



Action

INSIDE
WIN AN EXCLUSIVE
WILD ISLES
BAG & SCARF
PAGE 30

THE MAGAZINE FOR WWF MEMBERS

AUTUMN 2022



WHERE JAGUARS ROAM

How you're helping people in the Amazon live alongside this forest icon



FOREST-FRIENDLY FARMING

Our new farm schools in Peru are helping ranchers live in harmony with the rainforest

SPEAKING UP FOR NATURE

Megan McCubbin talks about protecting the planet – and becoming a WWF ambassador



FORESTS NEED WILDLIFE TO THRIVE, AND WE NEED FORESTS TO FIGHT THE CLIMATE CRISIS

TOGETHER, WE CAN BRING OUR FORESTS BACK TO LIFE



In the UK, we have a strange relationship with our woodlands. 'Wildwoods' and trees such as the English oak form part of our national identity. But with less than 13% tree cover, the UK is one of the least-wooded countries in Europe.

Only 7% of the UK's woodlands are in a state of good ecological health. Ancient woodlands – some of which have existed in our landscapes for more than four centuries – are home to our rarest species, and are twice as good at storing carbon as we thought. Yet they cover only 2.5% of the UK and are under constant threat from human activities and climate change.

Moreover, the majority of our most precious woodlands sit outside protected areas, with only 16% found in areas designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, the highest form of protection.

The government in England has set a target to increase tree cover by a few per cent by 2050, but there's no defined plan to prioritise the natural woodland on which nature depends.

If protected and given space to regenerate, the UK's woodlands can help address the triple challenge of averting climate change, restoring nature and securing the health and prosperity of a growing population.

Mary Gagen, chief adviser on forests

Turn to page 6 to learn about the threats to global forests and what we can do to protect them.



Around the world, woodlands are fantastic carbon catchers, provide a home for thousands of species, and support livelihoods for millions of people. Yet up to 70% of ancient woodlands in the UK have already been lost

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MEET THIS ISSUE'S GUEST CONTRIBUTORS



VALERIA BORON is WWF's senior

programme adviser on jaguars. She says: "As their habitat is destroyed, jaguars come into more contact with humans and livestock, which can be detrimental on all sides."



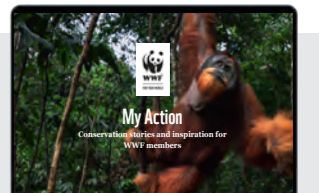
JAMIE GORDON is WWF's senior programme adviser for

Latin America and a forest conservation expert. "What happens in the Amazon affects the world," he says. "If we lose the Amazon, we lose the fight against climate change."



MEGAN McCUBBIN is a zoologist and presenter

and one of WWF's new ambassadors. She discusses her passion for nature and her new book, dedicated to "the species that make this curious world so beautiful".



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wwf.org.uk/contact

01483 426333

WWF-UK Living Planet Centre, Rufford House, Brewery Road, Woking, Surrey GU21 4LL

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MEET THE ACTION TEAM

Editor Liz Palmer editor@wwf.org.uk

Editorial executive Emma Brill

Head of supporter engagement Katie Dogra

Supporter engagement manager Stephen Osborne

Senior editor Guy Jowett

For Our Media

Consultant editor Sophie Stafford

Senior art editor Nicole Mooney

Art editor Bob Bewick

Designer Julia Young

Managing editor Charlotte Martyn

Production editor Sarah Newman

Senior account manager Katy Hewett

Account executive Kajal Grant-Hindocha

Design director Will Slater

Editorial director Dan Linstead

THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Paul Bloomfield, Valeria Boron, Stanislaw Czaplicki, Mary Gagen, Jamie Gordon, Jason Harasimo, Barney Jeffries, Megan McCubbin, Mike Unwin



YOU HELPED STUDY AND PROTECT RIVER DOLPHINS IN BOLIVIA

With your support, a fishing community in Bolivia has been working with scientists to monitor rare river dolphins. The country is home to a unique species of pink dolphin – the bufeo or Bolivian river dolphin. But these elusive creatures can be hard to spot in the murky waters of the Bolivian Amazon, and relatively little is known about them.

Our colleagues in Bolivia are working with local fishers to monitor and protect the dolphins – and their own livelihoods. Along with pollution and habitat degradation, fishing is a major threat to river dolphins, either because their prey is overfished or because they get caught accidentally. But fishers in Puerto Villarroel on the Ichilo river have become the dolphins’ allies, because they understand that a healthy dolphin population is a sign that the river is healthy too.

These fishers are now using a mobile app we helped develop, which enables them to record information about the dolphins they see, including the date and location, the weather, and whether the dolphin is a male, female or calf. The app works without an internet connection so it can be used in the most remote areas. Fishers have also taken part in dolphin-counting research expeditions. ■

“WITH A BIT OF TIME, TOLERANCE AND SPACE, NATURE CAN THRIVE”

MEGAN McCUBBIN, WWF AMBASSADOR

YOU HELPED PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE THRIVE TOGETHER IN KENYA

Your support is improving the lives of Maasai communities in Kenya and Tanzania and preventing conflict with elephants, lions and other wildlife. In late 2020, we launched a fundraising campaign to support Land for Life – a community-led conservation project that aims to improve the wellbeing of 27,000 people across an area of over 8,400 sq km.

Thanks to your generosity, we raised an amazing £4.76 million, including £2 million in match funding from the UK government. That’s allowed us to step up support for African People & Wildlife’s human-wildlife coexistence officers. These local teams provide a rapid response to reports of attacks on livestock or the presence of large carnivores, and help prevent retaliation against wild animals. From July 2022 to June 2023, 40 officers responded to 580 incidents, preventing the killing of at least eight carnivores. Their searches for lost livestock prevented the potential predation of over £515,000 worth of livestock. Human-wildlife coexistence officers also support communities to grow ‘living walls’ by planting trees to secure livestock enclosures and protect livestock from predators, creating 179 eco-friendly barriers that will benefit over 2,500 people and protect 29,700 animals. ■



YOU HELPED EXPAND A UNIQUE NATIONAL PARK IN COLOMBIA

Your support has helped Indigenous communities in Colombia to increase the size of a national park, bringing extra protection for the area’s unique species.

Towering above the beautiful beaches of Colombia’s Caribbean coast, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta contains Colombia’s two highest peaks. Its varied habitats, from coastal forests to snowy peaks, are home to a staggering range of wildlife, including jaguars, peccaries, tapirs, howler monkeys and around 70 species of birds and 17 amphibians that don’t live anywhere else. The Sierra Nevada National Natural Park is already considered the most important protected area in the world for endemic species (those found nowhere else).

Now a further 172,854 hectares have been added to the park, increasing the area under protection by nearly 45%. The Arhuaco and Kogui peoples led efforts to expand the park, with support from WWF-Colombia and other partners. As well as benefiting biodiversity and preventing deforestation, increased protection will help to safeguard the culture, ancestral knowledge and livelihoods of the Indigenous communities who have looked after the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta for generations. Four Indigenous communities – Arhuaco, Kankuamo, Kogui and Wiwa – live within the area that they know as the Heart of the World. ■

My Action

DISCOVER MORE

wwf.org.uk/myaction

Visit your members-only site to find more successes you’re helping achieve around the world

