



2024 Impact Report

We Stand for Wildlife®



Wildlife
Conservation
Society

MISSION

WCS saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature.

VISION

WCS envisions a world where wildlife thrives in healthy lands and seas, valued by societies that embrace and benefit from the diversity and integrity of life on Earth.



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Letter from the Chair of the Board and Interim President & CEO

Thank you for your partnership in advancing WCS's mission to save wildlife and wild places. We hope you see yourself in the pages that follow, because without your generosity we could not achieve the results highlighted in this Impact Report.

In the most important places for nature in 50+ countries, WCS is conserving landscapes and seascapes that are bursting with biodiversity, keeping planet-warming CO₂ out of our atmosphere, and reducing the chances of dangerous diseases jumping from animals to people, which can cause pandemics.

At the same time, through our four zoos and aquarium in New York City, we are opening a gateway to nature in one of the busiest cities on Earth, creating pathways to science and conservation careers, and inspiring the next generation of wildlife champions.

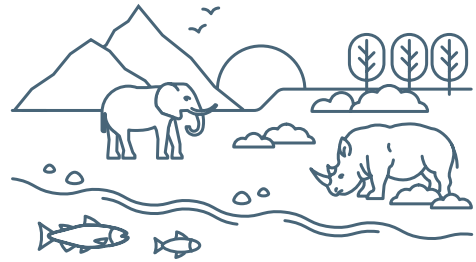
I hope the stories in this report inspire you to share our vision for the future—from rising tiger populations across Asia to stronger forest protections in Africa; from the reopening of the Prospect Park Zoo to our diverse and talented staff around the world.

We stand for wildlife. Thank you for standing with us.

Alejandro Santo Domingo
Chair of the Board

Robert G. Menzi
Interim President & CEO

WCS Impact Around the World



360+

protected areas WCS helped create since our founding



5,000+

scientists, conservationists, animal experts, and other dedicated staff

95%

of staff are citizens of the country they work in

Conserves habitat for

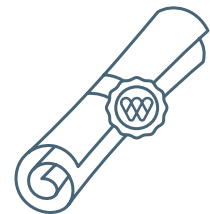
40%

of the world's biodiversity



350+

peer-reviewed scientific publications each year



150+

scholarships for emerging conservation leaders awarded by WCS in the last 3 decades

440+

local partner organizations, including local communities and Indigenous Peoples



2030 Goals

WCS will help nations significantly scale up conservation, supporting the creation of at least 50 new protected and conserved areas in the next 5 years, preserving millions of km² of tropical forests, peatlands, grasslands, oceans, and other key ecosystems.



Tropical Forests

Protect 2.5 million km² of the world's high-integrity forests and restore degraded areas

Peatlands

Protect the ecological integrity of 500,000 km² of the world's remaining intact peatlands

Grasslands

Safeguard 2.3 million km² of grasslands

Oceans

Secure 500,000 km² of new protected areas in coastal seas

Our efforts to conserve Nature's Strongholds will help drive global progress on climate and biodiversity targets:



✓ Protect and restore natural systems, which could offer as much as 1/3 of the climate action needed to meet the goals of the Paris climate agreement



30X30

✓ Partner with nations and communities to protect 30 percent of the planet by 2030

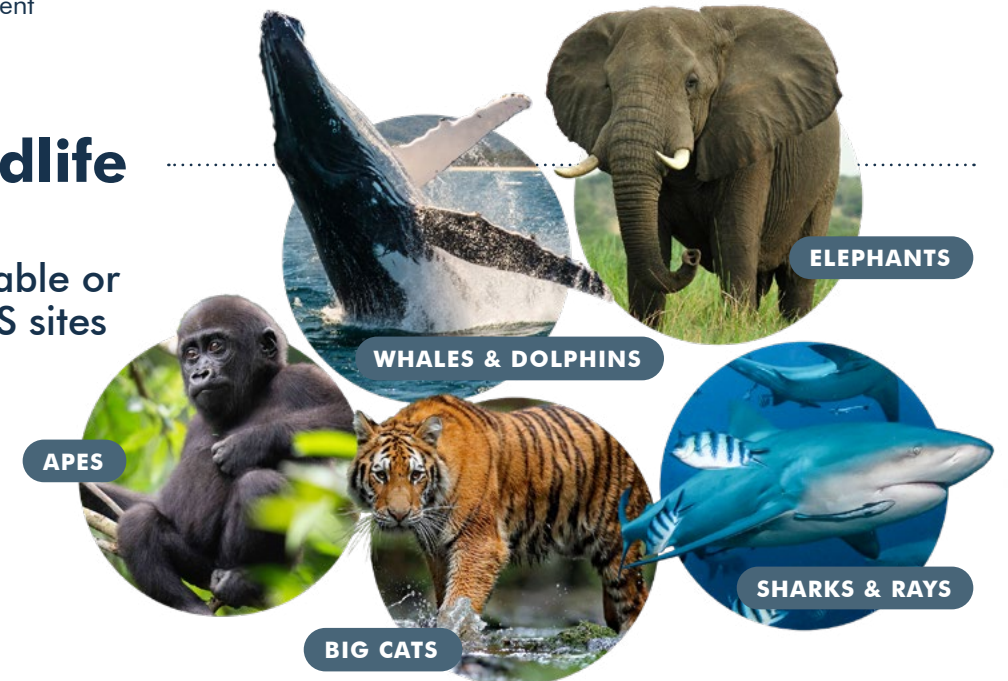


✓ Advance policies toward ending wildlife trade and preventing zoonotic pandemics

✓ Saving Wildlife

2030 GOAL

Priority species stable or increasing at WCS sites



WCS Zoos & Aquarium



3.5M
visitors to our zoos and aquarium in 2023



20K+
animals at our zoos and aquarium

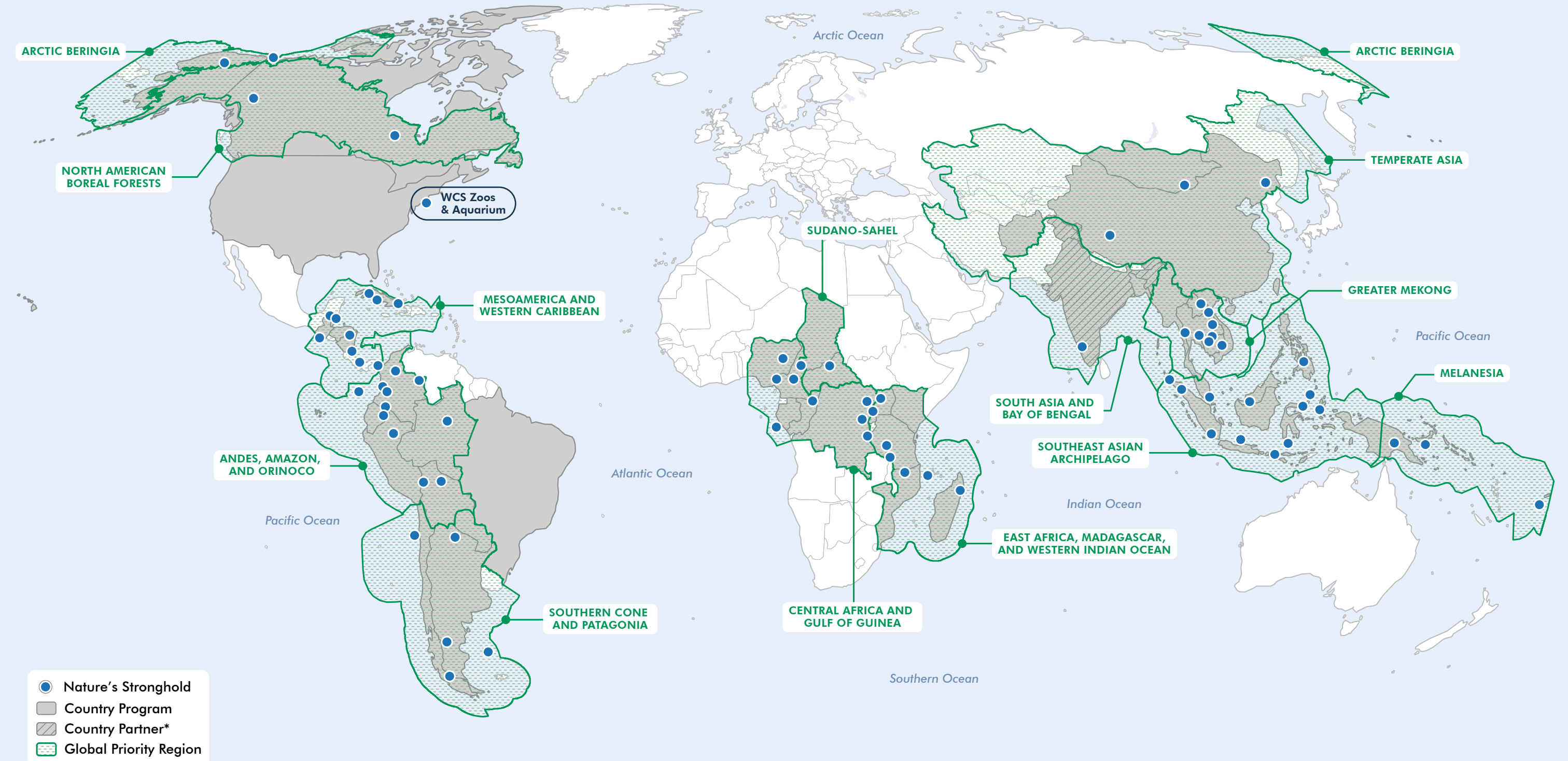


1M+
students, educators, and families reached with science education programs annually

2030 GOAL
Inspire millions of people to advocate for the conservation of wildlife and wild places

Where WCS Works

WCS is conserving high levels of biodiversity and ecological integrity in the world's most important places for nature. Nature's Strongholds also store vast amounts of carbon, are more resilient to climate change, provide health benefits locally and globally, and act as a buffer against future zoonotic pandemics.



*In India, WCS collaborates with the national NGO WCS-India



Saving Wildlife

From 30,000-year-old cave paintings of woolly mammoths to modern-day snapshots of birds in our backyards, wild animals have intrigued and inspired people for thousands of years. But our bonds run far deeper. Species around the world—elephants, tigers, sharks, hornbills, and countless more—play a crucial role in Earth's ecosystems, fortifying the web of life on which we all depend. As WCS-led science advances our understanding of how animals are interconnected with humans and the planet, our wildlife experts are finding innovative ways to protect and recover them.

Saving Elephants Across Africa and Asia

From the forests of Indonesia to the savannas of Tanzania, elephants play a valuable role as caretakers of nature. As they travel they engineer habitats, spreading seeds, creating pathways for other wildlife, and knocking down trees, allowing new vegetation to grow.

However, poaching, habitat destruction, and other threats have shrunk their numbers and diminished their ranges. For example, a WCS-led study found that Central Africa lost more than 65 percent of its forest elephants between 2002 and 2013, mostly as a result of poaching.

WCS aims to reverse this trend. We work in more elephant landscapes than any other conservation organization—and we are striving to protect and restore elephant populations in these places. For example, though African forest elephants have suffered dramatic declines across much of their range, populations are stable or increasing at sites where WCS has supported long-term park management.

How WCS Protects Elephants



Safeguards critical forests and savannas



Prevents poaching and ivory trafficking



Reduces demand for ivory and pushes to close all legal domestic ivory markets



Reduces human-elephant conflict with win-win solutions



Monitors and studies elephant populations

Halting Poaching in a Republic of Congo National Park

The Republic of Congo's Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park is a biodiversity haven. It is also one of the rare places in Africa where forest elephant and ape populations have remained stable or increased in the past 15 years—thanks to WCS's collaboration with the Congolese government. Our Ndoki-Likouala survey—one of the largest wildlife monitoring programs on the continent—found in 2017 that around 3,200 elephants live in the park, confirming Ndoki as a critical refuge for this species.

In 2023, we reached another conservation milestone: we did not detect any elephant poaching within Nouabalé-Ndoki—a first since we began tracking this data in 2014.

That success was achieved by a significantly strengthened ranger team. In 2013, when WCS and the Congolese government first formed a public-private partnership to manage the park, there were just 8 rangers. Now there are more than 90.

