

The Golden Lion Marmoset

John Perry

'The most brightly coloured of all living mammals, an intense shimmering golden yellow', is Osman Hill's description of the golden lion marmoset *Leontideus rosalia*, one of three closely related species restricted to Brazil (the others are *chrysopygus* and *chrysomelas*). Once they were widely distributed in the coastal forests; today they are reduced to small remnants, two of them at least with a very precarious future. John Perry, Chairman of the Survival Service Commission's Zoo Group and Secretary of WAPT (Wild Animal Propagation Trust) in the USA, reports here on their status following his recent visit to Brazil.

The golden lion marmoset's prospects for survival in Brazil are gloomy. Capture for export has been almost completely stopped, but there is serious and immediate threat to the last remaining habitat. The remnant population, estimated at less than 400 by Adelmar Coimbra-Filho, clusters chiefly in gallery forest along the São Joao River, to the east of Rio de Janeiro. A bridge is now being built from Rio to Niteroi to connect with a major highway that will cut through this habitat, and the São Joao River is to be canalized.

At a conservation symposium in Rio in 1968, Coimbra proposed establishment of a golden marmoset reserve. Since then, he has identified a triangular area of about 8000 acres as suitable. This is in private ownership, and the only realistic hope of setting it aside lies in expropriation. Under Brazilian law, the government can assert what is, in effect, a five-year option and prohibit any changes in land use for this period. The land value can be fixed within this time and the owner compensated.

Coimbra, who has made field studies of all three *Leontideus* species, proposes that a field station be established within the reserve. Golden marmosets would be trapped in parts of the habitat that cannot be saved, and moved to the field station for study, propagation, and release. It has also been proposed that a core area be acquired quickly, without awaiting expropriation action, so that the field station could be set up and translocating begin.

The outlook for the species is especially grim because captive breeding efforts have thus far been unsuccessful. While many births in zoos have been reported, almost all have been to wild-caught parents. Zoo-born adults have rarely if ever reproduced. In consequence, the captive population has declined rapidly since exports from Brazil ceased. The captive population in Brazil has declined to three pairs, one with young (as of November 1970).

In the United States, a WAPT Golden Marmoset Committee has reviewed the literature and zoo histories, and consulted with Coimbra. The consensus is that present zoo caging arrangements and management practices frustrate the normal territorial and mating behavior of the species. Three zoos have agreed to construct facilities which may meet



MARMOSET WITH A GLOOMY FUTURE *Zoological Society of London*

the requirements, and other zoos have agreed to deposit their remaining golden marmosets in a breeding pool.

Coimbra recently reported discovery of a considerable population of the related marmoset, the golden-rumped tamarin *L. chrysopygus*, which had not been seen for some years and was feared extinct. Fortunately, this population is concentrated deep in a rather well protected park. On the other hand, he believes that the position of the third species, the golden-headed tamarin *L. chrysomelas*, is almost as precarious as that of *L. rosalia*, but the latter has attracted more public interest because it is the only one of the three to have been seen frequently in zoo collections.

Turtle Laws and Turtle Sales

An FPS member in El Salvador, Mr D. Levy, sends us some observations on turtle consumption in Latin America. Everyone in El Salvador, he says eats marine turtle eggs, mainly the Pacific ridley *Lepidochelys olivacea*. The turtles themselves are fully protected – but objects such as ear-rings made from the shell of hawksbills (a highly endangered species) are almost always for sale at Insafi, the government agency to foster local industries. Mexico has reverse laws: adult turtles may be and are killed, in large numbers, but eggs are protected. Nevertheless, eggs are widely taken and often to be seen for sale in market places and beer bars. In Belize City, British Honduras, notices in the main water-front market state that the maximum controlled retail price of green turtle, hawksbill and loggerhead was 'all cuts 23c per lb', and the *Belize Reporter* asked any readers interested in supplying Vertex Optical Ltd with 'a source of genuine tortoiseshell for making spectacle frames' to contact the Chamber of Commerce. In November 1968, at Panama City's waterfront fish market, turtle eggs were on sale at '40c a dozen, flippers at 10c a lb; also turtle meat and bones'.

Dr Peter Pritchard, secretary of the SSC Turtle Group says that 'the virtually 100 per cent collection of eggs is not peculiar to El Salvador, but also occurs in Pacific Honduras and Nicaragua, although the adult turtles are allowed to live, at least when found nesting'.

Seychelles Sanctuary

'The islands belong to the birds. You are their guests. Please do not disturb them', is the notice that greets all visitors to Cousin Island, the bird sanctuary in the Seychelles which ICBP (International Council for Bird Preservation) bought three years ago, and where it now runs a small research station. The generosity of Lars Eric Lindblad made it possible to appoint Malcolm Penny as resident scientist for 1970 and a report from him appears in the British Section of the ICBP Annual Report. Most of the island's visitors come in the fortnightly cruises of the *Lindblad Explorer* and they too have contributed generously to the Cousin Appeal Fund, which is still some way off its target of £50,000. Donations are urgently needed – FPS will gladly forward any sent in. FPS has a special interest in the five giant tortoises on the island, having contributed £225 which represented the 'value' of the tortoises.

Monk Seal Survey

The Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals asks us to state that they financed the scientific study of the Mediterranean monk seal in Sardinia (ORYX, December 1970, page 348) at the request of the Italian WWF. UFAW also contributed.