



Conservation Highlights

December 2011 - April 2012

Recent WWF achievements and challenges in protecting biodiversity and reducing humanity's footprint in priority areas of the global conservation programme

CAMPAIGNS

GLOBAL CAMPAIGNS

WWF has run many campaigns to focus attention on key issues and seek solutions. WWF is now launching a new series of global campaigns to deal with critical and urgent environmental issues and threats, starting with the illegal wildlife trade. Many wildlife populations are being driven to the edge of extinction due to huge new waves of poaching fed by demand for products such as ivory, rhino horn and tiger parts.

WWF's Illegal Wildlife Trade Campaign will profile illegal wildlife trade as a serious crime. African elephants and rhino, and tigers – all currently threatened by an upsurge of poaching for the illegal trade – will be the face of this campaign which aims to secure key changes to turn round the decline of species due to this malignant activity.

Largest ever seizures of illegal ivory in 2011

Up to 12,000 elephants are killed annually for their ivory, mostly in Central Africa, where elephant numbers are historically low following centuries of both legal and illegal hunting. A recent upsurge of cross-border poaching into Cameroon's Bouba N'Djida National Park has resulted in the slaughter of about half the park's 400 elephants, and despite recent military support, poaching continues. But a sign of hope is that convicted poachers were recently sentenced in Cameroon to the heaviest sentences ever.

Meanwhile Gabon is planning to burn its ivory stocks to show that illegal ivory has no legal commercial value and needs to be destroyed to deter further poaching.



© Brent Stirton / Getty Images / WWF-UK

Rhino poaching in South Africa up 3,000% since 2007

The South African government announced in March that 199 rhinos have been killed in the first three months of 2012 and 122 suspected poachers have been taken into custody so far this year. Last year, a record 448 rhinos were poached for their horns – a rate of well over one rhino killed a day. WWF is working with the South Africa authorities to increase protection on the ground and to ensure wildlife crime is taken seriously by police and courts.

WWF's African Rhino Programme is supporting efforts to improve law enforcement and prosecution in rhino poaching cases through the creation of a DNA database for all rhinos in Africa, and is helping supply DNA forensic kits to support prosecutions of poachers.



© Martin Harvey / WWF-Canon

WWF's Tigers Alive Initiative

WWF's Tigers Alive Initiative has launched an initiative to achieve zero poaching of tigers – a call to action to stop poaching at its source: the protected areas and parks where rangers, officials and communities take great risks every day to save tigers and their prey. Zero poaching aims to gain commitments of resources and capacity from tiger range country governments for those on the frontlines. Illegal trade is one of the key factors that has driven tiger numbers down to an estimated 3,200 wild tigers.

The Initiative has also launched its awards for Excellence in Enforcement Efforts to honor the teams in tiger landscapes already taking strides towards Zero Poaching. Awards have been given to teams in China, Cambodia, India, Nepal and Sumatra.



© naturepl.com / Edwin Giebers / WWF

Brazil Government votes for negative Forest Code

Despite huge effort by WWF together with many other organisations and internal opposition from local civil society, the Brazilian Congress passed a revised Forest Code bill that rolls back key protections for fragile landscapes, reduces the area targeted for restoration, and offers financial and legal amnesty for past forest crimes. This is likely to increase deforestation and increased carbon emissions – just as Brazil was getting this under control. The bill now goes to President Dilma Rousseff, who can veto all or part of the bill, or sign it into law. WWF is using social media to ask President Dilma to keep her campaign promises and stand firm against these changes.



© Nigel Dickinson / WWF-Canton

Stop conversion of tropical forest into toilet paper

After years of trying and failing to persuade Asian Pulp and Paper (APP) – one of the world’s largest pulp and paper conglomerates – to make its operations sustainable, WWF is running a campaign to inform APP’s customers in the United States that APP’s products are responsible for huge deforestation in Sumatra, destroying the last remaining habitats of critically endangered species such as Sumatran tiger, elephant and orang-utan. So far, 17 of 20 customers have agreed to drop APP products. In recent months APP, the world’s fifth largest tissue producer, has been shown to have logged inside a tiger reserve it created, claimed it has gained certification on sustainability denied by the certifiers, and is using protected timber species in its timber mills.



