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## Frontlines Dispatches From Around The World

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## North & South America



**The Pennsylvania Game Commission announced that 374,690 deer** were taken in the state’s 2018-19 hunting seasons—the most in 14 years and topping the previous year’s harvest by about 10%. The buck harvest was the fourth largest since the start of antler restrictions, in 2002, but a 10% decline from 2017-18. The antlerless deer harvest rose 10% over the year before, to a reported 226,990 animals. Details are in the [York Daily Digest](#).

**In the US, 11 million hunters kill 6 million whitetail deer annually**—but this is not nearly enough to stabilize, let alone reduce, populations, [writes George Smith](#) in CentralMaine.com. He quotes a US Forest Service botanist who calls overabundant whitetail deer “the greatest conservation challenge of our time.” In the 1980s, US whitetail populations started to explode in areas where more people were living and hunting was restricted; now, instead of five to 15 deer per square mile, as is common in rural areas, urban and suburban areas are accommodating 40, 80 or even 100 deer per square mile. And deer aren’t the only overabundant species across the US—others include (in certain regions) wolves, wild horses and iguanas.

**A Montana [hailstorm](#) wiped out 12,000 wetlands birds**—one quarter of the entire bird population of the Big Lake Wildlife Management Area—over the weekend of August 17-18. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks biologists found “ducks and shorebirds with broken wings, smashed skulls and other signs of internal bleeding.” The area received two inches of hail driven by 70 MPH winds, which also ruined crops, broke windows and damaged roofs and vehicles. Big Lake and the surrounding wetlands are nesting areas for dozens of species of ducks, geese, cormorants, gulls, pelicans and other waterfowl. To protect survivors, officials will monitor for signs of diseases caused by rotting carcasses.

**The Recovering America’s Wildlife Act is landmark legislation** on par with other historic US conservation laws such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918), the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (Dingell–Johnson, 1950) and the Endangered Species Act (1973). The new bipartisan [legislation](#), introduced by Debbie Dingell (D-Michigan) and Jeff Fortenberry (R-Nebraska) with at least 61 cosponsors, proposes to provide sufficient funding to states to conserve imperiled species identified in State Wildlife Action Plans. It is championed by the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish & Wildlife Resources—26 energy, business and conservation leaders assembled in 2014 by North America’s Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The new law is expected to send \$1.3 billion annually to states for fish and wildlife conservation.

**Wildlife groups spoke out against the CECIL Act**, aka the Conserving Ecosystems by Ceasing the Importation of Large Animal Trophies Act (HR 2245), introduced in April by Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-Arizona). In a July 25 [letter](#) to the US House Natural Resources Committee’s Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife, The Wildlife Society and more than 30 partner organizations warn that the “bill represents an ill-conceived attempt to substitute uninformed prejudices for the management strategies of the wildlife authorities successfully conserving the world’s largest populations of lions, elephants and other African species in their range

countries. . . . If implemented, H.R. 2245 would undermine some of the most effective strategies for conserving the world's wildlife."

**The Texas Court of Appeals reaffirmed state ownership of wildlife** as well as Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's authority over them. A [dispute](#) between a commercial deer breeder and TPWD, centering on the ownership of captive-bred whitetail deer, was resolved on June 28. The breeder wished to establish that bred deer are private property and thus exempt from the department's requirement to test captive deer populations for chronic wasting disease.

**Texas has more than 5,000 ranches breeding non-native animals**, according to the *Dallas Morning News*. A July 23 [editorial](#) calls for an official state census and tracking of exotic animals as well as more research and regulations to encourage the increase of breeding stocks. On private ranches across the state, scimitar-horned oryx populations have grown to about 15,000, addax antelopes to about 9,000 and dama gazelles to about 2,500—many of which have been sent to their native lands of Senegal, Chad and Tunisia, where the species are, or were, on the verge of extinction.

**The Interior Dept. and a Native Corp. agreed to trade land** in the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, in southwestern Alaska. According to a [Reuters story](#) filed on July 24, the swap would allow an unpaved road to be built through a designated wilderness. Supporters of the deal say that a roadway along bird-rich Kinzarof Lagoon would give residents of King Cove, an Aleut village of about 1,000 people, emergency access to an all-weather airstrip at Cold Bay. Environmentalists say the road would destroy valuable habitat, that villagers have better alternatives for emergency services and that the project is really intended to serve commercial fishing interests. Further legal action is likely.

