



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



Frontlines Dispatches From Around The World

North & South America	2
Europe	6
Africa	7
Asia	11
Pacific	12
World	14

North & South America



The Migratory Bird Treaty Act is being gutted. According to *Popular Science*, on Jan. 30 Trump officials announced a [plan](#) to release individuals and companies from account for harm to birds. Previously, the MBTA addressed environmental disasters like the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, when BP had to pay \$100 million to restore bird habitats; without MBTA’s “incidental take” language, this wouldn’t have happened. The proposed change also affects longline fisheries that unintentionally hook albatrosses, wind-energy installations that kill birds and construction projects that disrupt nesting sites. The new rule isn’t official yet, but it’s already having effects: In Virginia, a nesting site for 25,000 birds was paved as part of a bridge expansion, and transportation officials avoided USFWS penalties for destroying the habitat.

Window technology could save billions of birds, says a Mongabay.com [report](#). Combining ultraviolet coatings on glass with solutions that control interior light and heat give building owners a bird-friendly choice. One billion birds die each year in the US from collisions with windows.

One million waterfowl use the Chesapeake Bay (nearly one-third of the Atlantic Coast's migratory waterfowl) as their wintering grounds and 70% to 90% of all Atlantic striped bass spawn in the Chesapeake. According to the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, on Feb. 5 the US House [passed](#) HR 1620, the Chesapeake Bay Program Reauthorization Act, on a bipartisan suspension vote.

Senate passes the America's Conservation Enhancement Act. The ACE, HR 925, is now in the House of Representatives. According to the *Duluth News Tribune*, a coalition of more than 50 hunting, fishing and outdoor-recreation groups have [asked](#) the House to pass this bipartisan legislation that invests in wetlands, fisheries, chronic wasting disease research and major environmental restoration efforts.

Deer overpopulation, meet women who hunt. A *NY Times* [story](#) from Feb. 6 reports that on Long Island, "women are taking to the woods in part to deal with an exploding deer population" and adds that "Women, in fact, are [the fastest growing demographic in hunting](#); they now account for as much as [15% of hunters nationwide](#), according to a study from the Fish and Wildlife Service. In New York State, as in the rest of the country, the number of first-time adult male hunters declined by over 30% over the last 15 years, while the number of women hunting for the first time increased at roughly the same rate."

Bear-baiting bans rejected in Idaho and Wyoming. According to a Feb. 11 [report](#) by the Heartland Institute, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Forest Service have asked the Idaho District Court to dismiss a lawsuit by environmental groups demanding a ban on black bear baiting in national forests in Idaho and Wyoming in order to protect grizzly bears. Idaho prohibits hunting black bears over bait in areas inhabited by grizzlies; Wyoming prohibits baiting in designated grizzly bear recovery areas. Both states also offer hunters help in distinguishing between black bears and grizzly bears.

Polar bears are thinner and having fewer cubs as sea ice melts, according to a Baffin Bay [study](#) led by the Univ. of Washington and published in *Ecological Applications*. In addition, the bears are spending more time on land than they did in the 1990s. "Climate-induced changes in the

Arctic are clearly affecting polar bears,” the study concluded; “They are an icon of climate change, but they’re also an early indicator of climate change because they are so dependent on sea ice.”

Shed hunters in Utah must take an ethics course before gathering dropped antlers. The [program](#) is intended to protect deer, elk and moose and their habitats from stress in late winter, when food is especially scarce and animals’ fat reserves are lowest.

A million dollars’ worth of shark fins were seized in Miami on Jan. 24, CBS News [reported](#). The US Fish and Wildlife Service said that the 1,400 lbs (635 kg) of dried fins likely came from South America and were headed to Asia, where shark fins are used in soup and traditional medicine. Shark “finning”—cutting fins from live animals and then throwing them back into the sea to die—is illegal in US waters, but trade in fins is not. Conservationists estimate that up to 73 million sharks are “finned” worldwide annually and are urging Congress to pass the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act.

