



FRONTLINE DISPATCHES

CONSERVATION NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

June 2021

Asia / Africa / Europe / North America

Pacific / South & Central America / World

ASIA



This peculiar bulbous-nosed animal (pictured in [Evgeny Polonsky's photo](#)) is a male Saiga antelope from the Eurasian steppes. The Saiga Conservation Alliance provides plenty of information in [Saiga News Issue 26](#). This forum of Saiga experts also features an editorial by E.J. Milner-Gulland on perspectives and prospects of sustainable use of saiga antelopes.

More than 50,000 migratory birds frequent the Mundok Reserve on the Korea Peninsula, now designated a Wetland of International Importance. The German [Hanns Seidel Foundation](#) and its international partners hope to integrate North Korea into global conservation efforts and to raise awareness for the biodiversity there.



In Pakistan, mountain ungulate hunting finances conservation. In a May 7 [article](#) in *The Express Tribune*, Fiza Farhan says these hunts—for Kashmir markhor, for example (see Imran Shah’s photo)—require little infrastructure, are ecologically more friendly and generate significantly more revenue per customer compared to ecotourism. They also benefit local communities in many ways.



The last remaining Sumatran rhinoceros (fewer than 100 individuals remain) display surprisingly low levels of inbreeding, found researchers at the Centre for Paleogenetics in Stockholm. [Reported](#) in *Science News* on April 26. (Nick Garbutt photo).



The Bornean subspecies of the Rajah scops owl was documented for the first time since 1892 [reported](#) Science News on May 4. Photographed by Dr. Andy Boyce in the montane forests of Mount Kinabalu/East Malaysia.



VIDEO: The rusty-spotted cat is one of the smallest felines in the world. *Prionailurus rubiginosus*, listed as Near Threatened, is native to the dry deciduous forests, scrub and grasslands of India, Sri Lanka and Nepal. This video was taken by a trail camera in southern India. [David Raju photo](#).

In Taiwan, hunting is central to the way of life of the island's indigenous people. Now the country's highest court ruled that while some hunting restrictions are unconstitutional, most will remain in place, [reported](#) *The Economist* on 15 May. Indigenous communities say the verdict is "far from satisfactory", because it breaches Taiwan's Indigenous people's rights to practice their culture freely.

NORTH AMERICA

NEW FEATURE - CONSERVATION 101



Sustainable Use is Conservation

Plants and animals have fed, clothed, and housed humans for millennia. To ensure plants and animals exist for future generations natural resource managers apply the concept of *sustainability*. Sustainability is the informed, legal, and ethical use of natural resources. Sustainability is conservation. We can consume natural

resources sustainably and at the same time ensure their future existence while supporting the livelihoods and self-sufficiency of humans.



Counting sheep isn't just for the sleep-deprived. A research team from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and New Mexico Game and Fish Department experimentally combined camera trapping with distance sampling to estimate bighorn sheep numbers at the Red Rock Wildlife Management Area, the USFWS [reports](#) in *Open Spaces*. The new method produced amazingly

accurate bighorn sheep numbers, exciting the international conservation community. Watch for a full-length feature of this topic in the July Conservation Frontlines e-Magazine.



Rare wolverine spotted on Antelope Island, Utah. [According](#) to the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources the elusive carnivore was seen in early May. Antelope Island is a untypical wolverine habitat, made up mostly of grasslands. Wolverines are typically found in high mountainous areas where the females have access to snowpack for denning sites.

Resident permit prices for non-resident students. On May 6, Montana Governor Greg Gianforte signed into law a student-led initiative allowing non-resident college students to participate in fishing and hunting at resident license fee costs, *Boone and Crockett Club* [reports](#). This move could help boost participation in these activities, and ease access to locally harvested game meat (a growing priority among students). Conservation Frontlines will feature an exclusive with the University of Montana student who led this successful effort in our July e-magazine.



Migratory ducks receive habitat protection on agricultural lands. Ducks Unlimited, Intermountain West Joint Venture, and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service announced \$3.8 million to enhance conservation efforts for migrating waterfowl on working lands, *Ducks Unlimited* [reports](#).



