WWF Action

THE MAGAZINE FOR WWF MEMBERS AUTUMN 2026

Life on *watch*

How rangers you support are helping black rhinos make a comeback



Ocean *travellers*

Together, we're securing safer seas for marine turtles around the world

Face *to face*

Actor Maisie Williams shares her once-in-a-lifetime experience with gorillas

Against the *odds*

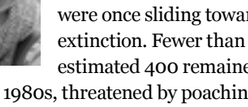


Hope can sometimes be hard to find in conservation – but the forests of southwest Uganda are a good place to look. Mountain gorillas were once sliding towards extinction. Fewer than an estimated 400 remained in the early 1980s, threatened by poaching and by forests under pressure from farming and the unsustainable collection of food, fuel and building materials. Their future looked bleak.

What changed was not luck, but long-term, people-centred collaboration. Through the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) – a coalition of WWF, Conservation International and Fauna & Flora – we've helped governments, communities and conservationists work together across borders to protect the entire mountain gorilla range. IGCP has helped strengthen protected-area management, improve law enforcement and link tourism revenue directly to local development, ensuring the people living closest to gorillas benefit from their survival.

Today, more than 1,000 mountain gorillas live in the wild. Their recovery is still fragile and shaped by delicate trade-offs: tourism brings vital income but also disease risk; habitat is limited but coexistence with communities is essential. IGCP is now leading a new, region-wide conservation action plan to navigate these pressures.

On my recent visit to Uganda with WWF ambassador Maisie Williams (see page 14), it was impossible not to feel hope. Mountain gorillas are proof conservation can succeed.



Cath Lawson
Senior programme adviser, Africa

"IT'S IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO FEEL HOPE – A HOPE BUILT FROM COMMITMENT, COOPERATION AND COEXISTENCE"

Right: Mountain gorillas are the only great ape population known to be increasing

Cover: © Alamy | Inset cover: © Adam Gerrard | This page: © IGCP | © Cath Lawson | Inset: © WWF-Kenya / Japhet Kaimenyi

Contents

On the cover



RHINO RESCUERS 08
Go behind the scenes with the remarkable rangers protecting Kenya's black rhinos

ANCIENT VOYAGERS 18
We're working with communities around the world to turn the tide for marine turtles

GIVING BACK 28
Discover why our 2030 Circle members choose to support our work on a larger scale

Regulars

WWF IN ACTION 04
All the latest news

INTERVIEW 14
Actor Maisie Williams on an inspiring trip to Uganda

THE BIG PICTURE 16
Helping humpbacks

HOW TO... 24
Go green post-Christmas, identify fungi, watch a WWF live show and more!

WWF *in action*

In *the balance*

Our *Living Planet Report* 2026 shows that nature can recover when people take action – but lasting recovery depends on tackling the root causes of nature loss.

The latest *Living Planet Report* – our flagship scientific publication on the state of global biodiversity – shows that wildlife populations continue to decline at an alarming rate. Globally, populations of vertebrates – amphibians, birds, fishes, mammals and reptiles – have shrunk by 73% on average since 1970. Habitat loss, over-exploitation and climate change continue to threaten the species and ecosystems we rely on.

Behind the headline statistics, there are signs of hope. Not all species are declining: around half the populations scientists monitor are stable or even increasing, and we've seen some remarkable stories of recovery, thanks in part to your support.

Wild tiger numbers have risen by over 70% since 2010, from 3,200 to around 5,700. Green turtles, until recently classified as critically endangered, are now no longer considered threatened. Bluefin tuna have rebounded dramatically in just a few years following decades of overfishing.

These stories show that conservation works – but it's not enough on its own. Lasting recovery depends on tackling the drivers of nature loss, especially how we produce and consume food and energy, and the finance system that supports destructive activities.

Solutions exist – the challenge now is delivering them at speed and scale. Your support is helping us make the case directly with the organisations and people that have the power to make change. Together, we can bring our planet back to life.



Explore more

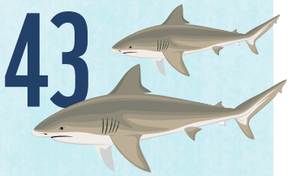
Nature is under pressure but together we can restore it. Read our report and see the difference your support is making at: **wwf.org.uk/lpr2026**

Right: African elephant numbers are stable or growing in many of the places where local communities lead the management of the land they share with them

© Steve Morello / WWF

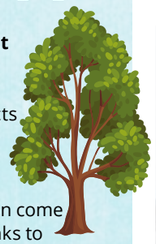
News in *numbers*

43



Critically endangered **Ganges freshwater sharks** have only been spotted 10 times in South Asia this century. But now scientists have discovered a **new hotspot** in Indonesia, where they counted an amazing 43 individuals.

60,411



A law to **protect the world's forests** by keeping products from **illegally deforested** areas off UK shelves will soon come into force. Thanks to all **60,411 supporters** who took action during our six-year campaign.

24



Together with partners, we've mapped **24 critical wildlife corridors** across southern Kenya and northern Tanzania. These corridors inform our efforts to **manage and restore** landscape connectivity for wildlife such as elephants.

Mangrove restoration soars

Mangrove restoration is taking root in Kenya, thanks to our supporters and Postcode Lottery players. WWF, Kenya Red Cross Society and British Red Cross are working with local people to restore 900 hectares of mangrove forest and freshwater habitats in Lamu County on Kenya's coast.

The mangrove seedlings are grown in community-owned nurseries, which provide an important source of income and employment. In 2025, the Mkunumbi Community Forest Association planted 33,000 seedlings in just three days which, a year on, have an incredible 90% survival rate.

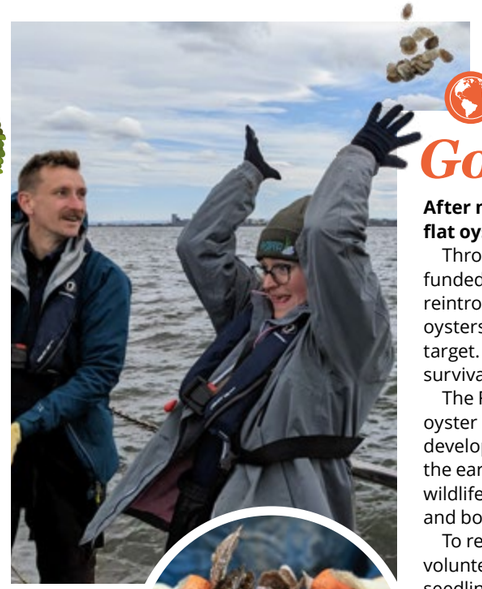
"I really enjoy doing this work to restore mangroves, an activity that hasn't been done for many years," explained group member Mansoor Ibrahim. "Many mangroves have aged, died or been cut down, so we're trying to restore those habitats."

Mangroves help protect coastlines from storms and erosion, as well as locking up carbon. They're also vital for wildlife and provide a safe nursery habitat for many fish species.



Above: Mangroves are vital protectors of water, land, wildlife and people – so we're helping restore them

© Kent Andreasen / WWF-Germany | © Getty



Go forth and multiply

After more than a century's absence, European flat oysters are thriving in the Firth of Forth.

Through the Restoration Forth programme, funded by Sky and other partners, we've reintroduced more than 60,000 European flat oysters into the estuary – double our original target. Initial monitoring showed an average 83% survival rate across multiple sites.

The Firth of Forth used to be home to vast oyster beds, but overfishing and industrial development drove them to extinction locally by the early 1900s. Their comeback is good for other wildlife too: oysters help improve water quality and boost biodiversity.

To revive the whole estuary ecosystem, local volunteers have also planted about 210,000 seedlings to restore vital seagrass habitat. The UK lost more than 90% of its seagrass meadows over the last century, but we're working to bring them back, both in the Forth and off the coast of Wales.

Above: European flat oysters and seagrass meadows are making a comeback in the Firth of Forth

© Emily Annand / WWF-UK | © Callum Bennetts – Maverick Photo Agency / WWF-Scotland

Nepal's thriving *tigers*

Wild tiger numbers in Nepal have reached new heights, with the latest population estimate of 429 tigers – up from 355 four years ago.

The recovery of tiger populations is a rare conservation success story. In 2022, the country became one of the first to double wild tiger numbers – in fact, the population had almost tripled since 2009.

The national survey, which our colleagues in Nepal supported, isn't just about counting tigers. It also helps us understand where they are and how they move across the landscape, both inside and outside protected areas, as well as how prey species are faring. These insights are critical for planning effective conservation strategies.

While the survey results are wonderful news, increased numbers of large predators can bring challenges. We're supporting local communities to thrive side by side with tigers – including through our Youth Champions programme, funded by the UK Government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund. We've trained around 100 young people in Nepal in skills linked to nature-based tourism.



