

## NATURAL HERITAGE

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## NEWS

### Endangered Species 2008

On 6 March 2008, the United Nations Postal Administration (UNPA) will issue a set of **12 stamps** depicting endangered species of fauna. These will be the sixteenth set of stamps in UNPA's multi-year series "Endangered Species". The series was launched on 3 March 1993 to highlight the need for the protection of endangered species throughout the world. This year the series "Endangered Species" feature a variety of marine life. UNPA will issue three sheets of 16 stamps, one sheet in each of the three currencies. Four different endangered species will be illustrated on each sheet; hence, 12 species will be covered.

#### Specification:

**Designer:** Suzanne Duranceau (Canada)

**Format:** 39.2 mm horizontally x 28.6 mm vertically

**Perforation:** 12-1/2 x 12-3/4

#### Marginal inscriptions:

Each sheet includes four marginal inscriptions, two in the left margin and two in the right margin. The marginal inscription consists of the emblems of the United Nations and CITES, with the year "2008" between the two emblems. One copyright symbol will appear in the bottom left-hand corner of each sheet.

The top and bottom borders of each sheet are illustrated with silhouettes of different endangered species, a border design which is consistent throughout the multi-year series. Each year, the corner illustrations will differ to reflect the endangered species featured on the three different sheets of stamps.

The stamps are printed against a beige background and the marginal inscriptions are black.

**Sheet Format:** Each sheet of 16 stamps accommodates four different endangered species, each in se-tenant blocks of four.

**Sheet Concept:** The sheet concept and the border illustrations are the work of Rocco J. Callari, a United Nations staff member.

**Selling Units:** The stamps will be available in selling units of a mini-sheet of 16 stamps or a single unit of a se-tenant block of four stamps.



The € 0,65 stamps depict the following endangered species: Northern Elephant Seal Fire Coral Thorny Seahorse Sperm Whale.



The US\$ 0.41 stamps depict the following endangered species: Cape Fur Seal Orange Cup Coral Longsnout Seahorse Grey Whale.



The F.s. 1,00 stamps depict the following endangered species: Pacific Walrus Brain Coral Pygmy Seahorse Beluga Whale.

## Exhibition “Thoughts of the reef”

*Exhibition from February 21, 2008. Oceanographic museum of Monaco*



In the conference hall, the association ACROPORIS proposes the exhibition “Thoughts of the reef”: an original parallelism between splendid submarine photographs of landscapes and reef bodies and the quotes and poems on the topics “Coral Reefs, the Ocean, Man and Society”. In this same hall, this will be completed with the projection of a selection of films that will illustrate the topics of this year. Finally, visitors willing to commit to the future of the Blue Planet will be able to request their Passport of Ocean Citizen: in order to take an active role as responsible citizen, mention

it in the entrance lobby. A day to inquire, but also to act and become a Great Ambassador of the Great Bleu. Animations, exhibitions and exceptional projections with free admission with the ticket to the oceanographic Museum.

*Oceanographic museum of Monaco. Exhibitions. Published: 4-6-2008*

## Exhibition “Desert and desertification: beauty and harshness”

*24 June - 4 July 2008. UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France*

This exhibition forms part of a series of events which took place in Geneva in 2006 during the International Year of the Desert and Desertification (IYDD) when the artist, Arno Boueilh, was invited by the United

Nations Office in Geneva to present his paintings on the same theme. Part of the exhibition was also shown at the international headquarters of the World Conservation Union (UICN) in Gland, Switzerland, on the occasion of the UN World Environment Day 2006. The artist’s 29 works, with such evocative titles as: “Erosion”, ‘Ruins in Palymyra’, ‘Dunes’, ‘Where the shepherds roam’, “Sand Mountain”, “Bedouin tent’, draw attention to the urgency to preserve the desert, which is both a splendid and fragile environment, and to avoid desertification in other zones...

*UNESCO World Heritage Centre. News. Published: 4-6-2008*

## CVA Monthly e-News: June Conservation Volunteers e-News



Conservation Volunteers e-News is the monthly email newsletter that is filled with information about upcoming conservation projects, nature holidays, opportunities to volunteer overseas and special offers.

*Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). Australia. Published: 3-6-2008*

## Great Ape Conservation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Gets a More than \$360,000 Boost from Spain

News Comes As Historic Gorilla Agreement Between Ten Nations Comes Into Effect. The Spanish government has contributed USD 368,000 to a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) led initiative to help protect gorillas, chimpanzees and their habitats in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The news comes as the country continues to face one of the greatest environmental challenge in Africa today. The last few years have seen a rise in the killing of rare wildlife and environmental destruction as the region is caught in the crossfire of conflict.

