PROTECTING WILDLIFE FOR A HEALTHY PLANET

Progress Report

While the past year has brought unimaginable challenges, WWF has found creative ways to ensure that our efforts to protect wildlife—from African elephants to gray whales in the Mexican Pacific—are moving forward.

With your support, we are protecting ecosystems, monitoring vulnerable wildlife populations, and stopping poachers in their tracks to ensure a future for the planet's most imperiled species. The following stories speak to some of the inspiring and innovative initiatives we are undertaking to ensure that wildlife across the globe continue to roam, swim, and thrive. **Thank you for making this work possible.**

WWF PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

SETTING THE GOLD STANDARD FOR TIGER CONSERVATION IN INDIA

India is home to over 60% of the world's wild tiger population, so in-country protections have an outsized impact on the fate of the species. In a huge leap forward for tiger conservation, the Indian government announced in July 2021 that 14 Tiger Reserves have been Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA|TS) approved. CA|TS is a global conservation tool that sets best practices and standards to manage wild tiger sites.

Suitable habitat is paramount for wild tiger conservation, and CA|TS certification ensures that these areas are effectively managed to support tigers' long-term survival. CA|TS is being implemented across 125 sites in seven tiger range countries, with 94 of those in India. In the future we hope to expand the tiger's range in India to previously occupied and new areas which will help us go beyond the goal of doubling wild tigers. India's progress shows that with political will, funding, and the support of partners such as local communities, doubling wild tigers is possible.

INCREASING NEPAL'S RHINO POPULATION

Nepal undertakes the immense task of counting its rhino population every five years to monitor their status in the wild and assess the management effectiveness of the nation's rhino conservation strategy. The positive results of Nepal's 2021 National Rhino Count are in. The country's rhino population has increased by 16% since 2015—a very promising sign for the greater one-horned rhino. Found only in Nepal and northeast India, the number of greater one-horned rhinos dwindled to as few as 200 in the wild at the turn of the 20th century. Conducted in the country's Terai Arc Landscape, the survey documented 752 rhinos, up from an estimated 645 counted in 2015. These numbers are proof that Nepal's ongoing protection and habitat management efforts are working.

ENDING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN VIETNAM

Recently, WWF and USAID launched a five-year project designed to tackle wildlife trade in Vietnam. Political leaders, law enforcement professionals, and consumers located in key trade hot spots, including the country's seaports and airports, will participate in this project. At the same time, we will collaborate with Vietnamese and US justice agencies to reform market regulations while strengthening capacity for marketplace governance and wildlife crime reporting. And together with our partners, we will build upon our successful history of changing behaviors around wildlife consumption by delivering strategic messages to both domestic and international tourists in Vietnam that will decrease the desire for tiger, elephant, and rhino products. We are convinced that this multi-faceted approach will help keep wildlife out of marketplaces and in the wild.

CATCHING ELEPHANT POACHERS IN ZAMBIA

Elephant poachers often hunt under the cover of night to avoid detection. In Zambia's Kafue National Park, which is home to about 6,500 elephants, WWF and Teledyne FLIR Systems, Inc., a leading developer of night vision thermal technology, have been collaborating on a game-changing approach to equip park rangers with night vison cameras to find poachers and protect wildlife.

The COVID pandemic caused tourism revenue streams in parks and reserves across Africa abruptly to dry up and reduced critical resources for anti-poaching and ranger patrols. As travel restrictions prevented WWF experts from being on site, we conducted frequent virtual trainings online. Through these instructive sessions, Kafue staff gained hands-on experience configuring cameras to automatically detect boats and people via artificial intelligence. They also set up EarthRanger software, which helps maximize ranger impact and coordinate movements throughout the park and allows them to respond to FLIR camera alerts in real-time. Thanks to FLIR, WWF is making life more difficult for poachers while providing a safer environment for some of the world's most endangered wildlife.

REVOLUTIONIZING POLAR BEAR MONITORING

WWF is working to understand just how polar bears are adapting to sea ice habitat loss. From our experience, we know that polar bears roam the region year-round. The people of the Arctic have long been able to estimate a bear's size, sex, and direction of travel from a simple polar bear track in the snow.

Now, WWF is looking at those same tracks more closely—extracting DNA from the skin cells that a polar bear sheds naturally with each step. In launching this research, WWF will empower Arctic communities to collect samples that will fill in data gaps on population estimates and offer insight into polar bears' response to climate change.

