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## FRONTLINE DISPATCHES

JULY 2022

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CONSERVATION NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

# NORTH AMERICA



**[WATCH](#):** The secret lives of raccoons, bears, coyotes and other animals in our backyards. *National Geographic* [details](#) how easy pickings, mostly our garbage, have led wild animals to adapt to city living—coyotes look before crossing busy streets, bears move into abandoned

houses and raccoons can open locked trash cans. The urban wildlife phenomenon is forcing us to learn to live with furry neighbors. This long article, with outstanding photos and video, is worth NatGeo's \$2.99/month subscription fee (and you can always cancel later).

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**So, what happened at school today?** Oh not much, but the janitor did corral a cougar in an empty classroom, [reports](#) AP News. The California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife immobilized the big cat (above) and brought it the Oakland Zoo for examination before releasing it back into the wild. Call it another example of the unusual challenges brought on by the “wildlife-urban interface.”

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**It was a major victory for conservation** when the US House of Representatives passed RAWA, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, on June 14. If the legislation passes in the Senate, it will provide more than \$1.3 billion to states, territories and tribal nations to bolster wildlife conservation, [reported](#) NPR.





**Panthers are now the top deer predator in Florida,** [according](#) to *Field & Stream*. Researchers found that 96 of their 241 radio-collared deer were killed by panthers last year while human hunters, formerly Florida's top deer predator, only accounted for one of them. The state has restricted human deer hunting to ensure ample food for endangered Florida panthers. It's a delicate balance.

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**Buy a duck stamp! Do your part for conservation!** Here's why we should buy Federal Duck Stamps, [according](#) to the US Fish and Wildlife Service: 1) duck stamps have a long history as one of America's most successful conservation programs; 2) the money goes directly to wetlands conservation; 3) the stamp allows free access to any National Wildlife Refuge; 4) the stamps are collector's items. Buy [online](#) or at the Post Office for \$25. Or buy a \$5 [Junior Duck Stamp](#), which supports K-12th

grade educational programs on wetlands and waterfowl conservation.



**Wyoming will get new game migration corridors.** Working with private landowners, the US Dept. of Agriculture plans to invest heavily in conserving migration routes and habitat for wildlife such as pronghorn antelope (above), [according](#) to the Wildlife Management Institute. The Wyoming pilot program will lead to expansion of the program across the West.



**[WATCH](#):** Sibling rivalry, mountain-lion style. [MeatEater](#) [posted](#) this long trail-camera clip of cougar kittens squabbling over dinner, with much growling and hissing, on a cold night in Montana. The 10-year-old mother of the four feisty kittens is part of a long-term study run by the MPG Ranch. Like all good mothers, ultimately she keeps the peace—and purring ensues.

**Editor's Note:** **Editor's Note:** This month, Dispatches features news on mountain lions, cougars and panthers. These are all the same species, *Puma concolor*, which is also sometimes known as



a catamount, puma or painter. Just to be confusing. And here's one more important item: a professional mountain-lion biologist's opinion on the conservation of the animal in [Arizona](#).

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**Caution: in moose country, give way!** Wild Aware Utah and that state's Dept. of Natural Resources [explain](#) how to avoid (or handle) confrontations with these thousand-pound animals. A cow moose with young calves can be very protective, while in the fall (breeding season) bull moose can become especially aggressive. Never try to approach or feed moose and keep your dog on the leash.

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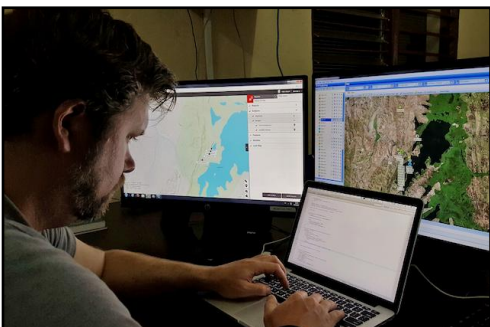


**New wild-turkey conservation projects in six states** will receive \$360,000 in funding, [announced](#) the National Wild Turkey Federation at the 12th National Wild Turkey Symposium last month. When NWTF was founded, in 1973, there were about 1.3 million wild turkeys in North America; today there are almost 7 million. The NWTF credits science-based conservation and hunters' rights with the turnaround.