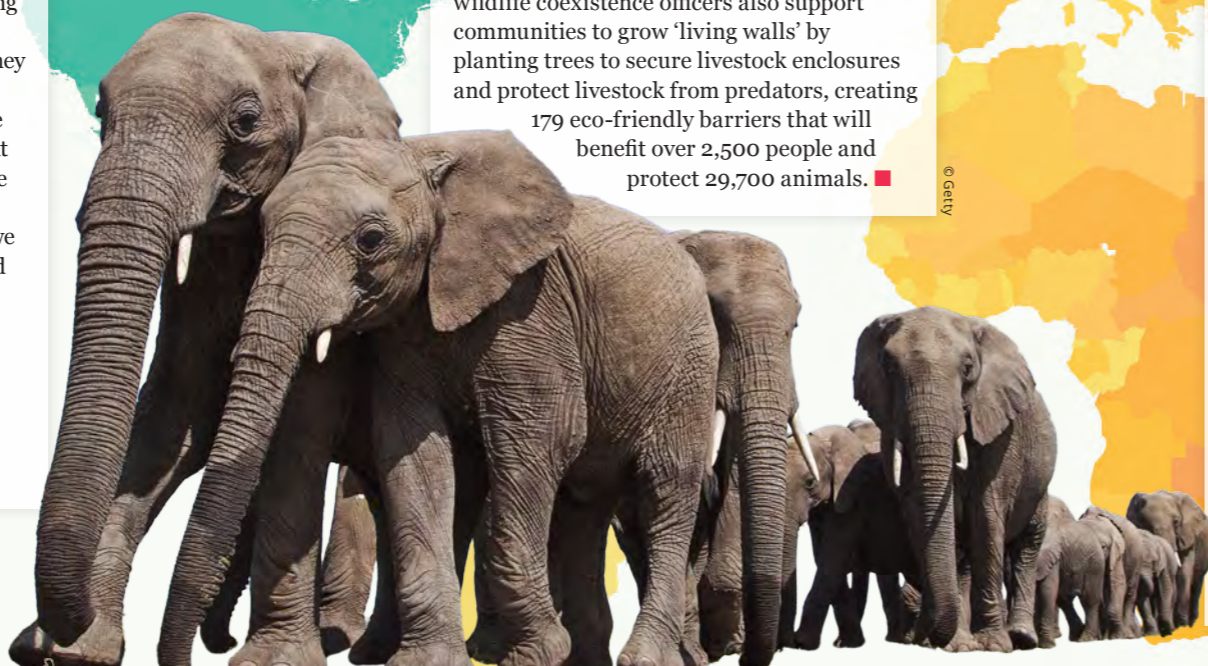


YOU HELPED COUNT SNOW LEOPARDS IN NEPAL

Thanks to you, we have a better idea about the status of snow leopards in Nepal’s largest national park. A camera-trap survey you supported revealed an estimated 90 snow leopards in Shey Phoksundo National Park, a vast protected area in the Himalayas. That’s an average of 2.2 cats per 100 sq km, though some areas of the park have a higher population density than others.

WWF supported the survey in partnership with the government and local communities and conservationists. As the first comprehensive scientific survey of the area, it’s an important step towards estimating the national snow leopard population. It will help guide future conservation efforts for a species threatened by climate change, the illegal wildlife trade and conflict with people.

Shey Phoksundo National Park includes snow-capped peaks, but below the snow line local communities make a living growing crops and raising livestock. Snow leopards sometimes prey on livestock and might be killed in retaliation, so tackling conflict is a priority. With your support, we’re working with communities to protect their livestock, set up insurance and compensation schemes for herders who do lose animals, and develop ways to improve their livelihoods. ■



TOGETHER, WE DID IT!

Thanks to your membership, we can help protect wildlife and wild places. Here are some of the great things supporters like you have helped achieve

WWF IN ACTION

How we're bringing our world back to life

Huge swathes of the world's forests are being destroyed every day. It's often seen as more economically viable to cut forests down than protect them. We're working to change that view

PUTTING FORESTS ON A PATH TO RECOVERY

The world's forests are under threat. Now WWF is shining a light on how the world is failing on its forest commitments and what we need to do to get back on track.

Forests are crucial for nature and people. They provide food, fuel, shelter and income for around a billion people, a home for countless species, and they regulate our climate. Despite this, we're failing to protect our vital forest life system. In the last two decades, we've lost more forest globally than we've restored – a staggering 10 million hectares of forest were cut down every year between 2010 and 2020. And we lose a football pitch-sized area of tropical forest every five seconds.

Despite government and industry pledges, we're not on track to halt and reverse deforestation by 2030. Instead, forests are heading for a future where they're empty of

wildlife and degraded by wildfires, climate change, illegal activities and unsustainable development and food production.

Every year up to 100 times more money is invested in activities that harm forests than is spent on actions that could save and restore them. This is depriving local and Indigenous communities of vital resources, while more than a billion people in forested areas live in poverty. We must change the way we finance, use and manage forests to stop the destruction of the unique natural wonders that remain – and to restore what's been lost. There's still time to do this.

In October, the latest Forest Declaration Assessment – of which WWF is a partner – will give its assessment of our lack of progress on forest commitments. And our *Forest Pathways* report reveals what we need to do to get back on track and recommends ways of reaching our goals.

Forest-rich nations and territories need support to grow and manage their natural resources sustainably – not to be given only one option of damaging their forests as they develop economically. We know forests can thrive under the stewardship of Indigenous peoples and local communities. By strengthening their land rights, we can help reduce poverty and ensure all forest peoples benefit from, and protect, their local environment.

The UN climate change conference in November, COP28, will be an opportunity to remind governments that have pledged to protect and restore our forests, and the rights of those who live in them, of their promises: to halt and reverse deforestation, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to change course to limit global warming to 1.5°C. We must take action now so that our forests can thrive once again.

FOUR WAYS YOU CAN HELP FORESTS

We can all get involved to help secure a better future for forests. Here are some ideas...



ADD YOUR VOICE

Email your MP to ask them to hold the UK government to account on its promises to protect forests: www.wwf.org.uk/hold-leaders-to-account



MAKE A CHANGE

Download the My Footprint app to find more ways you can help nature: www.wwf.org.uk/myfootprint



FIND OUT MORE

Read about our work on forests and download the *Forest Pathways* report at: www.wwf.org.uk/forests



TAKE ACTION FOR WOODLANDS

Find out why it's so important to protect UK woodlands: saveourwildisles.org.uk/habitats/woodlands

SHARE YOUR FOREST PHOTOS

Send us your snaps of UK forests and we'll showcase the best photos online. You could even win a copy of *Wildlife Photographer of the Year: Portfolio 33* myaction.wwf.org.uk/your-forest-photos



My Action

NEWS IN BRIEF



ACTION FOR ELEPHANTS

Kenya has launched a new national action plan to ensure its elephant population can thrive safely with people. The comprehensive strategy will guide conservation efforts in Kenya over the next 10 years. It aims to secure and expand elephant habitats, prevent unlawful killing of elephants and reduce the illegal trade in elephant products through law enforcement and community engagement. Other priorities include reducing conflict with people, and safeguarding local communities' rights to govern their resources and help them benefit from living alongside elephants.

NEWS IN NUMBERS



A survey for WWF Cymru has found that 96% of residents in rural Wales agree that farmers have an important role to play in protecting nature. The Welsh government will soon share proposals for its Sustainable Farming Scheme, which aims to help farmers produce food sustainably while tackling the climate and nature crisis.



An amazing 380 new species have been discovered in the Greater Mekong region in south-east Asia in the last two years. The discoveries, described in a WWF report, include a colour-changing lizard, a thick-thumbed bat, a poisonous snake named after a Chinese goddess, an orchid that looks like one of the Muppets, and a tree frog with skin that resembles thick moss.

NEWS IN BRIEF



© Richard Edwards / WWF-UK

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION RECOGNISED

Nepal's Terai Arc Landscape has been shortlisted as a World Restoration Flagship as part of the ongoing UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, in recognition of long-term efforts to protect and restore nature. With your support, we've been working with the Nepalese government, local communities and other partners across this vital landscape that's home to tigers, greater one-horned rhinos and Asian elephants.



© Chris Hails / WWF

PANDA POO POINTS TO PROGRESS

For the first time, we've found unmistakable evidence of giant pandas using a bamboo forest we helped restore - in the shape of panda poo and half-eaten bamboo stems! Back in 2005, we started planting more than 200 hectares of bamboo habitat in a wildlife corridor that links two nature reserves in China's Shaanxi province. The area had been split in two by a busy road, which left local panda populations cut off from each other. Wildlife sightings have been increasing in the newly restored forest, and now we have the clearest signs yet that pandas are using the corridor to roam.

TIGER NUMBERS CLIMB IN THE HIMALAYAS

Brilliant news from Bhutan, where tiger numbers have shot up by over a quarter in just a few years.

According to the latest national tiger survey, the Himalayan kingdom is now home to an estimated 131 tigers - an increase of 27% since the first-ever systematic survey was conducted in 2015. This fantastic achievement is the result of strengthened law enforcement to prevent poaching, efforts to protect and improve tiger habitat, and community-based tiger conservation programmes.

At around a quarter of the size of the UK, Bhutan is the smallest of the 13 countries where tigers are still found. But estimating the tiger population in this remote, rugged territory is a major undertaking.

The survey, which WWF supported the government in completing, involved more than 300 field rangers and 1,201 camera locations covering 85% of the country. Tigers were snapped at over 15% of the camera trap locations, including in two areas of forest where they'd never been seen before.

The survey confirmed that tigers are breeding throughout the country. It's likely that some of these tigers will

disperse into other parts of the region, including Manas National Park across the border in India.

"This is an extraordinary conservation achievement for Bhutan, which now joins a small number of countries that have increased their tiger population over the last decade," says Stuart Chapman, who leads WWF's Tigers Alive Initiative. "As tiger numbers increase, challenges can intensify, yet Bhutan is perfectly positioned to be a global champion for approaches that support coexistence between tigers and people."

