Mission
WCS saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature.

Vision
WCS envisions a world where wildlife thrives in healthy lands and seas, valued by societies that embrace and benefit from the diversity and integrity of life on earth.
We Stand for Wildlife.

WCS addresses conservation from all angles. We harness the power of our field programs and zoological parks in New York City to save wildlife in nearly 60 nations and across the world’s oceans. Our staff—including biologists, curators, zookeepers, veterinarians, educators, and dozens of other professionals—have dedicated their lives to understanding and improving the health of the planet since our founding as the New York Zoological Society (NYZS) in 1895.

Our programs are selected to maximize our resources for greatest impact, focusing on 14 priority regions where we work that are pivotal to safeguarding our world’s natural heritage. We work to ensure the protection of nature’s strongholds—those wild places on land and in the sea that are most important for wildlife and are sufficiently intact to maintain their ecosystems and biodiversity long term.

That focus is essential if we are to help break through the bottleneck constricting nature that has resulted from population growth and economic development in the modern era. We know that even as Earth’s human population expands, its rate of growth is declining in most continents and should stabilize over the next century—in part due to expanding education and empowerment of women. Urbanization has helped to reduce extreme poverty and unsustainable resource use.

These shifts in demographic and economic trends that previously resulted in environmental destruction now create the conditions for a renaissance of nature if we act wisely.

Using science and our wildlife expertise in the field and in our zoos and aquarium, WCS has supported governments and communities in the creation or expansion of 268 national parks and protected areas—from the remote mountains of Afghanistan to the wind-swept wilderness of Chile’s Tierra del Fuego.

In New York City, we have welcomed more than 400 million guests to our four zoos—the Bronx Zoo, Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, Queens Zoo—and our recently expanded New York Aquarium. By connecting our visitors with wildlife, our parks inspire empathy and a sense of urgency and action. Our guests in turn support conservation field programs around the world through their advocacy and financial support.

Our legacy of science-driven conservation is strengthened by collaborations with indigenous and local communities, governments, other NGOs, the private sector, and multilateral entities like the United Nations. We support countries in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, and CITES.

Our planet’s challenges are greater than ever, but with the focus, dedication, and passion of a committed staff—with a unique mixture of field, zoo and aquarium expertise—WCS will continue to set the bar for wildlife conservation.
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WCS Priority Regions/Landscapes/Seascapes

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Our Strategy

WCS's conservation strategy endeavors to protect some of the most important wildlife and wild places on the planet. To achieve that goal, we work in two parallel tracks of equal importance. In its field work, WCS seeks to conserve 14 intact regions on land and in the sea, while reversing the decline of six priority species groups: elephants, apes, big cats, sharks & rays, whales & dolphins, and tortoises & freshwater turtles.

In New York City, we manage the largest network of urban wildlife parks. As we partner with other zoos and aquariums to inspire people to save wildlife, we are galvanizing a growing conservation movement.

WCS's conservation strategy has three core pillars: to Discover, to Protect, and to Inspire.

DISCOVER:
Through science, WCS produces and disseminates the information and knowledge necessary to inform and improve conservation and management action in the wild places we seek to conserve and to measure the impact of our work.

PROTECT:
Through conservation action and the creation of protected areas, WCS secures biological diversity across the globe with a broad range of interventions that include impeding the trafficking of wildlife, mitigating the impacts of climate change, and supporting local livelihoods.

INSPIRE:
Through engaging zoo and aquarium experiences, stimulating education programs, and powerful digital and media tools, WCS activates a diverse and empowered global audience invested in protecting wild nature.

—CRISTIÁN SAMPER, WCS President & CEO
"Over its proud 125-year history, WCS has significantly helped to advance wildlife conservation around the globe in partnership with governments and local communities. New York would not be New York without the Bronx Zoo, and the cause of wildlife conservation would not be what it is without your efforts."
—U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL BAN KI-MOON

"The Wildlife Conservation Society is one of the most impressive, foremost organizations working to save the world’s wildlife."
—SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH
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“The urgency to preserve the world’s wildlife and the intricate balance of species and the systems that all lives depend on demands that we go beyond conservation as usual. To succeed, we must stay focused on our mission while realizing our work cannot be implemented without partners.”

