



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



Frontlines Dispatches From Around The World

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North & South America



Chronic wasting disease is one of the big issues facing trophy-deer breeders, [writes](#) John Myers in the *Duluth (MN) News Tribune*. The always-fatal disease has expanded from a single site in Colorado to 26 states and three Canadian provinces over the past 50 years. It can now be found in pen-raised and wild deer in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and the Dakotas. A similar [article](#) by Tony Kennedy, in the *Star Tribune*, notes “Fenced hunting preserves have become a flash point over who is to blame for the spread of chronic wasting disease.” There are more than 100 deer farms in Minnesota alone.

Chronic Wasting Disease has been confirmed in elk in Montana. According to a Nov. 25 *Mountain Journal* story, a wild, free-range cow wapiti [tested](#) positive for CWD after it was killed by a hunter on private land in Red Lodge, on the eastern slope of the Beartooth Mountains.

The US Senate is considering a national CWD task force. A *Powell (WY) Tribune* [story](#) reports that WVA Agriculture Commissioner Kent Leonhardt told the Senate’s Environment and Public Works Committee that CWD is “the single greatest threat to hunting and conservation in America today.” The 2020 House Agriculture Appropriations bill would provide \$15 million to state wildlife agencies for CWD surveillance and testing. The bill is currently in conference with the Senate. Whit Fosburgh, of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, urged

senators to “reach out to your colleagues on the Appropriations Committee and ask them to support . . . the Agriculture Appropriations bill.”

The US House Natural Resources Committee voted to pass the [Recovering America's Wildlife Act](#) (HR 3472) and the [Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act](#) (HR 877) by strong bipartisan vote in December. Both bills are critical to funding the highly successful North American Wildlife Management Model as well as state efforts to recruit and retain hunters and fund chronic wasting disease research. Both now await further action in the House of Representatives.

The US Senate [confirmed](#) Aurelia Skipwith as the next Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service on a bipartisan vote in December. Ms. Skipwith was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, where she oversaw the management of lands and waters within the National Park Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The National Wild Turkey Federation has about 235,000 members. The wild turkey is the second most popular game in the US, behind deer. Overall, bird species have declined alarmingly, but wild turkeys have made a strong comeback through trap-and-release programs and conservation funding. There are an estimated 6.25 million wild turkeys in North America today, up from 1.3 million when the NWTF formed in 1973. Read the recent [story](#) in *The New York Times*.

New Hampshire's turkey population has exploded to around 40,000. Reintroductions in neighboring states and around the country have met similar success—there are 60,000 wild turkeys in Maine, 45,000 in Vermont and 25,000 in Massachusetts. According to a recent [nationalgeographic.com article](#), the birds are (like [whitetail deer, wild boar and other species](#)) becoming suburban nuisances.

While most bird populations waned in North America, waterfowl also flourished, increasing by 53% since 1970. [According](#) to the director of the North Dakota Wildlife Federation, John Bradley, ducks, geese and other wetlands birds have benefited from decades of habitat restoration funded by waterfowl hunters who buy duck stamps, gear, guns and ammunition. Now other species need conservation funding.

Songbirds on the decline. Conservation technician Jim Freeman, in the *Gallipolis (OH) Daily Tribune*, [writes](#) that domestic cats kill up to 2.4 billion birds a year, with window strikes adding

another 600 million, cars 214 million and power lines 34 million, while bright city lights distract millions of migrating birds. He notes, “People like to point out wind turbines as bird killers, but for every single bird killed by a turbine, perhaps thousands are killed by Fluffy and her kind.”

New Mexico Game Commissioners met with State Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard to protest her unilateral closure of 200 acres of prime waterfowl hunting area southwest of the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge. According to a December [story](#) in the *Los Alamos (NM) Reporter*, NMDG&F Director Michael Sloane; Joanna Prukop, chair of the state game commission; Roberta Salazar-Henry, the commission’s vice-chair and Jesse Deubel, executive director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation opposed the closure.

Wyoming’s sage grouse prospects are poor, according to new data from the state’s Game and Fish Dept. According to a Jan. 8 [report](#) in the *Laramie (WY) Boomerang*, hens averaged 1.1 chicks each in 2019; for the population to expand, 1.5 chicks per hen are necessary. The news comes as Wyoming, and the rest of the West, is in the third year of sage grouse declines. Drought, loss of habitat, invasive species, fire and human influences all likely contribute to the decline.

Feral hogs were [spotted](#) a few miles north of Montana and many experts believe the invasive, prolific and highly damaging animals have already taken up residence in the high plains. In December Todd Wilkinson wrote, in *Mountain Journal*, “What’s the bigger threat to this part of the world—native bison wandering out of Yellowstone National Park into Montana or invading non-native feral hogs now entering the state for the first time, crossing the invisible international border from Canada?”

