



WILDLIFE in the NEWS

The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

Poachers in Congo have killed 20% of the elephants in Virunga National Park in the past year, according to the park's director, Emmanuel de Merode. In August 2008 alone, Rwandan rebels killed seven elephants in a 10-day span in the 2 million acre reserve, which lies along Congo's eastern border with Rwanda and Uganda. In the 1970s, Africa's oldest national park was home to the largest herds of Savannah elephants in the world, at that time numbering around 5,000. Wildlife experts approximate the current population at no more than 300, a decline caused in part by heavy poaching, corruption, war and mismanagement. Part of the problem is that the rangers attempting to protect the gentle giants are outnumbered 20 to 1, according to the director.

In July 2008, as part of the effort to stem the sale of ivory on the black market, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species granted China permission to buy over 100 tons of ivory from stockpiles in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

China is one of the primary destinations for illegal ivory, and wildlife officials believe that Asia's growing appetite for animal tusks for use in traditional medicines has fed the upsurge in elephant killings. Clever poachers and politically well-connected militias mix their illegal ivory in with stocks for legitimate sale, in effect "laundering" their ill-gotten gains, and hiding their illegal acquisition.

In 1989, when the ban on ivory trade was enacted in response to a tremendous public outcry, the elephant population numbered approximately one million. Today, the total elephant population in Africa is less than half a million.

Researchers at the University of Washington have developed a process to identify where ivory has been poached using the genetic markers found in elephant dung, which may help countries like Tanzania who are politically stable enough and have the resources to stop poachers. However, it's unlikely to help the Virunga, where 120 park rangers have been killed in the past decade while trying to protect its wildlife.



The Virunga hippo population faces a similar fate, though the reserve once boasted the largest population of them on the continent. The main threat comes from a rebel Congolese militia group, the Mai Mai, who set up an encampment inside the national park in 2006, according to conservationists with the Zoological Society of London. Poorly-paid Congolese soldiers and local militia groups have also turned to the illegal ivory trade.

The Mai Mai eat and sell hippo meat and the ivory from their teeth. The sale of hippo meat, though illegal, is as difficult to track on the black market as it is lucrative. The rebel group targets rangers and their families to discourage interference and investigations. In 1988, approximately 22,000 hippos lived in the Virunga. Today, their numbers have dwindled to less than 650.

According to the World Wildlife Federation, soldiers and armed groups are still found in sections of the park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, making it difficult to maintain consistent conservation work in those areas. Soldiers encamped in the park are often not being paid, so poaching is an attractive means of obtaining not only sustenance, but income. Rwandan refugees fleeing from the wars in their homeland also contributed to the decline, hunting for food, and destroying precious animal habitat by cutting down trees to make charcoal to sell.

The decline of the Virunga hippo population also adversely affects the thousands of fishermen living around Lake Edward, which lies within the reserve. The lake is one of the most productive in the world, as hippo dung provides vital nutrients for fish. The dramatic fall of the hippo population has also resulted in a rapid decline of the lake's fish stocks. *(continued on page 6)*



Post Office Box 16637
Beverly Hills, CA 90209

Dear Friends,

Some of you may have read the announcement on our website concerning the drought in East Africa and its impact on our education center. If not, we have reprinted the text on page three of this newsletter. I hope we have fully explained the challenges we faced that caused our decision.

As of this date, the long-awaited rains have still not arrived, and more famine camps are being established in the north of Kenya. This is the first time Kenya has ever had to cope with such numbers of starving people. We hope and pray that by the beginning of next year those famine camps will no longer be necessary.

In spite of the lack of rain and the difficult times, we continue to conduct our rural school programs with the ongoing collaboration from the principals and their teachers to effectively integrate our message of conservation into their standard curricula (i.e. they are required to study English, Science and Geography and we provide them with lectures on all subjects that increase their understanding of bio-diversity, sustainability, and the damaging effects of habitat loss to the world's environment).

We are also in the first stages of the construction of the Guara Primary School Library and kitchen facility. In addition, our education office, coordinated by Michael Ng'ang'a, will soon implement the next stage of the Bongo Awareness Program.

We are still very active at the center and pray that soon we'll be back to full operations.

