



# Biodiversity Monthly Newsletter

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Biodiversity



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### UN Chief, Marking International Day, Urges Greater Protection for World's Forests

**21 MARCH 2013:** Governments, businesses and civil society must commit to protect forests by reducing deforestation, preventing environmental degradation, and providing sustainable livelihoods for all of those who depend on this precious ecosystem, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today.

"Forests are vital for our well-being. They cover nearly a third of the globe and provide an invaluable variety of social, economic and environmental benefits," Mr. Ban said in a message marking the first International Day of Forests.

Forests are the most biologically diverse ecosystems on land, home to more than half of the terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects. Around 1.6 billion people – including more than 2,000 indigenous cultures – depend on forests for their livelihood.

In his message, Mr. Ban highlighted the many functions that forests have in the environment and their benefits to humans. For example, they are the source of three-fourths of freshwater, stabilize slopes and prevent landslides, and protect coastal communities against tsunamis and storms. In addition, more than three million people use forest wood for fuel.

Forests also help combat climate change as they store more carbon than is in the atmosphere.

However, Mr. Ban noted that there are several threats to this ecosystem as urbanization and large-scale agriculture can exacerbate the rate of forest and biodiversity loss.

Some 13 million hectares of forest are destroyed annually, and deforestation accounts for 12 to 20 per cent of the global greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.

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“As weather patterns alter due to climate change, many forested areas are increasingly vulnerable. This underlines the urgency of a global, inclusive, legally binding climate change agreement that will address greenhouse gas emissions and encourage the protection and sustainable management of forests,” Mr. Ban said.

“We need now to intensify efforts to protect forests, including by incorporating them into the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals,” he added.

“The first UN International Day of Forests is a tremendous opportunity to celebrate our unique relationship to forests and trees,” said the Forum’s Director, Jan McAlpine. “This is the day for the whole world to celebrate not only the gifts that forests and trees provide us, but also the unsung heroes, those who make a difference for your forests, your trees and your communities. Find them among you and thank them.” Source: [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com)

### World Water Day “Water Cooperation”

**March 25th, 2013** Water is fundamental to basic human needs. This includes not only safe drinking water and decent sanitation for all, but also food security. Water is central to socio-economic development, poverty reduction and sustainable economies. And water is fundamental to sustaining all terrestrial, wetland, coastal and marine ecosystems, the life they support and the benefits they deliver to people. The hydrological cycle involves interaction between water, the physical landscape and the ecosystems they support. The functioning of ecosystems determines the flow, storage and quality of water.

Therefore, sound ecosystem management and water management are intricately linked. Accordingly, we are seeing increasing emphasis on the role of ecosystems as solutions to addressing water related challenges. Ecosystems are being considered as “natural infrastructure” because of the way they can deliver water management outcomes similar to those of man-made infrastructure, sometimes by substituting built infrastructure but, more usually, by augmenting it to make the most

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efficient use of both approaches. Examples include using the water storage abilities of wetlands to help manage flood risk, using forested catchments to deliver clean drinking water supplies and to reduce erosion risks and, in farming systems, improving the vegetation on soils, and the biodiversity within them, to improve water availability for crops, increasing resilience to droughts and reducing run-off.

These attributes of biodiversity, and the ecosystem services underpinned, are well recognised in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, especially Target 14 that, by 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, are restored and safeguarded. Natural infrastructure approaches also deliver other significant benefits, in addition to those relating to water; such as to tourism and recreation, fisheries and helping to achieve biodiversity conservation outcomes. For example, restoring a wetland to protect people and assets in cities from flooding brings benefit to water-birds, fish and other fauna and flora that in turn bring added benefit to people.

The theme of World Water Day this year is Water Cooperation. We are all water managers. Each time we turn on a tap or buy food we are responsible for a small element of the much larger water management cycle. The responsibility to manage water extends across sectors, governments, countries and individual citizens and should be considered as an activity that requires cooperation and integration from local to international levels. Similarly, the appropriate management and protection of biodiversity is a shared responsibility. The relationship between management of water and biodiversity should not be one of conflict: there are significant win-win outcomes to be gained.