**Conservation and sportsmen's groups are lobbying for animal-crossing structures** in the [2020 Highway Bill](#) budget. The groups include the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Trout Unlimited and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation

Partnership. Speaking to Montana's [KPAX News](#) on July 23, Christy Plumer, TRCP chief conservation officer, said "We had a 30-plus-organization letter that went up to the committee leadership, and within that letter, we requested at least \$50 million be included for a new program specifically dedicated to wildlife crossings. We ideally would love to see something upwards of \$100 million annually. These projects are expensive but they're vital." One beneficiary would be the [mountain lions](#) cut off by Rte. 15 in the Santa Ana Mountains in Temecula, California.

**Wyoming's Super Tag raffle raises millions for wildlife.** This year 87,112 tickets were sold for a chance to win one of 11 so-called Super Tags. A Super Tag allows a hunter to choose any open hunting area in the state for bighorn sheep, moose, mountain goat, elk, bison, deer, pronghorn, black bear, gray wolf or mountain lion—or, with the single Trifecta tag, a combination of three species of their choice. A 12th winner in the July 15 drawing won a package of hunting gear. The [2019 raffle](#) raised \$1.1 million for the state's Game and Fish general fund. Tickets for the [2020 Super Tag](#) drawing went on sale on July 17 and will be available until July 1, 2020.

**Bass Pro Shops [joins](#) the Wild Harvest Initiative** to publicize the economic, social and conservation value of recreational hunting in the US and Canada. The initiative, developed by [Conservation Visions](#), will address questions such as: How many pounds of food are procured through hunting and angling? How much of this food is shared with family and friends? How much would it cost to replace this food, not just in dollars and cents, but ecologically? By exploring sustainable use of wildlife in the contexts of food security, human health and fitness, wildlife and habitat conservation, animal health and welfare, ecological and environmental concerns and economic prosperity, this program will demonstrate the benefits of wildlife and wild animal harvesting to the public.

**Alabama will allow sandhill crane hunting**, joining Tennessee and Kentucky as the third state east of the Mississippi to recognize the sandhill crane as a gamebird. An August 9 NPR [report](#) says that the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division will conduct a drawing for

400 sandhill crane permits this year, the first time the state has allowed the bird to be hunted in more than 100 years.

**The PREDATORS Act intends to reduce human-predator conflict.** Introduced by an unusual coalition of senators from Wyoming, Delaware and New Jersey, S. 2194—The Promoting Resourceful and Effective Deterrents Against Threats Or Risks involving Species (PREDATORS) Act—would establish a Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize for reducing conflict through innovative, non-lethal technologies. The first hearing on the proposal, on July 24, focused on bear attacks, which are increasing in the Greater Yellowstone Area as grizzly bear populations and range expand.

**Seal bombs don't help, might actually hurt West Coast commercial fisheries.** An August 22 [story](#) in *High Mountain News* details the efforts of squid, anchovy and salmon netters to save their catches—and their nets and livelihoods—from sea lions. The Marine Mammal Act of 1972 protected threatened species, but sea lion populations in particular have more than tripled since then. Commercial fishermen, no longer allowed to shoot sea lions, try to drive them away from their nets with 3-inch “seal bombs.” But the explosives are ineffective and may harm other marine life. Reportedly, fishermen set off as many as 37,500 seal bombs per month in Southern California from 2005 to 2016.

# Africa



**Sixteen critically endangered black rhinos** were moved from South Africa to safer territory in eSwatini, formerly Swaziland. A July 26 [report](#) in Smithsonian.com says that the group includes adult breeding bulls and cows, juveniles and small calves, making it “demographically complete.” The animals had been at a game ranch, but the threat of poaching in South Africa had driven the cost of protection to unsustainable levels. The 16 rhinos now live at a national park recommended by the [IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group](#).

