



DEDICATED TO THE WORLD'S CUSTODIANS OF WILD SPACES & WILDLIFE



## Frontlines Dispatches From Around The World

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**Happening now in the UK: African communities and science v. Western animal-rights advocates and emotion.** In an August 3, 2019, [letter](#) to *Science* Magazine, 128 scientists and other wildlife specialists—many of them in Africa and Asia—argued that ending trophy hunting would threaten wildlife conservation and biodiversity. The letter touched off a storm of debate and some other scientists, all from Europe or North America, responded critically. In the months since, to try to influence the vote on a proposed ban on importing hunting trophies to the UK, Western animal-rights activists have again claimed the moral authority to determine the fate of Africans and African wildlife by spreading propaganda, sensationalist media articles and uninformed comments from anti-hunting celebrities and government ministers.

This in turn led 43 community leaders from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana and Namibia to respond with their own [letter](#) to *Science*, dated January 21, which ends with: “We recognize and respect the rights of Western conservation scientists and animal rights advocates to discuss how best to manage African wildlife. However, we request that your discussions are informed by our voices as custodians of this wildlife. Discussions should acknowledge both our conservation successes and our communities’ right to earn a livelihood through the culturally appropriate, sustainable management of our resources for the benefit of our people. Any less is to deny our human rights.”

One result of this dispute is that the UK government has extended its [consultation](#) period on the proposed trophy ban to February 25, to allow more input. On January 21, UK Environment Minister Lord Goldsmith [acknowledged](#) “there are people who believe trophy hunting is an important source of funding for conservation.” However, the minister also said that “the purpose of this consultation is to unpick those arguments. How can it be good for an endangered species when the healthiest and most magnificent among them are the first to be shot?”

On January 22, [Dr. Amy Dickman](#), one of the principal authors of the original *Science* letter, in support of the conservation benefits of hunting, was ejected from an animal-rights meeting in a room at the British Parliament while a group called The Campaign Against Trophy Hunting made its case for the trophy ban. Dr. Dickman wanted to attend as a representative of the

IUCN's (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group. Afterward, she observed facetiously on her [Facebook](#) page, "I'm sure the future of conservation is safe thanks to the presence of top conservation scientists such as [Eduardo Goncalves](#), [Jan Leeming](#), [Ranulph Fiennes](#) and [Stanley Johnson](#) . . . I may as well retire!" [*Links added by Conservation Frontlines staff.*]

Calling it "eco-imperialism at its finest," Dr. Dickman concluded, "This group of people is important to decide what's best for Africa's wildlife and humans? How absurd is this?"

Conservationists are urged to study the issues around the proposed trophy ban and make their feelings known to the consultation.

## North & South America



**Mayfly numbers have dropped by half since 2012** in the Northern Mississippi River Basin and the Great Lakes region, threatening diverse species of birds and freshwater fish that rely on these swarming insects as food. The Jan. 20 *National Geographic* [report](#) added that in western Lake Erie, populations of *Hexagenia* mayfly declined by “an incredible 84%” just between 2015 and 2019.

**The Carolina parakeet** went extinct at the beginning of the 20th Century. Recent genomic [research](#) suggests that the rapid demise of *Conuropsis carolinensis* was mainly caused by humans. The bird was hunted extensively during the last decades of the 19th Century, mostly for its feathers, to decorate hats, but habitat destruction likely also contributed.

**Glacier Park mountain goats’ A/C is failing** as glaciers and snow patches dwindle rapidly. The goats seek out snow patches to reduce summertime heat stress, but researchers from the Univ. of Montana, Glacier National Park and the Wildlife Conservation Society have [found](#) that climate change affects the national park’s mountain goats, *Oreamnos americanus*. In Glacier Park and other areas, including Alaska's coastal mountains, summer mountain goat habitat is

expected to shrink up to 86% in the next 70 years; the resultant forest encroachment will decrease food availability and reduce predator detection.

**More women are hunting and fishing in Wyoming.** The state's Game and Fish Dept. annual [review](#), issued on Dec. 31, found that over the past 10 years participation by women in hunting has increased by 30.5% and 14.4% in fishing.

