

Mountain Protected Areas

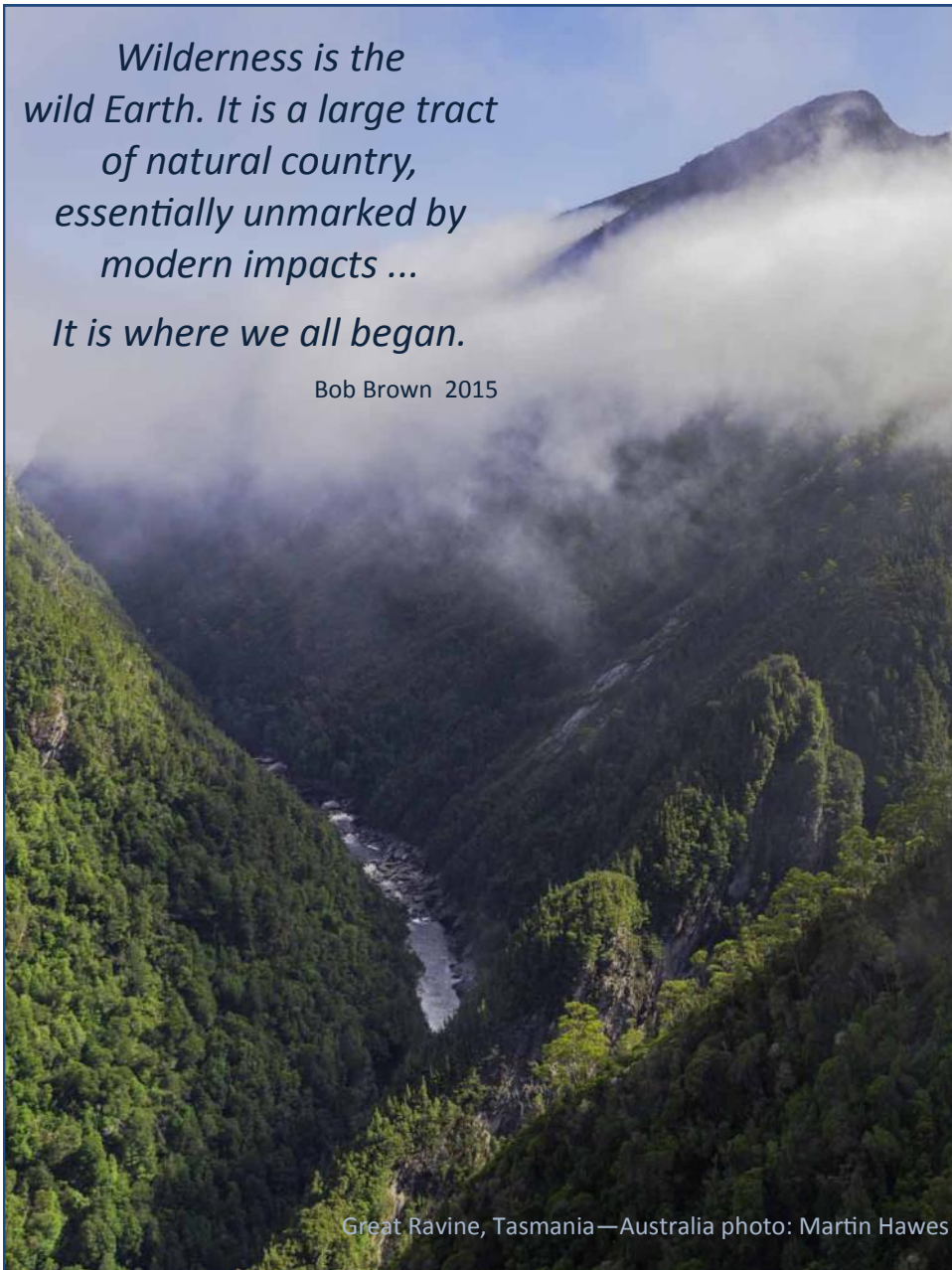
UPDATE

September 2020 # 107

Wilderness is the wild Earth. It is a large tract of natural country, essentially unmarked by modern impacts ...

It is where we all began.

Bob Brown 2015



Great Ravine, Tasmania—Australia photo: Martin Hawes

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A note from the editor

Welcome everyone to the 107th edition of the Mountain UPDATE. Strangely enough this issue seems to be full of mountain stories involving the first, biggest, smallest, oldest, most famous, most courageous, lightest, darkest...the list goes on and on.

So happy reading—I hope you find something that piques your interest! As per the previous issue I have not included meetings and events as so many have been cancelled.

Stay safe and well...September 2020

From *People and Mountains* around the world:

Global: *The case for mountain protection and conservation*

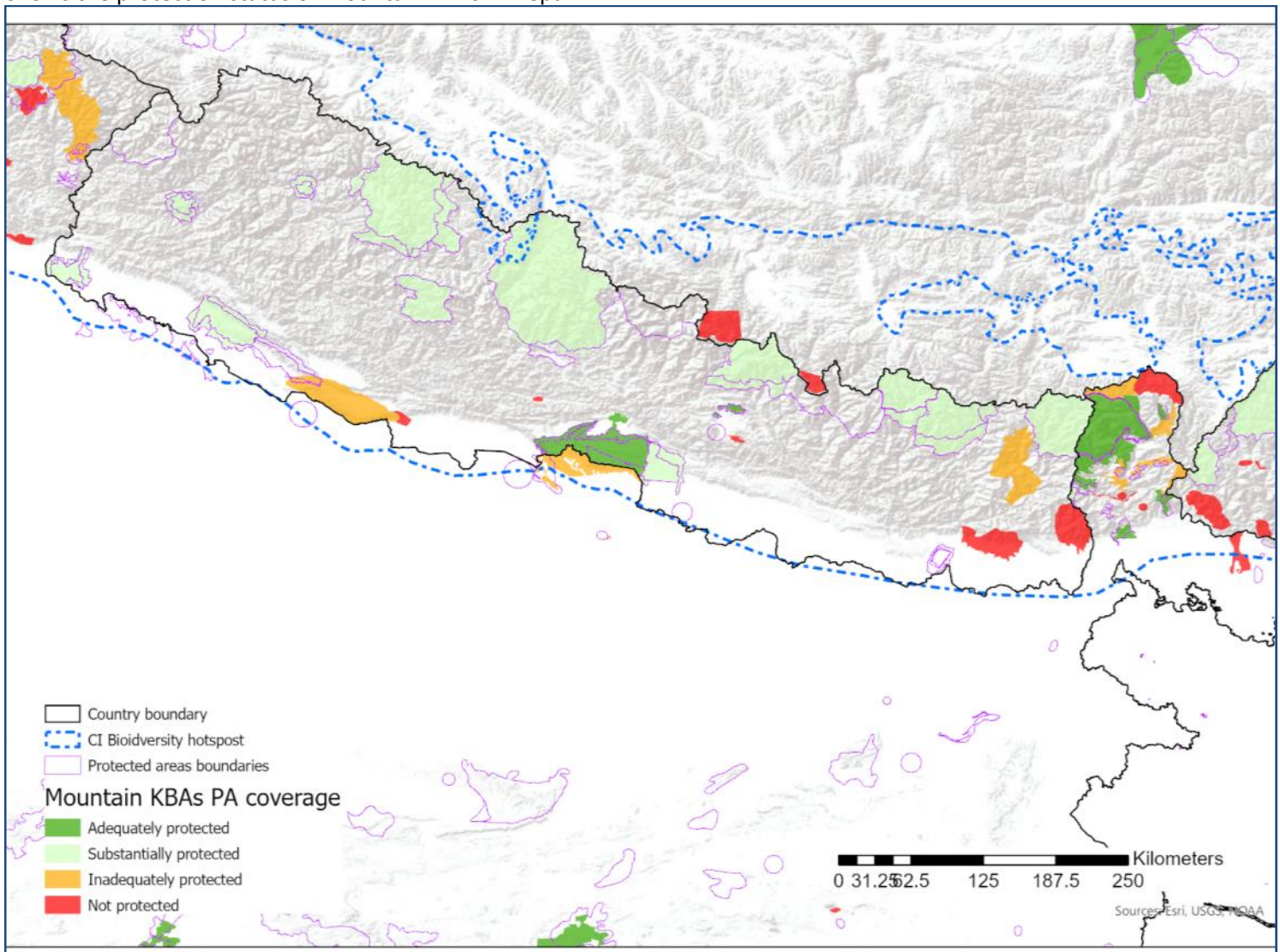
News from *Peter Jacobs*, Chair IUCN WCPA Mountain Specialist Group