© Getty | © WWF-Nepal



Above: The new estimate will guide conservation efforts, helping people and tigers coexist long term

Inset image: We're equipping local youth with skills that create sustainable income, while strengthening their role as conservation advocates

Our future is not for sale

Thousands of Indigenous peoples mobilised in the Brazilian capital in April with a clear message: Indigenous territories are not for sale. Latin America's largest Indigenous gathering, the Acampamento Terra Livre (Free Land Camp), highlighted growing threats to Indigenous lands, which include large areas of the Amazon, from mining and other extractive industries. Indigenous leaders shared their own solutions for protecting forests and biodiversity, while defending their communities from destructive development. Supporting Indigenous rights is a critical part of WWF's conservation work, and our colleagues in Brazil provided financial and logistical support for communities to take part.



Right: We supported Indigenous peoples as they stood up for their territories and rights against threats, including laws that could weaken Indigenous protections

NEWS IN **BRIEF**

Business backs *net zero*

A survey released during London Climate Action Week highlighted strong support among business leaders for the transition to a net zero, nature-positive economy. It found that 9 in 10 business leaders believe companies should reduce their environmental impact, while 7 in 10 say the transition will benefit business and national prosperity. Supported by KPMG International and PSB Insights, the findings indicated that 8 in 10 leaders believe they should help ensure the transition is fair. But responses showed most have not done enough to address social impacts in their plans. Read more: **wwf.org.uk/our-reports/path-resilience**

Building back in *Myanmar*

Thanks to your help, communities and ecosystems in Myanmar are recovering from the earthquake that devastated the country in March 2025. After the earthquake hit, we provided emergency support around Inle Lake, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and among the community river guardians who help protect endangered Irrawaddy river dolphins. We supplied purification kits to provide access to clean water and home solar kits to address the urgent need for electricity. Since then, we've also been supporting families in 33 villages to rebuild their lives and restore the local environment.

Bringing tigers *back to Laos*

Laos has approved a 10-year plan to bring back tigers. Our WWF colleagues in Laos helped the Government develop the plan, identifying priority landscapes and actions for tiger recovery. Aims include securing habitats, rebuilding prey populations, tackling poaching and illegal trade, and involving communities. Wild tigers haven't been seen in Laos since 2013, but extensive forest could support reintroduced tigers from neighbouring Thailand. Other species will benefit, including dholes (right).



© Getty



Above: The reintroduction of free-ranging rhinos, and the fact that they are now breeding, is a giant leap forward for rhino conservation

Rhinos return

Rhinos are reclaiming an area of northern India where they went extinct more than a century ago.

In March, one male and three female greater one-horned rhinos were released into Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in India's Terai region. The translocation was led by the Government of India and the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department, supported by our colleagues in India. It brings the total number of free-ranging mature rhinos in Dudhwa to eight, after two earlier operations. Excitingly, the rhinos reintroduced last year are already breeding, with several calves spotted.

Rhinos once roamed freely across this landscape of grasslands, wetlands and forests, but were hunted near to extinction by the early 1900s. Their return to the Terai is part of an amazing comeback: from as few as 100-200 individuals a century ago, there are now around 4,000 greater one-horned rhinos across India and Nepal.



Top right image: © Amy Whight | Bottom right images: © Somreet Bhattacharya / WWF-India | © Alamy

Rangers face challenging and dangerous situations almost every day, yet many lack the equipment they need to do their jobs safely and effectively. Thanks to you, we're helping support rhino rangers across Kenya, like Doreen Adongo (pictured here) and Harrison Kamande (below right)



YOU HELPED £

READ TIME 10 MINS

Protecting the *protectors*

The future of Kenya's black rhino recovery relies on rangers who do a difficult and dangerous job. Thanks to their resilience – and your support – we're giving this recovery a fighting chance

Working with black rhinos keeps you on your toes. "A few years ago, I was on patrol with two rangers in Lewa Wildlife Conservancy," recalls Kenneth Ayiego, our rhino programme officer in Kenya. "We tracked a black rhino for hours, and I didn't realise I was heading straight for it until I was less than 10 metres away." That was nerve-jangling enough – but what followed was worse.

"The rhino was sleeping deep in thick bush, but it woke up really quickly," he says. "By the time I saw it, it was already charging at me. Adrenaline surging, I scrambled up the nearest tree – a thorny acacia – as the animal dashed below, missing my leg by a split second. It was a mother with a calf to protect, so no wonder she was defensive. And so was the tree! The rangers had to pull out acacia thorns that were embedded in my head. It was painful."

Clearly, black rhinos don't make friends easily. Notoriously unpredictable and sometimes tetchy, they can react aggressively when disturbed. Yet they desperately need allies. Thankfully, Kenneth is one of many dedicated men and women who work hard, often under difficult and dangerous conditions, to monitor and protect these magnificent creatures.

Once the world's most numerous rhino species – around 100,000 browsed shrubs across sub-Saharan Africa in 1960 – black rhinos are now critically endangered. Today, an estimated 6,788 individuals survive in isolated pockets of habitat across a range that's shrunk by more than 50% over the past half century, lost to agriculture, mining and urban development.

DEADLY DESIRE

The biggest threat facing these monumental mammals – adult males reach 3m long and well over a tonne – is large-scale poaching, which drove a 98% collapse in black rhino numbers between 1960 and 1995. Fuelled by intense demand for rhino horn, mostly in China and Vietnam, poaching surged again in the 21st century, peaking in 2015 when 1,349 African rhinos were illegally killed. Thanks to conservation efforts, the situation has improved – yet in 2024, 516 poaching incidents (involving both black and more numerous white rhinos) were still recorded across Africa.



In the 1980s, Kenya's black rhino population had dwindled to fewer than 400. Thankfully, that number has now more than doubled, giving the country the world's third-largest population. Kenya has fought hard for this recovery, supported by you with monitoring equipment, training, research, environmental education, range expansion and improvements to ranger welfare. But progress depends on stopping poaching – a task that falls largely to the ▶

Words: Paul Bloomfield. Images: © Jonathan Caramanus / Green Renaissance / WWF-UK | © Greg Armfield / WWF-UK



brave, resilient rangers who protect rhinos in national parks, private and community conservancies and reserves.

Aside from the daily risks of encountering grumpy horned animals and armed poachers, rangers often endure tough conditions in remote locations for weeks at a time. Thanks to your support, we work with Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and other partners to provide vital resources that make rangers' lives safer and more comfortable.

MAKING LIVES BETTER

"Some rhino habitat comprises rugged terrain with thick spiky vegetation, making navigation challenging," reports Kenneth. "Daily patrols involve trekking long distances in all weathers. So we've provided rangers with warm jackets, raincoats, boots and other essential gear."

Even back at base, life isn't exactly easy. "Some rangers have to live in tents, which can become torn in rough weather," explains Kenneth. "So at sites including Nairobi National Park, we've built accommodation units using pre-fabricated containers, which are more comfortable and durable."

Rangers typically live in camps far from home, often for many weeks at a time. "You miss your family," says Philip Odhiambo, a veteran ranger with 19 years' experience, based at Meru National Park. "Being away from loved ones for a long time is the hardest thing about working in the field."

It's harder still if regular communication with family members isn't possible. "I stayed in one camp where there was no power to charge phones," recalls Kenneth. "So the rangers couldn't contact their families."

Unreliable power also affects lighting – inconvenient and potentially dangerous where wild animals, including venomous snakes, are common. Generators can fail or cut out in early evening; they're costly to run and environmentally unfriendly.

So last year, we helped install solar-power systems in three ranger camps in Meru National Park and Sera Rhino Sanctuary. "Now we can reliably run computers, improving our ability to send reports, charge camera-trap batteries and phones so rangers can keep in touch with our families. This has been highly motivating," says Alex Kipoki, a KWS warden in Meru National Park's rhino unit. "Even when night falls,



Above: Rangers in Kenya's Maasai Mara National Reserve use thermal-imaging cameras to detect the body heat of poachers in total darkness. The technology improves both ranger safety and wildlife protection by helping teams locate intruders faster

Top right: A ranger scans the landscape from a rhino watchtower. Elevated lookout points help teams monitor rhinos over large areas, detect potential threats early and coordinate rapid responses when needed

Left: Kenneth trains rangers who work hard to monitor wild rhinos and collect the data needed to help protect Kenya's black rhino populations

> "I MISS MY FAMILY. BEING AWAY FROM LOVED ONES FOR A LONG TIME IS THE HARDEST THING ABOUT FIELDWORK"



we have reliable light for cooking and eating, and walking around the camp is less risky."

"That's particularly important for female rangers," says Kenneth. "At Sera Rhino Sanctuary, which is run by the local community, a female ranger who works in the operations room told me she's more able to take care of her family now she has light to cook for them after dark. She feels her children are safer, so she can work in the evenings without worrying."

This supports efforts to recruit more women, who currently represent less than 10% of the ranger workforce in Kenya.

FULLY CHARGED

Power is also essential for equipment used in rhino monitoring and protection. Thanks to you, we've provided kit ranging from binoculars and digital cameras to more advanced technology such as SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool), an open-source platform comprising mobile apps, cloud-based systems and artificial intelligence that helps rangers collect, view, analyse and share data.