—CRISTIÁN SAMPER, WCS President & CEO
EMBRACING A CONSERVATION MISSION

WCS manages five wildlife parks in New York City: the world famous Bronx Zoo, the New York Aquarium, the Central Park Zoo, the Prospect Park Zoo, and the Queens Zoo. Our diverse audience represents all ages, ethnicities, and economic strata.

That reach enables us to provide up-close encounters with wildlife to many people who might otherwise never have an opportunity to experience the magnificence of a tiger or the grace of a shark eye-to-eye.

Connecting people to animals and nature is core to our work, reinforced since 2017 through Animal Planet’s television docs-series “THE ZOO,” which takes viewers behind the scenes at the Bronx Zoo.

Our parks meet the highest standards of care as we work to maintain genetically viable and sustainable populations of rare species as a hedge against extinction while training the next generation of zoological professionals.

Since 2012, more than 10,000 Kihansi spray toads have been released into their former Tanzania habitat after going extinct in nature.

“As AZA zoos and aquariums, we do not exist to be well run menageries; we have a higher purpose, and that higher purpose is the conservation of species in the wild…. We must manage the species we keep sustainably for the future; and we must connect our animals and exhibits to species in the wild and inspire and empower our visitors to support our efforts to save them.”

—JIM BREHENY
WCS Executive VP for Zoos & Aquarium and Director of the Bronx Zoo

WCS launched the 96 Elephants campaign in 2013 to help stop the killing, trafficking, and demand for elephant ivory taken from elephants poached in Africa at a rate of 96 per day. A large portion of the campaign’s more than 170 partners are members of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

With strategic and tactical support that includes legislative counsel, an updatable digital toolkit, media opportunities, public-relations templates, campaign collateral, and exhibitions, we have been able to help our partners reach their audiences with unified campaign messaging.

This effort has been critical in passage of intrastate bans on commercial ivory trade in the nation’s biggest markets, including New York, New Jersey, California, and Hawaii. These efforts combine with a successful federal US ivory ban that helped lead the way to similar bans in China, Hong Kong, and the UK.

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CONSERVING WILDLIFE AND WILD PLACES

Because protected areas present the most effective means of securing natural ecosystems, more than 80 percent of WCS’s site-based fieldwork is targeted there. When well-managed and funded these places can reduce the loss of natural habitat, sustain wildlife populations, and improve livelihoods around them.

WCS provides the scientific basis to help countries identify and establish protected areas, to understand where such areas need to be expanded and connected, and to help countries effectively manage them for the long-term through technical advice, monitoring, and financial mechanisms.

While protected areas are necessary for conserving nature, by themselves they are often not extensive enough to sustain the complete biodiversity and the range of ecosystem services. For that reason we must operate at a landscape and a seascape scale in the areas surrounding the protected areas where we work.

“WCS is first and foremost dedicated to providing scientific knowledge, technical assistance, and management expertise required to conserve the remaining wild places on earth and the species that live there.”

—JOHN ROBINSON
WCS Executive VP for Conservation and Science

REDUCING BIODIVERSITY LOSS

WCS also tackles drivers of biodiversity loss that include climate change, the illegal wildlife trade, and wildlife disease.

Climate Change
We apply our science to discover how best to limit the impacts of climate change on ecosystems, wildlife, and people—increasing resilience and providing insurance against a rapidly changing world.

Illegal Wildlife Trade
We use our local presence and global influence to stop wildlife poaching, block trafficking across transit routes, and reduce demand for wildlife and wildlife products.

Wildlife Disease
We use our global health expertise to investigate and combat diseases that move between people, domestic animals, and wildlife and threaten the health of all.

MEASURING IMPACT (SCIENCE)

WCS is the world’s premiere science-based conservation organization and we hold ourselves accountable for reporting the impacts of conservation efforts both within protected areas and the larger landscapes and seascapes where we work. WCS’s traditional boots-on-the-ground presence allows us to measure our success in achieving desired conservation impacts.

SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

WCS works with local and government partners across the planet to ensure that wildlife conservation helps to sustain incomes and livelihoods of local people, secure ancestral lands, and reduce human-wildlife conflict. Respectful engagement with Indigenous Peoples is core to our work, and we share an interest in conserving the intact places they call home.

SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

WCS creates business plans to identify the costs of implementing protected area management efficiently. In addition, WCS works closely with governments to develop national-level conservation financing plans that leverage public and private investment opportunities aimed at achieving conservation outcomes.
More than a century ago, a bold idea was developed in the United States by a group of visionary leaders: Set aside some of the most beautiful natural areas and protect them from development to ensure that they will be around for future generations. Writer Wallace Stegner called it “America’s best idea.”

The first national parks, created largely to preserve their scenic beauty, resulted in the protection of such iconic places as Yosemite and Yellowstone. Since that time, the concept of safeguarding critical wild places has taken hold around the world.

WCS currently helps to manage more than 370 protected areas. Since our founding in 1895, WCS has used its expertise in the field and in our zoos and aquarium to help create or expand close to 270 protected areas, six of which are highlighted on these pages.

Today 15 percent of land and 6 percent of the ocean fall under nationally designated protection—twice the amount as in 1992. WCS researchers determined that more than one-third of protected areas on land are under intense human pressure and unlikely to be serving their conservation function.

To combat this growing threat, we must improve management and monitoring in protected areas. This requires greater funding, capacity, and technology. It’s a challenge felt especially in developing countries confronting urgent social and economic needs while holding some of the world’s last great strongholds of nature.

EXUMA CAYS
Work by WCS helps in establishment of the Exuma Cays National Park, the world’s first land-and-sea park, in the Bahamas.

GRAND TETONS NATIONAL PARK
WCS founds the Jackson Hole Wildlife Park. Will be gifted to the National Park Service to become part of Grand Teton National Park in 1962.

COCKSOMB BASIN
The world’s first jaguar reserve is created following two years of research and conservation by WCS.

USA 1946
Belize 1984
Democratic Republic of Congo 1992
Afghanistan 2009
Bahamas 1959
Gabon 2014

THE OKAPI WILDLIFE RESERVE
Work by WCS helps establish 5,300-square-mile Okapi Wildlife Reserve, covering a significant part of the okapi’s range in the Ituri Forest of present-day Democratic Republic of Congo.

BAND-E-AMIR NATIONAL PARK
WCS works with conservation and government partners to help create Afghanistan’s first national park, which soon brings on board the nation’s first women wildlife rangers.

GABON
With WCS’s assistance, Gabon launches network of marine parks covering about 23 percent of its territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone, within which no commercial fishing will be allowed.

Democratic Republic of Congo 1992
Afghanistan 2009
WCS has worked for over a century to protect wildlife and wild places. We developed some of the world’s first conservation programs in collaboration with local, scientific, and government partners.

WCS now works in nearly 60 countries and across the world’s ocean, concentrating on the planet’s most important, ecologically intact places with the greatest biodiversity and resilience to climate change. Our goal is to conserve these last strongholds for a set of iconic flagship species, deeply valued for themselves and critical to the functioning of ecological systems.

Our conservation solutions draw on the unrivalled expertise of our field biologists and our zoo- and aquarium-based veterinarians, curators, and animal care staff. Our work is grounded in best-in-class science, and in strong partnerships with governments, local communities, and indigenous groups to build conservation capacity and support local livelihoods. We stay as long as it takes to get the job done because conservation is not a short-term endeavor.

To design effective programs with clearly defined goals and measurable outcomes, WCS conservationists build upon the efforts of their predecessors with new knowledge gained working in the field. They have deep connections to the places where they work, whether by birth or as forged over decades of contact with local colleagues.

To celebrate the impact we have achieved, we highlight five species or species groups whose conservation WCS has long championed: the gentle giant, the gorilla; the ocean’s crooner, the humpback whale; Latin America’s sleek carnivore, the jaguar; Africa’s mighty elephant; and Myanmar’s resurgent Burmese star tortoise.
Gorillas are so closely related to humans that it is no wonder they have fascinated us in so many ways for so long. From George Schaller’s seminal studies of mountain gorillas in the Albertine Rift in 1959, to Amy Vedder and Bill Weber’s research that drove the creation of a groundbreaking gorilla tourism initiative, to Emma Stokes’s 2006 report of more than 125,000 western lowland gorillas in the northern Republic of Congo, WCS has been a leader in gorilla conservation for more than half a century. During that time, WCS has worked to conserve both gorilla species (eastern and western) and all four Critically Endangered gorilla subspecies, focusing efforts on the most threatened populations. Since opening in 1999, the Bronx Zoo’s 6.5-acre Congo Gorilla Forest has informed millions of guests about the threats facing gorillas in the wild and raised more than $15 million for conservation programs in Africa.
The Road to Recovery

