

Mountain Protected Areas

UPDATE

June 2020 # 106

Let's work together with kindness and compassion. Let's keep our thoughts on what is special to us. Let's focus on caring for ourselves, our loved ones and the natural places we love.

*Victorian National Parks Association
March 2020*

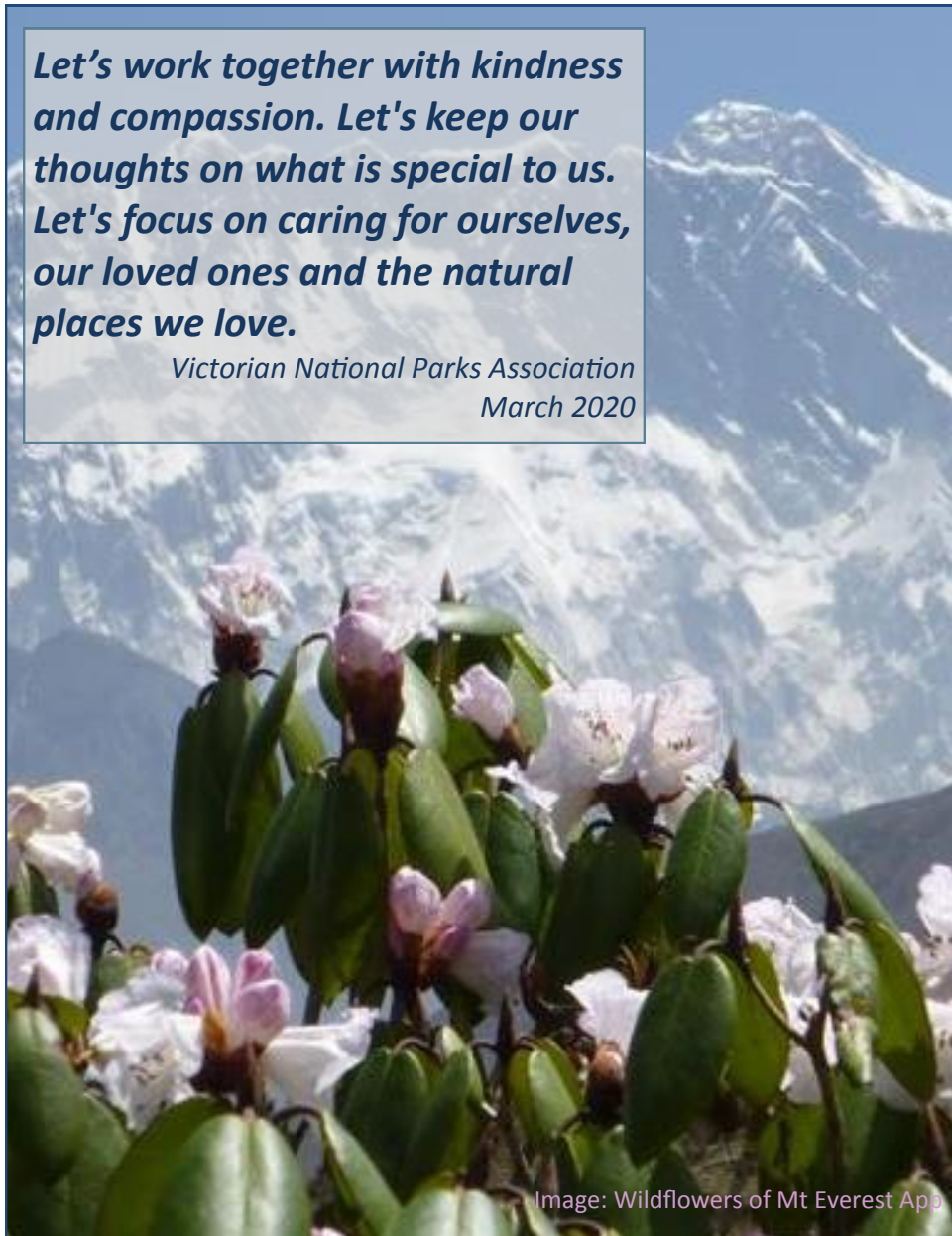


Image: Wildflowers of Mt Everest Ap

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A note from the editor

It was not possible to put together this 106th edition without a few articles in the Mountain UPDATE about the pandemic we have all lived with for the past 3 to 4 months; a strange and challenging time of great tragedy and conflict. In Australia there is a saying "we are all in this together..." of course this is not strictly true as some are "in this" more than others. People, parks, wildlife, nature...all impacted differently but all needing to be kept safe and healthy!

Due to so many cancelled and postponed meetings I have left out "Meetings of interest" but please read on for the usual mix of mountain stories and articles from around the world. And don't forget World Environment Day 5 June.

June 2, 2020

From *People and Mountains* around the world:

Global

News from *Peter Jacobs*, Chair IUCN WCPA Mountain Specialist Group

The world's system of protected areas includes many outstanding areas in mountainous regions. Relative to other ecoregions, ecosystems, or landforms, mountains are well represented among the world's protected areas. Outside Antarctica, 17% to 19% of mountain areas are protected globally.

Nevertheless, there are many mountainous areas of high biodiversity value that are poorly or inadequately protected. Of the 6109 Key Biodiversity Areas located in mountains, 52% are less than 30% protected and 40.4% are completely unprotected.

A recent study of world ecosystems and their level of protection (Sayre et al 2019) identified broadly five biomes in mountains; Snow and Ice, Forest, Grassland, Shrubland and Sparse/Bare cover.

Snow and Ice is the most protected (38%) and Grassland is the least protected (9.6%). Forest, the most extensive biome covering over 50% of mountains, is 18.7% protected but accounts for 56.4% of the mountain protected area estate.

These snapshots highlight the challenge for mountain protection to be comprehensive and representative of mountain diversity. As the world moves towards raising the global proportion of protected and conserved areas towards 30% over the next decade, we need to identify and advocate for new mountain protected areas based on values that are currently inadequately protected. This is a focus of work of the WCPA Mountains Specialist Group.

Sayre, R. et al (2019) An assessment of the representation of ecosystems in global protected areas using new maps of World Climate Regions and World Ecosystems. *Global Ecology and Conservation* 21 (2020)

Seeing is believing: earth's climate crisis

Ed Note: on 50th Anniversary of Earth Day the World Conservation Society (WCS) launched a 'photo album' by WCS scientists and friends. Here are 2 of particular mountain interest.

New Zealand—in only a decade



"I did a glacier walk on the Franz Joseph Glacier on the South Island in 2007 (left). Thirteen years later, my parents went to the area. You can't access the glacier on foot anymore, but they returned to the same spot and snapped a picture (right). The differences are astounding."

—Jake LaBelle, WCS Research Program Officer

France—signs at Mont Blanc



"Thanks to these postings, you can track the height of the glacier over the last 30 years. As you can see, it has retreated significantly."