"We've supplied camera traps to help detect and identify individual rhinos in challenging environments," adds Kenneth. "We've also provided surveillance cameras, including AI-enabled FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared) to some protected areas." These cameras can detect poaching-related intrusions and send alerts to a command room, triggering a rapid response. They're positioned along perimeter fences and also mounted on trucks for mobile surveillance, detecting intruders at up to 2km away.

"Thanks to our supporters in the UK and US, FLIR cameras have now been installed around the perimeter of Lake Nakuru National Park, Ol Pejeta Conservancy and Solio Game Reserve," says Kenneth. "Since they were introduced in Solio in 2023, there have been no poaching-related intrusions along the stretch of fence covered, and not one rhino has been poached. We also help make sure the system is maintained with efficient solar panels to ensure it continues delivering a high level of protection."

Some solutions for monitoring these elusive creatures are simpler. In Ruma National Park, for example, we funded the construction of a lofty tower that allows rangers to spot rhinos amid thick vegetation and tall grass, and to watch for bushfires ▶

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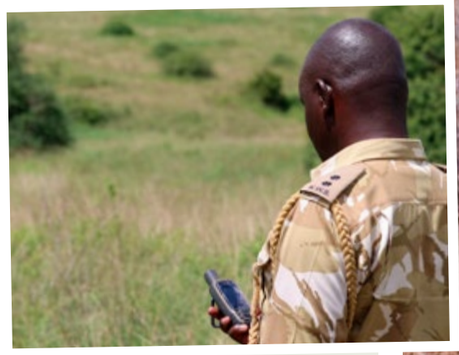


Above: Rangers use GPS units to record rhino locations, navigate in the field and track their patrol routes. The GPS helps teams monitor high-risk areas and coordinate responses to poaching incidents



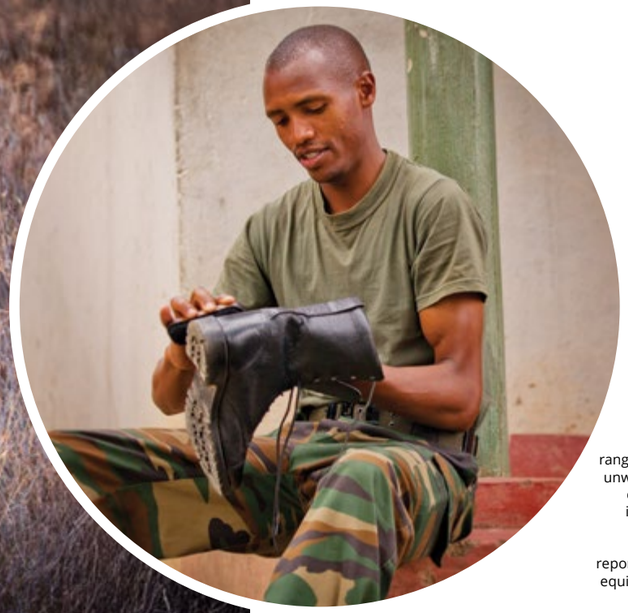
Above: Each rhino is given a unique pattern of ear notches so rangers can tell individuals apart. This helps teams track movements, monitor wellbeing and build a picture of population trends over time



Above: Ranger accommodation in Meru National Park has been fitted with solar panels, giving hard-working rangers access to reliable energy to cook, work and stay in regular contact with their families



KENYA'S LONG-TERM VISION TO BREED AND PROTECT 2,000 BLACK RHINOS BY 2037 IS ON TRACK



Left: In camp, rangers like Harrison unwind with a game of darts or in the improvised gym. After dinner, it's time to write reports and maintain equipment ready for the next patrol

Main: In the 1980s, Kenya had fewer than 400 black rhinos. Today, thanks to your support, that number has more than doubled – giving the country the world's third-largest population

and illegal activity. We're also helping train rhino monitors to locate, identify and collect data on individual animals.

"We've trained more than 300 rhino monitors since January 2025," reports Kenneth. "And we've developed a standardised curriculum and materials that are used by trainers across the country. This includes patrol and tracking techniques to ensure monitors can safely approach a rhino, identify it by its unique ear-notch pattern, collect the required scientific data, then leave the animal safe and undisturbed."

Monitors record each rhino's health condition, age, sex, location, group size (if it's not alone) and behaviour. All this information feeds into a database, which is supported by you and used to generate accurate population estimates and regular reports. "This informs management decisions at both site and national levels, such as translocating rhinos to establish new populations or strengthen existing ones, and enabling timely interventions for sick or injured animals," explains Kenneth.

We're helping shape the next generation of conservationists too. "We educate schoolchildren about conservation issues in collaboration with the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya," says Kenneth. "They designed a curriculum focused on rhino conservation and threats to ecosystems, and we support field trips into national parks that encourage local children to become future ambassadors for nature."



Thanks to the efforts of the Kenyan Government through KWS, organisations including WWF and other partners, local communities and dedicated rangers, the country's long-term vision to breed and protect 2,000 black rhinos by 2037 is on track.

The 2025 National Wildlife Census estimated that Kenya is now home to 1,147 black rhinos – more than double the 1980s population.

We've also helped shape Kenya's long-term strategy for the species, contributing to successive editions of the National Black Rhino Action Plan – the blueprint that guides everything from population monitoring and habitat management to decisions on where rhinos can be safely moved to grow new, secure populations.

Poachers still threaten Kenya's rhinos. "Criminals monitor our protection efforts and adapt their tactics and techniques," notes Kenneth grimly. "We now have better technology – but they also improve the technology they use. So it's vital we keep equipping and supporting the rangers who protect rhinos."

"Not all days are good days," reflects Harrison Kamande, formerly a KWS ranger in Nairobi National Park. "It takes dedication and passion. Anything can happen at any time. You must be focused – your ears alert. But when you see a rhino, your heart cheers up. These animals need great care, from each and every one of us." ■

Rhino protectors

100% of your donation will help protect black rhinos by supporting the people on the front line working towards their recovery.

£20 could buy batteries for camera traps that help monitor rhinos

£30 could go towards GPS equipment used by rangers on their patrols

£50 could help provide weatherproof clothing and boots for rangers

£100 could support training for rhino rangers in new technology and monitoring skills

You can donate using the enclosed freepost envelope or by scanning this QR code

Donate today at **wwf.org.uk/rangers-for-rhinos**

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READ TIME 5 MINS

Open heart, *gentle giants*

Actor and WWF ambassador **Maisie Williams** had a life-changing trip seeing mountain gorillas in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda

What inspired you to help us tell the mountain gorilla conservation story?
I've always been drawn to conservation stories where you can actually see the impact of long-term work. Mountain gorillas are the only great ape whose population is increasing – from fewer than an estimated 400 in the early 1980s to over 1,000 today. I wanted to understand what it takes to make that happen. This trip was a chance to see the work of the International Gorilla Conservation Programme – a coalition of WWF, Conservation International and Fauna & Flora – and meet the people who devote their lives to protecting gorillas.

What did it feel like to see gorillas in the wild?
It's hard to put into words how incredible that moment was. We trekked for about an hour to find the Rushegura family – there are 17 gorillas, including a silverback, some cheeky young blackbacks, and we saw a tiny one-year-old riding on a silverback's back. Being that close was a bit intimidating. But they're so peaceful and so gentle, you feel this immediate connection. It was honestly one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life.

Did it affect your sense of responsibility?
When you're standing only 7-10 metres away from a gorilla, you can't help but feel how closely connected we are. There was a moment when I made eye contact with a young male – that was so powerful. Knowing they share more than 98% of our DNA makes you realise how vulnerable they are, especially to human diseases, and how important it is that we follow responsible tourism guidelines to reduce the risk.

