

# Drought Threatens Sistan Wildlife

Damages inflicted by the seven-year drought in south of Sistan-Baluchestan province, especially the cities of Iranshahr, Chabahar and Nikshahr, are not negligible.

The province, extended over 181,578 square kilometers, has a mean annual rainfall of less than 100 millimeters and is considered as a hot and dry region.

The subterranean reserves provide the only source of water for the southern regions of the province, except for areas such as Bampur and Sarbaz Valley, which have seasonal rivers.

Besides harming agriculture and vegetation in the region, prolonged drought has aggravated desertifica-

tion and intensified threats to wildlife.

IRNA quoted head of the provincial DoE, Parviz Aramanesh, as saying, "Given its proper ecological conditions, the area is a proper habitat for the endangered mugger or marsh crocodile as well as the valuable mangrove forests."

He elaborated that mangrove forests are among the important genetic reserves of south Asia and are used for shipbuilding industries.

"Apart from menacing the indigenous flora and fauna, the dearth has caused wild boars to attack villages and harm farmlands," he explained.

"Local hungers have been provided with hunting guns to ward off the animals."



Annual precipitation rate in the province is less than 100 millimeters.

## Sighting of Sea Eagle In Boujaq Park

Director general of Gilan Department of Environment said a pair of white-tailed sea eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), a species already pushed to the brink of extinction worldwide, was for the first time sighted in Boujaq National Park of the province, ILNA reported.

Shabanali Nezami added the white-tailed sea eagle is 80 to 90 centimeters in length. The bird of prey is only active in daytime.

"The hunting of the eagle is prohibited under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)," he said.

Nezami explained the specifications of the carnivorous eagle, remarking it is a huge bird of prey with a hooked thick beak, strong claws and long broad wings (200-240



White-tailed sea eagle is about 90 centimeters in length.

## Hospitals Violating Waste Law Face Cash Penalties

Hospitals which breach the law pertaining to efficient disposal of waste material would face cash penalties of between 100 and 200 million rials, according to an official with the Department of Environment in charge of supervising disposal of hospital and industrial waste, Pourkarimi.

"As per the law endorsed by the cabinet ministers on disposal of hospital waste, medical centers which refuse to sort out medical waste from non-medical garbage would be fined," she told Iran Blue Sky.

"The law has assigned the responsibility of waste disposal to the producer of the waste

material, which can in turn hand the task over to the municipality or the private sector. In that case, the municipality will be regarded as the contractor and the Ministry of Health as the employer."

Pourkarimi stated that there are a total 150 hospitals and 313 medical centers and clinics in the capital.

She reiterated the need for importing new incinerators and noted, "Hospital waste should not be recycled. We need microwaves, autoclaves and incinerators to handle such hazardous waste. The autoclave and microwave devices are used to make the infectious waste safe by beaming rays."

Johannes Kepler (German astronomer, 1571-1630): Nature uses as little as possible of anything.



Autumn in Haraz Road, Mazandaran province (Photo by Oshin D. Zakarian)

## Life-Like Habitat for Bernese Bears

Nearly 500 years after they were thrust into a pit in the city, the emblematic bears of the Swiss capital, Bern, are about to be moved to their own small nature reserve in the heart of the city, AFP reported.

Protests by animal lovers about conditions in the circular pit paid off last year when the city council decided that Tana, Delia, Pedro and Urs or their successors would be better off in a 10,000-square-meter, 6.9-kilometer-Swiss franc (4.5 million euro) riverside park from 2007.

The Bernese bears will remain a prime tourist attraction, but in a more natural habitat as the animals scamper around, fish, climb trees, pick berries, and dig their lair on the edge of the medieval city center, a World Heritage site.

Despite some improvements a few years ago, the bears barely have room for short sprint in the pit and their few pastimes—lounging on a concrete rock or scratching against a bush—are disturbed by onlookers who throw them fruits.

"We still receive protest letters from

shocked tourists," said Mark Rissi, spokesman for the Swiss society for the protection of animals.

In 1998, a group of protesters clamored into the pit to demand the bears be freed. At the time the animals were locked in their nearby pen.

Bears have been bred in the Swiss capital since 1513, as a tribute to Bern's founder, Duke Berthold V of Zähringen, who decided in 1193 to name the then settlement after the first animal he would kill while hunting.

The unfortunate victim was one of the country's brown bears—"Baeren" in the German language—which became extinct in Switzerland in the early 20th century.

