Wildlife Conservation Society

2026 Impact Report

We Stand for Wildlife®

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.

Black-and-gold howler monkeys as seen by WCS's Rob Wallace
LLANOS DE MOXOS, BOLIVIA

Contents

03 Letter from the Chair of the Board

05 Letter from the President and CEO

IMPACT AROUND THE WORLD

06 By the Numbers

08 Where WCS Works

CONSERVATION IMPACT

10 Connecting People to Nature

26 Saving Wildlife

42 Protecting Nature's Strongholds

INVESTING IN CONSERVATION

59 Financial Report

60 WCS Trustees and Leadership

62 Ways to Give

White-bellied pangolin
UGANDA

Letter from the Chair of the Board

Thanks to your generous support of WCS's mission to save wildlife and wild places, we have strong results to share in this year's Impact Report—along with inspiring stories from our four zoos and aquarium in New York City, and the more than 55 countries where we do conservation work.

As a member of WCS's community of supporters myself, I understand the choice you make each year to invest in our work, and I do not take it lightly. Your trust in us is the foundation we build on, and the results in these pages are, in the most direct sense, yours. I hope that you feel proud of what you've helped us accomplish.

Thank you for your partnership.

Alejandro

Alejandro Santo Domingo
Chair of the Board

Letter from the President and CEO

Earlier this year, I celebrated my one-year anniversary as President and CEO of this remarkable organization. I've learned an enormous amount from our staff, supporters, partners, and many others—about what sets WCS apart, what it takes to do the work that we do, the challenges we face, and the opportunities in front of us.

And after this year of learning, the simplest thing is the clearest to me: WCS is about wildlife. That is the thread woven through everything I've heard, seen, and experienced at our five parks in New York City, the field sites I've visited on four continents, and beyond. Whether it's inspiring people to protect animals by seeing them up close at the Bronx Zoo, or putting rangers and scientists on the ground in more than 55 countries around the world, saving wildlife is what we do.

I am so proud of the work WCS does every day, and I hope you are too, because we absolutely could not do it without you. Thank you so much for your support.

Here are just a few ways you've helped make the world a better place for wildlife and wild places, which you can read about in this year's Impact Report:

- **Opening the World of Darkness exhibit:** WCS welcomed nearly 200,000 visitors to the new World of Darkness exhibit at the Bronx Zoo in its first year.
- **Sharing science education through our parks:** We brought science programming to more than 1.5 million students, educators, and families at our four zoos and aquarium in New York City.
- **Understanding forest elephants better—so we can protect them:** WCS teams in Africa completed an innovative DNA-based survey of forest elephants in Gabon—and we have plans to increase our conservation footprint there.
- **Helping local communities around the world protect wildlife:** We advanced community-led conservation of jaguars and forests in Bolivia and elsewhere.
- **Saving marine species:** WCS won landmark global protections for sharks, rays, and other species.

And we have big ambitions for the future. I see so much potential for WCS to scale up our work and achieve even better and more lasting results for wildlife. I also see enormous needs to meet the magnitude of the challenges that wildlife face from habitat loss, climate change, and many other threats.

I'm so grateful to have you by our side as we continue on this journey.

Adam Falk
President and CEO

Impact Around the World

By the Numbers

20 million+ km² of land and sea
protected and restored across 55+ countries

Conserves habitat for more than
40% of the world's biodiversity

480+ local partners
including local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and national government agencies

160+ scholarships
awarded by WCS to emerging conservation leaders in the last 3 decades

350+ peer-reviewed scientific publications
on average each year

3.5 million visitors
welcomed at our 5 NYC parks in 2025

18,000+ animals
cared for at our zoos and aquarium

Most of our scientists, conservationists, animal experts, and other dedicated staff are from the countries where they work
95% of our staff are nationals

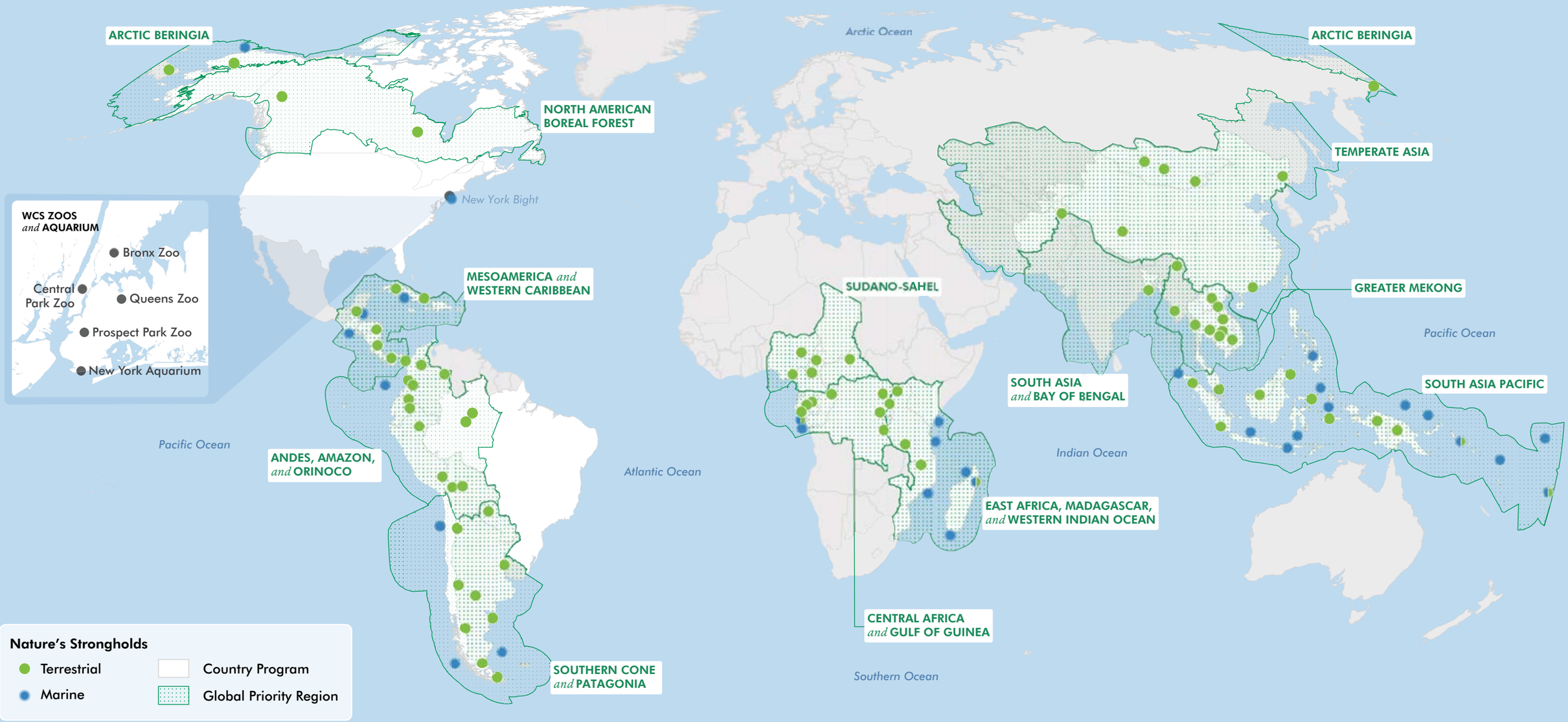
580+ protected areas
WCS helped create since our founding

1.5 million+ students, educators, and families
reached with science education programming annually

Impact Around the World

Where WCS Works

WCS saves wildlife and wild places in 55+ countries worldwide.
Across our five New York City parks, we inspire lifelong connections to animals.



Okapi and visitors
BRONX ZOO

Connecting People to Nature

Bronx Zoo ▪ Central Park Zoo ▪ Prospect Park Zoo ▪ Queens Zoo ▪ New York Aquarium

A tiny turtle hatchling emerges from its egg thanks to a breeding program for endangered species. A young giraffe learns to walk after a successful surgery. Toucans rescued from the illegal pet trade spread their wings in their new Bronx Zoo home. Each animal at WCS's four zoos and aquarium has its own story. Our keepers and veterinarians provide the highest level of care for all 18,000 of them.

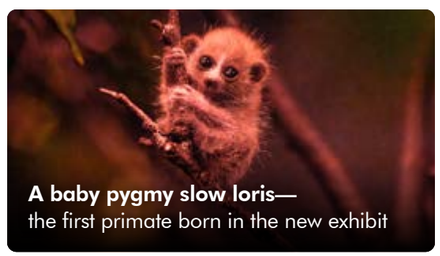
What the Night Can Teach Us

World of Darkness Reveals the Secret Lives of Nocturnal Animals

The Bronx Zoo's World of Darkness immerses visitors in the hidden world of nocturnal animals. Revitalized and reopened in 2025, this exhibit features 25 fascinating species. We welcomed nearly 200,000 visitors in the first year, making it one of the zoo's most popular experiences.

Celebrating Our Babies

The Bronx Zoo partners with other accredited zoos to breed threatened species and ensure animal populations are genetically viable and healthy. Some of our successful births are below.



A baby pygmy slow loris— the first primate born in the new exhibit

A litter of naked mole rat pups* born in their off-exhibit colony

Four New Caledonian giant geckos, the first born at the zoo since 2001

> "I forgot I was in the Bronx for a second. It was cool to see so many animals I've never seen before in one place."
>
> **—World of Darkness visitor**

Bringing the Nocturnal World to Life

We are teaching a new generation about how nocturnal animals help foster healthy ecosystems, and highlighting WCS's efforts to conserve them in New York and around the world. Since World of Darkness opened, we have:

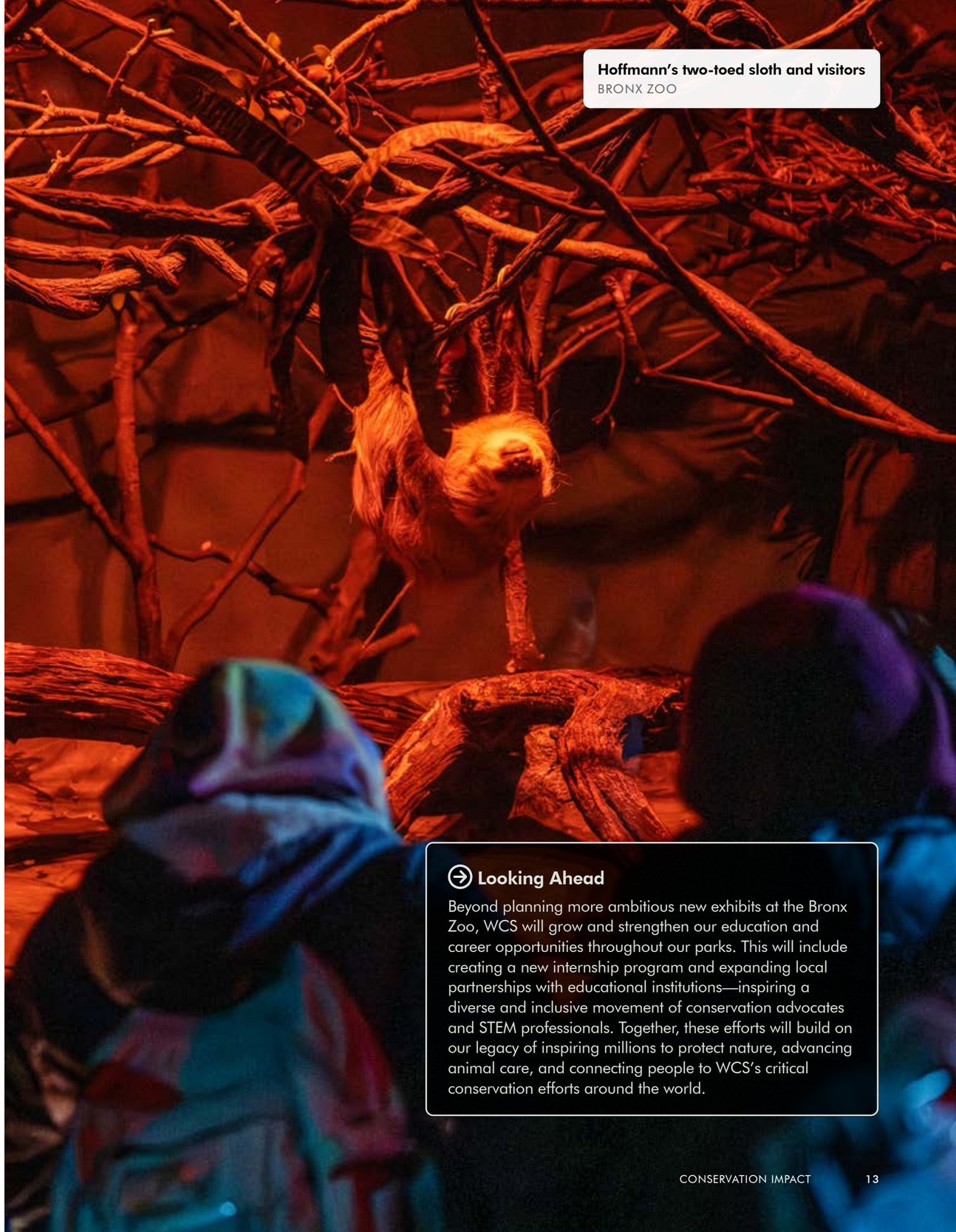
Engaged 160,000 visitors with activities led by our Discovery Guides: student volunteers who gain leadership and public speaking skills by educating zoo visitors about conservation and wildlife

Captivated 10,000+ visitors with Wildlife Theater performances about nocturnal animals' special adaptations, such as bioluminescence and using "super senses" to navigate darkness. The shows also helped guests learn how these animals play important roles like pollination that sustain our planet, and highlighted how everyone can protect night-dwelling species.

Hosted Bronx Zoo Summer Camp sessions in World of Darkness, engaging 500 children aged 2 to 17

Reached 200 NYC teachers and educators through a professional development workshop focused on nocturnal animals

Little-known fact: Naked mole rats are not strictly nocturnal, but they live in darkness.



Hoffmann's two-toed sloth and visitors
BRONX ZOO

Looking Ahead

Beyond planning more ambitious new exhibits at the Bronx Zoo, WCS will grow and strengthen our education and career opportunities throughout our parks. This will include creating a new internship program and expanding local partnerships with educational institutions—inspiring a diverse and inclusive movement of conservation advocates and STEM professionals. Together, these efforts will build on our legacy of inspiring millions to protect nature, advancing animal care, and connecting people to WCS's critical conservation efforts around the world.

From the Bronx to the Plains

The Bison's Century-Long Comeback Story

Bison have long been icons of the American West, pictured on state flags, stamps, and coins. They are critical to maintaining healthy grassland ecosystems. And they are central to many Native American tribes' spiritual and social identities. But at the turn of the 20th century, these mighty mammals were nearly wiped out by overhunting, and their numbers dwindled to fewer than 1,100 animals.

Today, hundreds of thousands of bison roam across the plains in herds managed and protected by Indigenous tribes, nonprofits, and government agencies—thanks in large part to WCS's Bronx Zoo and our work over more than a century to breed and reintroduce bison that are free of domestic cattle genes.

But the bison's range across America remains highly fragmented. WCS is carrying forward the work of breeding bison at the Bronx Zoo and working with our partners to reintroduce and increase healthy, genetically sustainable populations. This is just one example of how WCS's long-term commitments have yielded lasting results for species across the globe.

▲ **ABOVE**
In 1907, 15 bison from WCS's Bronx Zoo left Grand Central Station on a train bound for the Wichita Mountains in Oklahoma, beginning a more than 100-year-long rewilding effort.

10-Year Snapshot

2017
Six bison calves are born at the Bronx Zoo—offspring of a herd generously gifted to the zoo by the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes in Montana in 2016.

2022
The Bronx Zoo sends 6 bison to the Osage Nation's 43,000-acre ranch in Oklahoma to help the Osage preserve their cultural heritage and the ecology of their ancestral lands.

2024
We send seven more bison to the Osage Nation.

2025
Twelve bison calves are born at the Bronx Zoo—the highest number of calves ever born here in one season, making the Bronx Zoo's herd among the largest of any zoo in the world. As descendants of the herd gifted to the zoo in 2016, these calves carry on the distinctive lineage and genetics of the species.

In October, we send four adult male bison to The Wilds—an Association of Zoos and Aquariums-accredited wildlife park in Ohio—to help them start their own conservation herd of genetically valuable bison.

SPOTLIGHT

Bison Are Climate Heroes

Bison are masters at creating resilient, carbon-rich grasslands. Unlike domestic cattle, which can overgraze and erode fragile habitats, bison have evolved to graze through constant movement across great distances; their natural behaviors have the power to restore American plains ecosystems at a grand scale. Bison strengthen their habitats' ability to store massive amounts of carbon by:

- ✓ **Grazing and trimming grasses**
- ✓ **Aerating soil with their hooves**
- ✓ **Dispersing seeds through dung**
- ✓ **Creating mud wallows used by amphibians and other animals**

Protecting bison ensures North America's plains remain climate-resilient.

Looking Ahead
In addition to sustaining its record-breaking bison herd, WCS's Bronx Zoo will educate millions of people about the incredible resilience of bison, and their ecological and cultural significance throughout North America, for generations to come.

Beauty Beyond Words

Diving Into the Mysteries of the Hudson Canyon

Imagine peering into the deepest, darkest, hidden depths of the Atlantic Ocean—without ever leaving dry land.

That's exactly what happened in 2025, when scientists opened a window into the vast Hudson Canyon via live-streamed video. Carved during the last Ice Age, the Hudson Canyon lies 100 miles off New York City and supports diverse marine life, including whales and dolphins, deep-sea corals, turtles, sharks, fish, and squid.

We are more likely to protect what we can see. That is why WCS experts from the New York Aquarium supported the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in undertaking this historic research expedition, which used a remote-operated vehicle to relay astounding images of the secret world hidden up to 1.35 miles under the sea.

▲ **ABOVE**
Longfin squid

◀ **FAR LEFT**
Deepwater octopus

◀ **LEFT**
Bubblegum coral documented on the NOAA research expedition, estimated to be more than 300 years old

Our connection to the Hudson Canyon dates back to 1925, when WCS (then called the New York Zoological Society) sent a team to conduct the first research expedition there, including Marie Fish (right) and several other women scientists.

> "With all this strangeness, there is also beauty beyond words."
>
> **—William Beebe**
> Scientist on WCS-led research trip to the Hudson Canyon in the 1920s

Today, the New York Aquarium's Canyon's Edge exhibit connects visitors to the extraordinary ocean life close to the city. In the field, WCS scientists study whales, dolphins, sharks, and other species that depend on the Canyon's ecosystem.

VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

See a giant manta ray filmed by WCS scientists at the Hudson Canyon in 2025

Securing a Conservation Legacy for the Hudson Canyon

Since 2016, WCS has led a coalition of scientists and stakeholders advocating for the Hudson Canyon's designation as a National Marine Sanctuary, seeking to ensure its protection for generations to come. In 2025, we trained over 300 local young people to engage more than 92,000 visitors across all our parks and online to participate in the designation process. Adults signed petitions and children made drawings to show their support for the Canyon—and we submitted all to NOAA.

Looking Ahead

WCS will advance the designation of the proposed Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary, working with bipartisan government leaders and communities. This designation would ensure permanent protection for the Canyon's wildlife and sensitive habitats from the threats associated with oil, gas, and mineral exploration and extraction; and expand investment in long-term research and monitoring.

Investing in Tomorrow's Conservation Leaders

High-quality science education and workforce opportunities are key entryways for young people to begin a career in conservation. But in under-resourced urban communities, young people often lack access to positions that open pathways to advanced study and STEM careers. WCS is closing this gap.

In recent years, nearly 12,000 young New Yorkers have gained employment, internship, and volunteer opportunities at our four zoos and aquarium.

Exploring Nature in the City Through Mentorships

WCS's Project TRUE (Teens Researching Urban Ecology) internship program connects Bronx high school students with undergraduate mentors from Fordham University's Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program. Each summer, teams carry out field research under the guidance of Bronx Zoo education staff, then present their findings at local research symposiums.

Bronx high schooler Ashmit Rahman plans to study marine biology, and his Project TRUE Fordham University student mentor, Aveena Khan, is pre-med. Project TRUE teamed them up to collect environmental DNA (eDNA) samples from the Bronx River to see which turtle species are using the waterway. Then they worked with WCS scientists at the Bronx Zoo to confirm their findings: that red-eared sliders, an introduced species, are more numerous than native turtles. Subsequently, the team used iNaturalist, a community science platform, to look at turtle populations in surrounding states and determined that this issue was not limited to the Bronx River, but rampant throughout the East Coast.

Looking Ahead

WCS will build on our internship and other education and workforce opportunities for young New Yorkers, expanding partnerships with local public schools, colleges, and other cultural institutions to increase our reach across the city.

"The training period with Bronx Zoo staff was critical—it helped prepare me to teach scientific methods to the students I mentored. Now I feel a lot more confident about the positions I will apply to moving forward."

—Aveena Khan
Project TRUE mentor

"This was my first time doing an extended research project, and it was awesome—especially the fieldwork part."