The development of expected new and ambitious targets for protected and conserved areas and indicators for mountain biodiversity in the post 2020 Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) will need a strong basis for advocacy if they are to be achieved over the next decade and beyond. It is timely then that the Mountain Specialist Group project “Identification of Global Priorities for New Mountain Protected and Conserved Areas” has made good progress recently. The draft paper and decision support tool will shortly be on the Mountains webpage [HERE](#) and any feedback is welcome, as directed on the site.

Utilizing the tool, as snapshot of the Western Himalaya in India, Nepal and areas adjoining in China indicates that:

- There are 84 mountain Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in that region (a Biodiversity Hotspot).
- 33 are reported as less than 30% protected and thus considered inadequately protected.
- 29 of those are completely unprotected.
- Only 26 are substantially protected.
- **Of the 33 inadequately protected KBAs, 29 also contain inadequately protected World Mountain Ecosystems.**

We expect that the application of this tool across all WCPA regions in time will help shape our understanding of where the focus needs to be for establishing new mountain protected and conserved areas over the next decade. The map below shows the protection status of Mountain KBAs in Nepal.



Spatial overlap between polygons for Key Biodiversity Areas from the World Database of KBAs, compiled by BirdLife International and IUCN, and polygons for protected areas from the World Database on Protected Areas (March 2020) compiled by UNEP-WCMC and IUCN.

America-north

Safe distancing (from people & wildlife)



As national parks around the US begin a phased approach to reopening, visitors expecting the usual warnings to keep a safe distance from wildlife are now being encouraged to do the same with each other. The contagious threat of COVID-19 means that **six-feet apart (1.5m - 1.8m)** remains the rule, even as some states move to impose additional restrictions such as **face masks**.

Here are a few of the *U.S. National Park Service* communications with visitors which include a variety of informative posters. A touch of humorous advice on a serious subject...

And as usual, even if they look perfectly healthy, please do not approach a bear or wave at a bison!

<https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/news/public-health-update.htm>

A LITTLE SPACE GOES A LONG WAY

← WHAT DOES 6 FT LOOK LIKE? →

Two picnic tables between friends

A moose's antlers

A Yoga mat

A national park sign

Two information waysides

One Grizzly bear

Looking for the best place for #socialdistancing? Many park areas remain accessible to provide that distance, but please do it safely and responsibly!

STAY SAFE AND RECREATE RESPONSIBLY

KEEP YOUR SOCIAL DISTANCE

WRONG	RIGHT
	<p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small;">6 ft</p>
WRONG	RIGHT
	<p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small;">300 ft</p>
WRONG	RIGHT
	<p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small;">300 ft</p>
WRONG	GOOD LUCK
	<p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small;">Shouldn't have been waving...</p>

KEEP WILDLIFE WILD

Observe wildlife rules... but with people!

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Stay home when sick.

Avoid close contact with those that are sick.

When you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Still don't use slower friends as bear bait.

America-central

flight & plight of Monarch butterflies and their defenders in mountains of Mexico

Adapted from Guardian (David Agren in Ocampo and Oliver Milman) & Mongabay February 2020 Read whole article [Mongabay article](#)

Each winter, millions of monarch butterflies migrate 4,500 km from the temperate forests of the United States and Canada to hibernate in their wintering grounds in the **Mexican Neovolcanic Axis**. This mountain range runs west to east across the states of Mexico and eastern Michoacán, in the center of the country.

The spectacle when they reach their destination in central Mexico is perhaps even more astonishing. Patches of alpine forest turn from green to orange as the monarchs roost in the fir trees, the sheer weight of butterflies causing branches to sag to the point of snapping.

The recent deaths of two butterfly conservationists in the region has, however, drawn attention to a troubling tangle of disputes, resentments and occasional bouts of harrowing violence that has lingered over the **Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve**, a world heritage site north-west of Mexico City.

Investigations into the deaths of the conservationist Homero Gómez González and butterfly sanctuary tour guide Raúl Hernández Romero are ongoing. But some conservationists fear they are a by-product of the violence that has long troubled the state of Michoacán.

As they have done across the country, organized crime groups linked to the drug trade have diversified into many other activities, including kidnapping, avocado cultivation, land theft – and the lucrative market in pine, fir and cedar wood.

The demise of Gómez also highlights the misery suffered by Mexico's beleaguered environmental defenders, who have been murdered with impunity in shocking numbers. Fourteen defenders were murdered in Mexico in 2018, according to Global Witness.

A natural marvel

The monarch butterflies themselves are also coming under growing pressures. It's suspected that butterfly numbers have been reduced by the use of toxic pesticides and razing of critical monarch habitat in the US and Canada.

Scientists warn the annual monarch migration faces an existential threat due to the climate crisis. The oyamel firs preferred by monarchs in Mexico are being stressed by rising temperatures and drought, with predictions the trees will be virtually wiped out by the end of the century.

Global heating is also reducing the viability of milkweed, the sole plant where the monarch reproduces, in US and Canada. This trend is set to restrict the butterflies to isolated pockets and end their epic migration to Mexico. A separate monarch migration, which brings butterflies to the warmth of coastal California, has shrunk from millions of insects in the 1980s to fewer than 30,000 individuals now.



In 1976, the Canadian zoologist Fred Urquhart reported the location of the hibernation sites in the forests of Michoacán, where for generations the Otomi and Mazahua indigenous communities have witnessed the winter stay of these butterflies. Urquhart's studies prompted the creation of a protected area in 1986 and, 14 years later, of the biosphere reserve. The reserve became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2008.



Monarch butterfly weighs only 1/2g but flies 1000's of km each year photo: National Geographic



Homero Gómez González Image taken from his Facebook page (Mongabay)



Monarch butterflies on fir branches Photo: Chicago Tribune/TNS via Getty Images

America-South

Case of Huaraz: Peruvian farmer takes on German energy giant

Huaraz—Huascarán National Park

From Germanwatch June 2020

From his mountain home in the Peruvian Andes, farmer Saúl Luciano Lliuya is suing one of the world's largest fossil fuel energy companies, RWE, headquartered half a world away in Germany. The reason: The energy company's immense emissions threaten his family, his property as well as a large part of his home city of Huaraz.

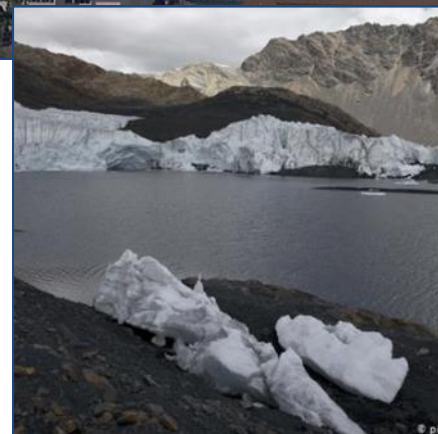
Lliuya, who is also a mountain guide, has spent years observing how rising temperatures are melting Huaraz's nearby glacier. If the lake it feeds should one day overflow, it threatens to destroy the livelihoods of some 120,000 local residents.