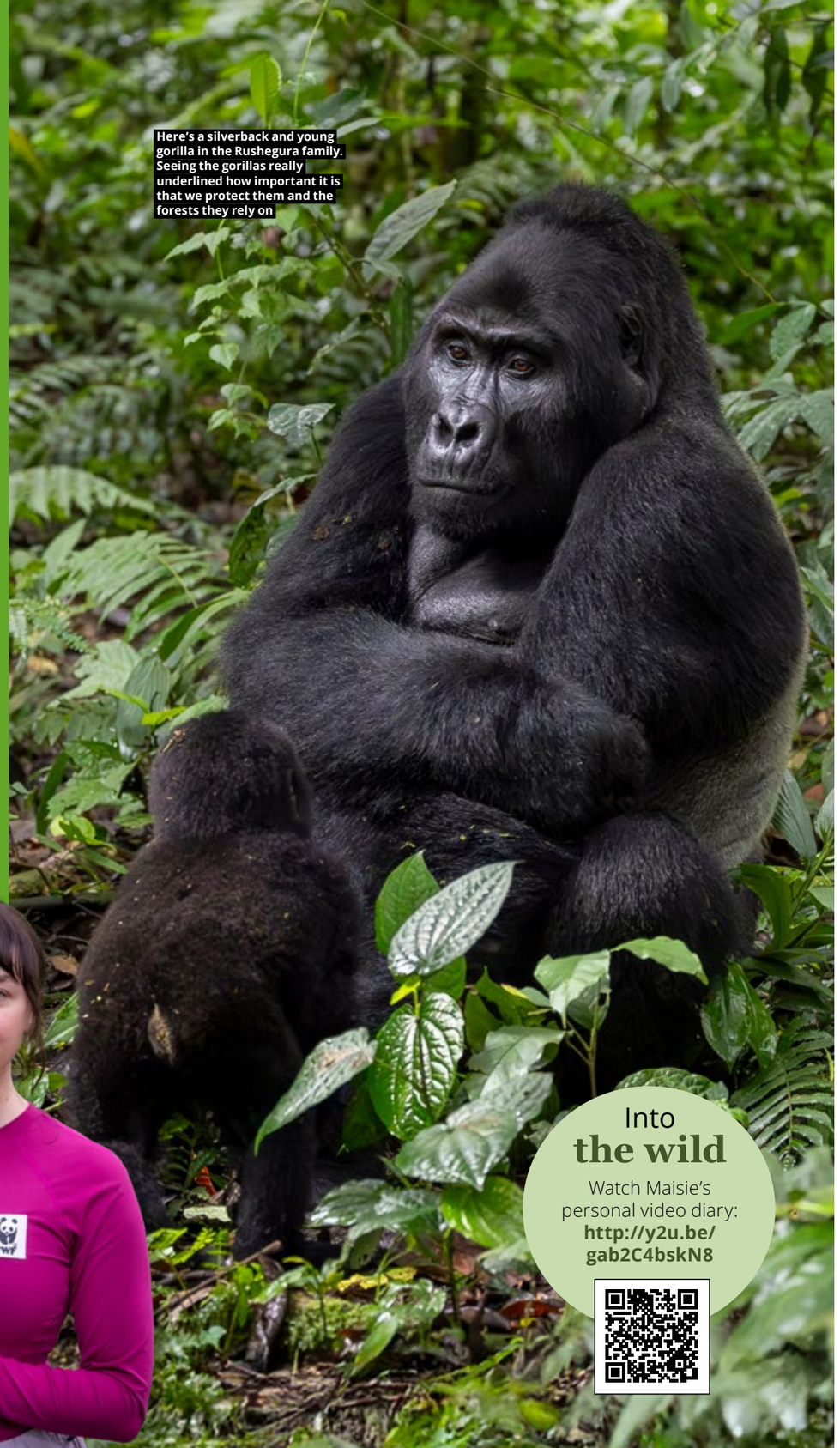
Did your understanding of 'conservation' change?
Absolutely. Many people think conservation is just about protecting animals. But in Bwindi, I saw it's about coexistence between people and nature and collaboration between countries that includes the communities living alongside gorilla habitats.

What did you learn about local communities?
I learned they're an essential part of any conservation success story. Tourism revenue and park fees support local people including through schools, nutrition projects, farming cooperatives, water programmes and livelihoods. I met people whose lives have changed because of mountain gorillas – from farmers to children who can now attend school because they no longer have to walk 10km for water. By protecting gorillas we're supporting people, and they in turn value and protect gorillas.

What had the biggest impact on you?
Meeting the female gorilla trackers really stayed with me. They talked about the challenges of working in the forest, but also the pride they feel in protecting gorillas. They're breaking barriers in their community and showing young girls that they can work in conservation too.

What gave you hope? What worried you?
Seeing how much progress has been made. Mountain gorillas are increasing because of decades of hard work. It gave me hope that we can do the same for other endangered species. What worried me is how fragile that success is. Disease, pressure on habitat and climate change are constant threats. There's no room for complacency – the work has to continue.

Has the experience changed the way you use your voice?
Seeing the impact of conservation first hand made me realise how important it is to use my voice to highlight stories of hope. If sharing my experience encourages even one person to support conservation, adopt a gorilla or visit wild mountain gorillas responsibly, then that's meaningful. ■



Here's a silverback and young gorilla in the Rushegura family. Seeing the gorillas really underlined how important it is that we protect them and the forests they rely on



Into **the wild**

Watch Maisie's personal video diary: **http://y2u.be/gab2C4bskN8**







Top: One of Maisie's highlights was meeting gorilla trackers Precious, Joyline, Generous and Christine, who are inspiring girls to work in conservation

Middle: Water tanks like this one reduce pressure on forest resources and improve community wellbeing

Bottom: This village sits right on the edge of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. Children play just beyond the mountain gorillas' home

Words: Sophie Stafford
Images: © Adam Gerrard | © Maisie Williams

Safe passage

Whales know no borders – and protecting them means safeguarding their migration routes across oceans. Last year, our colleagues in Peru launched the country's first humpback whale satellite-tracking project. Three females were tagged off northern Peru, where hundreds gather each year to breed and nurse their calves.

One female, travelling with a calf only weeks old, swam more than 6,800km to the Antarctic Peninsula in just 89 days, passing through areas of intense fishing and shipping activity.

The findings are helping shape our Blue Corridors initiative, identifying the critical migration routes whales rely on between feeding, breeding and nursery areas. Thanks to you, this research is helping us build a clearer picture of these ocean highways, so we can work with governments and partners to ensure whales can move safely through an increasingly busy ocean.

Words: Sophie Stafford | image: © Shutterstock / Earth Theater / WWF

READ TIME 10 MINS

Turtles without *borders*

Marine turtles roam vast oceans. Protecting them takes global action, and with your help, we're making progress

"I've always had a strong connection to turtles," says Alfred Ralifo. "I grew up on a small island in Fiji. I remember seeing turtles as a child and learning all their stories and legends. They were like my extended family."

Today, as Fiji conservation director for WWF, he's supporting a team working with local communities just like the one in which he grew up. Our aim is to improve protection for hawksbill and green turtle nesting sites in Fiji, while also collecting vital data on nesting behaviour, climate-change impacts and turtles' cultural value. Trained volunteers from the community now work as turtle monitors, known as *Dau ni Vonu*, while outreach programmes teach students about turtle biology, climate change and sustainable fishing practices.

The results have been impressive. From 2023 to 2025, an annual one-month survey of four key beaches recorded a significant increase in hawksbill nests. The team also fitted 10 turtles with satellite tags to find out where they travel. Two key sites have now been designated as marine protected areas, with immediate positive results. "Since they were protected, there's been no illegal harvesting of turtles or their eggs," says Ratu Viliame Tuinavadra, headman of Dravuni village. It's a hopeful sign for recovery.

ANCIENT MARINERS

Marine turtles have lived in our ocean for over 100 million years and are critical to ocean ecology – for instance, by maintaining healthy seagrass beds and controlling sponges on coral reefs. They're also integral to the cultural life of island communities. But today they face many threats, from poaching for food and other products, to entanglement as bycatch in fishing nets. They're also vulnerable to climate change, as cyclones can damage nesting beaches and overheated sand can skew the sex ratio, meaning that some warmer nests produce only female hatchlings. ▶

Coral care

Marine turtles act as keystone species in the ocean environment, helping maintain a healthy ecosystem that benefits many other marine organisms. On coral reefs, they play a vital role: hawksbills (pictured) eat a lot of sea sponges, keeping numbers in check and preventing them from outcompeting reef-building corals. Green turtles feed on algae, preventing overgrowth that might also harm the reef.

Words: Mike Unwin | Image: © Alamy

Today, two of the world's seven marine turtle species are listed as critically endangered, three vulnerable, one least concern and one data deficient. All are protected under international conventions, but protection is hard to enforce because of the great distances turtles travel. These long-lived reptiles may migrate thousands of kilometres between their feeding and breeding areas, traversing the waters of many different nations during their long lives.

