Mountain Protected Areas UPDATE

September—December 2025 # 127

Seasons of despair

Provide fertile ground to plant seeds of resilience

And grow future solutions

Award-winning Wiradjuri poet Dr. Jeanine Leane

from Seeds of Hope, Botanic Gardens, Melbourne

A note from the editor Welcome to the 127th Mountain UPDATE. A 'double edition' as for the first time in over 30 years the September Mountain Update was missed!

As often happens with Mountain Update editions we find reoccurring themes—not surprisingly many revolve around the climate crisis & glaciers, earthquakes and fire.

We also have an important message from the WCPA Mountain Protected Areas Chair, Peter Jacobs.

Thank you for reading and hopefully you celebrated International Mountain Day on December 11!

December 2025

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

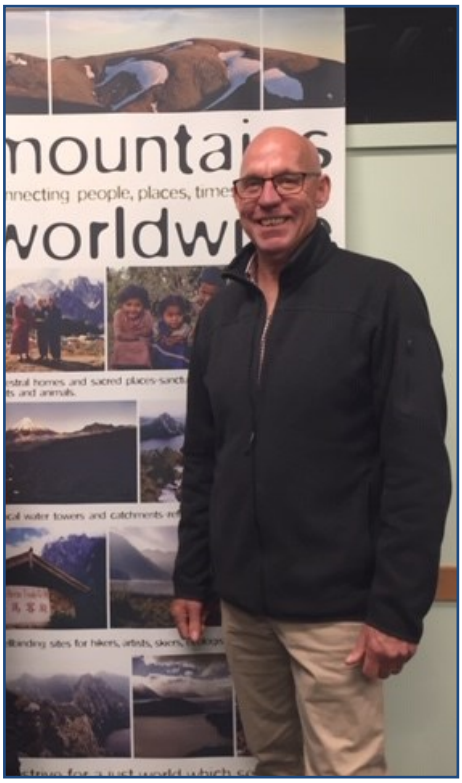
The Mountain Specialist Group acknowledges the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters where we live and work and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship they have to Country.

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

From *People* and *Mountains* around the world:

Global

Message from Mountains Chair Peter Jacobs



Peter Jacobs, retiring Chair, Mountain Specialist Group

Leadership Changes Afoot

In accordance with IUCN Bylaws, the Mountains Protected Area Specialist Group is transitioning leadership as we enter the next IUCN quadrennium. Current specialist group and task force leaders are now dissolved, and new appointments will be made for the upcoming four-year term.

After discussions with the **WCPA Chair, Madhu Rao**, I have decided not to seek another term. This transition is an opportunity to explore new ways of operating, especially given our ongoing challenge of limited third-party institutional support. While partnership opportunities have been explored, success has been elusive so far, but I remain confident that future collaborations can be achieved.

Achievements

The Mountains Update has been the backbone of our group, now reaching its 127th edition! Our main work in recent years has been the "Identification of Global Priorities for New Mountain Protected and Conserved Areas" project. It is now time for new ideas and a fresh approach.

Future Directions

The WCPA will be exploring options for the future of the Mountains Protected Area Specialist Group and will be calling for expressions of interest in leadership. If you have ideas or are interested in leading the group, please contact Madhu Rao at wcpa.madhurao@gmail.com.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to:

- Gillian Anderson for editorship of the Mountains Update
- The co-authors of the Mountains Project
- Predecessors Larry Hamilton and Graeme Worboys, both now deceased, who had been stalwarts for the mountains group for over 40 years.

Photo: Australian Alps national parks

People love mountains.

These water towers of the world contain astonishing biodiversity, unique cultural heritage and provide essential ecosystem services globally. Their beautiful, confronting and spiritual landscapes continue to inspire and for many, provide a meaning to life. The challenge now is to secure more of our mountains in protected and conserved areas.

It has been a privilege to have had a leadership role in the Mountains Group and meet so many inspiring people and groups working across a myriad of fields.

I would encourage everyone to think about a future leadership role in mountains.