© Eyes on the Forest

Virunga National Park under threat

Sparked by news that oil companies SOCO (UK) and Total (France) plan to explore for oil within the boundaries of the world-famous Virunga National Park, WWF is campaigning to keep the park fully protected. Virunga is Africa’s oldest national park, and first UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS); the park is extremely rich in biodiversity with many threatened species including the famed mountain gorillas. UNESCO maintains oil exploration is incompatible with WHS status, yet 85 percent of the park is allocated for oil concessions. Communities around Lake Edward - a Ramsar wetland site of international significance – are reliant on the lake for fishing and concerned at news of plans for exploration under the lake, fearing oil spills damaging their livelihood and food security.



© Kate Holt / WWF-UK

BIODIVERSITY

FORESTS AND SAVANNAH

WWF's biodiversity meta-goal is to ensure the integrity of the most outstanding natural places on Earth. This includes the protection of biodiversity in high conservation priority areas, and restoring populations of those species with the highest ecological, economic and cultural value.

Kenya and Tanzania join forces for elephants

Kenya and Tanzania have agreed joint measures to better conserve elephant populations living along their shared border. Meeting in Arusha, Tanzania in February, the countries agreed to form a taskforce which will lead to joint training of wildlife rangers, mixed country patrols, intelligence sharing, and collaborative community engagement. The agreement brings together key government agencies and NGOs to protect and manage savannah elephants, which will also benefit other species sharing elephant habitats such as rhinos, lions and leopards among others in a region where some of the world's most spectacular wildlife habitats span the border area of Kenya and Tanzania, such as the Serengeti and Masai Mara reserves, as well as Mt. Kilimanjaro and Amboseli.



Romania takes steps to protect 250,000 ha of forest

In December the Government of Romania committed to place all virgin forests under protection, and signed an agreement with WWF to identify, map and protect the country's most important and valuable forests, estimated to cover 250,000 ha and shelter at least 13,000 species. This followed a WWF "Save the Virgin Forests!" campaign which gathered 65,000 signatures and raised huge public interest in the country's forests. Romania's virgin forests represent up to 65 percent of the virgin and old growth forests still remaining in Europe outside Russia.



Heart of Borneo beats strong on 5th anniversary

Indonesian President Yudhoyono has signed a decree conserving at least 45 percent of Kalimantan, the Indonesian portion of Borneo, to ensure local ecosystems and biodiversity are protected. This action will also contribute to meeting national greenhouse gas emission targets. The Heart of Borneo forms a core of this vision. To commemorate the Heart of Borneo (HoB) Declaration's 5th anniversary, WWF issued a pioneering report assessing the environmental health of the 22 million ha region. Using indicators such as key species and ecosystems, the report shows the status of most forest types is good, but the HoB still remains under serious threat – especially from industrial conversion of natural forest to palm oil.



Positive picture of snow leopards in Bhutan

The first ever snow leopard prey survey in Wangchuck Centennial Park - Bhutan's newest protected area - revealed astonishing footage of snow leopards scent-marking, a sub-adult snow leopard, Tibetan wolf, threatened Himalayan serow, musk deer and a healthy population of blue sheep, the main food source for snow leopards.

Film footage shows snow leopards are thriving in Wangchuck Centennial Park, a vital snow leopard corridor between Jigme Dorji National Park in the West and Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary in the East. Field biologists from the Government of Bhutan and WWF captured over 10,000 images during the camera trap survey.