# AFRICA



**Zimbabwe needs about \$25 million per year for wildlife** conservation programs (above: an anti-poaching patrol in the Bumi Hills). Tourism income disappeared during the pandemic and trophy-hunting revenue, though substantial, cannot make up the difference. So, to raise money, the country is renewing its efforts to be allowed to sell its 136-ton stockpile of rhino horn and elephant ivory lawfully, on the open market. The topic will be front and center at November's global CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) meeting in Panama. Mongabay [covered](#) the issue recently; read [more](#) about it at Conservation Frontlines also.



**Smartphones, smart cars, smart TVs . . . and smart parks,** which now employ sensors, satellites and wireless connectivity to protect remote conservation areas from poaching and other illegal resource thievery. In fact, Smart Parks is the name of a Dutch tech company using a networking protocol called LoRa (Long Range) and tracking devices small enough to be hidden in, for



example, a hole cut into a rhino's horn. The photo above, of the control center at Akagera National Park, Rwanda, where rangers can see the data collected by sensors on its LoRa network, is from a recent [report](#) on Mongabay.

## EUROPE



**Tracking Russian environmental crimes in Ukraine.** A group called Ecoaction logged more than 100 instances of environmental damage from Russian military action in just the first month of the war, [reports](#) Mongabay. The Geneva Convention prohibits “methods or means of warfare that are intended to cause or are expected to cause widespread, long-term, and serious damage to the environment.” Conservation Frontlines also has [covered](#) the war’s impact on Ukraine’s wildlife.

# WORLD



**New Zealand's native birds, bats and lizards are being wiped out** by imported predators such as stoats, possums and rats, and the country is going to extremes to save them. So far, so good—a thousand square miles of land are under control (with the help of rat-detection dogs, above, and other measures) and invasive predators have been eradicated from 117 of New Zealand's 600 islands. But now, [explains](#) the *NY Times*, the country is weighing the costs versus the benefits of the campaign: Is Predator Free 2050 achievable?





**Humans and wild animals sometimes work together** to mutual advantage, but ecologists find that these “business partnerships” are dying out due to environmental and cultural threats. In Mozambique, for example, honey harvesters (above) rely on birds called honeyguides to lead them to bee nests; in return, the birds receive bee larvae and wax. In Brazil and Myanmar, dolphins team up with humans to net fish. Read this fascinating [interview](#) in *Science*.



**An isolated and genetically distinct population of polar bears** has been discovered in Southeast Greenland, [reports](#) the AAAS. Unlike other polar bears, which rely on rapidly disappearing sea ice for survival, the Southeast Greenland bears hunt year-round in conditions like those projected for the High Arctic in the late 21st Century. The discovery provides hope for polar bear resilience, as the Arctic is warming more than twice as fast as the rest of the planet.



**How to re-wild a country: Argentina.** It began with a philanthropic couple buying a swamp and has become one of the world's boldest experiments in restoring degraded habitats, bringing wildlife and landscapes back from the brink—so [writes](#) *The Guardian* in the latest instalment of its [Age of Extinction](#) series. While the Amazon rainforest gets the attention, Argentina's immense Gran Chaco, the home of thousands of species of animals and plants, is the focus of an intense, slowly succeeding conservation campaign that relies on indigenous people, enlightened politics and good science.



**How much land do we need to preserve to halt the biodiversity crisis?** More than we thought, [says](#) *Anthropocene*. Working together, researchers from the US, Europe and Australia refined the body of knowledge on this topic and found that altogether 44% of Earth's land mass requires some form of conservation management—not 30%, as previously thought. The amounts

vary: Some regions are remote and relatively untouched, while the most threatened land is in developing countries where natural resource extraction and farming are expanding. More than half of the most at-risk habitat is in Africa.





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