



THE MAGAZINE FOR WWF MEMBERS

Wildlife guardians

How you're helping the Maasai and wildlife thrive together in east Africa

Saving our wild isles

Thanks to your support, UK community grassroots projects are growing green

Racing to the rescue

You can boost our work to protect Amazon river dolphins when they need it most

The path to peace



I know how famously hard it is to see the 'ghost of the mountains', so I couldn't believe it when I heard a snow leopard had been spotted nearby. I'd just stepped off the plane in Leh, north India, and as

dawn broke the next day, I drove out of the city to find it.

Amazingly, the cat was hiding in plain sight of the road, its coat providing camouflage against the golden rocks. Moving closer, I could see blood on its mouth and, nearby, the cow it had killed.

My thoughts turned to the cow's owner. In the Himalayas, survival is a daily battle. Food and water are scarce, crops are hard to grow and communities depend on raising cattle to live. But as the snow leopard's natural prey dwindles, the cat moves closer to people – and to livestock.

Communities are surprisingly tolerant when the occasional animal is taken while grazing, but when a predator raids a pen overnight and kills a whole herd, that leads to retaliatory killings. So we're helping herders to protect their livestock during this vulnerable time by building predatorproof enclosures and trialling flashing lights as deterrents.

I watched the snow leopard for two hours – as the sun crept overhead, it moved only to stay in the shade. And all the while, I contemplated the delicate balance of life here.

Dicola

Nicola Loweth

WWF senior programme adviser for Asia

Right: The elusive snow leopard that Nicola was lucky enough to see in India



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WWF in action

Billion-dollar boost for tiger conservation

Governments, conservation organisations and donors have committed to raising an additional US\$1 billion over the next decade to secure the future of tigers in the wild.

The pledge was the culmination of a landmark conference aimed at raising finance to conserve tigers and the landscapes where they live. It was hosted by the Royal Government of Bhutan in partnership with the Tiger Conservation Coalition, of which WWF is a member.

At the event, government representatives from tiger-range countries joined conservation groups and donors such as the World Bank to look at ways of raising the extra finance needed to build on this success. As well as increasing and securing tiger populations, the US\$1 billion will contribute to expanding the tigers' range and enhancing existing habitats while benefiting communities who live alongside them.

Over the 20th century, hunting and habitat loss pushed tigers to the brink of extinction, with numbers falling by more than 95%. By 2010, as few as 3,200 tigers remained in the wild. But since then, conservation efforts have made a real difference. Tiger numbers have increased in Bhutan, China, India and Nepal, leading to an estimated global population of around 5,500.

And this year Thailand became the first southeast Asian country to record a rise in its wild tiger population. The big cats have become extinct in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in the last 25 years, but there are hopes that the tigers in Thailand

might disperse to Laos in future.

Right: India is one of the countries that's seen an increase in wild tige:



News in **numbers**

more than 10,000 people from 203 countries and territories at the first World Species Congress. This was a 24-hour virtual event to celebrate conservation successes and scale up collective impact.

449,000

A wildlife-rich, 449,000 sq km area of the Southern Ocean. more than 20 times the size of Wales, is now free from fishing after we helped strengthen marine protection measures around South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

Over 250 supporters. many of whom have left a gift to WWF in their will, got an inside look at some of our conservation projects at our series of legacy events in May, June and September.

Young voices speak up for nature

More than 250 young people from across the UK came together to help shape the future of conservation at the Youth in Nature Summit 2024.

The two-day event - which we supported, along with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the RSPB - was organised by and for young people. The summit aimed to bring young people together to build their skills and confidence, and inspire action for people and nature. The packed programme featured talks, workshops and networking sessions. These included a careers fair and a youth empowerment fair, where attendees could find out about opportunities at 15 environmental organisations, including WWF-UK.

"There was an overwhelming sense of community and togetherness throughout the event," said Abbie, a WWF Youth Ambassador. "We're committed to collaborating with the BTO, the RSPB and young people to protect our planet."



Above: The Youth in Nature Summit brought young people together to share their ideas

Al for the **Arctic**

Imagine if we could use the power of AI to protect polar bears and other Arctic species...

That's the aim of IceNet, an artificial intelligence model we've helped develop with the British Antarctic Survey and the Alan Turing Institute.

Using an array of information, including 40 years of satellite records, IceNet learns to forecast likely Arctic sea-ice conditions up to three months ahead. Combined with other information such as GPS tracking data, this can help us predict wildlife movements and find the best ways to protect them.

We've shown that IceNet can help predict caribou migration routes across sea ice, which could help protect them from icebreaking vessels. And this summer, researchers used IceNet to support a polar bear survey in Foxe Basin in Canada. Its forecasts were used as a guide to when the bears should have moved to land from the ice floes, so that none were missed from the survey.

Right: Caribou migration routes have been protected thanks to IceNet's predictions

Back from the **brink** (§)

We're celebrating amazing news from Spain the Iberian lynx is no longer listed as endangered!

Just 20 years ago, one of Europe's last big cats was on the edge of extinction, with around 100 left in the wild. But thanks to a captive-breeding programme and field conservation efforts involving WWF and many others, there are now more than 2,000.

The latest census, from 2023, showed a 21% increase in the population in just one year, with a total of 1,730 individuals in Spain and 291 in Portugal. As a result, the Iberian lynx has been officially downgraded from endangered to vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Of course, the work doesn't stop here. We'll continue working with partners to secure a stable Iberian lynx population. That includes reintroducing the cats into new areas and rebuilding populations of rabbits, their main prey, which have been devastated by disease in recent decades. We're also tackling threats such as illegal hunting, and putting measures in place to prevent roadkill – being hit by cars is the leading cause of premature death for Iberian lynx.