Over the past five decades, ecotourism efforts focused on mountain gorilla populations in Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have helped this great ape’s numbers rebound. More recently, WCS has helped reduce threats to mountain gorillas in Uganda’s Bwindi impenetrable National Park, one of only two strongholds for the entire subspecies. Despite the heavy toll on Grauer’s gorillas due to hunting, recent work by WCS shows that in the highland sector of DRC’s Kahuzi-Biega National Park, gorilla numbers have increased by about 20 percent due to effective monitoring and protection, strategically targeted conservation efforts, and the expansion of a well-trained and equipped surveillance team.

The 2006 announcement of some 125,000 western lowland gorillas in the northern Republic of Congo by Emma Stokes and her team of WCS conservationists, including the discovery of important populations by the Government, led to the creation of the Nkouk-Pikounda National Park by the Government of Congo. In 2008, WCS pioneered the use in Cameroon of Gorilla Guardians, a community-based network to monitor Cross River gorilla populations and protect them from poachers. A similar initiative in Nigeria, the Mbe Mountains Community Wildlife Sanctuary, provides eco-guard monitoring while promoting conservation awareness.

Cross River gorillas (Gorilla gorilla diehli) occupy the rugged and remote green highlands that straddle the border of Nigeria and Cameroon and represent the last stronghold for the first of two western Africa gorilla subspecies. Cross river gorillas are the rarest great ape on the continent, with as few as 250 individuals remaining. Once believed extinct, these apes were rediscovered by John Oates and others in the 1980s.

Western lowland gorillas (Gorilla gorilla gorilla) are familiar to anyone who has visited the Bronx Zoo’s Congo Gorilla Forest. The most widespread and numerous of all gorilla subspecies, these great apes inhabit the forests of Gabon, the Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Republic, small areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola. WCS has been conducting pioneering research on western lowland gorillas for almost three decades and working with national governments to ensure their protection.

Grauer’s gorillas (Gorilla beringei graueri), the other eastern gorilla subspecies, live only in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Inhabiting lower elevations than their mountain cousins, this great ape was first surveyed by George Schaller in 1959 before being recognized as its own subspecies. Later surveys led by Jefferson Hall identified as many as 17,000 Grauer’s gorillas in 1995 before the more recent losses sustained due to hunting outside of Kahuzi-Biega N.P.
Humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) inhabit all of the world’s oceans and are distributed around the globe in a number of distinct populations. Reaching up to 50 feet in length, humpbacks are characterized by their unusually long pectoral fins and epic migrations from their polar feeding grounds to the calving grounds in tropical and subtropical waters. These baleen whales are also favorites of the world’s whale-watching community and known for their breaching and other acrobatic behaviors. In previous centuries, humpback whales were sought after not as ecotourism attractions but as sources of blubber and other body parts by commercial whaling fleets. Humpback whales were extensively hunted before they began to receive much-needed protections starting in the 1960s, when their ethereal vocalizations, or “songs,” attracted wide interest from the public.
WCS’s work with humpback whales can be described as a journey from discovery to recovery for these ocean giants. A 1931 analysis of commercial whaling catch logs by Charles Townsend—first director of the New York Aquarium for the New York Zoological Society, or NYZS (now WCS)—provided important insights into the distribution of humpback and other whale species in the world’s oceans. These studies became the foundation for later whale conservation.

In 1966, NYZS conservationists Roger and Katy Payne began a five-year study of humpback whales. The Paynes were the first to discover the compositional structure of humpback whale “songs” and study the songs’ role in humpback whale behavior and mating systems. Their research led to a commercial record, “Songs of the Humpback Whale,” which helped popularize the movement to “Save the Whales” that culminated in the commercial whaling ban of 1982.