Tigers are sacred in Bhutan, and the support of local communities has been crucial in boosting their numbers. But as the tiger population grows, so does the risk of tigers coming into conflict with people. In some areas, tigers are increasingly preying on livestock.

As well as threatening people's livelihoods, this could undermine local support for conservation and lead to tigers being killed in retaliation. From supporting insurance and compensation schemes for farmers to building tiger-proof livestock pens, we're working hard to find solutions that will enable people and tigers to coexist.



Nestled in the heart of the Himalayas, between India and China, Bhutan is one of the priority areas for the long-term survival of tigers



My Action

DISCOVER BHUTAN'S TIGERS!

Watch our exclusive documentary at myaction.wwf.org.uk/bhutan-tigers

© Doops



Every year, thousands of Indigenous peoples travel from all over Brazil to meet in the capital, Brasília, to demand the government protect their rights. This year, the Free Land Camp called for Indigenous lands to be officially recognised

INDIGENOUS LANDS FOR LIFE

In good news for the Amazon, the climate and human rights, six new Indigenous lands received official recognition in Brazil in April.

The first new Indigenous territories to be recognised in the country since 2018 were signed into law at the Free Land Camp, Brazil's largest gathering of Indigenous peoples, attended by representatives of more than 200 Indigenous groups.

Indigenous lands play a critical role in fighting deforestation, climate change and nature loss. They cover roughly an eighth of Brazil, including a quarter of the Amazon. Just 1.6% of deforestation in Brazil between 1985 and 2020 occurred in these lands. Between 2004 and 2012, when more than 100 Indigenous lands were demarcated, Amazon deforestation fell by 83%.

Under president Jair Bolsonaro, Indigenous rights came under attack and deforestation soared. The country's new government has created a Ministry of Indigenous Peoples and has pledged to protect the Amazon.

The Free Land Camp also brought news that two important bodies for influencing government policy on Indigenous issues will start meeting again after being on hold since 2017.

© Nayjinkress / WWF-Brazil

BEST FOOT FORWARD

Huge thanks to all of you who joined and fundraised for our Great Wild Walks in Epping and Delamere this summer.

We challenged you to walk five or 10 miles through the forest to raise funds to save the places you love, as part of our new walking series. Hundreds of you brought along family and friends and joined like-minded people in stepping out for nature.

Edward Wootton from Llandudno, north Wales, was one of this summer's walkers. "I grew up in a small countryside village, which I loved to explore on foot," he explains. "I had walked every trail of that village and never grew tired of seeing the wonders that my surroundings had to offer."

It wasn't only Edward's passion for walking that inspired him to sign up for our Great Wild Walk in Delamere. "I was excited to see a part of the world that I'd never explored before and to meet new people," he says. "It was a chance to give back to nature and to be absorbed into the stillness of the forest - to reset the mind in the best way possible."

We provided support to help our walkers prepare for the events, including a kit checklist and fundraising tips, and everyone received a WWF T-shirt and eco-medal on the day.



Spend time in nature and make new friends

© Chris Radcliffe

"The opportunity to walk through a forest like Delamere and appreciate nature may become a thing of the past if we don't act now," says Edward. "Taking on this challenge supports WWF with the huge task of bringing our world back to life, so that nature has the chance to thrive in an ever-changing climate. So get your shoes and let's go walking!"

If Edward's story has inspired you to fundraise, the good news is that Great Wild Walks are back in 2024! Find out more and register your interest for the 2024 events at wwf.org.uk/events/great-wild-walks

Bolivia is home to the largest dry tropical forests in the world. It has some of the wildest parts of the Amazon, which are home to wildlife such as pumas, tapirs, giant anteaters and, of course, jaguars

FOREST NEIGHBOURS

The Bolivian Amazon is vital to the survival of the communities who call it home – and the iconic jaguar. With your support, we're working to tackle the ever-present threat of deforestation before it's too late

Words: Paul Boomfield | Image: © naturepl.com / Sebastian Kennerly

▼ Bolivia is home to an Amazon ecosystem that supports the livelihoods of Indigenous people



How well do you know the Amazon? Let's have a recap. Yes, it's vast – the region spans close to seven million sq km. No, it's not just rainforest – it also encompasses savannah, swamps, dry forest and other habitats. Yes, it's a hotspot for biodiversity, home to perhaps 10% of the planet's wildlife species. And no, it's not just in Brazil: it crosses the borders of eight other nations, though Brazil claims the lion's share. Except it's not the lion that reigns in this jungle. The Amazon is the stronghold of the jaguar – 75% of the global population lives here. Another fact: jaguar numbers are falling, and the species is classed as 'near threatened'. True, the global population is an estimated 173,000, but it's declining at an alarming rate.

"Today, jaguars occupy just over 50% of their historical range," explains Valeria Boron, WWF's senior programme adviser for Latin America. "There has been a substantial decline in their distribution, as well as their numbers." The species is already extinct in El Salvador, Uruguay and the US, and is threatened elsewhere.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Unsurprisingly, Brazil is home to by far the biggest population, with an estimated 86,834 jaguars. But a neighbouring country also has a key role to play in the species' long-term survival. "Bolivia hosts an estimated 12,845 jaguars and provides a vital connection between the Amazon and the Pantanal, another key jaguar landscape to the south," explains Valeria. Such wildlife



My Action

FOREST VIEW

Get close to Bolivian wildlife with our camera traps: myaction.wwf.org.uk/bolivian-amazon



In 2022, more than 245,000 hectares of the Bolivian Amazon were lost to deforestation, with fires affecting a further 107,000 hectares. The destruction was concentrated in an area associated with soy production. It's vital that agriculture becomes more sustainable

corridors are crucial for enabling the big cats to roam and increase their gene pool, rather than being isolated in small, inbred populations.

This beautiful cat is not just an icon of the Amazon. As the apex predator, it keeps other species in check and helps maintain a healthy, balanced ecosystem. Since jaguars need large areas in which to thrive, protecting the big cats helps to conserve tracts of forest that are vital for wildlife, for regulating our global climate, and for tens of millions of people who depend on them for clean air, water and food. Our ultimate goal is that by 2030, jaguar numbers, their prey, habitat and connectivity will be increasing or stable in all WWF priority jaguar landscapes, spanning the species' entire range from Mexico to Argentina.

In Bolivia, we're working to identify and tackle threats, the most significant of which

◀ The jaguar is the biggest cat in the Americas and the Amazon's apex predator – its name is derived from the Indigenous Tupi-Guarani word *yaguareté*, which means 'one who kills with one leap'

is the loss or conversion of habitat for agriculture. "Within the Amazon basin, we have dense, moist, tropical forest and dry forest known as Chiquitania," explains Stanislaw Czaplicki, sustainable commodity leader at WWF-Bolivia. "Further south is the Chaco, a very dry forest and grassland area shared with Paraguay and Argentina, plus a small section of the Pantanal wetlands. These habitats are all home to jaguars, but they're all threatened by conversion."

FOREST DESTRUCTION

Deforestation here is a big problem. Between 2001 and 2017, Bolivia lost 7% of its tree cover – an area more than twice the size of Wales. In 2021, some 639,251 hectares of natural habitat were lost, including 380,249 hectares of forest, most in Chiquitania and Chaco. Estimates suggest the situation was worse still in 2022, with around 429,000 hectares of forest lost. And though natural wildfires fuelled by years of drought contribute to this deforestation, around 90% is driven by land conversion for cattle

IN BOLIVIA, WE'RE WORKING TO TACKLE THE CONVERSION OF FOREST TO AGRICULTURE

ranching and agriculture (primarily soy) supported by government policies and market conditions.

In Bolivia, the main reason land is cleared for cattle isn't always simply for the profit this generates. "Though cattle ranching is reported as the official cause of conversion, land speculation is often behind it," Valeria clarifies. "Once the forest has been felled, putting cattle on the land is an easy way to keep it clear and retain ownership. In reality it's a way of owning and holding land."

TIPPING POINT

Deforestation in the Amazon isn't just chipping away at the edges. Research suggests the biome is close to reaching a tipping point – a threshold beyond which catastrophic and abrupt degradation of its vegetation would be unstoppable.

Three main factors are believed to be critical to this theoretical point of no return: decreasing annual rainfall, increasing length of the dry season and the percentage of forest loss. These are linked to both climate change and deforestation, and are part of a vicious circle. Increased forest loss leads to decreased water recycling, which reduces rainfall. This contributes to longer dry seasons and reductions in humidity, increasing fire frequency and duration, and increasing forest flammability, leading to further increases in forest loss.