It's a landmark case that could radically disrupt the debate over climate action.

With the help of a German law firm, Lliuya is suing for 0.47% of the costs he needs for protective measures, which amount to around €17,000. Germanwatch referring to the Carbon Majors Study, the basis for the lawsuit, says that is the share of man-made greenhouse gas emissions RWE has been responsible for since the start of industrialization.

In November, 2017 the Higher Regional Court in Hamm [ruled that the case was well founded](#) and could proceed to gathering evidence. That was more than the environmentalists had hoped for. For the first time, a causal link — between the company's contribution to global warming and threats to Huaraz — was declared legally relevant.

Fast forward to 2020 and unfortunately the taking of evidence in Huaraz will be further delayed due to the Corona-crisis and resulting travel restrictions.



The melting Pastoruri glacier above Huaraz may cause Lake Palcacocha to overflow

Important information on the 'case of Huaraz'

[Court documents of the 'Huaraz Case'](#)
[Frequently asked questions \(FAQ\)](#)
[Interesting facts: Background information](#)
[Factsheet "The Huaraz Case"](#)

Cordillera Blanca

Huaraz sits at the base of the great mountain range, the **Cordillera Blanca**. It is the most extensive tropical ice-covered mountain range in the world and has the largest concentration of ice in Peru. It is part of the Cordillera Occidental (the westernmost part of the Peruvian Andes), and trends in a northwesterly direction for 200 km.

It has five of the most spectacular peaks above 6,000m in the Peruvian Andes; the highest peak, **Huascarán**, rises to an elevation of 6,768m above sea level. Declared a World Heritage Area in 1985 **Huascarán National Park** protects most of the Cordillera Blanca .



Trekking in Huascaran NP.

Africa

Safeguarding “island mountains” of Northern Cape: South Africa

From WWF Africa June 2020

If you drive through Bushmanland east of Springbok, you will come across a group of solitary mountains that tower over the surrounding flat grassy plains. These protrusions in the landscape are called inselbergs (literally “island mountains”) and are home to **rare succulent plants** – at risk from mining and plant poachers. But until March 2020, these Bushmanland Inselbergs of the Northern Cape were unprotected.

Now, with the declaration of four new provincial reserves this is no longer the case: Areb, Karas, Marietjie van Niekerk and Smorgenskadu Nature Reserves – adjoin each other and form the greater “**Karrasberge Protected Area**”.

Northern Cape Department of Environment and Nature Conservation (DENC) will now oversee the four reserves in partnership with the landowners. Under the **Biodiversity Stewardship Programme** landowners play a key role in assisting the province (SANParks or NGOs) to expand protected areas, whilst maintaining a living/working landscape, which is the ethos of biodiversity stewardship.



Investment in the mining sector of the Northern Cape has increased significantly over the past couple of years. Securing ecologically important Critical Biodiversity Areas, such as the **Karrasberge**, is of utmost importance in terms of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem functionality.

Inselbergs have long been known to harbour unique plant species, which is why the Leslie Hill Succulent Karoo Trust first identified these solitary mountains as a top priority for conservation. The reserves fall within the Succulent Karoo biome in the arid western part of South Africa which was recently described by UNESCO as the “most biologically diverse arid area in the world”.

Analysis Pinpoints Most Important Forests for Biodiversity & Conservation: Central Africa

From WCS Africa Newsroom August 2020

A [study](#) by WCS and partners produced new analyses to pinpoint the most important forests for biodiversity conservation remaining in Central Africa. The results highlight the importance of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), northern Republic of Congo, and much of Gabon as the most important countries in Central Africa for safeguarding biodiversity and [intact forests](#).

The study combines new datasets on forests to identify where the most intact forests remain across this vast area with previous work that identified strongholds for bonobos, forest elephants, gorillas, and chimpanzees across the region.

The forests of Central Africa contain some of Earth’s few remaining intact forests. These forests are increasingly threatened by infrastructure development, agriculture, and unsustainable extraction of natural resources (e.g., minerals, bushmeat, and timber), all of which is leading to deforestation and forest degradation, particularly defaunation, and hence causing declines in biodiversity and a significant increase in carbon emissions.



Identified in study the **Crystal Mountains** (*Monts de Cristal*) is a group of low mountains inland of the Atlantic coast of Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Angola. The mountain slopes are a breathtaking variety of trees, orchids, lichens, gallery forests and begonias. The high altitude forest reserve is shielded by mist and clouds. Photo: Travel Gabon

Oceania—Australia

A mountain of threats

Mt Kaputar photo: Narrabri Rural Fire Service

A new report by WWF reveals the devastating extent of the 2019/20 Australian summer fires on native animals: 143 million mammals, about 2.5 billion reptiles, 180 million birds and 51 million frogs killed or displaced.

Below is a story from *The Conversation July 2020* about a little known Australian (mountain) national park and a rare lizard whose potential fate is a common problem for many species living on mountain tops...

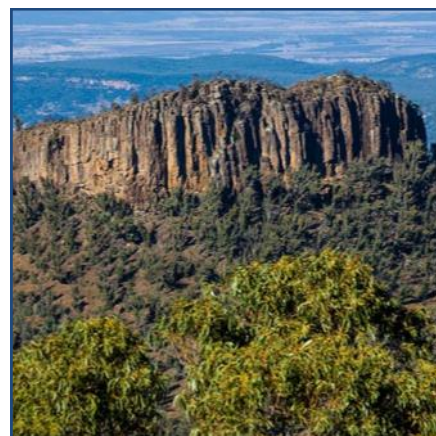
Bushfires are a threat to most animal species. But for one rare lizard living on a rocky island in the sky, a single blaze could wipe the species off the planet. The Kaputar rock skink (*Egernia roomi*) is thought to have an exceedingly small range – at the summit of a single extinct volcano, **Mount Kaputar**. The existence of this mysterious skink was informally known for decades, and in August 2019 the species was finally scientifically described. But only months later it may already be headed for extinction due to the bushfires burning through more than half the Kaputar rock skink's habitat.

It's likely that many Kaputar rock skinks died during the fires themselves, although it is hoped others survived by crawling deep into rock cracks. But after the fires, threats remain. Vegetation loss may make the skinks easy prey, and in a charred landscape, there may be little for the reptiles to eat.

History tells us fires do affect high-elevation skinks. For example, fire is thought to have driven the rock-dwelling Guthega skink (*Liopholis guthega*) to become locally extinct at some sites on the Bogong High Plains (Australian Alps).

Species restricted to a small area are vulnerable to any loss of habitat. And fire is not the only threat. Climate change is a big concern. While many species respond to increasing temperatures by migrating uphill to cooler climes, that's not possible for the skink, which is already precariously perched on a summit.

The skink is found in the **Mt Kaputar National Park, Nandewar Ranges** – weathered remnants of ancient volcanic eruptions between 21 and 17 million years ago – which rise out of the surrounding plains in a series of breathtaking rock formations.



NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service

Enough is enough! feral horses: Australian Alps

From *Reclaim Kosci* August 2020

The beautiful **Kosciuszko National Park** (Australian Alps) and its unique fauna and flora have been trampled by thousands of hooves for too long!

The Park is still operating under the 2008 horse management plan when there were estimated to be only a few thousand feral horses– there are now an estimated **20 thousand horses**, and their numbers are increasing by around 23% each year.

Removing a few hundred here or there makes almost no difference. A new management plan that recognises and tackles the true scale of the feral horse problem in **Kosciuszko NP** is desperately needed.

A new online campaign allows you to urge Minister Kean to display the new draft plan as soon as possible. [Click here to take action](#)



Feral horses Australian Alps

Oceania—Australia

Connectivity Conservation: Cores, corridors, koalas...plus much more!