Colorado forests are recovering from the bark beetle. New research from Univ. of Colorado Boulder indicates that even simultaneous bark-beetle outbreaks are not a death sentence for the state’s forests. Between 2005 and 2017, a severe outbreak of spruce bark beetles affected more than 741,000 acres of high-elevation forest and the western balsam bark beetle infested subalpine fir trees across 124,000 acres. But the [study](#), published in *Ecology*, found that these forests are “quite resilient” and have a good chance of recovery. One thing that is slowing down the recovery: foraging elk and deer.

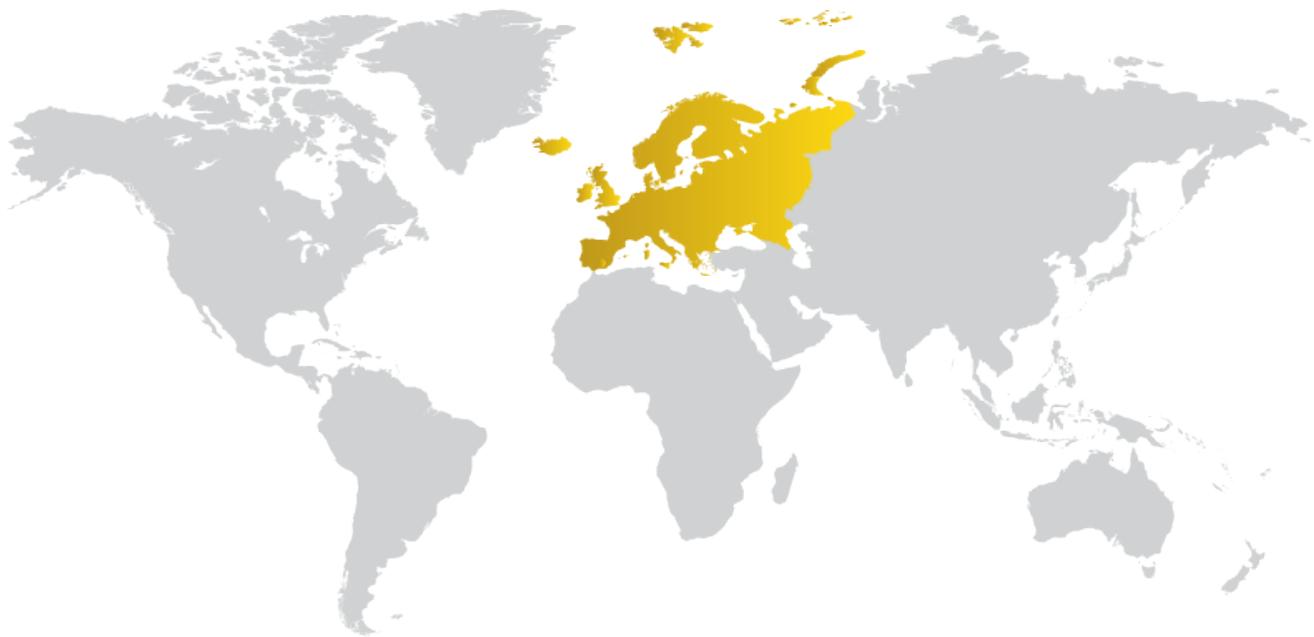
“Advocates, biologists look to hunters to save raptors from lead” says a Feb. 15 [article](#) in Wyoming’s *Gillette News Record*. Minnesota’s College of Veterinary Science Raptor Center reports that 90% of the bald eagles it examined have elevated lead residues. In the past 24 years, more than 500 eagles at the clinic have either died or had to be euthanized due to lead poisoning, and data point conclusively to lead ammunition from wounded deer and deer gut piles left by hunters as “a significant if not primary source of toxicity.” Technicians at the WY

Game and Fish Dept. lab in Laramie urge fellow-hunters to buy non-lead birdshot and bullets to stop lead poisoning and to reduce anti-hunting sentiment.

Climate change is causing competition for grazing in Chile. A joint British-Chilean [study](#) released on Feb. 6 reports that increasing aridity is driving wild guanacos, a llama-like species, out of their normal high Andean habitat to lower pastures where they conflict with cattle. Some ranchers want guanacos to be culled.

Confiscated game does *not* go in the Dumpster. That's the conclusion of a February *Outdoor Life* [investigation](#) into what happens to culled, poached, euthanized, possibly road-killed and other game seized by state fish & game agencies: "It's unclear if every state donates confiscated and culled meat. But after extensive research and interviews it looks as though most of this meat is making it into the freezers of the people who need it most, and very little is wasted as long as it is safe for human consumption."

