



**WORLD  
WILDLIFE DAY**  
3 MARCH

Organized by:



# World Wildlife Day 2025 Concept Note

## Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet

On 20 December 2013 at the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), 3 March was declared United Nations World Wildlife Day. This day holds significance as the day that the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#) was signed in 1973. The [UNGA Resolution](#) designated the CITES Secretariat as the facilitator for the global observance of this special day for wildlife on the UN calendar. UN World Wildlife Day has now become the global annual event dedicated to wild animals and plants.

In 2025, World Wildlife Day will be celebrated under the critical theme of "Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet". The year 2025 will also coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of CITES in 1975.

### 1. Innovative Finance for Wildlife Conservation

Investing in wildlife is not an aspiration, it is a necessity! It is our collective responsibility towards a resilient future for both people and the planet. From the highland steppe to the coral reefs, wild animals and plants hold intrinsic value as part of the intricate web of life on Earth, sustaining ecosystems, regulating natural processes and supporting biodiversity. Wildlife provides essential services that support human livelihoods and the achievement of our Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Forests alone contain 60,000 different tree species, 80 per cent of the world's amphibian species, and 75 per cent of the world's bird species<sup>1</sup>, while providing over 1.6 billion people with natural capital in the form of food (SDG 2: Zero Hunger), medicine (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being), income (SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth)<sup>2</sup> and more<sup>3</sup>.

With more than 1 million species now estimated to be threatened with extinction and the intensifying triple planetary crisis<sup>4</sup>, innovative finance for wildlife conservation has never been more urgent. Over half of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) is dependent on nature,

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<sup>1</sup> UNEP-WCMC (2020). "[Earth's Biodiversity Depends on The World's Forests](#)".

<sup>2</sup> United Nations (2024) "[The 17 \[Sustainable Development\] Goals](#)".

<sup>3</sup> UN DESA (2020) "[Forests – a lifeline for people and planet](#)".

<sup>4</sup> IPBES (2019) "[Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#)".

making biodiversity loss an increasing threat to financial stability<sup>5</sup>. For example, while fisheries contribute more than 10 per cent of GDP in some countries, over one-third of the world's marine fish stocks are classified as overfished<sup>6</sup>. This not only threatens marine ecosystems and biodiversity but also leads to widespread unemployment, disrupts local economies, and drives illegal and unsustainable harvesting practices.

Current financial flows have proven insufficient for governments to meet their national biodiversity targets, especially in low-to-middle-income countries where the world's biodiversity hotspots are located<sup>7</sup>. Though USD 143 billion is currently invested annually in biodiversity conservation, of which 80-85 per cent comes from the public sector, this amount falls significantly short of the estimated USD 824 billion needed each year to adequately protect and restore nature<sup>8</sup>.

On the path to achieving the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called for an SDG Stimulus of at least USD 500 billion to significantly increase affordable, long-term financing for development, including for nature<sup>9</sup>. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) has revitalized the global effort to take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, calling for stimulating innovative financial schemes to mobilize at least USD 200 billion of financial flows for biodiversity (Target 19) and aiming to eliminate, phase out, or reform harmful subsidies by at least USD 500 billion annually by 2030 (Target 18)<sup>10</sup>.

While public finance remains the largest funding source for wildlife conservation, there is growing interest in moving beyond traditional grant-based or overseas development assistance (ODA) models, and towards innovative approaches that merge public, philanthropic, and private financing. Multilateral development banks (MDBs) are already integrating biodiversity loss risks into their policies and operations<sup>11</sup>. However, efforts to incorporate these considerations into government financial regulations are still in the early stages<sup>12</sup>. Blended finance models can leverage the strengths and synergies of each sector to address the long-standing undervaluation of biodiversity's economic contributions and ecosystem services, offering a more comprehensive and effective approach to conservation funding.<sup>13</sup>

Today, innovative wildlife finance solutions are emerging to unlock the power and agility of the finance sector and mainstream nature-positive considerations in the spheres of investment and policy making. Debt-for-Nature (DFN) swaps have demonstrated the potential to convert national debts into conservation funds, simultaneously conserving critical habitats and alleviating financial burdens on governments. The first Wildlife Conservation Bond (WCB) has created an opportunity to attract private investment for protecting certain wildlife species and has the potential to be scaled and replicated for other species and ecosystem services<sup>14</sup>. Payments for ecosystem services (PES), such as wildlife credits, have generated revenue for

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> FAO (2020). "[The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020](#)".

