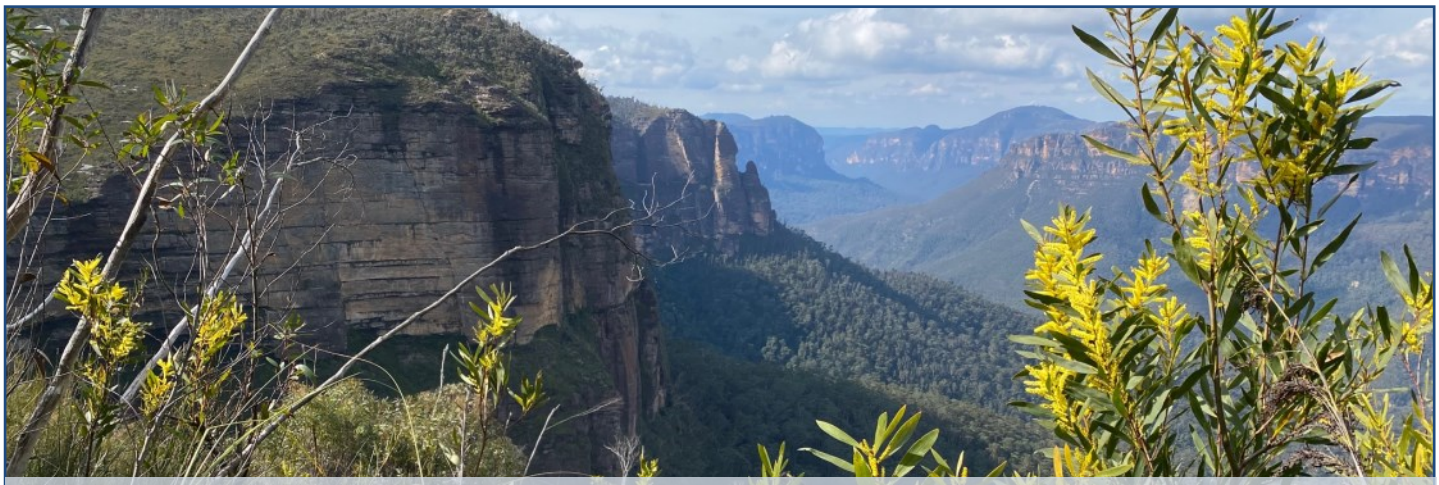
Mountain Protected Areas UPDATE

September 2024 # 123



A note from the editor *September2024*

By way of introduction to this 123rd Mountain UPDATE please read the poem below by Kit Denton

photo: Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area within the Country of first nations being the Darkinjung, Dharawal, Dharug, Gundungurra, Wonnarua and Wiradjuri Traditional Owners

There is a language spoken here
As old as mammals, and as strange.
There are words and phases here
First spoken when an early dawn
Came green and smoke-shot on this mountain range
Thrust from the furnace of the world,
Heaved up in a fantastic fiery yawn
And thrown and hurled
Into the sky to cool
It is the language of this land-
And much of it is spoken without words.

The stick men understood, some understand
Even today, some of the last left traces
Of the Kedumba men and others.
Sometimes you see, when broad black television faces
Speak, sometimes you catch a glimpse of the early knowing,
When they speak true and you feel the glowing
Heat, find the fire within, know that they are brothers,
That man, these tribes, this land – a family.

The old, the first born tongue
Is clear. Its consonants are now
As they have always been, rung
From rough rock sounded like bells
And timpanis and gongs
From crag faces and great trees and wells
Of water in long gorges, billabongs,
And clear and pebble-clicking creeks.
Fire-grass and tinder-paper leaves
Crackle and rustle in the ancient tongue
This mountain country speaks.
And spoke when the idea of time was green
And still will speak when all of time has been.

Kit Denton

(poem taken from Conservation Hut, Blue Mountains NP)

Mountain Update is a quarterly newsletter distributed to members of the Mountain Protected Areas Network.

The Mountain Specialist Group acknowledges the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters where we live and work and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship they have to Country.

The views expressed in this UPDATE are not necessarily those of the IUCN WCPA.

IUCN WCPA Mountain UPDATE # 123 Editor: Gillian Anderson peopleinnature@bigpond.com

Global:

From people and mountains around the world

WCPA Mountain Specialist Group presents at WILD12

WCPA Mountains Specialist Group member *Erik Beever* attended the Wild12 meeting in Rapid City, SD, USA at the end of August 2024.

In addition to presenting a talk that outlined the approach, key findings, and implications of the Jacobs et al. 2021 IUCN-WCPA white paper and 2023 publication in the peer-reviewed journal *Land* **"*A Decision-Support Tool to Augment Global Mountain Protection and Conservation, including a Case Study from Western Himalaya*".** Both laid out a 6-step process for empirically identifying opportunities for possible new or increased protection of landscapes in mountains around the world that align with Key Biodiversity Areas, biodiversity hotspots, and low levels of current protection.

Authors on those efforts assessed current levels of protection with respect to terrestrial ecosystems, which in turn reflect temperature, moisture, landforms, and vegetation, as well as biogeographic realm (Nearctic, Holarctic).