Since 2007 the **Great Eastern Ranges Initiative (GER)** has been bringing people and organisations together to find innovative solutions that address environmental challenges: stemming the loss of native plants and animals, providing natural solutions to climate change, protecting precious resources and ensuring a healthy, resilient landscape for wildlife and people.

The well-established network of regionally based partnerships, involving more than 250 organisations, collaborate on locally-led projects and initiatives across 11 key landscapes spanning the length of Australia's Great Eastern Ranges.

GER provides the common vision, science, geographic focus and shared priorities that bring people together to achieve results that are far greater than the sum of their parts.



As part of GER bushfire response efforts, they have partnered with WWF-Australia to restore the health and resilience of key habitat for Koalas, Greater Gliders and other forest-dependent native wildlife.

Through the collaboration, GER are rolling out a series of coordinated, complementary projects to restore and relink the forests of eastern Australia and support the movement of wildlife in six priority locations across the Great Eastern Ranges.

This is the first phase of what is hoped will become a long-term, strategic collaboration with WWF-Australia.

For more information on this mountain community **connectivity conservation** initiative go to: [Great Eastern Ranges](#)



Koala photo: GER

And connectivity conservation guidelines of global interest

From **WCPA Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group (CCSG)**

Science now overwhelmingly shows that interconnected areas managed for conservation are significantly more successful for conserving wildlife, landscapes and natural processes than isolated protected areas in a fragmented landscape dominated by human activity.

Deputy Chair of IUCN CCSG and President of **Yellowstone to Yukon** Connectivity Initiative, Jodi Hilty, argues that, "To effectively conserve biodiversity we need to advance conservation at the scale that nature needs, and that means conserving ecological networks. Key components of these networks are ecological corridors that allow ecosystems to support movement of species and other life-sustaining processes on Earth. These Guidelines help society plan for a more connected future".

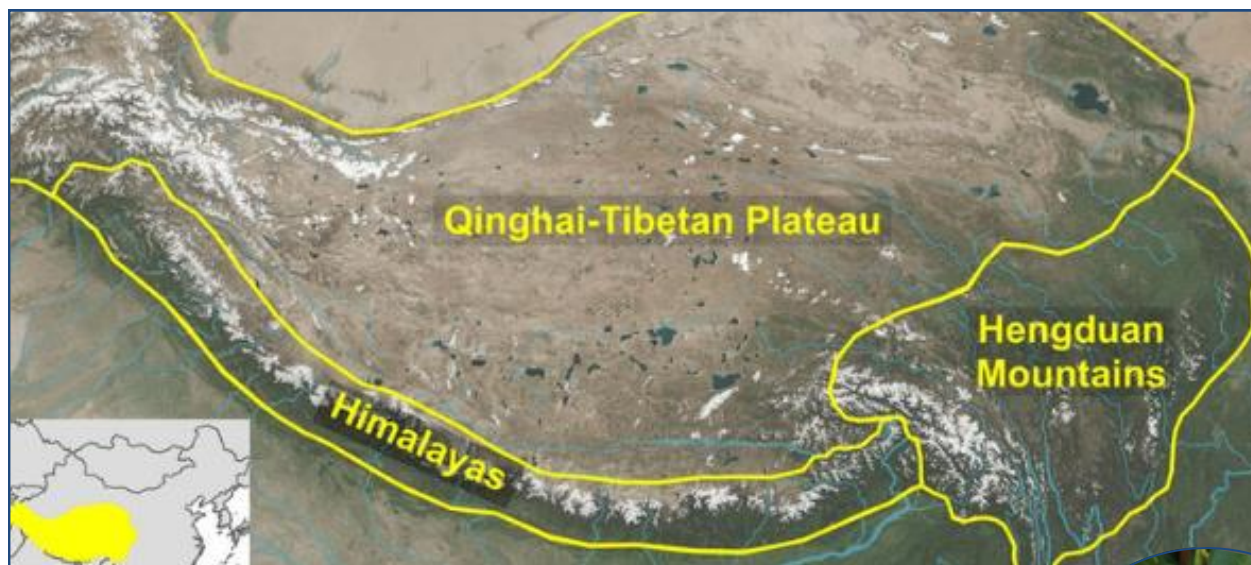
[IUCN Guidelines for Conserving Connectivity through Ecological Networks and Corridors](#)

A collaborative, landscape-scale approach to conservation that focuses on protecting, relinking and restoring habitats is the best chance we have of building resilience, and of ensuring our communities, wildlife, environment and economies recover and thrive in a rapidly changing climate. *Bob Debus*, Chair, Great Eastern Ranges initiative



Central Asia—Himalayas

Beloved garden flowers originated in this mountain hot spot—the oldest of its kind on Earth



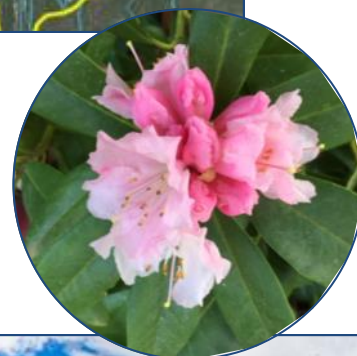
From Science July 2020 doi:10.1126/science.abe0808

The **Hengduan Mountains** adjoining Asia's massive Tibetan Plateau are a place of superlatives. Four major rivers, including the Mekong and the Yangtze, flow through deep valleys. In winter, snow blankets the peaks, and in summer fierce monsoon rains pelt them. And one of the world's richest alpine plant communities, boasting more than 3000 species, cloaks the slopes.

"It's a fascinating place, especially botanically," says Richard Ree, an evolutionary biologist at the Field Museum. At first glance, he notes, the alpine meadows on the high slopes of the Hengduan peaks look like those found in other ranges, such as North America's Rocky Mountains. "But then you realize that there are 10 times more species." The *Rhododendrons*, *Primulas*, and *Gentians* are particularly diverse.

The **plant community is also much, much older**, Ree and colleagues revealed in *Science*. It originated some 30 million years ago, tens of millions of years before those blanketing other mountains. That makes it the world's oldest continuous alpine ecosystem "by a long shot," Ree says, which gave it far more time to diversify. Evolution also had a potent driver here, they conclude: intense monsoon rains, which provided essential moisture but also promoted erosion that carved up the landscape, dividing and isolating plant populations that ultimately diverged into new species.

Development, in the form of new roads, hydroelectric dams, and growing settlements and farms pose a pressing threat. On the bright side, the stunning wildflower displays that appear each summer on the slopes of the **Hengduan Mountains** have made the region a growing draw for ecotourism, and prompted China's government to protect parts of this ancient cradle of plant diversity.



A showy Rhododendron is one of some 3000 alpine plant species found in the Hengduan Mountains
YAOWU XING/XTBG/CAS

Dr Pema Gyamtsho appointed as the new Director General of ICIMOD

Dr Gyamtsho said that, "ICIMOD is the key institution in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region to accelerate action to address the region's shared concerns. I am delighted to be selected for this very important position that would give me an opportunity to pursue my passion to work for the HKH community".

