



FRONTLINE DISPATCHES

CONSERVATION NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

May 2021

Asia / Africa / Europe / North America
Pacific / South & Central America / World

EUROPE

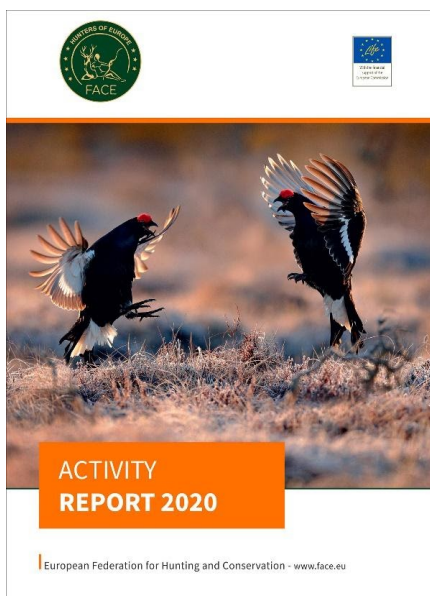


VIDEO: Across Europe, the diet of the brown hare has degenerated into a mix of rapeseed, wheat stalks and other farm crops. This fast-food diet also affects partridges, lapwings, insects and other species. The German Wildlife Foundation [suggests](#) that 7% of arable land in the EU

be returned to nature as a combination of fallow ground and areas seeded with wild herbs and grasses, poppies, clover, etc.



[WildForestReindeerLIFE](#) covers the conservation of wild forest reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus fennicus*) in Finland. Funded with €5.16 million (\$6.24 million), the project enlists hunters in research, data collection, reintroductions and surveillance across the reindeer range. See also [Metsäpeura—Forest Reindeer](#) on Facebook.



Its [2020 Activity Report](#) is now available from FACE, the European Federation for Hunting and Conservation. It provides information on the work of more than 7 million hunters across Europe. Included is FACE's Biodiversity Manifesto, the latest EU wolf assessment data, policy discussions on restoring biodiversity for small game, African swine fever, the work of the European Parliament's Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside [Intergroup](#) and more.



VIDEO: The blue heart of Europe, the Vjosa River, runs from the Greek mountains to Albania's Adriatic coast, through age-old habitats and cultures. This 6:31 [documentary](#) commissioned by the Californian company Patagonia chronicles the ongoing struggle to protect Europe's last wild river from hydro dams and to create Vjosa National Park.

Ireland's Sika deer may be driving local outbreaks of TB in cattle, new research in *Science Daily* [suggests](#). Although bovine tuberculosis has decreased in Ireland, county-level data shows a correlation between greater sika numbers and more local TB infections.



The northern bald ibis is one of our most endangered birds. In 2013, eight partners in Austria, Germany and Italy—the *Waldrappteam*—launched the first scientific attempt to reintroduce a migratory bird to its original range and old migration routes. There are now four breeding

colonies in Germany with a common wintering site in Italy, per the Waldrappteam's [2020 report](#).



Tracking and monitoring to conserve wildfowl. In Poland, hunters and ornithologists have worked together for eight years to band more than 1,300 migratory geese to gather data for management and to improve breeding success—[posted](#) April 8 by FACE.



Chronic Wasting Disease reaches Europe. [According](#) to the German Hunting Association, reindeer, moose and red deer have been diagnosed with CWD in Northern Europe since 2016. Attempts to check the disease have so far failed. Scientists are now asking German hunters for samples from red, roe and sika deer to investigate genetic susceptibility to CWD.



Great bustard populations are increasing in Germany—347 rare *Otis tarda* are living now in Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt, [according](#) to the German Hunting Association. This is the result of joint efforts by government agencies, farmers and hunters. At about 17 kilos (37 lbs), adult male bustards are among the heaviest flying birds. DJV photo

ASIA

Cheetahs will be re-introduced to India. A recent *Indian Express* [article](#) reported that 35-40 cheetah will be translocated from South Africa and Namibia to four or five sites in India. The cheetah was declared extinct in India in 1952.



Sri Lanka has the most human-elephant conflict casualties. An average of 71 people died each year in human-elephant conflict between 2005 and 2010, and 54 between 1992 and 2001. In 2020 the human death toll spiked to 112. The Dept. of Wildlife culled a yearly average of 272 elephants between 2011 and 2020, with 407 elephants killed in 2019 and 318 in 2020. [The Citizen](#), March 30.



A flock of 11 critically endangered Siberian cranes was recorded in Guangdong Province, China, on January 20. On February 27, spotters sighted a single bird near Zhuhai City. The global population of Siberian cranes is fewer than 4,000 individuals; it breeds in the Arctic tundra of Yakutia in Russia and winters almost entirely in central China. [From](#) the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership.