I wish to thank, from the bottom of my heart, all my loyal friends who have contributed to the Julie Powers Memorial Fund Scholarship in memory of my late mother. The response to her passing was so overwhelmingly touching and the generosity was so great that it seemed fitting to create her own fund within WHWF to perpetuate the love and respect she had for our work in Kenya.

Warmest regards,

Stefanie Powers
President

Education Center News

SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM WHWF PRESIDENT STEFANIE POWERS

As you may have read, Kenya and most of East Africa is experiencing the worst drought since that of 1962. Rivers are running dry, grasslands cannot support traditional herds of cattle, sheep and goats forcing tribal migrations to higher altitudes in search of grass where the colder climate and weakened condition of the domestic animals causes large numbers to die. Power sources, mostly hydroelectric, have been forced to engage in blackouts twice a week. We at the WHWF's education center have also suffered from these conditions. There is little if no water in the river from which we derive the water to serve our kitchens and flush our toilets. Power outages cause us to run our generator at great expense in order to operate essential equipment. These reasons coupled with the effects of the last difficult financial year have greatly effected our financial health. In order to prudently manage our donors' generosity we have had to make a difficult but necessary decision. Since we have already served nearly 8,000 students this year we feel it appropriate to close the education center grounds temporarily to groups while continuing with all our outreach programs and the rural libraries inclusive of the pen pal ongoing correspondence. It has also become necessary to downsize our staff whose services will not be necessary in the forthcoming months. Since we opened our doors in 1982 we have served over 300,000 students and visitors of all ages free of charge as a result of our donors' ongoing commitments. I personally have also committed a great deal of my own income to our project and have always taken pride in the knowledge that we, over all other organizations, can actually say that 100% of each donation we receive goes to our work in Kenya and that nothing is deflected for directors' expenses, or overheads in the US. We are also proud of the way our money and expenses have been carefully managed and overseen by David McConnell in Kenya, who has been able to consistently prevent waste and find ways to cut extraneous costs. I hope you will bear with us while continuing your support in the hopes that we may ride out these difficult times and emerge successfully to reopen and continue the vital work of the foundation. Thank you.

Stefanie Powers, President



A worker tries to lift up a weak cow from among the carcasses of drought-stricken cows in a paddock at the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC) factory near Athi River, 50km (31 miles) east of Nairobi. Farmers make their way to the recently revived KMC in a bid to cut their losses by selling their drought-stricken livestock for meat. Photo from Kenya Agriculture Animal Disaster Images of the Day



Miles and miles of displaced Kenyans still struggle to survive in make-shift refugee camps. Over one-third of the population is at risk of starvation. Photo from Oxfam

Africa's climate has always been erratic but there is growing evidence that global warming is increasing droughts, floods and climate unpredictability. The prolonged drought and ancient tribal customs have created the perfect atmosphere for runaway wildfires ravaging Kenya's national forests, including Mt. Kenya. According to indigenous belief, if the people set fire to the trees, the water that evaporates from the burning trees will rise up into clouds and create rain. At one point this year, every forest in Kenya was ablaze, and WHWF-EC provided valuable assistance in the firefighting efforts.

Famine has created an humanitarian crisis of biblical proportions and continued in-fighting and ineffectiveness of the Kenya government only hampers solutions. While Kenyans starve, the government continues exports of corn and other life-giving foodstuffs. Food aid from the UN and other NGOs is being allowed to mold in silos. The constant stream of refugees from the poverty and bloody conflict in neighboring Somalia further compounds the problem, providing more mouths to feed and adding to already overcrowded refugee camps. The camp at Dadaab, approximately 50 miles from the Somali border, is home to more than 280,000 in a space intended to accommodate only 90,000.

By June 2009, the U.N. refugee agency had already registered nearly 38,000 new occupants. That's in addition to the thousands of Kenyans still in the encampments that arose during the ethnic strife last year, which displaced hundreds of thousands of Kenyans.

Kenya's Machakos District, roughly 60 kilometers southeast of Nairobi, is one of the areas hardest-hit by famine. The situation is so bad, parents have resorted to getting their children tipsy on liquor so that they can fall asleep, rather than think about how hungry they are. The lucky few are able to feed their children porridge once every two to three days. It is estimated that up to ten million of Kenya's 30 million citizens currently face starvation.