—Nat Moss, Executive Director, WCS Strategic Communications

The climate crisis is happening now. On a global scale. Impacting all life on Earth. Humans, fauna, and flora. The world is experiencing a zoonotic pandemic. Species are dying out. Floods and fires are threatening the Earth's landscapes. Intense storms and sea-level rise are wiping away coastlines. Communities are being forced to relocate. Wildlife must adapt or find different habitats. These new extremes are changing how all species function, including us. [These are not distant problems](#), which is why viable solutions are more critical than ever. **WCS**

From *People and Mountains* around the world:

Global

Is Nature sending us a message?

Ed Note: much has been written about the connection between COVID-19 and the destruction of nature – here are a few summary statements from World Environment Day web site [World Environment Day](#) and UNEP’s Executive Director Inger Andersen

The emergence of COVID-19 has underscored the fact that when we destroy biodiversity, we destroy the system that supports human life. The more biodiverse an ecosystem is, the more difficult it is for one pathogen to spread rapidly or dominate; whereas, biodiversity loss provides opportunity for pathogens to pass between animals and people.

Human actions, including deforestation, encroachment on wildlife habitats, intensified agriculture, and acceleration of climate change, have upset the delicate balance of nature. We have changed the system that would naturally protect us, and have created conditions that allow particular pathogens—including coronaviruses –to spread.

Today, it is estimated that, globally, about one billion cases of illness and millions of deaths occur every year from diseases caused by coronaviruses; and [about 75 per cent of all emerging infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic](#), meaning that they are transmitted to people by animals.

Executive Director of the UNEP Inger Andersen said humanity was placing too many pressures on the natural world with damaging consequences, and warned that failing to take care of the planet meant not taking care of ourselves. She also noted other environmental impacts, such as the Australian bushfires, broken heat records and the worst locust invasion in Kenya (and northern India) for 70 years.

To prevent further outbreaks, leading scientists have said, both global heating and the destruction of the natural world for farming, mining and housing have to end, as both drive wildlife into contact with people. They also urged authorities to put an end to live animal markets – which they called an “ideal mixing bowl” for disease – and the illegal global animal trade.

Our continued erosion of wild spaces has brought us uncomfortably close to animals and plants that harbour diseases that can jump to humans.

At the end of the day, [with] all of these events, nature is sending us a message.

Matterhorn and messages of hope

ABC News April 2020

Zermatt-Matterhorn's director of tourism, said the projections were a message of hope and solidarity to the rest of the world during the COVID19 pandemic.

Words and messages, such as the Swiss word for solidarity as well as the hashtag #stayhome, have been projected onto the Matterhorn since the start of the pandemic, as well as the national flags of several countries.



The 4,478-metre peak overlooks Zermatt, a town in southern Switzerland. Zermatt Tourism

America-north

Closing Alberta's Provincial Parks: cut short the cuts!



Adapted from *Jodi Hilty - president and chief scientist of the Canmore-based Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y) Conservation Initiative*. Please read the whole opinion piece in Y2Y [NEWS](#) March 2020

The Alberta government (Canada) has announced it will be fully or partially closing 20 provincial parks and deregulating more than 160 others or handing them over to third-party managers.

Ten parks will be fully closed to the public, impacting 4,490 hectares of provincial land. Notably, the removal of a park's designation opens it to "alternate management approaches". This is misguided for 3 reasons.

1. Albertans love parks and getting out into nature, and so do the millions of tourists who visit for our turquoise lakes, green foothills, mountain vistas and rich wildlife. What's more, the province made this decision unilaterally without consulting the Albertans who use and love these parks.
2. This decision is at odds with the government's desire to promote nature-based tourism as part of economic diversification. When we diminish the experience and affect accessibility, we discourage visitors.
3. The provincial government committed to protecting 17 % of the province for nature conservation. The decision to defund and close parks diverges from that commitment.

It's also out of step with a federal government that just committed to 25 % of all lands protected across the country by 2025.

A change of plan?

In 2009, [Alberta's Plan for Parks](#) was released after being developed via a collaborative process, including consultations with Indigenous peoples, park visitors, MLAs, government staff, environmental non-profits and others.

The plan encouraged visitors to discover, value, protect and enjoy the natural world, preserve shared culture and build a legacy for current and future generations.

The resulting plan changed the way Alberta's parks are managed. How sad it would come to an end so quickly after its 10-year anniversary.

Mount St Helens 40 years later

From *Science May 2020 Mount St. Helens: what we've learned, and still don't know*. Interview [extract](#) with Charlie Crisafulli, ecologist U.S. Forest Service (R).

Q: Has the work at Mount St. Helens informed understandings about these processes in other places?

A: When a volcano starts acting up in Chile, or Japan, or Iceland, or New Zealand, we're often asked to anticipate what's likely to happen. To what extent are these lessons at Mount St. Helens general across different volcanic settings?



Photo: COURTNEY TALAK

What we have seen is strikingly similar patterns of ecological response.

In all cases, what we found is nutrient-impooverished volcanic material. And that's one of the biggest obstacles [to ecological recovery]. There seems to be always heroes at these volcanoes that play critically important roles. At Mount St. Helens it was species such as lupine and alder. They had a special association on their roots with bacteria that produce nitrogen. So they were able to exploit these landscapes, and in doing so, they modified these sites and facilitated the colonization of many other plants and animals. The pocket gophers survived under the volcanic deposits, and later would go on to burrow in the old forest soil. It mixed soil with volcanic tephra, creating this great place for plant growth. We see organisms playing the same roles at other volcanoes. In the case of Surtsey [in Iceland], it was seabirds. And when you go to Krakatoa in Indonesia, it's fruit-eating bats.

America-north

Ruby Mountains, Nevada, USA



Ed Note: the notes below are from 2019 but I can only imagine the issue is ongoing...if not in the Ruby Mountains then elsewhere. From Sierra Club May 2019

Sen. Cortez Masto is leading the fight to protect Nevada's **Ruby Mountains**-- a place that's cultural, recreational and ecological importance cannot be overstated. Its acres safeguard Native American history, abundant wildlife, breathtaking scenery and an entire local recreation economy.

The Ruby Mountains need these strong and permanent protections, especially in the face of the Trump administration's relentless attack on our public lands for oil and gas development.

Even places like the Rubies, which are virtually worthless in terms of oil and gas potential, but have an irreplaceable economic and natural value, are being caught up in the nonsensical rush to drill.

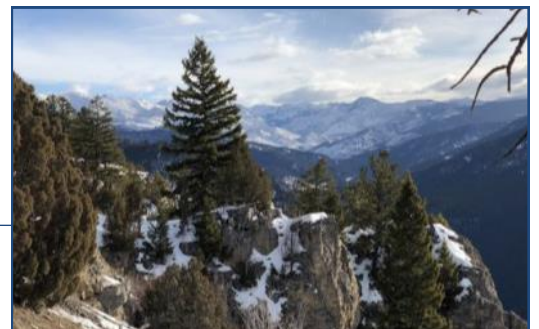
The Trump administration must halt its blind fossil fuel-first agenda that would destroy these places and the communities that depend on them.

