

R E S E A R C H

Symposium to focus on endangered species

By GISELE WINTON

Saturday, March 5, 1988 marks the date of the 14th scientific symposium sponsored by the Association of Graduate Students in Biological Science. This year's symposium is entitled Conservation Genetics, and should attract a wide audience both scientific and nonscientific as it will be discussing the current state and future of animals in danger of extinction. Admission to the conference, being held in Moot Court, Osgoode Hall, is free, and all are welcome to attend the symposium which begins at 9:00 a.m.

Conservation genetics is an exciting new field of biology. "It applies population genetic theory to animals that are in danger of extinction," states Steven de Belle, graduate student of biology and an organizer of the symposium. The first four speakers will discuss the use of population genetic theory to determine why problems of decreased species diversity have arisen. They will also attempt to predict how these problems can be solved. The fifth and sixth speakers discuss managed animal populations in the wild and in captivity respectively. "The beauty of this symposium is that it brings together the people who are doing molecular genetics and theoretical genetics with the people who manage wild or captive population of animals. An exchange of this kind of informa-

tion should be valuable to both parties," states Brian Hickey, a graduate student of biology and another organizer of the symposium.

Four of the six speakers at the symposium are very well respected in their field, and are expected to draw a scientific audience from universities and research institutions from across Ontario, Quebec and the North Eastern states. The symposium committee expects to receive 300-500 people to the symposium. One of these speakers, Dr. Stephen O'Brien from the National Cancer Institute, Frederick, MD, will be discussing the natural history of the African Cheetah, and describing how his findings of genetic similarity among cheetahs in the wild may indicate that the cheetah is doomed to extinction in the near future. O'Brien's research in this area was the cover story of the May 1986 *Scientific American*.

The symposium is financially assisted by Bio/Can Scientific Inc., Pharmacia Inc., LKB Instruments Inc., Bio-Mutatech Inc., Probtect Inc., the Faculty of Science, York Ad Hoc Research Fund, the Department of Biology, York Graduate Students Association, York Graduate Dean's Development Fund, and the York University Biological Society. Students and faculty can obtain more information from Elizabeth Tillier-Potvin at 736-5497.

Interest aid for OSAP debts

By JAMES FLAGAL

Students who are being faced with a substantial amount of loan debts upon graduation may now be able to find some financial relief through a new programme announced by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) last Thursday.

Students eligible for the programme can have the MCU pay interest on their student loans for a period of up to 18 months after graduation. MCU already pays the interest which students accumulate from loans while they are attending school. Previously all students were forced to start taking over interest payments immediately following their graduation.

Now, if a graduating student can prove financial need, MCU will continue to assume interest payments on his/her loans. Eligibility is based on the income of the graduate, his/her spouse's income, and the number of dependents which the couple possesses as compared to the size of the monthly student loan payments.

According to Barbara Hauser, a spokesperson for MCU, graduates must apply for the programme every six months, and can only retain interest relief for three terms, or 18 months. The government took the six-month term approach, says Hauser, "because it's been our experience that a graduate's employment situation may change drastically within that period, allowing them to take over loan payments as soon as possible."

"Essentially, the programme buys the graduate some time," Hauser explains, "so they're not faced with these huge payments right after they get out of school while they're hunting for a good job."

But Tim Stutt, Communications Director with the Ontario Federation of Students (OFS), sees the programme as "just another patchwork solution while the government continues to avoid dealing with the real

problem." According to Stutt, the only way to resolve the debt problem for students is to increase the amount of grants which the government currently offers in its Ontario Student Aid Plan (OSAP).

Many students are forced to supplement their provincial grant with a loan, simply because the grant is not enough to live on and pay for all school expenses. Also, the eligibility system only makes undergraduate students eligible for grants, and many students who have difficulty proving their financial need for the grant are forced to settle for a loan.

Many students are left with an enormous amount of debt upon graduation, says Stutt. According to figures released by the Ministry, over 5,300 students who graduated in 1986 faced a debt load of \$1000 or \$5000. Over 6000 graduates had to deal with loans totalling between \$5000 and \$10,000, while just under

3300 faced loans between \$10,000 and \$15,000. Approximately 1200 students were over \$15,000 in debt after 1986 graduation.

Stutt accuses the Ministry of copying the interest relief programme which the federal government already has in place for its Canada Student Loans. But Hauser points out that the province's programme will consider even those candidates who have jobs, while the federal government's programme demands that graduates be unemployed in order to be eligible.

Hauser also notes that the Ministry will pay for both the Ontario and Canadian portion of the student loan. MCU estimates that the programme will cost the government between \$350,000 and \$375,000. Applications and details about the programme will be available in mid-March at most banks.

Student poll is planned

cont'd from page one

first in a series of programmes "designed to foster a more positive environment for foreign students." The Secretary of State, the Department of External Affairs, and the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs working with the provinces will also be announcing programmes in the near future designed to improve Canada's foreign student situation.

One of the groups responsible for advising the government on its recent employment programme is the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE). An association of groups and colleges, the group promotes the mobility of students and educators across national borders. CBIE is currently launching a nation-wide study to probe the attitude of Canadian foreign students on these issues.

The study, funded by the Department of the Secretary of State, will survey approximately 3000 students from across Canada—about 200 of these from York. "It will provide a basis for developing policies and planning services and programmes for international students," says CBIE's Director of Policy and Public Affairs, James Fox. "At present we do not know much about their experience in Canada and whether our institutions are meeting their needs."

Hortsing says the survey will be mailed to designated students this week, and that they must be completed and returned to the Office of Student Affairs (124 Central Square) no later than March 11. CBIE hopes to have a report on the study released by the fall.

Details of the programme will be available at all Canada Employment Centres in two weeks.

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On bearing a particularly good turn of phrase
Oscar Wilde remarked "I wish I said that."
The painter Whistler replied "You will Oscar, you will."



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