Africa-Eastern

Sacred Mount Mulanje, Malawi

'A big no': Opposition grows to proposed mine in Malawi's newest UNESCO site

From Mongabay November 2025

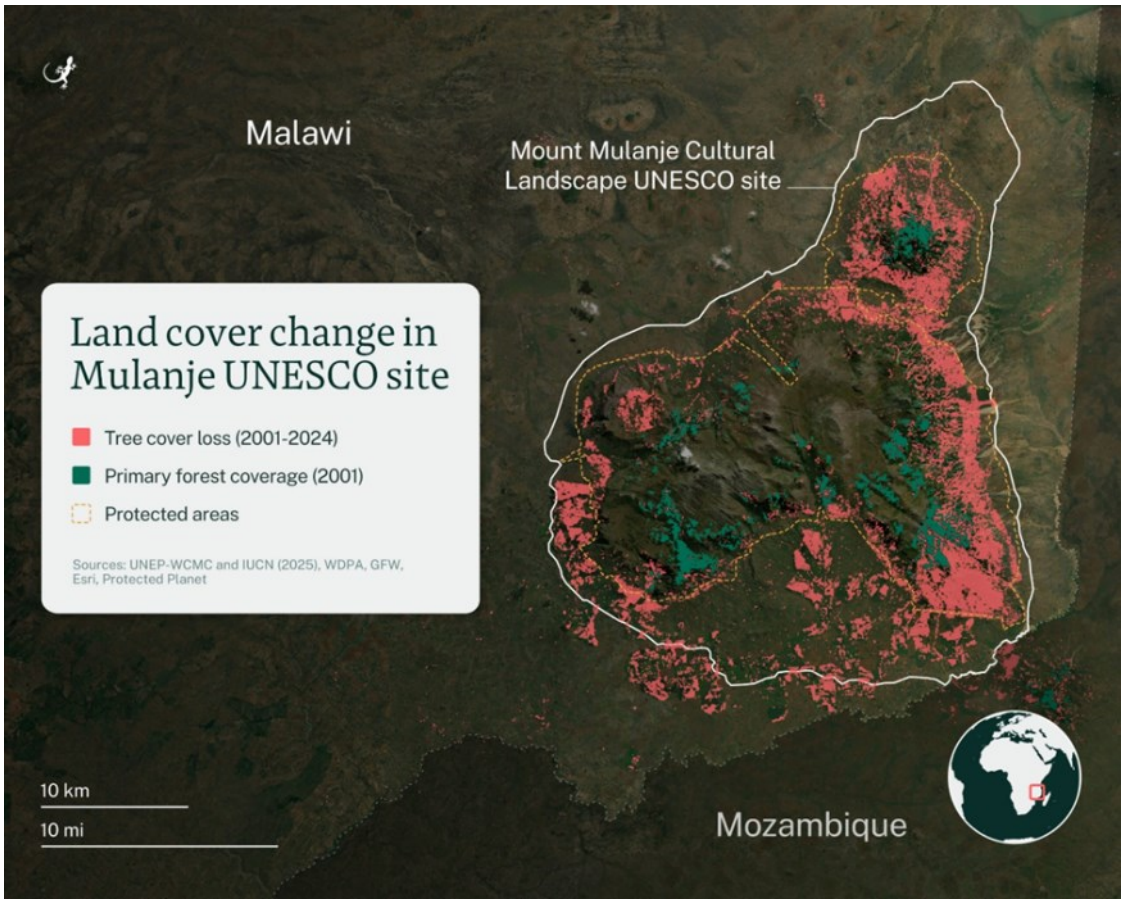
A controversial proposed mining project in Malawi's newest UNESCO World Heritage Site is raising opposition from traditional chiefs and conservationists.

Mount Mulanje in southern Malawi is a renowned biodiversity hotspot, a vital source of freshwater, and is of huge spiritual significance to the communities that live on and around it. In June, the mountain was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Malawi's third.

Mulanje conservationists say they fear that proposed mining projects on the mountain's high-altitude plateau would threaten the mountain's ecological integrity, jeopardize tourism development and undo hard-won gains in sustainable development.

Mount Mulanje is a massive inselberg in southern Malawi, its forested slopes rising steeply to a broad plateau with 13 peaks, reaching an altitude of 3,002 metres (9,849 feet) at its highest point. Nine perennial rivers drain from the upper slopes, and the mountain is home to more than 70 endemic species, including the critically endangered Mulanje cedar. (Widdringtonia whytei), Malawi's national tree.

The critically endangered Mulanje cedar (Widdringtonia whytei), found only on Mt Mulanje between 1,830 and 2,550 m is threatened by logging and human-caused wildfires. Photo: A Phalloides via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0).



Satellite data and imagery show the land surrounding Mount Mulanje has lost much its tree cover. Mining and exploration licenses held by Akataswiri Mineral Resources (not shown) encompass the protected area's western lobe — including about a third of the mountain's remaining primary forest.