Europe



The Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside Intergroup in the European Parliament laid down the basis for its work in the current parliamentary term at its [first meeting](#), in February. More than 130 MEPs will represent rural actors for the next EU Biodiversity Strategy, the reform of its Agricultural Policy and the EU Green Deal.

Animal-rights activists have driven a neuroscience lab from Germany to China. On Jan. 27, *Science* [reported](#) that Nikos Logothetis, at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics, in Tübingen, Germany, said that the first members of his lab will soon move to a new International Center for Primate Brain Research in Shanghai. The Chinese are building a new facility that will house as many as 6,000 primates for genetic-engineering studies. Research on nonhuman primates is much more accepted in China than in Europe.

Asian hornets are spreading across Europe and threatening not only honeybees but entire ecosystems. A [paper](#) in *Evolutionary Systematics* reports that in September 2019, an Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*) was collected alive in Hamburg, Germany—the northernmost extent of the species so far in Europe. Known to prey on many insects, since

2005 the Asian hornet has invaded France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Great Britain and now Germany.

German hunter numbers have been growing for years. In Germany, the right to hunt is connected to hunters' legal obligation to conserve biodiversity. Hunters also have a mandate to minimize game damage to forestry and agriculture, and they assist authorities in preventing wildlife disease. As well, hunting is recognized as a way to procure healthy meat that can be eaten "with a clear conscience." Read the [report](#), in German, which also covers the intensive (and expensive) government-administered oral and written [hunters' exam](#) and shooting test.

Africa



SCI will investigate reports of canned lion hunts. According to a *NY Times* [story](#) on Feb. 14, Safari Club International CEO W. Laird Hamberlin launched an ethics investigation after seeing undercover Humane Society video that apparently shows vendors at SCI's recent convention promoting trips to shoot captive-bred lions in Africa. "Under my leadership, [SCI] will take all necessary action to ensure that all of our partners adhere to the policies that are instrumental

in making us First for Hunters," Hamberlin said. Hamberlin also challenged the Humane Society to provide SCI with its raw, unedited videos from the Reno convention.

Botswana has issued a quota for hunting 272 elephant bulls in 2020, 202 by visitors, after last year's national elections and a mandate to rescind the previous administration's ban on trophy hunting. The hunting season will last from April to September. A license auction took place in Gaborone in February and, according to a *DefenceWeb* [report](#), six of the seven hunting packages of 10 elephants each brought a total of 25.7 million pula (\$2,475,000). The seventh package apparently failed to meet its reserve price. Botswana has the world's largest elephant population with at least 130,000 animals.

A loss of genetic diversity in a population of African lions was likely caused by ecological rather than human factors, according to a Jan. 20 [report](#) in *SciTechDaily*. Scientists found that diversity loss among 149 African lions in the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area in northern Botswana was caused by the lions' need to adapt to differing habitats. Dr. Simon Dures: "The findings have important applications for wildlife managers across Africa. It means translocations of animals, post human-wildlife conflict, for example, need to be carefully considered with regards to their genetic predisposition to their new environment."

Twelve Madagascar pochard ducklings were born in the wild in November after conservationists introduced 21 young adult pochard (*Aythya innotata*) to Lake Sofia in northern Madagascar. A recent *Mongabay.com* [report](#) says that the pochard population declined rapidly in the mid-20th Century and the ducks had been feared extinct.

Rhino poaching in South Africa has declined for a fifth straight year—594 rhinos were found poached in 2019, down from 769 in 2018. A Feb. 7 [report](#) on *Mongabay.com* credits this to technologies that speed up reaction times, improved information collection and sharing between law-enforcement agencies, greater cooperation at the regional and national level, and more meaningful engagement of the private sector.

African Parks takes over management of Angola's Iona National Park. The landmark [agreement](#) was announced recently by the International Conservation Corps. It ensures the protection of 10,000 square miles of Namib Desert in the southwest corner of Angola. African Parks' management portfolio now includes 17 national parks in 11 countries.