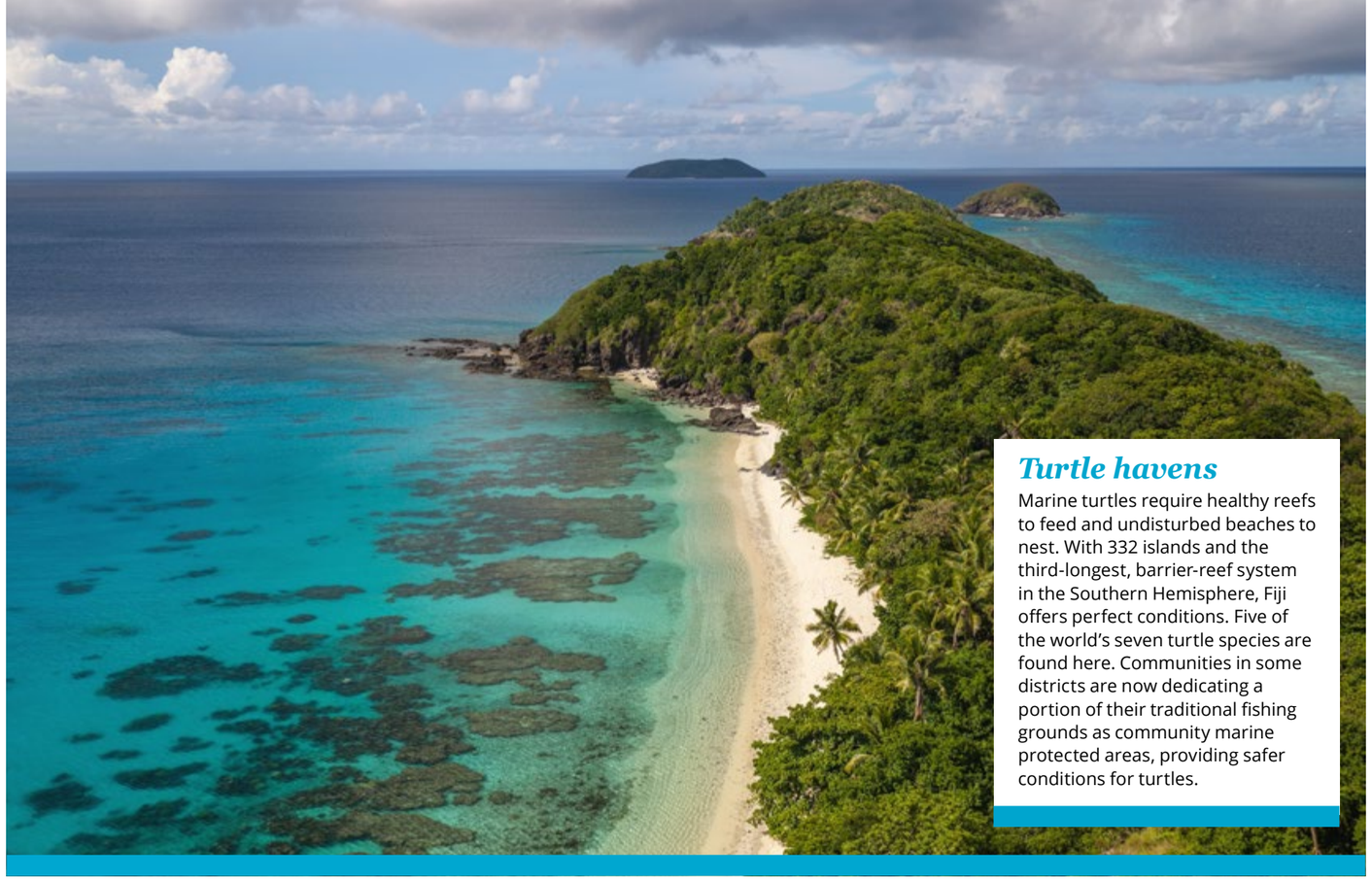
Conservation thus requires a global network with everyone working together. In 2025, we launched a new programme with our partners called Blue Corridors for Turtles. This aims to improve our understanding of the species by bringing together researchers from across nations, and connecting datasets so that vital information is more easily shared. It's already connected over 50 datasets covering 166 distinct turtle populations in 147 countries. Alongside ShellBank – a DNA-based toolkit – it can now trace the origins of turtles and turtle products to anywhere on the planet.

Blue Corridors helps us assess where turtle populations are most in need of protection and identify Important Marine Turtle Areas (IMTAs). Such areas have already been identified for other wildlife – for example BirdLife International has designated over 13,600 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) that are now recognised by governments worldwide. For turtles, this could be a game-changer.

Baby steps

Turtle hatchlings emerge from their nest at night. This maximises their chances of survival, as they avoid high daytime temperatures that might cause dehydration or heat exhaustion. After dark, there are also fewer predators such as crabs and birds. At the surface, they immediately start heading for the ocean, orientating themselves by the moonlit horizon, the only natural light source.





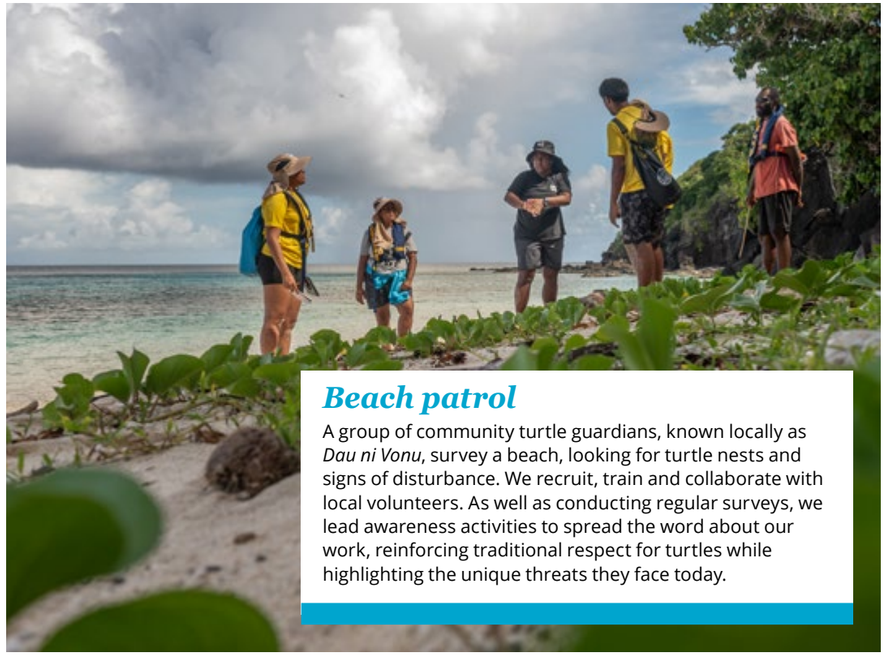
Turtle havens

Marine turtles require healthy reefs to feed and undisturbed beaches to nest. With 332 islands and the third-longest, barrier-reef system in the Southern Hemisphere, Fiji offers perfect conditions. Five of the world's seven turtle species are found here. Communities in some districts are now dedicating a portion of their traditional fishing grounds as community marine protected areas, providing safer conditions for turtles.

CONNECTING OCEANS

Meanwhile, the success of the Fiji programme is informing WWF's work on other Pacific islands. In 2024, WWF visited Pomio in eastern Papua New Guinea to set up a new field office. Working with the community, they established three turtle monitoring sites and trained 19 turtle monitors. On 7 December 2025, the villagers of Malai celebrated finding their first nesting leatherback turtle. Plans are now afoot to boost their monitoring capacity with infrared drones, while a new satellite-tracking programme will provide information on the turtles' travels around the Pacific.

There's also good news from the beaches of Malaysia, some 3,000km to the west. Green turtles here have suffered historically from illegal egg poaching, but our colleagues are now working with the local community to provide a round-the-clock turtle guardian programme during the nesting season, using infrared lights to patrol the beaches at night. Females are also satellite tagged to reveal where they travel and how often they return – all adding information to the Blue Corridors database. ▶



Beach patrol

A group of community turtle guardians, known locally as *Dau ni Vonu*, survey a beach, looking for turtle nests and signs of disturbance. We recruit, train and collaborate with local volunteers. As well as conducting regular surveys, we lead awareness activities to spread the word about our work, reinforcing traditional respect for turtles while highlighting the unique threats they face today.



Measuring up

Turtle monitors measure the carapace (shell) of an adult female green turtle before she returns to the sea. Recording these biometrics, as well as weight and DNA samples, provides important information on the health, age and movement patterns of turtles. This now feeds into the Blue Corridors for Turtles database, enabling it to be shared between different turtle conservation projects across the Pacific and elsewhere.