**A private piece of South Africa will be sold to protect rhinos.** Mauricedale Nature Estate, a 6,600-hectare (16,300-acre) property just 10 miles from Kruger National Park, will be auctioned off on September 25 by owner John Hume to raise funds for his rhino breeding project. Hume’s [Buffalo Dream Ranch](#), in the North West Province, now holds some 1,732 white rhino and has not suffered a poaching incident in two and a half years. However, operating and security costs are forcing Hume to sell Mauricedale, his last significant asset. He hopes to realize at least R400 million (\$24 million) from the sale. A prospectus for Mauricedale Nature Estate, which includes mountains, rivers and plains as well as accommodations,

infrastructure and telecommunications and is zoned for residential development, is available from [media@mlpmedia.co.za](mailto:media@mlpmedia.co.za).

**Pres. Magufuli has initiated the Stiegler's Gorge dam project** inside Tanzania's Selous Game Reserve despite the environmental impact on this UNESCO World Heritage Site. According to a July 27 [report](#) in *The Independent*, the dam across the Rufiji River is expected to be 130 metres high and 700 metres long (142 x 765 yds) and to take three years to complete. The project will remove 2.6 million trees and flood about 1,200 sq km (463 sq mi) of habitat for elephants, black rhinos and other wildlife. Also threatened are the livelihoods of tens of thousands of people who depend on the river for agriculture and fisheries. "It would cut the heart out of the Selous Reserve, with catastrophic impacts on the site's wildlife and habitats," said Peter Shadie, of the IUCN's World Heritage Program. Pres. Magufuli called the dam the "start of economic independence" for Tanzania and said that by providing energy, the dam would deter locals from felling trees for fuel. According to a Reuters [report](#), the dam will split the 50,000 sq km (19,000 sq mi) Selous Game Reserve in two, and the larger area, to the north, will become a national park where hunting is no longer permitted. Pres. Magufuli said that south of the dam,, some 47 blocks would continue to be leased to hunting companies.

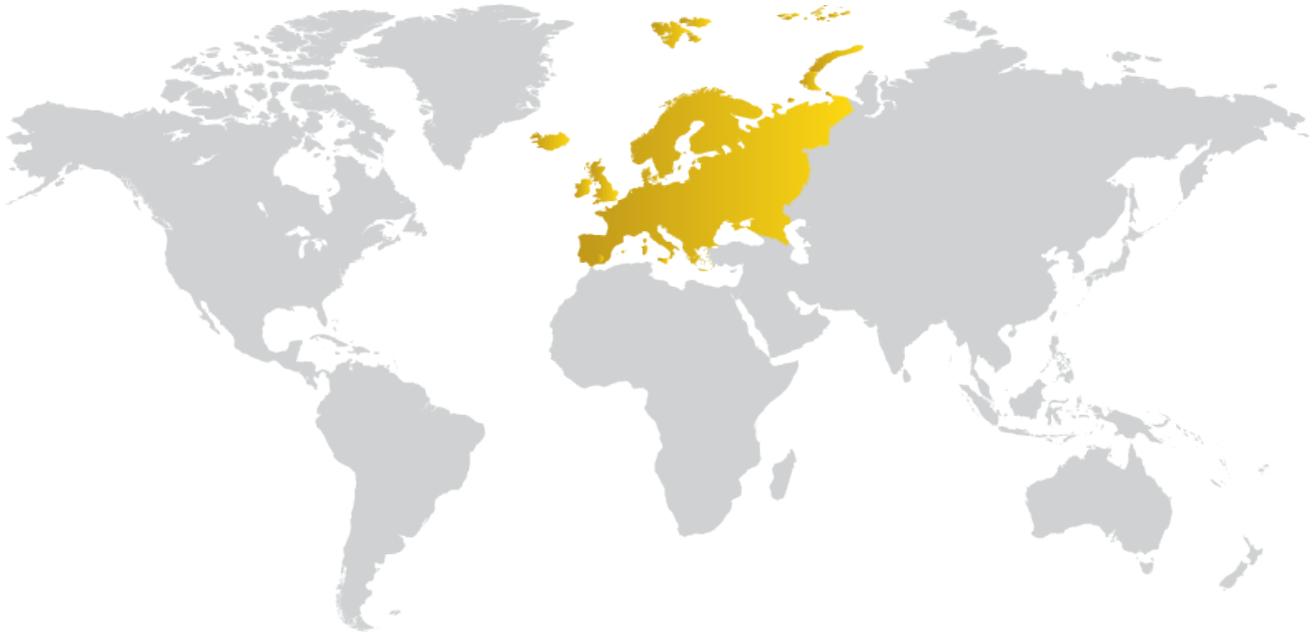
**South Sudan's six national parks and 13 game reserves** cover more than 13% of the country, but wildlife that survived the country's civil war is now increasingly threatened by poaching and human settlement. According to a July 27 AP [report](#) on Britain's News1130, the parks are rudimentary, lacking lodges, visitors' centers and roads, and South Sudan has no tourism to speak of. The country allocated just \$6 million for parks and reserves last year. In June, South Sudan received a pledge of \$7.6 million from the US Agency for International Development and another \$1.5 million from the Wildlife Conservation Society, both for parks protection. Fauna & Flora International is teaching rangers and community members to develop conservation tourism as an alternative source of revenue for a country whose economy is almost entirely based on oil.