—Ashmit Rahman
Project TRUE intern

▼ **BELOW**
WCS Project TRUE interns conducting ecological research in the Bronx River

12,000 opportunities
provided by WCS to NYC youth since 2018

Rothschild's giraffes
BRONX ZOO

Meet a WCS Expert

Joseph Nappi

As Senior Keeper at the Bronx Zoo's Carter Giraffe Building, I manage the daily care, training, and medical needs for aardvarks, giraffes, zebras, ostriches, spotted hyenas, painted dogs, and other African species.

How did it all begin for you? As a kid, I was drawn to animals. By first grade, I was fascinated by zoos—from habitat design to the day-to-day care provided by keepers. In middle school, I realized that working with animals could be a career, and I started treating it that way. I kept a keeper-style logbook for my pets, mostly guinea pigs and frogs, and even made 'exhibit' signs with facts about them. Looking back, it was my way of learning and practicing early. I carried that interest into college at Delaware Valley University, where I studied conservation and wildlife management alongside others who were equally focused on entering the zoo and conservation field.

What brought you to the Bronx Zoo, and what keeps you here? Growing up in Pennsylvania, I spent a lot of time at the Philadelphia Zoo. Age 11 was a turning point: my first visit to the Bronx Zoo. The naturalistic exhibits and scale of the park expanded my sense of what a zoo could be. From then on, I came back regularly. After college, I knew I wanted to work on the East Coast, and I was fortunate to join the Bronx Zoo immediately after I graduated.

What's kept me here is the relationships I've built both with my keeper colleagues and the animals we care for every day. Giraffes in particular are incredibly sensitive and perceptive. Even though they're so large, they behave like prey animals, and earning their trust takes time and patience. That challenge is also what makes it so rewarding. We have a four-year-old giraffe named Tayari who had to wear corrective shoes after she was born. It was a really challenging medical case, but she pulled through. When we could finally take her last shoe off around her first birthday, we threw a big party for her. I'm really proud of her and the staff who helped her get to this point. She has come so far, and we give her specialized care to keep her healthy and strong.

What excites you about the future?
Being part of an organization that is achieving real conservation progress gives me hope for the future and makes me especially proud. At the Bronx Zoo and across WCS, the work we do directly advances conservation efforts in the field.

I'm also excited about the future of zoos and how we are helping inspire the next generation of animal experts. At the Bronx Zoo, there's a real emphasis on growth, collaboration, and conservation leadership. Knowing that we're helping to build both strong animal care programs and strong people behind them makes me optimistic about where we are headed.

Saving Cottontails and Crested Toads from Extinction at WCS's Queens Zoo

WCS's zoos and aquarium have helped save many species from extinction, and our experts inform conservation strategies for wild species across the globe. The Queens Zoo's animal staff are leaders in giving species from the Americas top-notch care—and our breeding and recovery efforts are boosting wild populations of vulnerable species, ensuring these animals can fulfill the vital roles they play in their native ecosystems.

Status **VULNERABLE**

85%
of native range lost

145 rabbits
released since 2016

VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

Watch Queens Zoo experts and partners release the rabbits into the wild

New England Cottontail Rabbits

Queens Zoo experts released 15 zoo-bred New England cottontails into their native habitat in Maine in 2025, giving them a much-needed boost following years of massive habitat loss.

But isn't breeding rabbits easy? As it turns out, no: they are surprisingly choosy when it comes to selecting mates. For optimal success, Queens Zoo keepers place one female rabbit near three males, then closely observe the rabbits for 24 hours to see which male the female chooses.

Thanks to the Queens Zoo's efforts with partners at the University of Rhode Island and Roger Williams Park Zoo, the rabbits are making a comeback in the wild.

Looking Ahead

We will redesign the Queens Zoo's "mate choice" areas for New England cottontails—including introducing a camera system that will provide definitive data on mate preference by tracking exactly how much time females spend with each male. This will enable us to breed and release even more of these rabbits, and we will strengthen monitoring efforts to ensure they can thrive in healthy habitats.

▲ **ABOVE**
New England cottontail rabbit kits at the Queens Zoo

▲ **ABOVE**
Puerto Rican crested toad tadpoles

◀ **LEFT**
Adult Puerto Rican crested toad

Puerto Rican Crested Toads

WCS's Queens Zoo has also helped save the Puerto Rican crested toad from extinction over the last decade by breeding and releasing them into their native habitat. These endangered toads were believed extinct until the 1960s, when scientists found a small surviving population. The Queens Zoo has been a leader in the remarkable recovery of this species—replicating the exact conditions the toads need to breed and working closely with partners to release them into protected, closely monitored native ponds in Puerto Rico.

Status **ENDANGERED**

4,000 tadpoles released in 2025 → **5,000** tadpoles released in 2026

20,000
released since 2014

"We play toad call recordings in a specially designed rain chamber to encourage the toads to breed. If we're lucky and the females lay eggs, they hatch within 24 hours. We care for the tadpoles for about 10 days, then they're off to Puerto Rico."

—Sosha Fusco
Keeper at WCS's Queens Zoo

Looking Ahead

By strengthening the Queens Zoo's efforts to breed and release a growing number of crested toads each year in collaboration with Association of Zoos and Aquariums partners, we hope to help the species fully recover and enable its conservation status to move from Endangered to Least Concern.

New England cottontail rabbit
FORT FOSTER PARK, MAINE

Meet a WCS Expert

Donna-Mae Butcher

As Curator of Animals at WCS's Queens Zoo, I oversee animal care, train keepers, and lead and support breeding programs for vulnerable species.

How did it all start for you? I grew up in Diego Martin, Trinidad, surrounded by an incredible diversity of tropical birds and other colorful wildlife. My father, Michael, had a remarkable ability to notice animals wherever we went, sharing folk tales about them and encouraging my curiosity. My fondest childhood memories include spotting iguanas basking in coconut trees on my way to school, and listening to the calls of red howler monkeys moving through the forests of Chaguaramas—staying as quiet as possible so we wouldn't scare them away. Those experiences instilled in me a deep respect for nature and inspired me to pursue zookeeping.

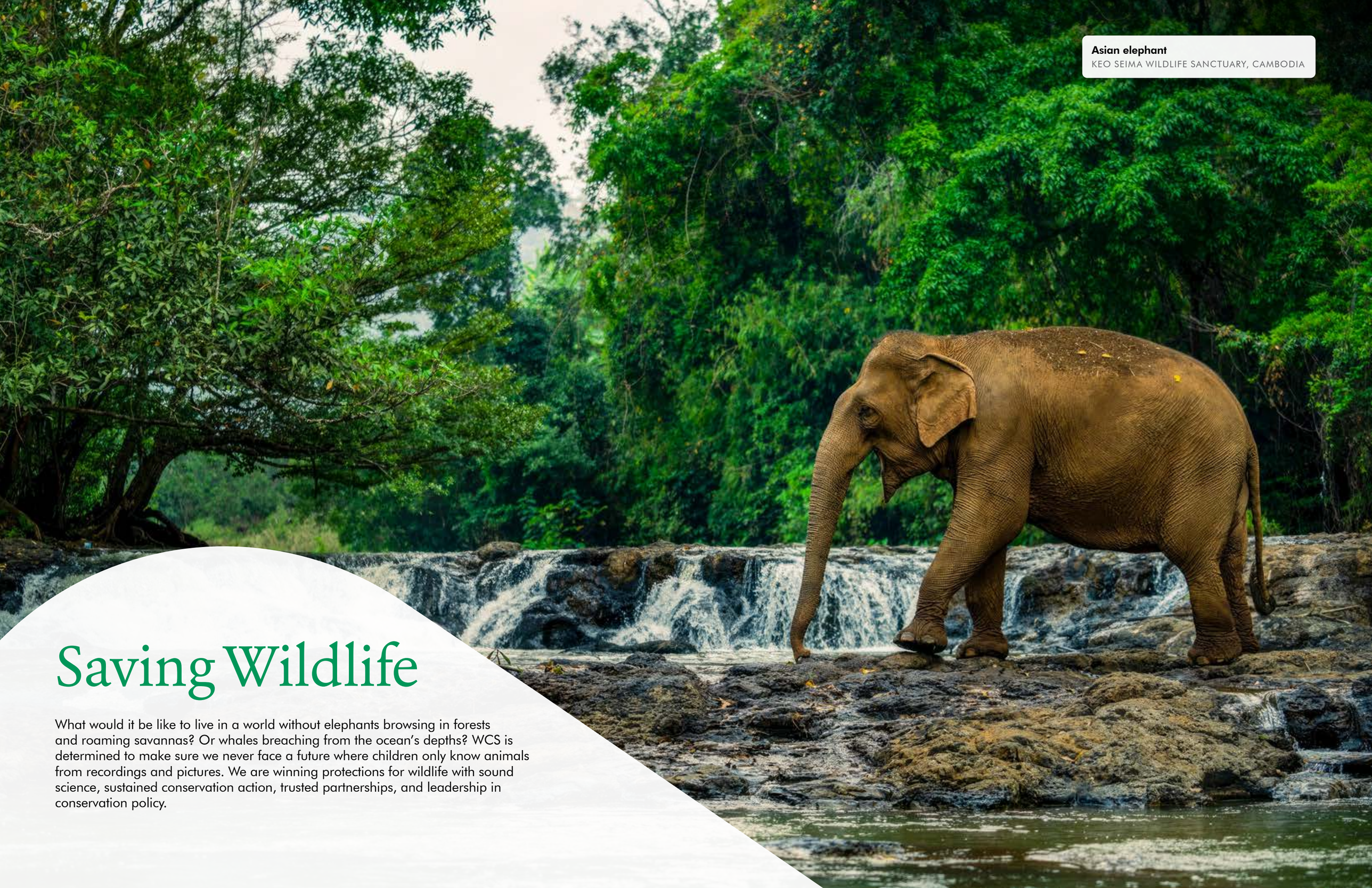
I became Trinidad and Tobago's first female zookeeper when I started at the Emperor Valley Zoo in 1982, and I aim to inspire other women to pursue careers in science. Beyond this, one of my proudest achievements was being part of the team that successfully bred Orinoco turtles in human care for the first time. It was a formative experience that helped me realize I could make a real difference not only for individual animals, but for entire species.

How did you come to the Queens Zoo? I moved to the United States and was hired at the Queens Zoo after it reopened under WCS management in 1992. I started as a zookeeper, then advanced from Senior Keeper, to Animal Supervisor, to Assistant Curator, to my current role. It was a challenge early on to learn how things are done differently here, but both in Trinidad and at the Queens Zoo, I've been able to observe animals closely and find creative solutions to caring for them. Over the years, I've cared for large cats, bison, elk, bears, chimpanzees, mandrills, crocodiles, and venomous snakes, just to name a few. I've trained and mentored hundreds of staff and interns in animal care and handling techniques. Today, my greatest focus is preparing the next generation of keepers to observe carefully, think critically, solve problems, and trust their instincts.

> Animal care is a responsibility that extends far beyond the end of a work day, and every decision we make is driven by one goal: ensuring the highest standard of care for every animal entrusted to us.