See the paper here: Website: https://www.mdpi.com/2073-445X/12/7/1323

Erik also attended numerous other presentations, and had in-person and follow-up conversations with other IUCN-WCPA and additional individuals, to extend the reach of our paper. Many dozens of countries were represented among the meeting's attendees, and meeting activities were very diverse.

Learn more about the event and the resolutions passed on the Wild Foundation's website. Photo: Katie Jacobs

Adaptation at Altitude: key insights for mountain stakeholders

The Adaptation at Altitude program has recently released a series of briefs and articles containing relevant insights for mountain stakeholders. They delve into pressing issues related to climate change, sustainable land management and conservation, offering insights and practical strategies for adaptation. Learn more

- Leave no mountain behind: the synthesis series – Migration, mobility and immobility in the mountains
- Pastoralism in the high tropical Andes: A review of the effect of grazing intensity on plant diversity and ecosystem services
- Diversity, structure and dynamics of tropical montane forests: Insights from permanent-plot monitoring in the Venezuelan Andes

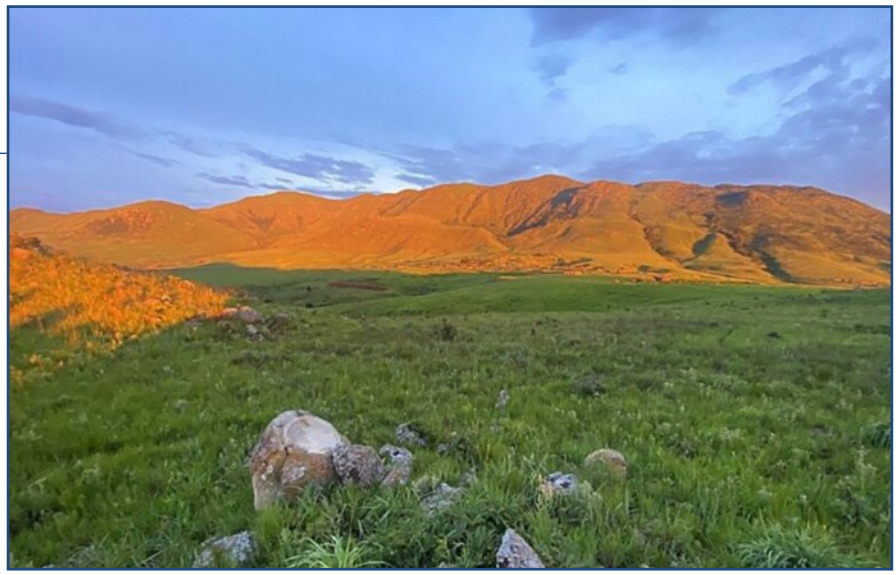
Africa

Mount Moco: Angola

Time is running out to save Angola's remaining Afromontane forests, such as those at Mount Moco

The highlands of Angola are home to a few isolated pockets of montane forest, which host several rare and localised birds, including Swierstra's Francolin.

Some of the best remaining examples of montane forest in Angola are located at the country's highest mountain, Mount Moco (2,620m), where currently only 85 ha of forest remains. ***Mountmoco.org***



Mount Moco is a critical site for the conservation of montane forest-dependent species in Angola.

Mongabay May 2024

MOUNT MOCO, Angola — On the slopes of Angola's highest mountain stands the gray jagged stump of a once mighty tree.

It's the remnant of a Guinea plum (*Parinari excelsa*), a species native to Mount Moco's evergreen forests. When South African ornithologist Michael Mills first started to survey the mountain's forests in 2005, it was a tall tree with a crown of evergreen leaves flourishing beside a small stream.

"A fire got in, and got into the roots and killed it," he says.

The mountain's Afromontane forests once formed large, dark-green patches against the lighter green and golden-brown shades of Moco's grasslands as they changed with the seasons. Fires and the harvesting of timber for firewood and building materials have reduced many of these forest patches to narrow ribbons surviving along steep gullies and ravines.

Since 2010, a conservation project has sought to regrow some of the forest patches and to protect them from wildfires.

The project has planted more than 4,000 trees. Mongabay was present early one morning in February when dozens of part-time workers from Kanjonde, some of them women with babies strapped to their backs, carried another 420 potted seedlings from the nursery to a patch of degraded forest targeted for restoration.

Although they'll take 40 to 50 years to reach maturity, younger trees quickly increase the "woody biomass" that helps reconnect forest fragments and create vital bird habitat. Species that had been absent have started to come back.

Using turbidity tube to measure water quality in a stream flowing out of a restored patch of Afromontane forest photo: Ryan Truscott Mongabay.

Habitat restoration work like this isn't just good for the birds. There's now a steady supply of freshwater to Kanjonde from the stream that flows out of the forest.

"By protecting the forest we are protecting the river so it can provide healthy water," says Regina Wimbo, one of the 12 nursery workers who waters and tends to the seedlings and helps carry them across the hillside on planting days.

Wimbo was born and raised in Kanjonde. She says she's happy to see her work in the nursery now bearing fruit.

America—south

Wildcats & Mujeres Quechua por la Conservación: Andes, Peru

From Mongabay August 2024

Habitat loss due to deforestation of Polylepis forests is increasing the incidence of human -wildlife conflict between communities and threatened feline species such as the Andean cat (Leopardus jacobita), puma (Puma concolor) and pampas or Peruvian desert cat (Leopardus garleppi) in the central Andes of Peru.