© Royal Government of Bhutan (DoFPS) / WWF

Hope for world's most endangered leopard

Numbers of the endangered Amur leopard, regarded as the world's most endangered leopard, have doubled to between 8 and 11 animals in China's north-east Jilin Province, according to survey results released in April. Less than 50 of this species are known to survive in north-east China and the Russian Far East, so the reports of increase is welcome news and indicates China's Hunchun and Wangqing nature reserves are playing important roles in protecting core populations and helping the species expand its range into much larger areas outside the reserves, helping better ensure the survival of this critically-endangered species.



© Vasily Solkin

Focusing on the Endangered Javan Rhino

A donation of 120 cameras aims to help the Indonesian authorities protect and increase numbers of the Javan rhino – the population of which has remained at a crucially low level of 50 animals. Donated by WWF and the International Rhino Foundation, the cameras quadruple video surveillance of the Unjung Kulon National Park in Java, home to the entire world population of wild Javan rhino, and will help the authorities achieve their target to achieve increases in 14 key endangered species populations including Javan rhino by 2014.



© Mike Griffins / WWF-Canon

Deaths of Yangtze finless porpoise raise concerns

The deaths of over 30 Yangtze finless porpoise in recent weeks raises major fears for the future of the species, which numbered 1,800 in 2006 but has since decreased considerably in the face of many threats including destructive fishing methods. The Yangtze River lakes Dongting and Poyang, where the dead porpoises were found, are home to at least one-third of the total population, and WWF is urging more effective protection. Local authorities have promised several conservation measures including action to prevent illegal fishing and to regulate sand-dredging and better pollution control. WWF will organize a survey to investigate the the species in Poyang and Dongting lakes in May.



© Xu Dianbo

News on the Irrawaddy dolphin

In a major discovery, WWF and local partners have confirmed the existence of Irrawaddy dolphins in the waters of West Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo. This underlines the rich biodiversity in Kalimantan waters, which originate in the highlands of the Heart of Borneo, and the need to protect the habitat of the dolphins – from the origins of the rivers in the Heart of Borneo to the lower rivers of the island. The Cambodian government will designate dolphin conservation zones for the Irrawaddy dolphin and ban or restrict the use of gillnets along a 180 km stretch of the Mekong River. WWF has been pushing for such legislation for over two years, and will work with local authorities and communities to help implement these measures.



© Syahrishyah / WWF-Indonesia

WWF calls New Zealand to fully protect Maui's dolphins

Following the death of a Maui's dolphin in January, and new research that suggests the population of this critically endangered species has fallen to just 55 individuals, WWF is calling on the New Zealand authorities to completely ban gillnets and inshore trawling within the dolphin's habitat. The Marine Mammal Sanctuary also needs to be extended further south with a suspension on all current mining and seismic activity. Maui's dolphins and their South island relative, Hector's, are the world's smallest and rarest marine dolphins, and WWF is requesting for the protection of a marine corridor linking the two to increase chances of rebuilding the Maui's population. Faced with such a low population, WWF believes all protection measures should be implemented.



© DOC

Vision for huge new marine reserve for Antarctica

A new conservation coalition of NGOs and eminent persons has called for the creation of a huge new marine reserve in the Ross Sea off Antarctica, which would protect 3,6 million km² of critical ecosystems from fishing and other threats. The Antarctic Ocean Alliance, which includes WWF, proposes that the new marine reserve enlarge on existing proposals by the US and New Zealand governments, creating the world's largest fully protected marine reserve, and the core of a network of marine protected areas and no-take zones in the Southern Ocean around Antarctica. The Alliance seeks to mobilize public support around the world to help protect one of the world's last and most intact marine environments.



© Wim van Passel / WWF-Canon

Progress towards protecting the fragile Arctic

In January, WWF gathered representatives of key Inuit organisations for indigenous people and Arctic governments to discuss the Last Ice Area project, and the future of the area of summer ice projected to last longest in the face of climate change. An entire ecological system ranging from plankton to polar bears, whales and people is dependent on the sea ice and WWF is discussing ways to protect this region.

A partnership between WWF and the Coca-Cola Company reached millions of people across North America with WWF's polar bear habitat conservation messages and raised funds for WWF's work on the Last Ice Area project spanning Canada and Greenland, and polar bear conservation projects in Norway, Russia, and Alaska.