Beginning in the 1990s, WCS conservation biologist Howard Rosenbaum initiated new research on hitherto unstudied humpback whales of the Southern Hemisphere, along with extensive genetic analysis of whale populations in partnership with the American Museum of Natural History, Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux of Gabon, and other partners. To evaluate present-day stocks, Rosenbaum used Townsend’s logs and maps as tools to identify promising study sites and key wintering grounds.

Using data collected during field surveys—including photographic identification of individual whales, acoustic recordings, genetic analysis of biopsy samples, and satellite telemetry—Rosenbaum and WCS teams uncovered previously unknown connections and differences between populations traveling throughout the waters of the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. After 20 years of this research, their results showed that humpback populations occurring in the waters of coastal Gabon and Madagascar (and the breeding populations to which they belong) might have recovered to as much as 70 percent and 90 percent of their pre-whaling numbers, respectively.

Today, all but four of the world’s humpback whale populations have been removed from the U.S. Endangered Species List. Recent work in the Arabian Sea shows that this small, non-migratory population is genetically isolated, prompting WCS and its partners to urge international agencies to formulate additional management provisions to safeguard them. Both globally and in the New York Seascape, WCS marine scientists are working to protect humpback whales from threats that include ocean noise, ship strikes, and entanglement in fishing gear.

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The top carnivore of the tropical Americas, the jaguar (*Panthera onca*) occupies almost two-thirds of its pre-1900 range between the semi-arid scrub forests of Mexico and the flooded forests of the Amazon. Two threats have taken a heavy toll on the Americas' largest cat species: habitat depletion due to the conversion of forest for development and agriculture, and retaliatory killing in response to the loss of livestock. And jaguars face a growing threat today from illegal hunting for their body parts for trade. The jaguar is now nearly absent from the United States in the northern part of its range and restricted to the extreme northern limits of Argentina in its southern range, while it has been eliminated across much of its historic range in Central America.
The Road to Recovery

For more than three decades, WCS has worked to conserve jaguars in their critical strongholds. Because large top carnivores need a lot of space, successful conservation requires keeping substantial areas of forest habitat intact, including beyond the boundaries of protected areas.

To this end, we have worked to support Indigenous Peoples who manage lands that neighbor protected areas. For example, in Bolivia’s Greater Madidi landscape, WCS has supported the Tacana and other local people in securing land rights, reducing deforestation in their territory, and maintaining suitable habitat for jaguars.

We complement this effort with assistance to law enforcement to reduce the incidence of illegal hunting, and to ranchers to reduce human-jaguar conflict. All told, we are working with our partners to protect 5,000 jaguars and 400,000 square kilometers of jaguar habitat—from northern Paraguay to northern Central America.

Jaguar populations remained stable or grew steadily at all sites where WCS was active between 2002 and 2016. The population growth rate averaged 7.8 percent a year across all such sites, with a 3-fold increase in Bolivia’s Madidi National Park alone. These results bode well for the future of jaguars.
SPOTLIGHT SPECIES

African Elephant

The African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) population, including both savannah and forest elephants, declined from about 1.3 million to 415,000 between 1979 and 2016 despite a ban on international commercial trade in ivory adopted in 1989 by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). As criminal trafficking networks expanded to meet rising demand for ivory in Asia, WCS launched its 96 Elephants campaign, which helped achieve U.S. bans on commercial ivory trade at the federal and state levels, while our International Policy team led in advocating for similar domestic bans through CITES and across the globe. On the ground in 15 African elephant range states, WCS is continuing to help local communities co-exist with elephant populations, train ecoguards, implement new technologies to aid local law enforcement, and assist governments in disrupting criminal trafficking networks.
The Road to Recovery

Led by WCS conservationist Charles Foley, WCS has been monitoring elephants in Tanzania’s Tarangire National Park since 1993. Between 2005 and 2017, the northern sub-population grew by an average of 4.8 percent each year, and in the entire length of our study of these animals, not a single female or juvenile elephant has been lost to poaching. This is one of the rare sites in Africa where elephants are living full lives and dying of old age.

Cooperative relationships with local communities have been critical to WCS conservation success with savannah elephants. Maasai living adjacent to Tarangire, for example, receive payments from tourism companies to keep their land available for grazing by elephants during the wet season, when the elephants move out of their protected areas for food.