Photos: David Melton Sierra Club



The **Ruby Mountains** are a mountain range in Nevada, USA. Most of the range is included within the **Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest**. The range reaches a maximum elevation of 3,471m on the summit of Ruby Dome.

The 'Rubies' were named after the garnets found by early explorers. The central core of the range shows extensive evidence of glaciation during recent ice ages, including U-shaped canyons, moraines, hanging valleys, and steeply carved granite mountains, cliffs, and cirques.



Storm Peak photo: AllTrails

Keep the Custer-Gallatin Wild

From Sierra Club May 2020

At over 3 million acres, the **Custer Gallatin National Forest** is an integral part of the vast Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the most intact temperate ecosystem remaining in the northern hemisphere. It provides unparalleled habitat for grizzly bears, wolves, bison, elk, lynx, and wolverines among many other species. It is adjacent to **Yellowstone National Park** allowing animals to migrate north, something that will only become more important with climate change.

The **Gallatin Range** is the only mountain range originating in Yellowstone National Park that does not have permanent protection.

The US Forest Service has released its draft management plan for the Custer-Gallatin National Forest.

[Send comments to the Forest Service](#) -The Sierra Club has developed a proposal that recommends **significantly more wilderness** than most of the alternatives in the draft plan. It balances already established recreation uses with the need to preserve habitat and enable connectivity across the landscape.

Big Picture Goals for the Custer Gallatin:

- Manage the Custer Gallatin with the future in mind, anticipating that climate change and population growth will significantly impact this ecosystem.
- Ensure connectivity for wildlife across the landscape.
- Work with state and private landowners and highway planners to facilitate wildlife movement along known travel corridors.
- Recommend wilderness for a significant portion of the Custer Gallatin
- Have the value of our public lands be placed in wildness rather than in timber or mineral wealth

America-South

Helping to interpret the mysterious & remote Chachapya Andes, Peru



Gocta Waterfall photo: Tourism Peru

From **Fausto Sarmiento**, Mountain Specialist Group committee member

Taken from Mountain science poised to help ecotourism in Peruvian cloud forests: Sarmiento FO et al [Access contents of this issue](#)>[Download this article as pdf](#)

This paper highlights how paleoecology, archaeology, and geoecology can assist ecotourism guides in Peru's **Chachapoya** region, providing stories about the history of cloud forest ecology in Peru's north eastern **Andes** and raising concerns about the future conservation of these mountain-scapes under human impact.

The eastern slopes of the Andes are underexplored and underexploited from the perspective of ecotourism. In the northern region of Chachapoyas where recent research was focused, phenomenal biodiversity and pre-Hispanic cultural diversity are present in such proximity to each other that an eco-tourist might encounter everything from mummies to marsupials.

Another interesting story is that many tropical montane cloud forests that were long thought to be "natural" are now seen as having long histories of human modification or "engineered" landscapes. The areas that tourists can readily access today are very likely to have long histories of intensive land use, dating to pre-Columbian times constituting de facto biocultural microrefugia.

Ecuador's hungry river?

A highlight of the landscape in Ecuador's **Cayambe Coca Park**, the San Rafael waterfall is now little more than a trickle.

The country's largest waterfall disappearance wasn't caused by a sudden drop in water levels, but because a gigantic hole opened up, changing the riverbed and diverting the river through a nearby arch that survived the collapse.

Exactly why the Coca River suddenly tunneled through its riverbed is a debated topic between geologists and conservationists.

Alfredo Carrasco, a geologist and former secretary of Natural Capital said (expose in Mongabay) that the San Rafael's location within a volcanic and earthquake-prone region likely played a role. Others, however, point to the existence of the new Coca Codo Sinclair hydroelectric plant, which sits about 20 km upstream of the San Rafael waterfall as a possible culprit. Emilio Cobo, coordinator of the South America Water Program at IUCN offered another explanation.

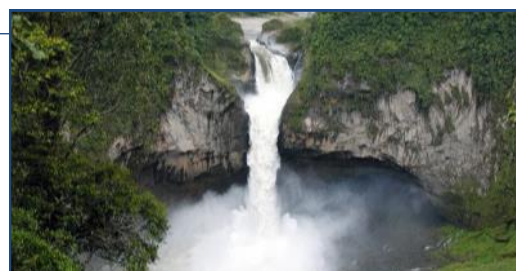
When a river loses sediments, water increases its erosive capacity, an effect called 'hungry waters'.

All rivers carry eroded sediments from the soils and rocks. Dams and reservoirs (such as for hydroelectric plants) trap part of this sediment, especially heavy materials, depriving the downstream river of its normal sediment load and increasing the rivers erosive capacity.

Montology is the transdisciplinary science of mountains. Current geoecological knowledge, paleoecological insights, and archaeological studies in the region's tropical montane cloud forests now complement one another.

Pollen data obtained from lakes tell stories of climate extremes beyond our modern experience, both wet and dry, against a backdrop of long-term change.

Biological and cultural diversity in these tropical montane cloud forests have been, and continue to be, shaped by climate change; but scientists have largely missed the opportunity to engage guides and tourists, and to enrich their experiences while informing them of montane conservation concern.



Earlier this year, the 500' San Rafael waterfall vanished. Photo: 2019

Africa

COVID19 highlights interdependence conservation and nature-based tourism

From WCS & NY Times April 2020

Threatened and endangered animals may become additional casualties of the pandemic. Map Ives, director of Rhino Conservation Botswana: “We can expect not only poaching of rhinoceros and elephant and other iconic animals, but we can also expect a spike in bushmeat poaching across the continent. There are going to be a lot of people that are not earning a living and they will turn on the natural world and you cannot blame them. These are hungry people.”

In the hopes of alleviating the situation, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) recently began raising money for cash-strapped parks, conservancies and private reserves in Africa that need help paying rangers and guards.

While the full impact of the coronavirus on Africa’s wildlife remains to be seen, recent events illustrate the risks of relying too heavily on tourism to support conservation.

To prevent this from happening (again) is to diversify the sources of revenue that support wildlife conservation. by expanding the range of sectors that support it. Until this happens, Africa’s wildlife will remain in jeopardy and conservationists will continue getting calls about orphaned baby rhinos.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a profound crisis for conservation efforts in eastern and southern Africa as a result of the sudden cessation of all international travel in a region where nature-based tourism and conservation are closely interdependent.

As the pandemic unfolds, the ability of critical conservation initiatives on the ground to adapt and sustain Africa’s unique wildlife will depend on collaborative local efforts coupled with strong national leadership from both civil society and government.

Comment: Mongabay March 2020

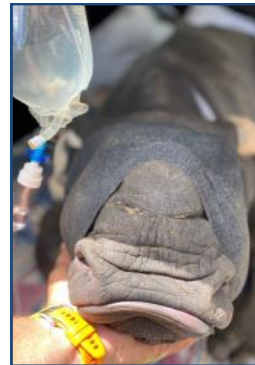
Dickson Kaelo is CEO of the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association.