Protecting Tanzania's Savannas with Communities

The Ruaha-Katavi Stronghold in Tanzania is home to the largest elephant population in East Africa, with a 2021 study identifying nearly 20,000 elephants roaming some 90,000 square kilometers. The Stronghold is also home to roughly 15 percent of Africa's remaining lions, and other iconic species including African wild dogs and giraffes.

WCS is working with local communities in Ruaha-Katavi to address the greatest threat this landscape faces: rapid conversion of land for agriculture and other uses. We partnered with nine communities to establish three Joint Village Land Forest Reserves. By protecting two critical wildlife corridors, these reserves prevent the landscape from being split in two by agricultural expansion. WCS also trained more than 170 community members and helped set up three community-based organizations to manage the reserves. This remarkable community commitment is helping ensure that elephants and other wildlife can continue to move throughout the Stronghold, ensuring their access to food, water, and other resources they need to thrive.

Looking Ahead

WCS's goal is to reverse declines and help support and sustain a growing elephant population, working with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, governments, and other stakeholders to advance elephant conservation in critical landscapes across Africa and Asia. Using proven strategies, we will reduce poaching, protect elephant habitats, reduce human-elephant conflicts, bolster international policy to ensure that the current ban on all commercial ivory sales remains, and prevent closed domestic ivory markets from re-opening.



SPOTLIGHT

Sounding the Call to Stop Human-Elephant Conflict

Across Africa and Asia, WCS is partnering with communities to help reduce human-elephant conflict. As elephants' natural habitats become more fragmented, they are coming into close contact with humans, increasing the frequency of conflicts. These can include elephants raiding crops or destroying property, which can lead to retaliation against them.

We seek to bolster the needs and livelihoods of local communities, while finding ways to prevent these conflicts and help people and elephants coexist. For example, in Malaysia's Endau-Rompin Stronghold, WCS has provided specialized "siren" fence materials to more than 180 Orang Asli Indigenous small-scale farmers to guard their crops against elephant raids. The siren fence, pictured being installed above, works like a trip-wire fence, alerting crop-guarders with an alarm when an elephant pushes against the wire. Installed along the perimeter of fields, the fence allows farmers to safely steer elephants away from crops, helping avoid human-elephant conflict.



WCS SCIENCE

Can Animals Help Fight Climate Change?

What do elephants, helmeted hornbills, and gorillas have in common?

They are all endangered species—and they are also quiet warriors in the battle against climate change.

WCS scientists have published research demonstrating how reducing populations of large fruit-eating and browsing species diminishes tropical forests' ability to absorb and store carbon—giving us another compelling reason to protect them and their habitats.

Large species are often the target of hunting, and when their numbers dwindle, it changes the composition of forests. Over time, we see an increase in wind-dispersed or small-seeded tree species that have lower wood density—and consequently store less carbon—while big, carbon-rich trees are more numerous in forests with a lot of large seed-dispersing and browsing animals.

In general, losing large animals impacts tropical forest ecosystems in a variety of harmful ways, in addition to impacting carbon storage. And once they are gone, animal populations are difficult to recover—which is why WCS works to prevent loss in the first place, and restore populations that have suffered declines.

Another interesting fact: animals also store carbon in their bodies. For example, an adult forest elephant holds more than 1,500 pounds of carbon—equivalent to the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by a gas-powered car driving over 6,000 miles.

SPOTLIGHT

Leading Through Science

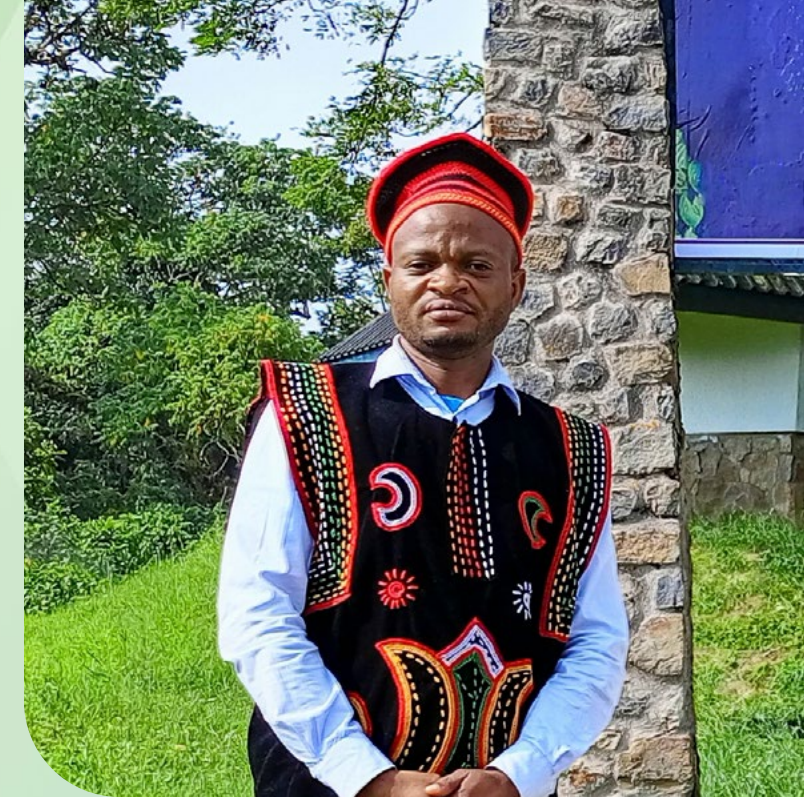
WCS's conservation strategies are underpinned by strong field research, and studies like the one featured here give us better insight into how best to protect landscapes and species. WCS experts publish over 350 peer-reviewed scientific publications each year, broadening global conservation knowledge. Our research has been cited more than 25,000 times in the past five years.



MEET A WCS EXPERT

Dieudonné Akilimali

As WCS's first Indigenous Peoples' Advisor in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I help shape biodiversity protections that honor Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and rights.



Q: Your grandparents were the last generation of the Batwa Babuluko people to live in what became Kahuzi-Biega National Park. What were their lives like?

DIEUDONNÉ: My grandparents lived on all the forest gave us. We hunted animals—antelope, porcupines—with bows and arrows, slingshots, and nets. During the season when fruits ripened, we trapped birds and gathered wild honey and mushrooms. At a special altar in the forest, we sought the grace of our ancestors—to sanctify the investiture of a new chief, or ensure a good hunt. If we got an animal, we knew our prayers had been answered. Then the whole village consumed that animal.

As the eldest of 10 children, I should have carried on those rites. But in 1970, when the government established the Park, they forced everyone to leave the forest and settle along the road. Instead of gathering honey, we had to keep beehives and plant crops. As the animals dwindled, we lost those traditions, too. We once had important hunting rituals using elephants. But they are no longer here.

Q: How did you come to WCS?

DIEUDONNÉ: Since completing my degree in 2012, I have worked on rural development and Indigenous rights, first for the Integration and Development Program for the Pygmy People, then for the United Nations. Then I heard about the WCS job. I was already passionate about conserving biodiversity, knowing that

it sustains our traditions, though it can also be in tension with them sometimes. In our community forests, we now protect many animals we once ate. Our involvement is crucial. You can't protect biodiversity without Indigenous People.

Q: Your vision for the future?

DIEUDONNÉ: The forest is our nourishing sea. By being on the side of conservation, I can protect what brought us here, what gave birth also to me. But the forest can no longer meet all of our needs. For the generation that includes my six daughters, we must develop alternatives. I want to be the person who encourages my people to evolve and adapt. I want to create educational opportunities like I had, that build resilience and counter our marginalization, while honoring our traditional knowledge.

For instance: our forests support the last big population of Critically Endangered Grauer's gorillas. It is Indigenous People who know how the gorillas behave, so we are now habituating four gorilla families to facilitate ecotourism. And with our ecoguards protecting our community forests, we can preserve some of our customs. Conservation groups have been criticized for caring more about animals than native people. I congratulate WCS for making the rights of Indigenous People a priority. With that support, I believe we can realize our vision.

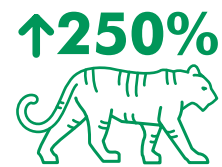
Tigers Rebounding Across Asia

From roughly 1900 to 2010, Asia's wild tiger population plummeted from about 100,000 individuals to just over 3,000.

Fast forward to today: tigers are bouncing back, with scientists estimating that there could be as many as 4,500 roaming the wild.

WCS is helping to propel this trend: tiger populations are increasing at seven sites where WCS works, and are stable in five. In three of these sites, tigers are doing so well that they are spreading out into new parts of the landscape. While these big cats still have a long way to go, WCS and partners have paved the road to recovery with strategic field conservation, building on decades of lessons learned about what these animals need to thrive.

WCS tiger experts—the majority of whom are country nationals—are on the ground in 8 of the 10 remaining range states for tigers in Asia, collaborating closely with communities and governments to halt poaching; protect prey species; monitor population size and health; and conduct rigorous research. As people move further into tiger habitat, tigers sometimes prey on livestock, and people retaliate. We work with local communities on tiger-proof enclosures and other creative solutions to reduce such human-cat conflict.



Tigers have increased by 250 percent over the last 15 years in Thailand's Western Forest Complex.



1 Tenasserims Stronghold THAILAND



In Thailand's Tenasserim mountain range, WCS is supporting the government of Thailand's efforts to increase tiger numbers through proven anti-poaching efforts.

Tiger populations in the Huai Kha Khaeng and Thungyai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuaries have grown by 250 percent over the last 15 years—and there are now at least 120 tigers thriving in this Stronghold.

We have helped steadily expand patrol coverage in recent years, and as of 2023, patrols now cover almost 80 percent of the Stronghold's critical tiger habitat—and there have been no instances of tiger poaching.



WATCH
camera trap footage from Thailand



2 Greater Leuser Stronghold INDONESIA



WCS's work in partnership with the Indonesian government is critical to the global recovery of tigers. Tigers are stable in the sites where WCS is supporting the government in Indonesia, including Gunung Leuser National Park, part of the largest intact forest ecosystem in Sumatra.

The Wildlife Response Units supported by WCS are collaborating with communities in and around Gunung Leuser to reduce conflict between humans and tigers. Tiger-proof enclosures just outside the park stop tigers from preying on livestock, and in turn protect the cats from retaliation. Increased patrol coverage has further reduced human-tiger conflict as well as the number of snares in the park.

WCS is working to strengthen the connectivity of the habitats within the Leuser Stronghold, which is vital if tigers are to have enough food, water, and space—to roam, hunt, breed, and extend their ranges over time.

3 Endau-Rompin Stronghold MALAYSIA



WCS's camera traps in southern Malaysia's Endau-Rompin Stronghold demonstrate that the region's tiger population is recovering and gradually increasing, reversing peninsula-wide trends of declining tiger populations.

WCS has supported government conservation efforts in Endau-Rompin for almost two decades—boosting law enforcement and patrol efforts; engaging communities through outreach programs and helping reduce human-wildlife conflict; and scaling up tiger and other wildlife monitoring. It is thanks to these efforts that tigers are on the rise in the landscape.

4 Northeast Asia Tiger Stronghold CHINA



Created in 2016, this 15,000-square-kilometer landscape represents the largest protected area for tigers in Asia. The population here initially depended on tigers crossing over from the nearby Land of the Leopard National Park in Russia. Northeast China Tiger Leopard National Park is estimated to hold between 40 and 60 tigers today, and about one-third of these individuals also use land across the border in Russia.

In 2023, WCS camera trap data showed five breeding female tigers on the Chinese side of the landscape, most with three to four cubs—proving that the Chinese population has become self-sustaining and is now large enough to expand its range farther into China. This encouraging trend is a result of decades of dedicated conservation efforts and WCS's long-term presence in both China and the Russian Far East.

Looking Ahead

Our goal is to restore tiger populations across Asia to their habitats' natural carrying capacity—and sustain them at that level—by strategically working in places with the greatest potential to boost their recovery. In 2024, WCS joined with other NGOs and the Royal Government of Bhutan to host The Sustainable Finance for Tiger Landscapes Conference in Bhutan. Representatives of the attending parties signed the Paro Statement—a call to mobilize \$1 billion in new funding to conserve tigers and tiger landscapes over the next 10 years.

Concurrently, WCS has set 10-year goals for tigers in each country and site where we work, focusing on scaling up patrol and monitoring efforts, reducing human-tiger conflict, creating new protected areas, and eventually reintroducing tigers into more areas where they once roamed.