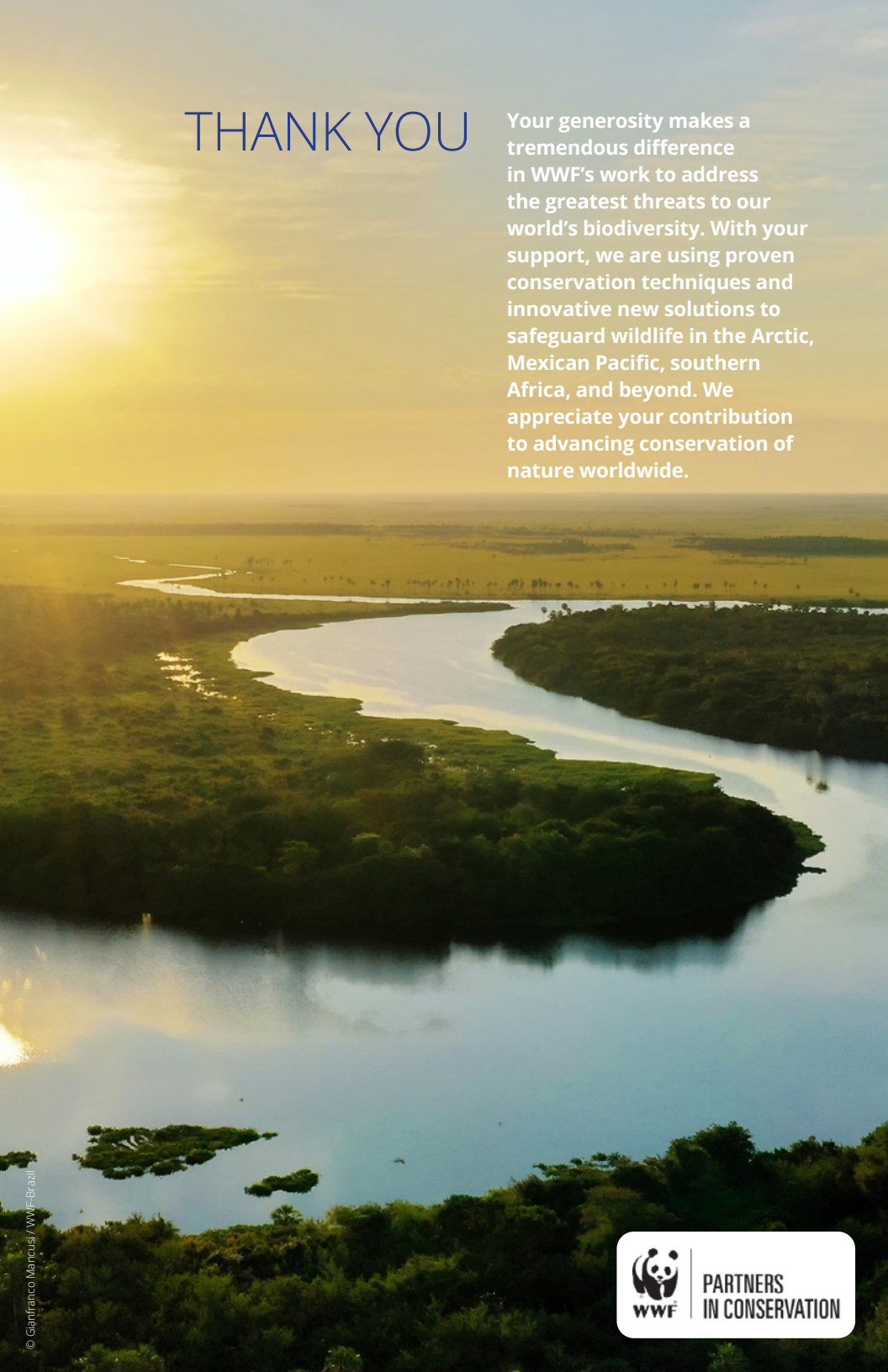
The success of this new technology could have major implications. Historically, studying elusive species in any given region requires long hours in the field and in multiple locations—and even then, large swaths of habitat go unstudied, severely limiting our ability to collect enough important data. Extracting DNA from a footprint offers a faster method of achieving more accurate results. WWF's partners in the field are collecting samples with promising results, and we are now working to refine the sample collection and analysis methodology.

ELIMINATING GHOST GEAR FROM THE MEXICAN PACIFIC

Ghost gear—discarded, lost, or abandoned, fishing gear in the marine environment—can trap, entangle, and even kill marine life while endangering maritime navigation and polluting the world's oceans. To stem the negative impacts of ghost gear along Mexico's Pacific Coast, WWF is working with local fisheries to document and retrieve abandoned gear and develop a program for recycling recovered nets. As a part of this program, WWF has also trained over 180 local community volunteers on techniques for freeing whales from ghost gear and equipped them with tools to ensure successful and safe disentanglements. This program is demonstrating how engaging stakeholders across the spectrum leads to improved outcomes for marine species and the communities that depend on healthy oceans.

THANK YOU

Your generosity makes a tremendous difference in WWF's work to address the greatest threats to our world's biodiversity. With your support, we are using proven conservation techniques and innovative new solutions to safeguard wildlife in the Arctic, Mexican Pacific, southern Africa, and beyond. We appreciate your contribution to advancing conservation of nature worldwide.



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