Daniel Sopia is CEO of the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association.

Damian Bell is Executive Director of Honeyguide, based in Tanzania.

Richard Diggle is a Business and CBNRM Specialist with WWF in Namibia.

Fred Nelson is CEO of Maliasili.



A two-month-old white rhino was placed in a Rhino 911 helicopter for rehabilitation in South Africa’s North West photo: Nico Jacobs

Tragic loss of 12 Rangers: Virunga National Park, DRC

From BBC News and IUCN April 2020

At least 12 rangers were killed by suspected members of a Rwandan rebel group in the **Virunga National Park** in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Government official said the attack was the deadliest in recent history. About 60 militiamen had ambushed a convoy of civilians that was being protected by the rangers.

One of the world’s most biodiversity-rich areas and home to the last remaining mountain gorillas, Virunga is Africa’s oldest national park and a World Heritage site.

Virunga National Park, which has been on the List of World Heritage in Danger for over 20 years, faces many serious threats including security issues due to the presence of armed groups. These groups illegally occupy parts of the park and are responsible for numerous criminal activities, including poaching, illegal fishing and the production of charcoal all of which threaten the important values of this park.

Despite life-threatening conditions, park staff have continued to carry out their work to protect the park’s wildlife and contribute to safeguarding local communities.



Oceania—Australia

Bougainville: a mountainous island of great natural beauty & uncertainty



Geographically, **Bougainville** is the principal island of the northern group of the Solomon Islands archipelago. It is about 190km long and 50km wide. The total population of the region is estimated to be in excess 200,000.

Running north to south is a steep mountain range, in parts more than 2,500m high including the active volcano **Mt Bagana**. The Keriaka limestone plateau south of Mt Balbi contains Benua Cave, one of the largest underground caverns in the world.

Bougainville has little flat land except around the coastal fringes and in the north. Its fertile areas are characterised by rich volcanic soil and copra and cocoa are important commercial crops.

From The Guardian / SBS News / ABC News April 2020

Almost 20 years ago a brutal civil conflict ended in Papua New Guinea in which one in ten people on Bougainville died - but the war set the island on the road to independence.

The conflict was sparked by an Australian-run gold and copper mine, then the world's largest. It had promised much but delivered very little for the local people.

The Anglo-Australian mining giant Rio Tinto is accused of being responsible for “multiple human rights violations” after its Panguna mine left people with a dangerous legacy of poisoned water, polluted fields and a ruined river valley, according to a damning [report from the Human Rights Law Centre](#).

In the November 2019 Bougainville referendum the region voted overwhelmingly for independence from Papua New Guinea.

But the path to potential nationhood remains complex and far from guaranteed, despite the mandate an almost 98 % vote of support offers.

The end of the referendum not only starts another political process, but it will also turn eyes back to a massive open-cut mine that has been sitting, waiting in the mountains since the 1980s.

As Bougainville looks for a way forward politically, it also needs to look at economic options.

That's something Papua New Guinea is keen for it to focus on as it grapples with how to respond to the vote. PNG is also known as the land of a thousand tribes and many in the Government are worried about keeping the rest of the country united if Bougainville leaves.



Panguna was once one of the largest and most profitable copper and gold mines in the world, but a new report says it has left a terrible legacy for residents of Bougainville. Photo: Human Rights Law Centre

Oceania—Australia

Australian Alps – Feral horses ruling by the Federal Court

From **Andrew Nixon** Mountain SG member May 2020

The many decades long battle over the control of feral horses (also known as brumbies) in the **Australian Alps** has seen a win for the **Alpine National Park**. A case was brought against Parks Victoria (PV) by the Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) to prevent the removal of feral horses. The ABA proposed that under the federal governments *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* that 'brumbies' are identified within the Act as being of National Heritage value. A complicated case with many twists and multiple witnesses it was to be a significant crossroad, win or lose. The outcome would determine the ability for Parks Victoria to significantly reduce the over-abundant populations.

On Friday 8th May 2020, after 18 months of legal proceedings and severely curtailed feral horse control, the court handed down its decision. The judge concluded that *".....I am not satisfied that the Action, involving the removal of brumbies from the Bogong High Plains and the reduction in number of brumbies in the Eastern Alps, will have or is likely to have a significant impact on the National Heritage values of the Australian Alps"*.

Put simply, feral horses are not considered a part of the National Heritage values of the Australian Alps.

This is another step in the rehabilitation of many areas of the Australian Alps that have suffered for 100+ years the degradation of ungulate impacts. Ungulates are not native to the Australian Alps nor any landscape on this continent.



Feral horse exclusion plot

Despite the Federal Court ruling earlier in the month (L) a further legal challenge about Parks Victoria's ability to act was heard in the Supreme Court on 26 May.

Just like **Kosciuszko NP**, the longer the plan is stalled, the more horses that have to be removed and controlled. Every day the plan is delayed means more destruction of the Alps' ancient peatlands, moss beds, native plants and animals.

Stop Press: Latest appeal overturned



Currango Plain, Kosciuszko NP—horse damage in riparian zone, high altitude snow plain



Tumut River, Kosciuszko NP—in tact riparian zone, high altitude snow plain

Compelling evidence: logging increases fire risk & spread

From **The Guardian** May 2020

A group of senior Australian scientists have warned in journal *Nature Ecology and Evolution* that logging native forests makes fire more severe and is likely to have exacerbated the country's catastrophic summer bushfires.

The article by the scientists David Lindenmayer et al comes amid intense debate about the resumption of logging in Victoria and New South Wales in bushfire hit regions.

This occurs because logging leaves debris at ground level that increases the fuel load in logged forests and the open canopy leads to drying of fuels. It also changes forest composition and leaves these areas of forest both hotter and drier.



Photo: Torsten Blackwood/AFP/Getty Images

Central Asia—Himalayas

new national park in Afghanistan offers hope for wildlife and people



Adapted from Mother Nature Network (MNN) & Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
March 2020

Decades of war have overshadowed many important issues in Afghanistan, including the protection of its unique wildlife and wilderness. Afghanistan has a lower percentage of protected land than nearly every other country on Earth, according to World Bank data, with less than 0.1% of its land area set aside for nature.

It also has a feature that's lacking in many nature preserves, especially in impoverished or war-torn places: community involvement. Environmental law in Afghanistan requires local communities to be directly involved with — and benefit from — the creation and operation of protected areas.

Bamyan Plateau is a starkly beautiful landscape of high-altitude grasslands, deep gorges and jagged rock formations scattered with rare wildlife, according to Mohammad Ibrahim Abrar, a project manager with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Afghanistan.

Abrar first encountered this landscape more than a decade ago, and he has worked to preserve it for posterity ever since.