What gives you hope for the future? Leading the Queens Zoo team in breeding and releasing New England cottontail rabbits, I have worked with many amazing people to build that program from the ground up. Somebody has video of me absolutely falling apart the first time we released one of the rabbits we'd bred. People asked if I was OK, and I said, "This is like watching my kid board an airplane."

The last few years have been our best yet for rabbit breeding success and releases into protected wild habitat. Collaborating across teams and with partner organizations to make this a reality has shown me that any result is possible if enough people come together with creativity and a common goal. Seeing those rabbits grow from tiny kits, then watching them hop out of their carriers into a new life where they will carry on their species, is a memory that will bring me hope long into the future.



Asian elephant
KEO SEIMA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, CAMBODIA

Saving Wildlife

What would it be like to live in a world without elephants browsing in forests and roaming savannas? Or whales breaching from the ocean's depths? WCS is determined to make sure we never face a future where children only know animals from recordings and pictures. We are winning protections for wildlife with sound science, sustained conservation action, trusted partnerships, and leadership in conservation policy.

Achieving Strong International Protections for At-Risk Species

At first glance, it seems far-fetched that a conference center packed with international delegates could prevent the capture of a sloth in a forest thousands of miles away. But that is just what governments at a recent Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) committed to do for sloths, as well as for sharks, okapi, Galápagos iguanas, geckos, and other species.

The illegal or unsustainable capture of wild animals—often for traditional medicines, pets, ornaments, or food—is pushing many species toward extinction. Wildlife trafficking also fuels organized crime and poses risks to human health by increasing the potential for virus outbreaks if diseases jump from animals to humans. No single country can combat this issue alone, as animals can be poached in one country, trafficked through others, and sold in distant markets.

> WCS's strong international policy presence and our field conservation programs worldwide make us a key player in stopping harmful wildlife capture and trade—whether legal or illegal.

In the past year, WCS helped secure landmark global protections for many species—in particular sharks and rays, key predators that are vital to ocean health.

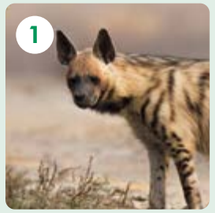
SPOTLIGHT

Safeguarding Migratory Species

Migratory animals do not recognize national boundaries, so their fate depends on countries working together. That is why WCS was front and center pushing for science-based protections at the 2026 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

The result? A sweeping set of conservation measures, marking a significant step forward for migratory species and their habitats worldwide. WCS will now work to turn these policies into action on the ground.

Moving Policy to Action for These Species and More:

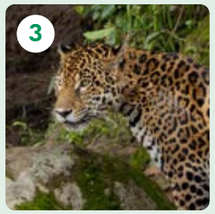


Striped Hyenas

RANGE: Parts of North and East Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia
NEXT STEPS: Reduce barriers such as fences, prevent illegal killing

Giant Otters

RANGE: Tropical rivers in South America
NEXT STEPS: Ensure the ecological integrity of the Amazon and other river systems



Jaguars

RANGE: Forests and mountains throughout the Americas
NEXT STEPS: Combat illegal trade, preserve migration corridors

Whale shark
as seen by WCS's Emily Darling
MADAGASCAR

A Turning Point for Sharks and Rays

Nearly 40 percent of these species are at risk of extinction—fueled by demand for their meat, fins, and other parts—and they are running out of time.

In 2025, over 180 governments voted to enact new international trade policies protecting 70 species of sharks and rays—including giving the highest level of protection to whale sharks and manta rays.

This was achieved through CITES, an international treaty that regulates the global trade of wildlife and their products. WCS helped ensure decisions were grounded in rigorous, evidence-based science.

Looking Ahead

These successes give some of Earth's most imperiled species a real chance at recovery. We must now turn this momentum into swift action: WCS programs in more than 55 countries will partner with governments and communities to ensure that the policies translate to impact in the field.

> "We may look back at this moment as the turning point that pulled these shark and ray species back from the brink."

—Luke Warwick
WCS Senior Director, Threatened Marine Species

VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

Hear more from Luke Warwick

Building a Future for Elephants on the Savanna and in the Forest

Elephants are the architects behind some of the world's richest ecosystems: they disperse seeds, dig water holes, create and maintain paths, and keep clearings open that are used by a wide array of wildlife. But poaching, habitat loss, and other pressures have left elephants under threat.

WCS field conservationists are dedicated to helping elephants thrive, working in partnership with governments, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities. With our extensive reach and expertise across Africa and Asia, we are in a unique position to make this goal a reality.

WCS protects elephants in
15 countries around the world

Elephant populations rose by
4,000 in 3 years
in the Ruaha-Katavi Stronghold

Stopping a Poaching Crisis, Recovering Elephants in Tanzania

Back in the early 2010s, Tanzania's Ruaha-Katavi Stronghold suffered some of the greatest elephant losses recorded in Africa at the time. Ivory poachers were unrelenting. In response, WCS, the Tanzanian government, and local communities came together to roll out solutions such as strengthening ranger patrols and wildlife monitoring. Today, we have all but eliminated ivory poaching in the landscape.

Thanks to these efforts, elephants are now well on the road to recovery. The population in Ruaha-Katavi in 2024 grew to over 24,000, up from roughly 20,000 in 2021, according to data released this year by the Tanzanian government, collected in partnership with WCS.

Our Strategy: How Does WCS Protect Elephants?

- **Protect** forest and savanna habitats across Africa and Asia
- **Monitor** and study elephant populations
- **Prevent** trafficking and dismantle criminal networks
- **Reduce** demand for ivory and advocate for ivory market closures
- **Find** win-win solutions to conflicts between humans and elephants

Supporting the First-Ever African Forest Elephant Population Status Report

WCS recently was a co-author on the first forest elephant report from IUCN, the world's largest environmental network. This is the most comprehensive report on forest elephant numbers created since the African forest elephant was declared a separate species to its savanna cousin. The news is encouraging—just 10 years after WCS led a major study that reported significant declines in forest elephants due to poaching, the species is now showing signs of recovery across much of its range, with populations stable in the majority of sites where WCS works to protect forest elephants. The report found that at least 136,000 forest elephants range across 22 countries, with Gabon and Republic of Congo hosting the largest populations. As part of this report, WCS led the survey of the Gabonese elephant population, using an innovative DNA-based survey technique that identifies individual elephants from their DNA "fingerprint" in their dung.

Innovative DNA-based survey technique

Reducing Conflict in Thailand

As increasingly fragmented landscapes across Africa and Asia push elephants and humans into closer contact, elephants sometimes destroy crops or damage property, leading to retaliation. WCS works with communities to find mutually beneficial solutions.

In Thailand's Kaeng Krachan National Park, WCS has been working with local communities and government rangers for over two decades to reduce human-elephant conflict. Since 2010, we have supported government and community night-response teams, which have decreased incidents of elephants leaving the park—and potentially entering into conflict—by over half. In partnership with nearby villages, we have also helped roll out crop protection techniques such as semi-permanent fencing, trip-wire alarms (below), and vigilance-based crop guarding—reducing human-elephant conflicts to fewer than five incidents per year.

Conflicts reduced to fewer than 5 a year

African lion
as seen by WCS's Luke Hunter
QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK, UGANDA

Meet a WCS Expert

Simon Nampindo

As Country Director for Uganda, I lead our team and cultivate strategic partnerships with government bodies, communities, and others that further long-term conservation of iconic species such as elephants, gorillas, and lions.

What led you to conservation? I was born in Uganda around the same time that the brutal dictator Idi Amin took power—there was great unrest, and as a child I felt powerless. Men would come right on our property and destroy all the trees and wildlife. I asked myself, 'If I grow up, how can I make sure this doesn't happen again?' Since then, I've known that I needed to be a part of the movement to conserve nature.

What role did education play? I earned my master's in wildlife ecology in Uganda. I looked for funding to get a PhD but didn't get far. Then I was approved for a WCS Beinecke African Conservation Scholarship. It gave me access to an amazing breadth of resources and connections, and I completed my PhD in environmental conservation at the University of Massachusetts.

The knowledge and skills I gained gave me confidence to apply for the Country Director role at WCS, a position I've held for over 11 years. I have also honed my skills as a communicator, learning to make knowledge accessible. I strive to speak for wildlife since they cannot speak for themselves.

Uganda is famous for its wildlife. What is the current picture? Uganda is gifted with immense biodiversity—gorillas, lions, and many other animals—but the elephants are my favorite. I like their social nature. Queen Elizabeth National Park, which we manage in partnership with the government, is a vital stronghold for elephants: there are over 3,500 individuals, the highest population density in Uganda. In the Ishasha sector of the park, tourists from around the world come to see the lions, which are famous for climbing trees. They have adapted this unique behavior over generations, passing it down to their cubs. But lions across the continent are largely in decline, and it is the same in Uganda. There is heavy pressure from illegal snaring and human-lion conflict, because lions sometimes prey on people's livestock and suffer retaliatory killings.

We partner with local communities, helping them construct lion-proof bomas (traditional open-air enclosures). This has been successful: for three years, we registered no livestock losses for families with those bomas. We are also monitoring lions with radio collars, learning more about their behavior. And we use special conservation technologies and machine-learning techniques to predict where there are likely to be illegal activities and immediately deploy rangers.

What gives you hope? Nature can bounce back. I am in early discussions with governments on possibly bringing in lions with similar tree-climbing traits to recover the population, potentially from Murchison Falls National Park or from our neighbors, Tanzania and Kenya.

I am also encouraged by our strong partnership with Uganda's conservation agencies. In fact, WCS recently won a national award recognizing the team's leadership in science and environmental stewardship.

Conserving Snow Leopards

Mongolia's Ghost of the Mountains

A set of round pawprints. Scrapes in the dirt. And if you're lucky: a ghostly figure, darting into the distance.

These are all traces of the snow leopard, one of our planet's most elusive big cats. Climate change, declining prey populations, habitat fragmentation, and conflicts with people all threaten the survival of this vulnerable species. No more than 10,000 adult snow leopards remain in the wild.

In Mongolia, home to the world's second-largest snow leopard population, WCS is supporting these big cats and their mountain ecosystems. Drawing on 55 years of snow leopard conservation across Asia, we are conducting research and bolstering Mongolia's emergence as a stronghold for this species. In 2025, WCS hosted experts from across Asia in Mongolia to assess the global status of snow leopards and help inform future conservation priorities for this big cat.

Our Strategy: WCS Snow Leopard Conservation in Mongolia

Protect key snow leopard habitats and corridors

Work with herder communities to reduce conflict and support coexistence

Advance research to better understand how snow leopards move, survive, and connect across landscapes

Strengthen policies and partnerships to secure snow leopard populations for the long term

Looking Ahead

WCS will advance work with government, communities, and partners across Mongolia to strengthen connectivity throughout the country's snow leopard range. By identifying and safeguarding key movement corridors, we aim to help snow leopards adapt to a changing climate while informing conservation planning, protected area expansion, and wildlife-friendly infrastructure.