America—central

Running Up Mountainsides: Mexico & Central America

Forests are migrating up mountain peaks From Science News November 2025

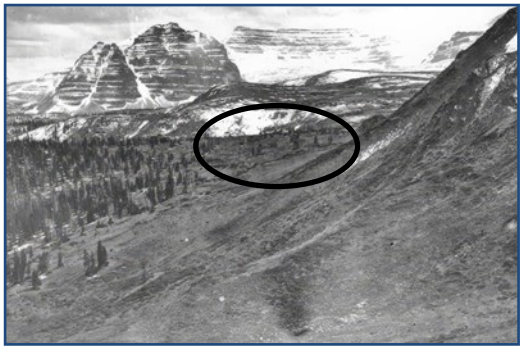
Satellite imagery reveals an unexpected shift in tree lines—but it may not have anything to do with climate change

It's a hallmark prediction of climate change: As the world warms, trees will migrate not just toward the poles, but also up the slopes of mountains, eating away at fragile alpine ecosystems.

Although advancing tree lines have been tracked at individual mountains, a new large-scale study has found something surprising: Over a span of 4 decades, the largest upward movement of these forests has come not near the poles, as one might expect, but instead in the tropics, where monitoring has been far more limited.

The survey, published late last month in *Biogeosciences*, looked at 115 peaks stretching from western Canada to Panama. Using imagery collected from 1984 to 2017 by the Landsat program, a long-running series of U.S. satellites, researchers found that tree lines at peaks in the northern United States and Canada had barely budged, even though global warming is happening faster at high latitudes than in the tropics. Meanwhile, "in Mexico and Central America, they are running up the mountainside," says Townsend Peterson, an ecologist at the University of Kansas (KU) and co-author of the study. "It's kind of scary how fast it is. It's at a level of multiple meters per year. It's too fast."

Whether warming is causing this surge is not clear, Peterson and his co-authors concede. They excluded any mountains with obvious signs of human interference in the forest edge, such as grazing, logging, or farming, but such signs can't always be picked up from space.



Photographic comparisons, such as these shots of Red Castle Mountain in Utah, taken in 1870 and 2024, help verify satellites' views of advancing tree lines

Communities and ecosystems in Venezuela learn to adapt to life after glaciers

From Mongabay July 8 2025

In 2023, La Corona, Venezuela's last standing glacier in the Sierra Nevada de Mérida National Park, was reclassified as an ice field, having shrunk to the size of barely two football fields.

The country is now the first tropical nation to lose all of its glaciers, which melted rapidly due to a combination of warming temperatures, reduced rainfall and ineffective policies since early signs of melting appeared in the late 19th century.

As Venezuela's symbolic glaciers began melting one after another, a team of researchers started studying not only their disappearance, but the emerging ecosystems that were taking over the formerly icy areas.

With the ice gone, the city of Mérida, advertised for decades as the "city of eternal snow," is now having to reinvent its identity and its tourism industry.

Sierra Nevada de Mérida National Park (left) is a protected area in the Andes Mountains of Venezuela, established in 1952 and covering parts of the states of Mérida and Barinas.

It is known for its diverse ecosystems, which include cloud forests, moors, and high-altitude peaks, and is home to Venezuela's highest point, Pico Bolívar.

America—south

Protecting Glaciers from Mining: Argentina

Science News November 2025

Scientists in Argentina are raising the alarm about a move to modify the country's landmark glacier protection law. President Javier Milei says the law, in place since 2010, unnecessarily limits mining and other economically important activities and wants to give provincial governments greater power to define protected areas. But some researchers fear the change could result in severe damage to sensitive ecosystems and key water sources.

"The danger is that this redefinition will fall into the hands of provinces with strong mining interests and without teams trained in glaciology," says environmental scientist Laura Isla of the University of Buenos Aires.

The law defines glaciers and so-called periglacial areas, which might not be covered by ice but are frozen for all or part of the year, as public assets and strategic water reserves and seeks to protect them from harmful activities. Argentina was the world's first nation to legally protect such environments.

If Congress approves the change, it could face legal challenges. In 2019, Argentina's Supreme Court of Justice ruled that the federal government, not provincial governments, is responsible for glacier protection.