In 1999, Washington State’s Makah tribe had its first successful gray whale hunt in 70 years. It was also their last. Now, reports a recent *New York Times* [article](#), the Makah want to resume whaling under an old treaty that explicitly allows them to do so. Animal-rights activists and some conservationists call the practice “barbaric.” Tribal members say the matter goes beyond their right to hunt; it is about restoring Native identity, honoring indigenous treaties and respecting age-old traditions.

Colorado may soon vote on reintroducing wolves to the state. A recent DenverChannel.com [story](#) reported that wolf proponents, who believe the predators will help restore Colorado’s ecological balance, turned in more than 211,000 signatures in favor of putting the issue on the ballot. Opponents say there are long-term economic and environmental consequences that

aren't being considered. (Both camps would be well advised to study the [expansion](#) of wolf populations in Europe, and the consequences thereof.)

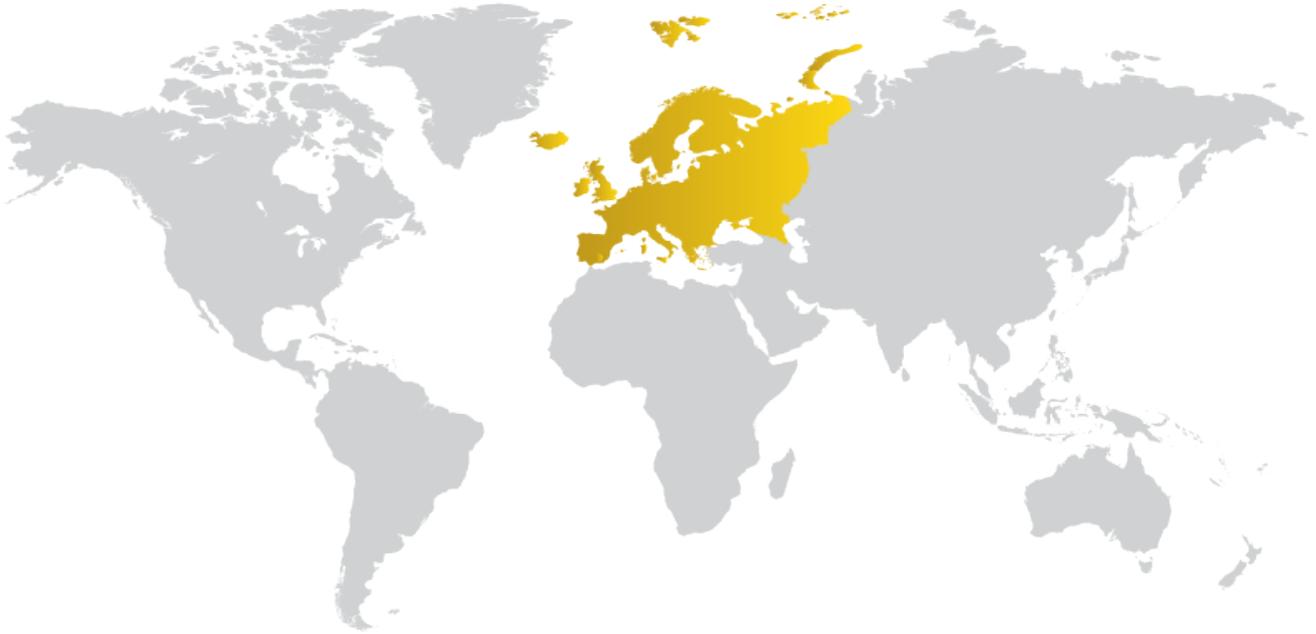
Conservation Visions [announced](#) a new partnership with the [Cabela Family Foundation](#), the philanthropic legacy of Dick and Mary Cabela, in support of the [Wild Harvest Initiative](#), the first attempt to “synthesize and evaluate the combined economic, conservation and social benefits of recreational wild animal harvests in North American society.”

Oregon State researchers [identified](#) forests in the western US that should be preserved for their potential to mitigate climate change and preserve biodiversity. Those forests are mainly along the Pacific coast and in the Cascade Range, with pockets in the northern Rockies. Not logging those forests would be the CO2 equivalent of halting eight years of fossil-fuel burning in the western US. The scientists, writing in *Ecological Applications*, noted that making land stewardship a higher societal priority is crucial for altering the climate change trajectory.