**America's Conservation Enhancement Act** passed in the US Senate by unanimous vote. According to a Jan. 12 [article](#) in *The New American Journal*, this bi-partisan package of two bills would expand federal conservation programs. One bill is to reauthorize the North American Wetlands Conservation Act through 2025 and increase its annual funding to \$60 million; the second bill would authorize the National Fish Habitat Action Plan for conserving and restoring fish habitats nationwide. The ACE Act now must be approved by the US House.

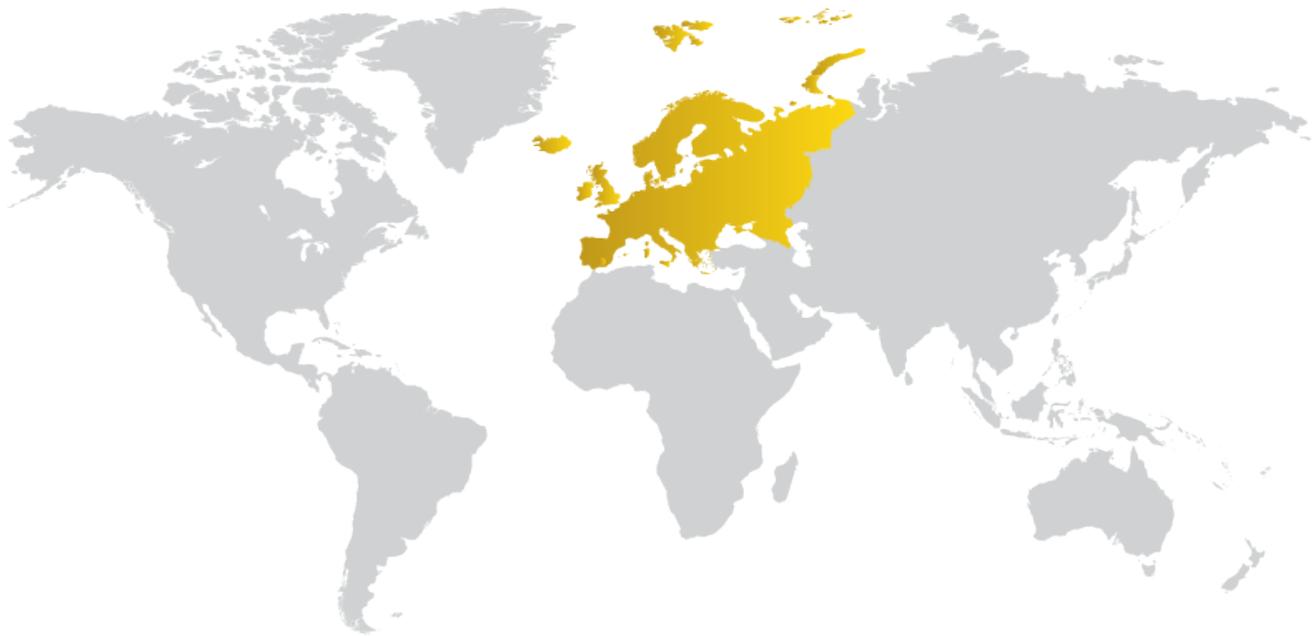
**The "Superbowl" of python hunting** brought in some 80 snakes between Jan. 10–20 in Florida. The number has not even dented the state's population of invasive Burmese pythons, which may be as high as 100,000 animals, but organizers say their intent was to raise public awareness of the snakes, which have been devouring native animals and birds. According to CNN, the 10-day "[Python Bowl](#)" contest awarded all-terrain vehicles and cash to the hunters who killed the most and biggest pythons, which can grow to 20 feet (6.10 m) in length.

**A Florida woman who fed vultures, alligators and other wildlife** at her gated-community home agreed to pay \$53,000 to settle a lawsuit brought by her homeowners' association. According to a Jan. 16 ABC News [story](#), Irma Acosta Arya was also permanently enjoined from feeding wildlife.