**In Disney's *The Lion King*, people are missing from the African landscape**—but it is humans living with lions who hold the key to wildlife's survival and recovery, write Fred Nelson and John Kamanga in a July 25 [commentary](#) on Mongabay.com. Balancing the costs and trade-offs of living with wildlife is a fundamental challenge for the conservation of large mammals in Africa, and locally driven conservation methods and investments must be supported and scaled up. The authors do not explicitly discuss the conservation contribution of well-regulated lion hunting.

**The Sahara Conservation Fund had a new CEO** as of August 1. [John Watkin](#) is a highly experienced conservationist with more than 25 years of field experience in Central and East Africa; he replaces John Newby, SCF's founding CEO, who will continue to serve as Senior Advisor to the organization. SCF is a leader in biodiversity conservation of Sahelo-Saharan species.

**Keith Somerville's *Humans and Lions: Conflict, Conservation and Coexistence*** was published by Routledge in July. The [book](#) traces man's relationship with lions through history, from hominids to the Romans, through Africa's colonial occupation and independence to the present day, and examines the current conservation crisis and the conflict between Western animal welfare concepts and sustainable development. Prof. Somerville is a contributor to *Conservation Frontlines*; CF will review the book in October.

# Europe



**British PM Boris Johnson's girlfriend [Carrie Symonds](#)**, a former Conservative Party communications official, is now a senior adviser to conservation charity Oceana, and her Twitter feed is filled with stories ranging from overfishing to [banning trophy hunting](#). Some analysts believe she will have the PM's ear on animal welfare, an issue that Johnson unexpectedly touched on during his inaugural speech. The UK's new Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [Theresa Villiers](#), also has publicly supported a hunting ban.

**Scottish Natural Heritage launched a 12-week consultation about wild birds** in July. The discussion will cover circumstances when wild birds can be controlled under General License, in order to make changes to the current set of licenses for 2020. All wild birds in Scotland are protected by law, but in some circumstances SNH allows wild birds to be controlled—for example, to prevent serious damage to crops, to protect public health and to ensure air safety when flocks of birds threaten flight paths. Documents are available at <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/2019GL/>.

**Born Free's #ShootToThrill photo [competition](#)** is meant to promote the British foundation's campaign against trophy and canned hunting. Howard Jones, BFF's CEO, has said, "Hundreds of thousands of innocent animals have been murdered by trophy hunters in the last decade alone. Most hunters claim that the money they pay to the hunting outfitters helps wildlife conservation and local economy but it's all a myth—in fact research shows that alternative activities such as photographic tourism can generate far more revenue from wildlife than trophy hunting." (Many wildlife conservation experts dispute this.)

**France has [decided](#) that up to 6,000 Eurasian curlew**—in rapid decline across the UK and Europe—can be hunted. Dismissing expert advice, including recommendations from its own *Comité d'Experts sur la Gestion Adaptative*, the government will not renew a moratorium on hunting the threatened shorebird, which expired on July 31. The decision also contravened its obligations under the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement. The UK's Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust announced that it will challenge the decision. The [curlew](#) is classified as a Priority Species in the UK and was added to the Red List of threatened species in 2015.