It is well established that sound water management is complex and requires an integrated, multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach. A wide range of government agencies, civil society organisations, private sector concerns and individuals are involved. But water resources and biodiversity are usually managed in separate sectors, each focused on meeting specific objectives, rather than as part of an overarching framework that balances different water or biodiversity uses to

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optimize and share their various benefits across society and the economy. Cross-sectoral and systematic approaches are needed to consider and initiate the use of natural infrastructure in order to achieve water security, including gaining climate resilience and rebalancing water distribution.

We are, however, seeing a significant shift to cooperation at the water and biodiversity interface, facilitated by a focus on the mutual objective of sustainable development. Biodiversity specialists have learnt to better understand the real and immediate problems being faced by water managers and users and, by offering solutions to such problems, there is a reciprocated understanding of the role and importance of biodiversity planning and management. Water managers and users are increasingly recognizing that the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity are indeed relevant to them and to the problems they address.

Recognition of the common interests of various stakeholders is a cornerstone of effective cooperation. Let us further build on this, not only today, but tomorrow, and until we achieve the future we want. Source: **CBD**

### **CITES CoP 16, Renewed Commitment to Halt Species' Decline and Wildlife Crime**

**15 March 2013:** The sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP 16) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) adopted 55 new listing proposals, saw the first global meeting of wildlife enforcement networks and adopted measures to address wildlife crime.

CITES CoP 16, which took place in Bangkok, Thailand, brought together more than 2,000 participants from 170 countries, including more than 200 non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations. Delegates at the meeting adopted new listing proposals including on, *inter alia*, sharks, manta rays, turtles and timber. Nine proposals were rejected (Caspian snowcock, Tibetan snowcock, saltwater crocodile, Siamese crocodile, South American freshwater stingray, Rosette

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river stingray, blood pheasant and 2 species of freshwater turtles). Three proposals were withdrawn: Southern white rhino; and two on African elephants. Three were not considered: Indochinese box turtle; Ryukyu black-breasted leaf Turtle; and Annam leaf turtle.

The CoP also adopted measures to address wildlife crime and established Wildlife Incident Support Teams (WISTs) to be dispatched at the request of a country following serious poaching incidents.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime (ICWC) convened several events on transboundary wildlife crime. John Scanlon, Secretary-General, CITES, praised the level of international cooperation in this regard, emphasizing that these international commitments will now be translated into national action, with the CITES Standing Committee reviewing progress between now and CoP 17 in 2016.

CoP 16 was marked by a general effort towards consensus, with member States declaring 3 March as World Wildlife Day. At the conclusion of the meeting, many delegates commented that they were “very happy” with the outcomes, with some remarking that CoP 16 had been the most successful CoP in CITES’ 40 years, particularly for marine species. The next CoP will be held in South Africa in 2016.

### **New Mobile Application Provides Information on Marine Fish Species**

**12 March 2013:** A new mobile application, AppliFish, provides consumers with information to help make informed choices when purchasing fish.

The app seeks to open marine knowledge to anyone with a mobile device, providing information on more than 550 marine species, including global distribution maps, predicted impacts of climate change, catch statistics and extinction risk. The app relies in part on data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO). AppliFish was created by the i-Marine platform of 13 research institutes, universities and international organizations, including the FAO and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The work was funded by the European Union.

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### **International Day of Forests to be commemorated worldwide**

**March 18th, 2013** The International Day of Forests will be observed for the first time on 21 March 2013 worldwide. Considering that there was no globally-recognized date commemorating and raising awareness on this issue, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution in December 2012, on the recommendation of its Second Committee, proclaiming 21 March the annual International Day of Forests.

The text encourages member States to organize annual events on forests and trees outside forests, including, for example, tree-planting campaigns. The draft requests the Secretariat of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) to act as the facilitator of the International Day in collaboration with governments, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and other relevant organizations.