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## FRONTLINE DISPATCHES

OCTOBER 2022

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CONSERVATION NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

### NORTH AMERICA



**\$82,500 buys water for both humans and bighorn sheep.** That's what the Wild Sheep Foundation and Dallas Safari Club [contributed](#) to drill a well in Sonora, Mexico. Previously, 78 local families had to truck in water from 30 miles away; the new well makes their lives easier while also providing water for desert bighorn sheep. (WSF has [contributed](#) nearly \$1.25 million this year to wild-sheep conservation across North America.)





**Red or Blue, 70% of Americans support RAWA**, the Recovering America's Wilderness Act. If passed, it will provide an extra \$14 billion annually to state agencies and tribal land managers to conserve at-risk species such as the lesser prairie chicken, above. The Wildlife Society [says](#) this shows that Americans understand the need to protect wildlife.

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**Skyrocketing deer numbers threaten America's forests.** An estimated 30 million deer are eating young trees, [Grist reports](#), and since most American hunters are older than 45, a new generation of hunters—like these eager novices from the National Deer Association and Hunters of Color—is needed to keep deer in check.



**Deer threaten neighborhoods also.** As white-tailed deer spend more time in residential areas, their ticks do too—and ticks carry Lyme disease, anaplasmosis and other viruses. A Maryland [study](#) found that suburban deer aren't just visitors, either; on average, a male deer's range included 129 residential properties.



**Is a cougar killing a donkey in Death Valley reason to celebrate?** Maybe so, [reports Science](#). Feral donkeys, a non-native species, have become a nuisance there, eating and trampling



vegetation and polluting streams. New trail-camera evidence shows that mountain lions have begun preying on the donkeys, which may help restore the environment.



**Ambitious plan for wind energy could kill 20,000 golden eagles**, according to an Associated Press [report](#). The demand for renewable energy is ramping up wind-energy production across the West, and some scientists fear the turbines could cut golden eagle numbers in half (by striking the birds with their blades) by 2050. However, windmill-related declines in eagle populations have not been noted yet, which suggests “some uncertainty in the projections.”



**The cost of poaching: \$74,000. Justice served: priceless.** That’s what a North Dakota man was fined in New Mexico for killing one mule deer illegally for its trophy antlers. According to Outdoor Life, the penalty [included](#) \$20,000 for poaching and \$54,000 to reimburse NM Game & Fish for an investigation and sentencing that lasted, with appeals, six years.



Meet *El Jefe*, the border-hopping jaguar—one of a few known to cross back and forth between the US and Mexico, [as seen in](#) *Mexico News Daily*. [According](#) to *National Geographic*, jaguars used to live as far north as the Grand Canyon, but now rarely venture into the US because of obstacles like roads and the border wall.

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**Are bison better for prairies than cattle?** A 30-year study found that where bison grazed tallgrass prairie, native plant species increased nearly 86% more than on ungrazed prairie. Cattle grazing in the same area led to only a 30% increase in native plant species. The [summary](#) is in *Anthropocene*.

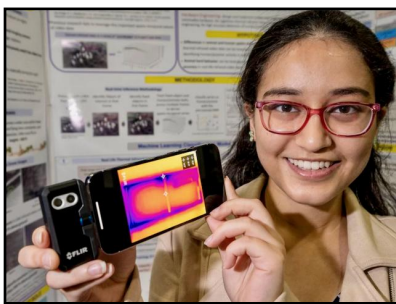




**Meet the neighbors: black bears in Massachusetts** have increased from about 90 statewide in the 1970s to more than 5,000 today (including this recent visitor to a backyard in Middleton), [according](#) to the *Boston Globe*. These resourceful omnivores have learned to navigate urban landscapes and major rivers and highways. To minimize bear conflict, wildlife officers recommend removing birdfeeders from porches and stringing electric fence around chicken coops.

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## AFRICA



**Elephant poachers, beware this teenager.** Annika Puri, 17, of Chappaqua, New York, developed an AI app called ELSa (Elephant Savior) that analyzes infrared drone video of elephant and human movements in thick forest to detect poaching. ELSa is four times more accurate than other detection methods and doesn't need expensive thermal cameras. *Smithsonian* [covered](#) Puri's award-winning app—and also mozAirt, the nonprofit she founded to inspire girls to get involved in computer science.



**DOCUMENTARY:** Observing World Rhino Day by uncovering corruption in South Africa that enables the lucrative black market in rhino horn. The BBC News documentary “Rhinos: Killing and Corruption” (which aired on September 22) begins with conservationists protecting rhinos and goes on to accuse police and park officials, magistrates and game rangers of taking bribes to allow an average of 1,000 rhinos to be poached per year. Jamie Joseph, above, is one of the investigators risking their lives to expose this criminal trade.

## EUROPE



**Germany pumps \$1.5B into a global biodiversity plan**—the largest national financial pledge yet to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The announcement came in September in New York, where political, business, conservation and Indigenous-rights leaders met in advance of the UN biodiversity summit in Montreal in December. Read [more](#), including the staggering projected cost of saving the environment, in *Nature*.