Championing Community-Based Conservation

Within the South Gobi's Umnugobi Province, WCS is partnering with five community-based organizations—including Bayan-Undur, Bayan Tukhum, and Temuulel—to help safeguard a critical corridor for snow leopards and other wildlife between protected areas. Together, these areas support 2,800 square kilometers of community-managed pastureland, including nearly 97 square kilometers set aside as wildlife refuge zones. WCS is helping communities strengthen stewardship by building predator-proof livestock corrals, establishing seasonal reduced-grazing areas, and supporting herder-rangers as they monitor wildlife and threats to the landscape.

> "Wild animals have always been part of our homeland. Protecting them is part of caring for the land that supports us all."
>
> **—Suren**
> Leader of the Bayan-Undur Community-Based Organization

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Emerging Conservationist
Achbileg Amartuvshin

In 2025, WCS awarded two scholarships to support emerging conservation leaders in Mongolia, including Achbileg Amartuvshin, a National University of Mongolia student who monitors snow leopards and wildlife corridors with WCS in the South Gobi.

"I was born in the land of the snow leopard, in a remote, mountainous region of Mongolia. The chance to study this species was unmissable for me as an aspiring ecologist.

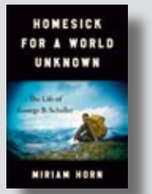
This was my first time studying the snow leopard. Following its rugged, unforgiving path required a lot of courage on my part. I almost felt heroic, to be able to follow in the footsteps of this quintessential apex predator."

A Snow Leopard Legacy

WCS's dedication to snow leopards began with field biologist George Schaller's pioneering surveys in the 1970s and 1980s, which established the scientific foundation for snow leopard conservation.

◀ LEFT
First-ever photograph of a wild snow leopard—taken in northern Pakistan by WCS's George Schaller in 1970

> "Scoping the crest, George saw them, backlit by the sun. A snow leopard and her tiny cub. Here was a beauty like none he had ever seen; not the taut rippling gleam of a tiger, but a thing almost without boundaries—her gray and cream coat soft as a fog."
>
> **—Miriam Horn**
> *Homesick for a World Unknown*



Learn more about George Schaller's scientific legacy

Protecting New York's Ocean Giants

Not long ago, the idea of seeing whales and dolphins just off New York City and neighboring shores might have been met with disbelief. Yet today such sightings are becoming more common.

The return of these ocean giants likely results from a combination of factors, including environmental policies over the past half century that have reduced pollution, enhanced protections, and led to more abundant food for whales and dolphins. But there are also new threats, such as ship strikes, increasing ocean noise, and incidental entanglement in fishing gear.

WCS scientists and partners are employing a range of scientific approaches to discover more about the whales and dolphins in the New York Bight so that we can figure out the best strategies for protecting them.

Listening

WCS uses special recorders on buoys to "listen" for whales in near real-time—and when the sounds of the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale are detected, the US government asks mariners to reduce speed in order to decrease the risk of a ship strike.

Analyzing Samples

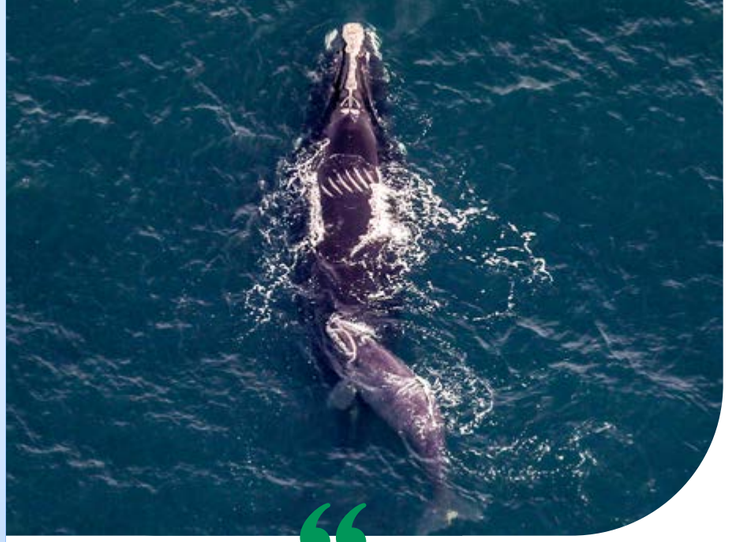
By conducting DNA and other tests on small skin samples, we gain insight into each whale's identity, sex, population connections, and even what they are eating.

Satellite Tagging

Tracking whales' movements and behaviors helps us determine how they respond to vessels and noise, and how much time they spend in high-risk areas such as shipping lanes.

Photographing

Surveying and taking photos of individual humpback and fin whales helps us determine how whales in the wider population use the New York Bight, and to what extent whales from feeding areas to the north frequent our waters.



▲ **ABOVE**
A New Calf and a Sign of Hope
"Accordion," so named for the scars on her back from a ship strike, is a critically endangered North Atlantic right whale, seen here with her first-ever calf off the coast of New York in 2025.

> "Our conservation science is helping to ensure that these charismatic animals can safely navigate the busy New York Bight, stretching from Montauk, New York, to Cape May, New Jersey."
>
> **—Howard Rosenbaum**
> Executive Director,
> WCS New York Bight Program

SPOTLIGHT ON WCS SCIENCE

Recent WCS Research Findings

- ✓ Humpback, minke, and fin whales spend significant time in and around shipping lanes as well as nearby offshore wind lease areas—highlighting the need for collective efforts to better protect them.
- ✓ The New York Bight is a key spring habitat for the elusive and endangered sei whale, a large, filter-feeding baleen whale. WCS research, which shows sei whales' seasonal and daily patterns, could inform best practices and policies to reduce ship strikes.

Launching the First Acoustic Whale Monitoring at Hudson Canyon

When WCS researchers traveled to the Hudson Canyon in 2025, they placed acoustic monitoring recorders on buoys on both sides of the Canyon. This marked the first effort of its kind to "listen" for whales, dolphins, porpoises, and ocean noise here. The information our scientists gather will tell us which species are present, and at what times of the year, and will help support efforts to protect this vital habitat.

New Acoustic Results

In just the first two months, the Hudson Canyon recorders detected whales over 395,000 times, including:

- ✓ North Atlantic right whales
- ✓ Fin whales
- ✓ Minke whales
- ✓ Humpback whales
- ✓ Sperm whales
- ✓ Sei whales
- ✓ Dolphins

Looking Ahead

We will strengthen our efforts in the New York Bight to advance data-driven, science-based protections for whales, dolphins, and porpoises, including providing input on boat speeds near critically endangered North Atlantic right whales using vessel data and acoustic detections of individual whales. Through our research, we can assess the effectiveness of ship strike protection measures and advocate for more stringent safeguards.

Sandbar shark
NEW YORK AQUARIUM

Meet a WCS Expert

William Hana

As Director of Animal Programs at the New York Aquarium, I support our animal care team as they create stimulating habitats, provide top-tier care, and manage environments for marine species. Each day, we aim to capture the imagination of our guests and inspire lifelong commitments to conservation.

When did you first get interested in aquatic wildlife? I grew up on the outskirts of Bangkok near a large pond, where I spent hours playing and watching the diverse fish that shared the water with me. During the rainy seasons, when some used the high waters to spawn and were easier to catch, I helped my grandmother harvest them. I spent so much time trying to figure out the different species—where each one hid, and why I could never find a Siamese fighting fish—that for my sixth birthday my mom gave me a small pocket guide to learn their names. She even let me dig a hole in our backyard, fill it with water, and stock it with a few fish. That early attempt failed, teaching me my first lesson in the complex challenge of providing stable life support to aquatic animals.

How did you wind up at WCS? My family moved to the US when I was 16. After high school, I joined the Army as a field medic, then earned my biology degree and spent two and a half decades at the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago and Mystic Aquarium in Connecticut, specializing in everything from veterinary technology to exhibit development. I joined WCS after a 2019 visit to the New York Aquarium's new shark exhibit unexpectedly turned into an impromptu interview.

The aquarium was still rebuilding from Hurricane Sandy, so I got to help design new exhibits that showcase the incredible diversity of our local New York waters. We built a vibrant salt marsh replicating Jamaica Bay's wetlands and designed a nursery to restore native oyster habitats. Today, watching guests interact with these spaces, I see them inspired just as I was as a kid: by discovering the rich life thriving in our own backyard. I knew I'd found a place that shares my goals, as well as my belief that the education we do every day at the Aquarium can inspire people to champion WCS's mission to save wildlife and wild places.

What's most rewarding about your job? The passion and energy of our keepers, with their continuous willingness to learn and to find ways to improve the well-being of our animals, drive us all forward. In guiding them, I strive to offer chances to try new approaches. I feel immense fulfillment when they achieve their goals.

While our keepers focus on daily animal care, they also contribute to our field research and work to combat the illegal wildlife trade. For example, they've hosted training for wildlife enforcement officers on coral species identification to improve seizures of illegal coral. Our team also rehabilitates confiscated coral.

That synergy flows both ways: When I visited the WCS team in Thailand, I saw firsthand how our organization protects the habitats of critically endangered species like the Siamese crocodile. That work brings real-world insights into what makes an ecosystem healthy—knowledge the New York Aquarium weaves into our educational programming. Ultimately, it's the rays, sea lions, invertebrates, and fish that we all work for. We re-create the wild environments they need to thrive, ensuring they always feel at home.

Improving the Odds for Scarlet Macaws

Tiny, newly hatched Scarlet Macaws are defenseless and fragile. They have always faced danger from predators and fires. But today there is an even greater threat: the illegal wildlife trade. Nest theft, the removal of chicks, and illegal transport for the pet trade all jeopardize the species' survival. Many chicks do not make it to adulthood.

In the Guatemalan portion of the Maya Forest—home to one of Mesoamerica's most important populations of Scarlet Macaws—WCS is helping them beat the odds. To date, we have hand-raised and released more than 165 Scarlet Macaws into the wild.

In collaboration with nearby communities and the Government of Guatemala, WCS hand raises low-weight chicks that would otherwise have a low probability of surviving to adulthood. But the chicks are genetically in good condition and do well in the wild after receiving this extra attention. After the chicks mature, we release them into the forest, where they boost the overall population of Scarlet Macaws.

VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

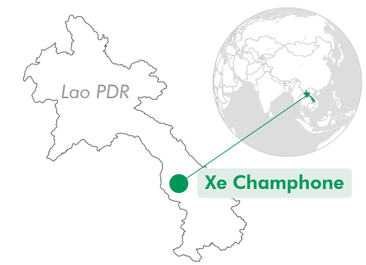
Watch our fieldwork in action

A Second Chance for One of the World's Rarest Crocodiles

Siamese crocodiles hold clues to understanding the health of the freshwater habitats they call home in Southeast Asia. When their numbers are strong, it is likely that the fish, birds, and surrounding wetlands are also doing well. But this ancient top predator has suffered catastrophic declines over the past half century due to habitat loss, hunting, and egg collection—which signals that the wetlands are in trouble, too.

Thanks to WCS and local communities, Lao PDR now contains one of the world's largest populations of Siamese crocodiles.

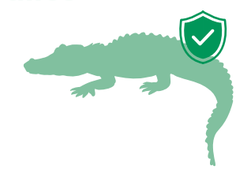
With WCS support, communities in Lao PDR have taken charge of recovering this crocodile before it disappears. Thanks to these efforts, the Xe Champhone wetland complex now contains one of the largest populations of these ecologically and culturally important crocs, based on annual nest counts. Our experts have worked with the government and local conservationists to "head-start" several hundred Siamese crocodiles—protecting and collecting their eggs, incubating them, and rearing the juvenile crocs during their most vulnerable period of growth. Then, once they're ready, we release them into the wild. WCS works alongside government and community partners to help establish, train, and support local Village Conservation Teams. These teams monitor the crocodiles, protect them from poaching, and ensure their numbers can grow.



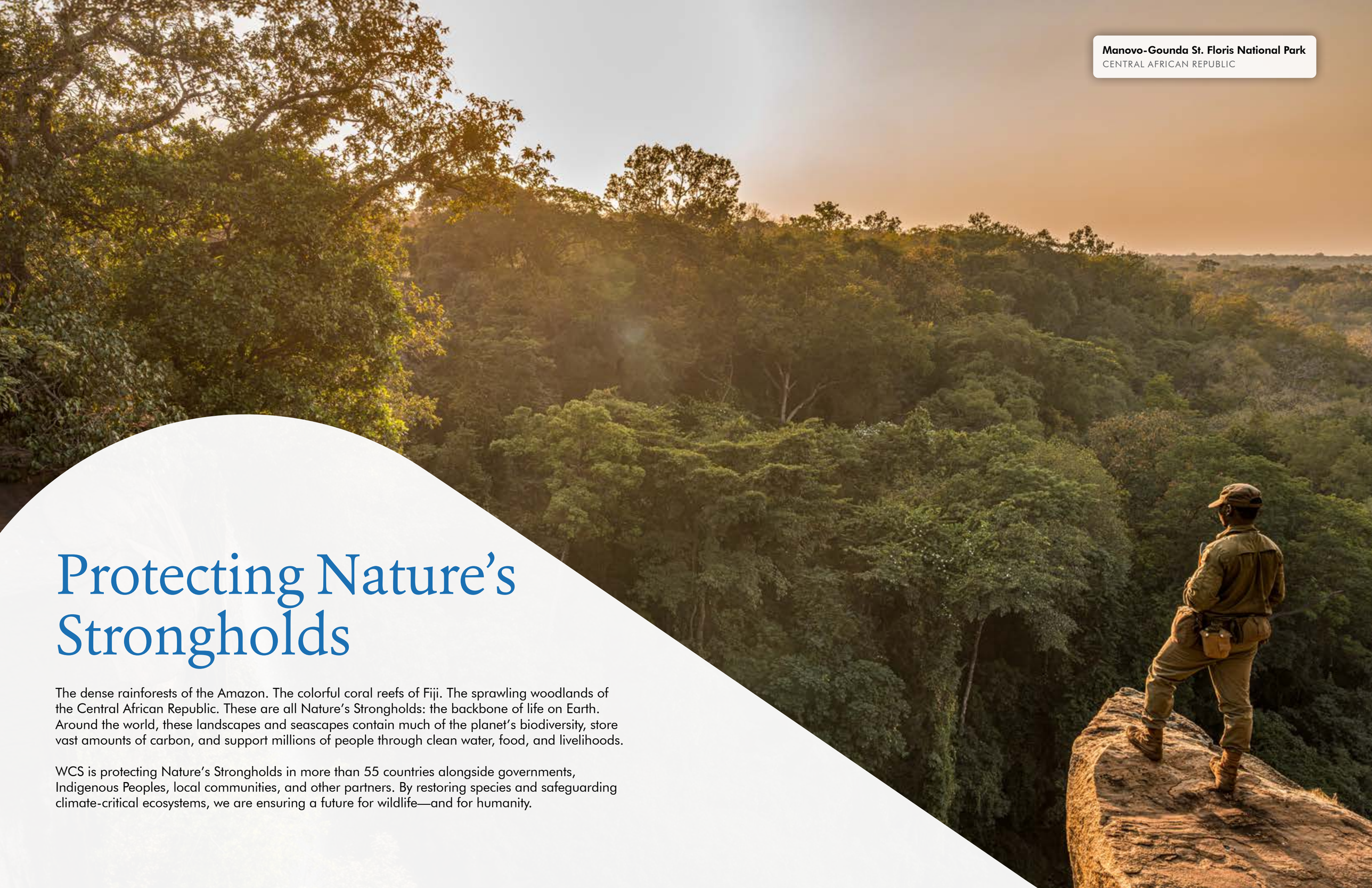
Status CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

Fewer than
1,000 Siamese crocodiles
remaining in the wild

278 → **247**
released since 2013 — more slated for release by 2028



RIGHT
A hatchling Siamese crocodile shortly after emerging from its egg



Manovo-Gounda St. Floris National Park
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Protecting Nature's Strongholds

The dense rainforests of the Amazon. The colorful coral reefs of Fiji. The sprawling woodlands of the Central African Republic. These are all Nature's Strongholds: the backbone of life on Earth. Around the world, these landscapes and seascapes contain much of the planet's biodiversity, store vast amounts of carbon, and support millions of people through clean water, food, and livelihoods.

WCS is protecting Nature's Strongholds in more than 55 countries alongside governments, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and other partners. By restoring species and safeguarding climate-critical ecosystems, we are ensuring a future for wildlife—and for humanity.

Africa's Decisive Decade for Wildlife

Scaling WCS's Impact Across the Continent

In Tanzania, an elephant matriarch leads her herd across a vast savanna woodland. Though her years of knowledge help her find water, food, and safe resting places for her family, there are challenges she can't navigate on her own, including poaching and rapid, unchecked agricultural expansion encroaching on her territory.

This is a scene echoing across Africa. Nations are racing to pursue short-term development projects. Infrastructure, mining, and other activities are opening remote landscapes, disrupting and fragmenting ecosystems. Climate change is reshaping where people live. These shifts threaten vital ecosystems: grasslands that sustain lion prides, carbon-rich forests that are gorilla troops' only home, and coral reefs that shelter threatened marine species.

> More than anywhere else in the world, Africa could experience some of the greatest conservation wins—or most tragic losses—depending on the choices we make.

The choices we make in this narrow window could become destructive for nature—or clear the path to a more sustainable future where Indigenous Peoples and local communities steward their lands and waters, and governments support them in doing so.

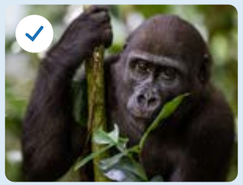
For the elephant matriarch, this future is within reach. In the Ruaha-Katavi Stronghold, WCS, the government, and local communities have nearly eliminated elephant poaching over the last decade or so. Now, our partnership with communities is helping to protect wildlife corridors so elephants can maintain their historic routes across the landscape. But this is just the beginning.

Our Plan

Over the next decade, WCS will roll out the most ambitious conservation plan ever undertaken in Africa. We will conserve 25 landscapes and seascapes across 14 countries in some of the continent's most important ecosystems, working side by side with governments and local communities who are requesting our partnership. This is a rare moment in time where we have a chance to open a path toward recovery.

2035 TARGETS

Stabilize or recover lion populations in all landscapes where we work



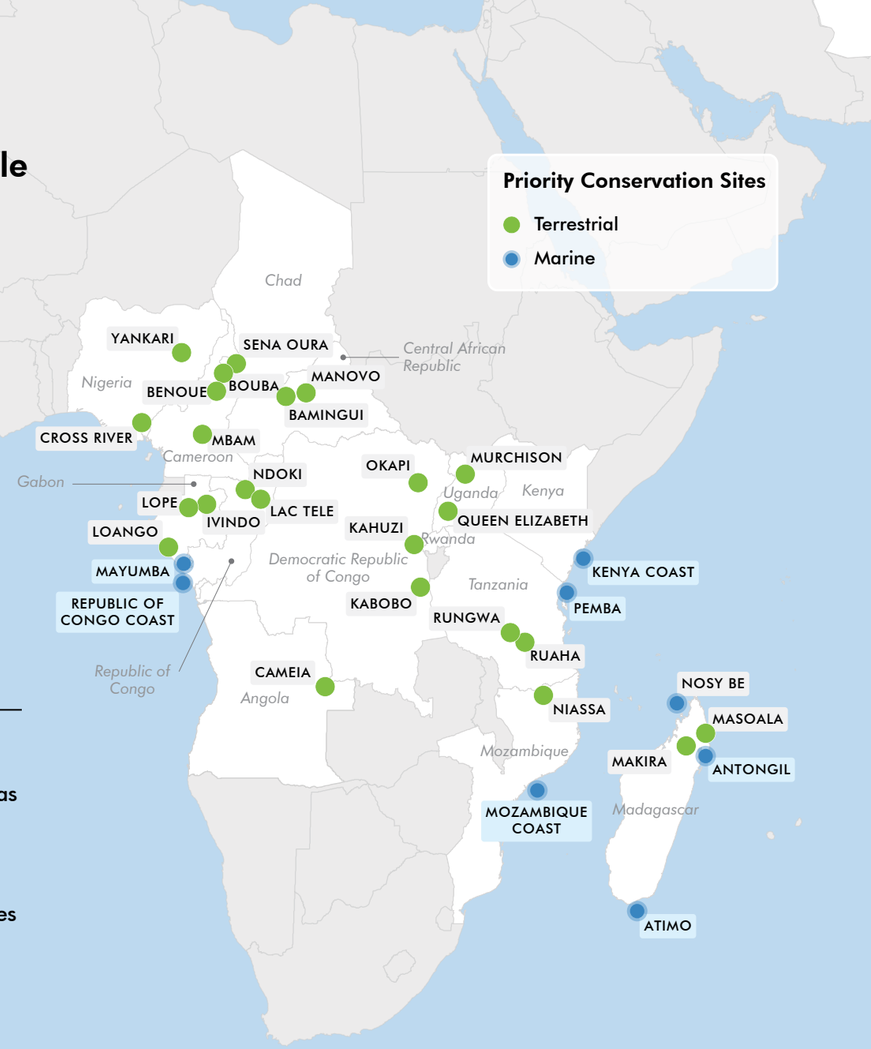
Safeguard strongholds for forest elephants and gorillas where we work

Step up management across 550,000 km² of climate-critical landscapes and seascapes

Increase the area of land and sea governed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities where we work

Conservation at Scale

2026–2035



2026 BY THE NUMBERS

262,892 km²
of Protected and Conserved Areas supported

468,000 km²
priority landscapes and seascapes strengthened

1,500+ staff
more than 90% locally hired

Bolstering Forest Elephant Strongholds in Gabon

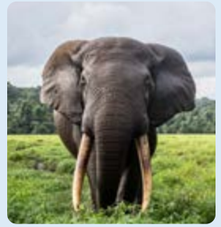
In the next two years, WCS and the Gabonese government will advance a first-of-its-kind agreement. We will collaboratively manage four key national parks—Ivindo, Loango, Lopé, and Mayumba—and strengthen protections for elephants, gorillas, sharks and rays, whales, leatherback sea turtles, and other threatened species.