**The Siku app and Web platform, named for the Inuktitut word for sea ice**, lets users post observations about dangerous Arctic ice or weather conditions, record wildlife sightings and trade hunting stories and oral Inuit history. According to a Dec. 4 [report](#) by The Canadian Press, the app integrates modern weather, sea ice and satellite imagery and allows travelers to post about potentially perilous conditions. The app, on SIKU.org, offers Social, Wildlife, Sea Ice

and Tools posts. Sea Ice, for example, provides users with the ability to report on conditions, while the Tools button provides ways to capture data with an ice core or water sample. “It’s time for the harpoon and the computer to work together,” said a Hudson’s Bay hunter who died recently.

## Europe



**In 2002, Orkney had just 300 breeding pairs of greylag geese;** since then, the resident wild goose population has inexplicably soared to 23,000, leading to extensive crop damage. In December, the BBC News [reported](#) that SNH, Scottish National Heritage, has granted permission for the wild birds to be shot by hunters and then sold by butcher shops across the country. Steve Rogers of Orkney Shooting Holidays said, “what we're doing isn't really a sport anymore, it's a necessity; [it's also] good for tourism.”

**A Dutch high court in May 2019 suspended permits** for construction projects that pollute the atmosphere with nitrogen compounds, stalling the expansion of dairy, pig and poultry farms—major sources of nitrogen from animal waste. In 118 of 162 Dutch nature reserves, nitrogen deposits exceed ecological risk thresholds by an average of 50%. A Dec. 4 *Science* [story](#) shows Dutch farmers protesting the ruling by holding up traffic with their tractors.

**Greenland's Viking colonies may have disappeared** in the 15th Century because of their overexploitation of walrus. For centuries, ivory traded across Europe came from walrus taken by Norse settlers in Greenland. Over time, the ivory came from ever smaller animals from ever farther north. Without ivory, Norse Greenlanders had nothing to trade for iron and timber, and the settlements were abandoned. The [findings](#) were published on Feb. 1 in *Quaternary Science Reviews*.

**The German Hunting Association took a position on the decline of chamois** (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) in the Alps. The DJV [suggests](#) a range of cooperative actions and demands that human use of chamois habitat be balanced with chamois conservation and that chamois reduction by state forest authorities should be re-evaluated.

**Germany believes the Selous Game Reserve hydropower dam**, now approved, will cause irreparable [damage](#) and risk withdrawal of the reserve's UNESCO World Heritage standing. In a position [paper](#), the German government offered Tanzania assistance with alternative and decentralized energy supply.

**Hunting in Germany is no longer a male domain.** Twenty-five years ago, only one percent of German hunting-license holders were women; today, 7% of the country's 384,000 hunting license holders are women. And in [hunting courses](#) surveyed by the German Hunting Association, participation by women reaches 24%.

**German hunting license holders doubled between 2008 and 2018.** In 2018, 20,060 novice hunters sat for the obligatory written, oral and practical license tests; 19% did not pass. The rigorous training courses for the first hunting license cost between €2,000 and €3,000 (\$2,250 - \$3,450).

**Also in Germany, hunters brought almost 36,000 tons of game meat to the table.** Between April 2017 and March 2018, game consumption increased in Germany by more than a third. Wild boar was the most popular, at 19,737 tons, followed by roe deer (12,368 tons), red deer

(2,633 tons) and fallow deer (1,276 tons). The video "[Trending: Wild Foods](#)" (in German) explains the attraction of such high-quality, tasty meat obtained in a climate-neutral way.

## Africa



**The importance of the hunting industry to rural economies** and the need to involve those communities in conservation was a highlight of the 17th African Wildlife Consultative Forum in Victoria Falls last November. This side of the conservation story (90% of the CAMPFIRE Program's Zimbabwe budget comes from hunting, and 70% of that from elephant hunting) and how the region has suffered due to trophy import restrictions in hunters' home countries must be told, [reported](#) the SCI Foundation in January.

**Millions of people in Sub-Saharan Africa eat bushmeat;** many of them could be exposed to bacteria that cause diseases such as anthrax, brucellosis and Q-fever, [said](#) researchers from Penn State University, who also found a high prevalence of Clostridium bacteria, linked to botulism and tetanus.