About 17% of the Amazon's forest has already been lost, and a further 17% is degraded. It's estimated that destruction of 20%-25% could be enough to reach the tipping point, with dramatic local and global consequences. Most of the Bolivian Amazon has already experienced at least one of the climate or forest-loss tipping point thresholds in the last 10 years.

We're running out of time to halt deforestation before we lose the Amazon, the jaguar's main stronghold, entirely.

Similarly, soy production may not be the primary motivation for clearing land. But the process is enabled by the availability of cheap finance, largely from pension-fund investment in agriculture. "It doesn't matter if soy production isn't profitable," says Stanislaw. "What's important is access to cheap credit and other subsidies that drive deforestation and benefit land speculation."

So what does this mean for jaguars and people? Clearly, less habitat means less space for jaguars to live in, as well as fewer

REALM OF THE JAGUAR

Bolivia is home to an estimated 12,845 jaguars – the fourth-largest population of any of the 18 range countries from Mexico to Argentina. The Amazon biome, most of which is in Brazil, hosts the vast majority of jaguars. In Bolivia, we’ve identified three other priority jaguar landscapes – Chiquitanía, Chaco and Pantanal. Our work also involves conserving a network of connecting wildlife corridors across the continent.

PERU
22,210 JAGUARS

BOLIVIA
12,845 JAGUARS

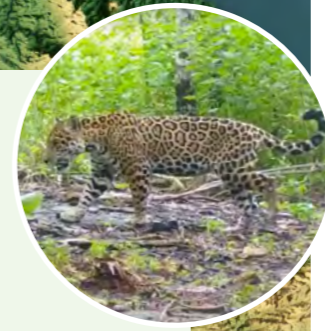
BRAZIL
86,834 JAGUARS

PARAGUAY
1,589 JAGUARS

ARGENTINA
314 JAGUARS

SOUTH-WEST AMAZON

This priority landscape, which extends into Pando department in the far north of Bolivia, is shared with Brazil’s Acre state and the Madre de Dios region of eastern Peru. In Pando, we work to monitor jaguars and prey, decrease conflict between people and jaguars, and support communities, many of them Indigenous, whose livelihood is based on collecting forest products such as Brazil nuts and açai berries from lowland wet tropical forests.



CHIQUITANÍA

This dry forest region between the Amazon and Chaco (see below) is home to jaguars. We support Indigenous and local communities to sustainably manage the habitat here.



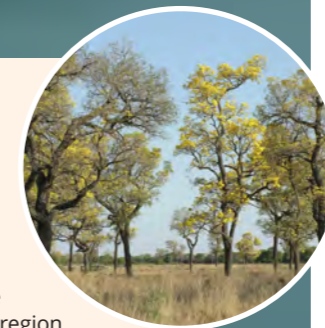
PANTANAL

The world’s largest tropical wetland – which has a very high density of jaguars, and is widely regarded as the best place for seeing the species – again lies mainly within Brazil, spreading a little into south-eastern Bolivia and the far north of Paraguay.



CHACO

Straddling the border of Bolivia and Paraguay, the Chaco is a region of mostly scrubby dry forest and savannah. Habitat conversion here is largely driven by cattle ranching and soy cultivation, much of it by the rapidly growing number of Mennonite communities being established in the region.



LESS HABITAT MEANS LESS SPACE FOR JAGUARS TO LIVE IN, AS WELL AS FEWER PREY

prey. Deforestation brings people and jaguars into closer proximity, increasing the risk of potential conflict – the cats are often killed in retaliation for attacks on livestock, or are seen as competition for food when people hunt the jaguar’s natural prey. And that’s not the only impact on humans. Less water is retained on deforested land, so communities find their water sources are running dry.

“Before, our small streams didn’t suffer from droughts – they maintained their flow throughout the year,” reports Manuel Salvatierra, a representative of the Villa Florida community in Manuripi-Heath Amazon Wildlife National Reserve in the north-east of Bolivia. “Now, around 60% of the creeks are reduced from August to October. It’s a big concern. Another change we’ve seen is in the Brazil nut harvest. Before, we were able to collect the same quantity every year. Now there are many ups and downs.”

Forest fires also destroy crops, either directly or indirectly – when animals fleeing fires or logging become concentrated on or near cultivated land, they can ravage crops. And during the main forest-fire season, from July to October, poor air quality affects people with respiratory conditions.

SQUEEZED OUT

Clearly, the factors driving deforestation in Bolivia are complex. And because there are so many drivers of deforestation here, we’ve had to come up with many different approaches to tackling them. One of the key ways we’re doing this is by working to eliminate deforestation from Bolivia’s soy and beef production, creating products that are deforestation and conversion-free (DCF).

“We’re working to develop ‘green finance’ schemes – for instance, encouraging financial institutions to make a commitment to ensure their portfolios aren’t associated with recent deforestation,” says Stanislaw. “But we can’t just demand that producers pledge not to contribute to deforestation – we need it to make economic sense for them and to create real incentives for DCF production.”

Demonstrating the link between soy cultivation and deforestation is important in a country where many producers aren’t fully aware that one contributes to the other. “We’re supporting a partner who’s developing a soy deforestation risk index for Bolivia,” says Stanislaw. “It will show how much forest has been lost to soy production, where and by which companies. And this powerful advocacy tool will enable us to engage with producers to find solutions.”

We also need to ensure there’s a strong market for sustainable soy and beef. “Beef producers ask: is there sufficient demand for better cattle ranching? How can we differentiate our product in the market? Will consumers pay more for a DCF product?” says Stanislaw. “With that ▶



Most of the UK's Brazil nuts come from Bolivia, so WWF-Bolivia works with nut harvesters to protect the forest



◀ It's estimated that 45% of the total jaguar population lives in protected areas, where they have the best chances of survival. But protecting connecting corridors, such as between the Amazon and the Pantanal, is crucial to enable them to roam more widely to find new mates

▼ In 2021, WWF and our partners installed over 70 camera traps in roughly 50 locations in Bolivia's Manuripi reserve and its buffers. Jaguars were recorded in most sites, demonstrating the benefit of the reserve



LEARNING TO LIVE WITH JAGUARS

We've worked in northern Bolivia's Pando department for over a decade, protecting habitat and supporting sustainable livelihoods collecting non-timber forest products such as Brazil nuts. But fear still sometimes prompts persecution or killing of jaguars. Since 2021 we've operated alongside partners in Manuripi-Heath Amazon Wildlife National Reserve to reduce conflict between people and jaguars, raising awareness of the importance of the big cats to the ecosystem.

Now we're demonstrating how people and cats can coexist safely. And we're working to reduce livestock predation by trialling deterrents and building fences to protect vulnerable animals. "Photos and videos from more than 70 camera traps we've installed show jaguars following the same forest trails as people," explains Valeria. "We hope that when communities see that and realise that no one is harmed, fear of encounters can be reduced."

"At first, the jaguar scared me," recalls Francisca Salazar de Claure of the Villa Florida community. "But I've found it and seen it up close... and now I've got used to it. When I see it, it's like looking at a puppy in the house."



in mind, we've been working with producers and buyers to help strengthen and expand the current methods of traceability in Bolivia. And raising awareness among consumers."

Currently, most of Bolivia's annual beef production of 280,000 tonnes is consumed domestically. So it's important for shoppers to be aware of the links between deforestation and meat production so they can make informed choices.

"A recent consumer survey we ran showed about 40% of people don't know cattle ranching can be a cause of deforestation," explains Stanislaw. "In fact, more than 50% said they didn't know cattle ranching had any negative impact on the environment. So we have to highlight the issue, while taking into account local sensitivities. For example, grilling meat is a big cultural tradition in Bolivia. How do we promote cooking more vegetables, and less meat, on the barbecue?"

"ONE WAY TO KEEP THE FOREST ALIVE IS TO MAKE IT MORE VALUABLE STANDING THAN CUT DOWN"

"Another way to keep the forest alive is to make it more valuable standing than cut down," says Valeria. "For 20 years, WWF-Bolivia has been working in the Amazon and other regions to improve the way forest products are collected, largely Brazil nuts and açai berries. We support cooperatives and associations so they can guarantee production volumes, create certification schemes that support sustainable collection practices, and provide links to markets so they can sell their products at the best price."

"There's no deforestation in Manuripi reserve because we manage the forest for Amazon fruits," agrees Manuel. "If we felled the trees, we would lose the fruit harvests that enable us to support our families."