Forest elephants need large areas well protected by trained staff. Over its long presence in Central Africa, WCS has helped governments to establish, maintain, and safeguard fully functional protected areas, including the Congo Republic’s Nouabalé-Ndoki and Conkouati-Douli National Parks, that are surrounded by a matrix of other land uses, including logging and mining concessions and subsistence agriculture.

Through conservation informed by this knowledge, WCS—working with government and other partners—has been able to protect forest elephants and reduce or reverse their decline. Conkouati and Nouabalé-Ndoki are two of the only places across the entire forest elephant range where populations have stabilized and, in the former case, are increasing.

Conservation efforts in Tanzania’s Tarangire National Park have contributed to the growth of the savannah elephant population by an annual average of 4.8 percent between 2005 and 2017.
Asian freshwater turtles and tortoises face major threats from the illegal wildlife trade and habitat loss, but recent WCS success stories offer hope for the future of these imperiled animals. Back from the brink of extinction is the Burmese star tortoise (Geochelone platynota), found only in Myanmar's central dry zone. Demand from the global pet market in the US, Europe, and Asia beginning in the mid-1990s virtually wiped out the species in a matter of years until it was considered ecologically extinct. In response, WCS began an active captive breeding program in conjunction with partners from the Turtle Survival Alliance and the Myanmar Forest Department.
The Road to Recovery

Beginning with approximately 175 individuals (most confiscated from the wildlife trade), WCS and its partners established three captive populations, or “assurance colonies,” to hedge against species extinction. After the colonies were established, we had to determine the tortoises’ dietary, reproductive, and hatchling needs.

With a team that included herpetologists and veterinarians from the Bronx Zoo, combined with field-based conservation staff in Myanmar, WCS had unique qualifications to recover this species—whether through design of breeding centers, provision of veterinary expertise, or community outreach to ensure the safety of tortoises released to protected areas. These efforts with our partners have helped the Burmese star tortoise to recover from fewer than 200 in 2004 to an astounding 17,000 wild and captive animals today.

Approximately 2,150 animals have now been released into the wild in two wildlife sanctuaries. Through our work with local communities to significantly reduce poaching pressure, released tortoises are not only surviving but now successfully reproducing in the wild. More than a century after saving the American bison from extinction, WCS continues to combine the power of its zoo and field knowledge to save species around the world.
EARLY DAYS
WCS has a long history of shaping conservation policy in the United States and around the world. In our early decades, we helped secure passage of such groundbreaking international legislation as the 1911 Fur Seal Treaty and the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Throughout our history, fieldwork sponsored by WCS has led to the creation of protected areas around the world.

UNITED STATES POLICY

WCS has helped lead the fight to end elephant poaching and the trafficking of—and demand for—elephant ivory. Through its 96 Elephants campaign, WCS led efforts to achieve strong U.S. federal and state ivory and wildlife trade bans and secured passage of the federal End Wildlife Trafficking Act.

Working in a broad coalition, WCS helmed an initiative to make the American bison—a species WCS helped save from extinction—the U.S. national mammal. And through its Give a Sip campaign, WCS is leading the way to reduce single-use plastics in New York.

WCS successfully spearheaded work to protect and grow U.S. federal funding for global conservation to more than $500 million annually—doubling USAID’s Biodiversity program between 2004 and 2019 and establishing and doubling the Combatting Wildlife Trafficking program in just a few short years.

INTERNATIONAL POLICY
WCS leverages its scientific and field expertise through policy interventions with intergovernmental organizations, treaties, and other fora—focusing on partnerships, delivering conservation outcomes, networking with governments, and opening doors to funding. Our policy engagement promotes our field-based wildlife and wild-places priorities.

We work with governments in the nearly 60 countries where we maintain field offices and through our Europe offices with the European Union. We likewise engage with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), UNESCO-World Heritage Convention, and the UN General Assembly.

WCS endeavors to bring a focus on ecosystem intactness to the CBD. We have also significantly scaled up our wildlife trafficking work in collaboration with governments across the globe. The transnational nature of this trade means that field-level actions can only be effective if complemented along the trade chain and at multiple policy levels.

In 2015, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an effort to integrate biodiversity conservation with sustainable development. As we lose biodiversity to human encroachment, habitat loss, infrastructure development, overfishing, and other threats, the SDGs have focused WCS and its partners on these challenges.