Food prices are at an all time high. The Kenyan staple food, maize (corn) meal, has increased almost 300% in less than two years. Though known throughout the world for its fine coffee and teas, the drought wreaked havoc on those crops, forcing Kenya's farmers to forego those lucrative crops to explore more drought-tolerant options. Because Kenya has many more subsistence farmers than large-scale commercial ones, such crop failures may well prove to be a major disaster for the increasingly hungry nation, and one from which it will not soon recover.

"Eagle Whisperers" at the Education Center?



Back on May 12, Education Center staff became inadvertent "eagle whisperers" when they discovered a Grey Kestrel (eagle) standing next to the male tortoise. Believing the eagle had achieved its kill, they approached, but were amazed to find that the tortoise was still very much alive, and had, in act, captured its predator...with its shell. The eagle tried to fly away, but was unable to since its talons were caught in the tortoise shell!



Staff members surmised that the kestrel saw the tortoise feeding, and swooped in on its head. When it got hold of its neck, the pesky resident reptile withdrew into his shell, bringing the eagle's claw with it, then he used his front legs to pin it tightly against the inside wall of its shell. The bird tried to escape by pecking on the shell, to no avail. It took three men to rescue the bird, which glared briefly at the tortoise and flew away.

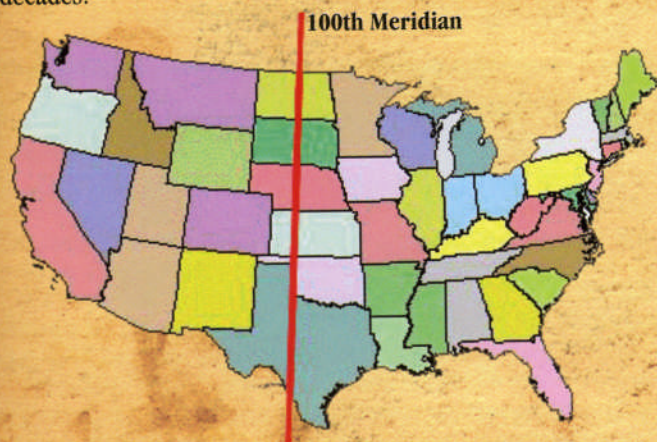
Drought Down Under: A Preview

For South Australian farmers, these are the worst of times. The past seven years of extreme drought, the longest in the country's history, have devastated them. The trifecta of climate change, a burgeoning population, and resource mismanagement has created a "Grapes of Wrath" experience of biblical proportions for its agricultural sector, which does not bode well for the world's 15th largest economy.

In many ways, Australia's water crisis is a preview of coming attractions for the American southwest, especially for California. From the late 19th century to the present, California dedicated itself to carving a lush, bountiful Garden of Eden out of a natural desert, with, at best, indifference to the responsible management of precious water resources.

The effort made the state an agricultural powerhouse which has led the US in food production for the past half century, producing about 73% of the USA's most water-intensive crops: fresh vegetables, fruits, nuts, rice, cattle and dairy products. California's expected population growth to 63 million by 2040 (in 2008 it was 36.75 million) will place a greater "human necessity" demand on the state's diminishing resources.

According to the US Global Change Research Program, areas west of the 100th meridian (the line representing the boundary between the wet east and the irrigation-essential west) are in for a world of hurt in the next few decades.



Climate change will increase heat, pests, floods, weeds, and water stress, presenting growing challenges for crop and livestock production. Forest growth is generally projected to decrease in much of the West as water becomes scarcer. Warmer temperatures allow seemingly never-ending insect infestations, such as bark beetles, in our national forests, creating ample tinder for the wildfires that are projected to increase substantially in both frequency and severity. Smaller and earlier-melting mountain snow packs will make water supplies increasingly scarce, requiring difficult trade-offs among competing uses.

As competition for water increases, food prices will rise, as will energy prices, because power plants require large amounts of water for cooling.

Like California's Central Valley, Australia's Murray-Darling Basin is considered the "bread basket" of the continent, producing almost 45 percent of Australia's agricultural output, including wheat, rice, cotton, vineyards, canola, soy, citrus and its sheep and cattle industry. It also generates about \$800 million per year from tourism and the area's numerous recreational opportunities.