In these mysterious surroundings, we camped safely for several nights in beautiful valleys. We saw wildlife and flowers in areas that gave me each morning the impression of a rebirth of mankind.

The new park is home to Persian leopards, Himalayan ibex, urials, wolves, lynxes, foxes, martens, marmots and pikas, as well as the only known Asian badgers and boreal owls in Afghanistan, plus the Afghan snowfinch (country's only endemic bird).

Creation of the national park is an important step, both practically and symbolically, but it's hardly the final chapter in the story of this ancient landscape. In recent decades, the fog of war has allowed poaching and overgrazing by outsiders to threaten rare wildlife which will require ongoing enforcement. Establishment of the park though has reportedly led to a surge of local support for conservation and WCS has provided funding for rangers to help control poaching and grazing in the protected area.

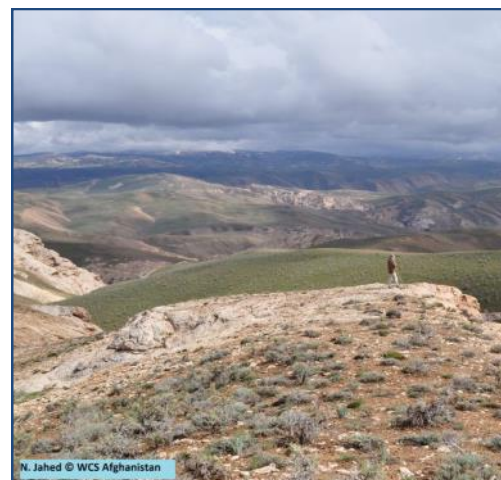


Bamyan Plateau Protected Area, which opened in late 2019, is reportedly only the fifth protected area in Afghanistan.



The four other protected areas in Afghanistan:

1. Band-e Amir National Park
2. Wakhan National Park (largest)
3. Shah Foladi Protected Area
4. Kol-e Hashmat Khan wetland National Park



Bamyan Plateau Protected Area spans 4,200 square km in remote central Hindu Kush Mountain Range photos: WCS

Central Asia—Himalayas

Western Ghats, India

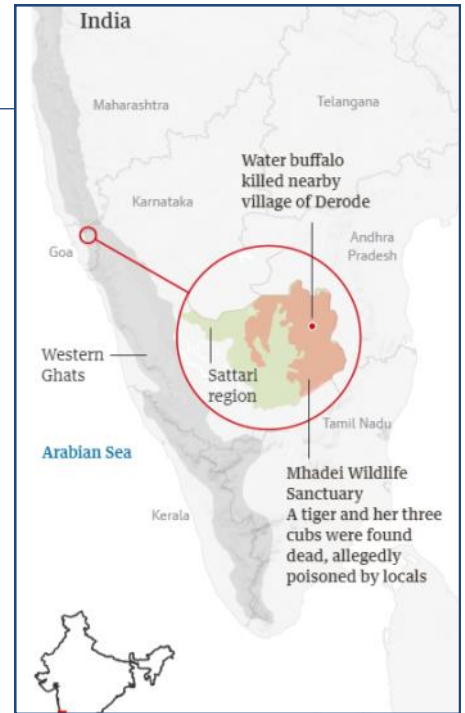
From The Guardian February 2020

The currently unprotected area of the **Western Ghats** in Goa forms a crucial part of the tiger corridor running from Maharashtra to Karnataka, which activists and the WWF have described as “the best and only hope for the continued survival of the tigers of India”.

But in a state heavily dependent on tourism, real estate and, until recently, iron ore mining, protecting the tiger’s forest habitat has been portrayed as a threat to industry and development.

Also the issue of the settlement rights of 31 villagers living inside or on the edge of the Mhadei sanctuary has yet to be resolved. If environmental protections were increased and the sanctuary declared a tiger reserve, the villagers would have to leave, and would be entitled to compensation.

According to Santosh Kumar, chief wildlife warden for the forest department, these land rights remain the greatest obstacle to declaring a tiger reserve. Kumar says Goa’s chief minister, has vowed to make it a priority.



Western Ghats are an important tiger corridor

UNESCO World Heritage

Older than the Himalaya mountains, the mountain chain of the Western Ghats represents geomorphic features of immense importance with unique biophysical and ecological processes. The site’s high montane forest ecosystems influence the Indian monsoon weather pattern. Moderating the tropical climate of the region, the site presents one of the best examples of the monsoon system on the planet. It also has an exceptionally high level of biological diversity and endemism and is recognized as one of the world’s eight ‘**hottest hotspots**’ of biological diversity.



Anamudi, is the highest peak of the Western Ghats at 2,695 m (8,842 ft)

Wildflowers of Mount Everest

From **Elizabeth Byers** Mountain Network member

Vegetation ecologist *Elizabeth Byers* has partnered with the Flora of Nepal Project, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal, and High Country Apps to produce *Wildflowers of Mount Everest*, the first-ever plant identification app for Nepal, with a focus on **Sagarmatha National Park** and Buffer Zone. This World Heritage Site and Ramsar location is famously dominated by Mount Everest and home to the Sherpa people.

Perhaps less well-known but equally spectacular are the beautiful subalpine forests and alpine flowers that adorn the mountainsides.

Elizabeth’s goal in creating the app was to increase appreciation and knowledge of the park’s biodiversity among visitors and local residents. The app will also serve as an easy learning tool for rotating park personnel. **See publications page for web and app details:**

[Wildflowers of Mt Everest](#)



Nepal’s subalpine and alpine flora is specially adapted to survive and thrive in a challenging environment of extreme daily fluctuations in temperature, scarce soil, steep slopes, snowpack, and sometimes scarce pollinators.

In *spring*, luxuriant displays of rhododendrons and primroses cover whole mountainsides with color.

Summer brings the beautiful and sometimes bizarre alpine blossoms, such as the spine-covered alpine blue poppy or *Hippolytia gossypina* with its white-haired pillars topped by clusters of golden flowers.

Fall trekking season is painted with the blue of gentians and the bright red and yellow autumn foliage of the shrubs and trees.

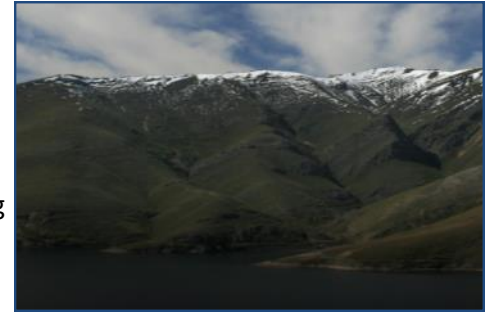
Europe

can megafauna reclaim the forests of central Europe?

From EWS / MNN / The Guardian March 2020

A brown bear has been spotted traversing a rugged and sparsely populated area of south-west Spain for the first time in 150 years thanks to a set of camera traps and a bit of luck. Although the area is home to wolves, deer and wild boars, this is believed to be the first time a brown bear has been seen in more than a century.