Central Asia—Himalayas

Resilience beyond the pandemic: HKH



From Pulse of the Planet International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

Photo: Jitendra Bajracharya/ICIMOD

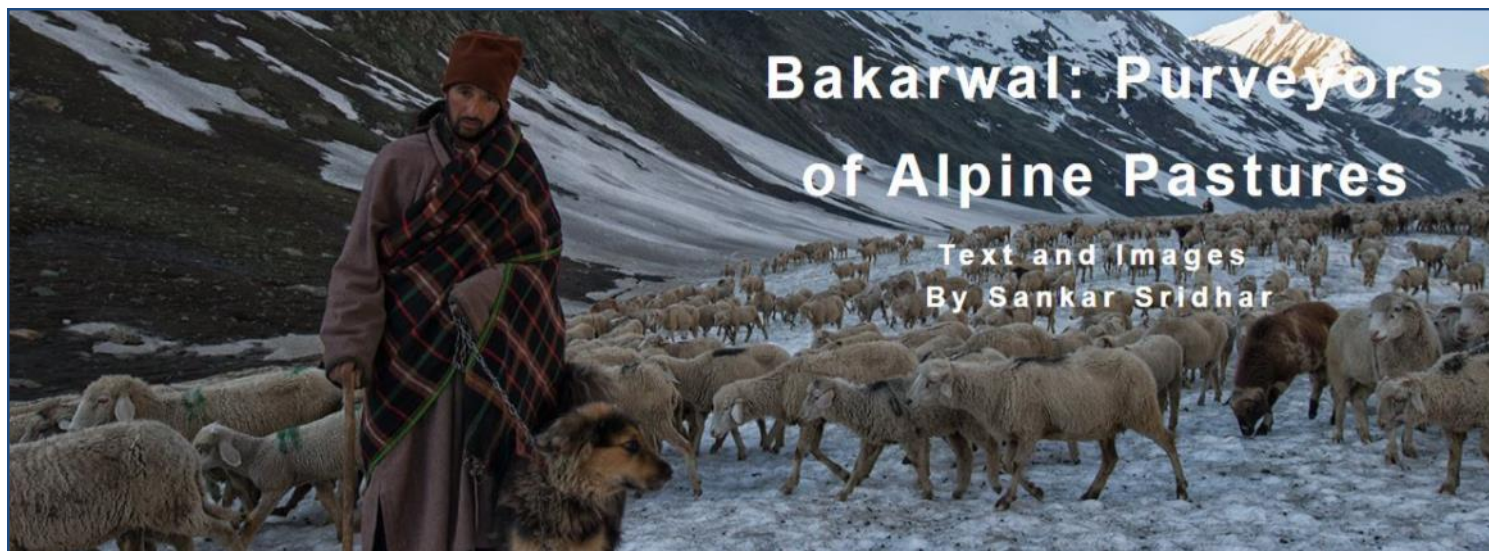
Climate change has left Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) mountain environments and communities vulnerable, and the pandemic has exacerbated these vulnerabilities.

Remittances and tourism-based income – economic lifelines for mountain people – have been severed. Agriculture and trade in high-value mountain products have been impacted by disruptions in transport and access to markets for trade and inputs. Since poverty and malnutrition rates are higher in the mountains than in other parts of the HKH countries, the pandemic threatens to exacerbate hunger and to push large numbers of mountain people into poverty. If environmental connections and ecosystem restoration are neglected, the likelihood of more zoonotic disease outbreaks and pandemics increases.

To bring a clear focus to the mountain communities ICIMOD has published a policy paper on [COVID-19 impacts and policy responses](#) in the HKH. The recommendations are meant to guide HKH governments in planning their resilient recovery and to build back better for a more prosperous future. Eklavya Sharma, ICIMOD's Deputy Director General, pointed out, "It is clear that sooner or later we will have a vaccine for COVID-19, but there's no vaccine for climate change."

Since the impacts of climate change on the environments and peoples of the HKH will remain even after the pandemic is over, it is important that post-pandemic recovery plans focus on climate action, resilience, and sustainable mountain development.

Shepherds of Himalayas



While the time of the Bakarwals in the high Himalayan valleys may seem like the perfect idea of a vacation, it's far from it. With lots of work and decisions to take, there is hardly a day off for anyone including children who must walk for long distances, supporting elders as they can. Thanks to the Bakarwals' survival skills, honed over time and passed on from one generation to the next, they are surviving in the harsh Himalayan landscape.

With new challenges due to roads in migratory routes, an influx of tourists in the pasture, attraction of glittering life in nearby towns, and seduction by less demanding jobs for Bakarwal youths, the future looks grim. But in the spirit of true pastoralists, they refuse to mope on it; as a Bakarwal elder put it: "We might as well enjoy the peace as long as we are able to."

Read full photo story by Sankar Sridhar titled " Bakarwals: Purveyors of Alpine Pastures" on SoH website: <https://www.shepherdsofhimalayas.com/purveyors-of-alpine-pastures.html>

Europe

The adventures of M49 and other bear stories: Italy



Brown bears were reintroduced to northern Italy from Slovenia photo: Getty

From *Patrizia Rossi* Mountain SG Committee June 2020

Readers of a previous issue of Mountain UPDATE may wonder what happened to M49 the bear. M49 is a male bear, who was part of a reintroduction project in the **Italian Alps** near Trento. He was a bit too confident with humans, and captured, but managed to escape several times – the last one from a very high fence with an electric wire. M49 does not read the newspapers or he would know that for this performance he gained the nickname of Papillon, after the French hero of evasions.

We left him in the fall of 2019, free in the Alps, feeding intensely before hibernation.

Winter came and because of the COVID 19 lockdown M49 woke up in an environment empty of people, with the mountains all to himself. He enjoyed this liberty for a while but liked cow milk too much: he started to get close to farms again. An infrared video caught him at night in search of the milk bucket, but frightened by a cat! So much for the ferocious predator. Local authorities decided it was time to go after him once more: he was captured and will probably be moved to a zoo. We like to remember him playing and rolling in the snow.

There are other interesting stories about bears in Italy, showing a different attitude of the local people.

In **Central Italy**, bears never disappeared: because this population was separated from the main European one, a subspecies evolved, *Ursus arctos marsicanus*, a little smaller. Here people have always coexisted with bears: they are used to them, accept the possibility that they may steal a bit of their harvest, and actively protect their cattle from attacks.

In **Abruzzo National Park** a sad incident occurred. A ten-year old female with two cubs drowned in an irrigation basin attempting to drink water. The reaction of the local people was prompt and the basin was filled with dirt to avoid similar accidents.

Nearby another female bear gained some notoriety: she is accompanied by four cubs, which is quite a rare event – they usually have two. The mayor and the Park Authority decided to close all the roads and footpaths leading to the area where the family lives, to protect them. Very wisely, they also set up observation points in the village: you can see the whole bear family climbing on trees to eat cherries, and the mother slapping the cubs when they don't behave. In this way, the five bears became an attraction for tourists, so they also help the local economy.

In the **Italian Alps**, bears went extinct around 1600. About 20 years ago, it was decided to reintroduce them from Slovenia, in an EU-sponsored project. But intensive orchard agriculture is not compatible with bears, and hunting or mushroom picking is very common. Just recently a hunter and his son were scared off by a bear, not even wounded, and again local authorities are calling for a bear hunt.

All these stories bring us to the following conclusion: the human factor is the most important to be evaluated when a reintroduction program is planned.



Italian Alps near Trento (Northern Italy)

Europe

Sinjajevina – a mountainous hole in a sea of protection, Montenegro



From **Pablo Dominguez** Environmental Anthropology Senior Researcher at GEODE, CNRS (France) – Associate Researcher at LASEG/AHCISP, UAB (Spain) - ICCA Consortium honorary member - on behalf of the Save Sinjajevina civic initiative.

The **Sinjajevina-Durmitor massif** mountain range in Montenegro is a traditional pastoral territory that is being transformed in its south eastern part, into a military training ground.

Geographically the area is unique: it is a high limestone plateau of over 1,000 km², between 1600 to 2200 meters above sea level. It is the second-largest mountain pasture in Europe and hosts a [unique biodiversity](#). Sinjajevina covers 600 km² in the south eastern part of the massif. Its natural and cultural values are widely recognized: it is at the heart of the UNESCO protected Tara Biosphere Reserve and is bordered by 2 World Heritage Sites.

