

BIRD ARTIST DOES SUDAN GUIDE

Robin Reckitt, a former army officer and business executive who became a wildlife artist in his late 40s and assisted ICBP in the Mediterranean Bird Book series, had to pack his sketchbook again to do research for an ICBP bird guide for Sudan. He travelled extensively with ICBP-Northern Sudan representative Ahmed Elmalik, in order to spot the 50 birds for which new plates had to be made. A key feature of the Sudan Conservation programme, to be launched upon ratification of a Memorandum of Agreement, is a public awareness campaign of the importance of conserving Sudan's immensely rich avifauna. The fieldguide, which is now ready for publication in a bilingual version (English/Arabic), is aimed at students and administrators; it depicts 96 birds in full colour, and includes an insert on the plight of the White Stork.

CYPRUS - FOR BETTER AND WORSE

ICBP sent the Dutch ornithologist, Gerant Magnin, to report on illegal liming and shooting activities in Cyprus during spring 1986, in response to word from Cypriot conservationists that liming and netting continued unabated in violation of new legislation. However, Magnin found little evidence of illegal activity, and it appeared that the Government was stepping up efforts to enforce its conservation measures. But fresh evidence was sent to ICBP in the autumn showing that illegal bird-taking had increased again alarmingly. Magnin, on his own initiative, undertook another thorough, three-month investigation. A full report is now in preparation by ICBP.



Robin Reckitt

INTERVENTIONS

- **Marion Islands, sub-Antarctic:** A South African plan to build an airstrip on this remote island is casting doubt on its commitment to conservation in the sub-Antarctic region. It is not entirely clear why the runway, which will be 1.4 km long, is to be built, but many suspect a military installation because of the lack of information. Situated half-way between the continent of Africa and Antarctica, Marion Island is the breeding ground for 15% of the world population of the Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*, and 200 pairs of Macaroni Penguins *Eudyptes chrysolophus*. There is greatly increased danger of introduced rats and other alien species as a result of the considerable construction work to be undertaken. A letter has been sent to the Chairman of the Marion Island Environmental Impact Assessment Panel in Pretoria requesting a re-evaluation of the situation in view of the fact that South Africa is a signatory to the Antarctic Treaty and has recently participated in an
- IUCN/SCAR workshop (France, September 1986) with a view to according the sub-Antarctic the same protected status as the Antarctic.
- **Thailand:** Letters drawing attention to the exciting rediscovery of Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* were sent to the Prime Minister and other leading officials on 9 October 1986, requesting extraordinary interim protection until full legislative measures could be taken. This was followed up by personal intervention by ICBP staff member Nigel Collar (see p. 6).
- **Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Australia:** Recent initiatives on the management of the seabird populations (*World Birdwatch* Vol. 7 No. 4 and Vol. 8 No. 3) have resulted in confirmation from the Ministry of the Environment that the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has now sent an Acting Conservator to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands to implement the moratorium on the taking of wildlife, to monitor the bird populations and to introduce conservation measures. A permanent Conservator is due to be appointed early in 1987.
- **Ireland:** Although the wintering population of the Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris* has shown an increase in the Wexford region, it has not shown the same improvement in the rest of Ireland, and a meeting of the statutory Wildlife Advisory Council recommended a complete shooting moratorium throughout the country. A letter supporting this recommendation was sent to the Minister for Fisheries and Forestry who has since confirmed that no hunting of the Goose would be allowed for the 1986-87 season in the best interest of the conservation of the species.