

18.69 Conservation of Arid Zone

Wetlands, especially in the Lake Eyre Basin, Australia

RECOGNIZING the twelve priorities for action listed in the IUCN Strategy for Wetland Conservation;

AWARE of the growing demands on supplies of freshwater throughout the world, and particularly in the arid zones;

CONSCIOUS of the particular importance and vulnerability of wetland areas within arid regions;

CONSCIOUS ALSO of their isolation from other gene pools, and their dependence on distant and often subterranean water sources;

AWARE ALSO of the extreme variability and unpredictability of the climatic and hydrological conditions governing these wetlands, and the consequent dependency of their biota on drought refuges;

AWARE FURTHER that the wetlands of the Lake Eyre Basin, overlying the Great Artesian Basin which is the largest discrete system of underground aquifers in the world, are an outstanding example of a wetland complex in an arid area, fed by major river systems which are entirely unregulated, and including an exceptional variety of wetland types, among them the Coongie Lakes, which are an internationally important habitat for waterfowl and migratory birds, listed under the Ramsar Convention;

NOTING that this wetland complex and those of other arid regions may be threatened by mineral development, cattle grazing, tourism and recreation, catchment clearance, pollution, upstream intervention in hydrological regimes and abstraction of underground water, and that the Lake Eyre Basin is under extreme stress from feral animal species, including rabbits, foxes and cats;

The General Assembly of IUCN—The World Conservation Union, at its 18th Session in Perth, Australia, 28 November-5 December 1990:

1. CALLS UPON the Governments of the Commonwealth of Australia, the Northern Territory and the States of South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales to:
 - a. investigate fully the vulnerability of the wetlands of the Lake Eyre Basin and the underlying waters of the Great Artesian Basin to development;
 - b. ensure adequate protection of these wetlands, including their catchment areas;
 - c. investigate thoroughly the case for nominating the wetlands of the Lake Eyre Basin under the World Heritage Convention;
2. CALLS UPON governments throughout the world, and especially State members of IUCN, to take adequate measures to protect wetlands in arid areas from activities which may cause their destruction or degradation.