Chinese pond mussels, which can approach the size of footballs, have been eradicated from some New Jersey ponds, where they had threatened to spread to the nearby Delaware River and wreak ecological havoc. Radio station WHYY [reported](#) that first all the fish—including some invasive bighead carp—in the ponds were killed, and then a copper-based algae that attacks mollusks was introduced. The mussel eradication is a significant success in invasive-species management.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service [found](#) “no basis” to investigate Donald Trump Jr.'s argali hunt in Mongolia, reports TheHill.com. The investigation was prompted by a complaint from a nonprofit organization focused on protecting endangered species. ProPublica first [reported](#) on the issue in early December.

Europe



Schools dramatically improve children's knowledge of animals. The [MammalWeb project](#) involved lending researchers' camera traps to 42 primary schools in the northeast of England for one month. In that time, schools gathered more than 2,000 photo sequences and children's knowledge of native mammals increased from an average of three species to six.

Rapidly biodegradable Eco-Wads for steel shot cartridges are available from Eley Hawk in the UK, per a November [report](#) by the Countryside Alliance. The wad, with "vegetable biomass additives," dissolves in water within 24 hours and leaves behind no plastic residues; its trace minerals reportedly turn into compost.

The European Parliamentary Intergroup "Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside" was [re-established](#) in December with the support of more than 130 members. Sustainable land use and biodiversity conservation are important to EU citizens, land owners and managers, hunters and the newly elected European Parliament. The Intergroup aims to affirm the socio-economic importance of hunting and other countryside activities.

Norway's reindeer populations, endemic to the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, are recovering, according to a recent [study](#) published by The Wildlife Society. However, inland reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus platyrhynchus*) are thriving more than their coastal brethren because

extremely rapid climate change now makes coastal Svalbard wetter and warmer during the winter.

Africa



Internationally renowned conservation biologist Dr. Amy Dickman, who has been working in Africa for 20-plus years on carnivore ecology and resolving human-wildlife conflict, talks to *The Guardian*'s Nicola Davis about trying to bring a halt to the decline in wild cat populations, including the role that trophy hunting might play, in this [podcast](#).

Fifty graduates in Natural Resource Management from the [Southern African Wildlife College](#) are returning to their respective parks across Africa to help usher in a new era in conservation. This year's graduates' countries include Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia.

Chinese Embassy seeks "practical cooperation" in combating wildlife trade. At a press conference in November, Xiusheng Wang, Deputy Chief of Mission and Political Counseling in Lilongwe/Malawi, [said](#) there is a need to oppose "double standards" for wildlife conservation: "Hunting for pleasure is extremely cruel and especially the social celebrities flaunting hunting results is more likely to cause demonstrative effects, endangering the reproduction of the

wildlife.” China, he said, attaches great importance to strengthening cooperation with African countries in wildlife protection and fighting poaching and illegal trade.

South Africa declared a firearms amnesty from 1 December 2019 to 31 May 2020 and by mid-January 2,266 “illegal or unwanted” firearms and almost 40,000 rounds of ammunition had been turned in, according to a [report](#) in the *Daily Maverick*. After being examined for possible use in illegal activities, the guns and ammunition will be destroyed.

Meanwhile, in Gabon, Russia’s defense ministry has [donated](#) firearms to help battle poachers and protect the country’s forest elephants. This according to Prof. Keith Somerville’s [blog](#) on *Africa Sustainable Conservation News*.

Namibia’s Environment Minister [highlighted](#) hunting at November’s annual meeting of NAPHA, the Namibia Professional Hunting Association. The Hon. Pohamba Shifeta pointed out that in Namibia, the economic contribution of wildlife has overtaken livestock production, and selective high-value conservation hunting is an important part of Namibia’s integrated sustainable development and conservation strategy. According to Shifeta, any foreign ban on hunting trophies will erode the conservation progress.

Namibia’s black rhino custodians [received](#) NAPHA’s Conservationist of the Year Award, recognizing decades of effort in protecting state-owned black rhino on private property. Some 550 of the animals were under management in Namibia at the end of 2019; the costs of protecting, monitoring and feeding them are borne by custodians. Namibia’s goal is to re-establish the black rhino, *Diceros bicornis bicornis*, in viable, healthy breeding populations that can be sustainably utilized by 2030.

Rhino poaching in Namibia dropped to 41 animals killed in 2019, compared with 72 during the previous year, according to a Dec. 19 Reuters [article](#). Namibia’s Ministry of Environment and Tourism charged 329 people with poaching offences between 2014 and 2018; 17 were Chinese and the rest were African.

The 1999-2020 anniversary edition of HUNTINAMIBIA is available for [download](#) with articles by authors such as Minister Pohamba Shifeta, NAPHA President Danene van der Westhuyzen, the Namibian Chamber of Environment, Gail Potgieter, Dr. Jürgen Hoffmann and more.