America—north

Zombie Fires: Canada

Taken from The Guardian Age of Extinction November 2025 Zombie fires: how Arctic wildfires that come back to life are ravaging forests

Blazes that smoulder in the permafrost, only to reignite, are extending fire season though winter, leaving vegetation struggling to recover

"It is a massive problem," says Lori Daniels, a forest and conservation sciences professor at the University of British Columbia. "Zombie fires, also called holdover fires, are fires that move into the organic soil matter and smoulder. It's a very slow, but hot, combustion through a prolonged period and then they resurface. In December 2023, we had over 100 fires that were still burning, and in the spring of 2024, they continued to burn," she says.

Over a very short period of time, we are combusting all this ancient carbon into the atmosphere. It becomes a feedback loop Lori Daniels

Current estimates show that only about 15% of the northern hemisphere is underlain by permafrost, yet these frozen soils contain roughly twice as much carbon than is now in the atmosphere. By burning slowly and at a lower temperature, they release vastly more particulate pollution and greenhouse gas emissions than flaming fires.

The 2023 wildfire in Donnie Creek, British Columbia, started in May and by June had become one of the largest in the province's history. In spring 2024, it reemerged as a "zombie fire" that continued to burn until August 2024. By then, more than 600,000 hectares (1.5m acres) had been destroyed. Photo: BC Wildfire Service/Reuters

America—north

Fires, graffiti, damaged cultural assets, rubbish, bear jams: USA

Adapted from The Guardian , Sierra Club News, Thin Green Line September 2025

Americans should "raise hell" to protect US national parks through the "nightmare" of Donald Trump's presidency, according to a former National Park Service director, Jonathan Jarvis, amid alarm over the impact of the federal government shutdown.

Jarvis claimed the agency was now in the hands of a "bunch of ideologues" who would have no issue watching it "go down in flames" – and see parks from Yellowstone to Yosemite as potential "cash cows", ripe for privatization.

Jarvis, who led the NPS from 2009 to 2017, faced intense scrutiny, a five-hour grilling in Congress and calls for his resignation after closing all 401 national park sites during a previous shutdown, in October 2013. He was certain, despite the backlash, that it was the right thing to do: keeping them open with a skeleton staff would have put parks and their visitors at risk, his team concluded.

Over the past month, hundreds of NPS veterans have watched aghast as most of the agency's workers were furloughed during the longest shutdown in US history – while the Trump administration kept all national parks open. Now the shutdown is over, Jarvis said service staff will "bust their butts" to clean up US national parks. But he remains concerned about the lasting impacts.

Take trash. In mountain parks, from Rocky Mountain to Mount Rainier, black and grizzly bears are currently fattening up to go into hibernation: a particularly important time to ensure they don't access garbage, and become attracted to human food.

"They will feed on it, and become habituated, and the end result of a habituated bear is either somebody gets hurt, or the bear gets killed," said Jarvis. "By not picking up trash in the parks, letting it accumulate, fall out of the cans … you're setting up for an impact down the road.

Resistance Rangers

The NPS was founded in 1916 to both promote the use of national parks and monuments and conserve them for the enjoyment of future generations. Under Trump, its workforce has reportedly shrunk by as much as 24% amid hundreds of layoffs. Thousands more staff have resigned or retired, either out of choice or due to pressure.

Park Service staff began connecting on group chats to make sense of what was happening. "A large stated goal of this administration is to make us feel isolated and afraid," said a Resistance Ranger "We realized pretty quickly: We need this."

The rangers wanted to empower the public too, which led to the creation of Resistance Rangers. The group's social media presence quickly gained traction and continues to rally supporters and raise awareness.

Global impact on conservation programs

Recent **cuts to USAID funding** have left global conservation efforts reeling. Once the world's largest international development donor, the U.S. has slashed support for programs that protected wildlife, supported rangers, and empowered communities from Africa to the Pacific.

Many organisations report losing all funding, with critical work like anti-poaching and habitat restoration grinding to a halt. Virunga National Park and Pacific Island nations are among the hardest hit. ***Photos: below Thin Green Line***

Europe

Global warming triggering earthquakes in the Alps

Taken from Science News By Paul Voosen June 2025

Climate change is worsening many natural hazards, including droughts, heat waves, and storm surges. Now, a new one has joined the list: earthquakes. **Researchers have found that as global warming accelerates melting of mountaintop glaciers, the meltwater, percolating underground, increases the risk of damaging earthquakes.**

The evidence comes from beneath Grandes Jorasses, a glacier-clad peak in the Alps that is part of the Mont Blanc massif, home to Western Europe's tallest mountains.

