

# SAFEGUARDING THREATENED SPECIES

## Progress Report—2025

As a member of WWF's Legacy Circle, you fuel tremendous conservation progress around the world, including efforts to protect and restore species like Asian elephants, pangolins, tigers, jaguars and other big cats, bison, and marine turtles.

The following pages highlight some key areas of progress for wildlife over the past year, made possible through your generous commitment. Thank you.

Jaguar in Brazil.  
©Bruce D. Taubert





Temminck's ground pangolin (*Smutsia temminckii*) foraging in South Africa. This pangolin was saved from poachers in an anti-poaching sting operation. ©naturepl.com/Neil Aldridge/WWF

## PANGOLINS

Highly sought after for their scales, leather, and purported medicinal uses, pangolins face immense pressure from poachers and illegal wildlife trade. To keep this elusive and understudied species safe in the wild, WWF partnered with Pangolin Conservation & Research Foundation to advance the science of pangolin conservation in southern Africa. Over the past year, we established new areas for long-term monitoring of pangolins in parts of Angola, Botswana, and Namibia. Through camera trapping, GPS tracking, and observation, these locally-led projects will collect vital baseline data that could ultimately increase the survival of wild and rescued pangolins. In Namibia's Nyae Nyae Conservancy, WWF helped Pangolin Conservation & Research Foundation open a solar-powered research base camp.

Community engagement is also essential to protecting pangolins where they live. In Nyae Nyae Conservancy, the Foundation employs upwards of 10 conservancy members as pangolin rangers; this year, the group tagged nine wild pangolins and played a key role in rescuing six more. At the national level, our partnership trained more than 100 conservation officers in Namibia on best practices related to pangolin rescue and rehabilitation.





Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) in grassland, Jim Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand, India.  
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## ASIAN ELEPHANTS

To address the significant threat of road and railway collisions to Asian elephants, WWF produced the first handbook specifically designed to help countries reduce traffic collisions and provide safe passage for elephants. The handbook provides practical solutions for transportation planners and engineers, including recommendations on elephant crossing structures and traffic calming strategies.

Additionally, WWF launched and championed the Elly Allies Initiative to study and protect declining Asian elephant populations, safeguard and restore their habitats, and promote human-elephant coexistence in Southeast Asia and China. Through transformative partnerships, the initiative aims to secure stable and healthy elephant populations across the region by 2030.



Tiger in Corbett National Park, India. ©Nachiketa Bajaj/Shutterstock/WWF

## TIGERS

According to the Global Tiger Forum, wild tiger populations have climbed an estimated 74% since 2010, when WWF teamed up with tiger range governments and other partners to halt wild tigers' rapid decline. This year marked significant steps in tigers' continued recovery, as Thailand became the first country in Southeast Asia to increase its wild tiger population. Southeast Asia has lagged behind other regions on tiger recovery, making the Royal Thai Government's new estimate of 179–223 tigers especially momentous.

In April 2024, to keep up the momentum for tiger recovery, WWF, Tiger Conservation Coalition partners, and the Royal Government of Bhutan convened the inaugural Sustainable Finance for Tiger Landscapes Conference. This landmark gathering invited participants to help mobilize \$1 billion to conserve tigers and their landscapes over the next ten years.





Female Jaguar (*Panthera onca*) in Brazil. © WWF-Sweden/Ola Jennersten

## OTHER BIG CATS

From South America to the Himalayas, WWF is creating the conditions for big cats to thrive in a changing world. WWF's unique ability to bridge community-based action with landscape-scale strategy is critical for these broad-ranging predators.

In Bhutan, WWF works with the government to protect one of the least studied big cats: the elusive snow leopard. This year, Bhutan announced that its population of snow leopards has increased by nearly 40% since 2016, according to the country's second National Snow Leopard Survey.

In the Americas, WWF partnered with governments, local organizations, and communities to secure strongholds and safe passage for jaguars across the species' broad geographic range. Only about 65,000 jaguars remain in the wild, scattered throughout fragmented pockets of habitat. Focusing on key landscapes spanning parts of Belize, Guatemala, Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Peru, WWF is mapping and restoring connectivity between areas of jaguar habitat and engaging communities to reduce jaguar killings related to livestock predation and illegal trade.



Closeup portrait of a green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) swimming.  
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## MARINE TURTLES

Bycatch in fisheries and a thriving illegal trade in sea turtle eggs, meat, and “tortoiseshell” fashion items pose significant threats to the world’s dwindling sea turtle populations. To stop sea turtles from slipping toward extinction, WWF partnered with the Australian Center for Wildlife Genomics at the Australian Museum, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Southwest Fisheries Science Center, and TRACE Wildlife Forensics Network to develop Shellbank, the world’s first DNA-based toolkit for tracking sea turtles. Shellbank uses a genetic database to trace the origins of confiscated or bycaught turtles and turtle products, making it possible to pinpoint critical areas for protection.

WWF and partners are taking Shellbank to the next level by expanding the database, providing researchers and law enforcement in relevant countries with hands-on training in sample collection and analysis, and advancing the science of turtle traceability. By 2030, we aim for 15+ countries to implement Shellbank, opening the door to more effective turtle conservation and recovery worldwide.





A buffalo grazes at the Wolakota Buffalo Range on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota.  
©Tailyr Irvine/WWF-US

## BISON

Building on more than a decade of work with Native Nations to bring back bison to Tribal lands in the Great Plains, WWF and partners stepped up to catalyze bison restoration on an unprecedented scale. In June 2024, WWF signed on to a transformational Tribal Buffalo Lifeways Collaboration (TBLC) as one of four founding parties.

This new, historic alliance was created to stabilize, establish, and expand Tribal-led buffalo (bison) restoration, and foster cultural, spiritual, ecological, and economic revitalization within Native communities. TBLC partner organizations have committed to working with stakeholders in philanthropy, government, and the private and non-profit sectors to build on the momentum created by Native Nations to bring lasting structural change and return bison to Tribal lands.



# THANK YOU

Your commitment as a WWF Legacy Circle member not only drives urgent action to protect threatened species, it builds global momentum to secure a brighter future for our planet. Thank you for helping to safeguard nature on a scale that matters.

Birds fly at sunrise in the  
Okavango Delta, Botswana.  
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