South Africa's decision to place more than 30 wild species—including rhino, lion and cheetah —on a list of “farm” animals that can be improved by breeding could cause significant damage to their genetic diversity, scientists warn in the current [issue](#) of the *South African Journal of Science*. *Conservation Frontlines* also [reported](#) on this issue.

Gorillas are still at risk from tourists. From a Feb. 13 [report](#) from Ohio University and Uganda: “Over 40% of the 1,059 mountain gorillas [*Gorilla beringei beringei*] that remain on the planet today are in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in southwestern Uganda, and these apes are the heart of a growing tourism industry that has incentivized their continued protection. But gorillas are particularly susceptible to infectious diseases that affect humans, and respiratory infections are the most common, causing up to 20% of sudden deaths in gorillas. Accordingly, the Uganda Wildlife Authority [limits] each habituated gorilla group to a single hour-long visit per day by a group of no more than eight tourists. Current rules emphasize that humans must maintain a seven-meter (or greater) distance from gorillas at all times, which in the absence of wind is the minimum safe distance to avoid a sneezed droplet carrying infectious particles. A number of studies over the years have documented that not all tour groups respect the seven-meter rule.”

Extreme swarms of locusts are affecting Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Eritrea, Tanzania and Uganda and could fly into South Sudan. One swarm in northeast Kenya was 37 miles long and 25 miles wide and contained up to 80 million adult locusts. Climate change may have contributed to the outbreak, [according](#) to the UNEP, and the UN Food and Agricultural Organization [warned](#) that the swarms could increase by 500 times by June.

“Diversifying local livelihoods while sustaining wildlife: Exploring incentives for community-based conservation”—from the Luc Hoffmann Institute and WWF-Norway—explores 130-plus

initiatives for wildlife conservation in southern and East Africa. Promising options include carbon credits, payment for ecosystem services, sustainable agriculture, wild product trade and sustainable forestry. Read the full [report](#) in the Conservation Frontlines Library.

Hydro dams will heavily impact fish across Africa and Asia. Researchers [publishing](#) in the US Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in early February say that the habitats of fish species in the Amazon, Niger, Congo, Salween and Mekong river basins will be severely fragmented by dams that are under construction or planned. This is the first time that researchers have mapped the impact of current and future river dams on fish habitats worldwide.

Asia



The giant Chinese paddlefish is gone. A Jan. 7 *Science* [report](#) calls this the “latest official extinction.” The fish, up to 7 metres (23 feet) long, inhabited the Yangtze River, but no specimens have been reported since 2003 and there are none in captivity. Chinese paddlefish have remained largely unchanged for the past 200 million years but overfishing and habitat loss have ended their long run.

The Wild Sheep Foundation and the government of Mongolia have signed a memorandum of understanding that will fund new conservation programs for *Caprinae* in Mongolia and engage local people in conservation efforts. The foundation, based in Bozeman, Montana, announced the [agreement](#) in early February. WSF and Safari Club International have signed similar MOUs with Kazakhstan and are close to finalizing a MOU with Tajikistan.

The 6th International Women and Sustainable Hunting Conference will begin in Yakutsk, capital of the Sakha Republic in the Asian Russian Federation, on 20 August 2020. The focus will be “Hunting, Sustainability and Tourism.” Contact Irina Doroshina (Chief Specialist, the

Dept. of International Affairs of the Russian Association of Hunters and Fishermen) at rushuntcic@gmail.com for details.

The Convention on Migratory Species' 13th Conference of Parties was held in February in Gandhinagar, India, with the [aim](#) of protecting migratory animal species worldwide, most of which are in decline. The CMS also appointed “ambassadors”; one of them is the British animal-rights activist Ian Redmond, who is currently campaigning to ban the import of hunting trophies into the UK.

Pacific



The platypus faces extinction, according to a new [study](#) on *ScienceDirect*. One of Australia's most enigmatic and iconic natives, the duck-billed platypus, currently listed as “near-threatened” on the IUCN Red List, is being pushed toward extinction by severe drought and heat, habitat loss and other human activities.