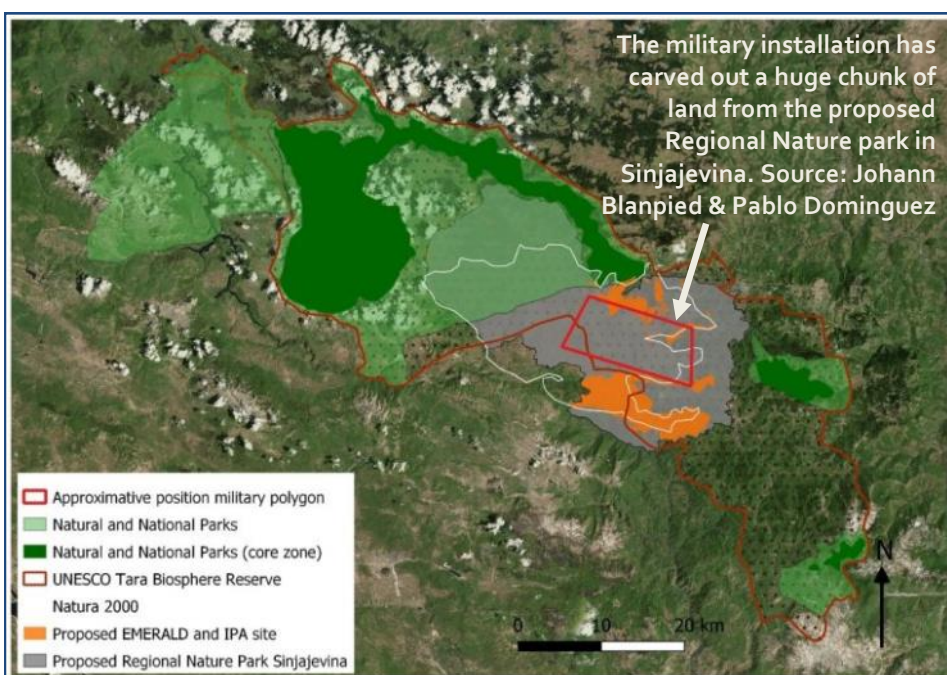
The pastures are in many cases still collectively governed by different communities (*katun*) through assemblies of users (*zbor*), effectively making Sinjajevina a cluster of pastoral *commons* or [community-conserved areas](#). Over 22,000 people live in Sinjajevina's lower lands today, and its highland pastures are used by more than 250 pastoralist families from eight different Montenegrin tribes.

In 2018, an extensive study (funded predominantly by the EU at close to €300.000) was presented publicly. Its recommendation was that Sinjajevina be declared a Regional Park for the protection of culture and nature, as well as for the enhancement of local economies.

Instead of the creation of the park by 2020 as expected, in 2019 the Montenegrin Government officially inaugurated a military training ground in the very heart of Sinjajevina. Here Montenegrin, American, Austrian, Slovenian, Italian and North Macedonian troops engaged in [the first international NATO military training](#), when civilians and shepherds were still present with their flocks on the highlands, some of which were reported to have been lost in the chaos of the shooting and military maneuvers. Additionally the Government has started to plant fast-growth conifers to reduce the pastures. They have already planted 3,000 trees and promised 100,000 more.

Sinjajevina's rich bio-cultural diversity is not only a product of nature.

It is a symbiosis between ecology and society, the co-production – and heritage – of local pastoralist communities' governance and management over millennia.



Pastoralists, local community members & Montenegrin citizens supporting the Save Sinjajevina civic initiative August 2020
Aleksandar Milatovic

For more information: [sinjajevina](#) or [saving a critical pastureland](#) or contact *Pablo Dominguez* eco.anthropologies3@gmail.com

The reindeer of Hardangervidda: Norway

In August 2016, a park ranger stumbled upon 323 dead wild tundra reindeer in Norway's remote **Hardangervidda plateau**. They had been killed in a freak lightning event. But instead of removing the carcasses, the park decided to leave them where they were, allowing nature to take its course – and scientists to study this island of decomposition and how it might change the arctic tundra ecosystem.

Over the years scientists observed the bloated, fly-infested bodies turn into dry skeletons. [The latest paper](#), published by the Royal Society in June 2020, looked at the creation of a “landscape of fear”, as top predators such as wolverines, golden eagles and arctic foxes took advantage of the carrion.

“The landscape of fear framework has provided a better understanding of animal decisions in relation to food and safety trade-offs, predator–prey relationships and how communities are structured across trophic levels,” it concluded.

Rotting bodies also change flora. Surrounding the 323 reindeer carcasses were seeds of crowberry – a keystone species of alpine tundra – that scavengers were dropping around the site.

Hardangervidda is a mountain plateau (1100m) in central southern Norway, the largest of its kind in Europe. With a cold year-round alpine climate, the plateau contains one of Norway's largest glaciers (Hardangerjøkulen) and national parks.

Its wild reindeer herds are among the largest in the world, with some 15,000 animals recorded in 1996 and about 8,000 in 2008. They migrate across the plateau during the year, moving from their winter grazing lands on the east side of the Hardangervidda, where they graze on lichen, to their breeding grounds in the more fertile west of the plateau.

Protection zone for Mont Blanc: France

From The Guardian July 2020

France is to restrict access to **Mont Blanc** in the Alps in an effort to halt reckless summit attempts and protect the biodiversity of the mountain and its surroundings. President Macron announced the new rules during a visit to Chamonix earlier this year when he visited the famous **Mer de Glace (Sea of Ice) glacier**, which has shrunk dramatically over the last 20 years (more than 65m depth & 300m length). He announced a new agency, the French Office of Biodiversity (OFB) to monitor and protect the environment.

The French government is to establish a **protected zone** around Mont Blanc and limit the number of people who can access the summit, which at just over 4,800m is the highest in western Europe.

As many as 30,000 people attempt to climb Mont Blanc every year – around 200-300 a day. Some ignore weather and safety warnings and many leave rubbish on the mountain.



2016 Photo: Olav Strand



As the reindeer carcasses decomposed, the scientists were able to observe different wildlife behaviours around the carrion. Photo: Shane Frank

Ed Note: This story amazed me, not so much the findings of recent predator prey paper but the number of reindeer killed by lightning!



President Macron visits the **Mer de Glace** glacier in Chamonix. Photo: Ludovic Marin/Pool/EPA

Scree and Talus

Seeds of change

From *Science* June 2020 DOI: 10.1126/science.368.6498.1444-a

Dispersal of seeds is a vital process for static plants. High-altitude plant communities are especially vulnerable to the effects of changing climate, and it is important to understand how climate affects their dispersal. Tovar *et al.* investigated the seed dispersal strategies of plants living close to the summits of the tropical Andes.

- Wind-dispersed species were common throughout
- Plants with unspecialized, gravity-dispersed seeds were more frequent at sites with low minimum temperatures
- Plants with animal-dispersed seeds were more frequent at sites with milder climates

As climate warms in the future, the spectrum of dispersal strategies and the composition of these plant communities may change accordingly. *J. Ecol.* 10.1111/1365-2745.13416 (2020)

Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) & vital role of rangers



In response to calls for international support the IUCN-WCPA has joined with the **International Ranger Federation (IRF)** and six other conservation organisations to form the **Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA)**.

Wolverines Return to Mount Rainier National Park

From *Treehugger* August 2020

For the first time in more than 100 years a wolverine mother and her two offspring have been spotted at **Mount Rainier National Park**. “It’s really, really exciting,” said Mount Rainier National Park Superintendent “It tells us something about the condition of the park— that when we have such large-ranging carnivores present on the landscape that we’re doing a good job of managing our wilderness.”

Wolverines are classified as a species of least concern, according to the [International Union for the Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) Red List](#). They are found in Canada, China, Finland, Mongolia, Norway, Russia, and Sweden.