WCS SCIENCE

Protecting Fin Whales, New York's Year-Round Residents

The ocean off the shores of New York and New Jersey is full of life, though many metro-area residents are unaware of this hidden world. Now WCS research shows that these waters are a year-round home for endangered fin whales, the second-largest animal on Earth.

WCS marine experts determined this using recordings of these majestic animals' songs and calls that are captured by acoustic buoys. Though the buoys are located about 20 miles offshore, if you're lucky you can spot fin whales, along with humpback and minke whales, and bottlenose dolphins, as close as a mile from New York City's shoreline and off the coasts of Long Island and New Jersey.

WCS's research helps inform conservation efforts designed to protect these endangered giants from threats such as ship strikes, entanglement in fishing gear, and ocean noise.



Slow Downs for Endangered Whales

In addition to fin whales, critically endangered North Atlantic right whales (see right) swim through New York's busy waterways. When one of our acoustic buoys detects their presence, the US government issues a temporary Slow Zone alert, encouraging mariners to reduce their speed to 10 knots or less.



LISTEN
to whales in New York waters



WATCH
a video of fin whales
in New York

WCS/Ocean Giants/Image taken under NMFS MMPA/ESA Permit no. 18786-04

Safeguarding Saiga, an Ancient Antelope

Saiga antelopes have roamed the earth since the last Ice Age, outlasting woolly mammoths and saber-toothed tigers. Recognizable by their distinctive nose, saiga play a crucial role in their ecosystems as wild grazers: distributing nutrients, maintaining vegetation balance, and supporting biodiversity across the steppes of Eurasia. Like all grasslands, steppe ecosystems store carbon underground in their roots and soil, helping to regulate the climate.

Huge herds of saiga once migrated across eastern Europe, Asia, and Alaska. In recent years, their numbers dipped close to extinction and saiga are now found only in fragmented populations, a result of poaching for their meat and horns, habitat loss, and disease. While saiga are protected by CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and international trade in horns from the wild is banned, markets still exist and we are working to combat illegal trade.

Yet there is cause for hope. Today, saiga populations are on the rise in Kazakhstan. As we celebrate this milestone, WCS is focused on the vulnerable population in Mongolia that remains precarious. We are partnering with the government and local communities to assess the extent of illegal trade and to develop strategies to avoid potential future trade impacts. We also partner with law enforcement on the ground; and at the national level, we are working with the Ministry of the Environment to develop a system for keeping track of illegal wildlife trade—and to ensure that confiscated horns or other parts do not make their way back into the market. WCS's deep-rooted presence across countries—especially in China—helps us to monitor where there is demand for saiga.

SPOTLIGHT

Combating Emerging Diseases

WCS scientists documented that *peste des petits ruminants* (PPR)—a contagious and devastating viral disease—“spills over” from livestock to wildlife and is a significant threat to saiga, as well as to other rare hoofed mammals. In Mongolia, WCS trained national and local field veterinary experts in monitoring, detection, and rapid response for the disease in saiga.



➔ Looking Ahead

It is vital to conserve saiga across its range, especially given the threat of illegal trade. Any opening of saiga horn trade could further threaten endangered populations in Mongolia. To ensure that these unique antelopes have a sustainable future, WCS will contribute our scientific and technical expertise to enhance government and multilateral efforts; and collaborate among research and conservation organizations to counter persistent threats of illegal trade, habitat loss, and disease.

MEET A WCS EXPERT

Noviar Andayani

As Country Director of WCS Indonesia, my job is to support 300 talented and passionate people working to sustain the second most biodiverse place on Earth.

Q: How did you come to wildlife and WCS?

NOVIAR: I didn't grow up close to nature, but just being in Indonesia was enough to make me wonder: Why are there so many different kinds of life on this planet? That question led me to biology and then to graduate work on genetics in Uppsala, Sweden, focused on speciation in birds. I couldn't understand why people there would walk all day in the cold just to see one owl. At home, you stepped outside and saw all kinds! Continuing my studies at Columbia University, I switched to studying our incredible diversity of primates: on just one island, Sulawesi, we have at least seven different species of macaque.

When I came home, no one understood why I kept talking about the need to preserve our genetic riches. Then, in 2003, I joined WCS. In the two decades since, we've worked to thoroughly incorporate genetic insights into the conservation of endemic and Critically Endangered animals like the Sumatran elephant, tiger and orangutan.

Q: What is most rewarding about your work?

NOVIAR: Our dedicated team who work tirelessly with local communities. In Lombok, an island near Bali, we helped families adapt to the reduced fishing access while helping the government establish a marine protected area. Our beloved community organizer worked with the fishermen's wives to create new businesses like



fish processing. He was so trusted that when one went into labor while her husband was out on his boat, he accompanied her to the birthing.

In other villages we work with communities to offer basic vaccinations for their livestock. That gives our One Health group an opening to talk about strategies to prevent pandemics at the source, like keeping livestock out of the forest where a pathogen might spill over. We also work with church leaders to stop unsustainable wildlife consumption in Sulawesi.

Q: What gives you hope for the future?

NOVIAR: Saving wildlife also saves the human world. For instance, we're now reintroducing Rote Island snake-necked turtles, which the exotic pet market had driven nearly extinct in the wild. We had some breeding pairs at the Bronx Zoo, which with the Singapore Zoo we're now using to reverse that extinction, an idea that amazes me. Even more so because conserving the turtle requires restoring their freshwater lakes, which are nearly gone after years of agricultural overuse and pollution. Severe water shortages have pushed local people into one of the highest poverty rates in the country. So restoring the lakes for this tiny turtle—regarded by some as ugly, but in my eyes beautiful—becomes a way to restore people's lives, too.



A NEW DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH

Reforming Poachers to Reduce Snaring in Indonesia

WCS has the largest and most successful counter-wildlife trafficking programs in the world, collaborating with governments, policy experts, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to create a future in which endangered species are no longer threatened by commercial poaching. With over 200 full-time staff across more than 30 countries dedicated to this effort, we are advancing counter-wildlife trafficking strategies globally.

A Biodiversity Haven

A case in point is our work in Indonesia's Way Kambas National Park. The park is one of the world's most critical biodiversity strongholds, home to Sumatran tigers, elephants, and rhinos. It also provides clean air, fresh water, and other benefits for people who live in the surrounding area.

But poachers threaten Way Kambas's wildlife, undermining conservation efforts by illegally setting snares, then selling the wild meat. So in 2020, Way Kambas National Park and WCS began a new pilot to combat poaching that has yielded strong results: snaring has decreased by 90 percent in a park section where illegal activity was highest.

Between 2020 and 2023, we documented a 90 percent drop in the number of snares detected in a priority area of the park.



Addressing the Root Causes of Poaching

Called problem-oriented policing, the new approach focuses on preventing crime, rather than arresting offenders after the fact. This is a win-win, because by identifying motivations and deterring crime instead of punishing it, we keep animals from being killed, and also keep people out of jail.

For the pilot, Way Kambas National Park and WCS reviewed patrol team data to identify park areas facing the greatest snaring threats. We then gathered information from local communities and government stakeholders to identify which groups were active in

these areas and why they were poaching.

Through this research, we identified priority poachers, and created an engagement plan. Their primary motivation for poaching was to sell wild meat as an income source in their local market, opening an opportunity to collaborate with them to foster more sustainable livelihoods.

Forging a New Path

To help these poachers transition away from a life of crime, we gave them livelihood support, and engaged influential community members and religious leaders to assist in their reintegration into the community.

“I feel more at ease now that I have been able to start a small cattle farm to support my livelihood compared to when I used to rely on hunting. I feel more comfortable being part of my community as there is no more negative talk about me.”

—A program participant

Thanks to our efforts, poachers abandoned poaching, found new ways to make a living, and were reintegrated into the local community.

➔ Looking Ahead

The pilot's success has led other poachers in Way Kambas to express interest in changing paths. We seek to expand this pilot in collaboration with the Indonesian government, introducing it to other areas of the park. More broadly, we are building skills within our teams and counterparts to apply a problem-oriented policing approach across terrestrial and marine strongholds.

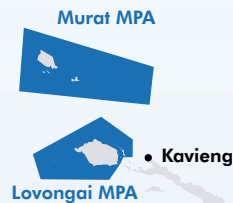




Protecting Nature's Strongholds

Nature's Strongholds are the lifeblood of our planet. Sweeping mosaics of robust forests, peatlands, grasslands, oceans, and other ecosystems contain much of the world's endangered wildlife, store vast amounts of carbon, are resilient to climate change, and provide health benefits locally and globally. We conserve Nature's Strongholds with partners around the world—including governments, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples who have effectively stewarded their lands and waters for millennia. Our goal is to protect and restore the integrity of natural systems that provide humans and animals alike with fresh water, food, livelihoods, habitats, and outsized climate benefits.

Papua New Guinea: Expanding Protections for the World's Most Biodiverse Ocean Ecosystem



Bismarck Sea

Papua New Guinea

The Coral Triangle is often called the Amazon rainforest of the ocean. Spanning a portion of the waters of Southeast Asia and Melanesia, this epicenter of global marine biodiversity is home to around 75 percent of known coral species, over 3,000 species of fish, and more than 130 species of sharks and rays. It also provides food and livelihoods to 120 million people.

At the heart of the Coral Triangle sits Papua New Guinea's New Ireland Province. WCS helped communities here design and create two new marine protected areas (MPAs) that safeguard an important piece of this critical ecosystem, while tripling MPA coverage nationally. This is one of the first and most ambitious community-led MPA wins since countries agreed through the United Nations to protect 30 percent of lands and seas by 2030 (30x30).

A Model for Human Rights-led Conservation

In Papua New Guinea, Indigenous Peoples are strong environmental stewards, holding customary tenure over 97 percent of the land and coastal waters. Community residents expressed initial interest in managing their marine resources. Through extensive consultations, communities, government, WCS, and other organizations and partners collaborated from 2016 onward to establish two MPAs through the free, prior, and informed consent processes, taking into account local governance and customs. These processes are the gold standard of community engagement, and ensure that Indigenous communities are informed of, give consent to, and have active participation in any activities that happen on their land and in their



3X  **WCS helped communities triple marine protected area coverage nationally.**

waters. More than 9,000 people from over 100 communities gave input, and through extensive focus groups, the communities determined the MPA rules, penalties, and boundaries. WCS drafted ecosystem-based management plans for the proposed MPAs.

In 2023, the process culminated with Papua New Guinea legislators approving the Lovongai and Murat MPAs in New Ireland Province. With community input in their design, the MPAs are a core resource for managing small-scale fisheries, local food sources, and livelihoods. Both MPAs safeguard critical populations of sawfish and rhino rays, with the Murat MPA also protecting marine turtles, marine mammals, such as dugongs, and other shark and ray species.



SPOTLIGHT

Protecting the World's Most Endangered Rays

Papua New Guinea is one of the last strongholds for some of the most threatened species on Earth: sawfish and their rhino ray relatives, wedgefish, and guitarfish. These animals' slow growth rate and high value in international trade put them at high risk for overfishing—and extinction. The two new MPAs are the first in the world with specific measures to protect this highly threatened group of rays. The new protections will be critical to the long-term survival of these species.

➔ Looking Ahead

We will work with coastal communities, our government partners, and other organizations to support effective management measures of these new MPAs. Our scientists will monitor fish and coral populations, as well as trends in fishing, livelihoods, and human well-being. Across Melanesia's lands and seas, we seek to scale up WCS's rights-centered approach to establish and recognize new community conserved areas, including by linking sites to long-term, sustainable financing. This achievement is a model for Indigenous-led protected area creation that other countries and governments can study and replicate as we work together across the globe to achieve 30x30.



Protecting the World's Largest Guanaco Migration

The spectacular La Payunia Natural Protected Area in Argentina's vast Patagonian Steppe Stronghold boasts healthy populations of pumas, rheas, foxes, and rare Andean cats who roam a landscape of sprawling grasslands dotted with cinder cone volcanoes. It is also a critical breeding site for Andean condors, and home to the world's largest guanaco migration.

While La Payunia is protected from mining as well as oil and gas development, more than 70 percent of the reserve is privately owned and lacks legal protection from other practices that could disrupt its natural systems. Road and fence building, corridors for utilities, and unsustainable livestock grazing all threaten the future of this unique otherworldly landscape and the benefits it provides to local people.