Rhino success in Nepal. One-horned rhinos in Nepal's wildlife sanctuaries have increased by more than 100—BBC News [reported](#) on April 13 that since 2015 Nepal's rhino population has risen from 645 to 752. The [species](#) was close to extinction; its revival in Nepal and India is one of the greatest conservation success stories in Asia.

NORTH AMERICA

NEW FEATURE - CONSERVATION 101



Do you know the difference between conservation and preservation?

Many people think *conservation* and *preservation* are the same thing when it comes to managing natural resources, but there are important differences between them:

- *Conservation* means actively managing land for multiple, sustainable uses according to science.
- *Preservation* is a hands-off approach—letting nature take its course, with no human input.

Both have a place in management, but *conservation* more often leads to healthy lands and waters, and the renewable natural resources used to shelter and feed our families.

Share this with friends & family who are new to conservation.



[VIDEO](#): Grizzly bears hate treadmills too,

Washington State University researchers write in *Science*. [Watch](#) as bears walk and run (motivated by hot dogs) on an enclosed treadmill to study energy expenditure while foraging. Researchers concluded that bears prefer flat, easy trails over more difficult ones—so they will likely interact with more hikers.

The value of game meat: Wild Harvest Initiative gains a partner. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has become the newest member of the Wild Harvest Initiative, parent organization Conservation Visions [reports](#). This science-based program assesses and emphasizes the importance of sustainable wildlife and wild food harvest for all consumers—hunters, anglers and the non-sporting community alike.



Condors return to northern California, thanks to the Yurok Tribe. From a low of just 22 birds in the 1980s, California condors have been reintroduced to southern and central parts of the state and now the northern region will see them again too, *The Guardian* [reports](#). A captive breeding facility to be built in Redwood National Park will be run by the Yurok people, in whose

ancestral lands the park lies. Captive-bred condors are expected to be released into the area as early as October. Marcio José Sánchez/AP photo

When the going gets tough, the gopher tortoise gets digging. Northern Florida's sandhills are dry and prone to wildfires in May and June. When a lightning strike sets off a blaze, as many as 300 species of animals, from armadillos to snakes, take cover in tunnels and burrows dug by gopher tortoises, PBS [says](#). This makes them critical to the resilience of this harsh ecosystem.

Bald eagle deaths in the southeastern US appear to be due to toxins from invasive plants. *Science News* [reports](#) that a cyanobacteria that affects the nervous system in bald eagles, among other birds, is linked to *Hydrilla*, an invasive aquatic plant. Bromine, a building block for the toxic cyanobacteria, builds up in *Hydrilla* and starts the deadly food chain that bioaccumulates to lethal levels in birds. Until *Hydrilla* is eradicated, it will continue to be a danger to bald eagles and other birds.

Caribou declines in western Canada are an ecological chain reaction. *Science Daily* [says](#) that land cleared by wildfire or habitat alteration leads to more understory plant growth; these plants support moose, deer and eventually their predators; the predators also prey on caribou. Caribou populations take longer to grow than moose, making them more vulnerable.



There's hope for the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale, with fewer than 400 individuals remaining. AP News [reports](#) the most new calves born since 2015. Researchers spotted 17 new-born right whale calves this past winter; in 2018, they'd seen none. This Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources photo was taken on January 19, 2021.