WE'RE TACKLING THREATS SUCH AS **ILLEGAL HUNTING**

Above: The Iberian lynx lives in some of the wildest most remote parts of Spain

NEWS IN **BRIEF**

Regeneration **reefs**



The Coral Reef Rescue Initiative works to protect reefs that have been found to be most resilient to the impacts of climate change. They're also linked

by ocean currents, so these refuges could bring life back to damaged reefs once the climate stabilises. Healthy reefs need marine turtles to graze on the seagrass and sponges that can crowd out coral. You're helping us support communities in Fiji to monitor turtles nesting around the Great Sea Reef.

Bringing back **bison**



European bison were extinct in Romania for centuries, but their reintroduction has been an incredible success story. Thanks to years of conservation efforts led by WWF, our partners and local communities, these gentle giants are now roaming free in the Tarcu Mountains. As ecosystem engineers, bison play a crucial role in regenerating the landscape and creating habitats for smaller species such as amphibians and insects. Earlier this year, 14 bison were translocated from Germany and Sweden to add genetic diversity to the existing herd in Romania. This will ensure the future population is healthy, adaptable and resilient.

On thin *ice*



With your support, we've been studying species that depend on ice, including polar bears in the Arctic and Adélie penguins in Antarctica, to see how our changing climate is affecting them. Frozen parts of our planet - known as the cryosphere - are home to a wide range of wildlife and play a crucial role in regulating the global climate. But as the world warms, ice is melting at an alarming rate. As well as informing

> our conservation efforts, our research will help us push for stronger climate policies and protection for these animals and their icy homes.



Act now

Join us to call for a

law to ensure nature is

at the heart of UK

government decisions

wwf.org.uk/

take-action

Oil palm fruit contains the

of everyday products

palm oil we find in hundreds

Speaking up to restore nature

Hundreds of organisations came together in London on 22 June to send a message to the new government: we must #RestoreNatureNow.

Since the election in July we've already seen some positive steps. Labour has committed to doubling onshore wind energy by 2030, and WWF met with the secretary of state to discuss restoring nature - setting a good precedent for future action.

We'll continue our campaign, asking all political parties to commit to a new Living Planet Act, so decisions on how our land and seas are used take into

Palm oil: the good, the bad and the ugly

WWF IN ACTION

Brands that buy palm oil aren't doing enough to stop the destruction of tropical rainforests, according to the WWF Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard 2024. Ending deforestation driven by palm oil is critical for the climate and wildlife. But of the 285 companies we approached to find out what they're doing about it, over half (55%) didn't even respond. No companies received a perfect score, but some are showing real leadership in sourcing sustainably produced palm oil and helping clean up the industry.

Palm oil isn't going away - it's cheap, abundant and versatile, and supports the livelihoods of millions of people. Instead, we need to make sure that it's grown in a sustainable way, without causing deforestation or other social and environmental damage.

You can use the PalmOil Scan app to see if the product you're about to buy is from a company committed to sustainable palm oil. Visit wazapalmoil. org/palmoil-scan

account people, nature and climate.







river dolphins

Last year, hundreds of river dolphins died in the Brazilian Amazon, victims of a devastating drought. It's critical we're prepared for future climatic extremes, so we can help protect people and wildlife

n 28 September last year, a pinkish, torpedo-shaped form was spotted floating in Lake Tefé, in Brazil's Amazonas state. Then another. Nearby, a smaller, greyer shape drifted. River dolphins. During the day, more appeared. Dozens more.

Not such an unusual sight, you might think: Tefé, a tributary of the Solimões – a stretch of the mighty Amazon – hosts large numbers of the region's two species of dolphins. But these individuals weren't foraging for fish or leaping out of the water. A few swam slowly in circles, seemingly disoriented; the rest were still, silent – dead. No fewer than 70 dolphin carcasses were retrieved on that sweltering day. "It was devastating – like a war scenario," recalls Mariana Paschoalini Frias, WWF's conservation analyst and South America River Dolphins Initiative (SARDI) lead in Brazil. "Seeing so many carcasses floating in the lake was a shock."

In total, last September and October, 330 dolphin deaths were recorded in Tefé and in Coari, another lake tributary some 200km downriver. Many others may have died in the 50-plus lakes in the region that aren't formally monitored.

DEADLY DROUGHT

The dolphin die-off occurred during the worst drought in recorded history. Largely as a result of climate change – linked to deforestation in the Amazon, among other factors – droughts here are becoming longer and more frequent. But the dry season in

2023 was longer and hotter than previous events, with terrifying consequences for wildlife and local communities. More than 600,000 people were in a state of emergency, facing power cuts, shortages of drinking water and a lack of essential supplies that were normally delivered via river routes.

Mariana, who's worked with river dolphins for nearly 15 years, was part of the taskforce that responded to the emergency. Thanks to your support, teams were able to monitor surviving dolphins, moving some from overheated shallows to areas of cooler, deeper water. Carcasses were collected and studied, and water samples were tested, to establish the cause of death.

Extreme weather isn't the only threat facing these wonderful creatures, and we've worked to address problems including fishing bycatch, poisoning, dams and deforestation (see p12). But this mass mortality was something new. "We tried to identify the fatal factor," recalls Mariana. "Was it bacteria, a virus, a contaminant in the water or in fish? We needed to understand the environmental drivers and how they related to the dolphins' biology."