ABOVE: WCS played a leading role in protecting the American bison from extinction in the early 1900s. A century later, WCS led a successful campaign to designate the bison as the US national mammal.

RIGHT: Ivory awaiting destruction in 2017 at a WCS-organized crush in New York City’s Central Park.

BELOW: The Save Vanishing Species stamp has helped raise millions of dollars in conservation support for global charismatic species like tigers, rhinos, and elephants.
WCS Conservation Timeline

1890s
- 1894: NYZS appoints a committee asking New York State to establish a zoological society in New York City.
- 1895: A.J. Stone travels across the Arctic for two years on behalf of NYZS's Department of Tropical Research.
- 1896: With the backing of NYZS leadership, the Lacey Act passes, making it illegal to transport wildlife across state lines.
- 1897: Clinton, in present-day Battery Park, becomes the first U.S. zoological park.
- 1898: Rockefeller University is founded, and its first PhD program in animal behavior is launched.

1900s
- 1900: NYZS's George Schaller conducts the first ecological study of the African Plains.
- 1902: The Bronx Zoo opens its first education department, teaching about environmental conservation.
- 1904: A recording of humpback whale communications generates a wave of interest in marine conservation.

1910s
- 1910: NYZS supports research by A. Starker Leopold and Frank Kay (pictured) and supported the conservation of New Guinea’s forests.
- 1913: NYZS supports an expedition to the southern slope of Mount Everest, the first ascent of which is by a Japanese expedition.

1920s
- 1920: The Bronx Zoo opens its first education department, teaching about environmental conservation.

1930s
- 1934: NYZS supports the conservation of India's Bengal tiger.

1940s
- 1941: NYZS supports an expedition to the southern slope of Mount Everest, the first ascent of which is by a Japanese expedition.
- 1942: NYZS supports the conservation of India's Bengal tiger.

1950s
- 1953: NYZS supports research by A. Starker Leopold and Frank Kay (pictured) and supported the conservation of New Guinea’s forests.
- 1959: NYZS supports research by A. Starker Leopold and Frank Kay (pictured) and supported the conservation of New Guinea’s forests.

1960s
- 1960: NYZS supports research by A. Starker Leopold and Frank Kay (pictured) and supported the conservation of New Guinea’s forests.

1970s
- 1973: NYZS supports an expedition to the southern slope of Mount Everest, the first ascent of which is by a Japanese expedition.
- 1977: NYZS supports research by A. Starker Leopold and Frank Kay (pictured) and supported the conservation of New Guinea’s forests.

1980s
- 1980: NYZS supports research by A. Starker Leopold and Frank Kay (pictured) and supported the conservation of New Guinea’s forests.
- 1981: NYZS supports an expedition to the southern slope of Mount Everest, the first ascent of which is by a Japanese expedition.

1990s
- 1992: NYZS supports research by A. Starker Leopold and Frank Kay (pictured) and supported the conservation of New Guinea’s forests.
- 1993: NYZS supports an expedition to the southern slope of Mount Everest, the first ascent of which is by a Japanese expedition.

2000s
- 2000: NYZS supports research by A. Starker Leopold and Frank Kay (pictured) and supported the conservation of New Guinea’s forests.
- 2001: NYZS supports an expedition to the southern slope of Mount Everest, the first ascent of which is by a Japanese expedition.

2010s
- 2010: NYZS supports research by A. Starker Leopold and Frank Kay (pictured) and supported the conservation of New Guinea’s forests.
- 2011: NYZS supports an expedition to the southern slope of Mount Everest, the first ascent of which is by a Japanese expedition.
### 1990s

**1990**
- WCS Conservation Timeline

**1992**
- Work by NYZS staff helps establish the 5,300-square-meter Seima forests as the world's first protected area, bringing an average of more than $750,000 in each successive year for the conservation of elephants and bushes.

**1995**
- WCS leads the effort to establish Madidi National Park, one of the largest protected areas in the Americas.
- The Bronx Zoo's Congo Gorilla Forest exhibit opens, raising $10 million.

**1996**
- The Gabon government establishes 13 national parks by an indigenous group.

**1997**
- The latter is the first such area in the Americas initiated with land donated by Goldman, Sachs & Co., WCS shepherds with land donation.