UNDER THE CANOPY

Protecting jaguars doesn't just mean reducing deforestation. "A big threat to jaguars is persecution and killing," says Valeria. "There are two main causes. One is retaliation following an attack on livestock by jaguars. The other is fear. People spend a lot of time in the forest gathering Brazil nuts and açai berries, so the chance of encountering a

jaguar is high. Add the fact that many people carry a gun for small-scale hunting, and the risk of conflict increases."

The big cats are also hunted for their teeth, claws, skin and bones, and evidence is emerging that these body parts are being illegally traded internationally. A 2021 survey in Bolivia found there's also a sizeable local trade in jaguar parts for traditional ornamental or medicinal use: 46% of people asked said they had been involved over the past five years. WWF-Bolivia is helping to support and train government enforcement agencies to control the illegal trade in wildlife parts.

We work with communities to reduce and mitigate conflict with jaguars, in part by helping people gain a richer understanding of the wildlife with which they share the forest (see box, left). "Ultimately, we must address deforestation, change perceptions and reduce conflict," adds Valeria. "Jaguars are a resilient species – they're able to withstand a degree of habitat loss – but once a large area is cleared, they'll be gone."

With your support, we'll keep working to protect the jaguar's forest home and keep the Amazon standing for people and nature. ■

SPACE FOR JAGUARS

You can help us do more to protect the Bolivian Amazon. Please support our work to halt the drivers of deforestation, reconnect jaguar habitat and safeguard local livelihoods.

- £10 could help pay for camera traps to survey jaguars and their prey
- £20 could go towards fencing to help farmers keep their livestock safe from jaguars
- £50 could fund educational materials for schoolchildren on the importance of jaguars
- £100 could help fund public awareness campaigns in Bolivia on sustainable food production

You can help protect the jaguar's forests. Donate today at www.org.uk/space-for-jaguars



Since being interviewed for this feature, Stanislaw Czaplinski has moved on from his role at WWF-Bolivia © A Cabrera / WWF-Bolivia | © Mary Chambers | © Alamy | © Michelle Peñaranda / WWF-Bolivia

My Action

OCEAN ACTION

Watch our film of researchers tracking whales in the Southern Ocean: **myaction.wwf.org.uk/whale-tracking**



WHALE SUPERHIGHWAYS

Imagine a world without whales. As Antarctic sea ice recedes to record lows, we're in a race against time to protect these ocean icons.

Researchers have monitored sea ice levels around Antarctica for the past 44 years. This year, there was less ice encircling the continent than ever before. The Southern Ocean that surrounds Antarctica is a critical feeding area for blue, fin, humpback and minke whales. Receding sea ice levels affect the amount and distribution of the Antarctic krill that whales and other species feed on in this region.

WWF's global lead for whale and dolphin conservation, Chris Johnson, recently joined other ecologists in Antarctica to conduct vital research that will help us learn more about how whales and their habitat are being affected by the changing climate. The team used cutting-edge technology, such as digital tags (pictured) and drones, while collecting tiny tissue samples. Together these give us insights into the whales' movements during diving and feeding, and their overall health.

We'll use this information to help protect the whales' superhighways, the 'blue corridors' that enable them to safely navigate between polar regions and the tropics. With your support, our goal is to establish a major network of marine protected areas in the Antarctic, and secure the protection of 30% of the most critical ocean areas for wildlife around the world by 2030.

This research expedition was made possible thanks to partnerships between Intrepid Travel, WWF-Australia and the University of California Santa Cruz

©JGSC / WWF-Aus / Chris Johnson

GREEN RANCHING

Madre de Dios is the jewel of Peru, home to incredible wildlife, but cattle ranching here is destroying the Amazon. We're supporting ranchers to adopt new farming techniques that will help restore this natural treasure

AMAZON UNDER THREAT

The forests of Madre de Dios in the Peruvian Amazon are among the most biodiverse in the world. Home to at least 860 species of bird, they also support threatened mammals such as the jaguar, tapir, giant otter and giant armadillo. Around 32 Indigenous communities inhabit the region and depend on its biodiversity. Today, an increasing demand for agricultural land is seeing the forests cleared and the rich soils impoverished, to the detriment of people and wildlife alike.

Picture the Amazon rainforest and what do you see? From above, perhaps an endless carpet of trees stretching towards a green horizon. Up close, the trunks of towering hardwoods and a vine-tangled canopy; the sound of screeching macaws and roaring howler monkeys; a jaguar padding silently over giant buttress roots into the dappled shadows.

But you might also picture a very different Amazon. That carpet torn and threadbare, exposing raw red earth, ugly scars and smoking fires. No green forest horizon, just dusty yellow grassland as far as the eye can see. No jaguars, just cows. The only screeching and roaring from trucks and chainsaws.

In Peru's Madre de Dios, these two Amazons exist side by side. This south-eastern province, sandwiched between the borders of Brazil and Bolivia, is known as the country's 'capital of biodiversity', home to the planet's greatest concentration of bird species and one of its densest jaguar populations. Yet its prolific forests are being ravaged by illegal mining and uncontrolled cattle ranching.

Of the many threats to the Amazon, cattle farming is the most destructive. The clearance of land for pasture to sustain an ever-growing beef market – and the livelihoods of an ever-increasing population that depend upon it – is steadily whittling away the forests. In 2021, in the southern Madre de Dios region, the impact of agricultural expansion exceeded that of gold mining.

When the forest goes, wildlife isn't the only victim: everyone who depends on the land is affected, including the ranchers themselves. The forest provides essential natural products and other benefits. For example, its trees soak up carbon and help protect against climate change, stabilising the soil and providing buffers against floods, droughts and soil erosion. Without the forests, the denuded land – pumped full of chemicals, depleted of nutrients and exposed to the elements – becomes exhausted. It offers no future for anybody.

REGENERATIVE FARMING

But change is possible. In Madre de Dios, we're working on an innovative project to save the forests without ranchers losing their livelihoods. In partnership with the Alliance for Regenerative Cattle Ranching in the Peruvian Amazon, we're helping the local community develop sustainable ways of ranching that help preserve the forests. This activity is funded by WWF-UK members like you, and the UK government's PACT programme (Partnering for Accelerated Climate Transitions – a capacity-building fund that supports low-carbon transitions to economic recovery).

"Cattle ranching is here to stay; people's livelihoods depend on it," concedes WWF project coordinator Jamie Gordon. "But there are ways we can help improve it." He explains how regenerative farming is about using 'nature-based solutions' to improve productivity. For example, instead of using expensive agrochemicals that degrade the soil and harm wildlife, you harness natural micro-organisms gathered from forest leaf litter that restore the soil's natural biology and structure.

Richer soil means richer grass, so more livestock can be supported in smaller areas – two or three animals per hectare ►

instead of the traditional one. Their richer, more concentrated manure nourishes the soil, and the land is rotated, allowing one area to recover while another is grazed. Thus, by working with nature, you can raise more – and healthier – cattle without losing more forest. “It’s a win-win,” says Jamie. “The farmers produce more, but without exhausting the land – and they don’t need to clear the forest any further.”

At the same time, native trees are planted to create an integrated patchwork of pasture and cover. This is known as silvo-pastoral agriculture. It can’t restore the entire forest but it can restore many of its benefits, such as root systems that stabilise soil and shade that improves livestock welfare.

And then there’s carbon capture. In Peru, 45% of greenhouse gases come from deforestation, largely driven by agriculture and methane emissions from cattle. More greenery on pasture helps absorb the gases that accelerate climate change, as well as making the land more resilient to extreme weather.

Trees also foster biodiversity. Smaller species flourish, while patches of cover create refuges for larger animals and ‘bio-corridors’ between protected areas. Scientists are using camera traps to study the movement of species such as jaguars, pumas and peccaries to see how they benefit from the project.



▲ UNSUSTAINABLE CATTLE RANCHING
Cattle ranching is vital to the economy of Madre de Dios: thousands depend on it for their livelihoods. But traditional grazing is damaging the Amazon at an unsustainable rate. In Madre de Dios alone, over 50,000 hectares of forest have been converted to cattle pasture. Regenerative farming offers a solution: by using sustainable, nature-based techniques, ranching becomes more productive, the land is enriched and the forests can be left intact.

FEEDING THE SOIL

On her farm, livestock producer Maritza Vargas scatters micro-organisms to restore soil health. This technique offers an organic alternative to expensive, harmful agrochemicals, and is taught by our farming field school, along with animal nutrition. “Bioproducts provide nutrients that help grass develop healthier roots and stems that are more nutritious for cattle,” explains Maritza. “[At the field school] we saw that women are also part of the regenerative livestock process. Our participation is imperative. Change is about facing challenges and learning. Every day in the field here is an opportunity to learn.”



