

services. Although the river also supports a large human population and generates > 30% of China's GDP, it faces many severe ecological and environmental challenges. China has, however, proposed sustainable development of the whole Yangtze River system. Following visits by President Xi Jinping to Chongqing, Wuhan and Nanjing in the upper, middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River in 2016, 2018 and 2020, respectively, he decreed that conservation and restoration, and avoidance of excessive development, must become priorities.

In 2020, a 10-year ban on fishing in the Yangtze River was implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, with fishing in all tributaries prohibited. The effects of this ban are already clear in the lower reach of Yuan River, a tributary of the Yangtze River, where a larger population of scaly-sided merganser *Mergus squamatus*, a prodigious fish-eater, was able to overwinter in 2020 as a result of greater food availability.

The Landmark Yangtze River Protection Law was adopted by the National People's Congress Standing Committee, China's top legislature, on 24 December 2020, and entered into force on 1 March 2021 as the country's first legislation on a specific river basin. This law bans fishing in all natural waterways of the river, and in its tributaries, estuaries and feeder lakes. It consolidates conservation of the Yangtze River and provides a reference for development of legislation for other river basins.

To complement this law, a draft Wetland Protection Law was submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on 20 January 2021. It is the country's first national legislation focused on conserving its wetlands. When passed, this second law will prohibit any organization or individual from destroying waterbird habitats and other wetland biodiversity.

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Rediscovery of rare shovelnose sturgeons in the Amu Darya River, Uzbekistan

The small Amu Darya shovelnose sturgeon *Pseudoscaphirhynchus hermanni* (Acipenseridae) is a small, rare sturgeon species known only from the Amu Darya River in Central

Asia. It was last caught in 1996, in the middle reaches of the river (Salnikov et al., 1996, *The Sturgeon Quarterly*, 4, 10–14), and had not been recorded in its lower reaches since 1982 (Zholdasova, 1997, *Environmental Biology of Fishes*, 48, 373–380). After the drying of the Aral Sea, habitat alterations in the Amu Darya River (overfishing, damming and channel management, extraction of water for irrigation, and water pollution) have led to a severe decline of sturgeon species there. In 1996, *P. hermanni* was categorized as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

On three occasions in 2020 (18–21 January, 14 March and 3 August), we searched for this species in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya. In a 55 km stretch of the river in the Khorezm Region of Uzbekistan, we collected five fish with the typical morphology of *P. hermanni* (i.e. a dark morph with a short snout). In addition, we caught four individuals of the Amu Darya shovelnose sturgeon *Pseudoscaphirhynchus kaufmanni*, which is also Critically Endangered. *Pseudoscaphirhynchus hermanni* can be distinguished from *P. kaufmanni* by its lack of a caudal filament, lack of spines on the snout, a shovel-shaped snout, pectoral fins with a fold that curls dorsally, and its small size.

Although they are rare and probably declining, our findings confirm that both *P. hermanni* and *P. kaufmanni* are still present in the Amu Darya River. Unfortunately, there has been no known reproduction of these species in captivity. Conservation efforts for both species are needed urgently.

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Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on conservation of the Javan gibbon

The Coffee and Primate Conservation Project was initiated in 2012 to conserve the Javan gibbon *Hylobates moloch* and its habitat in the western Dieng Mountains, Central Java,

Indonesia. The project has developed a sustainable conservation scheme by promoting shade grown coffee as a commodity to improve livelihoods and involve the local community in gibbon conservation. It is located in the c. 81 km² Petungkriyono forest in the Dieng landscape, which has the highest recorded density of the Javan gibbon (2.5–7.6 individuals/km²), with a total population of c. 881 (Setiawan et al., 2012, *Biodiversitas*, 13, 23–27). Coffee production, although on a small scale, has been a useful way to promote the Javan gibbon amongst consumers in both local and regional markets. Owa Coffee is recognized locally as a sustainable commodity that also has a wildlife conservation message. In regional markets, this gibbon friendly coffee has been promoted in collaboration with Wildlife Reserves Singapore. Since 2016, export of the coffee to Singapore has raised USD 10,000–15,000 annually to support community conservation activities in Petungkriyono forest and its surrounding villages through participation in coffee production and forest protection. Owa coffee now brings pride and motivation to the communities, as they recognize the added value brought by the Javan gibbon to the commodity they produce.

However, since March 2020 the coffee supply chain has been disrupted by the uncertain market conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the closure of a cafe in Singapore that was one of the most important Owa Coffee outlets has resulted in a decline in demand for the coffee. With conservation funds from the export of the coffee no longer available, there have been impacts on community development activities that relied on the project. Typically, communities working with agroforestry have the capacity to survive such situations by relying on the food commodities they produce themselves. However, in this case the cessation of coffee sales has had an impact on the income of the local community. From this experience, the Coffee and Primate Conservation Project has recognized that it is important to consider the choice of agroforest commodities based on their resilience and to reduce dependency on a single commodity. Other forest products will need to be developed that have added conservation value.

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Assessing protected area effectiveness

The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), a simple assessment system for protected and conserved

areas, was relaunched in a 4th edition in December 2020. This new edition has updated questions and a spreadsheet tool to streamline implementation and compilation of results. Originally published in 2002, METT is aimed principally at tracking progress in individual protected areas over time. It was one of the first tools developed using the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) framework for assessing protected area management effectiveness. The tool was developed by the World Bank/WWF Alliance for Forest Conservation and Sustainable Use and has been applied in at least 127 countries. Several editions have been produced, reflecting lessons learned, and it has been adapted at national level by several countries. The tool has two main sections. Datasheets collect key information on the protected area, its characteristics, main conservation values, any threats, and management objectives, and details of who completed the assessment. An assessment form provides a composite measurement across 38 questions integrating all six components of the WCPA framework. Within each of these questions, performance is assessed against four grading statements representing standards of management from poor to very good. Each question has data fields for details of evidence that supports the assessment, steps to improve management if necessary, and details of information sources used in making the evaluation. Additional worksheets in METT-4 facilitate more detailed assessments of community relations, planning processes, condition of natural and cultural values, key species and habitats. Results of the assessment are presented in a dashboard summarizing the key results. The tool, and associated capacity-building material, is available at protectedplanet.net/en/thematic-areas/protected-areas-management-effectiveness-pame.

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