**1999**
- WCS's Center for Global Conservation, HQ for its field programs, opens at the Bronx Zoo.
- WCS launches a partnership with the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute to conduct a national survey of elephants and frame a plan for conservation of the species.
- Samantha Strindberg, and others identify nearly 6,000 Irrawaddy dolphins in Myanmar.
- WCS work in Patagonia leads to the creation of the Golfo San Jorge marine protected area, a key habitat for Magellanic penguins.

**2000**
- WCS work in Cambodia leads to the creation of the first federally-designated wildlife disease transmission at the interface of wildlife, livestock, and human communities.
- In the wake of Mike Fay's 1999 megatransect, WCS conservationists Brian D. Smith, Rubaiyat Mansur Mowgli, and Mammal Species, and tortoise species through propagation efforts at Bronx Zoo.
- WCS identifies 125,000 western lowland gorillas, more than half of the entire gorilla population.

**2003**
- WCS partners with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the National Geographic Society to establish the first federally-designated national park.
- WCS identifies 125,000 western lowland gorillas, more than half of the entire gorilla population.
- WCS carries an average of more than $750,000 in each successive year for the conservation of elephants and bushes.

**2004**
- The Bronx Zoo opens Tiger Mountain, the 7th Bronx Zoo exhibit to receive the AZA's award for exhibit excellence—more than a wilderness 3.5 times the size of Yellowstone.
- WCS's 96 Elephants campaign succeeds in its efforts to pass state ivory ban laws in New York and New Jersey.

**2008**
- A decade's work results in a U.S. Postal Service stamp benefiting WCS efforts lead to creation of the first federally-designated protected area, bringing 2,000 Kihansi spray toads bred at the Bronx & Toledo Zoos are

**2012**
- WCS begins an effort to protect the 25 most endangered turtle species.

**2013**
- WCS work in Cambodia is declared the world's first sustainable wildlife economy.

**2015**
- WCS partners with the World Wildlife Fund and the Wildlife Conservation Society, helping to establish the world's first wildlife park in the capital.
- 2,000 Kihansi spray toads bred at the Bronx & Toledo Zoos are

**2017**
- WCS partners with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the National Geographic Society to establish the first federally-designated national park.
- WCS carries an average of more than $750,000 in each successive year for the conservation of elephants and bushes.
- WCS's New York Aquarium staff discover a nursery for sand tiger sharks, the first of its kind in the world.
- WCS works in Patagonia leads to the creation of the Golfo San Jorge marine protected area, a key habitat for Magellanic penguins.

### 2010s

**2010**
- WCS works in landscapes & seascapes that contain: 55% tigers, 70% forest elephants, 44% large mammals, 90% of all shark species.

**2014**
- WCS works in nearly 100 countries.

**2016**
- WCS works to conserve the entire known range of tigers.

**2017**
- WCS works to conserve all the world's sea turtles.

### WCS by the Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>100+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Species</td>
<td>1,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteering opportunities</td>
<td>4 Million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Animal populations</td>
<td>2 Million+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools and universities</td>
<td>150,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoos managed today</td>
<td>287 terrestrial; 372 marine/coastal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protected areas and national parks established with WCS assistance: 189 terrestrial; 60,000 marine/coastal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Species represented more than 1,89 million sq. km of ocean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live interpretation team of staff, volunteers, and interns.</td>
<td>750+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs facilitated each year by our Education staff.</td>
<td>750+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals under the care of WCS’s zoos and aquarium. These are under the care of WCS’s zoos and aquarium.</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Species under the care of WCS’s zoos and aquarium.</td>
<td>14,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>WC benefits wildlife health research.</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC by the Numbers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FRONT COVER: A twenty-year conservation effort by WCS-India and local partners in the Melenad landscape has secured the world’s largest tiger population.

BACK COVER: Gentoo penguins on Steeple Jason Island, one of two islands owned and conserved by WCS in the Falklands (Malvins).

LEFT (CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT): Porcupine at WCS’s Queens Zoo; Ocean Wonders: Sharks! at WCS’s New York Aquarium; WCS education programs serve some 150,000 students every year; a Malayan tiger, Azul, swims in a pool at the Bronx Zoo’s Tiger Mountain.

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