Nature Waves Flags of Warning on World Wildlife Day

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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

➤ World Wildlife Day (WWD), which is held annually to celebrate biodiversity and raise global awareness of our relationship with plants and animals, has never been timelier.

➤ With the rapidly spreading coronavirus suspected to have jumped from the most trafficked species on Earth, the pangolin, and an extinction crisis threatening a million plus species, nature is waving flags of warning.

➤ As the UN dubbed 'Super Year' crescendos towards global agenda-setting meetings on oceans and a post-2020 biodiversity framework, events on World
World Wildlife Day (WWD), held annually on 3 March, is meant to celebrate biodiversity and raise global awareness of our relationship with plants and animals. The event has never been timelier. The rapidly spreading coronavirus is suspected to have jumped from the most trafficked species on Earth (pangolins), while the world’s leading scientists have concluded that an anthropogenic-driven crisis now threatens at least one million species with extinction.

With the WWD convening under the theme, ‘Sustaining all Life on Earth’, has there ever been a more pressing time to draw attention to the links between humanity and the Earth’s flora and fauna? Nature is waving warning flags.

There were some notable announcements on the Day. Technology companies of the ‘Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online’ said they removed or blocked over three million listings for endangered and threatened species and associated products from their online platforms, to date. The results were publicized as part of the report titled, ‘Offline and in the Wild’, produced by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), TRAFFIC and International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)-led coalition.

In partnership with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the Ocean Agency launched Glowing Glowing Gone, a creative awareness campaign to bring attention to coral fluorescence due to climate change. The campaign’s press release instructs that corals fluoresce as a last line of defense before dying or bleaching, a phenomena made more common by warming seas. The Ocean Agency worked with Pantone and Adobe to turn the warning colors of glowing coral into three official Pantone colors, to inspire action that everyone can use.

The Day also saw traditional and high-level awareness raising. The Ambassador of India to the UN in New York, the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the UN, the CITES Secretary General, and the President of the Wildlife Conservation Society were among speakers at a high-level event at UN Headquarters in New York.
York. On the creative front, Jackson Wild™ led the organization of the fifth iteration of a wildlife-themed film festival with some 350 entries, and the International Fund for Animal Welfare held an international WWD youth art contest that featured youth artists’ expressions of the Day’s theme.

Just after the Day, UNEP announced that the theme of the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) will be: ‘Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.’ The session is set to take place from 22-26 February 2021 in Nairobi, Kenya. Speaking on the UNEA theme, Sveinung Rotevatn, Norway’s Minister of Climate and the Environment and President of the Assembly said, “Nature is the solution we in many ways take for granted, but that we cannot afford to lose.” Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, while addressing the WWD, pointed out that humanity seems to have “forgotten just how much we need nature for our survival and well-being.”

As the UN dubbed ‘Super Year’ crescendos towards global agenda-setting meetings on oceans and a post-2020 biodiversity framework, events on World Wildlife Day highlighted that humanity needs to notice that glowing corals aren’t the only thing signaling, ‘Going … Going … Gone.’ [UNEP Press Release] [UNDP Press Release] [UN News] [WWF Press Release] [WWD Landing Page] [Policy Brief on Nature]

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