Salmon Gold addresses the impacts of placer mining and restores salmon habitat. The Washington DC-based NGO Resolve partners with placer miners, and raises money from companies like Tiffany's and Apple to restore former gold mining sites, explains an *Hakai*

Magazine [article](#) dated May 10. Pools and fast-running shallow waters have already been recreated on three river systems in Alaska and Yukon in five projects; 10 more are slated for 2021. (Before and after from Sulphur Creek; Salmon Gold/RESOLVE photos)

For the future of hunting, the proof is in the potential. Results from a survey of 17,203 undergraduate students at public universities across 22 states found that, while active hunters were predictably white males from hunting families, potential hunters were far more likely to be female-identifying, from racial and ethnic minorities, and less likely to receive social support for hunting. This [study](#), published in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*, also reported that potential hunters “valued game meat and altruistic reasons for hunting.”

Public schools and school districts in Arkansas are offering hunting safety courses for grades 5 through 12 within the physical education, health and safety curriculum, [reported](#) Outdoors Tomorrow Foundation on May 12.



Photo: Rita Frey

Biologists and volunteers resume the North American Breeding Bird Survey, a program initiated in 1966, to track the health of wild bird populations across the continent. [According](#) to the US Geological Survey, North America has lost nearly three billion birds over the past 50 years and this survey will provide important insight on the status of the birds that remain.

In Idaho, conservation organizations, hunters, and the Idaho Fish and Game Commission oppose ballot box biology. Voter initiatives and legislators lack the ability to address wildlife management issues, spokespersons of these groups said of Idaho’s Senate Bill 1211. The bill, which allows reducing wolf populations in the state by 90%, was signed into law by governor Brad Little, the *Idaho Statesman* [reported](#) on May 10. The Idaho Wildlife Federation [considers](#) the bill not being grounded in science, and a drastic departure from the wolf delisting agreement, likely to spawn lawsuits, putting Idaho wolf management in the hands of judges.



A demand for indigenous perspectives in North American conservation. A group of scientists from Canada took to *The Conversation* in [this op-ed](#) to demand that more indigenous voices are included in Canadian conservation efforts. They cite the Mi'kmaw principle of “Two-Eyed Seeing,” which combines traditional knowledge with western knowledge. Similarly, the CIC [highlights](#) the emphasis on community-led conservation efforts and indigenous perspectives present in the Biden-Harris “America the Beautiful” Initiative ([Rick Bowmer photo](#))

Jaguars have a long and checkered past in New Mexico and Arizona. Eric Sanderson of the Wildlife Conservation Society together with 15 scientists presented the case for jaguar reintroduction in the southwestern US in a paper [published](#) on May 21 by *Conservation Science and Practice*. Their proposal suggests involvement from stakeholders like ranchers and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The agency’s own [jaguar recovery plan](#) is far more limited than what the scientists suggest, [reported](#) *Mountain West News Bureau* on May 13.

EUROPE



VIDEO: Don't mess with the *Rackelhahn*. Competition to breed with females among black grouse cocks is normally highly ritualistic. But on this lek (breeding ground) in Norway, a *Rackelhahn*—a hybrid between a female capercaillie and a male black grouse—enters the contest, attacks a much smaller black grouse cock, and the uneven fight comes to a violent end.

Romania has tightened bear hunting regulations after a Liechtenstein prince apparently illegally killed a large male brown bear, [reported](#) the *Irish Times* on May 7. *Politico* [reported](#) on May 10 that the European Commission's environment chief will look into the matter. The Romanian environment minister stated that foreigners could no longer hunt “problem” animals.

Germany will have almost 2,000 wolves by early summer, [estimates](#) the German Hunting Association. The population grows annually by ca. 30% and wolf management is becoming a flashpoint. The German state of Brandenburg already has more wolves than Sweden, which is 15 times larger and less populated.



[LIVE VIDEO](#): Watch this spotted eagle nest in Latvia (and listen to wonderful bird concertos). Lesser spotted eagles, *Clanga pomarina*, are migratory, spending the winter in southern Africa and returning to Central and Eastern Europe in April. By the time this newsletter reaches you, there should be nestlings. State Forest of Latvia has [cameras at several nest sites](#).

About 170 endangered Caspian seals were found dead on Russia's Dagestan coast in May. Fishing activities and illegal trade (skins and seal oil) are most likely to blame, reported *Mongabay*. Only about 68,000 mature Caspian seals are left in the wild.