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WWF's second meta-goal is to reduce humankind's Ecological Footprint so that we live within the renewable resource limits of our planet. This builds on strong foundations and targets humanity's carbon, commodity and water footprints which have the greatest impact on biodiversity.

Mozambique and Tanzania to combat illegal logging

A new forest cooperation agreement between Mozambique and Tanzania aims to dramatically increase the effectiveness of measures to stop rampant illegal logging and timber trading across their shared border. Cooperative measures prioritise improved management of forests and wildlife, and increased economic and livelihood benefits for local communities. WWF helped facilitate this agreement, which will target illegal cross border logging by establishing joint law enforcement units within the boundaries, sharing intelligence and establishing checkpoints in the border areas.



First rattan forest FSC-certified

In August, the world's first rattan forest, a 1,200 ha area in Laos, became FSC certified. A market link between a local rattan processing company and a Swiss retailer was established during the project and 8,000 locally produced baskets made of sustainable rattan were exported from Laos to Switzerland. Rattan is an ecologically and economically important, but increasingly rare, non-timber forest product in Southeast Asia, which can generate significant community income.



WWF urges purchase of sustainable palm oil

WWF's Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard 2011 shows that companies in Europe, Australia and Japan are buying more sustainable palm oil certified to the standards of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) than ever before, but nearly half the retailers and a fifth of manufacturers scored very poorly on taking responsibility for their palm oil sourcing and its impact on forests, species and people. While 87 of the 132 companies scored have committed to sourcing 100 percent RSPO-certified palm oil by 2015 or earlier, and the annual supply of sustainable palm oil stands at five million tonnes – 10 per cent of global production – only half is being sold, and WWF is urging greater take up to send a positive message to the industry to stop clearing tropical forests for palm oil.



Good news for the Mekong

WWF welcomed the decision by the Mekong River Commission in December to defer a decision on building the Xayaburi Dam in northern Laos pending further environmental impact studies. The proposal was criticized for ignoring potential impacts on fisheries (supporting 60 million people in the Lower Mekong), biodiversity and river flows. WWF advocates a 10-year moratorium on building mainstream dams on the Lower Mekong.

The six Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) governments – Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam – agreed a new 10-year Economic Cooperation Strategic Framework to integrate sustainable development and deliver a regional action plan for a green economy, protecting forest and freshwater systems.



© WWF-Greater Mekong

Progress on sustainable water management

Partnered with the German development finance institution (DEG), WWF has launched an online tool enabling companies and investors to address their water-related risks. A simple online questionnaire provides steps to identify and mitigate risk, and will in time enable water users in a river basin to work together to achieve sustainable use including environmental flows.

After years of lobbying by WWF and others, the European Parliament finally agreed to eliminate high-content phosphate detergents from the European market as from July 2013 for laundry and January 2017 for automatic dishwashers. Phosphates contribute to algae growth in our waters, consuming large portions of oxygen and causing severe stress to living water organisms.



© Martin Harvey / WWF-Canon

Important moves for China's rivers.

The Chinese Ministry of Water Resources and WWF have jointly developed guidelines for strategic water management including riverbasin planning, water allocation, and flood risk. This influenced the revision of master plans for China's seven major river basins, for the first time in nearly 30 years, and will be rolled out in all China's 242 large rivers. A key driver for the revision of the plans is to ensure future environmental flows and sustainability, and how to balance competing water, food and energy objectives. The next 25 years of strategic river basin planning will be influenced by this work, not only in China, but also around the world. As China's river policy reform is emulated around the world, environmental issues will become a central part of river basin planning.