Precise seismic records show a heat wave in 2015 kicked off a surge of small earthquakes under the mountain. Although the tremors themselves were not damaging, the chances of large earthquakes are known to rise with the frequency of small ones. "It increases the hazard dramatically," says Toni Kraft, a seismologist at ETH Zürich and co-author of a new study , in Earth and Planetary Science Letters.

In the Mont Blanc region, existing records already display a clear seasonal trend: Small tremors tend to rise in late summer, after meltwater from glaciers penetrates the rocks, and decrease again in early spring. The researchers looked at weather records for other years. They found that stronger heat waves seemed to lead to bigger jumps in seismicity—albeit with a delay of a year for shallow earthquakes, and 2 years for quakes as deep as 7 kilometers.

The system must have reached a triggering point as meltwater found pathways through the mountains and primed more faults to rupture.

Evidence of underground faults combined with the researchers' seismic data and broader models of Alpine melt, it adds up to a remarkably clear picture. Pressurized water quickly percolates to faults that are often on the verge of slipping—and sometimes pushes them over the edge.

Overall, the European Alps are thought to be capable of earthquakes as big as magnitude 6—and most infrastructure is built to withstand such a quake.

But other ranges including the Himalayas can experience much larger earthquakes—and are home to many melting glaciers.

If this same dynamic is playing out beyond the Alps, scientists and communities need to start to take it into account.

It seems the world's shrinking glaciers won't go quietly.

Water melting from the glaciers of Europe's Mont Blanc massif appears to be driving bigger and more frequent earthquakes. Photo: F Roux/Alamy

Scientists have known for decades that water, pressurized by the weight of rock overhead, plays a key role in triggering earthquakes. When water percolates into the pore spaces of rocks, the added pressure can counteract forces that keep faults clamped shut, leading to slip.

In Taiwan, for example, movement along a fault, is thought to vary seasonally with rainfall.

The same mechanism is at play in the clusters of earthquakes sometimes triggered by natural gas fracking, wastewater storage, and advanced geothermal energy projects, which all inject pressurized water deep underground.

Famed 11-kilometer-long Mont Blanc tunnel construction has provided evidence of how quickly water finds it's way along fault lines and into the tunnel.

Europe

European Green Belt Initiative

From Stefania Petrosillo via Trans Boundary Conservation SG-WCPA

Vision:

The European Green Belt, our shared natural heritage along the line of the former Iron Curtain is to be conserved and restored, to function as an ecological network connecting high-value natural and cultural landscapes whilst respecting the economic, social and cultural needs of local communities.

Hiking *Peaks of the Balkans* through Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo photo: *peopleinnature*

An extraordinary ecological network and living memorial landscape has developed along the former Iron Curtain, which divided the European continent into East and West for nearly 40 years. Along 24 countries and more than 12,500 kilometres – from the Barents Sea at the Russian-Norwegian border, along the Baltic Coast, through Central Europe and the Balkans to the Black and the Adriatic Sea – the border zone granted nature a pause and has created a zone of life. As the European Green Belt snakes from north to south it passes through a huge variety of European landscapes. Today, the European Green Belt forms the backbone of a Pan -European ecological network and provides a significant contribution to European "Green Infrastructure".

The European Green Belt Initiative aims to harmonise human activities with the natural environment and to increase opportunities for the socio-economic development of local communities.

Read more about the European Green Belt and the Initiative.

Pearls of the European Green Belt (a selection above)

The so-called “pearls” of the European Green Belt are beautiful and unique places that are of special value from an ecological perspective. They are mostly cross-border areas that safeguard rich natural resources with important animal and plant species and magnificent sceneries. As such, the pearls deserve commitment for protection and sustainable management from local networks including local NGOs and communities, as well as from the partnership of the European Green Belt Initiative. Last but not least, the pearls offer unforgettable nature experiences for all nature lovers or eco-tourists.

Protecting Vulnerable Habitats: Tongariro, NZ

Taken from The Conversation November 2025

Read whole article:**The fire is out, but Tongariro is now at risk of losing its unique biological legacy**

The sight of flames tearing across Tongariro National Park last week was heartbreaking for lovers of the landscape. It was also potentially disastrous for a world-renowned alpine ecosystem. With aerial footage exposing the scale of the wildfire – nearly 3,000 hectares was burned – the impact on spiritually and ecologically important land could well be severe.