According to two local wildlife rangers who were serving as advisers on the shooting of film *Montaña ou Morte*, the bear spent the entire winter in the **O Invernadeiro National Park** in Galicia's Ourense province – probably after making its way south from the Sierra del Caurel mountains.



Natural Park O Invernadeiro

In an effort to consolidate the bear population in the Pyrenees between France and Spain, brown bears from Slovenia have been introduced over the past two decades.

Brown bears have been a protected species in Spain since 1973.

Today, there are about 530 wolves in France, mostly confined to the regions near the Alps and the Italian border.

Grey wolves, once considered the bane of farmers for their livestock-ravaging ways, were over-hunted to the point they disappeared from all of France. But their numbers are likely to grow thanks to their status as "protected" [under the EU's Bern Convention](#). And it appears at least one grey wolf has now made it as far north as Normandy, the first in more than 100 years.

And perhaps the elk could become the next large mammal that naturally reclaims part of its old distribution in Europe. After World War 11, the population soared and spread all over Poland. Some estimations assume that there are now up to 20,000 elk in Poland. From there, one lonely elk arrived in the Czech Republic and a relatively stable population established. It now seems that this population is under threat.

In eastern Germany there are signs that a viable population might establish with around five elks and the first calf is on its way.

The iconic, majestic forest dweller *Alces alces* is known as a moose in North America (actually the sub-species *Alces alces americana*) and an elk in Europe.



Photo: Zeitun Films



Photo: Paul A Carpenter/Shutterstock

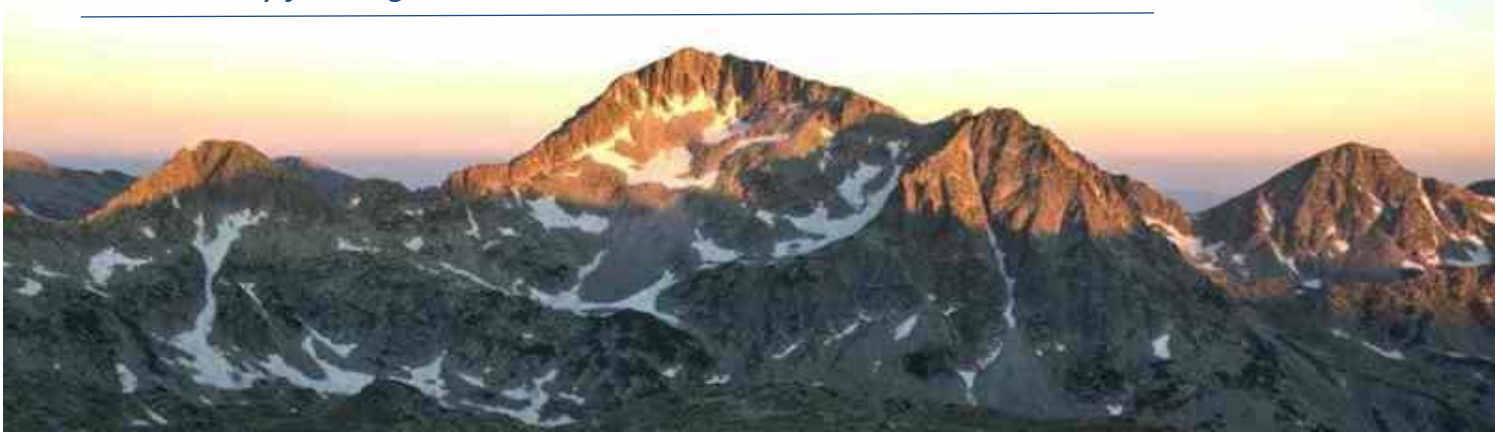


Photo: imagebank.sweden.se

The wolf has proven that animals have the potential to spread in our modern world again, if we accept and support them. Elks are adaptable generalists and there are suitable habitats for them all over Central Europe. In a few decades, we might find the original megafauna of Europe in a lot of forests again, including wolves, bears, bison and elks.

Europe

Court victory for Bulgarian Pirin National Park



From European Wilderness Society (EWS) April 2020

After a 3 years long court saga, the Bulgarian Supreme Administrative Court ruled against the plans to allow construction in 66% and logging in 48% of **Pirin National Park**. The case was led by WWF Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Law Association and won on the 29th of April.

This decision happened after a large public campaign against the management plan that was signed by the Ministry of the Environment. Thousands of people protested on the streets against the destruction of the park that this management plan would cause. In addition, 125 000 people signed a petition launched by WWF Bulgaria.

Pirin National Park is Bulgaria's oldest National Park, situated in the **high Rhodope mountains**. It is also a World Heritage Site and is especially important area for birds. The European Wilderness Society has long been following the developments in Pirin that are unfortunately destroying its Wilderness potential. The development of new ski resorts is one of the main threats to the Park. Others include illegal logging, poaching and motor vehicle use.

The fact that the court ruled against the new management plan shows it does not meet the European environmental directives. In particular, it breaches the Habitats Directive and the need for strategic environmental assessment.

This decision is likely to have repercussions for the management plans of protected areas and other projects that fall under these two directives.

Wilderness in Bulgaria

While the oldest National Park has now successfully escaped construction and logging threats, there are many other protected areas in Bulgaria that are highly preserved. The visit of the country last October has enabled the European Wilderness Society to discover some new potential Wilderness. Bulgaria has 10 recognised or potential Wilderness areas making it very high in Europe for Wilderness potential.



Exploring Potential Wilderness in Triglav National Park, Slovenia

A EWS team hiked high up to the core zone of [Triglav National Park](#) to explore its Wilderness potential. **Triglav National Park** is Slovenia's only national park located in the north-west part of the country in Julian Alps. Its name comes from Slovenia's highest mountain Triglav which is dominating above the park. Using the [European Wilderness Quality Standard and Audit System 2.0](#) the natural forests free of logging on the steep slopes and little human infrastructure the area seems to have a good potential to be a Wilderness.



Scree and Talus

[Himalayas visible after 30 years: mesmerising, amazing, massive, surprising, never-before!](#) SBS News 7 April 2020

As the lockdown to stop the spread of coronavirus in India continues, pollution levels across much of the country have dropped sharply. Now some residents in northern India say they can see the snow-capped Himalayas 200 km away for the first time in 30 years.



We can see the snow-covered mountains clearly from our roofs. And not just that, stars are visible at night.

I have never seen anything like this in recent times says Mr Seechewal, who has been working to raise awareness of environmental pollution for over 30 years.