Made up of the River Murray, the Darling River, the Murrumbidgee River, and all creeks and rivers that flow into them, the landscape within the Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) is incredibly diverse. It includes forests, plains, grasslands, mountain ranges, wetlands, and both dry and emperal lakes (lakes that have no outlets, so the water stays in them until it evaporates). The MDB supports a significant portion of Australia's

Bio-diversity including species of flora and fauna found only within the MDB, such as the Coorong Mullet, Superb Parrot and the Murray Cod. These systems rely on the natural drying and flooding regime at appropriate times of the year. This variability provides for major breeding events of birds, fish and other fauna. But human effort to tame the Murray resulted in the unintended consequence of reversing the natural cycles.

Home to more than two million Australians, the MDB provides drinking water to over three million people, more than a third of whom live outside the basin.



Farmers purchase a license to draw water from the Murray-Darling River system every year for their crops and dairy farms. The problem now is that there are too many straws in the milkshake. Like a giant environmental Ponzi scheme, water has been promised to too many interests, chief among them corporate farming operations. For the past three years, the New South Wales government has forbidden struggling farmers from taking so much as a drop, though they are still required to pay for their allocations. They just can't withdraw any water until the drought is over.

As once-vibrant soil reverted to desert, farmers began selling off first their prized livestock, then their land, some of which has been in the family for generations. For some, it's been over two years without a crop. Many are placed by government rural financial counselors on a suicide watch list, and the list keeps growing, because all the farmers can do is watch while everything they worked for turns to dust.

The problems actually started in the late 19th century, when settlers along the 1600-mile River Murray cleared billions of trees in order to make room for herds of livestock and water-intensive crops, none of which were suited to an arid environment. The repeated tilling of the land further depleted the soil. Over the last century, man-made locks and dams along the river diverted more and more of the Murray's flow for crop irrigation. After WWI, the government gave returning soldiers plots of land and equipment and encouraged them to be farmers.

That most of this land was north of the Goyder's Line, (a boundary established in 1865 that marks the boundary of sufficient rainfall for crop farming in South Australia) didn't seem to matter, because they believed they could just divert more of the Murray for irrigation. But when the Murray began to run low, or was subjected to a long drought, the fields began to build up excess salt in the soil, poisoning crops.

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission finally introduced a cap on how much water each state could draw from the river in 1995. Farmers who owned unused water rights sold them to others who would use them. Industrialists were offered tax incentives to create super-farms and introduced vast olive and almond groves to the basin. Yet some states ignored the caps and continued issuing licenses.

f Coming Attractions for the U.S.?

The crisis has created a tug of war, setting cities against rural areas, small farmers against corporate mega-farms, and environmentalists against resource managers in a high-stakes contest for a rapidly diminishing resource precious to us all. Every major urban area on the continent has faced severe water restrictions. The crisis is particularly acute in rural communities, populated by proud, self-reliant individualists accustomed to weathering whatever Mother Nature threw at them. Many of those communities are now ghost towns. Whole crops have been wiped out by heat stress because of the lack of precipitation, while entire agricultural sectors fight to survive.

Australia is facing brutal lessons about the limits of natural resources in the context of accelerating global climate change. Today the over-allocation of irrigation water, coupled with the drought, has brought the Murray to a virtual standstill. Its mouth must be dredged around the clock in order for it to complete its journey to the sea. Without dredging, silt would build up, cutting off fresh water to Lake Alexandrina and protected lagoon ecosystems, all because "human necessity" trumps nature yet again.

Several species of native fish have disappeared because the increase in salinity has made the waters uninhabitable. Carp, rarely seen in the past three decades, and an indicator of the demise of the fresh water environment, are now plentiful. Government plans to install a new weir (a small overflow-type dam commonly used to raise the level of a river or stream) to increase drinking water to the city of Adelaide are expected to completely turn Lake Alexandrina and nearby Lake Albert from freshwater to saltwater lakes.



Winemakers in the region have been informed that the Murray River will no longer be available for their vineyards. Orange groves and orchards are being bulldozed. National rice production has dropped from over a million tons a year to less than 25,000. The drought has also revealed serious problems in the water resources of other large urban areas, including Sydney and Melbourne.

According to a recent study published in the journal *Conservation Biology*, the southern hemisphere is also ground zero in the earth's "sixth great extinction event," with Australia, New Zealand and their neighboring Pacific islands on target to become the extinction hot-spots of the world. There the impact of humans on wildlife is likely to increase, with populations predicted to rise substantially in the next few decades.