Six rhinos, black and white, were killed by poachers in the Okavango Delta between October and November 2019, [reported](#) the rhino coordinator at Botswana's Dept. of Wildlife in *Africa Wildlife and Conservation News*. This brings the number of rhinos killed illegally there since last April to 15.

Abu Dhabi's Environmental Agency has re-introduced addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*) to Chad in partnership with the Sahara Conservation Fund. According to a [story](#) in *The National*, 15 of the rare spiral-horn antelope, bred in captivity, were flown from the UAE to Chad in late November, to be acclimatized in a holding pen before their release into the wild.

Asia



Forest fires in Indonesia’s Sembilang National Park tore into vital habitat for Sumatran tigers and elephants. In November, [Mongabay.com](#) [reported](#) that about 30% of the park’s tiger habitat burned between August and September. The fires also encroached into Padang Sugihan Sebokor Wildlife Reserve, possibly destroying half those parks’ elephant habitat. The fires are attributed to farmers’ slash-and-burn clearing techniques.

Taman Negara, Malaysia’s largest National Park, was established in the colonial era with the help of Theodore Rathbone Hubback (1872-1942). A [story](#) on Cilisos.my recalls the conservation efforts of this “persistent British hunter.” Hubback wrote *Elephant and Seladang Hunting in the Federated Malay States* (1905) and *Big-Game Shooting: with an article on the Tiger* (1924); he also gave his name to the country’s second-largest land mammal, the Malayan gaur or seladang, *Bos gaurus hubbacki*.

A court in Tehran convicted eight conservationists in November of spying and handed down prison sentences ranging from four to 10 years. According to [Mongabay.com](#), the eight were affiliated with the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, working to save the critically endangered Asiatic cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*) and other species. The charges stem from allegations that they used wildlife camera traps for espionage. They have been

imprisoned since being arrested in January 2018. A ninth conservationist apprehended at the same time died in custody.

Tigers are gone from Laos. Nam Et-Phou Louey, a remote protected area in northern Laos, was that country's last haven for wild tigers. In 2013, camera traps set by researchers confirmed the presence of two tigers. Over the following four years they observed 43 mammal and bird species, but never saw the tigers again. The [report](#), appearing in January on ScientificAmerican.com, is subtitled "even bountiful habitat will not save species if poaching cannot be stopped."

Don't confuse "poaching" with "hunting," [writes](#) Rob Breeding on Montana's FlatheadBeacon.com, citing a World Wildlife Fund plea for snow-leopard conservation that seems to imply they are the same. Breeding points out that controlled hunting for argali, blue sheep and ibex in snow-leopard habitat provides conservation funds for mountain communities that are in fact the snow leopard's salvation. (*Editor's note:* It shouldn't need saying, but the definition of poaching is "the illegal hunting or capturing of wild game.")

The Sumatran serow is a Totally Protected Species. Under the Wildlife Conservation Act of 2010, the illegal possession of *Capricornis sumatraensis*, a mountain goat-like animal called *kambing gurun* in Malaysia, is a felony bearing a fine of up to RM500,000 (\$122,850) and a maximum of five years in prison. Malaysia's *Sun Daily* website recently reported that between 2013 and 2019, 39 people, locals and foreigners, were [punished](#) for poaching serow.

Pacific



NZ stag sale expects strong results, says a [story](#) in the *Otago Daily Times*. In January, buyers from across New Zealand made the annual pilgrimage to Foveran Deer Park, in the Hakataramea Valley, for its 37th annual “elite sire stag sale.” All the deer sold will have “a six-generation pedigree” and are said to come from German and English bloodlines crossed, through embryo transfer and artificial insemination, with genetics from elsewhere in New Zealand. Foveran Deer Park also offers trophy hunting. (*Editor’s note: These deer bear no similarity to free-ranging wild red deer; they are genetically engineered monstrosities raised on formulated diets.*)

World



Evidence-driven debate is absent from popular animal-activist movements. While international conservation scientists were holding a considered debate on trophy hunting, with all the pros and cons, “rabid activists were digging up imaginary dirt on them,” [writes](#) Gail Potgieter in South Africa’s *Daily Maverick*. Her article, “Activists shoot down scientists—and we all lose,” points out the hypocrisy among certain animal-rights groups looking to discredit wildlife scientists who support hunting as a conservation mechanism.

Chinese traders are driving a global massacre of donkeys by buying millions of hides from developing countries. Sciencemag.org [reports](#) that donkey hides are used to make *ejiao*, a Chinese folk medicine that combines mineral water with collagen extracted from donkey hides by boiling them in an ancient 99-step process. Chinese farmers have been unable to keep up with the exploding demand, which has now triggered steep donkey population declines in African countries, where owners can get as much as \$200 per animal.



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