© Michael Gunther / WWF-Canon

Breakthrough MSC certification of tuna

In an important step towards sustainability for one of the world's most important fisheries – Pacific tuna – the members of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) have achieved an industry first with the MSC certification of the largest tuna fishery certified to date. This move will help ensure the survival of economically viable tuna stocks in the region, benefiting the fishing industry and consumers alike. The certification has been gained by a purse seine free-schooling skipjack tuna fishery. Free school purse seiners harvest proportionally more adult tuna with far less bycatch than fishing methods using “fish attraction devices.” Consumers could soon see close to one billion cans of MSC certified tuna lining up annually on supermarket shelves.



© Jürgen Freund / WWF-canon

WWF bites into shark fin consumption

The WWF initiative to switch consumers away from shark fin products is gaining teeth. Since the announcement by the Singapore-based food chain Cold Storage that they would cease sales of shark fin products, this example has been followed by many leading Asian hotels, restaurants and retailers, including the Hong Kong and Shanghai Hotel Group, the Peninsula hotel chain, and the Shangri-la chain which has also banned Chilean seabass and Mediterranean bluefin tuna because of concerns of sustainability. Retail chains such as Carrefour and FairPrice have also halted shark sales in Singapore. Hong Kong and Singapore are the main trading centres for shark fin.



© Jarrett Corke / WWF-canon

WWF's Smart Gear Competition winners

The winning entry in the WWF 2011 International Smart Gear Competition, announced at the Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle in November, was from the captain of a Japanese tuna boat who won both the US\$50,000 Grand Prize and this year's US\$7,500 Special Tuna Prize. The design increases the sinking rate of fishing gear, making it more difficult for seabirds to chase baited hooks. Used with other devices it can reduce seabird mortality by almost 90 per cent. Runners up included “Turtle Lights for Gillnets”, which reduces capture of marine turtles. This device reduced turtle interactions by up to 60 per cent without affecting target catch rates or catch value. WWF works with the inventors to develop these ideas further to ensure uptake by the industry and increase sustainability.



© Troy GuyF

Mexico shows leadership on climate change

The Mexican Senate passed the developing world's first climate change law in April, placing the nation within a small group of innovative countries taking firm action against climate change. With 78 votes in favor and none against, the new law makes Mexico and the UK the only two nations to have enacted ambitious and comprehensive approaches to climate change legislation. The new law commits Mexico to cut its emission by 50% by 2050 with international support, generating 35% of electricity with clean sources by 2024, making renewables economically competitive before 2020, phase-out of fossil-fuels subsidies, create a National Green Climate Fund and a National Ecology and Climate Change Institute.



© National Geographic Stock / Mark Thiesen / WWF

Earth Hour's "I Will if You Will" catches on

Earth Hour 2012 completed a record journey across more than 150 countries and 6,525 towns and cities on 31 March. The "I Will If You Will" campaign has been excitedly adopted by hundreds of thousands of people worldwide, challenging family and friends to do something special for the environment beyond the hour. Earth Hour's YouTube platform alone generated almost 4 million hits and more than 4,400 challenges were accepted by 150,000 people. The Earth Hour I Will If You Will campaign will continue at www.YouTube.com/EarthHour



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China gives lead on green credit

The green credit guidelines issued in February by the Chinese Banking Regulatory Commission (CRBC) provide a leading regulatory framework in support of a green economy. The guidelines, which apply to both national and overseas credit by Chinese financial institutions, "acknowledge the essential role of the banking sector in promoting a green and sustainable economy, as well as the risks presented by activities that are detrimental to the environment and local communities," said Dr Jim Gradoville, head of WWF China. As China's economy is now the world's second largest, these guidelines are highly transformative for China and the world, placing green credit strategies at the highest level to promote resource efficiency, environmental protection and sustainable development.



© Brent Stirton / Getty Images / WWF

Perhaps WWF's greatest strength is its people, the staff and officers who together strive for a living planet. Similarly, there are many leaders and champions playing key roles outside WWF to achieve conservation success and sustainable development. By highlighting these champions for the environment, WWF recognises their contribution, while profiling conservation success and, above all, showing what can be achieved and inspiring others to take up the challenge to secure a living planet.