Ida Auris Arango remembers the day in 2023 when she stumbled upon the Andean cat and its young on the mountainside. While shepherding her alpacas, she heard her dog barking and spotted the fog-gray feline cornered against a boulder, hackles raised and hissing as it shielded a pair of kittens. Grabbing the dog by the scruff of its neck, she gave the cats time to vanish among the *queuña* (*Polylepis*) trees.

“It had a right to life. It was beautiful, and I was happy to see it,” she says of the fleeting encounter with the endangered wildcat species, one of the Andes’ most elusive mammals.

For much of Ida’s life, Quechua locals treated the deaths of wildcats with ambivalence or even welcomed them. Attacks on livestock had been causing economic losses and driving a conflict that seemed to have no clear resolution. But attitudes toward felines have been rapidly changing in the village of Licapa in the Andes of central Peru. The changes are the work of a new conservation project led by Indigenous women. A project first created by Quechua conservation biologist Merinia Mendoza Almeida and wildcat expert Jim Sanderson, women in the community have made it their own.

At first, they were bemused by the project. But the women slowly began to weave it into their lives and found it fun. It became a community space, one that was not led by men who typically dominate social affairs, nor the Peruvian government. Camers trap images below from Mujeres Quechua por la Conservación (via Mongabay)

A camera trap image of a puma in Licapa, a near-threatened species in Peru and an animal frequently caught up in human-wildlife conflict.

Camera trap image of an Andean cat, an endangered species in the Andes—which fewer than 1,500 are estimated to exist, and the first photographic evidence of the species using a Polylepis forest.

Peruvian desert cat, a near-threatened species, and a focus of the conservation project. Indigenous conservationist Merinia Almeida trains Quechua women in the use of camera traps

To address the conflict with small cats was simple enough; chicken and guinea pig corrals were repaired with wire and wood or constructed anew, a straightforward measure that has reduced conflict. However, addressing puma attacks has required a different approach rooted in finding alternatives to grazing on the mountains and reducing pressures on the forest. The project also obtained a variety of grass seeds resistant to the cold temperatures of the Andes, including rye (*Lolium perenne*) and bison grass (*Hierochloe odorata*) as well as forage oats (*Avena sativa*). Planted behind houses and on the outskirts of the village, the new pastures have been key in reducing, though not entirely eliminating, puma attacks, according to local people.

“We don’t need to take our alpacas into the mountains as much as before, so we don’t lose as many of them now”

Read whole article here https://news.mongabay.com/2024/08/how-a-fun-womens-gathering-led-to-small-wildcat-conservation-in-perus-andes/

Europe

Mystery seismic waves rippled around Earth for 9 days caused by tsunami: Greenland

From ABC News September 2024

In September 2023, earthquake-detection equipment around the world picked up a signal that lasted nine days. The signal was detected globally — as far away as Australia and Antarctica — seemingly causing the entire planet to "ring" like a bell.

Dr Widmer-Schnidrig and dozens of seismologists jumped onto online forums to share data and speculate on what happened. "This is really a very extraordinary occasion to work on such a signal," Dr Widmer-Schnidrig said. A year on, the scientists unravelled the mystery and reported their findings in the journal Science.

A new study now shows the signal was produced by a landslide into a Greenland fjord, which created a 200m-high wave.

After months of modelling and simulations, plus developing a precise mathematical formula to show how the water sloshed back and forth (like water in a bathtub) in Dickson Fjord, the research team turned its attention to what caused the landslide. Dr Hicks said climate change contributed to the mountain collapse.

"This glacier at the base had been thinning by up to 30 metres over the past couple of decades," he said. "And so that mountain just wasn't able to be supported anymore."

The study authors pointed out that accelerating climate change would likely cause more massive slides and tsunamis, potentially putting people at risk.

Researchers say similar events could happen again as melting glaciers trigger more ice-related landslides.

Before

After massive landslide

A research boat in the Dickson Fjord. *(Supplied: Soren Rysgaard)*

Brown Bears to be shot: Sweden

Euro News August 2024

Bear defenders say the hunt is more about 'macho prestige' than keeping the predators to a safe level. Around 500 bears are set to be shot in Sweden (tomorrow) as the country's annual licensed hunt begins. In total, the government has approved the killing of 486 brown bears - 20 per cent of the wild population - between 21 August and 15 October.

Campaigners say this "trophy hunt" is incompatible with the large carnivore's status as a strictly protected species within the EU.

Brown bears were hunted to the brink of extinction in Sweden at the beginning of the last century. They have steadily recovered thanks to protective measures introduced in 1927

America—north

Grizzly Bear Hunt: Alberta, Canada

From The Guardian July 2024

The Canadian province of Alberta has quietly reversed a two-decade ban on hunting grizzly bears, in what conservations described as a "slap in the face" amid continuing debate over the future of the threatened species.

Alberta first banned the hunting of grizzly bears in 2006 after the population of the species, which once reached as many as 9,000 bears, collapsed due to generations of overhunting, agriculture development and urbanization.

In 2002, provincial authorities estimated there were approximately 850 bears living in provincial lands and nearly 200 in national parks. The bears were listed as a threatened species by Alberta's government in 2010, and a recent count found a population of between 856 and 973.

