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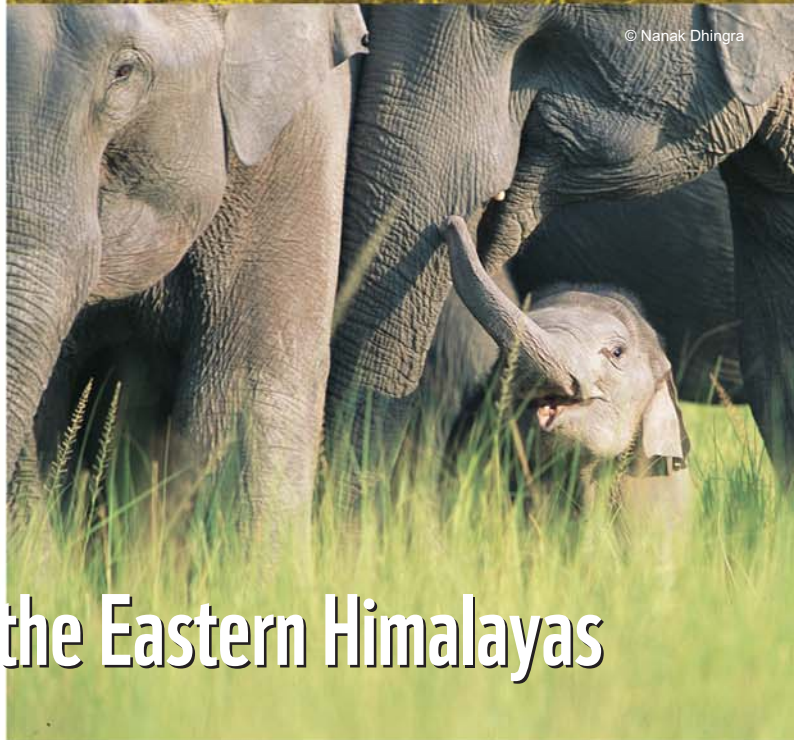
FACT SHEET

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HIMALAYAS



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## Species Conservation in the Eastern Himalayas

The Eastern Himalayas is known for its rich biodiversity, which includes thousands of different species: 10,000 plants, 977 birds, 300 mammals, 269 fresh water fish, 176 reptiles and 105 amphibians. It is also home to a number of the world's most iconic species: tigers, elephants, rhinos, red pandas and snow leopards. {Ref: *New Species Discoveries-The Eastern Himalayas: Where Worlds Collide (WWF Report)*}

Despite the rugged terrain and secluded valleys that have protected these species for time immemorial, many are threatened as a result of habitat loss, poaching, unsustainable trade and human-wildlife

conflict. Protecting these threatened species has and remains an integral part of WWF's work in the Eastern Himalayas.

### TIGER

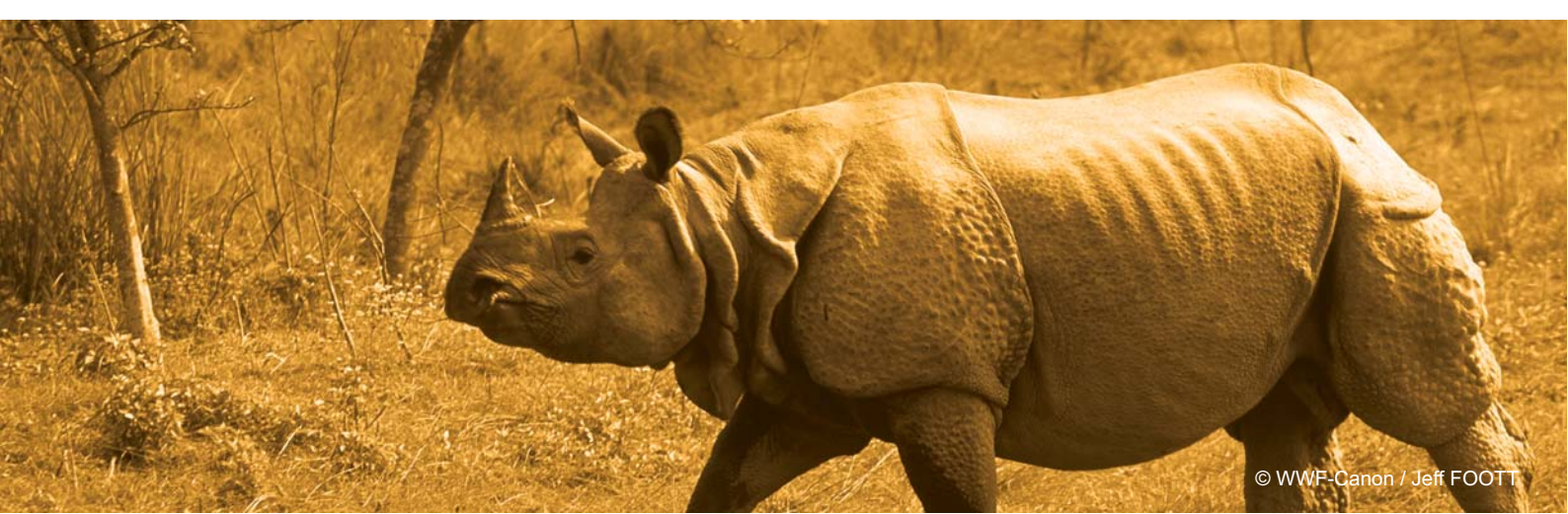
The Eastern Himalayas is home to a significant population of tigers (*Panthera tigris tigris*). Found in the Terai-Duar grasslands of the Himalayan foothills and the temperate forests of Bhutan, this once contiguous population of tigers is becoming more fragmented due to growing threats. Increasing human pressure is pushing into the tigers' natural habitat and causing human-tiger conflicts. The creation of Tiger Reserves throughout the region