The disaster should also raise questions about how we fund, manage and protect these vulnerable habitats in a warming world where change is often outpacing conservation efforts. For ecologists who have studied the national park's rare plant communities, the true toll might not be measured in hectares burned, but in the loss of irreplaceable genetic diversity.

Alpine zones such as Tongariro National Park – a dual World Heritage area – are geological anomalies where species diversity is uniquely high. The flames swept through extensive sub-alpine shrubland and tussock grassland, strongholds for rare species. Protecting this national treasure requires controlling weeds and fire risks on the land surrounding the park, treating the landscape as a whole, interconnected system. Recovery must be guided by both science and cultural knowledge – and it must be properly resourced.

And it must be accompanied by a reversal of the trend of cutting conservation science. The erosion of the knowledge base through the loss of skilled scientists and resource managers has left the Department of Conservation with reduced capacity to effectively guide long-term recovery efforts.

Our alpine systems – the mountains we tramp, climb, ski and travel through every day – represent the heart of Aotearoa's ecological and cultural identity.

The fire exposes large tracts of bare earth, creating a perfect opportunity for introduced exotics. Invasive weeds such as heather, gorse, broom and pine – all possessing vast seed banks and fire-stimulated germination – rapidly colonise the open space.

They out-compete slower native species, threatening to tip the ecosystem from a resilient native tussock landscape into a highly flammable, invasive weed monoculture.

The increasing frequency of extreme events, fuelled by climate change, combined with the pressure of invasive weeds, threatens to dismantle these unique ecosystems layer by layer.

Himalayas—Central Asia

The Mountains are Speaking: Nepal

Drone image captured on 17 October 2024 shows Rhindi Cho, with an ice cliff indicating that the lake was formed on the glacier surface, and an erosional scar on the end moraine caused by the flood impact. PHOTO: FOOTAGE FROM SPCC

From ICIMOD News October 2025

A new study on a 2024 glacial lake outburst flood in the Everest region, finds that a 'devastating, and complex, chain reaction' of geological and geomorphological factors amplified the destructive power of the flood that decimated the iconic high-altitude trekking village of Thame, in Solokhumbu, Nepal, on 16 August 2024.

The new study describes Dudh Koshi river basin, and the Everest region – which has been hit by five significant glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) in less than 50 years – as a flashpoint for GLOFs

Experts describe proactive risk management and mitigation as 'urgent' and 'essential' due to the ongoing threat lakes pose to downstream communities.

GLOFs are among the most destructive and prominent hazards in high-mountain regions. Capable of releasing millions of cubic meters of water and debris within hours, they can cause catastrophic damage downstream: unleashing torrents of water that obliterate communities, devastate infrastructure, and permanently reshape landscapes.

Sudan Bikash Maharjan, Remote Sensing Analyst at ICIMOD and one of the authors of the study said: "The Hindu Kush Himalayas has more than 25,000 glacial lakes and Thame shows us that we need to spend much more effort in understanding and preventing the risks posed by even the relatively smaller lakes. In this case, the additional geological and morphological characteristics of a landscape intensified the impact of this climate-driven event to cause catastrophic damages, though mercifully – with no loss of life."

Study co-author Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa, ICIMOD Cryosphere Analyst, says: "As climate extremes intensify, the Thame flood is both a stark reminder and a moment of reflection, showing how mountain communities are already bearing the brunt of climate-induced disasters. In line with this year's International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction theme on funding resilience, it reinforces the urgent need to invest in preparedness, strengthen scientific understanding, and support the people most at risk. Events like these also serve as crucial moments for understanding and communicating the realities of climate change, reminding us that the mountains are speaking, we just need to listen."

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT

Nepal has seen over 90 GLOFs since the early 1920s, and the Everest region has withstood five significant events in less than 50 years – including the 1985 GLOF of Dig Tsho, which struck the neighbouring valley to the Thame event, wiping away a newly constructed hydropower plant.

The accelerating impacts of climate change, particularly in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region, are compounding these risks. The HKH, warming at an average of 0.28 degree Celsius per decade, is experiencing unprecedented glacier mass loss, which has increased by 65% in recent decades compared to earlier periods. This rapid glacier retreat has fuelled the proliferation of over 25,000 glacial lakes across the region, spanning the Amu Darya, Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Irrawaddy

Scree and Talus

A Missed Opportunity in the Victorian Alps (Australia) *From Victorian Protected Areas Council (VPAC)*

When native timber harvesting stopped in the Victorian Alps, the State Government missed a rare opportunity to increase the size of the Alpine National Park and offer permanent protection against future logging. This could have helped preserve adjoining subalpine areas, safeguard several threatened species like the Long-footed Potoroo, and ensured safe, well-managed nature based activities without excessive four-wheel driving, hunting, dogs, or firearms.