But on 17 June, the province quietly amended the Wildlife Act to once more permit the hunting of individuals deemed to be "problem bears".

In a statement, the right-leaning provincial government defended the move as a way of "protect[ing] Albertans", citing 62 maulings and eight deaths from bear attacks since 2005. A spokesperson for the minister also cited 897 counts of livestock losses since 2016, which has "greatly impacted Alberta farmers", but it was unclear if all of those losses were attributable to grizzly bears.

"I can't believe I'm writing this, but the controversial Alberta grizzly bear hunt is back on," wildlife photographer John Marriott "The grizzly bear is a threatened species."

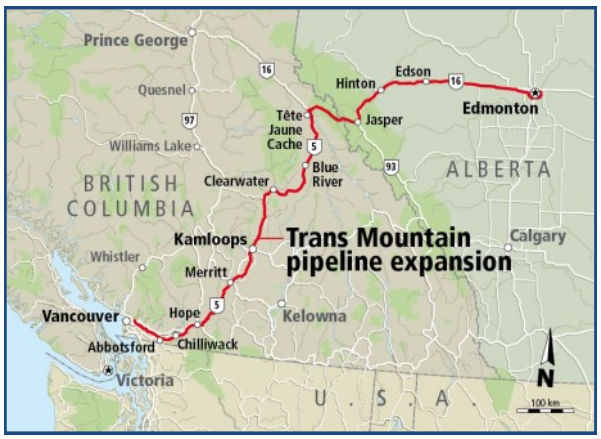
Fatal bear attacks are exceedingly rare and it is often the bear that comes out worse following interactions with humans. One study showed that the University of Alberta estimates 21 grizzlies were killed in collisions with trains in 2000 in Banff national park while 75 deaths were caused by vehicle collisions in the broader Bow valley region of Alberta.

Trans Mountain Pipeline: Canada

The Trans Mountain pipeline crosses two provinces, threads a national park in the Rocky Mountains, dips underneath bodies of water and passes through dozens of First Nations communities before terminating at a sprawling oil storage facility on the verdant shores of the Pacific.

After a decade of fierce protests, cost overruns and construction delays, oil started flowing at the beginning of May, but there was no grand ceremony or ribbon-cutting. Instead, a China-bound Aframax tanker named Dubai Angel departed with 550,000 barrels of diluted bitumen to be sold to global markets. In the coming years, the megaproject will move nearly 900,000 barrels every day. The number of tankers will surge sevenfold.

When Justin Trudeau was elected in 2015, he touted his government's climate credentials on the world stage. "Canada is back, my friends," he told delegates at the Paris climate summit. But in the years since, Canada remains the only G7 nation to emit greenhouse gases far above its 1990 levels – while now also planning to extract and export record volumes of oil.

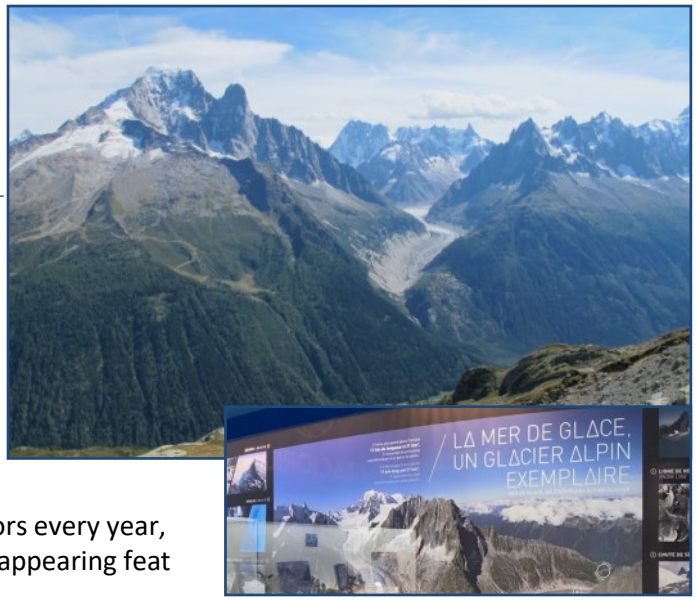


The pipeline itself has become emblematic of a Canadian contradiction: promises of strong climate action, coupled with billions in fossil fuel investments – and, critics say, massive government subsidies to the oil industry at a moment when the planet needs to move away from fossil fuels.

Where does the oil come from? Tar sands oil — even the name sounds bad. And it is bad. In fact, oil from tar sands is one of the most destructive, carbon-intensive and toxic fuels on the planet. Producing it releases three times as much greenhouse gas pollution as conventional crude oil does. ***Centre for Biological Diversity***

Europe

new Glaciorium climate and glacier interpretation centre: France



Taken from Euronews.com August 2024

Living in Chamonix, it's not easy to escape the fact that, over the last 10 years, the famous Mer de Glace has looked more like a sea of rubble than a sea of ice .

France's largest glacier and the second-longest in the Alps is losing six metres of thickness every year.

The glacier, also known as Montenvers, attracts thousands of visitors every year, with some 450,000 people coming in 2023, all eager to see this disappearing feat of nature.