Two species live in these waters. The tucuxi, reaching just 1.5m long, looks like a smaller version of more familiar marine





Left: Climate change was the main driver of the severe drought that parched the Amazon river basin in 2023. More than 30 million people living in several countries, including Brazil, Colombia and Peru, were severely affected

Heat mapped

Satellite data is helping identify dangerously warm water so that our team in Brazil can work with local partners to monitor temperatures and, if necessary, move dolphins to cooler areas. The tech is being trialled at 23 high-risk lakes, and it's hoped that in future it will be able to issue emergency alerts when water gets too hot. While the system doesn't give exact temperatures, it highlights warmer areas, as shown on this map of Lake Coari.

dolphins. The pink-hued Amazon river dolphin – sometimes called a boto – is larger, with a long beak and bulbous forehead. Both species are endangered, and numbers are declining worryingly.

Far more pink dolphins than tucuxi perished, many of them suffering from respiratory problems that could have been related to smoke from forest fires. But that wasn't the ultimate cause of the deaths. "Our research found that water temperature was the main driver. It was up to 41°C in Lake Tefé – way above normal averages for this region, and in fact the highest temperature recorded in any freshwater ecosystem in the world," explains Mariana. "These animals simply can't tolerate such temperatures."

OUT OF TIME

River dolphins are extraordinary creatures, able to thrive across the region's everchanging habitats. "They are flexible, versatile and resilient," says Mariana. "In this environment, they have to be dynamic, because the water changes, the forest changes, fish movements change in a moment – and they need to be able to adapt quickly." Yet they can't adapt quickly enough to cope with increasingly frequent extreme-

weather events – to learn when to leave areas where water levels drop dangerously low and temperatures climb perilously high.

Research suggests that before global warming reached current levels, such intense droughts would have been many centuries apart. Today, they might be expected every 50 years – but their prevalence will soar if rates of warming continue to climb. "We experienced another big drop in water levels this August," says Mariana. "So we were prepared for a similar emergency situation to happen earlier than in 2023."

Mariana and 52 SARDI collaborators — including dolphin experts, environmental scientists and agencies — are focusing initial efforts on lakes such as Tefé and Coari, where many of the dolphins live. "These populations are faithful to these sites," Mariana explains. "They don't travel far from their home lake, because they've learned these places offer abundant food and a safe nursery for calves. But that's a concern, because a new climate event could alter the suitability of the lake environment, and we could lose the whole population."

Mariana and her colleagues have developed an early warning system methodology to predict future extreme droughts, and aim to prevent dolphin mortality through coordinated rescue operation guidelines and monitoring of vulnerable areas.

In April 2024, our colleagues in Brazil organised a workshop bringing together more than 40 participants from research and conservation institutions involved in the 2023 response. The aim: to share lessons learned and to develop action plans and protocols for tackling future emergencies.

"We're now monitoring the behaviour of river dolphins, such as changes in feeding locations or social interactions," Mariana says. "We're also measuring the temperature, depth and rate of river flow so we can detect when levels start to drop and alert our network to any

potential problems."

Responses will depend on the situation as it evolves in the field. Ideally, vulnerable dolphins would be moved out of the riskiest areas – but that's not simple. "We can't just take an animal from one place and move it to another until we know if it's healthy, and that the new area can support more

dolphins. So we need to research potential destinations," says Mariana.

Temperature

"We're learning from researchers around the world who are experts in capturing dolphins and putting them in oxbow lakes, for example, where they can be held before transferring them to the main river."

Translocation of dolphins is a big step
— and a big challenge. "It's not cheap and
it involves many trained, skilled, experienced
people," notes Mariana. "We're not talking
about translocating just a few animals —
it could be 100, 150 or more. We have to be
ready to launch a huge rescue operation,
considering the horrifying mortality figures
from the 2023 dry season."

LOCAL HEROES

Depending on circumstances, translocation may not be necessary. "During 2023's drought, we worked with local communities, with their boats, nets and traditional knowledge, to shepherd dolphins out of the riskiest areas into deeper, cooler water," says Mariana. "This is less invasive and stressful than taking animals out of the water and relocating them."

The insights of local people are crucial to finding a solution. "We ask them if a ▶

CRISIS IN NUMBERS

330

The number of river dolphins of two native species that died in two Amazon lakes during the 2023 drought.

41°C

The water temperature in parts of the Solimões river in September 2023 – the highest ever recorded in a freshwater ecosystem worldwide.

15%

The proportion of Lake Tefé's recorded river dolphins that died during the drought.



Below: Low rainfall, high temperatures and

Other ways you're helping dolphins

As well as extreme weather, Amazon river dolphins face multiple threats - which we're tackling with your support.

FISHING

Overfishing reduces food, and dolphins are often caught by accident. We're supporting riverside communities to manage fisheries sustainably and watch for illegal fishing activities.

Mercury used in gold mining contaminates rivers and poisons wildlife. We work with governments and the industry to tackle illegal gold mining and switch from mercury to safer alternatives.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hydroelectric dams can stop dolphins mingling with other populations, harming their long-term survival prospects. We research the impacts of these projects, and push for relocating or cancelling the most harmful.

DEFORESTATION

We're striving to end deforestation, which affects fish numbers and water levels, and contributes to climate change.



WITH YOUR SUPPORT, WE WORKED TO HELP PEOPLE AS WELL AS RIVER DOLPHINS DURING THE DROUGHT drought like this has happened before, and how it affected fish stocks," Mariana says. "This helps us to understand how such events affect not only the river dolphins, but also the communities who are, in effect, competing with the dolphins for the same resources. It's complicated. But when something like this happens, perceptions change. Because if the dolphins are dying, the fish are also dying - their food source is dying. So people start to understand that the whole freshwater ecosystem is collapsing." The drought had major impacts on Amazon communities. Rivers became

impassable, limiting the transport of food and medicine, and access to education and healthcare. This proved particularly serious for Indigenous people, isolated riverside

settlements and quilombolas - descendants of Afro-Brazilians who historically escaped from slavery. Wildfires raged, drinking water ran short, crops failed and power cuts were rife. So, with your support, WWF worked to help people as well as dolphins.