WCS has been working with local and government partners to safeguard La Payunia for over 20 years. Recent progress includes securing a larger area of protected lands vital for guanacos, and ensuring local people receive meaningful livelihood benefits from helping conserve this Stronghold.

Securing wildlife corridors in the reserve:

WCS has built longstanding partnerships with local landowners, government agencies, and supporters to increase protections for wildlife and their habitats. Between 2019 and 2024, we helped organize the purchase of more than 82,000 hectares of key range to add to the core of the protected area—connecting and safeguarding two major stopovers that guanacos need during their migration.

As part of this effort, all livestock will be removed, and the land will be monitored by local authorities and marked with signage as public lands. This land purchase for conservation also enhances the possibilities for local sustainable development through public use and nature-focused tourism, which will benefit local people as herding and ranching become less profitable due to climate change, overgrazing, and other factors.

Strengthening management and supporting livelihoods:

In the last year, we have trained park rangers on new, more effective techniques for monitoring wildlife and their habitats. We are also partnering with local communities to help improve their livelihoods through sustainable livestock care, pasture regeneration, guanaco shearing in the wild, certified fiber production, and low-impact nature tourism.

Looking Ahead

We are committed to the long-term sustainability of this landscape, and are working to purchase additional private lands to add to the core of the reserve. We aim to conserve the remaining 350,000 hectares in private lands in La Payunia through these efforts; if successful, it will be the largest land purchase for conservation in one reserve in Argentina, and one of the largest worldwide.

MEET A WCS EXPERT

Catalina Gutierrez

As Country Director for Colombia, my job is to lead our team of 80 experts in making measurable impacts for people and animals such as the Andean bear and Critically Endangered Magdalena spider monkey.

Q: The wild animals you study are insects. What led you there?

CATALINA: From the time I was little, my father took us every year from Cali to the jungles of the Chocó-Darién region near the Pacific coast. We'd spend weeks without electricity, fishing the rivers and dodging bullet ants, one of the largest in the world, with a brutal sting.

I never dreamed I'd wind up studying insects, but when I got to college I fell in love with their hidden universe and role in sustaining life. After studying beetles and flower flies, I found my way to bees through my first project at WCS. We found that where there are still forests in an agricultural landscape, there are more diverse wild bees. And where we have more bees, we have higher production of coffee and passion fruit. Colombia's most biodiverse regions are full of people living from the land; we have to conserve species and their ecosystem services in these areas as well. We are also helping families revive and improve the ancient practice of keeping native stingless bees, to raise awareness about sustainability and diversify their incomes.

Q: Can you share an inspiring win?

CATALINA: The work of our team and partners to protect an endangered catfish in a stretch of the Magdalena River is a great example of community-led conservation. The government had set a seasonal closure, but with environmental changes that closure no longer matched the time when the fish reproduced.



We persuaded the authorities to be guided by the community, initiating the closure only after the fishermen reported seeing the fish move as they do when they're ready to breed, unifying the efforts of local people and regulators.

This also helped rebuild the social network that had been lost during many years of armed conflict in the region. Women and men who previously had little interaction when we arrived came together around the environmental challenge, and 10 years later are still together, running a bakery, restaurant, and handicraft business. The catfish species is recovering and so is the community, welcoming new conservation projects and advocating for itself with the government.

Q: Your vision for the future?

CATALINA: This fall, Colombia will host the sixteenth UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 16), followed by two years as president of the group of nearly 200 member states. That's already having an effect: everyone here is talking about biodiversity, proud to be recognized as a "megadiverse" nation. That energy gives WCS an opportunity to accelerate and scale up on all fronts: maximizing the climate and health benefits of our biodiversity work; recovering critically endangered species like the Carranchina turtle and its vanishing dry forest habitat; and working with partners ranging from big private companies to the smallest communities to conserve landscapes as protected areas or communal territories.

Honoring Forest Guardians with Direct Resources

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities are some of the planet's most effective stewards, and we all reap the climate and biodiversity benefits. Over one-third of the world's healthiest forests are within Indigenous Peoples' lands. Safeguarding their rights and supporting their role as forest protectors must be a global priority. Yet these groups receive only a fraction of funding available for conservation for their role as guardians of nature.

To help address this gap, WCS and partners launched two new initiatives—one in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and one in Bolivia—that will put funds for conservation directly into the hands of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.

Strengthening Communities and Forests CONGO BASIN

Working with partners and local communities, WCS launched the first-ever direct access fund for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities protecting high-integrity forests in the DRC, including the Kahuzi-Biega National Park. These forests provide life-giving resources for people and are home to iconic wildlife such as gorillas, chimpanzees, okapi, and forest elephants.

This major new funding and technical assistance initiative will help secure Indigenous land and resource rights and protect one of the largest tracts of tropical rainforest in the world. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities will play a leading role in securing,

protecting, and managing the forests they depend on through funding for forest-friendly practices and other community-centered conservation solutions. Channeling resources directly to local groups will ensure that they have autonomy to apply funds toward forest conservation and social benefits.



Mukine Therese collects cassava leaves just outside her village in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



“The launch of this initiative reflects WCS’s commitment to expanding funding opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities by honoring their values and role in safeguarding the forests of the Congo Basin. Communities play a central role in protecting high-integrity ecosystems and in turn, these ecosystems are essential to peoples’ well-being as their customs, traditions, livelihoods, and tenure systems are deeply interwoven with the forests.”

—Jean-Paul Kibambe

WCS Country Director, Democratic Republic of the Congo



“We signed a historic agreement thanks to the efforts of WCS, which will allow us to strengthen our capacities and territorial rights.”

—Gonzalo Oliver

a Tacana representative and President of the regional organization of the Indigenous People of La Paz



Supporting Indigenous-Led Conservation BOLIVIA

The Greater Madidi landscape in the tropical Andes includes some of the world's most biodiverse and climate-critical forests, home to jaguars, spectacled bears, titi monkeys, and many more species.

After more than 20 years of collaboration, WCS and the Tacana, Leco, T'simane, Mosekene, and San José de Uchupiamonas Indigenous Peoples—who have called these forests home for millennia—launched a unique,

first-ever funding tool to enable them to advance their territorial land management vision. Indigenous management is critical to maintaining corridors in this region's lands and waters, which include nine Indigenous territories. This initiative will enable people to secure their land rights and livelihoods while protecting portions of the Madidi landscape from encroaching threats such as gold mining, in partnership with protected area authorities on joint protection, management, and monitoring.



Leco Indigenous women sharing their culinary traditions and native ingredients, many derived from forests.

NATURE IS HELPING US FIGHT THE CLIMATE CRISIS

How Ecosystems Store Carbon

Our most powerful ally in fighting the climate crisis is nature itself—and WCS is committed to protecting and restoring nature. Forests, coral reefs, mangroves, grasslands, peatlands, and other natural ecosystems provide fresh water, food, disease control, livelihoods, habitat, and many more benefits essential for humans and wildlife alike. These ecosystems also deliver outsized climate benefits.



Where is carbon stored?

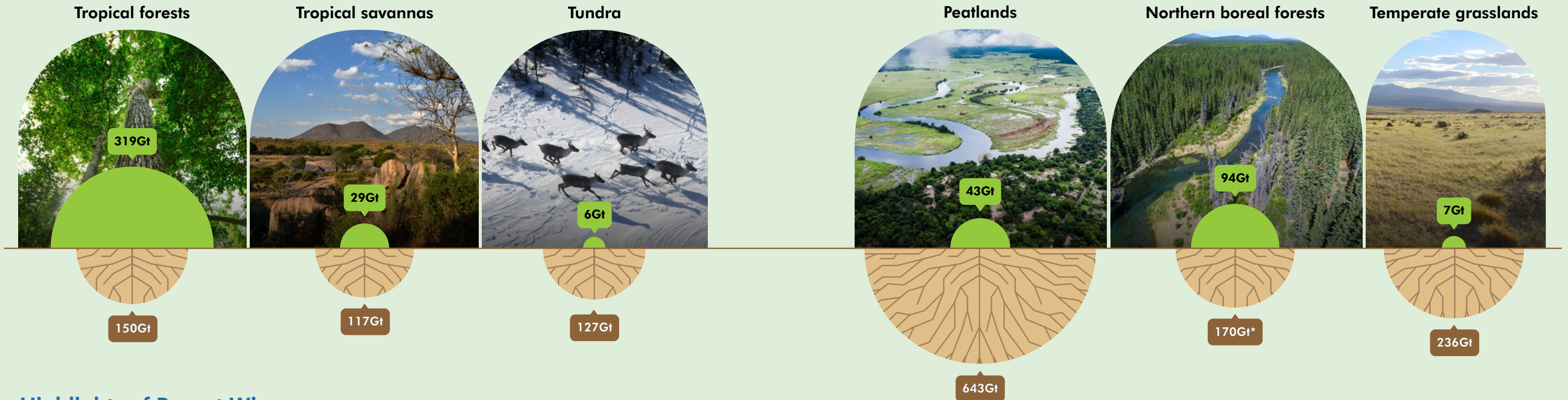
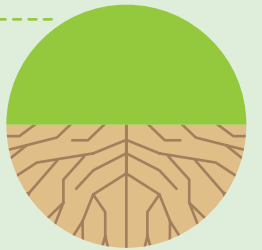
Gt (Gigatonne) = one billion tons of carbon

Living biomass

Leaves, twigs, roots of trees, trunk, and branches store carbon

Soil

Contains almost 2X as much carbon as the atmosphere, living flora, and animals combined



Highlights of Recent Wins

Protecting Tropical Forests

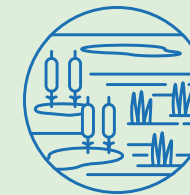
WCS is strengthening protections for the healthiest, most carbon-rich tropical forests on the planet.

- Africa:** WCS assisted the Republic of Congo government in expanding the boundary of Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park to include the Djéké Triangle, a biodiverse tract of unlogged forest in the Congo Basin—expanding the park to a total of 4,224 square kilometers.
- The Americas:** WCS helped recover over 1,500 square kilometers of tropical forest that was damaged by illegal cattle ranching in Guatemala. We are also restoring a portion of the forest through investable climate solutions such as encouraging natural tree growth, integrating trees into agricultural areas, and managing fire—all in partnership with Guatemala's national parks agency, local communities, and civil society organizations.
- Asia:** WCS supported the government of Sumatra in creating a new protected area corridor that connects the 5,000 square kilometer Gunung Leuser National Park with the more-than-1,000 square kilometer Singkil Wildlife Reserve.



Elevating Peatlands as a Climate Solution

Covering just 3 percent of the earth's land surface, peatlands store more carbon than all of the world's forests combined. WCS is increasing protections for the world's carbon-rich peatlands and elevating them on the global agenda as vital carbon sinks. For example, we are strengthening safeguards for Central Africa's Cuvette Centrale, the world's largest tropical peatland complex, which contains the equivalent of 112 billion tons of CO₂—roughly three times annual human-caused global emissions. In 2023, the Republic of Congo established strict protections for peatlands, including a ban on commercial extraction of timber, oil, and minerals.



Safeguarding Grasslands

WCS conserves over 2.3 million square kilometers of grasslands around the world, including some of the planet's healthiest grasslands in Mongolia and the Patagonian Steppe in Argentina that store carbon in root systems deep in the soil. In Cambodia, WCS recently supported the government in declaring the Bakan grassland a national protected area—securing this vital carbon sink that is also habitat for endangered wildlife such as the elusive Chinese Grassbird.



*Northern boreal forests soil carbon estimate may include peatlands

Rekindling Hope for African Savanna Wildlife

Once home to some of Africa's most robust populations of giraffes, lions, elephants, and other iconic species, Central African Republic's protected savannas, forests, and rivers across the Manovo-Gounda St. Floris and Bamingui-Bangoran National Parks span an area larger than the state of Virginia. Located in the Sahel region just south of the Sahara Desert, these are some of the most fragile ecosystems on the continent. While vast tracts of habitat remain, illegal livestock herding and overgrazing, wildlife trafficking, and armed conflict have all driven declines in wildlife populations over the last several decades.

In response, WCS signed an agreement with the Central African Republic's government in 2018 that delegates full management responsibility for the two national parks and their surrounding landscapes to WCS. Since then, we have made significant conservation gains.