The bear remains on Bern's coat of arms, although nowadays the animals in the pit are not native Swiss, but eastern Europeans or Spanish.

The planned park by the fast flowing River Aar, which cuts through a gorge around the old city, delighted Rissi, whose organization helped with the planning.

## Khorasan Has 75 Natural Resources Schemes

Director general of Khorasan Natural Resources Department said about 75 natural resources projects are under implementation in the provinces of North Khorasan, South Khorasan and Khorasan Razavi, IRNA reported.

Faramarz Zeinal-Pour explained that the schemes pertain to preservation of wooded areas, production of saplings, stabilization of running sands, afforestation and renovation of pastures.

He put the entire budget for execution of these projects at 70 billion rials, secured from national and provincial funds.

Zeinal-Pour emphasized that the culture of preserving natural resources

should be inculcated among the public and people should be informed of the economical values of such reserves.

He referred to the grazing of over four million head of livestock in the three provinces as a main factor behind destruction of natural resources, adding presently the plan to strike a balance between the pastures' capacities and the livestock population is underway in these provinces.

Zeinal-Pour noted that from the total 24 million hectares of natural resources, 12.8 million hectares are located in Khorasan Razavi. "Of a total 15.5 million hectares of rangelands in the Greater Khorasan, 7.3 million hectares are in Razavi province," he mentioned.

## DoE to Issue Hunting Permits

Director general of Tehran Department of Environment, Mohammad Hassan Pirasteh, said a limited number of permits would be issued for hunting large mammals in Tehran.

He told ISNA about 50 permits would be issued for hunting large and

mainly male mammals such as ram and billy goat.

"With regard to the limited number of permits compared to the applicants, they will be selected by random draw," he said, inviting those interested to refer to Tehran DoE for further information.

Pirasteh pointed out the measure was aimed to prevent a number of old wild animals from perishing.

"The deadline for submitting applications has been extended to November 16," he mentioned.

The aim is to prevent old animals from perishing.



## Canberra Invaded by Kangaroos, Moths

Australia offers no shortage of natural nasties ready to chomp, poison or sting the unwary, but residents in the capital are facing an unexpected new peril from drought-crazed kangaroos roaming the city in search of water, AFP reported.

The sleepy center of about 320,000 people in inland southeastern Australia proudly bills itself as "the bush capital", but its proximity to nature has thrown up unusual challenges to urban planners.

Tens of thousands of kangaroos live in the bushland of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) in which Canberra lies.

The animals, Australia's national symbol, are a common sight hopping around local golf courses and even the grounds of the governor general's mansion, Yarralumla.

In recent months, however, the worst drought in living memory has dried out the normally shy and nocturnal kangaroos' normal drinking

holes, forcing "mobs" of stressed and dehydrated marsupials to seek water in Canberra's lush parks and gardens.

Fearing the kangaroos would contaminate the city's water supply, ACT authorities ordered a cull of 1,000 marsupials in July, overriding outraged animal rights activists who said they were entitled to live.

City authorities have also cautioned residents against approaching the animals, warning the lovable marsupials had a dark side.

The kangaroos grow to a length of about 1.5 meters and can weigh up to 60 kilograms, with powerful hind legs tipped by a sharp central claw.

"Kangaroos will defend themselves vigorously if they feel threatened, meaning we must all take care when we encounter them in our nature reserves and public spaces," ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said.

"People with pets should be aware that it is a natural instinct for a

dog to chase a kangaroo. Kangaroos become alarmed when harassed by dogs, and it is likely that your pet will come off second best to a large kangaroo."

There have been two reports of dogs being killed by the marsupials and another woman was attacked when her poodle bit off more than it could chew in a local park.

Aside from marauding marsupials, Canberra residents also have to cope with an annual visitation of bogong moths attracted by the city lights during their migration to nearby mountain ranges.

Millions of moths congregate at Australia's Parliament House, clogging air-conditioning ducts and forcing parliamentary authorities to hire cleaners sporting vacuum backpacks for "moth patrol" to collect dead insects from the building's interior.

The moths cannot be controlled with insecticides because their bodies contain traces of arsenic, which kills the



Kangaroos have powerful hind legs tipped by a sharp central claw.

protected native birds that feed off them.

Parliament said this month it would reduce nighttime lighting around Capital Hill in the hope that the troublesome moths will simply continue on their way.

"External lighting levels around the building have been reduced to about half of normal capacity so that fewer moths are attracted to the building," head of parliamentary services Hilary Penfold said.