Since last winter they have been able to see it up close, at an altitude of 1,913 metres, via a new cable car. In just two minutes, visitors are transported between the viewing platform and the ice below.

Adapting to melting ice

The new cable car, which was built about 40 metres up the valley from the 1988 lift, is part of major works that have started on the Montenvers site.

The goal is to allow visitors to get high up in **mountains** while exposing them to the effects of climate change.

A new Glaciorium climate and glacier interpretation centre will be constructed next year, scheduled to open in 2026. With interactive displays, the Glaciorium will chart the evolution of **glaciers** and our relationship with them.

Local glaciologist Luc Moreau has studied Chamonix's glaciers since 1987. He said that in places, the glacier has lost 40m in four or five years.

Moreau points out that in 15 years, the glacier will have melted significantly.

'Last chance' tourism

Experts say the skiable part of the glacier will only be available for another 30 years at most and Moreau believes that by the end of the century, with the **Alps** warming faster than the rest of the world, all glaciers below 3,500 metres will be gone.

For now, he is still taking advantage of **glaciers** being here to tell people about them. "We're raising awareness as much as we can, talking to people about this environment that we owe it to ourselves to preserve," said Moreau.

Many visitors also appreciate that this could be their last chance to see them. "We've realised that we're privileged and that it won't be here for much longer".

With the continuing **glacier** melt, the Compagnie du Mont-Blanc had to adapt to make it easier for people to get around and reach popular attractions, such as the glacier cave, which is carved out anew every year so people can see the glacier from the inside.

The restoration of the historical hotel and red Montenvers mountain railway is also part of the project.

SE Asia—Oceania

Mountain Forests, the Burning Question: Australia

Taken from The Conversation April 2024 Our tall, wet forests were not open and park-like when colonists arrived – and we shouldn't be burning them (theconversation.com) David Lindenmayer et al

Some reports and popular books, such as Bill Gammage's Biggest Estate on Earth, have argued that extensive areas of Australia's forests were kept open through frequent burning by First Nations people. Advocates for widespread thinning and burning of these forests have relied on this belief. They argue fire is needed to return these forests to their "pre-invasion" state.

A key question then is: what does the evidence say about what tall, wet forests actually looked like 250 years ago? The answer matters because it influences how these forests are managed. It's also needed to guide efforts to restore them to their natural state.

In a new scientific paper, we looked carefully at the body of evidence on the natural pre-invasion state of Australian forests, such as those dominated by majestic mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*), the world's tallest flowering plant. We analysed historical documents, First Nations Peoples' recorded testimonies and the scientific evidence.

Our analysis shows most areas of mainland mountain ash forests were likely to have been dense and wet at the time of British invasion. The large overstorey eucalypt trees were relatively widely spaced, but there was a dense understorey of broad-leaved shrubs, tree ferns and mid-storey trees, including elements of cool temperate rainforest.

The ecological and other scientific evidence suggests mountain ash forests evolved under conditions where high-severity bushfires were rare. As a result, mature forests of eucalypt trees of multiple ages dominated these landscapes. There was no evidence of active and widespread use of recurrent low-severity fire or thinning.

The key conclusion is that these forests were not open or park-like – as was the case in some other vegetation types in Australia.

On Top of the Mountain: Mount Buffalo NP, Australian Alps

Ski run revegetation project led by Parks Victoria rangers Elaine Thomas (left) and Tom Sanchez photo: Australian Alps

from Australian Alps News Australian Alps national parks website

"We've old ski runs within Mount Buffalo National Park where due to climate change and lack of snow the lifts are long gone.

We've been suppressing the weedy grass species that were sown decades ago, and will be progressively planting clusters of snow gums (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) down the old runs." It sounds too easy but in reality, what this has meant on the ground is mapping the site carefully, attacking the weeds in bouts, carrying 150 rice straw bales through the undulating peatland to use as mulch, then planting the snow gums."

We planted in March and were congratulating ourselves on the timing given rain was on the way to water everything in, but the system never arrived so we had to deliver the water by hand – for a month."

Three months later: "The trees are doing well, and we'll be planting more of them, filling in more of the mosaic pattern.

We're also planning to tackle the peatlands over the next financial year, controlling the weeds then establishing cover with appropriate species which should allow the peatland species to reestablish themselves. These upland peatlands are so important: I like being able to be a part of the work that's helping to protect them." Ranger MBNP

Snow gum seedlings

Himalayas—Central Asia

Ancient Art of Tracking Himalayan Wildlife: Nepal

Alton was able to make 30 or more plaster casts of bear, leopard, barking deer, tiger, chital, sloth bear, snow leopard, wild buffalo, blue sheep, and pika tracks, and turn them into a silicone rubber moulds to make them durable, so they could be used as a teaching tool for students of natural history.

Rubber molds (above) of various Himalayan mammals presented to the Natural History Museum Kathmandu in 2022

Nepali Times June 2024 From Alton C Byers

Animal tracking is an art that has been practiced by traditional peoples for thousands of years for hunting and survival. Gathering evidence about an animal with tracks, scat, and other signs, they locate, trail, and interpret its behaviour in the wild.

In Nepal, although indigenous people like the Raute, sikari hunters and a few naturalists use tracking, the knowledge is diminishing.