This builds on our 40-year history of conservation partnership with Gabon. WCS played a crucial role in the last two decades in helping Gabon create 13 national parks and 20 Marine Protected Areas.

WCS's Conservation Legacy in Africa

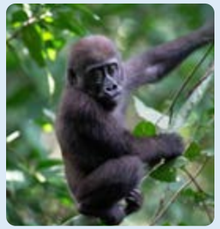
For more than 60 years, WCS has achieved enduring conservation impact in Africa's most ecologically important places for wildlife. We have built long-standing partnerships with host governments, local communities, and others who trust us to stay the course, even under challenging circumstances.

✓ Recovering At-Risk Species



Collaborations between WCS, local governments, and local communities have stabilized or reversed wildlife declines and protected globally significant populations of elephants, gorillas, and a multitude of other iconic species in Africa.

✓ Scaling Up and Strengthening Protection



WCS has helped create nearly 80 protected areas across the continent. A notable example is the Republic of Congo's Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, home to one of the most high-integrity forests in the Congo Basin and a stronghold for elephants, gorillas, and chimpanzees.

✓ Pioneering Innovative Ecotourism

In the 1970s, WCS's Amy Vedder and Bill Weber created the model of gorilla tourism as we know it today. Their work helped Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda drastically increase its revenue and bolster its population of mountain gorillas.

✓ Strengthening Community-Based Conservation

Across the continent, WCS has improved livelihoods for communities that depend on nature, including the Indigenous Efe, Mbuti, and Batwa communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo; Bomitaba and Ba'Aka communities in the Republic of Congo; and local communities in the Joint Village Land Forest Reserves of the Ruaha-Katavi landscape in southern Tanzania.

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Recovering Lions in the Central African Republic

Decades of commercial poaching and instability had decimated lions, elephants, and other wildlife in the Central African Republic's Northeastern Protected Area Complex by the time WCS entered the landscape in 2018.

Now there is hope, following intensive patrolling and other conservation efforts by WCS and partners. In 2025, we captured images of the first lioness and cubs seen in decades—a sign that lions are starting to reclaim their foothold here, as lion recovery only happens with the recovery of the entire ecosystem. In 2018, WCS made a 25-year commitment to conserve two vital parks in the country.

▼ BELOW
Central African lions in neighboring Cameroon

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Supporting Community-Based Marine Conservation in Zanzibar

Off the coast of Pemba Island, 15-meter coral towers rise from the seabed. Sharks and rays glide through the water. This is one of the most biodiverse reefs in the Western Indian Ocean, and local communities depend on this ecosystem for food and livelihoods.

WCS worked here with Zanzibar's government and coastal communities to create two new Marine Conservation Areas. They will protect climate-resilient reefs, mangroves, seagrasses, and marine life. Key to the areas' creation was WCS's community consultation process, in which WCS engaged 4,000 local community members across 43 villages—helping guide the design, boundary setting, zoning, and governance of the new areas.

2 new Marine Conservation Areas created

▼ BELOW
Mangrove restoration on Pemba Island

Stepping Up Protections for Reefs, Coasts, and Communities

Our oceans are under enormous pressure: rising levels of pollution, overfishing, and climate change threaten marine wildlife and people alike. The next five years are a critical window for conservation action—and WCS has ambitious goals, building on our strong foundation of science-based fieldwork, policy expertise, and long-term, trusted partnerships with coastal communities.

2030 Goals

Secure healthy ecosystems by increasing or maintaining the ecological integrity of high-biodiversity, climate-resilient seascapes

Increase conservation outlooks for endangered and threatened marine species—halting population declines, preventing extinctions, and moving populations toward recovery

Strengthen community well-being by partnering with coastal communities on conservation actions with economic incentives

Some of our objectives include:

- ✓ **Advancing** new and expanded marine protections across 1 million+ km²
- ✓ **Securing** strong protections for the most endangered shark and ray species in 10 countries over 10 years
- ✓ **Bringing** more than 95% of the global shark fin trade under international CITES regulation
- ✓ **Forging** agreements with 150 communities to comanage sustainable fisheries across 25 countries

WCS Impact in 2025–2026

Safeguarded climate-resilient coral reefs, sharks and rays, turtles, whales, and other critical marine populations by helping create and expand 17 Marine Protected and Conserved Areas across 5 countries

Worked with 10,000+ coastal community members to ensure their full involvement in creating marine protected areas that directly benefit their well-being and livelihoods—a critical component of our long-term conservation successes globally

Helped win new international protections for 70 shark and ray species, including the highest level of protection for iconic species like whale sharks, manta and devil rays, and oceanic whitetip sharks

SPOTLIGHT ON WCS SCIENCE

Revealing More Climate-Resilient Corals than Ever Before

Coral reefs sustain over 25 percent of marine life and provide food and livelihoods for hundreds of millions of people. They are also severely at risk from climate change.

WCS is leading new scientific efforts to identify and protect our planet's high-integrity, climate-resilient coral reefs—those with enough live coral cover, species diversity, and fish biomass to avoid, resist, and recover from climate impacts. Our recent analysis confirmed that climate-resilient reefs exist across more than 70 countries and 100 territories—3 times more than previously estimated. Less than one-third of these reefs are formally protected.

KEY TARGET

Expand global coral monitoring

15% → 100% of reefs

in the next 10 years

Building on MERMAID—an open-source, AI-powered platform to strengthen coral data and conservation—WCS is now harnessing cutting-edge machine-learning technology to identify and protect all of the planet's climate-resilient reefs. This new tool, which will launch on MERMAID in 2027, will empower divers, citizen scientists, and community partners in 100+ countries to photograph, monitor, and help protect these reefs—benefiting coastal livelihoods, sustainable fisheries, and marine biodiversity everywhere.

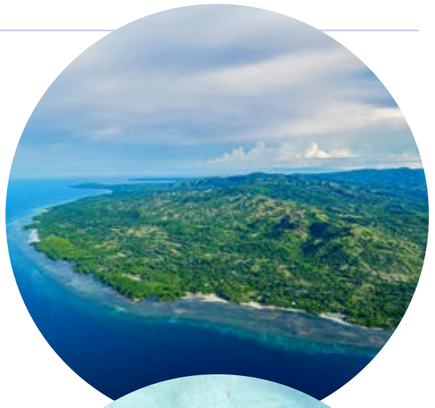
IMPACT SPOTLIGHTS

Securing Climate-Resilient Corals in the Philippines

After 18 years of local community advocacy, and with WCS support, the Philippine Province of Siquijor created the Bitaug Marine Protected Area, which generates ecotourism revenue from snorkeling and diving that is reinvested into community-led conservation work.

New MPA Safeguards:

- Climate-resilient coral reefs
- Seagrass meadows
- Turtle habitats
- Sharks and rays



Supporting Community-Led Coral Protection in Fiji

Over the past year, WCS assessed the health of Vatu-i-Ra's globally important coral reefs—and the data shows clear evidence that protections work. WCS has worked closely with communities here to establish *tabu* areas—regions with strict fishing bans, which are rooted in cultural knowledge and local traditional practice to periodically close sections of local seas.

***Tabu* Areas Result In:**

- Fish returning
- Healthy, recovering corals

Advancing Bolivia's First-Ever Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund

Indigenous Peoples' lands hold more than one-third of the world's highest-integrity forests. Yet these groups receive only a fraction of conservation funding around the world. WCS is changing this, starting in Bolivia's Greater Madidi Landscape.

Where the Andes Meets the Amazon

Boasting over 8,000 species—among them the jaguar, Andean bear, and 11 percent of the planet's bird species—Greater Madidi is considered one of the most biodiverse regions in the world. WCS has conserved Greater Madidi alongside Indigenous communities for over 20 years.

Together with our Indigenous partners and the Bolivian conservation fund, FUNDESNAP, we launched the country's first-ever, Indigenous-led funding tool in 2023 to support Indigenous organizations' conservation and management of 15,000 square kilometers of their lands.

The Fund for Indigenous Territorial Management disbursed

$1.1 million

to support conservation of 15,000 square kilometers of biodiverse lands

as of April 2026

WCS's Indigenous Partners

- Tacana
- Leco
- T'simane Moseten
- San José de Uchupiamonas

Indigenous Conservation Perspectives

"The Fund helps us protect and conserve everything we hold as the Pilón Lajas Indigenous territory and protected area."

—Magaly Tipuni
President of the T'simane Mosetenes-Pilón Lajas Regional Council

"The Fund has become an effective tool for defending territories and supporting the fight against illegal mining and pollution."

—Remberto Terrazas
Official Representative of the Indigenous Communicators Network

Key Results

Fewer Forest Fires
Established 53 community brigades of Indigenous firefighters, which have reduced forest fires in Indigenous lands by 56 percent

Local Livelihoods Improved
Supported the establishment of sustainable livelihoods, such as cacao and coffee farming, fisheries, and ecotourism, which have benefited over 2,000 people

Enhanced Solutions to Threats
Created joint monitoring programs across Indigenous lands and protected areas to guard against forest fires, illegal gold mining, and other landscape-scale threats; strengthened an Indigenous communicators network to share information more efficiently

▼ BELOW
Shan (natural oil) producers in Pilón Lajas

Southern elephant seals
as seen by WCS's Valeria Falabella
ARGENTINA

Meet a WCS Expert

Valeria Falabella

As Coastal and Marine Conservation Director for WCS Argentina, I work with partners from governments, local communities, and other sectors to protect the wildlife and ecosystems of the Patagonia coast.

How did you become interested in wildlife conservation? I have had a deep connection with the ocean since I was young. I was always inspired by its beauty and strength. At the same time, I was conscious of its vulnerability and our power to impact nature and transform it.