Praise for Hong Kong government marine actions

In March WWF presented the Hong Kong Government with a Leaders for a Living Planet award in recognition of its commitment to marine conservation exemplified by a recent ban on trawling in Hong Kong waters. Ms Yolanda Kakabadse, President of WWF International presented the award to Dr York Chow, GBS, JP, Secretary for Food and Health, representing the government. The trawling ban policy sets the foundation for more marine conservation initiatives which are crucial to saving Hong Kong's near-collapsed marine ecosystem. The ban – which was supported by a 60,000 signature petition organized by WWF, Hong Kong's biggest-ever environmental petition – will bring significant future benefits, with income from recovered fisheries estimated to amount to HK\$ 600 million over 25 years.



WWF honours sustainable development pioneer

The 2011 Duke of Edinburgh Conservation Medal – WWF's most prestigious award for exceptional achievement – was awarded to Dr Ashok Khosla MBE, a leading global environmentalist and sustainable development expert who has championed building cooperation between governments and NGOs to ensure development is not at the cost of the environment. The medal was presented to Dr Khosla by WWF President Emeritus HRH The Duke of Edinburgh at a ceremony in December at Buckingham Palace. Dr Khosla has held many key positions ranging from founding director of the Indian Government's Office of Environmental Planning – the first such agency in the developing world – to being advisor to the World Bank, and is currently President of IUCN and Club of Rome.



WWF champions honoured for services to conservation

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, the Ramsar Standing Committee presented Dr Luc Hoffmann with a special Ramsar Award in November in recognition of his lifelong commitment to the cause of freshwater conservation. Dr Luc Hoffmann is a WWF Vice-President emeritus. Former WWF Greece President Thymio Papayannis was also recognised for his years of service to Ramsar. Dr Claude Martin, former WWF International Director-General, received an outstanding Contribution Award presented by the China Council for International Cooperation and Development (CCICED) – a high level think-tank and adviser to China's State Council – which this year celebrated its 20th anniversary.



Rio +20

Twenty years on from the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the UN will hold a Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in June 2012 in Rio. The themes include sustainable development, green economy and poverty eradication. Rio+20 represents a significant opportunity for governments, business and civil society to push for genuine long-term stability, full cost accounting of all externalities, and human development with net sustainable footprint to preserve the natural environment and resources in which people live and depend on. Check out information on the conference and contribute to our work on the Hot House Rio+20 working space (<http://bit.ly/dJQxsS>).



CBD India

The 11th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will be held in Hyderabad, India, in October 2012. This summit of government leaders, scientists and NGOs will review the threats to global biodiversity, its importance and ways to secure it, and will focus especially on the world's targets agreed at previous CBD COPs including a commitment to achieve fully representative, viable and well managed marine protected area (MPA) networks. While this target is far from achieved, the impetus given by CBD, plus the evidence of marine environment destruction worldwide, has given huge urgency to MPA creation and, increasingly, to the necessity to manage the marine environment on the basis of whole ecosystems rather than individual species or habitats.



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China-Africa cooperation for sustainability

The Forum on China-African Cooperation (FOCAC) is the premier platform for Sino-African dialogue, and within this Forum key decisions on China's trade and investment in Africa are made every three years. The next FOCAC meeting is in November 2012 in Beijing. WWF aims to integrate social and environmental principles within FOCAC's development strategy so that China's trade and investments in Africa can make a substantive contribution to sustainable development, protect vulnerable high value conservation areas such as forest, river basins and fisheries, and help Africa achieve the Millennium Development Goals.



© WWF-EARPO

WWF highlights in numbers

1 BILLION

Close to one billion cans of sustainably fished tuna will appear in stores following MSC certification of skipjack tuna in the Pacific.

5M TONNES

Sustainable palm oil now produced annually amounts to 5 million tonnes – 10 per cent of the global palm production.

3000%

The rate of rhino poaching in South Africa has risen 3000 per cent.

242

Development of new guidelines for river basin management emphasizing sustainable use will benefit 242 large rivers in China.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

panda.org

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