REGENERATIVE FARMING IS GOOD FOR EVERYTHING: HABITATS, LIVELIHOODS, CLIMATE, WILDLIFE AND CATTLE

Regenerative farming is, in short, good for everything: habitats, livelihoods, climate, wildlife and even the cattle (see the caption above). And, so far, the local community has proved ready to embrace it. Phase one of the project, conducted in summer 2022, introduced the basic principles through 10 field schools, where participants shared ideas and completed a series of learning modules.

More than 250 ranchers attended, of which, significantly, 38% were women and young people. “I was happy to see that value was given to women,” says Belén Sota, one of the workshop leaders. “Women are not only wives: we are a support and we can do the same activities that men do with livestock.”

TIME FOR CHANGE

To date, the results have been encouraging. Farmers have reduced their use of agrochemicals and the affected areas are recovering, with richer pasture and more tree cover. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that attacks by jaguars on livestock – a long-standing concern for ranchers – are declining. This reflects new husbandry techniques, including more fences and grouping the cattle in smaller areas. In the long term, the recovery of the forest will encourage more natural prey species, meaning predators no longer need to target livestock.

These demonstrable results are helping promote the cause. “If your neighbour sees your grass is greener, they’ll be interested,” says Jamie. “Ranchers are coming to us, wanting to know what it’s all about.” Already the team has been asked to conduct similar projects elsewhere in Peru.

The ultimate goal is to make the project self-replicating. Success so far has required outside assistance, with grants helping fund ‘conversion’ expenses such as new fences. It must now prove that it can make more money for the farmer. To this end, phase two includes a technical roundtable where farmers can discuss how to generate new economic activities, attract private investment and create new markets – perhaps ones that will pay more for sustainably sourced beef. “This doesn’t have to be charity,” says Jamie. “We can scale it up and turn it into an investable project.”

Rainforests don’t recover overnight. The Amazon is at least 10 million years old and the damage it has already sustained would take thousands of years to repair – were this even possible. Meanwhile, however, the ranchers of Madre de Dios are proving that making small changes can halt the destruction and help restore the environment for everybody’s benefit. Together with you, we’ll be there to support them every step of the way. ■



▲ TREES FOR LIFE

An aerial view of ranchland in Madre de Dios reveals rotational grazing and tree cages protecting newly planted saplings. Integrating tree cover into a pastoral landscape brings many benefits. The roots stabilise the soil, offering a buffer against erosion and flooding, while additional greenery provides shade and fodder for livestock. The trees also support a community of smaller plants and animals, increasing biodiversity and enriching the soil.



▲ A FAMILY BUSINESS

Livestock producer Manuel Flores feeds his cattle mineralised salts to improve their health, a technique he learned at one of WWF’s regenerative farming field schools. “In the beginning [of the project], we had 11 people. Now we are on our way to 30 partners... focused on regenerative livestock,” he explains. “And we’ve had many visits from other ranchers who are also interested [in what we’re doing].” The son of a rancher himself, Manuel is now passing on what he’s learned to his children and grandchildren.

▼ GOOD FOR NATURE, GOOD FOR CATTLE

Niflen Velásquez is another graduate of our farming field schools. Here, on his ranch in Tambopata, he provides his cattle with a feed concentrate enriched with micro-organisms. This improves milk production and body condition, and represents a sustainable alternative to the anti-parasite chemicals he used previously. “I didn’t know that what I was doing had harmful effects on the environment,” he explains. “[WWF] has taught me that there are other ways to improve productivity and have healthier cattle.”



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WILD AT HEART

"I'm only 28 years old but I've seen, at first hand, how remote and wild habitats have changed," says Megan. "Travelling has opened my eyes to what's happening, and how bad things could get"

We chat to TV wildlife presenter and zoologist *Megan McCubbin*, one of WWF's newest ambassadors and a voice for nature

Why are you passionate about UK nature?

I was always fascinated by the wildlife around me, but became aware that was no longer enough – I had to try my hardest to protect the animals and habitats I loved. 'Shifting baseline syndrome' is a big threat – how each generation normalises the current environmental situation. My grandad heard nightingales singing in Southampton and my nan watched red squirrels in Norfolk. I'd like to make that the reality for future generations.

What gives you hope?

There are some remarkable scientists, rangers, activists and conservationists going above and beyond. And generally speaking, the awareness of the issues has never been greater. We're all poised, ready to implement the solutions. As far as I'm concerned, while there are nightingales singing and red squirrels in the forests, we still have a lot to be hopeful about. We're in this together.

Is that why you're a WWF ambassador?

We all have to stand up and work with each other to protect nature. I'm thrilled to be a WWF ambassador, helping raise awareness about the plight of species around the world. I hope to help engage new audiences with WWF's conservation work in our ever-changing landscape.

What obstacles need to be overcome?

Environmental laws and guidelines need to be updated to reflect current science. Most people are trying to make good decisions for the planet, but when outdated policies are guiding us down a rabbit hole of greenwashing, fossil fuels and mislabelled products, it can be hard to make a truly green choice. Policies change too slowly, so it's vital we use our voices to ask for the change we need.

What can we do to restore nature?

There are so many small, day-to-day changes we can all make. My top tips are to identify a few areas in your garden that could be left 'wilder' (you could add a patch of wildflowers or a small pond). Recognise the 'power in your pounds' and shop wisely, and only when you actually

need to. Eat locally grown, seasonal foods. Switch to an energy supplier with good eco-credentials. Recognise that what you do makes a difference and that your voice matters.

Tell us how we can all make a difference

The most important thing we have is our voice. I'd love everyone to start talking to politicians and get comfortable being an activist. Activism doesn't mean making trouble. I'd argue that every living being who has an impact on their environment is an activist. Whether you feed the birds or buy sustainable products, we're all making a difference.

Does nature need our help?

Nature is resilient. Species can recover if given the chance, with tolerance and understanding. We are losing species and habitats at an unprecedented rate due to human activities, therefore I think it's our duty to make things right. Nature needs our help, just as we need nature. And we are an important part of that fragile, beautiful system.

How can we make conservation inclusive?

To make a difference to our world, we need to make wildlife more accessible to everyone. I was seven when I was diagnosed with dyslexia, and I had to find ways to learn things on my own terms. I'm now a science communicator. Different opinions and voices are vital – to tackle extinction we must put all our minds and skill sets together.

What inspired you to write a book?

Travelling opened my eyes to the changes taking place in wild habitats – I've seen species go extinct, glaciers decline and people living on the knife-edge of climate change. I've also met amazing scientists and other passionate people. They inspired my new book – I wanted to help get their stories out there, and motivate readers to stand alongside them to save the planet.

Read an extract from Megan's new book, *An Atlas of Endangered Species*, on page 26.



ENDANGERED

Joyful and heartbreaking, **Megan McCubbin's** new book celebrates critically endangered species and the people who champion them. Here, Megan introduces some of her heroes...

When you give yourself a moment to soak in the diversity of life around you, it's impossible to ignore how special it truly is – yet many remarkable species are on the knife-edge of extinction. Two years ago, I set out to find the inspiring people trying to save these unique species. Whenever I feel frustrated and overwhelmed by the world teetering on the brink of climate catastrophe, I remember these exceptional people fighting to safeguard it. We have the solutions. It is possible to turn things around. And as long as these species walk, fly, slither, hop or swim on the planet, then we still have a lot left worth fighting for.

GLOW-WORM

"No matter who you are, if you see a little glow-worm glowing in the dark, you'll be fascinated!" says ecologist Peter Cooper. Glow-worms are actually beetles, and the females shine a bioluminescent light from their bums to attract a mate. In southern England and Wales, the species used to make grasslands, hedgerows, heathlands and clifftops shimmer, but now their lights are fading a little more each year. To address the species' nationwide decline, Peter breeds glow-worms in plastic takeaway containers at his home. "The best thing we can do is to increase the resilience of the population," he explains. "Small populations are vulnerable and female glow-worms can't even fly! But we can increase their numbers, and find patches of great new habitat for them."

YOU CAN HELP

Light pollution is on the rise. For insects that rely on light for communication and breeding, it's confusing and distracting. Turn off your outside lights whenever you can.