"We brought food supplies to $4,\!600$ families around the Amazon. And we helped communities to combat fires by providing equipment and training that will improve their resilience to future events," explains Mariana. "Now we're working with people who live by the water to set up an early warning system so that they can rapidly alert us to changes they notice in water levels."

For Mariana, the severe drought in this region reflects a worldwide problem. **CRISIS IN NUMBERS**

The depth of Solimões river on 17 October 2023: the lowest water level ever recorded.

Emergency funds we sent to Brazil in November 2023 to support the response.

"The climate crisis is linked to our wider relationship with nature," she says. "It's bigger than Lake Tefé or Lake Coari, bigger than all the rivers in the Amazon – this is about the whole planet. River dolphins are symbols of climate change: they're not able to evolve quickly enough and may not be resilient enough to survive, so we could lose these precious species.

"Rescuing dolphins is a last resort and not something we want to do," Mariana concludes. "We want dolphins to live freely in the rivers as they have for countless generations. But it's beyond our control here to stop climate change-related events that cause these deaths. Taking action to stop climate change causing extreme weather conditions so frequently is a global commitment. We must all act now."



Above: We supported the emergency response team to investigate the mass deaths of pink river dolphins and tucuxis. Thermal stress was identified as the cause of death

Left: Around 10% of the river dolphin population of Lake Tefé died in one week due to the drought and high water temperatures

Icons 😉 under threat

You can help us better protect Amazon river dolphins, with the support of local communities. Here's how your gift could help:

£10 could cover a day's meals for a researcher monitoring river dolphins

£20 could go towards food supplies for Amazon communities affected by fires and drought

£50 could help pay for an early warning system for waterside communities to report changes in their river

£100 could help fund conservation workshops to create drought emergency action plans

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



Donate today at wwf.org.uk/dolphin-drought

Dream big

For many community groups there's a mismatch between big ideas and small funds. But with a little help, green dreams can come true...

Last year, we teamed up with the RSPB and Aviva to create the Save Our Wild Isles Community Fund, with the aim of making it easier for grassroots community groups across the UK to take action for nature in their local area. From mental health groups and primary schools to refugee centres, community gardens and even sports clubs, many took part to feel the benefits of getting outdoors and connecting with their neighbours. Projects accepted onto the fund received matched funding from our partner Aviva,

who donated £2 for every £1 raised (for pledges of up to £250). In total, Aviva supported the fund with £1 million.

We supported a staggering 249 initiatives over the year, and the groups profiled here hint at the breadth of projects. Nationwide, groups raised over £2.6 million from 12,000 supporters, and just over half the projects were in urban areas. Best of all, even though the scheme has ended, 97% of those involved said they intend to continue. The future's green!



Get your daily dose of nature!

Turn to **page 28**to read more about how nature can be good for your



Knockbreda Community Wildlife Garden

An overgrown allotment on a south Belfast housing estate has blossomed into the Knockbreda Community Wildlife Garden, enticing people to "chill out and have a bit of craic". The inspired individuals who started the project wanted a space to bring the community together, where they could access resources, volunteer and enjoy a garden growing fruit, vegetables and wildflowers.

Part of their mission was to "bring in the countryside to make a space for wildlife in the heart of our community". And through the community fund they can also go off-grid – they've raised £6,000 for a battery to store the electricity their solar panels generate. Alongside a restored well, Knockbreda's new green space will be self-sustaining.



Stump Up For Trees restoration project

In Bannau Brycheiniog National Park (Brecon Beacons), the farming community and local volunteers have come together with an ambitious plan to plant one million native trees, to enhance biodiversity, benefit local farms, and help foster a spirit of community responsibility.

This exciting project, named Stump Up For Trees, is being led by local farmers, such as Jenny Parry. "I've learned more about native trees and hedgerows, and how to give back to the environment we farm in," she explains. The fund has supported the work with essentials, such as making its tree nursery more accessible, and helping water management on site.

"Funding like this has been invaluable," says farmer and woodland creation officer Kate Beavan. "Without it, we couldn't put trees in the ground, and certainly couldn't grow them. We just wouldn't exist."



Young people living in one of the most under-served areas of Bristol have found new pride and purpose with support from the fund. The BS13 Young Green Influencers have been learning skills to campaign on their community's behalf for a greener, cleaner place to live, giving a voice to marginalised young people.

The funding enabled the group to tidy up green spaces and plant pollinator-friendly flowers, and raise awareness of nature and environmental issues in the BS13 district. It also helped their campaign against shopping-trolley fly-tipping, including lobbying local supermarkets for support. Lexi says her outlook has

changed: "I'd rather see bees and butterflies than abandoned shopping trolleys and burntout bikes everywhere."



Belgrave Community Garden Project

A sense of community is flourishing in inner-city Leicester, where volunteers have turned a derelict roadside plot into an urban oasis. "The fund has helped us to dream big," says Alison Gage, founder of Belgrave Community Garden Project. "It's enabled us to buy lots of seeds, plants and bulbs. We're bringing wildlife into the city."

A key part of the project has been involving people from different backgrounds who tended not to engage with nature in an active way. The team have transformed the space to include raised vegetable beds and a herb and flower border. "We've got a lot of people in the

community who have mental health issues or are facing challenges, and they've come along and said that this garden is family to them," says Alison.

