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## FRONTLINE DISPATCHES

AUGUST 2022

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CONSERVATION NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

### NORTH AMERICA



**Paying for wildlife crimes by fighting wildlife crimes.** Oregon is sentencing wildlife traffickers to hefty fines plus a novel form of restitution: helping to catch others trying to commit similar crimes. NatGeo [reports](#) that offenders scour Facebook, WeChat and other media for ads for prohibited wildlife—like the eastern box turtles, above, that were being smuggled to China—

and wildlife products and report them to researchers at the University of Maryland. ([More](#) on wildlife trafficking from *Conservation Frontlines*.)

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**[WATCH:](#)** Need a quick wildlife break on your phone or desktop? Check out the collection of live webcam feeds featuring bears in Alaska, eagles in Iowa, orcas in British Columbia and many other animals at [Explore.org](#). The snoozing [walruses](#), above, were captured by an Alaska Fish & Game camera on Round Island, part of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge.

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**[VIDEO:](#)** Speaking of Alaska . . . the state's wildlife—and its wildlife biologists—are the stars of this "[Working for Wildlife](#)" series of short films. From radio-collaring muskoxen (left) to monitoring ptarmigan and other grouse populations with dogs to aerial surveying of moose, the videos provide up-close looks at conservation programs across the state.





**America's greatest source of conservation funding faces opposition.** Since 1937, the [Pittman-Robertson Act](#) has generated hundreds of millions of dollars annually (more than \$1 billion in both 2020 and 2021 alone) for wildlife conservation across the US through a tax on firearm and ammunition sales. Now a Georgia congressman and 53 co-sponsors claim the fee threatens Americans' Constitutional 2nd Amendment right to gun ownership and therefore should be eliminated, [reports](#) MeatEater.



**Utah's Great Salt Lake is in trouble—and so are migratory birds.** As the lake drops to historically low levels due to drought, brine shrimp are dying off, threatening the 10 million birds who stop there to feed during their annual migrations, [according](#) to the *NY Times*. The *Deseret News* [reports](#) that local duck hunters are playing a conservation role through projects to

try to help restore the lake and its surrounding ecosystems.



**Giving native species a fighting chance** by eliminating invaders is working on Mexico's Pacific islands. Twenty-four years ago, Mexican biologists formed the Ecology and Island Conservation Group to rid the islands of invasive species such as rats, cats and goats, [reports Mexico News Daily](#). Their efforts allow native species such as the Laysan albatross, above, to flourish again. (Invasive species are not just animals—see this [article](#) in *Conservation Frontlines*.)



**Scat-sniffing dogs save sheep across the West.** Per the Wild Sheep Foundation, a new [program](#) with Montana-based Working Dogs for Conservation is training dogs to detect diseases in sheep through the smell of their scat. This “new breed of sheepdog” is helping both domestic and wild sheep stay healthy.





**Wildlife corridors are now a priority in Colorado** as the state's Bureau of Land Management updates its programs to save migration routes and habitat for deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep and other species. The new management plans reflect recent research into how these animals—such as the deer leaping a fence, above—live and move, [reports](#) the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

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**The largest Burmese python ever found in Florida**, weighing 215 pounds and nearly 18 feet long, was captured recently by the Conservancy of South Florida. Trappers located the giant snake, a female, by following a male “scout snake” with a radio transmitter who was searching for a mate. Invasive pythons are outcompeting—or simply eating—native Florida species. The full [story](#) comes from *Outdoor Life* .

## AFRICA



**VIDEO:** Spotted hyenas have been translocated to Mozambique's Gorongosa National Park, re-establishing a vital scavenger/predator that disappeared from the ecosystem in the 1980s. [Gorongosa](#), one of Southern Africa's great conservation successes, now has its full natural complement of carnivores, all thriving: lions, leopards, painted wolves and hyenas. Furthermore, from collar fit and immobilization (above) to crowd control, the video shows what biologists say is top-notch animal handling.