Between 1993-1995, I lived in what was then the remote village of Khandbari of Sankwasabha district to help establish the 2,300 km2 Makalu-Barun National Park.

I started making and collecting plaster casts of the mammal tracks encountered along the forest trails, riverbanks, fields, and alpine areas.

My main teachers were the Rai sikari hunters whom accompanied me on treks through the park. They had grown up learning about the forests, animal tracks, and hunting and trapping (paso) techniques. They were also experts at identifying edible, utilitarian, and medicinal plants, and could live quite comfortably for months if given nothing more than a kukuri and a little salt.

Hunting was prohibited in the national park and buffer zone but there were local people with a hunting background who were among the best naturalists that I had ever encountered. They were fluent in the flora and fauna of the forests in which they lived. They could mimic dozens of bird and animal calls, follow a trail over solid rock, and often knew the names of the birds, mammals, and reptiles in three languages.

Fast forward several decades: The Natural History Museum in Kathmandu has a collection of over 50,000 plant, animal, and fungi. Its head Ganesh Bahadur Thapa was enthusiastic about using the track casts as an educational tool and they are currently on display there together with later collections of snow leopard, blue sheep, Tibetan wolf casts, as well as Tarai species.

Ideally, the next step will be to develop mammal tracking and natural history educational programs for students throughout Nepal as they have in Baltistan in Pakistan (right).

"Making school children aware of snow leopard behaviour and its habitat, and teaching them about tracks and tracking from a young age will significantly contribute to survival of the species," says Ghana Gurung, director of the WWF Nepal. Wildlife educational programs are particularly important at a time when Nepal becomes more and more urbanised, with children spending less and less time in the natural world. Tracking opportunities abound even on the outskirts of towns. Common leopard, wild boar, and barking deer tracks, for example, can be found along the sides of the roads on the Kathmandu Valley rim.

I observed my guide Bhakta Ram Rai examine a set of fresh tracks.

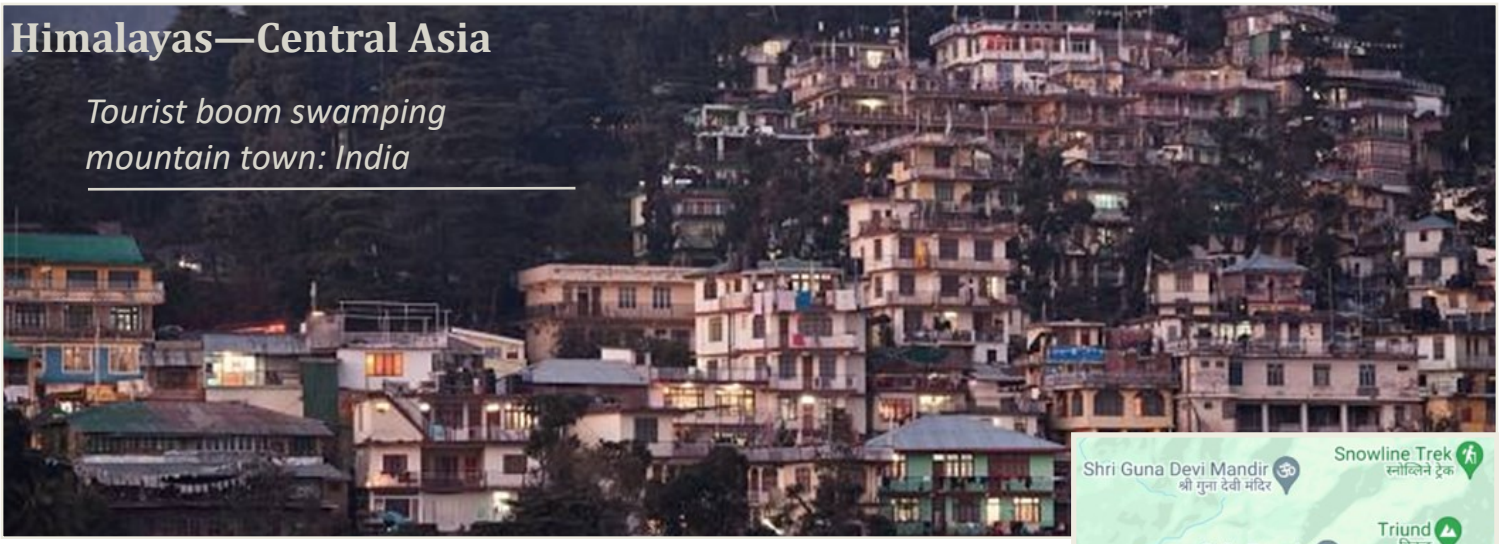
Just on the basis of that track he could infer that the tracks were rounded, wider than long, with three-lobed footpads and four, somewhat rounded toes. No claw marks, except occasionally at steep and muddy trail inclines.

The animal was large, walking, unhurried, with a body length of about 1.5m, shoulder height of 40cm, and weight of approximately 50kg, most likely male. The tracks were made between 4 to 6 hours previously, just after the misty rain. It was the leopard which had dined on a barking deer recently.