Silent killers

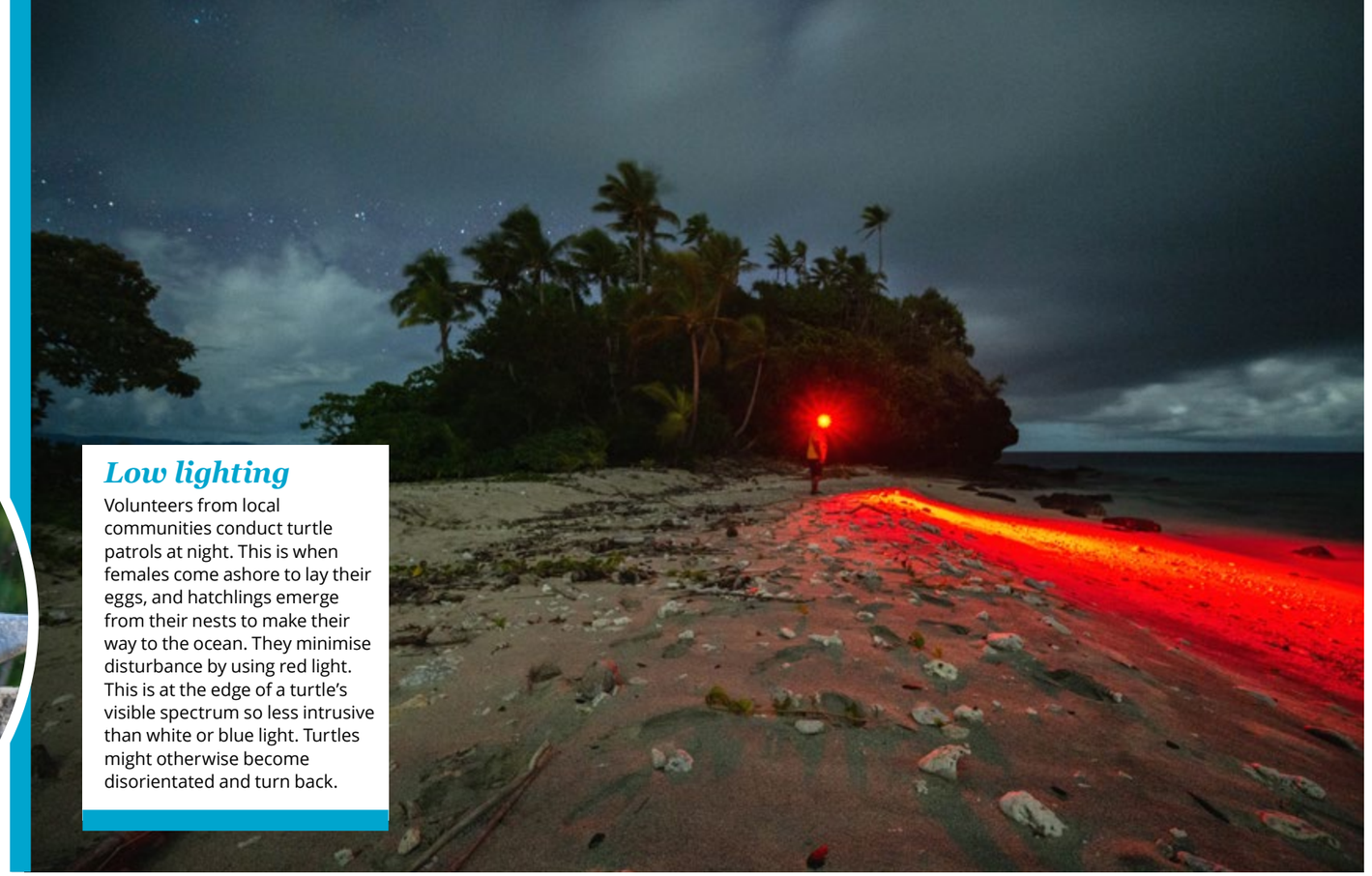
'Ghost nets' – abandoned or lost fishing nets – pose a deadly threat to turtles, which may become entangled and drown. They also damage coral reefs by snagging on coral and breaking it, or by shading it from sunlight. By attracting small fish, nets sometimes lure juvenile turtles into danger. In Fiji, community-led monitoring, dive clean-ups and recycling initiatives are helping remove these silent killers from the reef.

© Tom Vierus / WWF-Pacific

Vulnerable giant

Papua New Guinea is a key breeding ground for vulnerable Western Pacific leatherback turtles. These ocean giants migrate thousands of kilometres from their foraging grounds off the coast of North America. Historically, they've been a vital source of protein for local coastal communities, but less so since bycatch and nesting disturbance have seen populations plummet.





Low lighting

Volunteers from local communities conduct turtle patrols at night. This is when females come ashore to lay their eggs, and hatchlings emerge from their nests to make their way to the ocean. They minimise disturbance by using red light. This is at the edge of a turtle's visible spectrum so less intrusive than white or blue light. Turtles might otherwise become disorientated and turn back.



Hatching plans

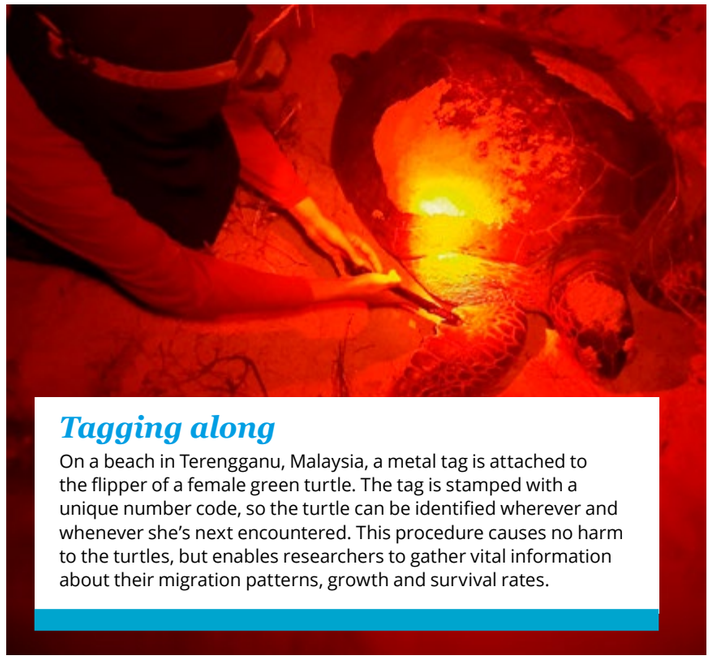
Our trained team removes freshy laid green turtle eggs from a nest on Terengganu that was at risk from erosion or flooding. The eggs are quickly relocated to special fenced hatcheries on a nearby beach, where they are buried in sand-filled containers to incubate, protected from poachers and predators. Once the eggs hatch, the hatchlings are allowed to emerge naturally. Close supervision helps ensure they make it to the sea.

In 2024, beaches monitored in the Setiu district, Terengganu, recorded zero poaching, with 49,250 eggs removed for incubation in hatcheries. Last year, 268 nests were protected, with an 83% hatching success rate. Since 2008, more than 3,000 turtle nests have been monitored and protected. Aliah Affandi, our marine conservation officer in Malaysia, describes how the community joined training sessions and beach clean-ups. "It's fulfilling to see people getting involved," she says.

MAKING WAVES

Last year, we made progress in other turtle projects too. Innovative solar-powered lights attached to gillnets helped reduce turtle bycatch in Mexico, while new community-led regulations cut the poaching of leatherback turtles on Buru Island, Indonesia. And with Blue Corridors for Turtles, all the findings from these projects now feed into a secure database, which is accessible to all conservationists.

Marine turtles are sentinels of the ocean's health. If they're in decline, we know that problems in our ocean run deep. That's why we must now build on these successes and work with communities around the world to give turtles a future. Alfred says: "I hope, in 100 years' time, people will still be able to see marine turtles." ■



Tagging along

On a beach in Terengganu, Malaysia, a metal tag is attached to the flipper of a female green turtle. The tag is stamped with a unique number code, so the turtle can be identified wherever and whenever she's next encountered. This procedure causes no harm to the turtles, but enables researchers to gather vital information about their migration patterns, growth and survival rates.



People power

Working with communities is key to the success of turtle conservation. On Pomio Island, Papua New Guinea, marine turtles have been part of the culture for centuries. Today, we're training local volunteer turtle monitors, and providing them with equipment. In turn, outreach programmes allow these volunteers to spread the word about why turtles matter and how their communities can help protect them.

© Getty | © Aida Roslan / WWF-Malaysia | © Aliah Affandi / WWF-Malaysia | © Tom Vierus / WWF-Pacific

How to...

Amazing ideas for bringing our world back to life

LIVE GREEN TOP TIPS



Go green after Christmas

The season of giving and receiving doesn't have to mean excess. Give back to the planet with these five friendly ways to start the new year

1 Green in between

Use any free time after Christmas to learn a new skill like repairing clothes, new recipes for reducing food waste, or switch your pension, bank and energy suppliers to greener options.

2 Tree care

Don't leave your Christmas tree in a woodland. They can introduce pests and diseases. Instead, use a council-run collection service (often free!) or take it to a local recycling centre.

3 Food share

Donate unwanted food (luxuries and basics) via your local food bank or community pantry. If they're unopened, in date and non-perishable, Christmas treats can be enjoyed year-round.

4 Gift twice

Invite friends round for a gift-swap gathering. It's a fun way to rehome unwanted presents and give them a second life. Donate leftovers to charity shops and community groups.

5 Tech trade

Got a new device? Don't leave old ones in a drawer. Sell, donate or recycle them instead. Reusing the precious metals in old devices can reduce the need to mine for new resources.

© Getty

EXPERT INFO

Track river dolphins

With your support, we're tracking river dolphins in the Amazon to better understand their movements and help safeguard their future. How do we do it?

1. Indigenous fisherfolk help us stretch a net across the river and gently guide the dolphin into shallow water before carefully closing the net.
2. The dolphin is lifted in a sling and carefully placed on a mat on the shore or into a boat. It's kept wet and comfortable and is constantly monitored.
3. Scientists collect measurements and samples to study the dolphin's genetics and exposure to contaminants. They work silently to minimise stress.
4. A GPS tracking device is attached to the dolphin's dorsal ridge, which provides daily updates on its movements. After about 15 minutes, the dolphin is released back into the river.