Instead, the State Government bowed to pressure from some unions and the hunting lobby and supported outdated, inaccurate claims that national parks are "locked up" and inaccessible for recreation. They have even gone further, declaring there will be no additional national parks in Victoria.

Remote camera survey's have shown Long footed Potoroos in areas of State Forest where hunting with dogs has prevented fox control, the main Potoroo predator. If they were protected within a national park hunting with dogs would be prohibited and therefore adequate fox baiting could take place year round.

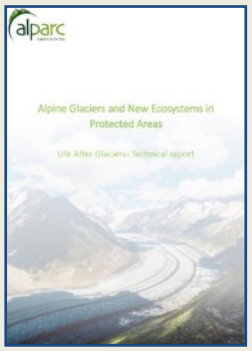
Photo: Liz Wemyss

Following devastating summer bushfires that burned nearly 80% of Victoria's Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park, a rapid-response strategy involving habitat pods, emergency feeding stations, and intensive predator control has helped protect some of our most vulnerable wildlife, including the brush-tailed rock-wallaby and Long-nosed potoroo (as opposed to the Long footed potoroo above).

Baseball & Glacial mud? November 2025 ***Sediment. Rec.*** (2025) 10.2110/001c.144870

Did you know (or care?) that for over 70 years, Major League Baseball has used the same mud from the same river. Its mineralogy has been analyzed to understand its function in terms of texture and grip. They found that it is composed of nonswelling clay, which reduces shine without being slippery, and quartz, which helps to abrade the leather for grip. The mud comes from a river eroding glacial and postglacial deposits with just the right mix of grains.

Alpine Glaciers and New Ecosystems in Alpine Protected Areas *From Alparc*



The report explores the ecological impacts of glacier retreat across Alpine protected areas, with a focus on landscape transformation, species colonization, and adaptive processes. Its aim is to identify key interactions within post-glacial ecosystems and to propose both conservation and communication strategies to support the emergence of new forms of biodiversity.

Key outcomes include mapping glacier retreat and its effects on biodiversity, documenting environmental change, and fostering awareness through protected areas. A dedicated workshop also promoted international exchange and cooperation.
This work is part of the Life After Glacier project, contributing to the International Year 2025 for the Conservation of Glaciers, and highlights the ecological and symbolic value of emerging post-glacial ecosystems.
Click here to read more Click here to access the report

The Life After Glacier project was co-funded by the French national fund for regional planning and development (CIMA / FNADT 2024).

Melting glaciers on remote Australian island spark concern

Glaciers on the remote Australian territory of Heard Island have lost almost a quarter of their size over the past seven decades amid rising temperatures in the sub-Antarctic region, new research shows.Read the full story

Race to save endangered gang-gang cockatoos grounded with frozen wings

Gang-gang cockatoos like cool weather, but freezing conditions are putting them at risk this winter, as volunteers race to save grounded birds in the Victorian Alps. Read the full story

Scree and Talus cont.

Mountain Research and Development Vol 45, No 3: Innovation Pathways to Sustainability in Mountains

How can innovation contribute to sustainability in mountains? Articles in this focus issue explore the question from different angles, providing insights from China and various European mountain contexts. In the editorial, Guest Editors Jörg Balsiger, Anne B. Zimmermann, João Carlos Azevedo, and Dietrich Schmidt-Vogt reflect on different framings of innovation and its role in sustainable mountain development. https://www.mrd-journal.org/

Impact everyone and everything ***The Guardian September 2025***

The Australian national climate risk assessment, was confronting even for those of us who have been reading this kind of analysis for 30 years.

As Guardian environment editor wrote, it documented that at 2C of heating, Australia would suffer "cascading shocks" to financial systems, increased heat-related deaths, species and ecosystem loss and huge economic costs from increasingly severe fires and flooding.

The bad news is that those increases in temperature, or worse, appear to be exactly where the world is heading. According to the Climate Action Tracker, even if every country does what they have promised to do before 2030, warming will still exceed 2C.

Kathmandu / Bern September 2025 - The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) has become the third regional hub for the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA) global research network, reflecting both the region's immense biological richness and precarity.