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As serious instability continues to plague eastern Congo, 500,000 Internally Displaced People (IDPs) have spread across the region and rebel groups have occupied large swaths of the national parks and important forest ecosystems.

The Spanish funds will be channeled through the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) as part of UNEP's programme to help improve the conservation of endangered and economically important animals and ecosystems there as requested by the DRC government.

UNEP is assisting the national authorities in drafting and developing national environmental laws, facilitating dialogue in the region and helping boost cooperation to tackle the country's environmental challenges.

Meanwhile the first international agreement for the conservation of gorillas enters into force on 1st June, offering hope for a new era of stronger protection for the apes. The agreement was concluded among the ten gorilla range states in Paris in October 2007, under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS).

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "The funding by the Government of Spain is a welcome development in this troubled country and region. At risk are the nature-based assets upon which many of the people of the DRC rely for livelihoods".

*"Meanwhile comprehensive environmental laws are urgently needed to ensure that these natural resources are harvested by international companies in ways that will guarantee their integrity and productivity for years and decades to come. The German government is also stepping up funding to the DRC under its new Life Web initiative. I would urge other countries to also join hands with the people and biodiversity of this key African country,"* he said.

The announcement of the new Spanish funding comes as 191 countries gather in Bonn for a key meeting on biodiversity this week in a bid to agree on ways to significantly reduce biodiversity loss by 2010.

The forests of DRC, which cover one million square kilometers, are a treasure trove for biodiversity. They

house some of the world's rarest and most remarkable species, including the bonobo (the closest living relative of the human species) and the okapi (a unique forest giraffe) as well as the rare mountain gorilla. More than half of the 720 mountain gorillas left in the world live in Eastern DRC.

But this biodiversity is under threat as a result of the decades of instability which has racked the country. The instability has taken a severe toll on the region's natural resources and wildlife, and the situation has been exacerbated by factors including poor capacity to enforce existing wildlife laws; widespread poaching; and rapidly increasing mining activities and opening up of forests which are facilitating access to previously remote forest areas.



Gorillas in Virunga National Park

In 2007, seven of the highly endangered mountain gorillas were killed in eastern DRC. Virunga National Park, which is at the heart of the current tensions and conflicts, has also seen its hippo population drop from an estimated 29,000 to a herd of just a few hundred.

Elephants are also under threat: new figures from the Convention on International Trade in endangered Species of

wild fauna and flora (CITES) show alarming levels of poaching in Central Africa - in and around eastern DRC.

CITES has found that Central Africa has much higher levels of illegal killings of elephants than any other part of the continent: 73% of dead elephants in the region have been found to have been killed illegally, compared to 17% in Southern Africa, 31% in West Africa and 44% in Eastern Africa. In April 2008 alone, fourteen elephants were killed in Virunga National Park.

UNEP is carrying out a wide-ranging strategy to help DRC's government to tackle this enormous challenge. UNEP is assisting the government with the environmental framework law and is facilitating stakeholder dialogue in the transboundary Virunga region.

The organization is also assessing possibilities for boosting cooperation between the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda to stem illegal flows of natural resources such as charcoal and transboundary exploitation of oil and methane gas. In addition, UNEP is addressing the issue of the IDP camps which are heavily dependent

on forests in the Virunga National Park for fuelwood and charcoal.

Once the security situation improves in eastern DRC, UNEP also plans to undertake a post-conflict environmental assessment in the area. In addition, UNEP and UNESCO have secured a commitment from the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC) to carry out joint patrols with park rangers of the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN) when the situation is more stable.

Other international partners are also working with UNEP and the DRC government to help boost protection for eastern DRC's critically-important ecosystem and endangered species. UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, with the assistance of MONUC, is currently facilitating a dialogue between ICCN and representatives of the armed groups present in Virunga National Park. One of the objectives is to convince the armed groups to allow ICCN to resume patrolling of the park, in particular the sector inhabited by the endangered mountain gorilla which is currently controlled by armed groups.

CITES is also collaborating with the World Heritage Convention in addressing poaching problems and illegal wildlife trade affecting DRC's five World Heritage Sites, including Virunga. This involves coordination with neighboring countries, training for enforcement personnel and distribution of intelligence information.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and UNESCO have also sent missions to DRC to investigate the gorilla killings and help devise solutions. Many other civil society groups are active at the field level.