<sup>7</sup> Puentes et al. (2020) "[The Little Book of Investing in Nature](#)".

<sup>8</sup> UNDP BIOFIN (2024) "[What is Biodiversity Finance? | BIOFIN](#)".

<sup>9</sup> UN (2023) "[UN Secretary-General's SDG Stimulus to Deliver Agenda 2030](#)".

<sup>10</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity (2024) "[2030 Targets of The Biodiversity Plan](#)".

<sup>11</sup> "[Joint Statement by the Multilateral Development Banks: Nature, People and Planet](#)" (2021)

<sup>12</sup> United Nations (2023) "[Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2023](#)".

<sup>13</sup> Puentes et al. (2020) "[The Little Book of Investing in Nature](#)".

<sup>14</sup> World Bank Group (2022) "[World Bank Wildlife Conservation Bond](#)".

landowners and communities managing wildlife resources who bear a large proportion of the costs that accompany living with wildlife<sup>15</sup>.

No single financial mechanism will fill all conservation funding gaps. Therefore, mobilizing financial resources for wildlife at the scale required demands creating enabling conditions, building trust, and applying a collaborative, multi-pronged approach that involves governments, financial institutions, businesses, and civil society, and that considers of the needs and expertise of indigenous peoples, local communities, women and youth.

## 2. Objectives of World Wildlife Day 2025

The global celebration of World Wildlife Day 2025 will take place through in-person activities and online, together aiming to:

- Showcase inspirational stories and solutions, as well as key actors and leaders, in wildlife finance through various media (e.g., film, photography, art, etc.).
- Provide a knowledge base for stakeholders, including youth, civil society, national governments, and relevant UN agencies, to access data and insights on innovative wildlife finance.
- Foster collaboration among different stakeholders and sectors in bridging wildlife conservation funding gaps.
- Bring together diverse stakeholders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors to exchange and explore innovative financing mechanisms for wildlife conservation.

## 3. Key Components of World Wildlife Day 2025

- **Events:** A main celebration event will be organized by the CITES Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland, with support from partner organizations. Local events and celebrations, such as film screenings, photography exhibitions, and lecture series, will be encouraged and advertised on the World Wildlife Day website.
- **Infographics:** A collection of infographics from projects and partners will highlight examples of innovative financial solutions for wildlife conservation. These visual assets will be posted on the World Wildlife Day social media accounts and website to help convey complex information in an accessible and engaging format.
- **Social Media Kit:** Key messages, data, insights, and visual assets will be made available for use and download. This toolkit will encourage individuals and organizations to celebrate World Wildlife Day and spread awareness about the importance of wildlife finance.
- **Videos:** As part of the collection of audiovisual assets, a promotional video, video statements collected from government and institutional leaders, and a recap of the global celebration events will be produced to highlight global support and diverse messages on the theme.

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<sup>15</sup> CITES Secretariat (2024) "[Mobilizing Sustainable Finance for African Elephant Conservation](#)".

#### **4. Showcasing Relevant Biodiversity Finance Efforts**

World Wildlife Day 2025 will showcase key global initiatives in wildlife finance. For example, the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works to demonstrate how nature-positive economies can work for people and the planet; the [Global Biodiversity Framework Fund](#) (GBFF) established by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to help countries achieve the Targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; the [Green Climate Fund](#) (GCF) which works to increase access to climate finance for biodiversity-rich (and other) developing countries; the [Biodiversity Credit Alliance](#) which works to facilitate the transition to a nature positive economy; as well as other initiatives.

The WWD2025 main celebration event in Geneva will aim to showcase the efforts on innovative financing of financial institutions, such as [Building Bridges](#), the [World Business Council for Sustainable Development](#), and the [World Economic Forum](#).

WWD2025 will contribute to the broader conversation on innovative financing solutions for conservation and help amplify the impact of these efforts.

#### **5. Partnership**

For World Wildlife Day 2025, the CITES Secretariat will leverage the expertise, knowledge, and creativity of key stakeholders through collaborative partnerships with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Jackson Wild, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (ifaw), WILDLABS, the Geneva Environment Network, and other organizations.