Stepping up monitoring and law enforcement: Increases in wildlife monitoring and law enforcement over the past year have doubled the number of animals detected from just 12,000 in 2021–2022 to over 24,000 in 2023. For the first time, camera traps captured photos of giraffes, ground pangolins, servals, and Nile crocodiles.

And in 2024, we detected lions where they had not been seen before, suggesting the home range of lions in the park could be larger than previously thought. This kind of population data helps us better understand how to tailor conservation strategies.

Reducing cattle herding and grazing impacts: To ensure that herd movements do not prevent wildlife from moving across the landscape and accessing the natural resources they need to survive, we recruited, trained, and deployed former livestock owners from local communities to work with herders. They are building consensus on strategies that respect traditions, adapt to changing climate, and promote biodiversity conservation.

Keeping the landscape intact: The government's original plans for a major public road would have cut right through the middle of Manovo-Gounda St. Floris National Park—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—severely limiting animals' migration routes across the landscape. WCS led an environmental and social impact study to evaluate this threat. Following our recommendations, the government agreed to relocate the road outside of the park completely, ensuring the habitats and wildlife within will remain unharmed.

Looking Ahead

WCS will collaborate with the government and partners to build on this momentum: increasing areas under protection; further strengthening monitoring and surveillance systems; and expanding conservation activities within the protected area complex so that a larger portion of the vast landscape falls under active management. We will use science to inform policies and strategies for reducing threats to biodiversity, and expand opportunities for the 80,000 people who live in the area to directly engage in the management of their natural resources. Our goal is to have Manovo-Gounda St. Floris National Sites Park removed from the list of World Heritage Sites in Danger in 2025.



MEET WCS'S COMMUNITY PARTNER

Moses Laveth

As president of the Lolieng Sustainable Program on Mussau Island in Papua New Guinea, I helped my community establish a nearshore Marine Protected Area with support from WCS and the local and national governments.

Q: What inspired you to stand up for your community's fishing grounds?

MOSES: My village is seven hours by boat from the rest of New Ireland Province; nine dangerous hours in bad weather. We have only ourselves to rely on, and the sea. To honor our religious beliefs, we eat only fish for our animal protein; when a baby cries, we say that it wants the fish soup it first tasted in its mother's milk.

But in recent years, our fishermen struggled to find fish. They began using dynamite to stun them, or gillnets that caught even the small ones. Our village elders remembered a time of plenty of fish so big they could spear just two and feed their family. Out of respect for those elders, and longing to become somebody useful to my family and my father's people, I began dreaming about how to help them build a better life.

Q: How did you get to know WCS?

MOSES: In 2014, we asked WCS to organize workshops in our villages, to explore the idea of a community-based organization to restore our fisheries. They began by reminding us of all the knowledge we already held. And with their help, everyone came together—not in a hierarchy but in a circle—to create a locally-managed marine protected area. We agreed on its boundaries and rules and even a long-term management plan modeled on our traditional *tambu*. *Tambu* are no-take zones set aside at certain times: to honor the death of a leader, or to protect fish when they're spawning. The biggest *tambu*



is right in front of the village, where we can watch over it. Now we fish the edges of that closed area, catching the big fish that spill out.

After that, many other communities reached out to WCS, motivated by the success of our program. We all continue to come together in "local champion" workshops to exchange information.

Q: What gives you hope for the future?

MOSES: What gives me hope is that we now have two kinds of knowledge. Scientific data and technologies can't restore our resources without traditional knowledge, but traditions aren't enough without science. Both have to work in harmony. For instance, we build houses of stones in the shallow water to lure the fish as we have always done. They come to eat the algae that grow on the rocks, and to hide between them. When it's time for harvest, we still surround these houses with nets. But we now use nets WCS helped us find, with mesh big enough to catch only bigger fish. Our youth are also increasingly involved. With our young men and women trained as sea rangers looking after our protected turtle nesting site, we already see more endangered green sea and hawksbill turtles.

Investing in Nature to Curb Climate Change

Climate change is accelerating rapidly, bringing increasing floods, droughts, wildfires, and other calamities; 2023 was the warmest year on record. But we have an important ally in our corner. Nature is hard at work preventing people and wildlife from facing even worse climate impacts—and could do much more if we invest in strengthening it.

A key example: the world's healthiest forests capture and store 30 percent of humanity's annual CO₂ emissions. What if we could monetize the benefits these forests are providing—and use the funds to keep climate-critical, biodiversity-rich forests from being cut down?

WCS seeks to do just that. As part of our new High-Integrity Forest Initiative, we have created a financial tool that incentivizes investors to contribute to

climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and community well-being by compensating the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities who steward the forests. This initiative rewards protection of healthy tropical forests based on their contribution to biodiversity conservation and climate stability, rather than through offsetting emissions from fossil fuels.

Prioritizing Brazil's High-Integrity Forests

In partnership with the state of Amazonas, Brazil, WCS is developing a pilot project in the Mamirauá and Amanã Sustainable Development Reserves, which extend across 36,000 square kilometers of high-integrity tropical forest—about the size of Taiwan. Combined, these two reserves absorb over

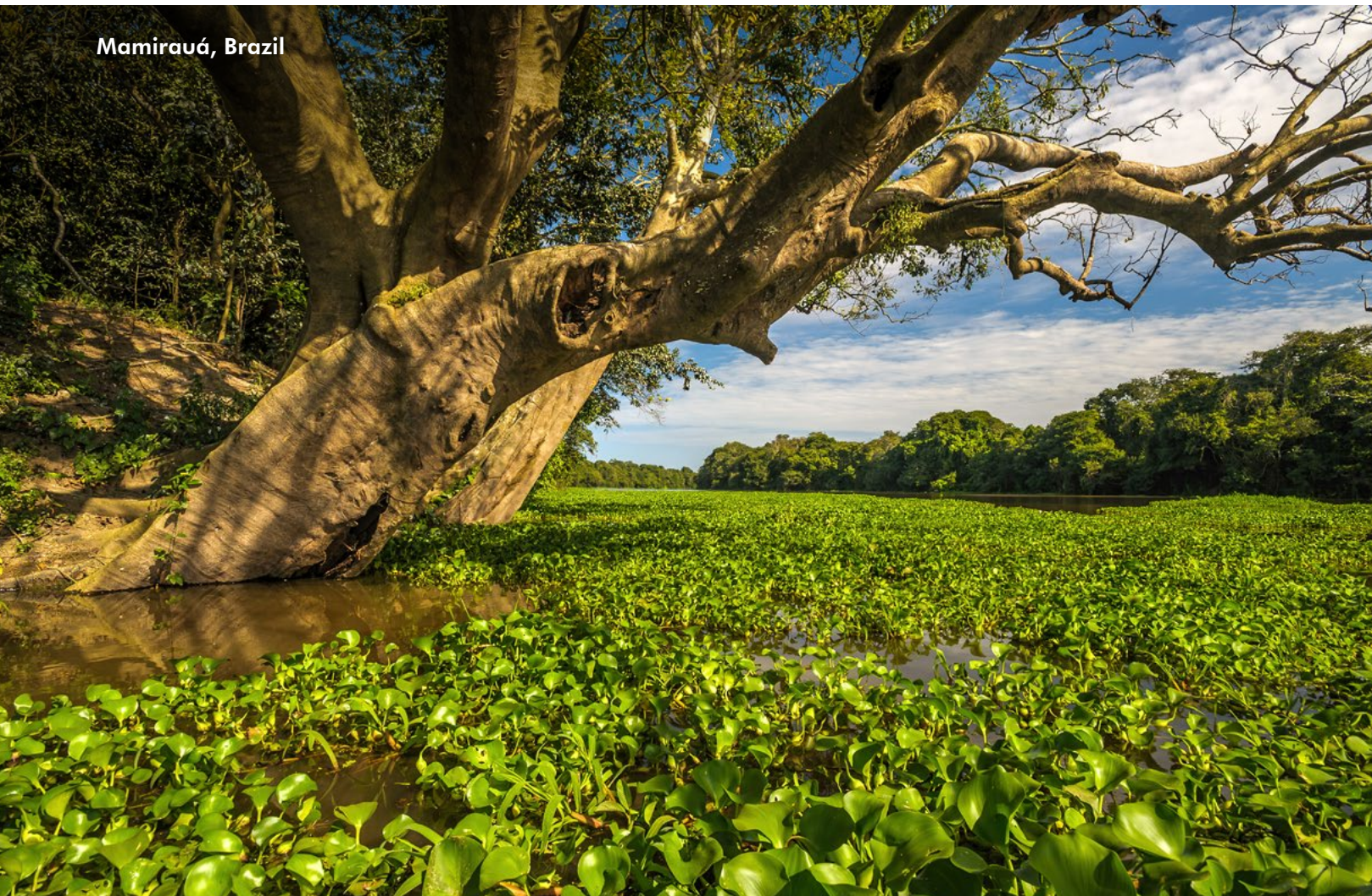
6.4 million tons of CO₂ yearly, or the annual emissions of approximately 1.39 million cars. Investments in these forests' future will keep them doing their part in the fight against climate change and fund the conservation efforts of 12,000 people living in and around the Reserves.

Expanding Impact to the Congo Basin

Building on our launch in Amazonas, in 2023 we reached a formal agreement with the Republic of Congo government to collaborate on a pilot for Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, which covers more than 4,000 square kilometers of contiguous lowland rainforest in the northern part of the country.

Looking Ahead

We plan to expand this initiative in climate- and biodiversity-critical forests in Bolivia, Colombia, and Democratic Republic of Congo, and will also explore opportunities in Southeast Asia—ultimately scaling to protect millions of square kilometers of the world's healthiest forests. We aim to channel sustainable finance from this initiative to support Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in their roles as stewards of healthy tropical forests.



Mamirauá, Brazil



Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, Republic of Congo



Connecting People to Nature

How does a lifelong love of animals begin? Exchanging a glance with a gorilla? Feeding a colorful budgie parakeet? Or standing awestruck as sharks swim past overhead? Each year, 3.5 million visitors have experiences just like these at WCS's five New York City wildlife parks. Across the Bronx Zoo, Central Park Zoo, Queens Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and New York Aquarium, we are inspiring the next generation of conservationists, promoting pathways into science and conservation careers, and creating a gateway to nature in one of the busiest cities on Earth.

THE BRONX ZOO Celebrating 125 Years of Conservation Impact

To celebrate the Bronx Zoo's unparalleled legacy, we created an immersive walking path called Animal Chronicles where guests revisited some of the zoo's most important conservation stories from the last 125 years. The following are just a few highlights of the stories featured in Animal Chronicles.



“Saving our Fauna: Great Zoological Park to Be Established in New York.”

So declared an 1897 newspaper headline heralding what would become the Bronx Zoo as a place where visitors could see animals in immersive natural settings and learn about their behaviors and needs in the wild. The zoo opened on November 8, 1899, and in the 125 years since, it has become a leader in the zoo and aquarium community—charting new paths in caring for animals, saving endangered species, designing groundbreaking exhibits, and inspiring people to protect wild places around the world.



Gorilla

Seeing Gorillas in the Bronx Supports Gorillas in Africa

In 1999, the innovative Congo Gorilla Forest exhibit brought an expansive outdoor rainforest to the Bronx Zoo, allowing visitors to observe gorillas up close as they climb, rest, eat, and raise their families in a naturalistic setting.

For the first time at a zoo, admission fees supported conservation programs in the animals' home region, creating a direct tie between zoo visits and protecting these animals in the wild. Since 1999, 18 gorillas have been born in the exhibit and over \$15 million has gone to WCS's conservation efforts, helping to create 19 national parks in Africa.

White-naped Crane



Snow Leopard



African Gray Parrot

Saving Wild Parrots with Zoo Expertise

In 2017, rangers in the Republic of the Congo rescued dozens of African gray parrots destined for the pet trade. A team of bird care experts from the Bronx Zoo traveled to a rescue facility built by WCS field staff in Congo and worked with them to rehabilitate and release as many as they could back into the wild. Those that could not live independently were moved to a local aviary for long-term care.