FRESHWATER PEARL MUSSEL

"Mussels help create cleaner water for people and wildlife like otters and fish," explains Dr Louise Lavictoire, head of science at the Freshwater Biological Association. But today, freshwater pearl mussels are one of the most endangered invertebrate species alive. In the UK, the species is restricted to a handful of strongholds, mainly in Scotland and one in Cumbria. "They need fast-flowing, clear, well-oxygenated rivers to survive," says Louise. But today they have a problem – pollution. Only 14% of English rivers are in good ecological health – and even they are contaminated with untreated sewage and agricultural run-off. As our rivers become increasingly inhospitable, young pearl mussels aren't surviving long enough to reproduce (they can live to over 100 years old). So Louise's team breeds them in captivity, a painstaking process that can take nine years before the young are ready for release into the wild.

YOU CAN HELP

We need to restore natural processes to rivers, enabling them to move, spread and flood when necessary. We must demand that water companies stop polluting our rivers.

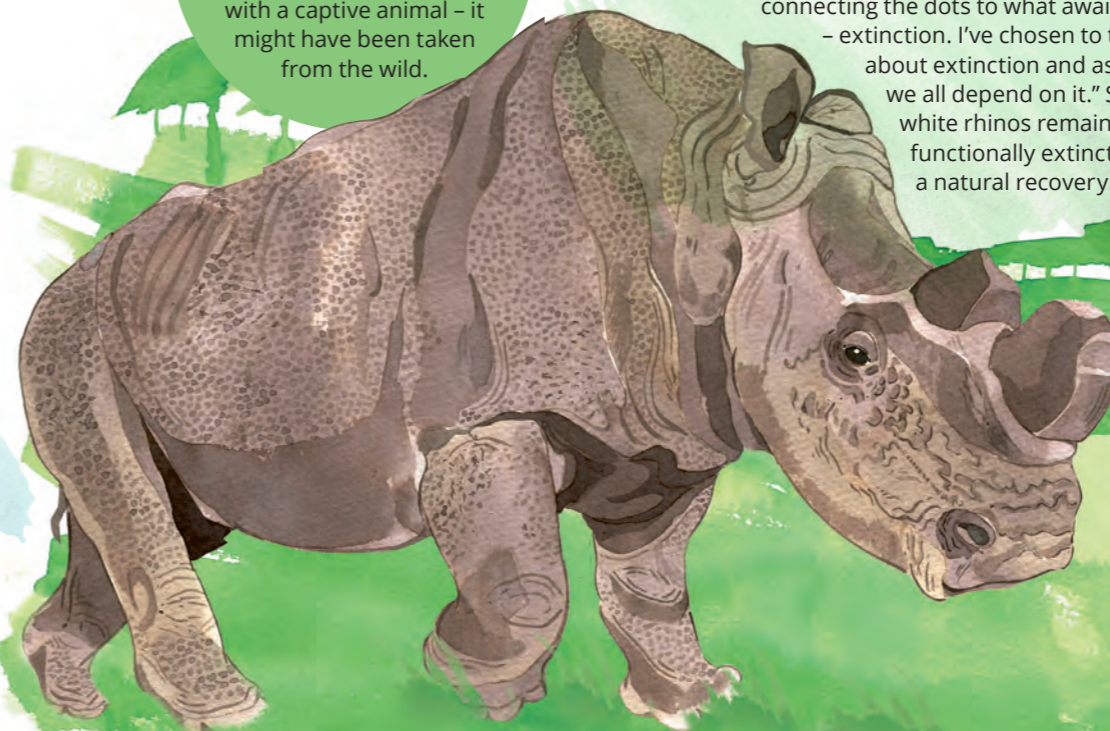


ORANGUTAN

"Orangutans are a symbol of conservation," explains vet Ricko Jaya who was devoted to returning injured apes to the wild when he worked for the Human Orangutan Conflict Response Unit in Sumatra. Only 14,000 Sumatran orangutans remain in the wild. Bornean orangutan populations are estimated at around 104,700. The apes are victims of the illegal pet trade and habitat destruction caused by the expansion of oil-palm plantations, among other threats. But saving individuals is only part of the equation – to save the species we need to protect and restore their habitat. "The orangutan's forests house hundreds of unique species, regulate water and pollution, and mitigate natural disasters," says Ricko. "By saving them, we can save the forest and save ourselves. That's how I see it."

YOU CAN HELP

On holiday, don't buy souvenirs derived from endangered species, and never have your photo taken with a captive animal – it might have been taken from the wild.



NORTHERN WHITE RHINO

"Sudan was the last male of his kind and I felt sorry for him," says James Mwenda, one of a handful of caretakers who protected the last three remaining northern white rhinos at Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya. "When I came to work as a caretaker and provider of carrots and bananas in 2014, I was scared of him. But he was calm and approachable, a perfect ambassador for his species. I couldn't help but feel sad about his fate, that it was a consequence of our actions as humans. It was emotional connecting the dots to what awaited him and what his death represented – extinction. I've chosen to turn his death into an opportunity to talk about extinction and ask people to care for the planet, because we all depend on it." Since Sudan's passing, only two northern white rhinos remain. As both are female, the species is functionally extinct, meaning that any hope of a natural recovery is lost for ever.

GIVEAWAY

We've got a copy of *An Atlas of Endangered Species* to give away, worth £15, courtesy of Two Roads. To enter, email your name and address, with *Endangered* as the subject, by Friday 24 November 2023 to competition@wwf.org.uk



This is an edited extract from *An Atlas of Endangered Species*, written by Megan McCubbin and illustrated by Emily Robertson, used with kind permission of Two Roads

Young people are the future protectors of our planet – and they’re already taking action. We helped a group of storytellers use their voices to make a change for our wild isles

Stories change hearts and minds. They can lead to mass action, break down barriers and inspire people to make change happen. But so often, diverse young people aren’t represented in the stories we see, and their views can go unheard. We know that today’s young people will be the stewards of our planet in years to come. That’s why, as part of the Save Our Wild Isles campaign, we’re supporting them to explore the issues facing our planet and equipping them to use their voices for action and change.

THE POWER OF YOUNG VOICES

Save Our Wild Isles puts young people at the heart of our mission to restore nature. With the RSPB and the National Trust, and as part of the TV series *Wild Isles*, we recently created a diverse community of hundreds of young nature restorers and storytellers to use the power of their voices to protect our planet – our new Youth Storyteller Network. It includes 17 inspirational WWF youth ambassadors, the RSPB’s youth council members and other brilliant young people aged 13-25 from across the UK, who want to create a brighter world for future generations.

Through in-person sessions and online workshops and resources, we helped these young storytellers to feel more connected to the natural world, to understand that nature is for everyone, and to know that their voices can – and should – be heard. They captured images and videos on their phones that reveal their unique view of the natural world. Their stories ranged from signs of nature doing well to symptoms of environmental damage, and the impacts of climate change.

Our storytellers used this content to produce an emotive and inspiring film. Featuring the voices of young people from diverse communities, this love letter to UK nature calls on others to join the conversation, urging the government, businesses, schools and more to take immediate action to tackle the climate crisis, as part of a united community.

My Action

TAKE A LOOK

Go behind the scenes of the Youth Storyteller Network film workshops at: myaction.wwf.org.uk/youth-storytellers



STEWARDS OF NATURE



SCHOOLS FOR NATURE

New Scotland Hill Primary School in Sandhurst has been recognised for its achievements in making the school a wilder place. Students made and decorated bird baths, planted flowers in pots and built a bug hotel. They also connected with the local habitat on wellness walks to neighbouring heathland. “We’re building our pupils’ understanding of the importance of protecting nature,” says Wendy Hardy, outdoor learning leader. “We regularly hold outdoor learning days that enhance lessons, improve wellbeing and encourage pupils to learn about the environment in the school grounds. We hope they’re inspired to protect wild spaces and that it strengthens their connection with the world around them.” **Find out how your school can help protect nature:** saveourwildisles.org.uk/schools

YOUTH FOR CHANGE

Alfie, Youth Storyteller Network member, RSPB youth council member and zoology student from Plymouth



Why did you join the Youth Storyteller Network?

I joined in the hope of engaging more young people with nature and to raise awareness of the importance of conserving wildlife in the UK and around the world. Our ecosystems are under threat, and every day I feel motivated to help protect them. Young people are the key to a sustainable future, so joining the network is an

excellent way to engage a wider audience with nature.

What do you hope to achieve?

I hope more young people will want to protect wildlife and support organisations working for nature – particularly people who wouldn’t normally be interested. I’m proud to be a part of a youth movement trying to protect wildlife. Together, we can make a great impact in conserving our precious biodiversity.

Why are young people vital to restoring the UK’s nature?

Young people have the passion and creativity needed to bring our world back to life. Inviting input from young people in projects and schemes can create more hope and optimism about the future of our world, and have even more positive effects for nature.

Our future relies on our success protecting the natural world, so young people should be at the heart of it!