© Alamy | © Jaime Rojo / WWF-UK



Above: Dolphins must remain conscious to breathe, so sedation isn't possible when tagging. But every effort is made to keep them cool and calm



Save energy when you cook

Ovens are the most energy-hungry appliances when it comes to preparing a meal. Air-fryers, slow cookers and microwaves are efficient alternatives, but if you don't have the kitchen space for any of these, there are ways to reduce your oven's carbon footprint.

Batch cook to make the most of the heat and fill any empty shelves with easy dishes that will keep in the fridge or freezer (flapjacks or roasted vegetables). If you're using an electric oven, turn it off 10 minutes early as the temperature will stay high enough to finish cooking. Use that time to add a tray of nuts or seeds to toast them – delicious!

And don't forget to keep the oven door clean so you can check your food's progress through the glass, without opening the door and letting all the heat out.

© Alamy

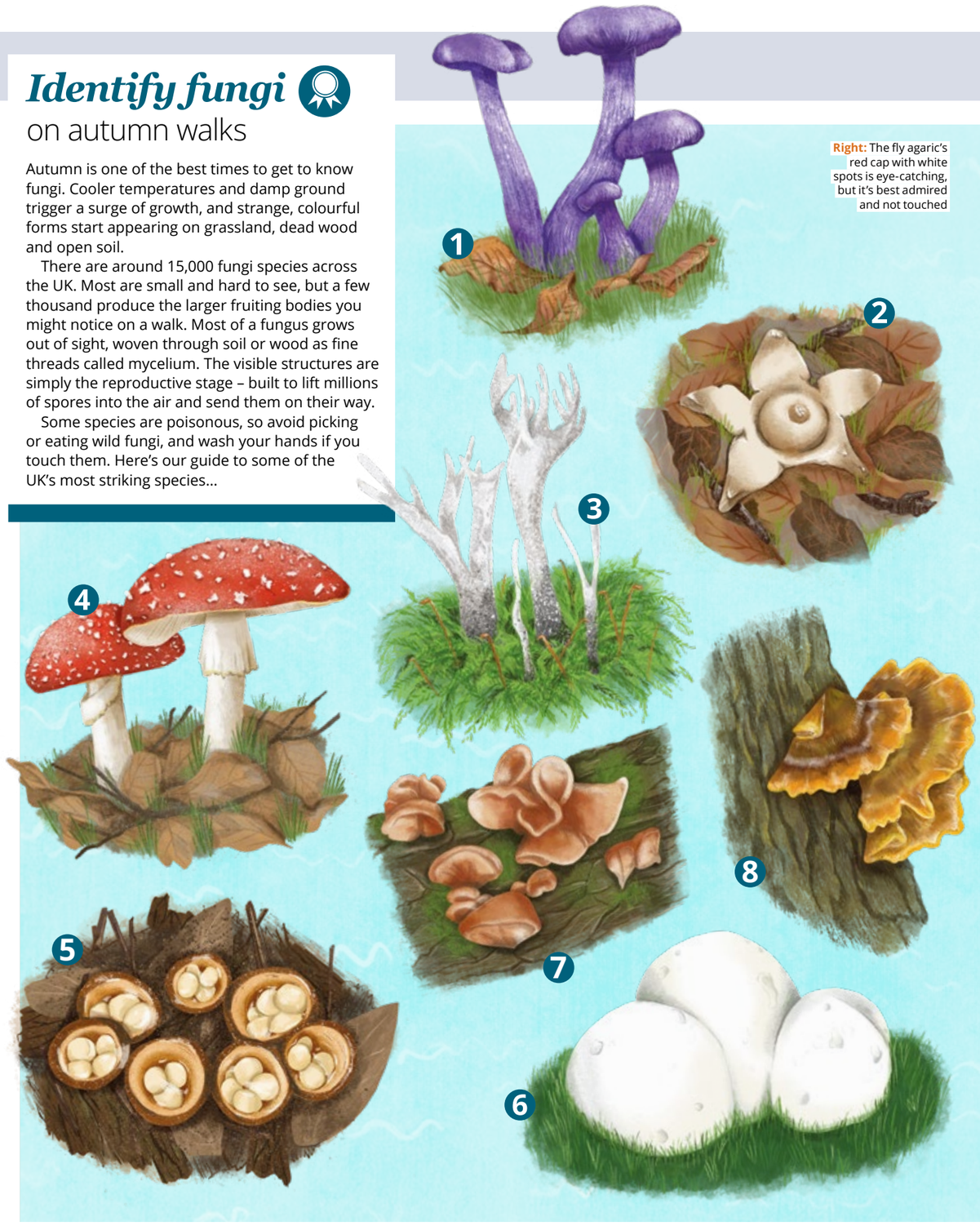
Left: When it's time to buy a new oven, choose electric rather than gas so you can use renewable energy

Identify fungi on autumn walks

Autumn is one of the best times to get to know fungi. Cooler temperatures and damp ground trigger a surge of growth, and strange, colourful forms start appearing on grassland, dead wood and open soil.

There are around 15,000 fungi species across the UK. Most are small and hard to see, but a few thousand produce the larger fruiting bodies you might notice on a walk. Most of a fungus grows out of sight, woven through soil or wood as fine threads called mycelium. The visible structures are simply the reproductive stage – built to lift millions of spores into the air and send them on their way.

Some species are poisonous, so avoid picking or eating wild fungi, and wash your hands if you touch them. Here's our guide to some of the UK's most striking species...



Right: The fly agaric's red cap with white spots is eye-catching, but it's best admired and not touched



1 *Amethyst deceiver*

Its vivid purple colour should make it easy to spot, but this small fungus (2-7cm) is often missed. The deep purple fades to lilac as it ages. Look for it growing in loose patches among leaf litter beneath beech, birch and oak trees, where it often blends into the forest floor.

2 *Collared earthstar*

Beginning life as a small, onion-like ball, the outer layer of this fungus splits and folds back into star-shaped rays. This exposes a central spore sac that 'puffs' spores into the air when struck by raindrops. Look for it under deciduous trees, often among leaf litter or moss.

3 *Candlesnuff fungus*

The candlesnuff fungus looks like a cluster of burnt candle wicks. Its black stems are dusted with a white, powdery coating that brightens towards the ghostly, forked tips. It grows all year round in woodlands, parks and gardens.

4 *Fly agaric*

Famous from fairy tales, this distinctive red-capped mushroom with white spots is one of Britain's most recognisable fungi. It's also poisonous. Caps can reach 20cm across. Look for it beneath birch, pine and spruces.

5 *Bird's nest fungus*

These tiny fungi resemble mini nests filled with eggs. They cling to twigs, branches and decaying wood. The 'eggs' are spore-filled capsules that are splashed out by raindrops, helping the fungus spread. Look for them in shaded woodland, low to the ground.

6 *Giant puffball*

One of the UK's largest fungi, giant puffballs sometimes reach the size of a football. Found in grassland and open ground, it has white, leathery skin that browns as it ages. A single puffball can release trillions of spores, and unlike most mushrooms it has no stem or gills.

7 *Jelly ear*

These ear-shaped fungi grow in clusters on dead or dying branches, especially elder, and persist through winter. Brown and jelly like when wet, they're shiny inside and velvety outside, with a wrinkled inner surface.

8 *Turkey tail*

With distinctive bands of blue, green, brown and white, this fungus resembles a turkey's tail. It grows in layers on dead wood and plays a vital role in breaking down trees, recycling nutrients back into the forest ecosystem.

Shop responsibly

Palm oil is found in around half of all packaged products. Made from the fruit of oil palm trees, it's widely used in foods, cosmetics and household items, because it's versatile, efficient and high yielding.



The challenge is that oil palm plantations are being grown in rainforests that are rich in wildlife. When the forests are cleared, threatened species such as rhinos, elephants, tigers and orangutans lose vital habitat.

Boycotting palm oil isn't the answer. Oil palms produce more oil using less land than alternative vegetable oil crops, and the industry supports millions of smallholder farmers worldwide.

Governments and companies are working to set better standards for sustainable palm oil production, but we can all act responsibly as everyday consumers.



Look for products with the RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) logo on packaging. We helped set up RSPO to promote more sustainable palm-oil production and reduce impacts on nature.

Fungi illustrations: Esther Curtis | Images: © Alamy | © Getty

READ TIME 5 MINS

It's a *giving thing*

People get involved with WWF for all sorts of reasons. We asked three of our 2030 Circle supporters about what motivates them to give. Do any of their stories resonate with you?

"YOU WANT TO LEAVE THE WORLD A LITTLE BIT BETTER THAN YOU FOUND IT"



CAROL

Big cats are my thing. I've been fortunate to visit India and Nepal and see tigers in the wild. I first started giving regularly to WWF about 40 years ago to help protect tigers. I donate to a few different causes, including those that have nothing to do with wildlife. When donating, whatever you give, it's nice to know it's appreciated, and to be kept informed about the difference it's making. I always feel that I'm involved with WWF.

I like being able to go to supporter events and chat to WWF experts. Over the years, I've been lucky to visit some of WWF's projects while travelling in different countries. On one visit to Namibia, our group met the chairman from a local village who regularly spent two days walking to community meetings. After hearing his story, we all helped him buy a bicycle to make those long journeys a little easier.

