



World Wildlife Day 2021

Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet

Concept note

In 2021, World Wildlife Day will celebrate forest-based livelihoods, promote forest management models and practices that accommodate both human well-being and the long-term conservation of forests and the species and ecosystems they shelter, and seek to value traditional knowledge that contribute to this.

Under the theme *“Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet”*, World Wildlife Day celebrations will aim to raise awareness of the immense value of forests and forest-dwelling wildlife species and for the economic, social and cultural well-being of communities around the world, particularly now that a global pandemic threatens to worsen social and economic inequality.

The Day will offer a platform to discuss a more balanced relationship with these ecosystems and the tools that can help us reach this objective, so that future generations can continue to enjoy and benefit from them sustainably and responsibly, in line with the objectives in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including Goals 1 (*No Poverty*), 2 (*Zero hunger*) 12 (*Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*), 13 (*Climate Action*) and 15 (*Life on Land*).

Covering over a third of the Earth’s surface, forests provide vital services such as filtering and storing freshwater, protecting watersheds, ensuring the fertility of soils, and regulating the climate through carbon sequestration. They are a home to 80% of all terrestrial wild fauna and flora. Forests and forest species also sustain the livelihoods of millions of people, providing ecosystems services and resources that are essential to the global economy and which can be valued in the trillions of dollars.

Between 240 and 350 million people live within or adjacent to forested areas globally, relying on the various ecosystem services provided by forests and forest species for their livelihoods and to cover their most basic needs, including food, shelter, energy and medicines. Wood and non-timber forest products also make up a fifth of incomes in rural households in developing economies with access to forest resources, and the forest sector powers over 80 million jobs globally.

Indigenous peoples and local communities are at the forefront of the symbiotic relationship between humans and forest ecosystem services, including the wild fauna and flora these environments shelter. These communities rely to a higher extent on the plentiful ecosystem services and wildlife in such environments. Roughly 28% of the world’s land surface is currently managed by indigenous peoples,

including some of the most ecologically intact forests on the planet. These spaces are not only central to their economic and personal well-being, but also to their cultural identities.

Yet, with less than 7% of the world's intact tropical forests currently benefitting from formal legal protections, forests, the species they shelter, and therefore the livelihoods they sustain are at the center of a global emergency brought about by the climate and biodiversity loss crises, a global health crisis, and an inequality crisis. Half of the world's forests have been lost or greatly degraded, endangering the wealth of species that rely on these habitats, and exacerbating climate breakdown and biodiversity loss, increasing the likelihood that zoonotic diseases like COVID-19 may spill over to humans. The decline of forests also threatens our global food and water security, thus worsening global inequality and imperiling the well-being and livelihoods of billions of people from the Amazon to the Mekong basin.

The Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN system organizations, Member States, and civil society will unroll a series of virtual events and social media activities around World Wildlife Day 2021, on 3 March.

The CITES Secretariat and UNDP are also collaborating with Jackson WILD to organize a World Wildlife Day Film Showcase to highlight the issues and progress affecting humanity's relationship to forests and tree species. The winning films will be highlighted during the WWD2021 events.

The CITES Secretariat is also teaming up with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) to organize a WWD2021 International Youth Art Contest.