[WILD11](#)

WILD11 was indefinitely postponed due to COVID-19, but its impact lives on. WILD11 needs your help to amplify its urgently needed calls-to-action, from rewilding the Earth to joining the Survival Revolution and publicly demanding the protection of half the Earth's land and seas. Link to the WILD11 Outcomes Portal: <https://wild11.org/outcomes/>

[Kangchenjunga Landscape](#)

From **Nakul Chettri** Programme Manager - Transboundary Landscape Programme ICIMOD

A team of Kangchenjunga (Transboundary) Landscape was part of 6th Asian Rural Tourism Festival. The team brought the innovation by targeting Homestay owners from pilot areas of Nepal, Sikkim, North Bengal along with others and organized a Homestay Congress. News prepared by team here: [Homestay Congress 2020](#)

[Parc national des Ecrins, French Alps](#)

From **IUCN News Protecting the Planet**

The Parc national des Ecrins achieved IUCN Green List status in June 2019 at the French Nature Congress. Initiated by mountaineers, naturalists and forest workers, the first steps to establish the protected area go back to 1913. **Parc national des Ecrins** provides a good example of stakeholder engagement for partnerships and collaborative management of a protected area. [Read more](#)

The **Ecrins National Park** charter, co-written with local partners, is based upon suggested excursions, the welcoming of visitors and educational initiatives. This territorial project accompanies economic activities while at the same time respecting the natural environment.



[Coalition to End the Trade](#)

To help prevent the next pandemic, the [Coalition to End the Trade](#) is calling for the permanent end to the commercial trade and sale in markets of terrestrial wild animals for consumption, particularly birds and mammals. Global Wildlife Conservation, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and WildAid are launching this coalition to implement key strategies that seek to end this trade.

April 9, 2020 | **Mongabay**

[Chinese Ban Likely to Become Law](#) WCS's Aili Kang speaks about the ongoing review of

[New GMBA - Mountain Partnership initiative: Tales of Biodiversity](#)

From **GMBA May News**

"Mountain Biodiversity" is the theme of this year's International Mountain Day. For this very special day, GMBA want to embark on a journey across the world's mountains based on stories about their biodiversity and invite you to share your own tale in word or art form. With your contributions, they want people to connect to the formidable diversity of species that live in the world's mountains and raise awareness for their conservation and sustainable management. [Read more and contribute!](#) **Related links:** [Mountain Partnership](#); [International Mountain Day](#)



Scree and Talus cont.

[Yukon to Yellowstone \(Y2Y\) & People and Carnivores](#) **People and Carnivores**

People and Carnivores is focused exclusively on encouraging and implementing coexistence strategies that enable humans and large carnivores, such as bears, to live alongside one another. This is an important part of the work needed to harmonize the needs of people with those of nature — central to Y2Y's vision.

Across Montana, People and Carnivores works to reduce the frequency of human-bear conflicts. This means partnering with farmers, ranchers, rural residents and Indigenous communities to establish and practice coexistence on both public and private lands.

[Lawsuit Challenges Trump Administration's Authorization to Kill 72 Grizzlies Near Yellowstone](#)

Sierra Club News Release March 31, 2020

The Center for Biological Diversity and Sierra Club [filed a lawsuit today challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to allow 72 grizzly bears](#) to be killed to accommodate livestock grazing in Wyoming's Bridger-Teton National Forest, near Yellowstone National Park.

[Rare white grizzly bear sighted in Canadian Rockies](#)

Grizzly bears normally range in colouration from dark brown to blond, but a white bear is incredibly rare. Experts say the colouring is the result of a recessive gene in the cub – not albinism. Nor is the young bear a member of another Canadian subspecies, the [Kermode "spirit" bear](#), which is found in the temperate rainforests of the country's west coast. Those elusive animals also have white fur, but are a subspecies of the black bear – not the grizzly.



[Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures \(OECMs\): Exploring the Potential in Asia](#)

IUCN Protecting the Planet April 2020

Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are becoming an increasingly important topic in the discussions leading up to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. As a contribution to the dialogue, the Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP) chose OECMs as the topic for its very first webinar, held on the 23rd of April 2020. The webinar was specifically designed to provide APAP members with an introduction to the concept of OECMs and the ways in which these sites can complement protected area systems. [Read more](#)

[Two beautiful images](#) **Mother Nature Network** The competition is supported by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London.



"The Vaia Storm" by Albert Ceolan -**Dolomites** in Italy- documents the natural destruction of pine forest by storm 'Vaia' in late October 2018



'Larch Basin Dawn' by Thorsten Scheuermann –North **Cascade Mountains USA**

[The Book](#)

Within five years of its launch, the English version of IUCN's *Protected Area Governance and Management* compendium textbook has reached the remarkable statistic of 100,000 downloads across 87 countries. The book is available for free download in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [French](#) (10 chapters) on the Australian National University Press website.

Scree and Talus cont.

From *Martin Price (follow up)*

[Scottish and South African researchers to share mountain knowledge](#)

Academics have been awarded a grant of over £264,000 from the British Council and the South African Department of Higher Education and Training to help mentor and co-supervise a group of South African doctoral candidates.

Mountains are vital for the production of water in the drought-prone region of southern Africa. With projections on the impact of climate change and population growth, experts have indicated that the area's mountains will become increasingly important for water security. Despite this, they are among the least studied parts of South Africa.

Academics from the [Centre for Mountain Studies](#) at Perth College UHI and other University of the Highlands and Islands' research institutes will work with colleagues from the University of the Free State and the University of Venda to co-supervise ten new doctoral students.

[Hidden Viking trade route emerges from melting ice in Norway](#)

Science News & The Guardian April 2020

In 2011, hikers in the snowy mountains of central Norway came across a 1700-year-old wool tunic, likely belonging to a Roman-era hypothermia victim. As ice in the region has continued to melt, researchers have made hundreds of additional finds.

Now, archaeologists have made their biggest discovery yet: a lost Viking trade route that may have been used for hundreds of years to ferry everything from butter to reindeer antlers to far-flung European markets.

Described as a “dream discovery” by glacial archaeologists, the finding was also a “poignant and evocative reminder of climate change”, said James Barrett, a medieval and environmental archaeologist at the University of Cambridge, who has been working with Norwegian archaeologists on the project since 2011.

Toward the top of the ice patch, however, the artifacts were different and more densely concentrated. The freshly exposed ground was littered with iron horseshoes and nails, walking sticks, shattered sleds, woollen mittens, leather shoes, the bones of dead horses, and piles of horse dung.

The team identified dozens of piled stone cairns marking a path up from the valley below, and the foundations of a shelter just below the ridgeline. “It dawned on us that this was a mountain pass,” from a river valley nearby to high mountain pastures, Piloe says. “It’s the first time we have a site like this in northern Europe.”



Upper part of the Lendbreen ice patch—covered with horse dung—after a big melt in 2019



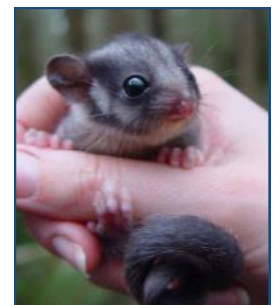
Birch Distaff, radiocarbon-dated to about AD800.
Photos: Espen Finstad/secretsoftheice.com

[Illegal Logging in Australia \(Central Highlands, Victoria\)](#) ABC News May 2020

The Australian Federal Court has ruled that state-owned timber company VicForests breached environmental laws by logging sections of the Central Highlands inhabited by the critically endangered Leadbeater's possum.