has helped to stabilize numbers but poaching in recent years has once again put the tiger at risk. WWF has been working with the respective governments and local partners in the Eastern Himalayas to strengthen anti-poaching efforts and to reduce threats to its habitat. WWF is also working in India to monitor the status of tiger in some of its key ranges.

### RED PANDA

Eastern Himalayas comprises almost 50% of red panda's (*Ailurus fulgens*) habitat, and it is iconic with this region. Occurring mostly in the temperate forests and also sometimes in the sub-tropical forests in





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Bhutan, India and Nepal within the Eastern Himalayas, this species also has its range extended into China and Myanmar. This species is presently threatened due to poaching, and habitat destruction and degradation. Red panda is presently confined in patches within this region, and needs urgent attention of the national and provincial governments, conservation organisations and local communities for its long term survival. WWF has been working with its partners to conserve this species and their habitat through a plethora of activities in the three countries within Eastern Himalayas.

### ASIAN ELEPHANT

The Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) is considered a sacred species, revered for its role in Asian culture and religion. But with more than 20% of the world's human population living in or near Asian elephant habitat, there are constant threats to its esteemed status. Major threats to the Asian elephant today are the loss, degradation or fragmentation of their habitat due to agriculture, infrastructure development and human settlement. It means that when elephants try to follow traditional migration corridors or find food, they may instead encounter roads, fields of crops and villages. This leads to increasing conflict between people and elephants, which can be fatal for both sides – scores of people and elephants are killed every year. Elephants in this region have also been killed for its prized tusks, that the adult males possess. In the Eastern Himalayas, WWF is working to restore and/or secure biological corridors - so that large animals such as elephants can access their migratory routes - along with community based management of human elephant conflict, and also working with partners to curb poaching of elephants.

### GREATER ONE-HORNED RHINO

Once found across the entire northern part of the Indian sub-continent, the greater one-horned rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*)

is the largest of all rhino species. Today, there are fewer than 2,800 left in the wild, with significant populations in Chitwan National Park in Nepal and Kaziranga National Park in India. However, many Protected Areas are surrounded by dense human populations who are encroaching on the rhino's habitat. To conserve this species in the Eastern Himalayas, WWF is working to strengthen anti-poaching efforts and Protected Area management; create additional populations through translocations; and assist local communities to benefit economically from the presence of rhinos.

**Despite the rugged terrain and secluded valleys that have protected these species for time immemorial, many are threatened as a result of habitat loss, unsustainable trade and human-wildlife conflict.**

### SNOW LEOPARD

Living at elevations between 3,000-5,500m in the high mountains of the Eastern Himalayas, the snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) remains elusive. According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, the population estimates at 200-600 in India, 300-400 in Nepal and 100-200 in Bhutan. The main threats to the snow leopard's survival are loss of habitat and prey, poaching and human-wildlife conflict. WWF is researching and protecting this Endangered species by working with partners and local communities to stop the illegal trade in cat skins, creating anti-poaching activities, establishing innovative relief funds and reducing pressures on the snow leopard's habitat.

## WWF AND SPECIES CONSERVATION

Protecting species and their habitats lies at the heart of WWF's mission to conserve the Earth's biodiversity. Conservation efforts do work as witnessed by a number of species that have been brought back from the brink of extinction. They help to not only conserve rich and diverse ecosystems but also deliver real benefits to local people through new livelihood opportunities and sustainable development.

Tigers, elephants, rhinos, red pandas and snow leopards are some of the Eastern Himalayas' most charismatic species. Focusing efforts on their protection also provide unique opportunities for promoting and communicating critically important conservation and environmental issues.



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