

reverse is happening. Tokyo has just banned import or sale of Libby's tomato juice for containing over twice the legal standard for lead contamination. Libby says the 0.4 ppm Japanese limit "does not even allow for natural variation" of tomatoes on the vine. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government replies that the Libby cans have 0.79 to 1.1 ppm, enough, it says, to cause lead poisoning if a person drank several glasses a day over a period of months.

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The Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs is holding three days of hearings this week to determine the effect of TV commercials on children's diets. A "moderate" viewer will see 80,000 commercials by the time he is 16. A large percentage of these advertise nontraditional, snack-type foods—the same types now experiencing a nationwide burst of sales. Committee chairman George McGovern said recent surveys reveal "a disturbing decline in some very important parts of the traditional American diet." □

An 80-nation agreement on endangered species

Representatives from more than 80 nations climaxed almost three weeks of negotiations by signing a powerful document last weekend in Washington that will shelter imperiled species, as well as their hides and other products, from the voracity of international commerce.

The International Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife, Animals and Plants will become effective, and binding on its members, when it has been ratified by 10 of its signatory countries. Under its umbrella will be 375 immediately endangered species and subspecies and 289 of imminent endangered status.

"We were determined," says Russell E. Train, head of the President's Council on Environmental Quality and also of the U.S. delegation to the convention, "that the convention also extend to wildlife species found on the seas and not belonging to any nation." □

A case in point is whales, on which a few major whaling nations including Japan and Russia had previously adopted only limited quota systems rather than the 10-year moratorium proposed by the United States (SN: 7/8/72, p. 23). Both Japan and Russia signed the new convention; in fact, the only major power not at the convention was the People's Republic of China.

Train pointed out, however, that the several months that will probably pass before the convention is ratified into effect will have to be a time of close watching. "During this period," he told the representatives at the signing, "all nations must be especially protective of their endangered wildlife. The appendices to this convention could, in the hands of unscrupulous persons, be used as a 'shopping list' of plants and animals." A grandfather clause in the convention exempts hides and goods taken before it comes into effect, so poachers and even lawful hunters about to be put out of lawful business may be working overtime. □

Islands in the stream: A gift from Agnes

Last summer's Hurricane Agnes was certainly at least 99 percent villain. However, it also left one apparently unprecedented windfall: a 500-acre fan of islands in northeastern Maryland's Susquehanna River.

In only two days, Agnes stirred up 50 million tons of sediment from a nearby reservoir, washed it over a dam and dumped it at the mouth of the river near the town of Havre de Grace—a century's work by ordinary processes. "This," says marine geologist J. R. Schubel of the Chesapeake Bay Institute at Johns Hopkins University, "is the only time anything like this has occurred in the Chesapeake Bay since man has been here."

Some area conservationists are excited about the chance that the new delta could help restore the Susquehanna's slipping position as a shelter for ducks, geese and other waterfowl. Pollution in the river has increased until it is smothering the submerged vegetation that attracts and feeds the birds, and the virgin islands could provide new wetlands for both flora and fowl.

Unfortunately, the same waters that deposited the cays may also erode them away. But there's a plan.

Environmental Concern is a fledgling (born in December) ecology organization that is working at Hambleton Island, a nearby established



Environmental Concern

Instant islands fan out across the Susquehanna—from Agnes with love.

wetland, to find a way of planting the new islands with cordgrass and other marsh plants, both to attract the birds and to stabilize the sand.

A major problem, however, is the very birds for whom the islands are supposed to be a present. Last year, Environmental Concern, then an affiliate of the Nature Conservancy, planted more than 60,000 deep-rooting marsh-plant seedlings on a test beach to study wetlands preservation. Seven months later the man-made marsh was full-grown. Then, last winter, voracious hordes of ducks and geese raided the area and consumed all but about 20 percent of the young plants.

The problem on the new islands will thus be to keep the waterfowl away from the plants for a year or two so that the roots can get a foothold. The organization has been try-

ing out scarecrows, floats, balloons and mirrors on Hambleton Island, none with overwhelming success. Last week members clipped some of the plants back as close to the ground as possible to see if reducing their visibility will help, and they may add blinking strobe lights.

Funding is another problem. A grant from Maryland will pay for two acres of planting on the new cays, and Environmental Concern is only aiming hopefully for 10. Also, the islands slope so gradually that the 500 acres shrink to about an acre at high tide, which means that planting probably has to be done by hand, since any heavy machinery that breaks down could be swept away.

Without planting, the islands could be eroded away in a few years. The ducks are waiting.