The Queen's Speech May 2021. Her Majesty [said](#) in the UK Parliament, that the Animals Abroad Bill (banning hunting trophy import and advertising trophy hunting) will be implemented along with the Ivory Act. Since the Queen's [words](#) outline British Government policy, it has to be assumed that Boris Johnson's government [disregards](#) the will of rural African communities co-existing with wildlife, and their socio-economic wellbeing.

WWF Sweden has produced a guide on how to choose meat ethically. The only type of meat that qualifies for green smiley-faces in all categories is wild meat. Unfortunately, the WWF [meat guide](#) is only available in Swedish.

AFRICA



Dominique Gonçalves currently manages Gorongosa Park's Elephant Ecology Program. A two-year, \$100,000 grant from [Wild Elements Foundation](#) will help Dominique to continue her elephant ecology studies, develop human/wildlife coexistence strategies, and inspire young women to explore careers in science and education (from [Gorongosa NP News](#)).

197 of 255 Afrotropical waterbird species listed under the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds are susceptible to wetlands loss due to climate change at their breeding areas in the Arctic and in Africa, says a May 3 [report](#) in *Science Daily*.

Six lions were found dead in Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda, [reported](#) *Nature World News* on April 19. The lions, with body parts missing, were apparently poisoned (dead vultures were also found), presumably by poachers made desperate by economic hardship.



Zimbabwe authorizes 500 elephant-hunting permits for the 2021 season. This is covered by an official CITES quota, says the [Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority](#); the country also has an [elephant management plan](#). The “current population of 85,000 elephants is about 40,000 elephants too many to maintain a balanced habitat and food base for grazing and browsing [wildlife],” [said](#) Willy Pabst, of the Savé Valley Conservancy. “[The quota] amounts to some 0.6% of the national herd against an average annual reproduction rate of 5 to 7%.” (See [“One Solution Does Not Fit All Problems,”](#) CFF Ezine 01/2021.)

Kenya’s National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) revoked a license for an avocado farm east of Amboseli NP because of flaws in the environmental impact assessment. Local Maasai and conservationists also joined forces to protect the wildlife migration routes in the Kimana Wildlife Corridor, the water table of the region, and Maasai grazing land, [reported](#) Africa Geographic on May 6. KiliAvo—the agribusiness planning the avo farm—is expected to appeal.

Kenya started its first-ever national wildlife census [reported](#) *The Brookings Institution* on May 14. Researchers anticipate improving knowledge about wildlife distribution and population sizes, identify threats, and develop conservation strategies.



Master tracker Horekhwe (Karoha) Langwane, left, of Botswana's central Kalahari, has passed away, [announced](#) the *CyberTracker* blog on April 11. Karoha became known around the world as the San hunter who ran down a kudu in the [video](#) narrated by David Attenborough. Karoha went on to co-author several scientific papers in high-impact journals.

A striking genomic distance separates leopard living in Asia from those in Africa revealed a [new study](#) published on May 11 in *Current Biology*. Leopards from different African populations are genetically interrelated, suggesting abundant gene flow across the range. By contrast Asian leopard populations are geographically distinct along ten recognized subspecies boundaries.



The 2020 Aerial Wildlife Survey of Mozambique's Gorongosa National Park revealed more than 1,200 buffalo, 2,700 crocodile, 750 hippo, and around 1,000 elephants. Marc Stalmans' [report](#) provides details.



Video: Carte Blanche exposed canned lion shooting in 1997. Now, minister Barbara Creecy released the recommendations of a high-level panel (on almost 600 pages) with a seismic shift away from captive breeding and shooting (our forthcoming July 15 Ezine brings an in-depth analysis). (Screengrab from video.)



Ezemvelo, KwaZulu-Natal's conservation agency, dehorned all white rhino in Spioenkop Nature Reserve, [reported](#) Mongabay on April 30. Michael Knight, of the IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group is supportive of rhino dehorning, but points out that it will need to be done repeatedly to maintain its positive effects. More on dehorning [here](#). (Casey Pratt photo.)

SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA



VIDEO: Watch a giant river otter hunt and eat an iguana lizard in the Tillava River in Puerto Gaitan/Colombia. The researchers who observed this believe it may be a video first for *Pteronura brasiliensis*.



