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LETTERS

had something for breakfast that day that didn't agree with him. Let us hope so and be thankful that he realized, however belatedly, that his future lay in areas other than administration of public lands.

BILL KIRBY
Fairfax, Virginia

WE'RE DEALING with a madman! After visiting Ed Abbey's home in Wilmington Hole, Arizona, a friend recounted to me his horror upon finding a toy doll savagely torn into three parts and skewered on a fence post in front of the author's barren lawn.

Now, **OUTSIDE** is a real nice magazine. To insure the future success of your lovely periodical I would suggest that you cease printing the writings of such a deranged, primitive, sick, uppity barbarian. He could, after all, blow up something like that big dam down in Utah. And then I'm sure you wouldn't want his name in your nice magazine. Would you?

J.E.M.
Denver, Colorado

Turtle Scoop

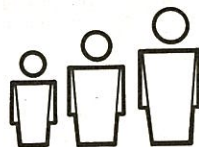
RECENTLY I HAD the opportunity to read "The Shame of Escobilla" [February 1978]. I want to commend you for preparing and publishing your observations and findings on this dismal situation. The information you have presented should be valuable to turtle conservationists and, hopefully, help to slow the decline.

GEORGE H. BALAZS
associate marine biologist and
member, IUCN Turtle Group
University of Hawaii at Manoa
Kaneohe, Hawaii

"THE SHAME of Escobilla" was a forceful story whose truth would bring any life-respecting person to tears. Unfortunately, sea-turtle slaughter is not restricted to Mexico, but also occurs in the United States, although not in such great numbers. Perhaps because this killing is more "subtle," the public remains uninformed, and those who know choose to ignore it.

For the past three years, I have studied a nesting population of loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) on one of the offshore islands of southern Georgia. The breeding season occurs from May through August, which is approximately the same period when the shrimping industry fishes coastal waters most heavily. The major

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cause of adult mortality during the breeding season proves to be drowning in shrimp nets. Last season alone a total of 79 dead turtles were washed up on three islands in this area, a frightening figure when the entire breeding population for this area has been estimated at approximately 1300 to 1800 females. This number becomes even more tragic when one sees the egg poaching that occurs. Under conditions where man is not a major predator, only about one out of every 300 hatchlings will survive to maturity, but with efficient poaching this number is reduced drastically. This will eventually lead to species extinction.

The problem is surely grave enough to warrant federal protection for this as well as other species of sea turtles. Once the loggerhead is on the Federal Endangered Species List, poaching laws can be more rigorously enforced. We must act now. Write your legislator, volunteer for sea-turtle patrols, but let your voices be heard.

SALLY C. LITWIN
Newark, New Jersey

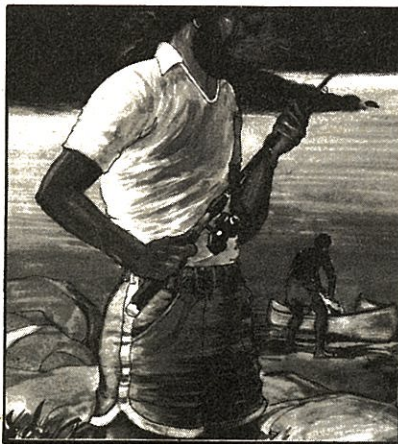
TIM CAHILL'S article on sea turtles is right on. Unfortunately, the situation is even worse than he reports. With the exception of those in Australia, all six species of sea turtles in the world are in imminent danger of extinction. Cahill witnessed the last stages of the liquidation of Mexico's great sea-turtle herds. If their reprieve does not come before the next breeding season—summer 1978—turtles will disappear from Mexico's seas within three years.

RICHARD S. FELGER
KIM CLIFFTON
DENNIS CONEJO
Research Department
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
Tucson, Arizona

The Mexican media are now covering the turtle controversy, and it is time for American preservationists to speak out. The best and most direct action is to write directly to Mexican president Jose Lopez Portillo at the National Palace, Mexico 1 D.F. The letters must be respectfully worded. They should state that all objective evidence indicates that the Pacific Ridley turtle population on the west coast of the state of Oaxaca is faced with total destruction. A ban on all fishing during the nesting season must be imposed immediately and not lifted until reasonable harvesting quotas can be set. These actions are necessary in order to preserve the turtles as a resource for future generations of Mexicans.

—THE EDITORS

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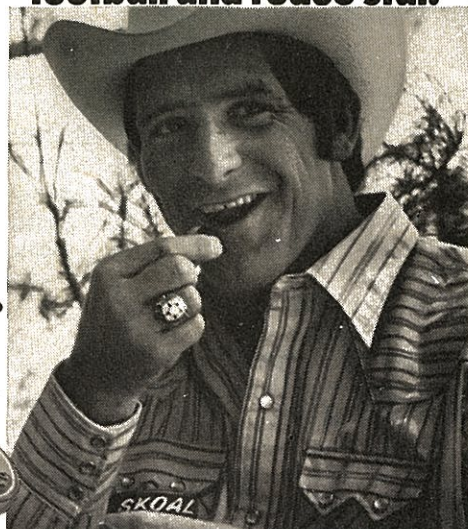
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