

Strict Natural Reserve No.	Forest Reserve	Location	Area Hectares (Acres)	Soil and Parent Material	Rainfall (mm)	Ecological Zone
8	Bam Ngelzerma	2 km north of milepost 116, Maiduguri–Potiskum road; 14 km (9 miles) east of Damagun, 11 km (7 miles) west of Ngelzerma ( $11\frac{1}{2}$ – $11\frac{3}{4}$ °N, $11\frac{1}{4}$ – $11\frac{3}{4}$ °E).	142(350)	Underlying rock is apparently a red sandstone of late Cretaceous or early Tertiary age. Soil is a coarse red sand overlying lateritic ironstone remnants at no great depth.	762	Sudan savanna zone—mixed open savanna woodland.

#### Continued Conservation of Aldabra and Seychelles Biota

The Seychelles Government's concern about the conservation of Aldabra Island and its unique scientific heritage has been rightly praised. The remote Indian Ocean island was saved for science in 1966 when a proposal to convert it into an Anglo-American air staging-post was dropped, ostensibly on grounds of economy, but actually following the outraged protests of the international community.

After meetings in London attended by representatives of the Seychelles Government, the World Wildlife Fund, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the Royal Society of London, the Smithsonian Institution, and others who are interested, Sir Peter Scott, Chairman of the World Wildlife Fund, wrote to President James Mancham\* of the Seychelles to say how encouraging it was that Aldabra was unlikely to be spoilt by tourist development. He declared: 'I share with my colleagues a concern that this incredible atoll should somehow avoid the grave alterations to its unique character which would inevitably result from establishing hotels, roads, harbours, or airfields'.

At the London meetings plans were discussed to ensure continued conservation of the island after the ending, on 31 March 1980, of the present lease held by the Royal Society. The proposal favoured is for the establishment of a Seychelles Island Foundation which would ensure conservation and research on Aldabra, Cousin, and Aride, Islands. Limited tourism would be allowed but no facilities, such as an airstrip or hotel, would be built on Aldabra;

instead they would be located on other islands some distance away.

It is estimated that there are 150,000 Giant Tortoises (*Geochelone [Testudo] gigantea*) on Aldabra—relics of the Age of Reptiles that survived on oceanic islands, only to be wiped out by mariners and settlers except on Aldabra and the Galápagos Islands in the Pacific. There are also endemic birds such as the flightless White-throated Rail (*Dryolimnas cuvieri aldabrana*), the Aldabra Brush-warbler (*Bebrormis [Nesillas] aldabranus*), and the Aldabra Drongo (*Dicrurus aldabranus*). Altogether this rugged coral island is of outstanding interest to science as a living laboratory that has still not been widely changed by Man.

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\* Subsequently we ourselves wrote to his successor, His Excellency F. Albert René, more particularly about the importance of conserving the extraordinary wealth of endemic genera of palms etc. in Seychelles, and received back promptly a very gratifying letter dated 24 June 1977 in which President René referred to 'the preservation of our unique heritage of wild nature' and continued 'I can assure you that it is the policy of the new Government to continue to ensure that this heritage remains undisturbed' before ending in anticipation of a future meeting.—Ed.

#### Call for Immediate Ban on Commercial Whaling

An immediate ban on commercial whaling was demanded by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) on the eve of the June 1977 meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in Canberra, Australia. IUCN called on the Commission to ban all commercial whaling until (1) a thorough analysis has been made of existing data on whale populations and the impact of whaling; and (2) research programmes on living whales have been stepped up.

It is now three years since the IWC promulgated an International Decade of Cetacean Research, but little if any action is apparent.

IUCN also calls for far more stringent control on the killing of whales 'for scientific purposes'. During the past year the Government of Japan awarded permits for the killing of 240 Bryde's Whales (*Balaenoptera brydei*) in an area for which there was a zero quota. The southern hemisphere population of this Whale has been little studied, and a zero quota had therefore been set by the IWC Scientific Committee, pending research.

IUCN insists that the Japanese action—while not contravening the Convention, as scientific permits are outside IWC control—was wholly contrary to the spirit of the new management policy. The world community cannot accept that the needs of research are most usefully served

by killing a large number of these Whales. Ignorance can best be made good by the study of *living* whales—for example, by tagging or sighting surveys.

Sei Whales (*Balaenoptera borealis*) are a further cause for concern. Last year there was scientific dispute about the right quota then, and the IWC therefore undertook to ensure a reappraisal by scientists of the status of Sei Whales before the 1977 meeting. However, at the recent meeting of scientists in Tokyo there was even less agreement than last year. Sound management cannot be based on such a large measure of uncertainty.

Quite recently the chairman of the IWC Scientific Committee is reported to have claimed that all species of whales are safe, but IUCN does not consider that the evidence warrants this bold contention. In recent years quotas have been progressively lowered, and yet catches have usually been below quota and consisted of smaller animals than in earlier years. These are strong pointers to excessive killing.

IUCN, with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Wildlife Fund, has recently launched a global programme for marine conservation and the responsible use of the living resources of the seas. This programme serves the interests of all men everywhere, and IUCN calls for the International Whaling Commission to play its full part.