Species are being threatened by habitat loss and degradation, invasive species, climate change, over-exploitation, pollution and wildlife disease. The report highlights destruction and degradation of ecosystems as the single greatest threat to the region's wildlife. In Australia, agriculture has altered or destroyed half of all woodland and forests. Around 70% of the remaining forest has been damaged by logging. Severe loss of suitable habitats is behind 80% of threatened species, the report claims. The arrival of invasive animals and plants has devastated native species on many Pacific islands and contributed to the extinction of birds and mammals.



The report also highlights several studies that point to serious threats from diseases such as avian malaria. One of the most devastating animal diseases is an infectious form of facial cancer that is spreading rapidly among Tasmanian devils, the world's largest marsupial predator. Populations of the animals are believed to have fallen by more than 60% because of the disease.

It is clear that we humans must forge new ways to live within the limits of a planet with finite resources. Gluttony has unique repercussions, not the least of which is war, especially when it involves something that everyone needs to survive. One can only hope that leaders of the world's major economies begin to connect the dots, and soon -- between environmentally sustainable economic and agricultural policies and mitigating the dire consequences of unchecked, irreversible climate change -- before it's too late, for not only the people and wildlife of Australia, but for every living thing on the planet.

Unfortunately, too few leaders have shown the courage to steer their nations toward sustainable futures. They fail to see the urgency when the evidence is right in front of them, in the glaciers melting at break-neck speed. In the arctic, soon to be ice free in summer. In the melting permafrost, which have held vast fields of methane at bay for centuries, which pose a greater threat than carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. In the rapid disappearance of countless species of life across the globe.

They don't see species decline as the "canary in the coal mine." But then wildlife doesn't make campaign contributions, so it doesn't matter.

They will never see, until we pry open their eyes through our outrage at their inaction. Make your feelings known to your elected representatives and demand that they take climate change seriously and take action to mitigate it before we have reached the point of no return (although some scientists thought we already have) and get others to do the same. Go out into the streets, bang on pots and raise merry hell, if that's what it takes.

You can lead by example, too, by conserving water, install a rain barrel to collect rainwater for your garden, buy produce from your local farmers market, recycle everything you can, keep cloth bags in your car so you can refuse those nasty plastic bags from stores ... politicians tend to pay attention to cultural trends. Let's show them that "sustainability matters."



David Smith reports in *The Guardian* U.K. that Zimbabwe's rhino population is also being decimated by poachers, with over 120 black and white rhinos killed in the past 15 months. Scientists worry that if the bloodbath continues another two years, the rhino population will be decimated beyond revival.

The majority of the killings are conducted by gangs of poachers who utilize a Chinese tranquilizing agent fired from a dart gun to avoid drawing attention. With no sound to accompany their treachery, the gangs brutally remove the horn with an axe, often disfiguring the rhino's face, and leave the unconscious animal for dead, without giving it an antidote to the agent, so the rhinos overheat and die. The agent renders the rhino meat poisonous, creating a threat to any locals who might discover the carcass and butcher it to feed their families.

To stem the tide, government veterinarians started removing the rhino horns to discourage poachers, but because the horns grow back, the process must be routinely repeated. A rhino horn can fetch several thousand dollars on the black market. It is used in ancient Chinese medicine, and to make ornamental dagger handles in the Middle East. A population of over 1,000 rhinos in Zimbabwe has been reduced to an estimated 400 to 700 today.



But there's a glimmer of hope for the rhino in Uganda. The Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary, a project of Rhino Fund Uganda, has announced the first rhino birth in 28 years. The young male was born in June, but researchers had only recently been able to get close enough to determine his sex, because of the overprotectiveness of the mother. The birth comes as part of the rhino repatriation project that seeks to reintroduce the rhino to Uganda. Many rhinos were slaughtered during Idi Amin's reign of terror in the 1970s, and the last wild rhino in Uganda was killed in 1982.

The first 4 rhinos (Taleo, Moja, Bella, and Kori) were donated to the sanctuary in 2005 by a ranch in Kenya. Taleo, the herd's alpha male, is the baby's sire. In 2006, a donation from Disney's Animal Kingdom brought Hassani and Nandi, a brother and sister born in captivity at that park. Nandi is the baby's mother.