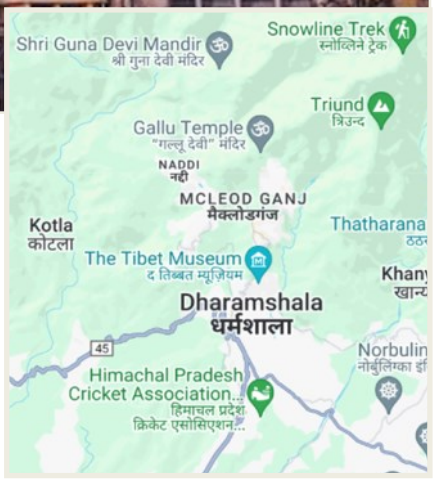
Ganesh Bahadur Thapa (fourth from left) and Alton C Byers (third from left) at the Natural History Museum in Kathmandu (right) 2023.

Himalayas—Central Asia

Tourist boom swamping mountain town: India



The McLeod Ganj area is known as Little Lhasa. McLeod Ganj is a magnet for domestic holi-daymakers fleeing scorching temperatures. photo: Lonely Planet



From The Guardian September 2024

SUVs and saloon cars pass slowly along McLeod Ganj's narrow one-way Jogiwara Road, blaring horns at pedestrians and scooter riders and playing loud music. The powerful vehicles soon get stuck in the traffic near Kalachakra temple, the place of worship of the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso.

McLeod Ganj, a Himalayan town famed for its temples, meditation courses and ashrams, is witnessing an influx of domestic tourists seeking refuge from rising temperatures in dry and tropical states across India. Many come to enjoy cricket matches with the view of the mighty Dhauladhar mountain range overlooking the stadium, which has become a magnet for India's sports fans.

Once monks in burgundy red robes dominated the colour palette of McLeod Ganj's main market. The town was where thousands of Tibetans fled after the 1959 uprising against the Chinese in Tibet sent the Dalai Lama into exile here.

It became a refuge not just for Tibetans but for foreign hippy travellers and others seeking a quiet and contemplative environment.

The tourist season of May to July has disappeared, with visitors now coming all year round. Now people come here to party for some days and leave, rather than staying here for some length of time.

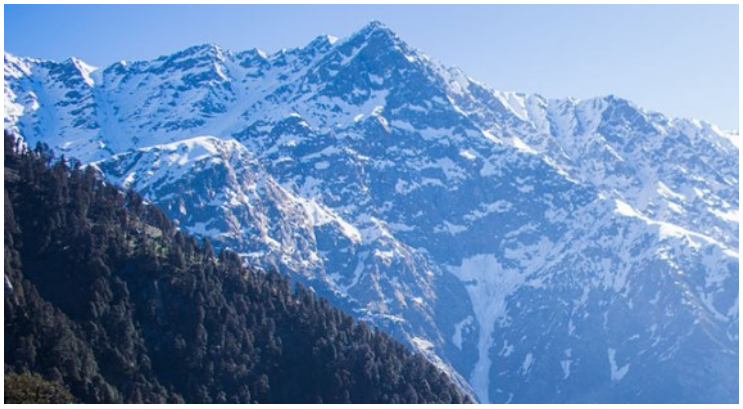
The Dalai Lama, who turned 89 last month, has been crucial in building a new home for Tibetans in India and is a symbol of hope for the scattered diaspora, says Dr Latika Gupta at the faculty of education in the University of Delhi.

Surrounded by snow-capped mountains and cedarwood forests, the city of Dharamshala is 1,457 metres above sea level, keeping the temperature cool. The weather conditions being similar to Tibet made Dharamshala a perfect new home for the Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan refugees who followed him into exile.

But as the debate around Tibet's freedom has faded from the global stage, many new visitors, especially from younger generations, are unaware of the links to the Dalai Lama and Tibet's history, seeing instead an exotic place with monasteries, prayer flags and waterfalls.

This year's heatwaves across India have pushed up temperatures in Dharamshala, and its suburbs of McLeod Ganj and Dharamkot, regularly hitting 40C, previously a rare occurrence for the region. India's capital, New Delhi, touched 49.1C on 29 May.

Temperatures in states near Dharamshala such as Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab also reached close to 50C in the May heatwave, according to India Meteorological Department.



The climate crisis is having its impact here. Triund (above) which is one of McLeod Ganj's main water sources, dried up during summer this year, according to those who frequent the popular trekking route.

Scree and Talus

2025 - International Year of Glacier Preservation *from ALPARC news*

2025 will mark the UN International Year of Glacier Preservation. Glaciers in the Alps are not only an essential source of freshwater, but also a crucial component of Alpine ecosystems and a defining element of the landscape. Last year ALPARC completed a survey of the remaining glacier surfaces in the Alpine protected areas (read more here). It is important to protect both still existing glaciated areas and areas that are becoming ice-free, and to monitor the consequences of decline.

Glaciers in protected areas can play an important role in this.

CENTER for BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY Saving life on Earth

Cougar Hunting

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission voted 8-1 to approve amended cougar hunting rules. Spurred by a petition from wildlife conservation organizations, the new rules aim to avoid cougar overexploitation.

"I'm glad to see the state finally taking action to rein in unsustainable cougar killing," said Collette Adkins, carnivore conservation program director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "For too long, hunters have been killing cougars at rates that far exceed the levels prescribed by state wildlife biologists. This is a big win for cougars and all of us who love these magnificent animals."

