

The trip from the mainland to the Falklands kept Darwin's thoughts on questions of geographical distribution and species. So, too, he pondered differences within the Falklands. Later, having visited the Galápagos and seen subtle variations of tortoise and bird, Darwin commented in a notebook: "The only fact of a similar kind of which I am aware is the constant asserted difference between the wolf-like Fox of East and West Falklands Isds.—If there is the slightest foundation for these remarks, the Zoology of Archipelagos will be well worth examining; for such facts would undermine the stability of species."

Observations from the Falklands also in time buttressed Darwin's view of evolution. After reading Malthus on population in 1838 and deciding that population pressure was the driving force of natural selection, Darwin found his Falklands notes fitting quite nicely into the evolutionary thesis. He wrote in the second edition (1845) of his *Journal of Researches* of the prolific Falkland sea slug, which lays 600,000 eggs but produces only a few adults. Hinting at the selective powers of a harsh environment, Darwin noted in italics that "No fallacy is more common with naturalists, than that the numbers of an individual species depend on its powers of propagation."

During his stay in the Falklands, Darwin saw not only varieties of fox but also differing breeds of men. "On Friday a sealing vessel arrived commanded by Capt. Lowe; a notorious & singular man, who has frequented these seas for many years & been the terror to all small vessels. It is commonly said that a Sealer, Slaver & Pirate are all of a trade: they all certainly require bold energetic men. . . . In their manner, habits &c. I should think these men strikingly resemble the old Buccaneers."

Darwin and the captain of the *Beagle*, Robert Fitzroy, worried about the fate of the few British citizens in such a bleak and turbulent land. They worried with reason.

According to Frank, up to 30 whalers and sealing ships were usually hovering about the islands or lying at anchor, the crews armed with clubs and rifles. In addition to the gauchos on the moorlands, there were about a dozen in the settlement. At Port Louis they gambled, quarreled, and fought each other with long knives. Fitzroy characterized them as "characters fitter for the pencil of an artist than for the quiet hearth of an industrious settler."

The *Beagle* left the Falklands in April 1833 and returned a year later. The voyagers found their worst fears confirmed.

Endangered Species Act Reauthorized

After months of perilous navigation the Endangered Species Act is headed for a safe port in the form of a 3-year authorization from Congress. Both houses have passed versions of the act which appear to be satisfactory to all parties, having rebuffed efforts by Interior Secretary James Watt to limit reauthorization to 1 year.

The bills, now in conference, contain numerous amendments designed to speed up the listing process. The Senate bill, for which environment subcommittee chairman John Chafee (R-R.I.) managed to engineer unanimous Senate confirmation, would require that the Interior Secretary take no more than 12 months to decide whether or not a proposed species should be listed as endangered or threatened. It also explicitly authorizes citizen suits to bring about compliance. Environmentalists regard this as a major improvement that could prevent the open-ended delays that have plagued the listing process since Watt took office.

The bill adds flexibility to the controversial provisions on designation of critical habitat by specifying that it should be designated concurrently with species listings "to the maximum extent prudent and determinable." This means a species could be listed even when insufficient data are available to determine the habitat. The House bill also contains this change, as well as the 1-year deadline. In addition, the House bill says determinations on whether species are endangered should be made solely on a biological basis. This represents a staving off of pressures by development interests to insert economic considerations into evaluation of a species' status.

Another significant amendment in the Senate version would prohibit removal of endangered and threatened plants from federal lands. Currently, listed plants are only protected by state laws.

Pleasing to industry groups are measures, contained in both bills, that would streamline the exemption process which was created so the Tennessee Valley Authority could go ahead with the Tellico Dam despite

the snail darter. The Senate measure would shorten the maximum time allowed from 360 to 200 days; the House to 170 days.

Both bills would restore money for cooperative activities with states that the Administration wanted eliminated, and would continue authorizations at the current level of \$39 million a year.—**Constance Holden**

Society Formed to Study Anomalies

The first meeting of the Society for Scientific Exploration was held this month at the University of Maryland, where about 35 scientists gathered to hear what's going on with UFO's, psychokinesis, and other assorted "anomalies."

"Heretical science" is what Peter Sturrock of Stanford University's Institute for Plasma Research called the field. The assumption of the group was that it is not getting a fair shake because the phenomena appear to violate both prevailing beliefs and the prevailing power structure in science. Ron Westrum, a sociologist from Eastern Michigan University, compared most scientists' attitudes with those who denied the existence of meteorites until a spectacular fall in France in 1790, which eventually compelled scientific acceptance of that phenomenon. The implication was that today's scientists are unlikely to consider the possibility that an unknown class of flying objects exists until a fleet of UFO's lands on the roof at a physicists' meeting.

Nothing in the way of new research was presented at the meeting, which was mostly devoted to UFO's. All in all, there did not appear to be much for researchers of anomalies to get their teeth into.

Some of the topics discussed, such as ball lightning and animal navigation, are poorly understood but science does not dispute their existence or eschew them as fields of study. Other topics are totally unsusceptible to research since there is zero evidence to work with—such as extraterrestrial intelligence and reincarnation. Others, such as UFO's and strange beasts of the Bigfoot variety (grouped under the heading of "cryptozoology")