Australia will continue to kill cats. In response to petitions demanding an end to Australia's feral house-cat cull, Agriculture Minister Bridget McKenzie said that the pests, found across

99.8% of Australia, pose the single biggest threat to native wildlife. ([SSAA](#), Dec. 19, 2019)
“Feral cats have contributed to more than 20 mammal extinctions as well as threatening survival of at least another 124 native Australian animals at risk of extinction,” she said. “We are removing feral cats . . . in a way that’s humane, effective and justifiable.” In 2015, The Federal Government launched the campaign to eradicate two million feral cats by shooting, baiting and trapping.

Dart guns and helicopters may no longer be needed. Researchers from the Univ. of South Australia have developed a [way](#) to perform basic health checks of wildlife digitally. In the study, nine species (panda, lion, tiger, orangutan, baboon, koala, kangaroo, alpaca and penguin) in the Adelaide Zoo were filmed for three minutes from up to 40 metres away with a high-resolution digital camera on a tripod, which picked up tiny chest movements that indicate heart and breathing rates. No physical contact with the animals or other disruption was needed. Now the goal is to extend the technology to animals outside a zoo setting.

World



At the zoo, size matters. Scientists from Trinity College Dublin, Species360 and NUI Galway have [found](#) that zoos, as centers for public education, are having significant positive impacts on the conservation of biodiversity as Earth enters its sixth mass extinction. They have also quantified the effect of zoos by assessing how variations in animal collections affect attendance.

The lights are going out for fireflies. A team of biologists led by Tufts University (Massachusetts) has [found](#) that habitat loss, pesticides and artificial light are endangering fireflies around the world. Fireflies belong to an economically important insect group, with more than 2,000 different species spread out across the globe.

“Shocking” effects shown by 150-year-old marine samples. Plankton collected during the 1872-76 HMS *Challenger* expedition have shells far thicker than those of today’s foraminifera. A Feb. 3 [report](#) in *Science* compares measurements of specimens found in London’s Museum of Natural History with others collected in 2011. Ocean acidification due to excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is the most likely cause. Acidic waters eat away at the calcium carbonate shells and exoskeletons of organisms from crabs to corals.

Protecting big, charismatic species has an umbrella effect in protecting ecosystems. A [study](#) led by the Univ. of Arizona has found that not only are larger animals and plants at higher risk of extinction, but their loss would fundamentally degrade life on earth. The continued loss of large animals alone would lead to a 44% reduction in the total amount of wild animal biomass on the planet and a 92% reduction in soil fertility. “There are fundamental scientific principles that explain why large animals and trees matter for the health and integrity of all life on Earth,” said lead author Prof. Brian Enquist.

The last woolly mammoths died of inbreeding, a new [study](#) in *Genome Biology and Evolution* reports. Some 300 to 500 mammoths survived on Wrangel Island, off the coast of Siberia, until about 5,000 years ago. Elsewhere, woolly mammoths, one of the most abundant cold-adapted species on earth, died off around 12,000 years ago due to dramatic climate change. But the mutated genes of the Wrangel mammoths indicates that their small population had developed a number of genetic defects that may have proved fatal for them.

As intense human activities spread, habitat is lost to many species, and their populations will decline. A new [study](#) in *ScienceDirect* finds more than 20,000 land-animal species are experiencing intense pressure from the global human footprint.



Publisher

Conservation Frontlines Foundation (USA)

Editor-in-Chief

Gerhard R. Damm (South Africa)

Co-Editor

Silvio Calabi (USA)

Consulting Editor & Hunting Brand Development

Derek Carstens (South Africa)

Administrative Director: Colleen Roberts (USA)

Design and Digital: Estee Bauernebel (USA)

Opinions expressed in the quarterly *Conservation Frontlines* e-magazine, in our monthly *Frontlines Dispatches* and on our [website](#) are not necessarily those of the Conservation Frontlines Foundation and/or the editors. While every care is taken in the preparation of our publications, neither Conservation Frontlines Foundation nor its editors accept any responsibility for errors. *Conservation Frontlines* and *Frontlines Dispatches* are published as a free service to the public. Please share our publications with others who may be interested. You can subscribe [HERE](#). To read or download previous issues click *Conservation Frontlines* or *Frontlines Dispatches*.

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

Conservation Frontlines Foundation

PO Box 917, Middleburg, VA 20118-917, USA

Email: admin@conservationfrontlines.org

© 2020 Conservation Frontlines Foundation 501(c)3. All Rights Reserved.