SHOW YOUR WILD SIDE

We've got one *Wild Isles* set to give away

Our *Wild Isles* collection is handmade in the UK and showcases a beautiful design from artist Cherith Harrison. Featuring a range of items including a scarf, bag, notebook and more, the collection supports vital species and habitats in the UK and Ireland.

The colourful design celebrates two heroes of our wild isles – the mighty oak and the captivating starling – and every product has been sustainably and ethically sourced.

The collection is released in celebration of the television series *Wild Isles*, the landmark natural history programme presented by Sir David Attenborough earlier this year.

One lucky winner will receive a colourful cotton scarf and stunning shopper bag from the exclusive range. **For your chance to win, follow the instructions in the box below.**



FOR MORE INSPIRING AND SUSTAINABLE GIFT IDEAS
See our full range at wwf.org.uk/shop



CHRISTMAS GIFT INSPIRATION

Discover our fun Paul Delaney collection

We've teamed up with illustrator Paul Delaney to bring you an exclusive collection for kids and adults. Paul has a unique way of capturing animal characteristics, so look out for stationery, kids' T-shirts and Christmas jumper must-haves! Use discount code JUMPER10 for 10% off jumpers, valid until 8 December 2023.



NEW BOOKS AND GAMES

From creative play and building sets to inspiring craft and activity books, check out our collection of new games, toys and books in the WWF shop this Christmas.

wwf.org.uk/shop/christmas

SHARE YOUR SNAPS

Send us your photos of the UK's forests. We'll showcase the best shots on My Action, and you could win a copy of *Wildlife Photographer Of The Year: Portfolio 33*

From tiny acorns to mighty oaks, send your best images to editor@wwf.org.uk by Friday 15 December.* The best photos will appear online in January 2024.

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WIN!
A copy of *Wildlife Photographer of the Year 33*

* Maximum email size of 10MB

HOW TO ENTER OUR ACTION GIVEAWAY

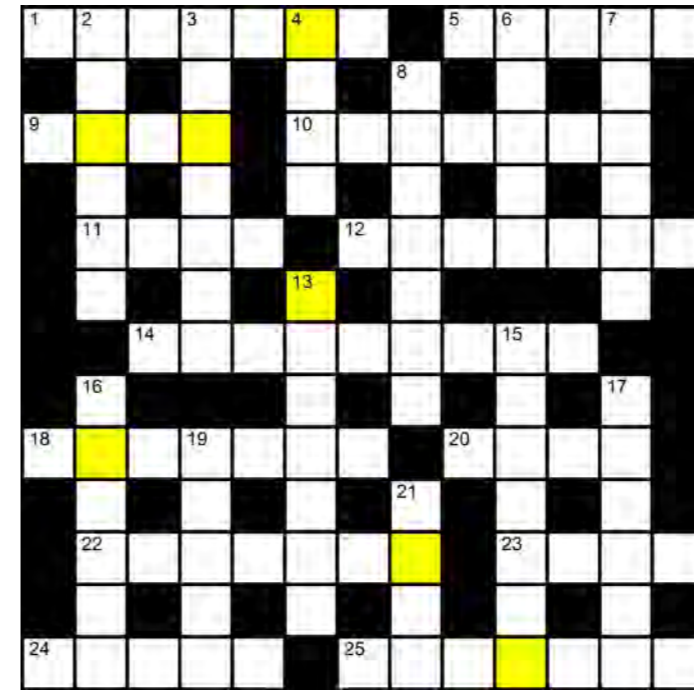
Send an email with your name, address and phone number, along with *Wild Isles* Competition in the subject line, to competition@wwf.org.uk

Alternatively, post your entry to **Action Magazine, WWF-UK, Living Planet Centre, Rufford House, Brewery Road, Woking, Surrey GU21 4LL.**

Closing date: Friday 24 November 2023. For full terms and conditions, visit: wwf.org.uk/compters

CROSSWORD

Solve our puzzle and you could win a copy of rewilding handbook *The Book of Wilding* by Isabella Tree and Charlie Burrell, worth £35, courtesy of Bloomsbury



WWF ACTION CROSSWORD 55: Autumn 2023. Compiled by Aleric Linden

After solving the crossword, take each letter from the shaded squares (going from left to right and top to bottom) to spell out the prize word. To be in with a chance to win, just send a postcard with the prize word to the address on page 30, or email it to competition@wwf.org.uk. The closing date is Friday 24 November 2023.

Clues across

- 1 Staple grain crops such as wheat and oats (7)
- 5 Felled tree remnant (5)
- 9 _ emissions, the target in tackling climate change and pollution (4)
- 10 A common protein-rich crop, most of which is fed to livestock (3,4)
- 11 National _ , Great Britain's electricity network (4)
- 12 Wetlands (7)
- 14 & 7 down Southern Ocean baleen whales (9,6)
- 18 Big cats in the Americas – third largest in the world (7)
- 20 A plant like bracken (4)
- 22 Informal term for a tornado (7)
- 23 The largest of the continents (4)
- 24 Chinese crested _ , critically endangered birds (5)
- 25 Guardians of nature reserves (7)
- 6 Those branching out in the woods (5)
- 7 See 14 across
- 8 The accidental capture of non-target species in commercial fishing (2-5)
- 13 Birds such as New Zealand's critically endangered kakapo (7)
- 15 European nation – one of the few countries still commercially hunting whales (7)
- 16 _ ranching, chief culprit of Amazon deforestation (6)
- 17 The Arabian Sea is part of which major ocean? (6)
- 19 International _ for Conservation of Nature, AKA the IUCN (5)
- 21 Another name for killer whale (4)

Clues down

- 2 Renewable _ , wind and solar, for example (6)
- 3 Soil degradation – a result of unsustainable agricultural practices (7)
- 4 Habitat _ , an unfortunate

Summer 2023 answers

Prize word: RAVINE
Across 7. Ramble 8. Caviar 10. Turbine 11. Lodge 12. Save 14. Council 17. Estuary 18. Peru 21. River 22. Extinct 24. Iguana 25. Heater
Down 1. British 2. Amur 3. Plain 4. Sapling 5. Wildlife 6. Green 9. Resources 13. Vesuvius 15. Current 16. Bustard 19. Train 20. Otter 23. Nets



This polar bear came close to camp to eat a seal. After it left, nothing remained of its meal

NIGHT OF THE BEAR



When we're doing field work in the Arctic, where polar bears roam, we set up watches every night. It was my shift, and though tea and jerky may be an odd midnight snack, it was perfect while I sat there alone in quiet anticipation. In the half-light of the summer night, I spotted a group of narwhals making their way north, right past our campsite. Everyone else was asleep. After taking notes and photos, I enjoyed watching the group for close to an hour as the sunrise slowly lit up the ochre cliffs.

We'd come to this research station on Somerset Island in Canada's High Arctic to study the narwhals and beluga whales that visit these waters. Our goal was to investigate the potential impacts of increasing underwater noise pollution on these cetaceans, though there was plenty of other wildlife to admire, including muskoxen, bowhead whales and, of course, polar bears.

I was relieved of my shift at around 5am. Two hours later, I was awoken by someone yelling "Bear in camp!" Rushing out of my tent, I saw the polar bear standing on the shore about 30 metres away. Its face was covered in blood, one paw holding down its prey while it pulled at the meat. It shot fleeting glances in our direction. What does a polar bear do once it's no longer occupied by its meal? We didn't want to find out, so we made sure it saw and heard us. Thankfully, the bear took the hint. When it had finished, it slowly walked into the water and swam away.

WHITE WHALES

A couple of hours later, half-asleep and jittery from the polar bear encounter and coffee, I had a very different experience with another white marine mammal. From the window of a twin otter plane, I spotted my first white whale! Then a second, and a third. A group with young: beluga calving grounds.

As sea ice melts, industrialisation is creeping towards the Arctic. Underwater noise from vessels in parts of the Arctic Ocean more than doubled between 2013 and 2019. In nearby Baffin Bay, it rose tenfold. We don't know much about how noise pollution affects the migratory movements and behaviours of narwhals and belugas: we urgently need to improve our understanding so we can protect these remarkable mammals.

Jason Harasimo

WWF-Canada's associate specialist of Arctic ecosystems

WE EACH HAVE A DUTY...

To fulfil our duty to the natural world, and future generations, we need to leave the planet stable, safe and thriving.

Including a gift to WWF-UK in your will could be one of the most important decisions you ever make. You'll be leading the way to restore our planet, and creating a path for future generations to follow.

If you have any questions about our work, or making a will, call Grace on **01483 412153** or email grace@wwf.org.uk

...WILL YOU LEAD THE WAY?

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