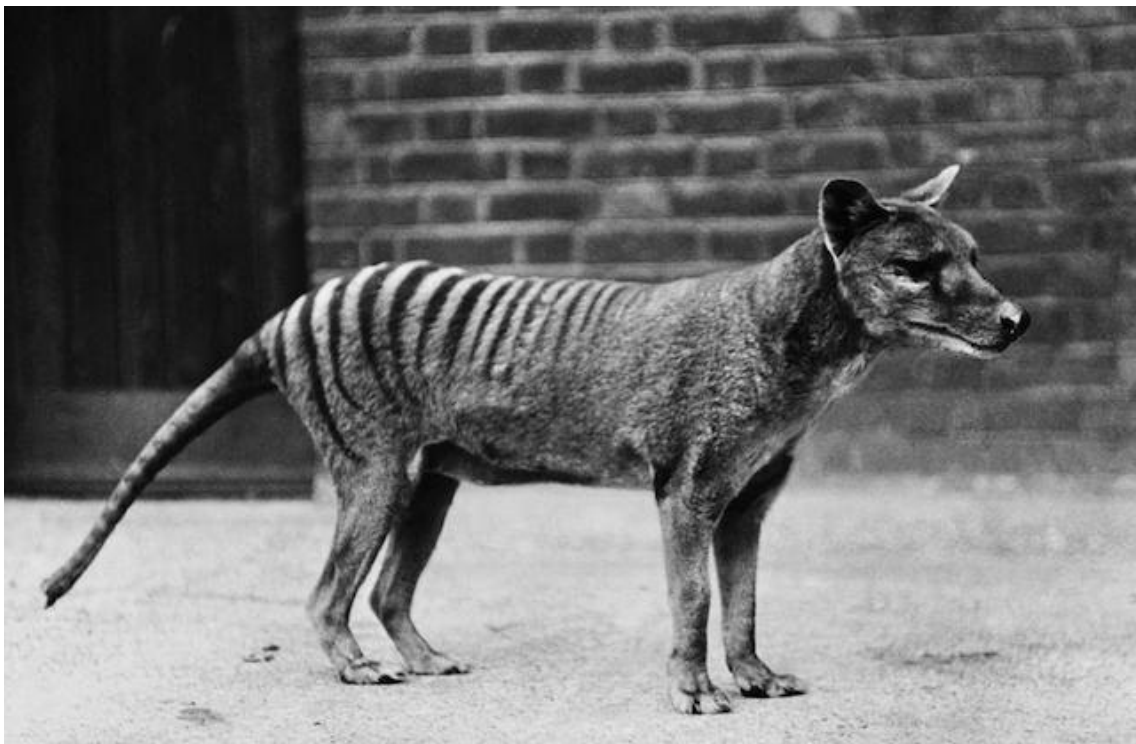
Florida's big cats are suffering from a mysterious neurological disorder. [According](#) to *National Geographic*, since 2017 the disease, which causes weakness and partial paralysis, has stricken 19 panthers and 18 bobcats in Florida. A neurotoxin is probably to blame, but scientists have yet to find concrete answers. This sedated panther kitten has been scanned in an MRI machine.

CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA



Dying of curiosity: Harpy eagles are “persecuted”—shot—across Central and South America mostly because people want to see the enormous birds up close. A recent study found 132 cases of people killing the birds in 11 of the 18 countries in their range, according to a March 16 [Mongabay.com article](#).

PACIFIC



Yes, the Tasmanian tiger is still extinct, says a March 10 *New York Times* [article](#). Analysis by thylacine specialists debunked recent photos of the marsupial carnivore—declared extinct in

1936—as a case of mistaken identity. This photo (Getty Images) is of a thylacine in captivity in the early 20th Century.



Dingo-dog hybridization is rare in Australia—99% of 5,000 DNA samples of wild canines tested as pure dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*) or dingo-dominant hybrid. Dingoes help maintain the biodiversity and health of their ecosystem; suppressing them can lead to kangaroo overpopulation, so a balance between dingo control and dingo conservation is essential, [write](#) researchers in *Science Daily*. Juergen & Christine Sohns photo

AFRICA

[Report](#): State of the Wildlife Economy in Africa. Because wildlife has not traditionally been seen as an economic asset, government investment in wildlife has often been limited. This new report covers the economic contribution of wildlife to local, national and regional economies. A team from the African Leadership University's [School of Wildlife Conservation](#) in Kigali/Rwanda (with funding from [Paul Tudor Jones](#) and the [MAVA Foundation](#)) wrote the comprehensive analysis.



At least 8 million African straw-colored fruit bats descend each year on a patch of swamp forest in Kasanka National Park, Zambia, between October and December to gorge on wild fruits that appear with the first rains. But this, perhaps Earth's greatest mammal migration, is far more than the sum of all known fruit-bat colonies for thousands of kilometres around. *Africa Geographic* reported the [story](#) on March 24. Wim Werrelmann photo



[VIDEO](#): Episode III of “The Last Free Rhinos” introduces viewers to community conservancy members in Namibia’s Erongo and Kunene regions, where we observe their wildlife and hear them explain their conservation responsibilities: “Without rhinos, we would not be able to survive.” (Episodes I and II are in our [video library](#).)

Protect our right to sustainably use our natural resources, wrote CLN, the Community Leaders Network (representing millions of rural people in nine countries in Southern Africa), to Ned Lamont, Governor of Connecticut, in a [letter](#) dated March 17. Connecticut’s proposed ban of imported hunting trophies is “in the misguided belief this will enhance the conservation of

these species.” Instead, wrote CLN, “such a ban will undermine Southern Africa’s conservation programs and human rights and livelihoods.”

CLN also put Germany’s Green Party on notice for the same thing—a proposed trophy hunting ban. CLN wrote, “your party’s call to end trophy hunting and wildlife trade harms biodiversity conservation and tramples on the right of our communities to manage and use their own natural resources, on which their livelihoods depend.” ResourceAfrica, another NGO, [added](#), “campaigns against trophy hunting devalue black lives, deny local communities the right to self-determination, and jeopardize community-based approaches to wildlife conservation that have been proven to work for decades.”