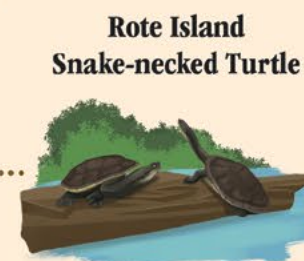
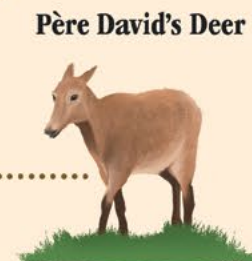
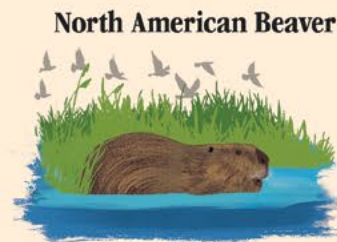


Grand Cayman Blue Iguana

Creating a New Hope for Grand Cayman Blue Iguanas

Thousands of blue iguanas once roamed the island of Grand Cayman. But in the 1990s their numbers dropped rapidly—to fewer than 20—due to habitat loss from human development, as well as a deadly pathogen that attacked iguana species in the region.

In 2001, experts from the Bronx Zoo and other zoos, universities, and conservation organizations around the world united to save the blue iguana with a zoo-based breeding program. In the two decades since, many Bronx Zoo veterinarians and vet techs have traveled to the island to do yearly check-ups on the iguanas, ensuring they are healthy enough to survive on their own before they are released. Today an estimated 1,500 blue iguanas are thriving in the wild thanks to these efforts.



Looking Ahead

We have several exciting new exhibits in the pipeline. For example, we are planning to transform the first-of-its-kind World of Darkness building at the Bronx Zoo into a new visitor experience. Visitors will see and learn about fascinating nocturnal species like aye-ayes—primates native to Madagascar—as well as naked mole rats, vampire bats, and many more.

GHOSTS OF THE MOUNTAINS Snow Leopard Conservation in NYC and Around the World

WCS field biologist George Schaller was trekking the hills of northern Pakistan more than 50 years ago when he spotted a snow leopard.

“Wisps of clouds swirled around,” he later wrote, “transforming her into a ghost creature, part myth and part reality.”

Snow leopards are elusive—and highly vulnerable. The 3,000 mature snow leopards that remain in the wild face growing threats from poaching, loss of prey species, conflict with humans, and habitat destruction and fragmentation.

For decades, WCS has worked to ensure that snow leopards do not fade into myth. From monitoring snow leopards in the mountains of Afghanistan to participating in a Species Survival Plan program (a cooperative breeding initiative in accredited zoos), we are committed to recovering these iconic big cats.

Tiny Cubs in the Big City

In 2023, two new faces debuted at the Bronx Zoo: snow leopard cubs Bedroco and Bettina. Born behind-the-scenes at our Himalayan Highlands exhibit, the siblings are descendants of Leo, who came to the zoo in 2006 after being rescued as an orphaned cub in Pakistan.

These cubs are just the latest result of a long legacy of innovative snow leopard care at the zoo. In 1903, the Bronx Zoo became the first in the United States to welcome a snow leopard. Since then, we have become a world leader in their care. We created the Himalayan Highlands exhibit in 1986 to better showcase the plight of these big cats. And the Bronx Zoo has produced 80 snow leopard cubs—more than any other zoo in North America.



A Leader in Snow Leopard Conservation

WCS has significantly advanced snow leopard conservation in Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan over many decades. Building on this legacy, WCS has protected snow leopards in Afghanistan since 2006, in partnership with local communities and the Afghan National Environmental Protection Agency. In 2014, the country formally established Wakhan National Park, in part to protect the high density of snow leopards discovered there by WCS scientists.

Today, our strategy to protect snow leopards in Afghanistan includes women-led local outreach, community-driven wildlife monitoring, programs to prevent snow leopards from preying on livestock, and plans to reduce poaching. WCS remains committed to improving conditions for both wildlife and communities in Afghanistan; at present we are the sole environmental NGO operating in the country.

WCS took the world's first camera trap photographs of snow leopards in Afghanistan in 2009.



Bronx Zoo Langurs—Advancing Science as Conservation Ambassadors

When JungleWorld first opened at the Bronx Zoo in 1985, visitors were delighted to meet its troop of silvered langurs: social, leaf-eating monkeys native to Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Since then, the Bronx Zoo has welcomed more than 100 silvered langur babies. Their treetop acrobatics have made them a fan favorite—so much so that today, the zoo hosts a live camera feed of the exhibit online, allowing people from anywhere in the world to observe the langurs.

Beyond captivating guests with their antics, our langurs are animal ambassadors who contribute to conservation and science. Like the tapirs, Indian gharials, and other animals throughout JungleWorld, the silvered langurs have helped millions of people learn about Asia's biodiverse rainforests and how to protect them. Studies of the Bronx Zoo's langur populations have also informed a number of scientific papers published by WCS experts.



Kathleen LaMattina

As Curator of Animal Encounters, my role is to inspire our visitors to become stewards of the planet by learning about and interacting with our animal ambassadors.

Q: How did you come to work at the Bronx Zoo?

KATHLEEN: I always loved animals. My dad saw my passion early on and began taking me to our little Brooklyn pond to feed ducks.

Then when I was in grad school, my apartment burned down with my cats, letters, pictures—everything I owned gone. So I came home to New York and heard about a teaching fellowship at the Bronx Zoo.

Early on, the fellows met Jim Breheny, who at that time oversaw the animals in our education programs. He said something I never forgot: “Present them in a respectful manner. They’re not props. They’re living beings.” When he heard I’d lost all my books in the fire, he gave me his set of animal encyclopedias. Three years later, we got married at the zoo, with the elephants looking on. And I just celebrated my 30th anniversary working at the zoo.

Q: Why are animal encounters important?

KATHLEEN: We have an eclectic group of animals, some with unique stories like a kangaroo ordered online by a kid who didn’t know better, fennec foxes bred for the pet trade and no longer wanted, or an eagle injured by a power line. It’s great to give them a second chance and an opportunity to become ambassadors. We provide our guests with a special way to meet our animals up-close, where their unique and engaging personalities captivate people. This interaction allows us to start a dialogue. We



draw people in, give them hope, and empower them to join us in advocating for nature.

Q: What gives you hope?

KATHLEEN: Animals give me hope. People give me hope. The dedication of staff who care for the animals gives me hope. Viewers of Animal Planet’s “The Zoo” comment on the close relationship between staff and animals. Most of the staff in our department began as part-time employees. Young people from the community who exhibited talent, an eagerness to learn, and compassion and empathy for animals. Some came as kids to zoo camp, others to our Wild Encounters program. These experiences made an impression and informed their career paths. I’m grateful for the opportunity to mentor young people in a career working with animals. Their enthusiasm makes me optimistic. Years ago, I taught a class where a young girl named Kira was a participant. Today, she is the Supervisor of our Wild Encounters program! This is more than a job for them, it’s a career and passion. That’s what gives me hope.

WCS SCIENCE

Understanding Climate Impacts on Animals: Spotlight on the Peruvian Andes



“If we can discover the meaning in the trilling of a frog, perhaps we may understand why it is for us not merely noise but a song of poetry and emotion.”

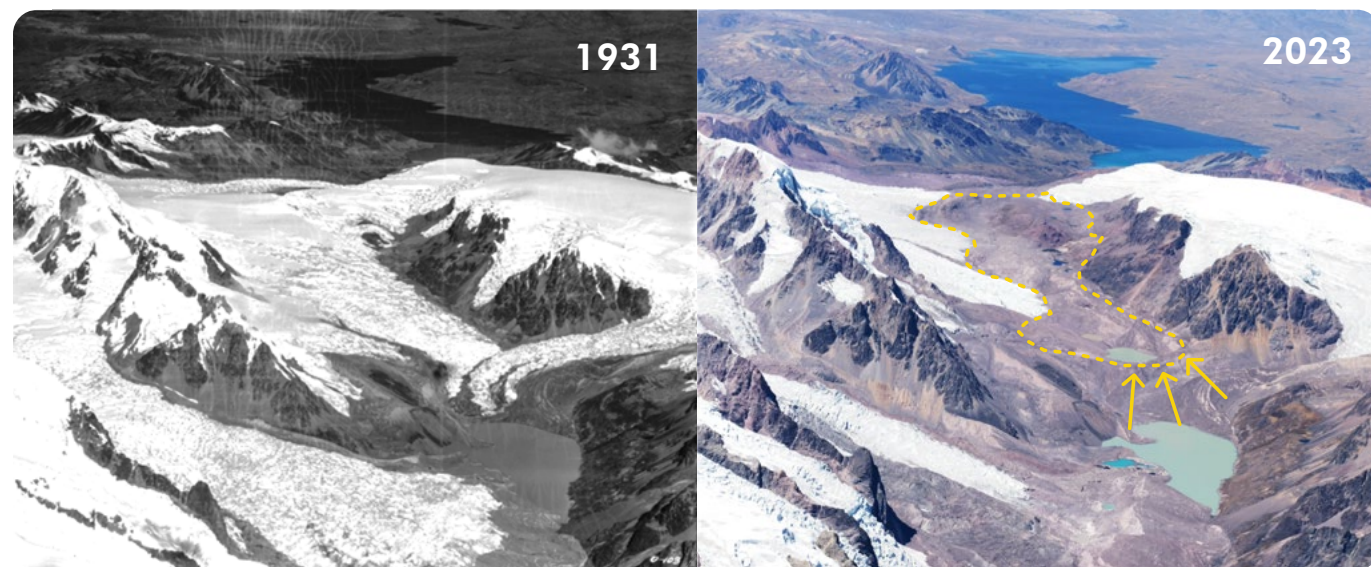
—Adrian Forsyth

Frogs, toads, salamanders, and other amphibians play key ecological roles, including eating insect pests and keeping food chains robust. But about 40 percent of amphibians are at risk of extinction—threatened by habitat loss, pollution, the pet trade, disease, and climate change. Because these animals are highly sensitive to changes in their environment, they serve as bellwethers, providing valuable insights into the overall health of their ecosystems.

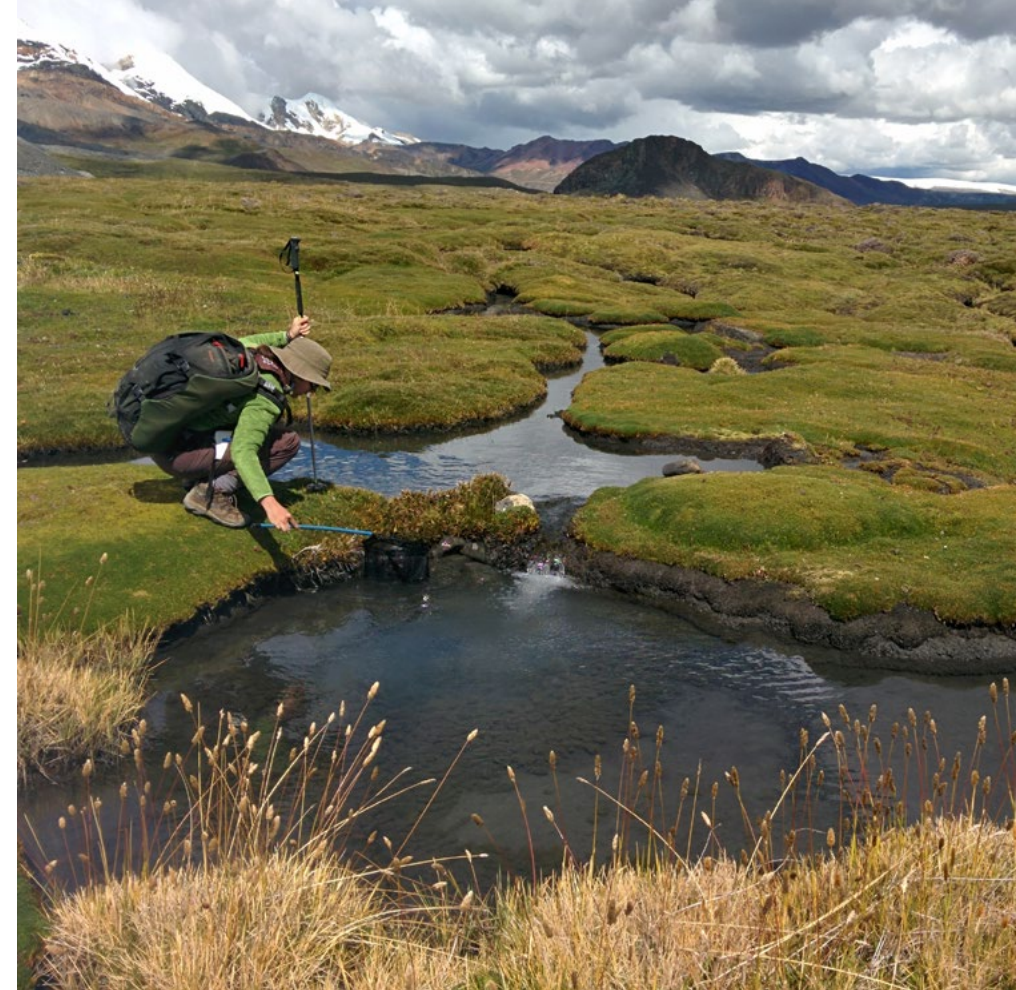
High-altitude amphibians are particularly sensitive to climate change, having to adapt as their habitats transform rapidly. That is why for more than two decades, Bronx Zoo-based WCS health experts, scientists from around the world, and local community partners have been monitoring amphibians in the Cordillera Vilcanota, a glacier-covered mountain range in southern Peru that is both rich in biodiversity and undergoing rapid changes.