Jasper National Park *July 2024*

Out-of-control wildfires near the Canadian town of Jasper forced more than 25,000 to flee one of the country's largest national parks as multiple blazes and thick smoke descended on the Rocky Mountain community. Officials in the province of Alberta ordered residents of the Jasper townsite to leave immediately on Monday night, and soon after they called for the park, more than 4,200 sq miles (10,900 sq km) in size, to be fully cleared out.

Cars clogging the highway as people evacuate because of wildfires in Jasper, Alberta, Canada, on 23 July 2024. Photo: The Canadian Press via AP

A climate off the rails *The Conversation September 2024 From David Bowman UTAS*

…But the problem with climate change is that weather conditions can turn on a dime. This August (winter in Australia) was a case in point. At month's end, much of Australia was hit by a record-breaking heatwave and damaging winds – conditions that can dry out a green landscape with devastating efficiency, turning it into fuel for a bushfire.

The dangerous fire weather that struck Sydney, Australia, this week came as a surprise to many. But in reality, these abnormal conditions are the new normal. We must open our minds to this, if we want to be prepared. The year 2023 was Earth's hottest on record. And 2024 looks likely to be hotter still.

In Australia, the last 12 months have provided all the evidence we need that our climate is wobbling on its rails.

Join us for World Ranger Day 2025: Trek Mt Kilimanjaro with us!

From Thin Green Line

Ever dreamed of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro? Well, now you can, all while raising funds for rangers on the frontlines of conservation. Trek through five climatic zones and 5,895m to reach this incredible snow-capped summit on World Ranger Day 2025. After you've conquered the world's highest freestanding mountain, spend some time with the rangers of the Amboseli ecosystem, learning about their work and enjoying the African wilderness they work so hard to protect. World Ranger Day 31 July **Find out more**

Scree and Talus cont.

Wine (making) and climate science—who would have thought!

From Science News July 2024

When it comes to understanding the medieval climate of Europe, scientists face a daunting issue: Europeans loved to chop down their oldest and biggest trees. Outside of northern Scandinavia and high mountain ranges, this penchant for felling trees has made it difficult for researchers to obtain records of tree rings, a standard paleoclimate tool, leaving gaps where most Europeans actually lived.

To fill that gap, climate scientists are now turning to a far more abundant historical resource: wine. Records of grape harvests found in the cellars and monasteries of Europe stretch back to the 1400s and can provide a powerful resource for teasing out past temperatures.

"Compared with the average tree ring, it's really excellent," says a paleoclimate scientist at the University of Bern. "I'm totally surprised how well it works."

For centuries, winemaking experts have rated the sweetness of freshly pressed grapes. Climate scientists are taking advantage. Image: History/Getty Images

Eucalyptus expansion worsens droughts and fires in Brazil's Cerrado from Mongabay August 2024

Brazilian paper pulp producer Suzano's eucalyptus plantations are worsening drought conditions in the Brazilian Cerrado, a new report says, causing water scarcity and biodiversity loss, which are impacting local communities. Suzano continues to expand its eucalyptus plantations (below left), including a new factory adding 2.55 million metric tons of pulp capacity annually; conservationists warn this expansion increases wildfire risk and water stress in the Cerrado.

The core areas of the Cerrado biome are the Brazilian highlands – the *Planalto*.

The Cerrado biome is strategic for the water resources of Brazil. The biome contains the headwaters and the largest portion of South American watersheds (the Paraná-Paraguay, Araguaia-Tocantins, and São Francisco river basins) and the upper catchments of large Amazon tributaries

From Area Based Conservation WCPA IUCN Bulletin August 2024

WCPA is excited to draw attention to the announcement of the IUCN World Protected and Conserved Areas Congress (previously known as the World Parks Congress) in 2027. WCPA are looking forward to ensuring that planning is on track for this globally significant event.

The context is clear: ⟹

2027 is projected for an unavoidable 1.5-degree global temperature increase.

In **2027** the world will be on a countdown to 2030, and the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Global Biodiversity Framework Targets, especially '30x30' ambitions.

By **2027** biodiversity loss must be demonstrably slowed and halted if we are to achieve a net recovery and gain from 2030.

Protecting the oceans is a global priority, and **2027** will provide an early milestone to gauge efforts since the UN High Seas Treaty, and to focus on the urgent need for more and better ocean and marine conservation.

Freshwater biodiversity conservation is a global priority, and **2027** will allow a stock-take of the status of freshwater systems, rivers, and wetlands within countries' protected area systems.

By **2027**, we must ensure that progress is made on recognising and supporting conservation efforts made by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities as a key contribution to planetary resilience

Looking for Mountain Research and many other excellent tools and publications? The Mountain Update has only a very tiny selection! Try Mountain Research & Development (MRD), Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA), Mountain Research Initiative, ICIMOD and Mountain Partnership—to mention a just few great sources of mountain information!

Important links

IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas for an outline of the role of Mountain Specialist Group WCPA Mountain Specialist Group

Please go to https://youtu.be/_NuY89TWscI a short video of Protecting Mountains IUCN WCC presentation by *Peter Jacobs* (Chair Mountain Specialist Group).

Some events of interest

Events - MRI - Mountain Research Initiative

Mountain Partnerships Events **Here**

Alparc: Alparc Events

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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, 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: WCPA 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!