Climate change is expected to alter the ecology of high-altitude plants in the Andes, like this Andean blueberry (*Vaccinium floribundum*).

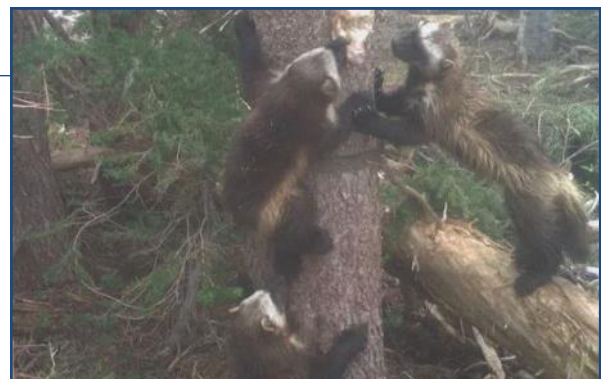
From *URSA & IRF* July 2020 www.ursa4rangers.org

Now more than ever we are appreciating how much we need nature, wild places and green spaces – for our health and well-being, and for our water, air and food.

URSA has prepared a global action plan to help support rangers achieve their needs and priorities to do their work more professionally, safely, and responsibly.

URSA will start implementing the plan at once through its members and through the member associations of IRF. They will focus first on a global framework of standards and performance for rangers and seek support and endorsement from donors, international organisations and NGOs. They will then work with IRF members, governments and other relevant stakeholders around the world to start implementing the plan at the national level.

[Summary Action Plan](#)



Although wolverines are common in Alaska, they are rare in the rest of the United States. Photo: Cascades Carnivore Project / NPS

Scree and Talus cont.

Dark Sky & Wilderness Quiet parks...

Ed Note: there are many dark sky parks around the world but wilderness quiet parks are a relatively new concept but possibly worthy of consideration...from MNN 2020

Great Sand Dunes has long been a destination for astronomers. Now, it joins about 24 national parks around the U.S. that have been designated International Dark Sky Parks.

"The dry air, high elevation, and lack of light pollution all make the park an ideal dark-sky destination." Great Sand Dunes Superintendent Pamela Rice.

Ecuador has become the first in the world to declare a "quiet park," a lush stretch of land straddling the Zabalo River where silence is protected like a natural resource. There are no transport routes, residential and commercial developments.

Dubbed **Wilderness Quiet Park**, and spanning about a million acres, the land is owned by the indigenous Cofán people of Ecuador. But hopes are high that this unique space in a world increasingly beset by noise will kickstart tourism in the region — quiet tourism! The new designation will help the Cofan Nation defend their lands and preserve their culture.

Sounds of Your Park – Join the Chorus

The organisations (right) are working together to create a global collection of the sounds of protected areas which will virtually transport listeners to protected spaces worldwide via immersive acoustic recordings. These evocative recordings will work to inspire people to engage with our natural and cultural heritage, and foster meaningful connections with our parks.

To contribute: email soundsofyourpark@gmail.com to ask further questions or indicate your interest in submitting your high-quality audio recordings. A potential example: [Wolves howling in Yellowstone National Park, United States](#)

Illegal logging continues in Australian mountain forests

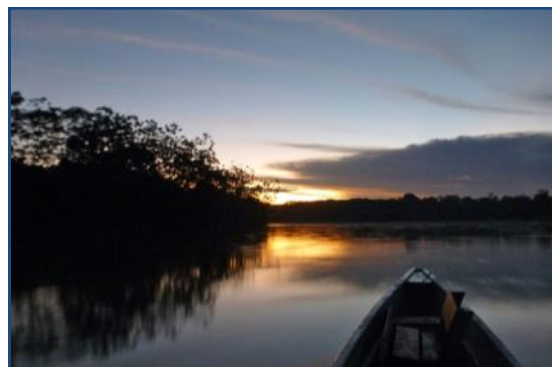
In Australia the former Greens leader Bob Brown has launched a legal challenge to native forest logging in Tasmania, claiming it is inconsistent with federal environment law.

The case by the Bob Brown Foundation, lodged in the federal court challenges what has been seen as an effective **exemption from environment laws granted to state-sanctioned logging under regional forest agreements between the Federal Government and the states.**

What are these?



Great Sand Dunes NP, Colorado USA



Quiet Parks International hopes that many more parks will follow the Zabalo River's lead. Photo: Quiet Parks International



The aftermath of logging in Tasmania. Photo: Rob Blakers/The Guardian

Scree and Talus cont.

LIFEstockProtect project approved!

From EWS August 2020 The largest and most ambitious livestock protection project in the German-speaking region of the Alps has been approved. This means that over the course of the next five years, the European Union will co-finance an investment of approximately €5M in livestock protection training, measures and improvements. As a result, the project aims to reduce human-wildlife conflicts, specifically concerning wolves and livestock depredations, and contribute to a long-term sustainable coexistence with wildlife.

Great American Outdoors Act

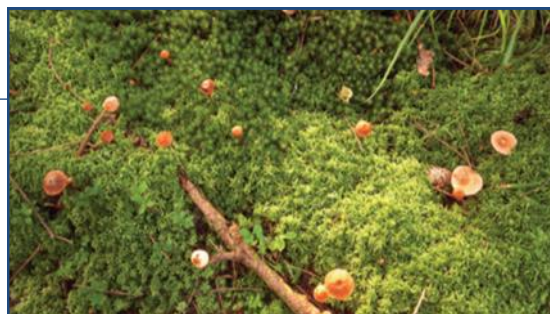
The Guardian July 2020 The US Congress has approved a sweeping, long-awaited bill to continuously fund national, state and local parks - a major boon to conservation. The [Great American Outdoors Act](#), allocates \$9.5bn over the next five years for previously neglected park repairs. And it sets up \$900m a year to acquire land for conservation and continue maintenance.

Some conservationists argue that because the new funding comes from revenues from the energy industry, national parks are protected at the expense of the climate. Others say that using fossil fuel money for conservation signifies a victory.

Shrubification of peatlands (sphagnum bog)

Science July 2020 Soil is a key player in the global carbon cycle. Peatlands are important because they contain more than half of global soil carbon, much of which is sequestered in slow-decaying *Sphagnum* moss.

Experimental warming of peatbog ecosystem (Minnesota, US) found that the growth of fine roots of shrubs and trees over two growing seasons rapidly increased by 130% for each 1°C temperature increase, mainly because of the drying of the soil and the increase in the duration of the growing season. Research suggests that over the longer term, drying will allow replacement of *Sphagnum* moss by other plants and hasten the loss of soil carbon. DOI: [10.1126/science.369.6503.520-a](#)



Sphagnum moss, which forms peat and is a major carbon store, is at risk of drying out under climate change. Photo: BLICKWINKEL/ALAMY

Feral animals threaten alpine sphagnum bog recovery

From Feral Herald July 2020 Victoria's alpine sphagnum bogs, burnt during the horrendous 2019-20 bushfires, won't recover without protection from feral animals, namely horses, deer and pigs, new research warns.

Scientists from Arthur Rylah Institute have warned that without "urgent management action to address these pervasive threats, many burnt bogs are likely to contract in size or disappear entirely". Willows as well as feral animals need controlling.



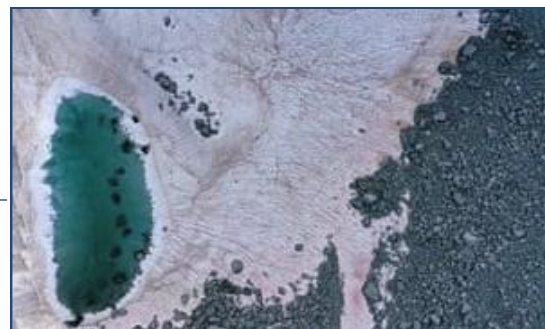
Alpine bogs in Australian Alps are a haven for threatened wildlife Photo: Karen Alexander

Dr Bruno Oberle has been selected as the next IUCN Director General

Dr Oberle, a Swiss national, succeeds Inger Andersen who served as Director General from 2015 to 2019 prior to her appointment as Executive Director at the United Nations Environment Programme.