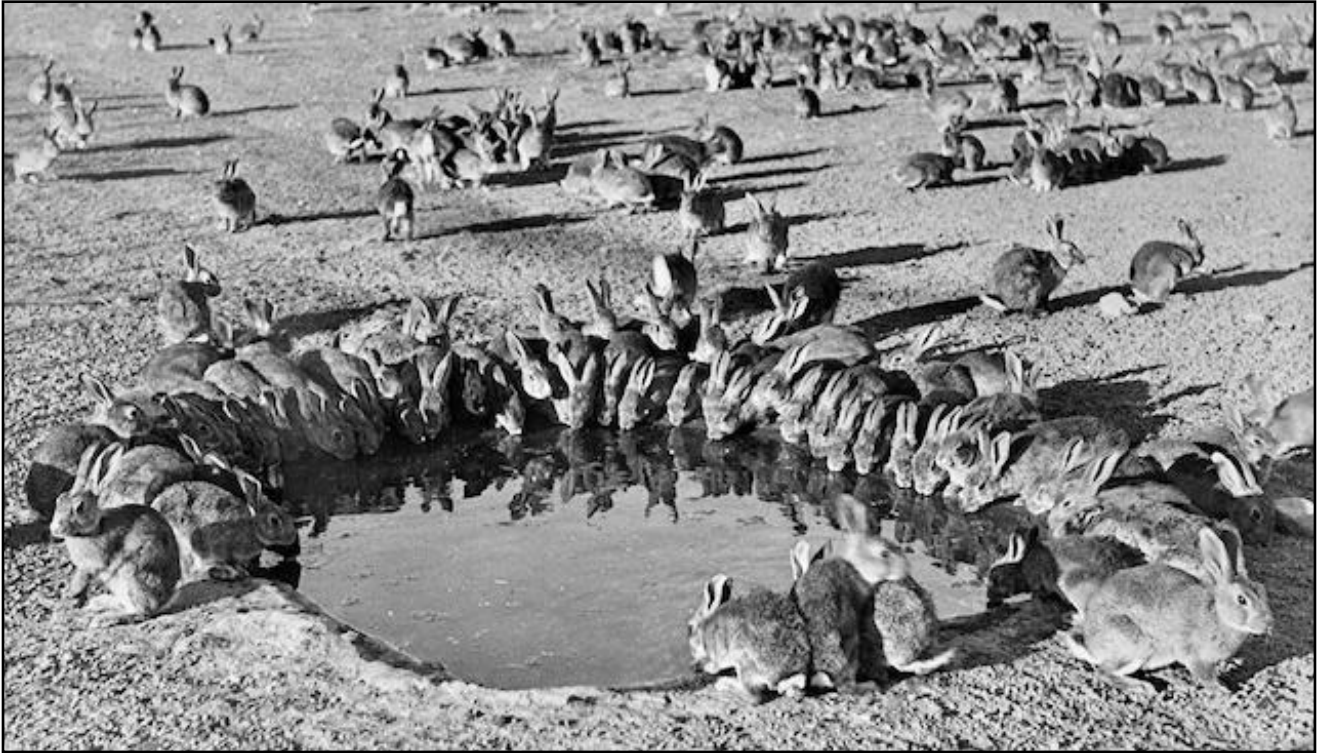
**Those Brit bison are hard at work.** In [August](#), we covered the re-introduction of bison into the UK after an absence of thousands of years. Now *Geographical* [reports](#) that in less than two months, the bison (above, the matriarch) have already made a surprising difference—opening up a network of wildlife trails, debarking trees for beetles and birds, and even stripping out highly invasive rhododendrons. “No one ever expected them to touch the rhododendrons,” said one of the bison rangers.

## WORLD



**The war on island invaders has been surprisingly successful,** [reports](#) *Anthropocene*. Islands are just 5% of Earth’s land mass, but they hold 40% of threatened vertebrates and account for almost two-thirds of all extinctions. The good news? Campaigns to rid islands of invasive species such as rats succeed 88% of the time. DIISE, the Database of Island Invasive Species Eradications, details more than 2,000 eradication projects on 1,200+ islands stretching back to the late 1800s.





**Species that breed like, well, rabbits make the worst invaders.** Most of the 200 million rabbits that today raid Australia's crops came from a gift of 24 European bunnies that arrived in Melbourne on Christmas Day 1859. Fifty years later, they had colonized an area some 13 times larger than their native European range, a rate faster than any other introduced mammal. *Science* [chronicled](#) recent studies of their genome that may help control the runaway population.

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**World's largest bird of prey is inching back from extinction** as scientists and indigenous people work together. *National Geographic* recently [covered](#) the campaign to conserve the Andean condor, the national symbol of at least four countries. The bird can attain a wingspan of 10 feet and live for 50 years, but human impacts ranging from wind

turbines to poison had reduced their numbers to about 6,700.



**The birds most threatened are the irreplaceable ones.** That's the [conclusion](#) of a British team that studied some 8,500 bird species worldwide and found that the ones that serve unique functions in their ecosystems—such as the Himalayan griffon vultures, above—are the most likely to disappear, taking with them special traits such as sharp beaks to tear into flesh and long legs that keep wading birds dry.

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**Selfies of people feeding wildlife**—like this begging deer—have become internet sensations, but ([according](#) to *Anthropocene*) researchers at University College Dublin say this may cause species to evolve to become more aggressive toward humans. The takeaway: *Don't feed wild animals!*





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