

Random Samples:

California, Here They Go

California, in many ways, should be a naturalist's paradise. The state has 748 species of vertebrate animals. Of these, 38% of the freshwater fish, 29% of the amphibians, and 9% of the mammals are found nowhere else in the world. More than half the 550 bird species breed in the state, and nearly one-third of the 5200 plant species, are endemic.

But driven by enormous population pressures, species are rapidly disappearing from California, as they are in many other parts of the country. Last week the California Academy of Sciences, together with the California Nature Conservancy, launched a traveling photo exhibit entitled "Portraits of Our Vanishing Wildlife" to alert the public to the problem.

The exhibit, photographed over a 2-year period by an Academy photographer, consists of color portraits of 25 of California's imperiled species. Included from the animal

world are the North American river otter (dubbed "the Arnold Schwarzenegger of the amphibious mammal world" for its great strength), the California brown pelican, and the giant kangaroo rat; the bird-footed checkermallow and Baker's meadowfoam are included from the plant world. Over the next 2 years the exhibit will tour the state's major urban centers.

Borrowing from the style of the *Harper's* Index, the Conservancy has developed a California Extinction Index to reinforce the message. Here are some highlights:

Number of counties in California: 58

Number of counties in California with at least one plant or animal species on the verge of extinction: 58

Number of plants and animals in California listed as endangered, threatened, or rare: 277

Number of plants and animals in California waiting as candidates to be listed as endangered, threatened, or rare: 627

Population of California in 1988: 27 million

Number of people who

"It went up; it came down. But it had absolutely no scientific value."

—Roald Sagdeyev, outgoing director of the Space Research Institute in Moscow, summing up the recent first flight of the Soviet space shuttle.

move to California every year: 600,000

Number of acres developed each year to accommodate population growth: 750,000

Number (in billions) of cockroaches in California: 100

Number (in hundreds) of native, endangered Delta Green ground beetles in California: 5

Number of yellow-billed cuckoos at the turn of the century: 70,000

Number of yellow-billed cuckoos in 1988: 150

The Energy Index

The *Harper's* Index style certainly is popular. Greenpeace recently issued its own Energy Index designed to show the effectiveness of energy conservation methods. Some excerpts:

Annual energy bill of the United States: \$420 billion

Annual savings attributable to energy efficiency improvements made since 1973: \$130+ billion

Barrels of oil imported to the U.S.: 6.8 million per day

Barrels of oil saved by energy efficiency improvements made since 1973: 13 million per day

Amount the U.S. Treasury spent in 1987 on energy conservation R&D: \$200 million

Amount the U.S. Treasury spends each year in subsidies to the nuclear power industry: \$15 billion

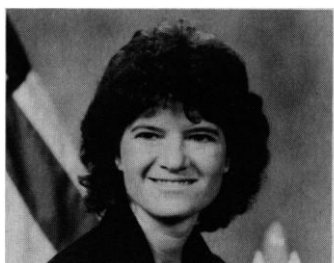
Year the joint DOE-industry research program on compact fluorescent lamps was halted: 1981

Year that General Electric began distributing Japanese-made compact fluorescent lamps: 1985

Amount saved in 1 year if the U.S. converted to best available lighting technology: \$30 billion

Sally May Ride

America's first woman in space is fueling rumors that she will be following Co-Director Sidney Drell in leaving the Stanford Center for International Security and Arms Control.



Sally Ride, who hasn't spoken to the press since fall 1987, issued a press release through the Stanford News Service asserting that she "may or may not be leaving Stanford" when her fellowship there expires at the end of the summer. Ride said she has been "talking to a lot of people and considering a lot of options," but that she would make no final decision before spring.

It has been widely rumored that Ride will leave because of Drell's departure 31 August in a dispute over the right to make professorial appointments to programs outside academic departments (*Science*, 9 December, p. 1371). In announcing his resignation, Drell said that "several of my outstanding younger colleagues . . . are now planning to leave."

Ride has a long association with Stanford. She earned her bachelor's degree (double major in English and physics) and her doctorate in physics at the university, and applied to be an astronaut after reading a NASA ad in the *Stanford Daily*.

■ GREGORY BYRNE



The San Joaquin kit fox. One of the endangered California species featured in the exhibit.

Susan Middleton