As the ice recedes, amphibians move higher uphill into new ponds that form in the wake of the receding

Melting Ice: Climate Change in the Andes



LEFT A 1931 aerial expedition photo showing the glacial ice cover as it appeared nearly a century ago. RIGHT Repeat image taken in 2023 showing expansive deglaciation. The yellow line and arrows depict the upward migration of amphibians into new habitats that were uncovered due to the melting glacier (>5,200 meters). Bronx Zoo-based scientists have been studying these changes for the past two decades.



LEFT Dr. Tracie Seimon conducting sampling to study the impact of climate change on amphibians in the Peruvian Andes. TOP RIGHT WCS health expert swabbing for chytrid fungus. BOTTOM RIGHT A marbled four-eyed frog.

glaciers. Unfortunately, many of these amphibians are also being impacted by disease. Bronx Zoo-based molecular scientist Dr. Tracie Seimon was the first to document the presence of and die-offs due to chytrid fungus in amphibians in the Cordillera Vilcanota in 2002, and she has been monitoring these frogs and documenting impacts since then. WCS’s research provided critical information that led to the decision to place the marbled water frog on the International Union for Conservation of Nature endangered species list.

We are working with local communities and governmental agencies to highlight the scale and speed at which climate change is impacting glaciers and water resources. The opening up of new terrain through deglaciation is also allowing roadbuilding and added pressures from mining and other human activities. Preserving connectivity between the alpine wetlands, where the frogs and toads congregate to breed, will be a critical step in developing adaptation strategies and resiliency plans for people, domestic animals, and wildlife as climate change and human activities continue to reshape this environment.

Looking Ahead

Around the world, WCS is studying climate impacts on species and identifying solutions to help them adapt. We are partnering with communities in rapidly changing environments—ranging from studying tiny amphibians in the Andes to whales in the Arctic, where we are collaborating with Indigenous Peoples to document how increasing ocean noise due to melting ice and increased shipping is impacting wildlife, and using that data to inform protections.

Securing Lasting Protection for the Hudson Canyon

About 100 miles off the shores of New York City lies the Hudson Canyon, a habitat for spectacular marine life ranging from mysterious deep-sea corals that never see sunlight to colossal whales. Recent US government aerial surveys in and around the canyon identified about 50 of the world's Critically Endangered North Atlantic right whales—roughly 15 percent of their entire population. On a recent expedition to the Hudson Canyon, WCS's Ocean Giants team photographed many of these North Atlantic right whales, confirming the Canyon's importance for migration and feeding.

WCS is working to protect whales, dolphins, and other marine life in the waters off New York and New Jersey. WCS's New York Aquarium is leading efforts to secure the designation of the Hudson Canyon as a National Marine Sanctuary, which would permanently ban harmful activities including oil and gas development, and mineral exploration and extraction. As we spread the word far and wide, we are proud of the diverse voices contributing to the effort.



LISTEN
to an interview featuring
conservation advocates



“New York City should be known not just for its skyscrapers but for its amazing underwater world.”

—**Leslieann Peers-Roman**

Former New York Aquarium Discovery Guide and Youth Ocean Advocate;
2024 Earth Echo Ocean Protection Ambassador



**MEET A
WCS EXPERT**

Paul Calle

As the WCS Chief Veterinarian and Vice President of Health Programs, I've overseen the care of animals at our four zoos and aquarium while supporting our global field veterinary and conservation programs.



Q: How did you discover your calling?

PAUL: I was born in the Bronx and grew up in Connecticut. The Bronx Zoo was my home zoo, and from the time I was a kid I wanted to be, not just a wild animal vet, but a Bronx Zoo vet. Then in college I got to spend time assisting Emil Dolensek, who became the Bronx Zoo's chief vet in 1969, when few zoos even had vets. He was a pioneer, designing and overseeing construction of our Wildlife Health Center, a state-of-the-art teaching and research hospital. Years later, as a new staff vet, I had the surreal experience of standing exactly where I'd watched Emil stand, doing the same procedure on the same species, a flamingo chick.

Q: What has been especially rewarding?

PAUL: Throughout my career, I've cared for gorillas—first at the San Diego Zoo, then the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, and now for almost 35 years here at the Bronx Zoo. I've attended to many their entire lives, watching them mature from infancy into full members of the social group having babies of their own. Being that close to an animal is unlike anything else, especially when you get to visit the same species in the wild. When I visited WCS's lowland gorilla conservation project in the Republic of Congo, I was struck by how those wild youngsters behaved just like ours do in the zoo: roughhousing, then running back to the silverback for reassurance.

Q: What gives you hope?

PAUL: When we started providing veterinary support for the Grand Cayman blue iguana program in 2001, there were fewer than 20 animals left in the wild. Over the two decades since, the National Trust for the Cayman Islands has released over 1,000. I've seen this critically endangered species bounce back with my own eyes, and am proud of the contribution WCS has made to the recovery of this species.

I also see continuous improvement in veterinary medicine, and though I am retiring from my position at the zoos and aquarium, I will continue to support those advances: as a reviewer of research grants for the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians; as one of the co-editors of *Fowler's Zoo and Wild Animal Medicine*, the professional textbook; and as a teacher in the US and abroad. It all continues a long WCS tradition of investing in the next generation. We've had students rotate through the Bronx Zoo since the 1940s; some have come here as volunteers, others as vet students, and others for our three-year residency in zoological medicine and surgery. A path not so different from my own lifelong story here.

PROSPECT PARK ZOO Ensuring Exceptional Animal Care After Flood

When Tropical Storm Ophelia hit New York City in September 2023, neighboring park storm sewers overflowed, sending a deluge of rainwater into WCS's Prospect Park Zoo in Brooklyn. Key electric, heating, and exhibit filtration infrastructure housed in building basements was destroyed after being submerged in up to 25 feet of water.

Thankfully, animal exhibits and holding areas did not sustain significant damage—and no animals were lost. Dedicated zoo staff provided all 400+ animals with uninterrupted care throughout the storm and subsequent nine-month closure of the zoo.

On a sunny day in May 2024 the Prospect Park Zoo reopened its doors to eager children, excited members, and other guests.



“Even through devastating flooding, you kept all the animals safe. Huge shout out to all the zoo workers! Can’t wait to visit our furry, feathery, and scaly friends again.”

—Thomas T. on Facebook

➔ Looking Ahead

The reopening of Prospect Park Zoo is a major milestone, but we have a long way to go before its back-of-house systems are fully restored. WCS is working with the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation and other city, state, and federal agencies to complete the zoo restoration and protect the zoo and its animals from future storms.

SPOTLIGHT



Introducing Pudu

During the closure, a pair of southern pudu—one of the world’s smallest species of deer—arrived as new additions. The team created a new habitat for pudu on the Discovery Trail where they previously housed prairie dogs, and visitors can now get an up-close view of this species with the exhibit’s unique viewing “bubbles.” As Director of the Prospect Park Zoo Denise McClean explained, “The flood pushed us to create new opportunities for positive change, and members of our Brooklyn community have shared how excited they are to be able to see and learn from our animals once again.”



Opening Doors to Conservation Careers



“As a Bronx resident for my entire life, WCS inspired my research on the value of zoos and aquariums, and provided internship opportunities that helped me obtain my dream career as a full-time mammal keeper at the Bronx Zoo. These workforce and educational opportunities are crucial to our local communities.”

—Reiarriel “Rei” Garcia

Bronx Zoo Mammal Keeper; completed Bronx Zoo Behavioral Husbandry Internship in 2022

Rei’s reflections on his experience at the Bronx Zoo illustrate why internships are so important for career growth—and why WCS is expanding access to these opportunities across our five New York City wildlife parks, so that youth from all backgrounds can participate. Some people are fortunate to get their first work experience through an internship, but these coveted positions have historically been available only to those with financial resources and social capital. We partner with local organizations, universities, and schools to recruit youth and support them as they pursue rich learning experiences across our wildlife parks.

We now offer more than 400 internships each year, spanning the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields from urban ecology research using DNA technology to science communication with zoo visitors, providing critical real-world experience while

equipping young people with the skills and social capital to progress into STEM careers.

Creating New Opportunities: We have recently added a Climate Solutions internship specifically designed for Bronx college students. In this 10-week program, local students participate in WCS-led field trips, learning about climate impacts in their communities and gaining knowledge about climate solutions.

We have also added the Eco-Vivencias Internship, in which Bronx college students participate in a 10-day trip to Puerto Rico focusing on field conservation work and zoo-to-field connections (see below). Interns meet with local conservation groups and visit reintroduction sites for the Puerto Rican crested toad; WCS’s Queens Zoo played a crucial role in bringing these toads back to the island.



“I often reflect on my own time as a WCS intern when I’m working with youth on public speaking and customer service. I make sure to highlight what they’re excelling at, building their confidence and motivating them to become better in the future.”

—Cayla Turner

New York Aquarium Youth Development Coordinator;
2020 New York Aquarium Behavioral Husbandry Intern



“I hope to be a conservation veterinarian. My internship helped me understand how the direct work that we’re doing in the field affects how we create policy. I’m really interested in making sure that the research matters. We need to act on the data we generate.”

—Kaylene Crespo

2023 New York Aquarium Marine Research Intern



A Leader in the Field

WCS’s internship program won the 2023 Association of Zoos & Aquariums “Significant Achievement Award,” in recognition of transformational leadership in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Amplifying Our Impact Across the City: WCS is the founder and a leading member of the SCI Network NYC—a consortium of eight science-based cultural institutions committed to providing high-quality STEM internships to New York City youth. In addition to WCS’s four zoos and aquarium, young people gain access to opportunities at institutions including the American Museum of Natural History, New York Hall of Science, and New York Botanical Garden.

In 2023, the partner organizations collectively hosted more than 1,100 interns who gained experience in a variety of fields, including animal care, horticulture, science communication, teaching, and administration. Young people earned more than \$2.3 million in stipends and wages; and 87 percent reported that their internship helped them identify something they would like to focus on in their career. For many, the experience helped them see that science can play a powerful role in their lives and communities.

➔ Looking Ahead

WCS will explore new partnerships and opportunities to ensure that all New York City youth have access to quality science internships. “Green careers”—including in the renewable energy sector, climate change innovation, and wildlife monitoring—present new prospects for youth. We will explore how we can combine our conservation, science, and sustainability expertise with our youth development framework to ensure that young people are well positioned for the green career opportunities they will encounter as they enter adulthood.

Advancing Conservation with Public and Private Investment

WCS's private funders power our conservation impact. We know you have choices about where to invest your philanthropic dollars, and we're grateful that you choose to partner with us and advance our mission to save wildlife and wild places in the face of climate change and other stressors. Your support has made every win described in this report possible.

Private giving at all levels is also critical to unlocking public funding. Each dollar you give allows us to leverage at least five dollars of additional public funding from many government partners around the world who put their trust in WCS to achieve and sustain conservation results. In FY 2023 (July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023), our global conservation programs received substantial support from more than 58 government funders and 25 multilateral agencies.

The City of New York and State of New York provide another important source of funding for our zoos' and aquarium's operations, capital upgrades, animal care, and education. As we celebrate the Bronx Zoo's 125th anniversary, we are grateful for more than 125 years of partnership with New York City and New York State.