The East African Crude Oil Pipeline faces global opposition. EACOP’s financing is in limbo following the announcement by South Africa’s Standard Bank that it is suspending support pending environmental and social impact studies, [reported](#) *Earth Island Journal* on March 18. These giraffes are in Uganda’s Murchison Falls National Park, which the 900-mile pipeline would cross. [Maciej](#) photo



VIDEO: The Leibniz-IZW Cheetah Research Project has been studying cheetahs in Namibia for decades. This 11:34 film shows how applied science can help solve human-wildlife conflict by finding economic and ecological solutions to livestock predation.



VIDEO: If the Leibniz-IZW video is too long for you, watch this animated 3:19 version instead, titled “Communication hubs of an asocial cat are the source of a human-carnivore conflict and key to its solution.”

In Zambia, Community Markets for Conservation helps people implement community conservation by planting trees, expanding beehives, marketing its wild products (peanut butter, honey, dried fruits and mushrooms) in the US and protecting wildlife from poachers. This and more is in COMACO’s March [newsletter](#).



VIDEO: A \$45 million, 5-year bond will benefit black rhinos in South Africa, [reports](#) Bloomberg Green. The world's first wildlife conservation bond will be sold by the World Bank; returns for investors will be determined by the growth of rhino populations in two South African reserves. The money will help replace tourism income lost to the pandemic.



The first photos of Walter's duiker, one of the world's most secretive animals, have been taken in Togo's Fazao-Malfakassa National Park by researchers from the University of Oxford using trail cameras. *Philantomba walteri* was identified only in 2010. See the [article](#) in *The Financial*, April 2.



In the dry season, elephants look for baobab trees. Elephants poke holes in the bark and then rip it away to reach the spongy, water-saturated inner part. A thousand-year-old tree can be destroyed in just hours. The photo is from a Savé Valley (Zimbabwe) Conservancy Facebook [post](#).

Botswana reappeared on the international hunting map this year. Hunting was suspended in 2014 and voted back in during 2019; having now lost another year, to COVID-19, safari operators and supporters of Botswana's Community Based Natural Resources Management program were eager for a re-boot, [reported](#) *MmegiOnline* on March 26. Botswana's Dept. of Wildlife and National Parks issued 287 elephant licences for this hunting season, which runs from April 6 – September 21. For context: "[Botswana's Varying Elephant Population\(s\)](#)" in the *April Conservation Frontlines*.



A plan to strip-mine the [Selati Game Reserve](#) in South Africa's Limpopo Province was [described](#) by *The Daily Maverick* on April 8. Selati is home to the Big Five and one of the few places where the critically endangered Lillie Cycad, *Encephalartos dyerianus*, occurs. [Tiara Mining](#) intends to drill, blast and dig for precious metals and emeralds, which includes stockpiling excavated material, building roads, infrastructure and a processing plant. SWF photo.

WORLD



Marine mammals are at a crossroads—some face extinction while others show signs of recovery, [reports](#) the University of Exeter (UK). A review of 126 marine mammal species—whales, dolphins, seals, sea lions, manatees, dugongs, sea otters, polar bears and more—found that fisheries bycatch, climate change and pollution are among the key drivers of decline. A quarter of these species are now classified as vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered on the IUCN Red List. But conservation efforts are helping other species recover, including the northern elephant seal, humpback whale (above) and Guadalupe fur seal.



By 12,000 years ago, nearly three-quarters of Earth's land had been transformed by humans, but new research shows it was not at the expense of nature. A University of Queensland study combined global maps of historic and prehistoric population and land use with modern biodiversity data and found that “traditional” peoples had been effective environmental

stewards. The findings challenge the modern assumption that human development inevitably leads to environmental destruction. Photo: Indigenous villagers in Odisha, India, by Ganta Srinivas.



COVID-19 masks and gloves are harming wildlife. In *Science News*, two biologists [reported](#) 28 instances of animals eating or becoming trapped in single-use protective gear around the world, highlighting a new problem: Every minute we throw away 3 million face masks (129 billion face masks are used every month); many end up as potentially toxic micro- and nanoplastics or carriers for other toxicants, warns a recent *Science Daily* [article](#). This Canadian robin entangled in a mask was photographed by Sandra Denisuk in April 2020.

“Is mankind warming the Earth?” This seminal essay was written in 1978 by William W. Kellogg, a senior meteorologist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado. Kellogg’s remarkably prescient and clear article on mankind’s influence on climate, the fate of the icecaps and the implications of a warmer Earth for society is well worth reading.



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