Retired volunteer Pushpa Dodier has been inspired: "I never did anything like this. It gives me pleasure."



A beacon

ofhope

For centuries, the Maasai have been guardians of some spectacular wildlife. Maasai leader John Kamanga explains how the Land for Life project aims to keep it that way

ot many children can say they were late for class because of lions. But hiding from lions on the way to school is one of my earliest memories. I've always loved being out in nature. Like any other youngster in Kenya's Southern Rift Valley, I used to herd the family livestock, following the cattle to the grazing fields, listening to the sounds of the birds, enjoying the vast expanse of space.

People and wildlife have always existed together in this landscape. The Maasai communities I come from understood that nature was there before us, that we are part of nature. And if you take care of the environment. then in time it takes care of you. We don't have a word for conservation, for preserving nature, because to us that's just part of everyday life. The environment is everything. Our livestock is dependent on nature. Without good grass, without healthy soil, without proper rain, you don't have livestock. And if you don't have livestock, you don't have a livelihood.

BOUND BY BARRIERS

But our world is changing. Traditionally, the Maasai lived communally as pastoralists, continuously moving their herds across the landscape. When it rained, they would move from one area to another to find grass for their cows, leaving the land they'd been grazing to rest and regenerate. Herds of wildlife would move across the landscape in the same way. This rhythm has been repeated for centuries.

Today, though, we have boundaries – national borders, village boundaries, individual properties. Fences. Roads. Artificial lines. This makes it harder to maintain our pastoralist lifestyle, and harder for wildlife to move freely across the landscape too. At the same time, our rangelands are coming under increasing pressure from a growing population, economic development and climate change, and are becoming degraded as a result.





Creating opportunities

Sylvia Nashipae (second from left, above) is part of an all-female team of rangers, and one of the first women to be employed in what was traditionally seen as a man's job. "I had a passion for wildlife and the environment, so I had to try," she says. Now many more women are aspiring to become rangers. "We're like one family," says Sylvia. She's excited that the project is giving women the freedom and opportunity to take leadership roles.



Working together

Community rangers carry out daily patrols to alert communities when predators such as lions and leopards are nearby and help prevent potential conflict between people and wildlife. They also prevent threats like poaching and illegal logging, remove snares and rescue wounded animals. Thanks to Land for Life, WWF's partner SORALO is able to employ more than 50 rangers, most of whom come from local communities.

Our vision is a landscape where people and nature can continue to thrive together, with open rangelands where pastoralists and wildlife alike can move freely. For the land to support life, it has to be healthy. So one thing we're doing is working with hundreds of community volunteers to regenerate communal rangelands, for example by removing invasive plant species that reduce grazing quality. Local grazing committees collect data on the state of different areas to decide where and when community members can graze their herds, leaving other areas to regenerate. Nature has an amazing way of coming back, if you give it space and time.

FRUITFUL FORESTS

When you think of grazing animals, you probably imagine wide open expanses of grasslands – but one of the most important places here is a highland forest, the Loita Forest. The forest is a lifeline for 20,000 people living in the area. In the dry season when grass is scarce, livestock can find fodder in the forest. It's also a source of water and fuelwood, and our traditional health service – before hospitals and healthcare clinics, people would rely on herbal treatments and medicinal plants from the forest. We sing songs of praise about the forest's importance in our lives.

The Land for Life project is working to protect the forest from increasing pressures such as illegal logging – not by putting up more fences, but by supporting Maasai communities to claim the right to look after and sustainably manage the forest, as they have done for generations. We're also looking at ways to reduce pressure on the forest, like introducing more efficient cooking stoves that use less wood.

Another vital area of our work is tackling conflict with wildlife. There are more people and more livestock in the landscape than ever before, and because of successful conservation work, wildlife populations are starting to increase. That's wonderful news, but it comes at a cost – for example, the growing number of lions and leopards can mean people lose more livestock to predators.

We've set up wildlife patrols to alert the community when there are predators nearby and help find wandering livestock that are vulnerable to attack. Because most of our scouts are from the local community, people understand that we're on their side, and tolerance of wild animals is increasing. If people do lose their livestock to predators, we support them to claim compensation.

Our heartfelt thanks go to everyone in the UK who's supported Land for Life. It's been life-changing for many communities – and we look forward to continuing to work together for a future where people and wildlife can coexist.



perfect

Intrepid wildlife photographer **Staffan Widstrand** tells us about his adventures photographing wild giant pandas in China

What's it like photographing wild pandas?

Looking for a giant panda is like looking for a needle in a haystack – they're the most difficult animals to photograph! They live on high mountains in dense bamboo forests. They don't do much – they just sit on their behinds and eat bamboo from morning to night. Or sleep. For 10 years I've worked on getting the chance to photograph a wild panda.

How did your dream become a reality?

This year, I visited a valley in a nature reserve where local researchers estimate six female and one or two male pandas might be living, with probably a few more passing through. That's a relatively high density of pandas. I planned my visit for the end of February to early March when the pandas move around a bit more because they're looking for mates. Once a day the females leave the high areas and go down to the river. Along the way they pee on all the big trees to make a scent trail. The males follow the river so they pick up the smell of a female along the way. If she's ready to mate they might climb the mountain to find her.

What were your days in the field like?

Every day, myself and my colleague – a Frenchman who speaks fluent Chinese – went out before sunrise and stayed out until it got dark. We walked about 15 kilometres up and down the mountains every day.

It was below zero, but I really enjoy the cold – the frost makes everything more beautiful.

Day one, we saw our first panda on the other side of a river in the forest. There was no chance to take photos so we just watched it and smiled – we knew we were in the right place. Then it was just a question of putting in the hours in the field and being prepared: camera always ready, always on and always in hand in case something shows up nearby.