The ancient beech trees of Karukinka natural park in Chilean Tierra del Fuego face an uncommon threat: beavers brought from Canada 75 years ago to create a fur industry. Today, more than 100,000 beavers have spread throughout Patagonia, leaving dead forests and stagnant ponds in their wake, says an April 23 [report](#) in Phys.org. (*National Geographic* reported on the [boondoggle](#) in 2019.)

Illegal fishing of pirarucu, aka arapaima, a massive Amazonian fish near Manaus/Brazil is surging, [reported](#) Mongabay on April 23. Compounded by perverse policy incentives, and more recently by the COVID-19 economic fallout and a lack of enforcement, more people are pushed into illegal fishing (Carlos Peres photo).



Migratory waterbirds breeding in sustainable-use protected areas on seasonal riverine sandy beaches benefit from the concerted action of local communities in Brazilian Amazonia. A new [study](#) published in *Plos One* on April 8 demonstrates the value of this highly-effective and low-cost conservation model.



El Tuparro National Natural Park in Colombia's Orinoco region ecosystems are healthy, for now. A WCS camera trap project revealed jaguars, pumas, tropical white-tailed deer and brocket deer, tapirs and peccaries in the 557,000 ha (1.38 million acres) park. According to a [May 4 article](#) in *Mongabay*, the researchers are also studying the impact of the growing human presence, and how to make traditional subsistence hunting and fishing

sustainable (Tropical White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus cariacou*, WCS photo).

PACIFIC



Crocodile hunting should be reintroduced in Australia's Northern Territory. The population continues to rise, according to Professor Graham Webb, as [reported](#) by *The Daily Mail* on May 10; ca. 200,000 crocodiles now almost equal the 246,000 human inhabitants ([Lui Sykes photo](#)).



The New Zealand Department of Conservation will [cooperate](#) with recreational and commercial hunters to control the non-native Himalayan tahr populations on public conservation land in the more accessible areas of the South Island. [Here is more info](#) on NZ tahr control.

WORLD



Indigenous leaders around the world view the 30x30 goals with a mixture of hope and worry. From the Amazon forests, the Pethei Peninsula in Canada's Northwest Territories, the Mayan Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala, to Papua New Guinea islands, Indigenous people live in highly important biodiversity hotspots. They need to be

engaged in biodiversity conservation, and their rights and development aspirations must be respected. Read more in this [article](#) of the *NY Times*, published on March 11 (Victor Moriyama photo).

Meanwhile, human rights NGOs warned of human rights violations and irreversible social harm in the wake of the 30x30 drive. Mordecai Ogada, co-author of *The Big Conservation Lie—The Untold Story of Wildlife Conservation in Kenya*, and Survival International's Steven Corry link 30x30 to the colonial conservation system, according to an [article](#) published on May 10 in the Kenyan news outlet *The Star*.

But, the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy [confirms](#) that community-based conservation is an important part of the 30 Percent Solution. Can Indigenous and Community-conserved Areas contribute to conservation? How does community stewardship work? Professor Fikret Berkes' new book "[Advanced Introduction to Community-based Conservation](#)" provides answers, and shows how participatory approaches unlock citizen power.

The Science of Climate Change Explained: Facts, Evidence and Proof—a conclusive *NY Times* [article](#) on April 19 answers the big questions: Is climate change really happening? How much do scientists agree about climate change? How do we know climate change is caused by humans? And much more.



In the Anthropocene the mark of human impact has reached every corner of the globe. It forces us to choose between restoring the Earth toward natural, functioning ecosystems or manipulating every aspect of nature, says Eric Molnar in an [opinion piece](#) published by the *Wildlife News* on May 10.

Nevertheless, an area of forest the size of France has regrown naturally since the year 2000 across 29 countries, a new [analysis](#) shows; enough to store around 5.9 gigatons of carbon dioxide (more than the US emits annually).

And, last but not unimportant, scientific communication fails (even among scientists) when a research paper is packed with too much specialized terminology. Italy's National Research Council [concluded](#) that such jargon hinders the transmission of ideas. They recommend to always ask: **"How do I describe what I'm doing to someone who is not doing this 24/7?"**



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