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JAN 1974

THE APPEARANCE OF AN ITEM IN THIS NEWSLETTER DOES NOT CONSTITUTE PUBLICATION

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Help!! This newsletter is both skimpy and belated, owing to a paucity of material. Special thanks to Wayne King, René Honegger, and John Ogden, who submitted most of the items contained in this edition. Please, let's hear from people.

GENERAL

The following appeared on page 228 of Vol. 1, No. 5 of Diving World, the official magazine of NDA (NAUI--National Association of Underwater Instructors--Diving Association):

"Crocodiles Swallow Stones. 680 crocodiles studied by British zoologist Dr. Hugh Cott, in Uganda and in Northern Rhodesia were found to have stones in their stomachs. Dr. Cott used X-ray to learn that the stones in the lower part of the stomach serve as a counterweight for the lungs, located higher up. The weight of the stones was found to be one per cent of the crocodile's weight."

It's encouraging to see the work of our Group members attracting attention outside the immediate field of crocodilian studies.

U. S. A

Sample prices for crocodilians from the November-December, 1973 price list of the Philadelphia Reptile Exchange:

- Crocodylus rhombifer, pair, 6 ft.--\$7000.00 pr.
- C. intermedius, 4 ft.--\$3500.00.
- C. johnstoni, 3 ft.--\$750.00.
- C. mindoriensis, 30 in.--\$750.00.
- C. moreletii, 3½ ft.--\$600.00.
- C. cataphractus, 4½ ft.--\$500.00.
- C. palustris, 3½ ft.--\$500.00.
- Melanosuchus niger, 3 ft.--\$400.00.

The moreletii is advertised as "U. S. A. zoo-raised". If this is true, one wonders: which American zoo, and how did the specimen get into the commercial market?

John Ogden submitted the following information on last summer's fatal alligator attack in Florida (text by Lovett Williams):

"Note to the file pertaining to alligator attack on a girl at Oscar Shearer State Park, Florida, based on a telephone conversation with Lt. Col. Brantley Goodson of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, on 22 August 1973.

"I discussed the incident involving the 16-year old girl allegedly killed and partially eaten by an alligator with Brantley Goodson on the phone. He advised that a thorough autopsy of the girl revealed that she did not drown, but died of massive hemorrhage of the liver caused by a broken rib from the crushed thoracic region. The damage was done by an alligator. The alligator also removed one arm and part of another arm and generally mauled the body. The arm and other parts were removed from the alligator stomach by a Wildlife Officer when the alligator was shot the next day.

"The alligator was a male measuring 11', 3". Weight was not recorded. As far as I can tell the thing has been handled only by Wildlife Officers. Biologists have not been involved. A more complete report will be available at a later date from Goodson's office in Tallahassee.--Lovett Williams"

John Ogden adds that a lawsuit by the victim's father is pending against the State agencies involved, claiming negligence in permitting swimming in a lake where an alligator was known to occur, on the assumption that it was harmless. *

GEORGIA

The following is from Dr. Howard Hunt, Curator, Atlanta Zoological Park:

"Crocodile Breeding at the Atlanta Zoological Park--An American crocodile C. acutus and three Morelet's crocodiles C. moreletii have produced eggs and young in 1973. Eleven C. acutus were hatched after being incubated for 106 days at 30 C. Eleven C. moreletii eggs on the verge of hatching after incubating 103 days in one nest were removed and buried in an empty nest mound being guarded by another female. The "foster" mother heard the hatchlings bark, opened the mound with her feet and took each baby crocodile to the water in her jaws. Once in the water the female washed away the shells and debris from the baby by moving her

* Additional data on this incident were provided by Howard Hunt of the Atlanta Zoo, who visited the site and talked to State Park officials there. The "lake" where the girl was attacked is small, more like a swimming pool-sized pond. The gator was a long-time resident of a nearby creek, and had only moved into the lake 10 days before the girl's death. Hatchling alligators producing distress grunts were present in the reeds around the lake. The girl went swimming alone in the dark, around 9:00 p.m.

jaws producing a current of water in and out of her mouth. The baby was safe inside the lower jaw pouch during this maneuver. After 5 min. of washing the hatchling swam out of the mouth. The male C. moreletii did not attempt to eat any of the swimming babies and ran other species of crocodilians out of the water. The "foster" mother also guarded the babies and took one back into her mouth when it was approached by an aggressive C. moreletii. We are still waiting for results on two other C. moreletii egg groups including the 13 laid by the "foster" mother."

MEXICO

The following is extracted from WWF International Progress Report for 1972 (March, 1973) No. 63, p. 5:

"Morelet's crocodile, Mexico—Propagation in 1973. First part of a progress report for 1972:

"During 1972, operating with quite limited funds, the principle (sic) objective was to have some of the specimens breeding successfully.

"This goal was attained in September, when at the Tuxtla Gutierrez Zoo the first batch was born; the new generation is doing very well up to now (March 1973).

"The rest of the animals in captivity at the Zoo and semi-captivity in Alejandria Lagoon are in good health and we hope that in the future other couples will mate successfully.

"Experiments are being made on feeding especially at Alejandria, trying to establish populations of different animal species which may be used as food for the crocodiles there.

"Field work for localization of new specimens, as well as for biological and etological observations, has been carried on along the State of Chiapas.

"Prof. Alvarez del Toro has prepared a complete monograph on the three species of Mexican crocodiles, which is now finished and is being edited. This was all the knowledge gained over the years on this project....."

COLOMBIA

Wayne King reports the following from Colombia:

"Colombia has promulgated a new series of wildlife regulations that affect crocodilians: The minimum size for Caiman crocodilus that can be

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hunted has been raised from 1.2 meters to 1.5 meters. The subspecies apaporiensis has been totally protected and may not be legally hunted. In addition, hunting of Caiman crocodilus has been totally prohibited throughout the Departments of Boyaca, Cundinamarca, Huila, Meta, Tolima, Arauca, Guainia, Vaupes, and Vichada. This is roughly the entire Orinoco basin in Colombia. Hunting of C. crocodilus is permitted for specimens over 1.5 meters in the jurisdiction of the Inderema (Colombian "Department of the Interior"), except from April to July.

"Hunting regulations are already (10 September 1973) in force, but trade and export regulations will not come into effect until after 15 October 1973 in order to permit companies to export their current stock.

"Excellent as these new regulations are, the hide trade may have already found a way around some of them. In the past Babillas (baby Caiman crocodilus) hides were exported to Japan in large quantities. Suddenly they are being "imported" into Colombia from Panama by the hundreds of thousands and then re-exported. It is suspected that these "Panamanian" Babillas actually originate in Colombia, and are re-imported to that country after being smuggled to Panama."

PERU

Supreme Decree No. 934-73Ag, passed 3 October 1973, bans indefinitely the hunting of all wild animals in Peruvian Amazonia.

RECENT LITERATURE OF INTEREST

Information provided by René Honegger.

Petzold, Hans-Günter, "Zum Aussterben Verurteilt? Über den gegenwärtigen Status und die Überlebenschancen der Panzerechsen." Monatsschrift für Ornithologie und Vivarienkunde, East Berlin, 1973.

A condensed account of the present status of the various crocodylian species.

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Best wishes to all for the New Year.

—James Powell, editor
Plainview, Texas, U. S. A.
9 January 1974