Walking on a path through the bamboo you can see only 50 or 100 metres ahead and only a couple of metres to the side. Anything beyond that is impossible to see, let alone photograph.

Tell us about your panda encounter

Ten days later a second giant panda came out of the bamboo bushes next to the path just six or seven metres away. Luckily, I was ready. I started shooting before it even stepped on to the path, and then it

stopped and looked at us.
It knew there was
something there, but we
were wearing camouflage.
For two seconds it stood
there and then continued on
y, nice and slowly, totally

its way, nice and slowly, totally unpanicked. I shot 66 frames in four seconds! I couldn't believe it!

What did you do next?

Afterwards, I checked my photos.

Did I get it right – focus, exposure,
composition? It felt good when I shot it but
I was still relieved when I saw the pictures



Above: For around eight months of the year, the pandas' habitat is often covered in snow. Their black and white colouration is clever camouflage against the snow and the shadows under the trees

Left: Staffan's camouflage outfit meant he could get within metres of the equally well-hidden pandas were sharp, the eyes were focused on me, and frosty snowflakes were visible in its fur. I was happy.

How did you know pandas were around?

Two days earlier it was my birthday. I celebrated with the best possible present – I found a big panda poo. It was so fresh it was still green, not black or brown. We also saw trails of footprints in the snow. Luckily, it snowed every night, so each morning we could see if there had been fresh movements. When we found fresh tracks and fresh poo in the same place, we started focusing on that area – and that's where the panda eventually showed up.

What else did you encounter?

I was almost run over by a big Asiatic black bear twice the size of the panda! I was walking down a path in the forest when I heard a sound behind me. I whirled around and maybe five metres away a big black bear ran over the path and into the trees. It looked at me briefly and then was gone. We also saw local specialities such as red pandas, golden eagles, musk deer, bearded vultures, colourful

pheasants and small birds such as parrotbills. I carried as little camera gear as possible because I was focused on photographing pandas, but I took an extra lens for the beautiful landscapes.

What would you like people to know?

That nature conservation works! Wild giant pandas have now increased in number and are expanding their range. Wildlife corridors help them migrate from one high-mountain bamboo zone to the next on the neighbouring hills. Pandas avoid valleys that are agricultural areas or where there's more human activity, so you get clusters of non-connected populations. So the Chinese government has started to create corridors of habitat to build connectivity between core areas for pandas.

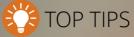
Local people love the pandas. They're proud of them. Back at the hotel everyone was excited to see my photos – from truck drivers to hotel guests. Everybody shared their own favourite panda-sighting stories. I felt very happy and very lucky. I had four seconds with a panda. That was it. But we could have looked for 15 days and seen nothing.

© Staffan Widstrand / wildwondersofchina.com @ WWF-Sweder

Amazing ideas for bringing our world back to life



LIVE GREEN TOP TIPS





Help garden birds this winter

As the nights draw in and temperatures fall, our garden birds prepare to face the challenges of winter. Here are some simple ways you can help.

Clean nest boxes before the new breeding season begins. After September, discard bedding (wear gloves) and rinse with boiling water to kill parasites. Put it back when dry for birds to shelter in on cold nights.

If you don't have a nesting box, autumn is a good time to set one up so it's ready for spring. Choose a quiet spot on a tree or wall that faces away from the wind and is out of reach of predators such as cats and squirrels.

Birds must fatten up to fight the cold, so fill feeders with sunflower seeds, suet balls and peanuts. Leave windfall apples on the ground and grow native berry bushes. Clean feeders often to stop diseases spreading.

Don't forget to provide water for birds. When temperatures drop, water freezes, making it difficult for them to find fresh water to drink. Provide fresh water daily so birds can drink and bathe to maintain their feathers' insulating properties.



Study snow leopards

Living high in the remote mountains of central and south Asia, these well-camouflaged cats are famously hard to study. Though a few people are lucky enough to glimpse one (see page 2), scientists have other ways of keeping track.

Preu: Wherever ibex and blue sheep roam, snow leopards are likely to be close by. Tracking their favourite prey species offers the best chance of spotting these stealthy hunters.

Poo: Snow leopard scats not only show where they've been, but also what they've been eating. They can even offer insights into the cat's genetics and health.

Pawprints: Known as pugmarks, footprints reveal paths taken by snow leopards. Scrape marks in soil and signs of spraying (a combination of urine and scent) are also evidence.

Photos: Camera traps placed by paths and scent-marking spots can reveal the natural behaviour of snow leopards – and help count them - without disturbing them.



Above: Because of their natural camouflage, which makes them almost invisible in their rocky landscape, snow leopards are often called the 'ghost of the mountains'

Left: Sloes - the fruits of the blackthorn tree - are best picked when they're dark purple. Wait until after the first frost has weakened their skins - or pop in the freezer for the same effect

Make seasonal sloe syrup

Thoroughly wash 500g of sloes, then place in a large pan with 500ml of water and around 250g of sugar (use more or less depending on your sweet tooth). Bring to a simmer while stirring to break up the fruit. Leave on a low heat for 30-40 minutes, then strain through a fine sieve (and then a muslin if you like). Pour into sterilised bottles, leave to cool and store in the fridge. Delicious on puddings, added to sparkling water or as a dash in an autumnal gin and tonic.



1 ROE DEER

A deer's cloven (split) hooves leave two oblong prints with a gap in the middle. They're usually pointy at the front and of equal size. At 5cm long the prints are smaller than red and fallow deer, but larger than muntjac deer. In soft ground, the little claws (dewclaws) on the back of their hooves will leave marks.

