



Left: trans-Amazonia highway and the jungle; right: maned lions each worth half-a-million dollars as Kenyan tourist attractions

called "genetic drift" will make a species unfit for survival.

Much of the problem of establishing and maintaining large reserves is economic: the need is greatest in areas encompassed by the world's poorest nations. William G. Conway of the New York Zoological Society concludes "The preservation of the majority of the animals that man finds attractive probably cannot be sustained on any provable economic basis". However, some nations, he says, have successfully used their preserves to bring in hard currency through tourism. In Kenya's Amboseli National Park, for example, a single maned lion is estimated to be worth \$515,000 as a tourist attraction, compared to only \$1,150 for commercial purposes as a skin.

For those animals that cannot be preserved in the wild, Conway suggests the limited use of zoos as "gene banks"

until future generations can be re-introduced into the wild. With careful mating, the number of individuals needed might be as small as 50 to 100 animals, he says, but even then half their genetic diversity would be lost and only 100 species could thus be maintained if half of all the zoo capacity in the United States were marshalled to the task.

Another way to preserve species by making some of them more profitable to indigenous people was discussed by Malcolm Coe of Oxford. The oryx, for example, is better adapted to life in Africa than cattle, he said, and some domesticated herds of eland, springbock and greater Kudu have been established. Another advantage of using such wild ungulates for food comes from their high proportion of lean meat — 43% compared to 23% of the carcass of cattle raised under the same

conditions. Even crocodiles might be raised as a valuable cash crop, since their hides bring a high price and they grow much faster in captivity.

The generally sombre message of the conference was phrased in particularly vivid terms by Thomas E. Lovejoy of the World Wildlife Fund. Between 50% and 85% of all species on Earth have yet to be named, he said, and a major fraction of these may pass entirely out of existence still unrecognised. They will be replaced by the quickly evolving, highly productive species that can coexist with man, often as pests. "Cockroaches and Norway rats will loom larger in 21st century bestiariums," says Lovejoy, "as will crabgrass and dandelions in the floras".

Bison trouble

BYELORUSSIA has been facing a somewhat unusual hazard of conservation at the—literally—grass-roots level. The primaeval Bielaviezskaja forest is a reserve for, among other species, Europe's last remaining bison. Virtually exterminated during the war, the bison herd is now multiplying in a most satisfactory manner, and it is hoped shortly to remove the bison from the Red Book of endangered species.

In the meantime, however, bison can occasionally cause problems — as certain collective-farmers found this summer. On the "Komintern" collective farm near Barysau, one particular bison claimed as its range a large hayfield, chasing the only farmer who dared approach it up a tall tree.

Denied more "radical means" of evicting it, the Farm Management Board decided to leave the field to the bison — whereupon several other bison moved in. To date no information is forthcoming as to whether the bison have been dislodged.

This is not the first time that forest bison have caused disruption of local life; a few years ago, at Hajdowka on the Polish side of the forest, one of the local bison went to sleep on the railway lines, following this exploit by a visit to the local school.

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part, only continue to exist where man has left conditions—habitats—suitable for them. As a conservationist I think that we should do more to preserve and develop such habitats, even though this conflicts with the needs of agriculture to produce food for the growing human population.

Although the producer of this radio programme had tried to provide a balanced audience, and had invited farmers, those engaged in animal experiments, and sportsmen to participate, these groups were greatly outnumbered by those who considered themselves to be animal lovers. There were colourful and hirsute young men and drab girls wearing T-shirts proclaiming them to be hunt saboteurs. We had anti-vivisectionists of all persuasions, vegetarians, some milk drinkers, some vegans, and some who seemed mainly to wish to oppose the politics of the establishment. Although there were good questions and sensible comments from the floor, the majority of the audience had not come to listen or to discuss. Their purpose was to stop those with whom they disagreed from speaking.

Thus when one panel member tried

to give the correct breakdown of the number of animal experiments in Britain, showing that these were mostly for genuine medical tests and not just to swell the profits of cosmetic manufacturers, a section of the audience, largely consisting of remarkably unattractive women resembling those who knitted when the guillotine functioned in revolutionary France, bayed "Lies, lies, lies, sit down, we won't listen to your lies". When I was asked about the policy of culling red deer in the Scottish Highlands, and said this was necessary to keep the population healthy, as otherwise, as wolves and other predators which controlled numbers were no longer present, the deer would increase until many died from starvation and disease, someone shouted: "Why not cull human beings?" The noise made by the audience was quite alarming, and made the interruptions heard at question time in the British parliament sound almost human.

I am afraid that my main reaction to the evening's entertainment was to wonder why those who profess to love animals hate their own species so much!