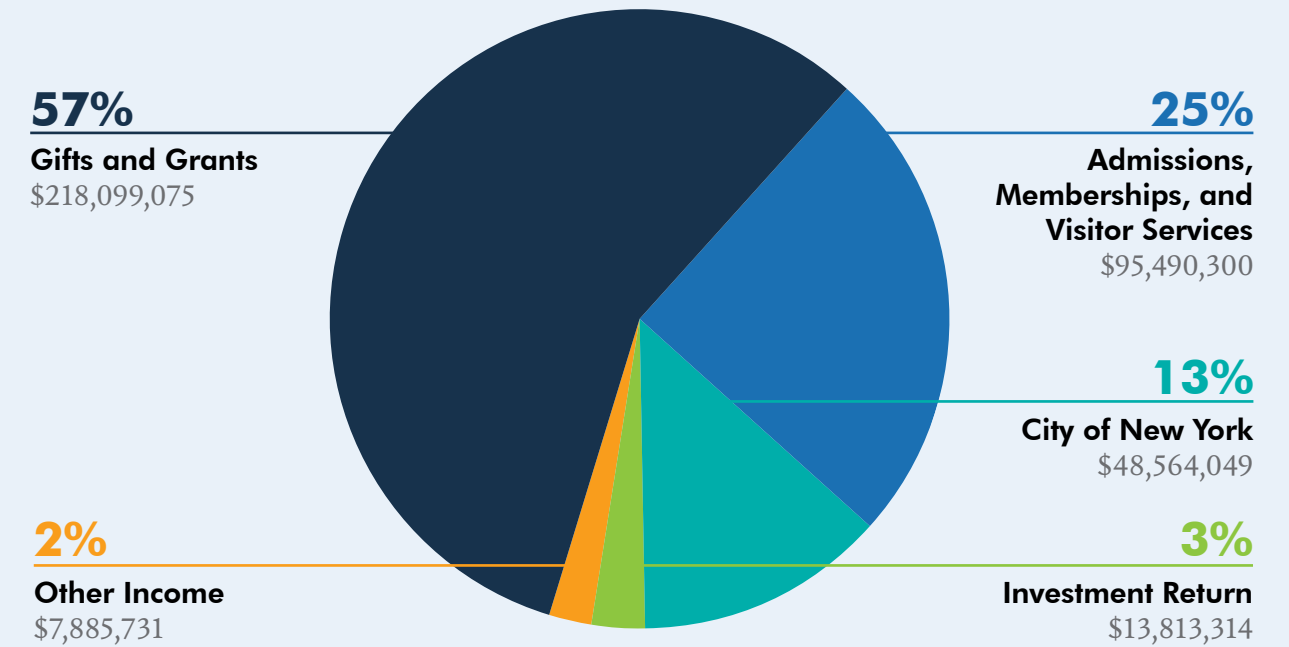
While WCS's investment returns in FY 2023 were moderately below target, our overall financial position remains strong thanks to you and other generous supporters, as well as strong attendance-driven income at our New York zoos and aquarium.

WCS stands for wildlife. Thank you for standing with us.

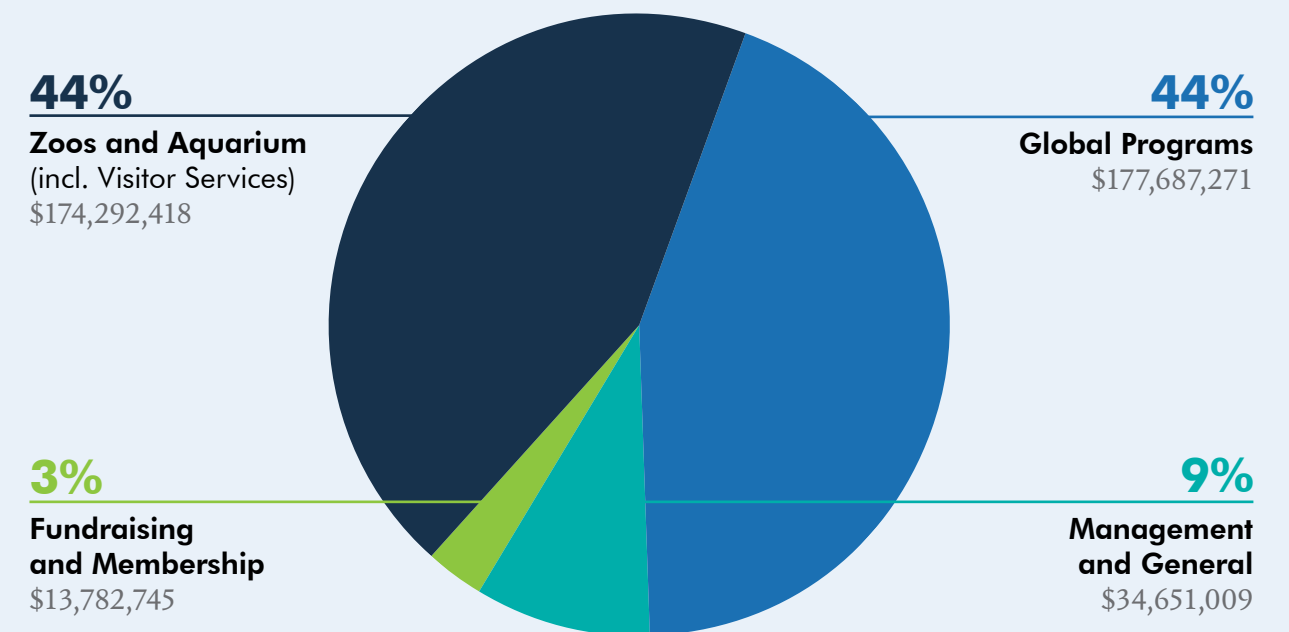


Financial Report

2023 TOTAL REVENUE (\$383.8 MILLION)



2023 TOTAL EXPENSES (\$400.4 MILLION)



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES (JUNE 30, 2023 AND 2022)

	2023	2022
2023 TOTAL REVENUE (\$383.8 MILLION)		
Bequests	\$ 4,577,949	\$ 3,706,887
Gifts and Grants	175,681,611	223,779,906
City of New York	48,564,049	46,526,734
Federal Agencies	37,839,515	41,294,056
Gate and Exhibit Admissions	42,453,214	38,950,891
Visitor Services	35,398,937	33,313,458
Memberships	17,638,149	17,797,002
Investment Return	13,813,314	(14,987,637)
Other Income	7,885,731	5,518,973
Total Revenues	\$ 383,852,469	\$ 395,900,270
2023 TOTAL EXPENSES (\$400.4 MILLION)		
Program Services		
Zoos and Aquarium	\$ 174,292,418	\$ 164,349,419
Global Programs	177,687,271	150,326,224
Management & General	34,651,009	32,740,127
Fundraising and Membership	13,782,745	12,366,384
Total General Operating Expenses	\$ 400,413,443	\$ 359,782,154

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS (JUNE 30, 2023 AND 2022)

	2023	2022
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 150,970,623	\$ 136,340,375
Miscellaneous receivable	3,054,268	5,089,064
Receivable from the City of New York	58,178,340	77,387,645
Receivable from the State of New York	9,245,626	8,151,650
Receivable from Federal sources	8,637,503	6,377,369
Contributions receivable	9,708,854	12,009,382
Non-US governmental and bilateral grants and contracts receivables	15,690,788	11,173,792
Private organization grants and contracts receivables	33,841,692	28,577,322
Inventories	3,960,014	3,327,554
Prepaid expenses	12,362,650	8,647,062
Advances to sub awardees	6,111,235	4,829,817
Right to use lease assets	1,567,285	1,946,977
Investments	510,406,477	523,679,381
Supporting organization investments	45,998,189	45,899,257
Amounts held in trust by others	1,681,593	1,664,957
Funds held by Bond Trustee	3,043,146	8,548,905
Property and equipment	433,535,825	440,425,317
Total Assets	\$ 1,307,994,108	\$ 1,324,075,826
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 60,085,380	\$ 54,253,872
Grants and contracts liabilities	43,341,530	45,212,110
Escrow liability	26,287,053	30,115,001
Right of use lease liability	1,748,309	2,007,987
Annuity liability	2,640,861	2,730,634
Bonds payable	164,961,157	164,923,219
Post-retirement benefit obligation	45,049,840	45,883,859
Total Liabilities	344,114,130	345,126,682
Net Assets (Without donor restriction)		
General Operating	462,700	(2,447,775)
Board Designated	133,834,716	132,573,988
Net investment in property and equipment	270,593,972	282,989,222
Total without donor restrictions	404,891,388	413,115,435
Net Assets (With donor restriction)		
Purpose restricted	285,583,106	292,588,548
Endowment Corpus	273,405,484	273,245,161
Total with donor restrictions	558,988,590	565,833,709
Total net assets	963,879,978	978,949,144
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 1,307,994,108	\$ 1,324,075,826

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Ways to Give

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE

WCS is pleased to recognize those who contribute annual gifts of \$25,000 as part of the President's Circle. At this level of giving, you receive all the benefits of Conservation Patrons, plus exclusive invitations and insider access to WCS leadership and Program experts.

For more information, contact Stephen Ham at 718 741 1619 or SHam@wcs.org.

PLANNED GIVING

You can build a conservation legacy by designating WCS as a beneficiary in your will or trust. You can also name WCS as a beneficiary of your individual retirement account, life insurance policy, donor-advised fund, or brokerage account.

For more information, contact Emily Hirshbein at 718 741 1628 or EHirshbein@wcs.org.

CONSERVATION PATRONS

WCS's Conservation Patrons who donate a gift of \$1,500 or greater annually receive exclusive updates and access to insider events to learn how your support is advancing our mission, as well as recognition in the WCS Impact Report.

For more information, visit wcs.org/Patrons or contact Alec Bandzes at 718 220 5085 or Patrons@wcs.org.

NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

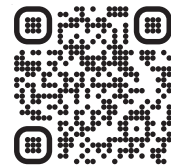
There are exhibits, galleries, and benches available for naming within well-loved spaces at our five wildlife parks. Naming an animal is also a unique way to provide critical support for the care, enrichment, and health of the animals at WCS's Bronx Zoo, Central Park Zoo, Queens Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and New York Aquarium.

For more information, contact Stephen Ham at 718 741 1619 or SHam@wcs.org.

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

WCS Corporate Partners provide vital operating support of our conservation efforts through philanthropic giving, corporate membership, sponsorship, and cause marketing. Partnerships with WCS help corporations gain brand exposure, consumer loyalty, and community engagement, while aligning with an important cause that resonates with their consumers, employees, and investors.

For more information, contact Jessica Sewell at JMSewell@wcs.org or send an inquiry to Corporations@wcs.org.



Learn more about these giving programs at wcs.org/waystogive

For information on how you can support the Wildlife Conservation Society, please call our Global Resources Division at 718 220 5090 or visit wcs.org. A copy of this annual report may be obtained by writing to the Chair of the Board, Wildlife Conservation Society, 2300 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10460. In addition, a copy of the WCS's annual filing with the Charities Bureau of the Office of the New York State Attorney General may be obtained by writing to the Charities Bureau, New York State Attorney General's Office, 3rd Floor, 120 Broadway, New York, New York 10271. The report can also be found online at wcs.org.

SUGGESTED FORM OF BEQUEST

The Trustees of the Wildlife Conservation Society suggest that, for estate-planning purposes, members and friends consider the following language for use in their wills:

"To the Wildlife Conservation Society ("WCS"), a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization incorporated in the state of New York in 1895, having as its principal address 2300 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10460 and tax identification number EIN: 13-1740011, I hereby give and bequeath [the sum of \$ ____ OR ____ percent of my estate] to be used as determined by WCS for its general purposes."

In order to help WCS avoid future administrative costs, we suggest that the following paragraph be added to any restrictions imposed on a bequest:

"If at some future time, in the judgment of the Wildlife Conservation Society, it is no longer practical to use the income and/or principal of this bequest for the purposes intended, WCS may use the income and/or principal for whatever purposes it deems necessary that is most closely in accord with the intent described herein."

If you wish to discuss the language of your bequest and other planned giving options, please contact the Office of Planned Giving at 718 220 6894.

Front Cover

Asian elephant and calves, Thailand

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Wildlife Conservation Society

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Native to Patagonia's Pacific coast, the Inca tern is known for its distinctive, mustache-like feathers. People of all ages can meet these dapper birds up close through our Wild Encounters program at the Bronx Zoo's Sea Bird Aviary.