2 SHEEP

Like deer, the split hooves of sheep leave a set of parallel prints, but these are rounder at the top than deer and one side of the hoof is larger than the other side. They also don't leave dewclaw marks.

3 FOX

Foxes leave a narrow, dog-like pawprint, though they're easily distinguished from canine tracks. Try drawing an imaginary straight line between the front two pads and the two behind them. In a fox print there'll be a clear gap between the two sets of pads. The front toes are also closer together.

4 BADGER

Heavy badgers leave distinctive tracks, with the long-clawed toes held straight and close together, and the broad front pad always well sunk into mud. Front and back foot tracks look very different. Their feet often point inward and the hind footprint overlaps the front print.

5 DOG

Dog prints are similar to foxes, but the middle toes tend to be spread wider and the print is slightly rounder. Look at the footprint trail – foxes tend to travel in straight lines, putting their hind feet in their front footprints, while dog trails are staggered and more erratic.

6 CAT

Cat footprints can be confused with dogs and foxes, but cat toes are more rounded and leave no claw marks, because they can retract their claws. Their prints are less symmetrical than dogs': draw an imaginary line down the middle of a print and a dog's will look like more of a mirror image.

7 HEDGEHOG

Both the toes and the claws leave an impression, though the 'thumb' print can be so faint that you only see four toes. The hind-leg footprint just touches or slightly overlaps the front footprint. The pads leave a noticeable print.

8 GREY SQUIRREL

Squirrels have hand-like front feet, leaving prints with a long foot pad and four toes. Their hind feet are larger and leave five toe prints. Their prints are often found near trees and are larger and longer than rat prints.

9 OTTER

Otters have five toes, but their tracks may show four depending on the substrate. In very soft mud, the webbing between the toes might be visible, though this is unusual. They're about as wide as they are long and clear prints may also reveal tiny claw marks. Look for a tail drag mark between prints.

10 RABBIT

As a rabbit's hind feet are bigger than its front feet, it leaves two long, oval prints and two shorter prints closely together. A slow hop forms a triangle-pattern print, with hind feet just behind front feet, but a longer stride leaves their hind feet prints in front of their front feet.

Celebrate sustainably

Whether it's a Christmas gathering or just a seasonal get-together, celebrating with friends and family needn't be bad for nature. There are plenty of ways to enjoy sustainable festivities – start with these four top tips...

Be a canny caterer. Go easy on the meat – plant-based meals have a much smaller carbon footprint.
Plan ahead so that food isn't wasted, and have some freezer-proof boxes ready so that leftovers can enjoy a new lease of life later.



If you're exchanging presents, give loved ones experiences or your time, rather than buying things for the sake of it. Why not give the gift of WWF membership?: support. wwf.org.uk/join-wwf

Fancy some sparkle in your home in the winter months? Opt for LED fairy lights as they're more energy efficient.

And try decorating with leaves and twigs rather than tinsel and baubles (just don't take too much from any one plant – wildlife needs shelter).



It's easy – and greener – to find pre-loved versions of everything you need, from gifts to decorations. Keep the cycle going: donate or re-gift unwanted presents, and reuse gift bags and decorations (maybe not the foliage, though).

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DAILY DOSE OF NATURE

Go forest bathing

to improve your wellbeing

If you go down to the woods today, you're in for a mood-lifting boost

As a WWF member, you're helping restore nature. But nature can help restore you, too, which is why we're inviting everyone to get a daily dose of nature. Scientific studies have proved the benefits of spending time in nature – just 20 minutes a day can lower stress, reduce anxiety and improve your mood.

The Japanese concept of *shinrin-yoku*, or forest bathing, is an easy way to immerse yourself in nature, whatever the weather. The concept was devised by scientists in the 1990s who found that stressed workers experienced an upturn in their mental health after spending time in nature, using all their senses to embrace the sights, smells and sounds of a forest.

The secret lies in phytoncides, natural oils released by trees and plants to protect themselves from insects, bacteria or harmful fungi. These chemicals benefit people too, by reducing stress hormones, improving sleep and indirectly stimulating anti-cancer proteins.

Whether you prefer a leisurely stroll in the woods or a muddy forest trail run, take the time to stop and take it all in – let nature restore you.

How to connect with trees

Clear your mind

Take a few moments to focus only on what you can see, hear, touch or smell.

Breathe deeply

Inhaling the oils of pine, fir and crushed vegetation lowers stress.

Listen closely

Press your ear to a tree trunk on a windy day to hear the sound of their branches swaying.

For more ideas of how to get your daily dose of nature, even if you're at home, visit:

wwf.org.uk/prescription-for-nature







It all began when Hatty Carder, Bobbie Mellor and I applied to take on the World's Toughest Row for Vodafone Foundation's Your Planet campaign. We all work for Vodafone, one of WWF's partners, but didn't know each other until we found out we'd secured a spot on the crew.

We share a passion for our world and the people and animals that share it. We wanted to highlight the effects of climate change and how it's devastating our environment. And we wanted to support those affected and efforts to combat the issues.

It took us over two and a half years to get to the start line. We had to build our strength and resilience, and learn how to manoeuvre the boat, navigate, survive at sea and understand the wind and currents.

We faced some big challenges out on the ocean. We'd imagined what it might be like, but the reality was like nothing else! We encountered big seas, strong winds and we even capsized. Staying positive and motivated was hard and we had to dig deep.

It was important for us to minimise our environmental footprint to reflect our concerns about climate change. We used second-hand equipment where possible, including our boat. We were obsessive about ensuring that no waste went into the ocean.