The court found VicForests' operations at 26 logging coupes were in breach of the code of practice that governed forest management in Victoria.

Logging in native forests is governed by regional forest agreements (RFAs) between the state and federal governments.



Scree and Talus cont.

[Reopening US Parks](#)

Yellowstone, America's oldest national park, and the nearby Grand Teton national park are the most recent to have partially reopened. While many have celebrated the reopening of the revered mountain landscapes, others have raised health concerns about large, possibly maskless groups of out-of-state visitors arriving and potentially skirting social distancing guidelines.

[Policy Brief | Elevating Mountains in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework 2.0](#)

From MRI News February 2020

In late February, the Convention on Biological Diversity met in Rome as part of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. With support from MRI and others, UNEP and GRIDA published a Policy Brief that recommends ambitious targets and goals for safeguarding global mountain biodiversity.

[Climate Surprise: Climate Change May Push Some Species to Higher Elevations – and Out of Harm's Way](#)

A new WCS-led study reveals that mountain-dwelling species fleeing warming temperatures by retreating to higher elevations may find refuge from reduced human pressure.

- Nearly 60 percent of all mountainous areas are under intense human pressure, but often at low elevations and at bases of mountains
- Climate change is pushing species to higher elevations
- Upslope movements may push species away from human pressure, which could reduce extinction risk for many mountain-dwelling species [Full Article](#)



Visitors watch Old Faithful erupt on Yellowstone national park's opening day. Photograph: Gabriela Campos/ The Guardian



Human pressure is often more intense at mountain bases, as in this Himalayan landscape in north India. Species shifting upslope tracking rising

Tools, Publications and other Media

Parks Stewardship Forum (George Wright Society) www.escholarship.org/uc/psf
This issue's theme papers look at innovations in education and interpretation in the US national park system.

[World Environment Day](#) June 5—learn how all living things on Earth are connected in the web of life and how we can act #ForNature <https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/>

Wildflowers of Mount Everest is the first-ever wildflower identification mobile app for Nepal.

High Country Apps: <http://www.highcountryapps.com/WildflowersOfMountEverest.aspx>

Direct links to the app in stores (\$7.99): Apple: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id1479336982>

For Android users in Nepal, the app is free of charge at this link:

सगरमाथाका क्षेत्रका वनस्पतिहरु <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.emountainworks.android.everestfieldguidenepal>



From Mountain Partnerships: Peak to Peak Newsletter June 2020

Launched on in May this year's *The State of the World's Forests 2020: Forestry, biodiversity and people* assesses the progress of global targets and goals related to forest biodiversity and examines the effectiveness of policies, actions and approaches in relation to both conservation and sustainable development ... [Read more](#)

Vital Sites: Protected areas offer hope in the face of the pandemic. This special Editorial in *PARKS Journal* provides a snapshot of how protected and conserved areas around the world are being impacted by COVID-19.

Tools, Publications and other Media cont.

18 May saw the virtual launch of **Kosciuszko: A Great National Park**, written by eminent conservationist *Dr Graeme Worboys* and alpine historian, *Ms Deirdre Slattery*. (NB: both Mountain Specialist Group members)

Kosciuszko is one of the great national parks of Australia. This book celebrates the people who dared to care for **Kosciuszko**, visionary politicians, public servants, scientists and naturalists - people who fought to protect Kosciuszko's special mountain scenery, its snow covered landscapes, ancient glacial lakes, raging mountain rivers and unique alpine plants and animals.



Available from envirobook.com.au

From *Marc Foggin* Mountain Specialist Group Committee
CHOOSING ECOTOURISM IN KYRGYZSTAN—Purpose-driven tourism – for people and nature

<https://plateauperspectives.exposure.co/choose-ecotourism>



From *Dr Peter Howard* Protected Areas and Heritage Consultant, Kenya
The primary purpose of the new website is to raise awareness of the need for conservation of these amazing places by providing a highly visual 'sense of place' with a 3-6 minute slideshow of images from each site. www.NaturalWorldHeritageSites.org.

And for those of you with a particular interest in Africa, remember to take another look at the long-established African website www.AfricanWorldHeritageSites.org (which includes slideshows on each of the continent's cultural sites, as well as its incredible natural places).



Introducing the [#NatureForAll Discovery Zone](#)—a new, interactive platform featuring resources that can be used by anyone looking to help connect people with nature or experience nature wherever they may be.

Future Tense – ABC Radio Australia with Antony Funnell [Locking away nature in order to liberate it](#)

There's a serious campaign underway to have 30 per cent of the Earth designated as a giant conservation area. The target date is 2030. But that's just the start. The scientists and environmentalists involved in the plan want to eventually lock away half the planet. It's about protecting habitats and biodiversity. Cost and logistics are primary considerations. But they aren't the only ones. Other issues at stake include increasing poverty and indigenous rights.

Ed Note: If like me you don't like the use of "locking away" just replace with "protect"...above (podcast) is an excellent summary of current thinking around importance of connectivity conservation and protected areas. There are sure to be names you recognize.

And another one...[Are governance issues failing the Himalayas?](#)

The Himalayas are sometime called the earth's "third pole". They're a vital source of water for a large chunk of the world's population. But the local, national and international systems put in place to protect and manage human development in this vital ecosystem are failing.



[MIREN survey on alien invasive species in mountains](#) From Mountain Invasive Research Network (MIREN) Working in or around mountains? The aim of this survey is to get the perspectives from a broad range of stakeholders worldwide (managers, land-owners, farmers, policy makers, conservation, scientists, etc.) on whether and to what extent they view **alien invasive species** (i.e. plants, animals and microorganisms) as a problem in **mountains**, thus causing negative impacts on nature and society. MIREN is also interested in which species are seen as the most problematic, what impacts these species have, and how the species are managed.



Important links

IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas for an outline of the role of Mountain Specialist Group [IUCN WCPA Mountains](#) and [Mountain UPDATE](#)

IUCN World Conservation Congress [IUCN World Congress](#)

Protected Area Governance and Management (book) [Management Book ANU Press](#)

The Mountain Partnership is a United Nations voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of mountain peoples and protecting mountain environments around the world. [Mountain Partnership](#)

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While Mountain Network members can choose not to be WCPA members and still be involved and receive the Mountain UPDATE, the WCPA Chair Dr Kathy MacKinnon, and Mountain Specialist Group Executive and would like to encourage all to become WCPA members. This helps to secure good governance and management of the WCPA and the Mountains Group and enlightens all members to the wider activities of the WCPA.

To learn more about WCPA membership go to: [Get involved - World Commission on Protected Areas | IUCN www.iucn.org › commissions › get-involved](#)

For any relevant mountain protected area news, please email me (Gill) on peopleinnature@bigpond.com

I look forward to hearing from you soon!