**Poaching and bushmeat threaten wildlife and biodiversity in Angola.** Researchers who surveyed markets in five Angolan cities concluded that poaching and the bushmeat trade are

beyond government control. Angola is one of the richest and most biodiverse countries in Africa, with an estimated 117 species of amphibians, 278 reptile species, 358 freshwater fishes and 275 species of mammals. The [report](#) was published in *Nature Conservation* in December.

**African Parks took over Zakouma National Park** in southeastern Chad in 2010, after 90% of the region's elephants had been butchered. Since then, the slaughter has been reduced dramatically, with only 24 elephants poached in the decade since and no ivory lost. According to a November 2019 [report](#) in *National Geographic*, African Parks is a private non-profit organization that presently has contracts to manage 15 parks in nine countries, bringing funding, efficient business practices and rigorous law enforcement to troubled wild landscapes.

**African Parks earned a cool \$1,440,625 from the sale of an Aston Martin** at [RM Sotheby's](#) international collector-car auction at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Nov. 30, 2019. The Aston, a rare One-77 model, was consigned by Markus Jepsen on behalf of Auction4Wildlife, all proceeds to benefit African Parks.

**Eight lions near Predators Rock Bush Lodge** in South Africa's North West Province have been poisoned and killed, according to a January 4 [report](#) on SA's News24. The carcasses—two males and six females, three of which were pregnant—had their paws and snouts removed. One of the females had three cubs, two of which also died. Predators Rock is registered as a zoo and a CITES breeding facility.

**“Extraordinary” drought threatens SA's wildlife industry.** According to a Jan. 6 [report](#) on Reuters.com, wildlife generates revenue for South Africa through tourism, hunting, breeding and meat production. Trophy hunting alone generated 2 billion rand (\$140 million) in 2016, according to research for the SA environment ministry. WRSA, Wildlife Ranching South Africa, estimates the Northern Cape Province has lost more than two-thirds of its game over the past three years. Southern Africa's temperatures are rising at twice the global average rate and in much of South Africa reservoir levels are dropping. The country has more than 9,000 wildlife ranches.

**Savé Valley will donate game to other parks.** Even after losing a third of its area to land reform, the conservancy, in the southeastern lowveld of Zimbabwe, still comprises 750,000 acres of diverse habitat. Savé Valley has offered buffalo, lion, elephant and other game to restock Chizarira National Park and two private game reserves, Sapi Safari Area and Mavuradonha, says a January 10 *NewsDay* [report](#).

**“Trophic rewilding” in Mozambique’s Gorongosa National Park** with large animals has controlled the encroachment of the notoriously invasive *Mimosa pigra* shrub, which restricts access to water and inhibits native vegetation. A January 13 [article](#) in *Nature Ecology & Evolution* details some of the benefits of Gorongosa’s successful reintroduction of native large herbivores.

***In memoriam: Dr. Markus Borner***, who shaped conservation in Africa with “passion and pragmatism” for more than four decades. This [obituary](#), from the Frankfurt Zoological Society, continues: “For more than three decades the Serengeti was Markus Borner’s home. Without him and his inimitably positive way of inspiring people, bringing together the right people at the right time, the Serengeti would certainly not be what it is today: an icon among Africa’s national parks.” Dr. Borner was also involved with mountain gorillas in the DR Congo; in Zambia he initiated the reintroduction of black rhinos to North Luangwa; and in the Ethiopian highlands he oversaw the protection of the Bale Mountains. Dr. Borner died on January 10.

## Asia



**India will reintroduce cheetah.** Per a BBC News [story](#) on Jan. 28, India's Supreme Court has approved the government's request to import cheetah, a species listed under CITES as endangered, from Namibia to be released into the wild "on an experimental basis." Wild cheetahs were reportedly sighted in India for the last time in 1967-68.