The night skies were phenomenal. With no light pollution, it was extraordinary what we could see. We also had amazing encounters with wildlife: dolphins, whales, even a marlin. The most incredible moment was seeing a pod of sperm whales. They gathered about 100m from our boat, hanging vertically in the water with their big, blocky heads bobbing up and down. It was awe-inspiring. I had a strong feeling we were guests passing through their world.

Arriving in Antigua after 40 days was unbelievable. We received a hero's welcome as the race organiser announced we'd broken the world record.

We'd advise anyone thinking of taking on a fundraising challenge to believe you're capable of the extraordinary! Anything is possible if you put your mind to it – just find a community to support you.

When you face your fears the rewards can be immeasurable. Not many things are as scary as capsizing in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, so we feel tougher, more resilient and ready to take on anything!

Thanks to match funding by Vodafone Foundation, the rowers raised £107,130 for WWF. Learn about our partnership with Vodafone at wwf.org.uk/vodafone

Above (I-r): Katherine, Bobbie and Hatty celebrate their incredible achievement

WHEN YOU FACE YOUR FEARS THE REWARDS CAN BE IMMEASURABLE







Bold as **brass**

These delicate hammered brass decorations are handmade in India. £15

The perfect **present**

The WWF Shop is packed with sustainable, seasonal gift ideas

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6.



Cool for **cubs**

and hat. From £19.50

Let little ones go wild in this

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Luxe **pyjamas**

Sleep tight in beautiful tiger-print PJs made from organic cotton. £75

WIN! Cuddly treats Treat yourself to winter warmers

Stay cosy and show your love for WWF with our exclusive prize bundle. Our iconic panda sweatshirt is made from super-soft 100% organic cotton and printed in the UK with eco-friendly dyes. Keep grown-up toes warm with our orangutan socks, which are also made from organic cotton. And a little one in your life will love Panu panda, an adorable plush toy with 100% recycled PET filling. We've got one prize bundle to give away. See the 'How to enter' box (right) for details.



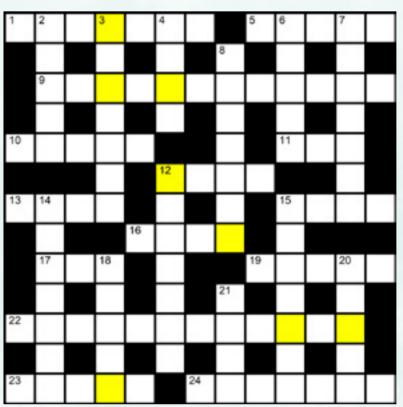
How to enter Action giveaways

Send an email with your name, address and phone number, along with Cosy Bundle 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 29 November 2024. For full terms and conditions, visit: wwf.org.uk/compterms

Crossword





Solve our crossword and you could win a copy of Seeing It All: Women Photographers Expose Our Planet, edited by Rhonda Rubinstein (Oro Editions, RRP £37.50)

WWF ACTION CROSSWORD 58: Autumn 2024 issue. Compiled by Aleric Linden

Clues across

- 1 Green spaces where bird tables, compost bins and water butts are right at home (7)
- **5** The Great _ , violent weather that ravaged the south of England in 1987 (5)
- **9** Elusive big cats often referred to as the 'ghosts of the mountains' (4,8)
- **10** A series of mountains such as Scotland's Grampians (5)
- **11** Endangered baleen whale (3)
- 12 Mountain summit (4)
- 13 The short tail of a rabbit or deer (4)
- 15 A barrier at the entrance to a field (4)
- 16 A bit of vegetation in the Australian wilderness (4)
- **17** Big _ , a lion or tiger (3)
- 19 Snowdonia and Dartmoor are national ones in the UK (5)
- 22 Environmental management one of WWF's key concerns (12)
- 23 A UK language once known as Cambrian (5)
- 24 San _ Fault it's associated with California earthquakes (7)

Clues down

- 2 Where offshore wind farms are located (2,3)
- 3 Amazon river dolphins have been victims of this extreme climatic occurrence (7)
- 4 Major world river with White and Blue tributaries (4)
- **6** Urban public transport vehicles usually powered by overhead electricity lines (5)
- 7 The IUCN's threatened species database (3,4)
- 8 A track along the bank of a canal or river (7)
- **12** Meat from birds like chickens (7)
- **14** Tropical storm (7)
- 15 Large body of ice subject to advance and retreat (7)
- 18 Ivory poaching targets on elephants (5)
- 20 Site of the 'Land for Life' project, as well as Tanzania (5)
- 21 Weather that may put a dampener on outdoor pursuits (4)

After solving the crossword, take each letter from the shaded squares (going from left to right and top to bottom) to spell the **prize word**. To be in with a **chance to win**, just send a postcard with the prize word to the address on this page, or email it to **competition@wwf.** org.uk The closing date is Friday 29 November 2024.

Summer 2024 answers

Prize word: PETROL

Across 1. Tropics, 8. Road, 9. Mozambique, 10. Air, 11. Essex,

- 12. Sett, 13. Zebu, 15. Fire, 16. Moor, 18. Crops, 20. Tar, 22. Ecological,
- 23. Iron, 24. Maggots
- **Down** 2. Roofs, 3. Plateau, 4. Cubs, 5. Great, 6. Barrier, 7. Equator,
- 12. Sponsor, 14. Eastern,
- 15. Farming, 17. Trent, 19. Plant,
- 21. Soya

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- wwf.org.uk/contact-us
- 01483 426333

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Find wild videos, puzzles, quizzes and facts on the new Go Wild website wwf.org.uk/

gowild



lustration: Andy Robert Davies | Gorilla © Getty

For a future where people and nature thrive | wwf.org.uk

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FSC logo to go here