When I was 11, I witnessed a fight between right whales and orcas by my father's house. The next morning, I woke up early and walked to the shore. The scene was very sad: I found a dead orca, with its calf calling out nearby. It was a very rare situation that the right whales won. After an hour, the beach was full of people trying to help. I wanted to help, too. As a young person, this experience marked me. It was the first urge I had to study conservation.

What brought you to WCS? When I was a marine biology student in Patagonia, I heard [WCS's] Claudio Campagna speak at a conference. I became his student at university and then applied to do fieldwork with him. It was my dream to be a part of WCS.

> I love to work at WCS because we are the voice of wildlife, and wildlife needs a voice.

My first field project with WCS was studying elephant seals in Península Valdés, an important breeding area for the species in Argentina.

Can you talk about your work today? I lead a wonderful, dedicated team focused on ocean conservation, including helping design marine protected areas, protecting threatened species, and improving small-scale fisheries' practices and climate resilience. In marine protected areas, we are working with the government on monitoring programs, which tell us about wildlife and the threats they face. At the same time, we are engaging communities and small-scale fisheries to help strengthen connections between people and conservation. Despite a busy schedule, I never miss the elephant seal population census in Península Valdés, which I've participated in since 1992.

Conservation is challenging. What motivates you to keep going? In 2023, I had my worst experience as a marine biologist. Avian flu killed 97 percent of the newborn elephant seal pups that year in Península Valdés. I was part of the team that discovered the situation and conducted that census.

It showed how fragile nature can be. This population was healthy, and from one year to the next, it became threatened. So, this is the challenge that I worry about.

But nature is also strong. The following year, our census team saw bones of dead animals on the beach. At the same time, there was once again life: female elephant seals giving birth. And that was amazing to me. Being part of the recovery of this population gives me hope.

Safeguarding Our Northern Climate Shield

Canada's Boreal Forests and Peatlands

Canada's vast sweep of boreal forests and peatlands form a mosaic of mosses, mirror-like wetlands, and towering conifers that stretch for thousands of miles. These ecosystems shelter iconic wildlife—from polar bears and wolverines to migratory birds and caribou—while their peat-rich soils quietly store and sequester immense amounts of carbon, making them as climate-critical as they are breathtaking.

Advancing Lasting Protection and Indigenous-Led Conservation

For more than 20 years, WCS has used our science and policy expertise to help secure protection for some of Canada's largest intact boreal forest landscapes. For example, our research helped build the case for the sevenfold expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve, and the pending protection of most of the Peel Watershed in Yukon—together totaling 80,000 square kilometers, roughly the size of Austria.

WCS science helped win a
7x expansion
of Nahanni National Park Reserve

Healthy forests and peatlands provide services essential to life on Earth:

- ✓ Global climate regulation
- ✓ Water security and quality
- ✓ Habitat for wildlife
- ✓ Protection against floods and drought

Canada holds the world's largest peatland carbon stores—about
150 billion tonnes
representing 11 years of global industrial emissions

▲ **ABOVE**
The peatlands of the Hudson Bay Lowlands are critical for polar bears: females dig "maternity dens" and give birth to cubs.

We also support Indigenous-led conservation by providing expertise for the establishment, land-use planning, and stewardship of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas covering thousands of square kilometers. In Canada's carbon-rich peatlands, we are laying the groundwork for future protections through research, policy reform, and support for Indigenous-led stewardship, especially in the Hudson Bay Lowlands, the second-largest peatland complex in the world.

> "Our partnership and collaboration with WCS over the past years has greatly helped the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government with large and meaningful projects. It has also enabled us to participate in progressive approaches to land and resource conservation."
>
> **—Natasha Ayoub**
> Natural Resources Analyst,
> Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government

Publishing a First-Ever National Strategy to Safeguard Peatlands

Peatlands across Canada help cool the global climate by accumulating vast amounts of soil carbon over thousands of years. Yet just a fraction are protected, and they face imminent threats, mainly from industrial activities. When peatlands are destroyed or degraded, carbon stored over millennia is released into the atmosphere.

For the first time, WCS is providing a comprehensive guidance tool to inform how policy frameworks are designed to protect Canada's carbon-rich peatlands. Our National Peatland Strategy for Canada will:

- ✓ **Strengthen** policies and planning through informing a more coordinated approach to peatland protection in Canada's multi-tiered governance system
- ✓ **Elevate** Indigenous leadership and advance meaningful co-governance across provinces and territories
- ✓ **Expand** effective protection, restoration, and long-term stewardship through policy alignment, Indigenous rights and leadership, integrated planning and assessment, research and monitoring, communications, collaboration, and finance

Looking Ahead

Our goal is to help the vast forests and peatlands of North America maintain their ecological integrity—providing global benefits and supporting the cultures and vision of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. We will work with partners to put our National Peatland Strategy into action and advance Indigenous-led conservation.

Conserving Indonesia's Mosaic of Life

From the deep-forest domain of the Sumatran tiger to the climate-resilient reefs of the Coral Triangle, Indonesia is home to one of the world's greatest arrays of biodiversity. Spanning 17,000 islands, the country features 12 percent of the world's mammal species and nearly 20 percent of its bird species. Millions of Indonesians rely on this biodiversity, which provides food, clean water, and livelihoods. WCS has supported the Government and people of Indonesia in conserving these life-giving landscapes and seascapes since 1997.

SPOTLIGHT **WCS Conservation in Indonesia: At a Glance**

✓ **Protecting key species**

✓ **Supporting conservation in 16 landscapes and seascapes**

GREATER LEUSER STRONGHOLD

Sustaining Tigers

In the largest tiger landscape in Sumatra, hope springs from a grainy black-and-white photograph. Taken by a remote camera in a recent wildlife survey, the image shows two tiger cubs bounding through Gunung Leuser National Park—the latest conservation success for this Endangered species. For over a decade, WCS has supported the Indonesian government in protecting Sumatran tigers here by reducing conflicts with humans, boosting patrolling, and aiding in tiger monitoring. These efforts have paid off: the latest data shows that the tiger population is stable.

Sumatran tiger populations stable
in Gunung Leuser National Park monitoring sites since 2017

SOUTHERN SULAWESI STRONGHOLD

Recovering Coral Reefs with Communities

Taka Bonerate National Park is a nexus of biodiversity and people: its climate-resilient coral reefs stabilize shorelines and provide a home to hundreds of fish species that keep the ecosystem in balance and provide food to surrounding coastal communities, including the Bajau people. However, rising sea temperatures and destructive fishing practices had slowly begun to degrade the seascape and reduce fish stocks.

Coral reef cover increasing
in Taka Bonerate National Park

For the last decade, WCS has worked with community, government, and park partners to address these challenges. We have collaborated with more than 800 fishers to reduce the number of boats using destructive methods, which has declined by over 50 percent between 2019 and 2022—contributing to more stable fisheries and resilient livelihoods. Through our efforts, coral reefs are showing early signs of recovery, with live coral cover increasing from 30 to 35 percent between 2019 and 2024.

Looking Ahead

In the coming years, WCS will advance conservation for tigers, corals, and other vital species and conserve climate-critical landscapes across Indonesia. Notably, in Rawa Singkil Wildlife Sanctuary—a climate-critical peatland that harbors 10 percent of the global orangutan population—WCS is helping the Indonesian government strengthen landscape protections. Safeguarding Rawa Singkil from degradation would avoid emitting over 4.5 million tons of CO_2 over 20 years—equivalent to removing one million cars from the road.

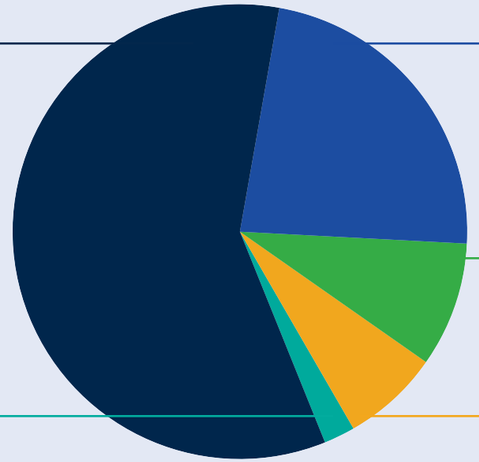
BELOW
Corals in South Sulawesi

Imbabura tree frog
as seen by WCS's Edison Araguillin
ECUADOR

Investing in Conservation

Financial Report

2025 OPERATING REVENUE ($441.2 MILLION)



59% Gifts and Grants
$258.3 Million

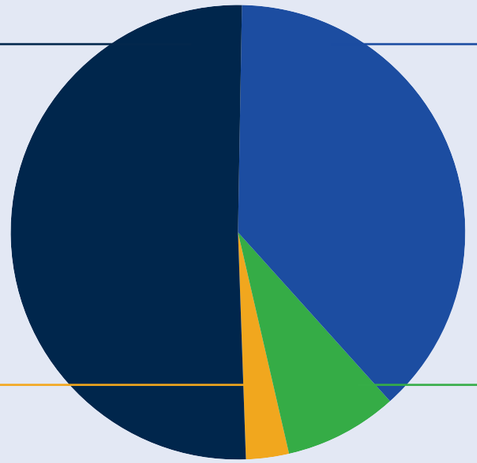
23% Admissions, Memberships, and Visitor Services
$99.5 Million

9% City of New York
$41.3 Million

7% Investment Return
$32.9 Million

2% Other Income
$9.2 Million

2025 OPERATING EXPENSES ($441.1 MILLION)



51% Global Programs
$223.8 Million

38% Zoos and Aquarium (incl. Visitor Services)
$168.3 Million

8% Management and General
$34.4 Million

3% Fundraising and Membership
$14.6 Million

For more information, visit wcs.org/financials

Southern right whales
ARGENTINA

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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.

CONSERVATION PATRONS

WCS's Conservation Patrons who donate a gift of $1,500 or greater annually receive exclusive updates, access to insider events, and may opt into premium membership benefits to our five wildlife parks.

For more information, visit wcs.org/patrons or contact Jayme Manion at 718 220 5085 or Patrons@wcs.org.

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

WCS Corporate Partners provide vital support for our conservation efforts through philanthropic giving, corporate membership, sponsorship, and cause marketing. Partnerships with WCS help meet corporate marketing, sustainability, and engagement objectives, while aligning with WCS on shared values that resonate with consumers, employees, and stakeholders.

For more information, contact Jennifer Contorno at JContorno@wcs.org or send an inquiry to Corporations@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 or to learn about the Wildlife Legacy Giving Challenge, contact Emily Hirshbein at 718 220 6894 or EHirshbein@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.

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.

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Plains Zebra, Tanzania

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A Rare Pair: Twin Collared Lemurs at WCS's Bronx Zoo
Lemurs are the world's most endangered group of mammals—and these twins are an especially rare pair, as less than a quarter of collared lemur pregnancies result in multiple births. Their mother was the first-ever collared lemur born at the Bronx Zoo.

WCS

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