Algae turns Italian Alps pink

Scientists in Italy are investigating the appearance of pink glacial ice in the Alps, caused by algae that accelerate the effects of climate change. Normally ice reflects more than 80% of the sun's radiation back into the atmosphere, but as algae appear, they darken the ice so that it absorbs the heat and melts more quickly. Hikers and ski lifts in addition to global heating could also have an impact on the algae and accelerate melting.



Aerial picture taken above Presena glacier near Pellizzano, shows pink coloured snow. Photograph: Miguel Medina/AFP/Getty Images

Tools, Publications and other Media

- From **IUCN WCPA**: [Journey to Marseille](#) **Vital Sites: The Journey to Marseille**: IUCN's Global Protected Areas Programme and the World Commission on Protected Areas are pleased to present "Vital Sites: The Journey to Marseille", a 6-month series of online events and multimedia content to run between June 2020 and the rescheduled World Conservation Congress in January 2021. The online journey will highlight stories, expert opinions, and case studies on the importance of protected and conserved areas, from around the world with a series of multimedia events and activities on our new digital platform.
- From **ICIMOD Nukal Chettri**: [COVID-19 impact and policy responses in the Hindu Kush Himalaya](#)
- The **European Parks Academy (EPA)** is a summer academy for professionals working in nature conservation. It takes place every year in the beginning of July for one week in Klagenfurt, Austria. Your mentors at the academy include experts from IUCN (*International Union for Conservation of Nature*), WCPA (*World Commission on Protected Areas*), the Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, E.C.O. Institute of Ecology and many more. You are very welcome to [contact us](#), if you have any questions. Find out more about the [programme](#) and register for 2021.
- [Eco.mont 12/2 | Journal on Protected Mountain Areas Research and Management](#)
From Valerie Braun: this issue of eco.mont covers topics from biosphere reserves, to the implications of tourism and recreation, to herpetofauna, and more.
- From Stephen Woodley: New paper shows: Economic Benefits of Protecting 30% of Planet's Land & Ocean Outweigh the Costs at Least 5-to-1 <https://www.campaignfornature.org/protecting-30-of-the-planet-for-nature-economic-analysis>
- From **IUCN WCPA Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group**:
The IUCN *Guidelines for Conserving Connectivity through Ecological Networks and Corridors* are now available free to the public to inform more consistent connectivity conservation practices that use the best-available science and innovations to ensure well-connected terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems. These Guidelines introduce common definitions, highlight applications around the world with 25 case studies, and recommend designation of ecological corridors that knit together protected and conserved areas to form ecological networks for conservation. The main objective of these Guidelines is to provide insight into the leading tools for conserving the physical links between protected and conserved areas, and areas outside their boundaries as part of large, interconnected ecological networks. Download from IUCN Library link: <https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2020.PAG.30.en>.
- **Tourism Planning and Development Journal - SPECIAL ISSUE 2020**
Going the Distance: The Importance of Long Distance Trails for Conservation and Development
The purpose of this special edition is to analyse the importance of Long Distance Trails for sustainable tourism: (1) conservation, (2) recreation and (3) job creation.
Full Paper Submission Deadline : 1 October 2020 Expected Publication Date : June 2021
Proposal submission date has passed but if interested in the journal contact: **Pedro da Cunha e Menezes** Chair - IUCN Long Distance Trails Advisory Group Email: cunhaemenezes@gmail.com
- The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) has launched the **Restoration Stewards Program**: to support and highlight the work of five young restoration practitioners and their teams. This exciting, year-long program will provide funding, mentorship and training to deepen the impact of five youth-led restoration projects! The details on the program and the application are provided in the link below.
Global Landscape Forum: <https://www.globallandscapesforum.org/>
- From **Mountain Research Initiative (MRI)**: [Special Issue of Land | Mountains Under Pressure](#):
This Special Issue aims to provide practitioners and policymakers with key information on the dynamics and changes in threatened ecosystems in order to help design and implement appropriate management strategies for sustainable mountain futures. **Submission deadline is 30 December 2020.**

Tools, Publications and other Media

Voices less commonly heard:

Biodiversity is under unprecedented pressure from human activities around the globe. The most common model for conservation has been in the form of 'protected areas' such as national parks.

However, much of the world is (or until recently has been) conserved de facto, independently of this relatively recent development: **more than a quarter of the global terrestrial area is cared for by local communities or indigenous peoples**, overlapping with around 40% of the world's protected areas and large ecologically intact landscapes.

Yet, their commitment and stewardship are at risk of being replaced by other detrimental activities if their ways are not duly recognized for their contributions to nature conservation and human wellbeing.

In this special issue, the focus will be on case studies highlighting their conservation outcomes. Fundamental values and beliefs as well as diversity in governance and management will be highlighted.

Particularly welcome are contributions from voices less commonly heard, aiming to enhance our understanding and to promote more inclusive conservation and sustainable development. If interested, please send a title and abstract to [Dr Marc Foggin](mailto:Dr.Marc.Foggin@mdpi.com) to discuss suitability for this issue. For further information, please see the attached information sheet or visit the special issue webpage at <http://mdpi.com/si/54786>.

Scaling up nature based solutions: Ecosystem based adaptation (EbA)

Healthy mountain ecosystems help buffer the impacts of climate change for local communities, wildlife and downstream populations worldwide. Efforts to manage, conserve or restore natural environments can help people adapt to climate change by **taking advantage of a healthy ecosystem's natural resilience**.

But in mountain areas, on-the-ground EbA measures have not been widely implemented.

To help build support for EbA approaches in mountains, both on the ground and in national and international policy, The Mountain Institute (TMI) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have joined forces, launching a three-year program to work on EbA in key mountain regions.

The goal is to expand EbA work started during the "Mountain EbA Flagship Programme" in the **Himalayas** (Nepal), **Mount Elgon** (Uganda) and the **Andes** (Peru) and to support the EbA approach being adopted in neighbouring **Bhutan, Kenya and Colombia**.

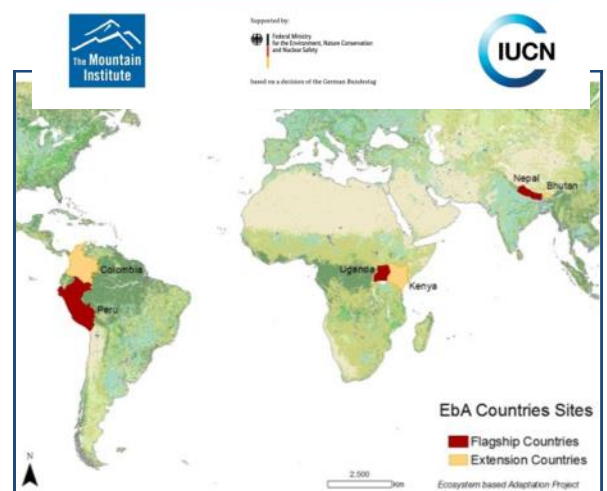
The EbA experience and data developed through this program will be instrumental in building wider support and generating financing for EbA within national governments and at international forums.

[CLICK HERE FOR NEW BROCHURE.](#)



EbA Programs that enable mountain farmers to sustainably cultivate, harvest and market valuable native crops provide a dependable source of income, promote biodiversity conservation and help maintain healthy soil.

Similarly, by carefully managing a mountain watershed, erosion and pollution are reduced and native plant species and wildlife can rebound. This also helps ensure sufficient water supply for local communities and for populations further downstream.



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 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!