There are three types of rhinos in Africa: the Southern White, the Northern White, and the Black. All of these species are currently endangered. All six (now 7) at the sanctuary are Southern Whites.

After determining the newborn is male, the staff had no trouble picking his name. Because his mother is American and his father Kenyan, they named him Obama.

A Mixed Bag: Rare dolphins discovered, but threatened

In March, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) announced the discovery of a huge population of rare dolphins in South Asia but warns that the population is threatened by climate change and fishing nets.

WCS researchers estimate that nearly 6,000 Irrawaddy dolphins, which are related to orcas or killer whales, were found living in freshwater regions of Bangladesh's Sundarbans mangrove forest and adjacent waters of the Bay of Bengal area where little marine mammal research has been conducted up to this point. Prior to this study, the largest known populations of Irrawaddy dolphins numbered in the low hundreds or less. Each discovery of these dolphins is important because scientists do not know how many remain on the planet. In 2008, they were listed as vulnerable in the International Union for Conservation of Nature's RED LIST based on declines in known populations.

"With all the news about freshwater environments and state of the oceans, WCS' discovery that a thriving population of Irrawaddy dolphins exists in Bangladesh gives us hope for protecting this and other endangered species and their important habitats," said Dr. Steven E. Sanderson, President and CEO of the Wildlife Conservation Society. "WCS is committed to conservation of these iconic marine species from dolphins, sea turtles, sharks to the largest whales."

"This discovery gives us great hope that there is a future for Irrawaddy dolphins," said Brian D. Smith, the study's lead author. "Bangladesh clearly serves as an important sanctuary for Irrawaddy dolphins, and conservation in this region should be a top priority."

Despite finding this extraordinarily large population, the study's authors warn that the dolphins are becoming increasingly threatened by accidental entanglement in fishing nets. During the study, researchers encountered two dolphins that had become entangled and subsequently drowned in fishing nets, a common occurrence according to local fishermen.

In a second paper, published in the March/April issue of *Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystem*, Smith and his coauthors report the additional long-term threat to the dolphin population of declining freshwater supplies, caused by upstream water diversion in India, coupled with sea-level rise due to climate change. These circumstances also threaten Ganges River dolphins, an endangered species with a range that overlaps with that of the Irrawaddy dolphins in the Sundarbans mangrove forest. The recent likely extinction of the Yangtze River dolphin, or baiji, is a potent reminder of how vulnerable freshwater dolphins are to extinction via the impacts of humans.

The Irrawaddy dolphin grows to some 2 to 2.5 meters in length (6.5 to 8 feet) and frequents large rivers, estuaries, and freshwater lagoons in South and Southeast Asia. In Myanmar's Ayeyarwady River, these dolphins are known for "cooperative fishing" with humans, where the animals voluntarily herd schools of fish toward fishing boats and awaiting nets. With the aid of dolphins, fishermen can increase the size of their catches up to threefold. The dolphins appear to benefit from this relationship by easily preying on the cornered fish and those that fall out of the net as the nets are hauled in.

In 2006, WCS helped establish a protected area along the Ayeyarwady River to conserve this critically endangered mammal population. The Wildlife Conservation Society saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, global conservation, education and the management of the world's largest system of urban wildlife parks, led by its flagship Bronx Zoo. Visit: www.wcs.org.



Wildlife Groups Seek Halt to Polar Bear Trade

The International Fund for Animal Welfare, Humane Society International, and Defenders of Wildlife have urged the United States to lead the way to end international commercial trade in polar bears, including hides, trophies, rugs and other polar bear parts. The United States has an opportunity to submit a proposal to stop the trade at next year's meeting of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The meeting is set for March 13-25, 2010 in Doha, Qatar.

Polar bears in the wild live entirely within five countries: Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Norway, Russian Federation, and the United States. There are presently between 20,000 and 25,000 polar bears and the number is decreasing.

Polar bears are completely dependent on sea ice, which they use for hunting prey, reproduction and movement. Ongoing atmospheric pollution is causing oceanic and atmospheric warming, which is leading to reductions in sea ice. Some scientists have concluded that polar bears will not survive past the end of this century due to the complete loss of summer sea ice.

In 2008, the United States listed the polar bear as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. This ended the importation to the United States of trophies of polar bears killed by American sport hunters. Although hunters from other countries can still import trophies, the United States was by far the largest importer and American trophy hunters had driven this large-scale commercial killing.