Experiences like these have helped me see that wildlife conservation goes hand in hand with supporting local communities. When people can benefit from protecting the natural world, whether through jobs as rangers or in ecotourism, it creates stronger futures for both people and wildlife.

Left: We help protect tigers by conserving wild habitat, securing connected landscapes, tackling poaching and supporting monitoring



JULES

I'm an optimist, an inventor and an engineer, who's experienced first-hand how ideas can become reality and impact the world. I believe that humanity can harness its knowledge and power to restore the environment and build a better future. Projects like WWF's saltmarsh restoration can help tackle climate change by drawing carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, into plants, the earth and oceans. Conducted on a global scale, such projects could help restore a sustainable future for all.

Another reason I identify with and support WWF is tied to human perceptions, and how we view our treatment of the planet. We experience the world as individuals, however, I believe we need to also consider the collective experience, including that of animals and plants, when choosing how we live.

For me, WWF does essential work in raising awareness of nature. It gives our planet a voice. And engaging our children in charitable projects and natural education is essential in establishing this collective awareness. I have two children and some of the most memorable times we've had as a family have been when we are in nature, experiencing its wonders.

Right: We're working to restore saltmarshes as natural climate and flood defenses

Words: Derek Niemann | Images: © Getty | © Alamy

SARAH

In the days before we had children, we would go scuba diving a lot. We were very in touch with nature, aware of the climate and the impact of environmental change. When you see a bleached coral reef, you want to support organisations that are working to address those challenges, to help protect that wonderful ocean environment for future generations. You want to leave the world a little bit better than you found it. We wanted to be able to do something to help.

We like backing the less glamorous projects that maybe don't appeal to other people as much. Work that's driven by science and data, and that makes an impact on the ground, either with local communities or conservation projects. As scientists, my husband and I always ask: what's the impact of this project and is it going to lead to change in the future?

Our fundraising includes running half-marathons for WWF and I do enjoy wearing an orange tiger vest. Does this encourage our three children? I think so – they've all become conservation champions. They look at us and say: your generation didn't do enough. Their generation is very aware of the changes that are required.



Left: We help protect coral reefs by restoring damaged areas, reducing destructive fishing, cutting pollution, and monitoring bleaching so reefs can recover as ocean temperatures rise

You already provide great support to WWF. **Sarah, Carol and Jules** show there are other ways to support us, be it at events, embracing nature with your family and supporting conservation first-hand. They're also all signed up to WWF's **2030 Circle**. It's a group for supporters keen to get closer to WWF's work on a larger scale. Visit **wwf.org.uk/action-2030-circle** to see if it's for you or someone you might know.



Bear-y *relaxing*

Treat a loved one to the indulgent Pampered Panda Bath & Body set for a little oasis of calm. **£30**



Snuggle *buddy*

Meet your cute, cuddly winter friend: an ethically made fluffy chick penguin plushie. **£9**

Christmas *gift ideas*

Thoughtful presents for nature lovers in our shop

Find more great gifts online:
wwf.org.uk/shop



Tree *treats*

The PLAYin CHOC Advent Calendar is an eco-friendly countdown to Christmas, with three treats behind each door. **£64**



Create a *buzz*

Give a gift the bees will love too. The limited-edition Merry Christmas Seedball Wildflower Tin is a blooming wonder. **£7**



Little *flower*

A little one will adore The Swaddle & Cuddle Gift Set, complete with a knitted bee toy and soft swaddling cloth. **£49**

WIN! *A safari-inspired Christmas stocking*

Bring a touch of the savannah to your festive décor

This sumptuous Elizabeth Scarlett safari stocking adds a wildlife twist to a much-loved Christmas tradition. Made from soft velvet, certified organic cotton and non-toxic dyes, each stocking is beautifully embroidered with a tiger, African elephant, giraffes and a crane. Worth £50, they give back too, with 2% of annual sales donated to support the animals featured – more than £750,000 so far. We have one forest green Safari Stocking to give away – see the 'How to enter' box (right).



How to enter

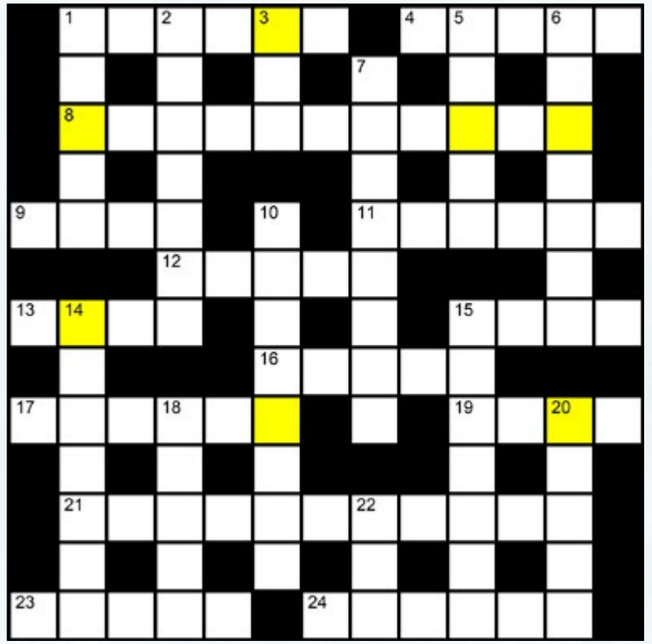
Action giveaways

Email us with your name, address and phone number, with 'Stocking', as the subject line:
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 4 December 2026. For full terms and conditions, visit: **wwf.org.uk/compterms**

Crossword



WWF ACTION CROSSWORD 64: Autumn 2026 issue. Compiled by Aleric Linden

Clues across

1 A sustainable palm vine used in wickerwork products (6)
4 Home spaces up top, insulated for energy saving (5)
8 One of the major black rhino countries – and home to Kruger National Park (5,6)
9 Acronym for a site of special scientific interest in the UK (4)
11 Natural armour for which critically endangered hawksbill turtles are poached (6)
12 What melting snow turns into (5)
13 The stalk of a plant (4)
15 Highly prized black-market target on a black rhino's snout (4)
16 Like a caterpillar before it turns into a butterfly or moth (5)
17 Lake _ , African Great Lake renowned for its exceptional diversity of fish (6)
19 See 20 down
21 Extreme weather events caused by sudden, heavy rainfall (5,6)
23 Recyclable metallic waste often destined for the 'yard' (5)
24 Home to the Bwindi mountain gorilla population (6)

Clues down

1 Changes in global temperatures and sea levels that are on the up (5)
2 A travel-focused industry that sometimes goes 'eco' (7)
3 Volcanic fallout capable of widespread disruption (3)
5 _ Ridley, vulnerable marine turtle species (5)
6 Fishing vessel (7)
7 _ wind farm, renewable energy installation most often at sea (8)
10 Free power source for a photovoltaic array (8)
14 Acronym for the global WWF-IUCN wildlife trade monitoring initiative (7)
15 Weapon used in whaling (7)
18 Addis _ , Ethiopia's capital city (5)
20 & 19 Central American country where about half a million different species live (5,4)
22 Fell trees for the timber industry (3)



Solve our crossword and you could win a copy of A Photography Masterclass by Paul Nicklen *(Frances Lincoln, RRP £18.99, paperback)*

After solving the crossword, take each letter from the shaded squares (from left to right and top to bottom) to spell the **prize word**. To be in with a chance to win, email **competition@wwf.org.uk** or send a postcard with the prize word to the address on page 30. **The closing date is Friday 4 December 2026.**

Summer 2026 answers

Prize word: BOILERS
Across 6. Biodegradable 8. Running 9. Mulch 11. Arab 12. Sierra 15. Nevada 17. Orca 20. Gulfs 21. Silicon 22. Electric fence

Down 1. Iberian 2. Mountain 3. Lewis 4. Jaguar 5. Black 7. Rig 10. Beta 12. Seas 13. African 14. Rainier 16. Effect 18. Bulls 19. Cliff 21. Sei

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MEET THE ACTION TEAM

Editor Liz Palmer
editor@wwf.org.uk
Editorial manager Emma Brill
Senior supporter engagement manager Adam Field
Supporter engagement manager Stephen Osborne

FOR OUR MEDIA

Consultant editor Sophie Stafford
Senior art editor Nicole Mooney
Art editor Julia Young
Managing editor Hannah Fletcher
Account director Katy Hewett
Account manager Leah Goldring
Creative director Matt Pink

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WILL YOU LEAD THE WAY?



Remember WWF in your will to help protect nature for future generations

Gifts in wills fund around 20% of our work, so it's one of the most powerful ways you can support us. Leave a lasting legacy and create a brighter future for our world.

To find out more about leaving a gift to WWF visit **wwf.org.uk/gifts-in-wills/action-autumn-26** or scan the QR code. Alternatively, call Ella on **01483 412153** or email **stewardship@wwf.org.uk**

WWF

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FSC logo to go here

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