**The European Commission sets its sights on lead.** In August, the EC formally asked ECHA, the European Chemicals Agency, to "prepare a proposal addressing the risk to wildlife and humans (via the consumption of game meat) from lead in all ammunition . . . Lead in fishing weights is also included in the request." So says a [bulletin](#) from the CIC, the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation, which is concerned about animal welfare and the potential environmental impacts of lead-free alternatives.

## Asia



**In India, 22 species have disappeared** in recent decades, according to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. A July 30 [article](#) in *The Hindu* reports that 18 kinds of plants and four species of mammals are now extinct in India, including the cheetah and the Sumatran rhinoceros. The pink-headed duck has been feared extinct since 1950 and the Himalayan quail was last reported in 1876. India outlawed hunting nearly 50 years ago.

**The UK's *Daily Star* [claims](#) the tiger extinction crisis** is worsening and blames poaching, habitat loss due to economic development and trophy hunting. This contradicts a July 29 *New York Times* [report](#) (from last month's *Dispatches*) that Indian tiger populations have increased by about 33%, to nearly 3,000, since 2014, and ignores the fact that India banned tiger hunting in 1971. See also *National Geographic's* "A Concise [History](#) of Tiger Hunting In India."

**"[Status of Tigers in India—2018](#)"** pegged India's current tiger population at 2,967, while yet another [report](#), from the National Tiger Conservation Authority, says that at least half of India's 50 tiger reserves are threatened by "linear infrastructure" such as roads, highways and railway lines. A July 31 [summary](#) on Mongabay.com reports that neighboring countries also

have improved tiger conservation: Nepal has nearly doubled its tiger population, from 121 in 2009 to 235 in 2018, while Bangladesh and Bhutan recently recorded 114 and 103 tigers respectively.

**Wildlife in Kaziranga National Park is threatened by monsoon floods.** The park, which spreads across the floodplains of the Brahmaputra River in India's Assam State and is home to almost two-thirds of the world's remaining one-horned rhinos, is about 80% underwater, according to a [report](#) in Al Jazeera. As of July 20, 51 animals had been found dead, four of them rhinos.

**Fifty-five pieces of rhino horn** weighing 125 kilograms (275 lbs) worth as much as \$16.5 million were discovered hidden in plaster at Hanoi's Noi Bai airport in July. A France24 [story](#) says the horns were found the same day police arrested a key wildlife trafficking suspect and two other men with seven frozen tiger carcasses at the airport.

**The Environment Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in Pakistan** said the population of Kashmir markhor (*Capra falconeri cashmiriensis*) has reached 5,511, while 3,876 Himalayan ibex (*Capra sibirica sakeen*) were counted in northern parts of the province. According to Syed Mohammed Ishtiaq, in a Pakistan Dawn [article](#) on August 2, "The population of wild animals increased mainly due to the conservation of habitats and involvement of local communities. The department generated \$342,000 by auctioning four trophy hunting permits of markhor." The minister also claimed that the province's forest cover had increased by 6.3% thanks to the successful completion of the Billion Trees Tsunami project, which has clamped down on illegal logging and added 1.2 million trees to the province's forests.

## Pacific



**Tasmania's Dept. of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment** has banned all hunting with bows, according to a July 31 [story](#) on the Australian website iamhunter.net. Bow hunting for native species anywhere in Australia was already illegal before Minister Peter Gutwein's directive; and in Tasmania only rabbits, hares, wild goats and feral cats were allowed to be taken with a bow. Gutwein called bow hunting "disgusting and cruel."

## World



**African elephants may no longer be captured for zoos** anywhere in the world. The [decision](#) became part of the [CITES](#) Treaty on August 28, at the triennial meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora. There are two exceptions: Elephants from Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa may be exported to African countries where elephants live or used to live; and other export may be allowed if a country can prove that there is a genuine conservation benefit to sending an elephant elsewhere. The decision, which was contentious, came down to elephant family structures versus population control and revenue. [Conservation Frontlines](#) will report in depth on CITES 18—when 182 countries and the European Union gathered in Geneva, Switzerland, to discuss wildlife-related trade regulations—in its October issue.



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