an article by Barel *et al.* entitled "Destruction of fisheries in African lakes".

Since then, a number of articles and reports have been published suggesting that Malawi plans to introduce the clupeid fish *Stolothrissa tanganicae* and *Limnothrissa miodon* (Kapenta or Ndagaa), which occur naturally in Lake Tanganyika, into Lake Malawi (formerly Lake Nyasa).

The government of Malawi therefore wishes to make it clear that it has no current plans, nor has it had any plans in

the past, to introduce any exotic fish species into Lake Malawi.

Although the Malawi government wishes to maximize the sustainable fish yield from all its waters, it does not contemplate achieving this by resorting to the hasty introduction of exotics.

The views of the Malawi government on the subject of introducing clupeid planktivores into Lake Malawi are as follows:

(1) There is at present insufficient knowledge of the chemistry, primary and secondary productivity, energy budget or trophic interactions of Lake Malawi to allow reliable predictions to be made about the outcome of any introduction.

(2) Without such information, no introduction of any kind is justifiable.

(3) If scientific studies suggest that the introduction of exotic clupeids could substantially increase the annual fish yield from Lake Malawi on a sustainable basis, without threatening the extinction of the lake's endemic fishes, Malawi would recommend the convening of multinational meetings, to include representatives of the three countries surrounding Lake Malawi and prominent fisheries scientists and biologists, to discuss and debate the issue before any action was taken.

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