

and that there is a pressing need for additional nature reserves. Economic conditions, however, seem to make early action improbable in both cases.

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Sinai Wilderness Marred by Paint-spraying

Incredible as it may sound, a French 'artist', Jean Verame, has been spray-painting the mountains in the previously unspoiled valley of Bir Nafach, an area close to the historically sacred Mt Sinai, with thirteen tons of black and blue paints. What Verame refers to as adding 'a human dimension to Nature' seems to us the ultimate in graffiti. Verame began 'painting' in mid-October 1980, and soon, it was reported, boulders, peaks, and rock-walls, were literally black and blue—in polka-dots, solids, and squares. The natural desert sandstone hues of the mountains of southern Sinai will have to bear this desecration long after Verame completes his paint-spraying in January 1981.

Environmentalists in several countries, including Egypt, Israel, and the United States, tried unsuccessfully to halt the project. The painting was first called to the public's attention by the Israel Society for the

Protection of Nature, which, during Israeli occupation of the Sinai, was a major force in establishing conservation standards in the area. The whole effort seems to have the backing of some French and American 'art enthusiasts'—especially the American-based Society for Prospectives in Other Spaces and Dimensions. The Sierra Club and the Holyland Conservation Fund in the US are now worried that this type of activity might open the door to other forms of exploitation in this unique piece of land which has remained relatively pristine since ancient times, and is sacred alike to Christians, Moslems, and Jews.

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Olympia Prize for IUCN

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) has been awarded one of the two coveted Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation Prizes. According to the Foundation's citation, the 'Olympia' Prize was awarded to IUCN for its 'important contribution and effective action in the protection and conservation of the environment world-wide'. The Olympia Prize—together with an accompanying cheque of US \$100,000—will be presented to IUCN at a ceremony in Athens in June 1981. On the last occasion it was bestowed by the Greek President in an official ceremony attended by Greece's leading statesmen and the Foundation's President, Christina Onassis.

The Foundation was set up by the late Aristotle Onassis, a Greek shipowner, in memory of his son Alexander, who was killed in an air-crash. Though the Prize has a strong international mission, it is slanted towards the shipowner's homeland, and in selecting IUCN to receive it the Foundation's Committee of international statesmen, academics, and businessmen, noted that IUCN has played a prominent role in promoting nature conservation in Greece. The Union has helped in establishing

national parks, drawn up plans for the conservation of wetland sites such as the Evros Delta, and has generally provided a wealth of technical and scientific advice to the Greek government and private organizations involved in nature protection.

Recently, at a meeting attended by 12 Mediterranean states in Athens itself, IUCN played a major role in designing a treaty to set up a network of protected areas for the Mediterranean Basin. Commenting on the award, IUCN's Director-General, Dr Lee M. Talbot, said: 'The award of this prize comes as a timely endorsement not merely of the work of an organization, but of a noble cause—notably, living resources conservation. The world-wide membership of IUCN is working to preserve our global life-support system—forests, fish, wildlife, and other resources, in every continent [and] for the benefit of all mankind'.

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