The GMBA Hindu Kush Himalaya hub, which will be hosted by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development ICIMOD, will set out to develop assessments on the status, trends, and knowledge gaps on the zone's biodiversity and enhance regional research capacity at a critical moment for mountain ecosystems.

Glacier Conference in Dushanbe outlines roadmap for urgent, coordinated action ***From Mountain Partnership***

As the world faces the cascading impacts of glacier retreat, over 2 000 delegates from 90 countries gathered in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, for the High-Level Conference on Glaciers' Preservation. A flagship event of the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation 2025, the conference emphasized that coordinated global action can still prevent the loss of half the world's glaciers... Read more

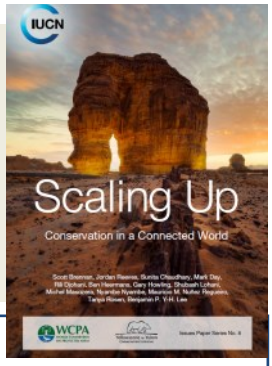
Commission of Mountain Studies of the International Geographical Union

The IGU Commission of Mountain Studies (IGU-CMS) fosters interdisciplinary research and global collaboration in mountain geography. Go to the web site for resources, publications, news and events!

New Publications – WCPA launched new knowledge products at the World Conservation Congress, including:

Enhancing Climate Change Mitigation in Protected and Conserved Areas – Launch of the Technical Report *Enhancing climate change mitigation in protected areas*

Sharing Stories on the Power and Practice of Very Large-Scale Conservation – Launch of Issues Paper *Scaling Up: Conservation in a Connected World*



Dominant Narratives ***From Mongabay July 2025***

Narratives help shape our society, culture and environment, entrenching beliefs that can help — or harm — our planet and human rights. Tsering Yangzom Lama, story manager at Greenpeace International, explains how dominant narratives — stories shaped by existing power structures and institutions — often undergird destructive industries and favor the powerful and the wealthy, and to discuss what people can do to counter such narratives. She expands upon thoughts shared in the essay "How to Reject Dominant Narratives," from the new book *Tools to Save Our Home Planet*, published by Patagonia Books.

"A dominant narrative in reality would be anything that supports the status quo … what we have right now is a system in which we're trashing the world in which a small minority is profiting off of that destruction, and in which the vast majority of humanity does not have the basic necessities for a dignified human existence," she says. "I think that is one of the most dangerous fallacies that's been around us," she says, pointing to the fact that food insecurity and malnutrition continue to rise globally despite advances in agriculture and continued economic growth. "I think it's important [to] present the facts, but also to say [that] there's a world in which people can have enough to eat, because they preserve nature."

Lama is also the author of the novel *We Measure the Earth With Our Bodies*, which contains the perspective of a Tibetan family's experience with emigration and exile.

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025 was a landmark moment for nature. Over 10,000 participants from 189 countries came together across more than 1,000 events, sessions, and exhibits, sharing bold ideas, groundbreaking commitments, and inspiring innovations that will shape conservation for decades to come – a truly global movement in action!

From the adoption of a 20-year Strategic Vision for the Union to the Abu Dhabi Call to Action outlining key global priorities, from being certified for sustainable event management to announcing Panama as the host of the next World Protected and Conserved Areas Congress in 2027, the Congress was full of milestones that will reverberate worldwide.

Unite for Nature on the path to 2045: A 20-year Strategic Vision for the Union sets out IUCN's vision for "a just world that values and conserves nature", while Nature 2030: One nature, one future. The IUCN Programme 2026-2029 defines the implementation plan.

Some commentators called Cop30 a failure but beyond the negative headlines, some good things came out. At the very least the phaseout of fossil fuels was directly discussed, even if not accepted as legally binding. But...

"What matters in the climate crisis is not the legal status of words agreed over night-long sessions in windowless conference rooms. What will save us is real-world action. If enough countries display their intent to move away from fossil fuels, money will follow. Today, global investment in renewables is twice that of fossil fuels; a quarter of all new vehicles sold worldwide are electric; and half of the power-generating capacity of China and India is low-carbon."

Fiona Harvey COP30 in Belém

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).

Looking for Mountain Research, Mountain Events and many other excellent tools and publications? The Mountain Update has only a very tiny selection!

Try Mountain Research and Development, Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA), Mountain Research Initiative, ICIMOD, Mountain Partnership and Commission of Mountain Studies of the International Geographical Union —to mention a just few great sources of mountain information!

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!