### Intense droughts are decimating East Africa.

Especially vulnerable are vast savannahs, already classified as semi-arid, in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. These are the homes of millions of people and their livestock as well as giraffes, zebras, elephants and other wildlife such as the critically endangered hirola antelope, left. In this [article](#) in *The Conversation*, a Kenyan scientist offers recommendations for proactive solutions

rather than reactive emergency measures.



## EUROPE



**VIDEO:** Bison roam England for the first time in thousands of years. On July 18, three females, above, from wildlife parks in Scotland and Ireland, were released into the countryside in Kent, where they will eco-engineer 200 hectares (500 acres) of commercial pine forest into a natural woodland. Bisons' taste for bark will kill some trees and their trails and wallows will open up areas for new plants, insects, lizards and birds. This month they will be joined by a bull from Germany. Bison, Europe's largest land animal, existed on the continent only in zoos a century ago; today bison are being re-established in Poland, Bulgaria, Belarus, Lithuania, Romania, Switzerland and Germany.

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**Albania created a national park to protect the Vyosa River and its tributaries from hydropower development. The park is the result of five years of study of this cold, fast highlands river and its rich wildlife by an international team. Conservationists now hope to replicate this success on the Neretva River, threatened by some 70 proposed dams. Dozens of experts**

on fish, amphibians and invertebrates are studying the river in Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of Neretva Science Week. Nearly all of Europe's rivers have been dammed or channeled. The [story](#) appeared in *Science*.

## WORLD



**VIDEO:** Rare footage of a mother tiger and four cubs, grabbed by a trail camera last month, shows more than 3% of Malaysia's remaining tigers. According to the World Wildlife Fund, patrolling more than 450 square miles (1,165 sq km) of that nation's habitat has reduced tiger poaching by almost 98%. This month a new National Tiger Task Force, backed up by stricter conservation laws and stiffer penalties for poaching, will take effect. WWF says this shows that under the right conditions the endangered cats can repopulate a once thriving tiger landscape.





**More good tiger news:** As [reported](#) on NPR, the IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, says there are 40% more of the big cats in the world than previously calculated—somewhere between 3,726 and 5,578 individuals. This is partly due to better conservation, but also because “we’re [now] better at counting them, [and] many governments in particular have really sort of moved heaven and earth to do massive scale surveys.” Fittingly perhaps, 2022 is the Year of the Tiger in the Chinese zodiac.

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**Data-logging sloths wearing backpacks** are beaming information about their slow—very slow—movements to zoologists in Costa Rica. “Baguette,” the brown-throated three-fingered sloth shown being fitted with a transmitter by the director of the Sloth Conservation Foundation, was rescued from two pit bulls. Sloths are “a powerful symbol of the slowness that our society needs more of. They don’t let anything stress them out unless it’s really important—they just get on with life.” The captivating [story](#) is in *Nature*.



**VIDEO:** From “pirates” to protectors, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society has cleaned up its act, [reports Science](#), and staffed its fleet of ocean-going vessels with legitimate researchers. The Sea Shepherds became notorious in the 1980s as militant “eco-terrorists,” sea-going vigilantes who attacked and sank whaling vessels and illegal fishing boats. Today, the focus is on collaborating with governments to gather data and to counter overfishing, and the Sea Shepherds themselves are now being attacked (above) by poachers.

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**A new report tries to sum up human usage of nature.** Billions of people worldwide rely on some 33,000 species of plants and fungi, 7,500 species of fish and aquatic invertebrates, and 9,000 species of amphibians, insects, reptiles, birds and mammals for food, energy, medicines and income, according to a major intergovernmental [report](#) by dozens of scientists. But others say the report underestimates the harm to nature. Read the [summary](#) on Nature.com.





**VIDEO:** Huge pods of southern fin whales have been filmed feeding near Antarctica. Agence France-Presse and *The Guardian* [reported](#) last month that populations of the world's second-largest animal are slowly recovering after whaling almost wiped the species out. Scientists say the congregations of up to 150 whales at their historic feeding grounds are a good sign that conservation measures are working.



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