**Vietnam's blue-boat poaching fleet must be controlled** according to a Dec. 4 [study](#): "A flotilla of Vietnamese fishing boats with crews suffering in harsh conditions is stripping Pacific coral reefs of seafood as the poaching escalates to become an international human rights and security issue." Dr. Andrew Song, joint ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies and World Fish research fellow at James Cook University, has produced the first analysis of international attempts to manage Vietnam's fleet of small fishing vessels, commonly painted blue, that travel thousands of miles to target high-value Pacific species like sea cucumbers and giant clams on coral reefs.

**Animated shows with animal characters** can increase public interest in real wildlife and boost donations to conservation programs at zoos. Recent [research](#) by the University of Tokyo

highlights the potential of entertainment-conservation partnerships to foster public interest in the natural world as people become increasingly urbanized.

**In northern Mongolia, reindeer herders make significant** seasonal use of *munkh mus*, “eternal ice,” to cool heat-stressed animals and provide respite from insects. However, a Nov. 20 [article](#) in PLOS ONE warns that climate change-induced ice melting now seriously threatens the viability of these summer pastures and reindeer herds.

**Chinese officials seized 23+ tons of pangolin scales**, according to a Dec. 20 [story](#) on Mongabay.com. Altogether, this massive haul, from about 50,000 pangolins, was the largest seizure of illegal wildlife products in China in 2019. The scales came from Africa and were being smuggled into China—in batches wrapped in layers of ginger slices—from Busan, South Korea; 18 suspects were detained.

**Pakistan’s Sindh Province has approved trophy hunting.** [Quoted](#) in *The Express Tribune* on Jan. 8, chief minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said it was not to generate revenue but to manage, conserve and protect wildlife and habitats. Trophy hunting takes place in game reserves, private lands and state lands; it is not allowed in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. Quotas for 2020 were set at five Punjab urial (*Ovis vignei punjabiensis*) for foreigners at \$14,000 each; and 15 Sindh wild goats (*Capra aegagrus blythi*) for foreigners at \$5,600 each and five for Pakistani nationals at Rs300,000 (\$1,950) each.

**China’s Belt & Road Initiative develops infrastructure** in 152 countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas—often in conservation-sensitive areas. According to Beijing, its global development strategy, adopted in 2013, benefits everyone, but Chinese state banks fund the projects and Chinese state-owned companies build the ports, bridges and roads almost alone. Poor countries often can repay the resultant debt only by transferring ownership of the new infrastructure to China. The Belt & Road Initiative has been the subject of global discussion; this Jan. 16 [analysis](#) by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* is one of many reports on the campaign.

**Indonesia's Aceh Province is deliberating using Sharia Law** to defend Sumatran rhinos, according to a Jan. 10 Mongabay.com [story](#). The move would add 100 lashes of the cane to the jail time and fines demanded for poachers under national law.

## World



**The IUCN World Conservation Congress—One Nature, One Future—**on 11 to 19 June, in Marseille, France, will provide a platform for scientists, policy experts, business and government leaders and professionals from around the globe to share insights, forge partnerships, define the global conservation agenda and find solutions to pressing environmental challenges. The [program](#) is on the IUCN website.

**More than one-third of the world's remaining pristine forests** are either managed or owned by indigenous peoples, a new study found. The [report](#), on Mongabay.com on Jan. 16, notes that indigenous peoples play a critical role in ensuring that their ecosystems are in good health—and that their rights to manage and control these areas must be respected and protected.

**Global temperatures on land and at sea in December 2019 were the second-highest** recorded for December since 1880, when record-keeping began. That capped off the second-

hottest entire year on record, according to data [released](#) by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and reported on Mongabay.com.

**Margaret Renkl, *New York Times* op-ed writer**, offers some very doable resolutions for living more lightly on the earth in 2020. Renkl's column, "[Effortless Environmentalism](#)" notes that this should be the year we start actually doing something about climate change, however small our individual actions may be: Study our local plants and animals; put up a bird feeder or two; support or plant native plants; provide an environment that supports local wildlife; prevent invasive species from spreading; help wildlife stay wild. Find out if there is a conservation plan for your area. Become a citizen scientist and gather data on migratory birds, the locations and movements of plants and wildlife. Create your personal conservation plan!



**Publisher**

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Conservation Frontlines and the free electronic distribution of its media are funded by the

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