In addition to hunting trophies, polar bear parts-skin, fur, claws, skulls and even stuffed bears-enter international commercial trade. More than 400 polar bear skins are traded annually; most come from Canada and most go to Japan.

The proposal would transfer the polar bear from CITES Appendix II, which allows regulated international commercial trade, to Appendix I, which prohibits all international commercial trade in the listed species. The purpose of CITES is to prevent over-exploitation of species through international trade.

The Appendix I designation would mean that countries agree to prohibit international trade for primarily commercial purposes and thus ensure that international trade will not contribute to the ongoing decrease in polar bear numbers. An Appendix I listing will not affect subsistence hunting of polar bears by indigenous peoples.

The United States must submit the proposal to the CITES Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland, by no later than October 14, 2009. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service accepted public comments through Sept. 11.



"We cannot sit on the sidelines and accept the extinction of these iconic and magnificent creatures. The government should be doing everything it can to eliminate all threats to polar bears. By uplisting the species at the next CITES conference, the U.S. could help prevent the deaths of hundreds of polar bears killed needlessly for the commercial market," said Jeff Flocken, DC Office Director, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).

"The United States is leading the way in saving this magnificent species from extinction by granting the polar bear protection under the Endangered Species Act. The federal government can continue its leadership for these rare creatures by urging global protection under CITES," said Teresa M. Telecky, Ph.D., Director of Wildlife for Humane Society International.

"Polar bears are facing so many threats right now - from global warming to poaching, trophy hunting and commercial trade - that scientists say they could vanish from the United States by the middle of the century. We can't solve all of these threats right away, but we can eliminate the threat of commercial trade. The U.S. can and should take the lead, by submitting a proposal to CITES to uplist the polar bear," said Rodger Schlickeisen, President, Defenders of Wildlife.

For more info, visit:

IFAW - www.ifaw.org

Humane Society International - www.hsi.org

Defenders of Wildlife - www.defenders.org

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - www.fws.org

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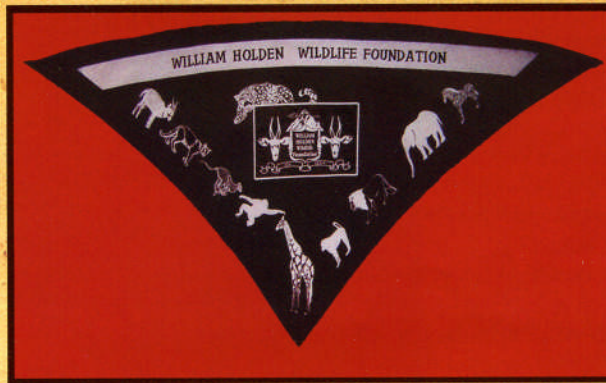
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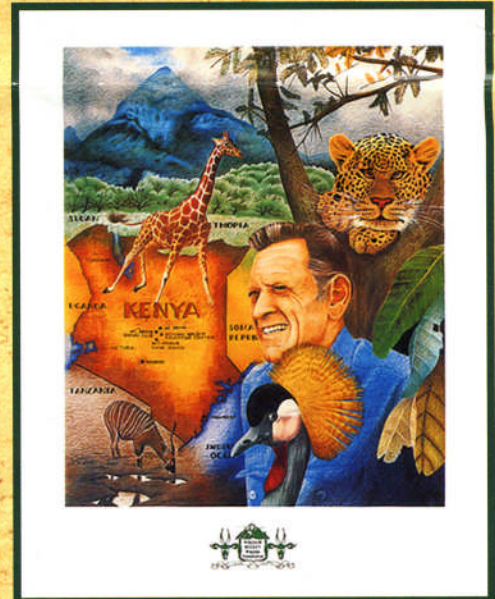
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WHWF Poster	SHIPPING: \$3 US \$5 CAN / \$7 INTL	\$15	\$3	
WHWF Logo T-Shirts (please indicate size/color selection)	SHIPPING: \$2 US \$4 CAN / \$6 INTL	\$20	\$2	
Recycled Bottle Cap T-shirt (Off-White Only)				
Size: <input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> XL				
100% COTTON	Size: <input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> XL Color: <input type="checkbox"/> DARK GREEN <input type="checkbox"/> BLACK	\$20	\$2	
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