*UNEP. Environment for Development. News Centre. Published: 29-5-2008*

## World's rarest rhinos make first video trap appearance - then toss camera

After just a month in operation, specially designed video cameras installed to capture wildlife footage in the jungles of South East Asia have twice recorded remarkable images of a mother and child pair of the world's rarest rhino. But the success was not without incident as after a short inspection, the rhino mother charged the camera installation in Ujung Kulon National Park and sent it flying.

*"With fewer than 60 Javan rhinos left in the wild, we believe this footage was well worth the risk to our equipment," said Adhi Rachmat Hariyadi, who leads WWF-Indonesia's project in Ujung Kulon National Park. "It's very unusual to catch a glimpse of the Javan rhinos deep inside the rain forest. The motion triggered infrared video traps are a useful way to observe them and the ways they use their habitat in a more detailed way."*

Recordings of the Javan rhino are the highlight so far of the installation over recent months of improved wildlife recording video cameras developed by US-based PixController Inc. In its pioneering phase in Malaysia, the new system has already provided footages of rare Malayan tigers in the wild and a Sumatran Rhino in Borneo.

*"Setting cameras such as these is always a challenge, especially with animals as rare and elusive as the Javan rhino," said WWF Malaysia photographer Stephen Hogg. "The assault on the camera still has us baffled because we specifically use Infra Red (IR) lights as the source of illumination so as to not scare animals away when the camera activates."*

The use of video traps over camera traps is yielding valuable insights into the behaviour of target and other species which will aid in their conservation.

In the case of Javan rhinos, the new video traps replace wooden bamboo platforms nearly 10 metres off the ground at wallowing sites, which were difficult and time-consuming to construct, required safety training and precautions for users and offered limited viewing angles. From a scientific viewpoint, adverse angles and larger distances meant it was often impossible to identify particular rhinos.

By contrast, the video traps are readily relocated, generally safe to operate and surprisingly robust. "The camera tossed in our footage was relocated by a survey team and put back on its stand next day and hasn't suffered molestation by a rhino since," said Adhi Rachmat, WWF team leader in Ujung Kulon.

*"We are proposing a test translocation of a few Javan rhinos in the near future to establish a new popu-*



*Young Javan rhino captured in a camera trap in Ujung Kulon, Indonesia. October 2006. © WWF Indonesia*

lation in a new area. This requires hard data and reliable science and setting up video traps allows us to do that without stop sending researchers to spend the night on rickety bamboo platforms trying to observe these highly endangered rhinos,” said Adhi. “Since the video traps don’t have any moving parts and are very silent, they can be placed much closer than humans along the favourite haunts of the Javan rhinos, like salt licks, trails and mud wallows.”

Javan rhinos are found only in two locations in the world with Ujung Kulong NP in Java, Indonesia estimated to have around 60 rhinos -- more than 90 percent of the global population.

To prevent the rhino population from going extinct from a sudden catastrophe like a diseases or other natural disasters, the Government of Indonesia recently launched rhino conservation strategy titled “Project Rhino Century (Proyek Abad Badak) in partnership with WWF, International Rhino Foundation (IRF), Yayasan Badak Indonesia (YABI), dan US Fish and Wildlife Service to create additional Javan rhino populations by translocating a few individuals from Ujung Kulon to another suitable site.

The video trap instalment was done and monitored by a survey team consisting of biologists, including Ujung Kulon park rangers, WWF, and local people.

*WWF. camera Traps. News. Published: 28-5-2008*

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## US government says climate change putting polar bears at risk

Climate change is destroying vital polar bear habitat, putting the species at risk of extinction, the US government said today as it listed the polar bear as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The government’s decision clearly indicates that climate change impacts are already threatening the survivability of animals and habitats, and illustrates the urgency of preparing for and adapting to a rapidly changing climate.

“WWF commends the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for heeding the unequivocal science that the survival of the polar bear is inextricably tied to its Arctic sea ice habitat, which is melting more rapidly than at any other time in recorded human history,” said Margaret Williams, managing director of WWF’s office in Alaska.

“We must take the necessary measures now to help save the polar bear. The ESA listing is an important first step, but we must also address the underlying cause of climate change: rapidly rising greenhouse gas emissions.”

