

# FIELD NOTES

## A giant step for tortoises



ALEX BENWELL

Thanks to work carried out by 19 year-old Adam Moolna, giant tortoises may breed again on St Anne's island in the Seychelles

**G**iant tortoises may breed again on St Anne's island in the Seychelles, thanks to the work of a British student. Nineteen-year-old Adam Moolna is working voluntarily for the Seychelles

Marine Parks Authority during a gap year, before going to Durham University. He has come up with a plan to reduce stress among the penned tortoise population to encourage them to breed. "In the wild, when

there are around six tortoises per hectare, they lay around 12-14 eggs per year," he said. "But breeding falls dramatically when the habitat gets too crowded. In the original pen on St Anne's there were 29 adults and seven youngsters — around 1,000 animals per hectare."

Not only was the original pen crowded, but the ground was bare earth and the tortoises were thrown kitchen waste for food, rather than being allowed to graze. Adam is now building three larger pens, incorporating grassland and features to stimulate the creatures. He plans to choose some animals for breeding and put them in one pen during the January-to-April breeding season. "We'll essentially be mimicking nature," he said. Adam's work has been a lifelong ambition. "My family's from Mauritius," he explained. "I first went there when I was five and that's when I fell in love with giant tortoises."



## Marathon madness blows hot and cold

**I**f you fancy a chilly fitness challenge why not run a marathon in Antarctica? Up to 100 people are expected to take part in marathon and half-marathon races scheduled to take place simultaneously on King George Island, Antarctica on 5 February 2001. The races are being marketed by Marathon Tours, a US-based company which organises long-distance running events around the world. For more information take a look at [www.marathontours.com](http://www.marathontours.com)

If you're a creature more suited to warm climes, then how about running under the African sun? The Tusk Trust is appealing for volunteers to run alongside athletes in the Safari Marathon in Kenya, which raises money for conservation and wildlife projects. The challenge involves running on dirt roads around two 21-kilometre loops through the scenery of East Africa on 27 August.

All profits from the event will be distributed by Tusk Trust between local community and conservation projects. About 35 per cent will go to the Lewa Conservancy, the 14,000-hectare game reserve that is hosting the event. For more information call Tusk Trust on 020 7978 7100.

KATHIE ATKINSON/OSF

## River deep and mountain high



RSGS

You could soon be canoeing down the Belize river

**F**ancy yourself as a bit of canoe connoisseur? Then why not take up the Mayan World Canoe Challenge April 2001. Set up by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society to raise funds for its Scotia Centenary Appeal, the challenge will involve canoeing more than 200 kilometres over eight days down the Belize river to the Caribbean sea.

Along the way, participants will get to learn about the medicinal powers of local plants, climb to the top of a Mayan temple and spot howler monkeys. Jungle survival training and canoeing hints will be provided by expert guides. For more information, please call 0141 337 2566.