### A victory, but concerns remain

“Today’s decision is a tremendous victory for one of the world’s most iconic and charismatic animals,” said Carter Roberts, president and CEO of WWF-US. “The other big winner today is sound science, which has clearly trumped politics, providing polar bears a new lease on life.”

Roberts added, “While we applaud today’s announcement, many concerns remain. The 360-page document comes with numerous caveats which we have yet to fully analyse. Interior secretary Dirk Kempthorne was quite explicit in saying, for example, that continued energy production in Alaska remains a priority.

“WWF strongly disagrees with that position and recently became a plaintiff in the litigation challenging the Chukchi lease-sale—a priority area for WWF and home to one of our nation’s two polar bear populations,” he said.

### Sea ice melting

Sea ice, which polar bears depend on for hunting seals and other prey, melted to record low levels last summer. The National Snow Ice and Data Centre announced earlier this month that current measurements and projections indicate that the 2008 melt season may also be “extreme”, possibly shattering the record set in 2007. Some scientists have predicted that the summer Arctic sea ice could be gone entirely as early as 2013.

The decision comes close on the heels of a new WWF report, Arctic Climate Impact Science – An Update Since ACIA, which found that change is occurring in all arctic systems, impacting on the atmosphere and oceans, sea ice and ice sheets, snow and permafrost, as well as species and populations, food webs, ecosystems and human societies.

Melting of arctic sea ice and the Greenland Ice Sheet was found to be severely accelerated, prompting some scientists to discuss whether both may be close to their “tipping point” (the point where, because of climate change, natural systems may experience sudden, rapid and possibly irreversible change).

At the time of publication, Dr Martin Sommerkorn, one of the report’s authors and Senior Climate Change

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Adviser at WWF International's Arctic Programme, said: *"The magnitude of the physical and ecological changes in the Arctic creates an unprecedented challenge for governments, the corporate sector, community leaders and conservationists to create the conditions under which arctic natural systems have the best chance to adapt."*

He also stated the importance of urgently addressing the underlying causes of these changes: *"We need to reduce global emissions of greenhouse gases to levels that will avoid the continued warming of the Arctic and the anticipated resulting disruption of the global climate system,"* he said.

### A positive step

Today's decision, however, represents a positive step toward creating conditions under which polar bears inhabiting arctic ecoregions in the US, at least, can better adapt to the physical and ecological challenges they are facing.

*"Based on the best available science, if current sea ice trends continue, two-thirds of the world's polar bears will be lost by 2050,"* said Geoffrey York, coordinator of WWF's Polar Bear Conservation Program. *"The threatened species designation will now provide additional legal protections for the bears, including the conservation of critical habitat and the development of a government-supported recovery plan."*

Citing the well-documented loss of sea ice due to climate change, the FWS recommended in September 2006 that the Interior Department list polar bears as threatened under the ESA. The Interior Department was legally required to issue a formal decision on the ESA listing by January 9, 2008, but failed to do so. On April 28, the US District Court for the Northern District of California ordered the Department to issue a formal decision on the listing by May 15.

### Overdue announcement

*"Today's announcement is long overdue,"* said Williams. *"The delay in listing has opened the door to accelerated oil and gas exploration in the Arctic. In February, the Minerals Management Service (MMS), which is under the jurisdiction of the Interior Department, auctioned off almost 30 million acres of prime polar bear habitat in Alaska's Chukchi Sea for oil and gas exploration."*

WWF condemns the US decision in February to open the Chukchi Sea to petroleum development; arctic marine conditions contribute to an oil spill

"response gap" that threatens polar bears by effectively limiting the ability to clean up after an oil spill.

WWF is part of a coalition of Alaska native and conservation organisations that filed suit in the federal district court in Alaska, arguing that MMS did not adequately weigh the impacts of oil and gas activities on indigenous communities and wildlife along Alaska's North Slope.

*"We should be taking every action possible to reduce stresses on polar bears, and we believe that oil and gas activities pose formidable risks to the Arctic sea ice ecosystem and the polar bears that inhabit it,"* said York.

*WWF. Artic. News. Published: 14-5-2008*



## Kobe Call for Action for Biodiversity - The statement from G8 Environmental Ministers Meeting

In recent years, global environmental issues such as climate change have become major international political issues. In reflection of this, environmental issues are expected to be among the major topics taken up at the Hokkaido Toyako Summit. Consequently, the role played by the Kobe Meeting will be of particular importance...

*G8 Environment Ministers Meeting. Results. Published: 27-5-2008*