

## ON THE MOVE TO 2010

In April 2002, governments at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is administered under UNEP's aegis, agreed "to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth". This target was endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and is the focus for UNEP's biodiversity-related activities. Biodiversity refers to the uncounted variety of living things on the planet. These living organisms, interacting among themselves and with the non-living environment, comprise the ecosystems of the world. They supply food, medicines, timber and fuel, and play a fundamental role in providing breathable air, conserving soils and stabilizing climates.

These benefits, or 'ecosystem services', which are ultimately essential for human life on earth, are the basis of a range of industries, from agriculture and biotechnology to fisheries and ecotourism. The value of ecosystem services was the subject of the five-year Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), in which UNEP was a partner. The MA concluded in 2005, and its synthesis reports reveal that ecosystem services are habitually undervalued, at an uncountable cost to society, especially the poor who rely most heavily on the planet's natural capital for health and livelihoods.

Among the greatest challenges for biodiversity conservation is the status of migratory species. 'On the Move to 2010' was the theme chosen for the eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), in Nairobi, in November 2005. On the agenda were proposals to give extra protection to a number of species, including the lowland gorilla, the basking shark, the Mediterranean dolphin and several African and Latin American bird and bat species. New agreements between countries were also signed to catalyze cross-border cooperation to boost the conservation of West Africa's elephants and the Saiga antelope of Central Asia.

The Conference also addressed the issue of avian influenza. In order to better understand the potential role wild migratory birds might play in this global danger, it was decided to develop and implement an early warning system to alert countries and communities to the arrival of potentially infected wild birds. The system will be developed by CMS with UNEP support. Experts from other leading organizations such as Wetlands International, Birdlife International and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation will be part of the scheme.

### CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY

2005 saw a shift in the activities of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) from policy development towards implementation of the Convention and the realization of its goals at the national and international level. The Convention's working group on access to genetic resources and equitable sharing of their benefits met in Bangkok, Thailand, to launch the negotiations for an international regime and discuss issues and concepts, such as Prior Informed Consent and Mutually Agreed Terms that would feature in an eventual regime.

The first meeting of the CBD working group on protected areas took place in Montecatini, Italy, in June. Delegates held groundbreaking discussions on available options for establishing marine protected areas on the high seas beyond national jurisdiction, and on mobilizing financial resources for the implementation of the work programme for developing countries. In cooperation with The Nature Conservancy, the CBD secretariat also launched *Towards Effective Protected Area Systems: An Action Guide to Implement the Convention on Biological Diversity Programme of Work on Protected Areas*.

At the second meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, in Montreal, Canada, 30 May–3 June 2005, the Parties adopted a multi-year programme of work for the biosafety



Thousands of glassfishes *Parapriacanthus guentheri* swim on the edge of the coral reef in the Ras Mohammed protection area near Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 6 July 2005. The Red Sea, enclosed by some 2,000 kilometres of coastline in between the Arabian Peninsula and the African continent, is populated by an incredible diversity of marine life, much of which is endemic. Globally, biodiversity is currently being lost at a rate more rapid than at any time in human history. The current rate of species extinctions is between 100 and 1,000 times greater than natural rates. Currently 12 per cent of bird species, 23 per cent of mammal species and at least 32 per cent of amphibian species are threatened with extinction globally due to human activities that result in habitat loss, the spread of exotic species, pollution, and over-harvesting. Biodiversity is also increasingly threatened by climate change. © Tarik Tinazay/AFP/Getty Images

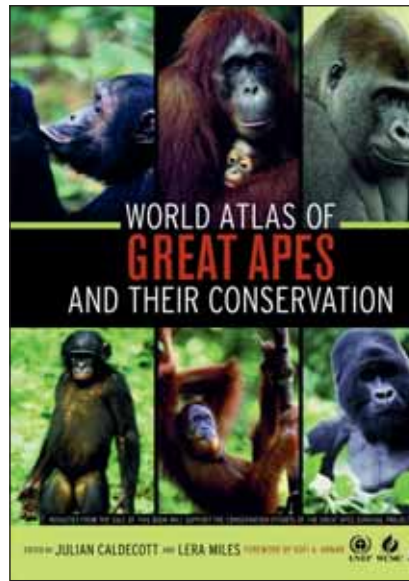
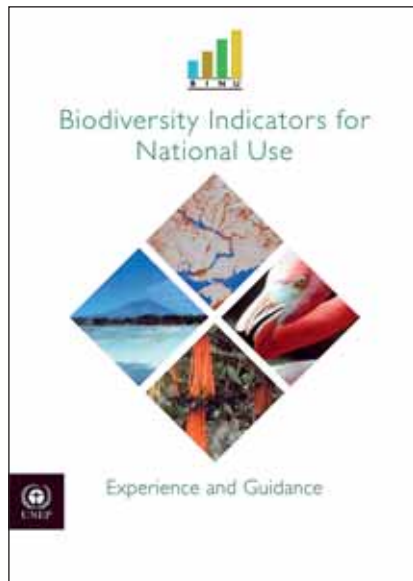
clearing-house; agreed on measures to address the capacity building needs and priorities of developing countries; established an expert group to review and provide guidance on approaches to risk assessment and risk management; and approved the rules that will guide the workings of the compliance committee.

UNEP's Division for Global Environment Facility (GEF) Coordination continues to play a lead role in ensuring that funding flows from the GEF for strategic actions to implement the CBD. The current portfolio of projects related to biodiversity and the CBD totals approximately \$300 million (including co-financing from other donors). This includes work in more than 100 countries to help them to prepare National Biosafety Frameworks, a key early step in the Cartagena Protocol's implementation.

## UNDERSTANDING BIODIVERSITY

UNEP, through its World Conservation Monitoring Centre, in Cambridge, UK, continued to work to support the biodiversity related Conventions, such as CBD, and their Parties. The Biodiversity Indicators for National Use project developed national-level biodiversity indicators to support planning and decision making in Kenya, Ecuador, Ukraine and Philippines. The project includes dissemination of the approaches it has developed to support the production of biodiversity indicators by other countries, and at global level under the CBD. UNEP-WCMC also produced *Guidelines for Biodiversity Assessment and Monitoring for Protected Areas*. These guidelines, which cover all the stages in carrying out a biodiversity assessment for a protected area and developing a biodiversity monitoring programme, are based

## Protecting natural capital



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on the practical experience of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation and UNEP-WCMC in developing a biodiversity monitoring system for the Annapurna Conservation Area in Nepal.

UNEP has been working with the Asian Development Bank in the Asia-Pacific region on the Core Environment Programme under the Biodiversity Corridor Initiative (BCI). UNEP was a partner in the design of the Initiative and now provides the secretariat of the Greater Mekong sub-Region Environmental Performance Assessment Project. UNEP will play an important role in biodiversity data management and monitoring in the two phases of the BCI—2006–2008 and 2006–2015. In Europe, the Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) process, with UNEP's Regional Office for Europe and the Council of Europe forming the joint secretariat, provides a framework for addressing biodiversity concerns in the Economic Commission for Europe region, with particular emphasis on implementing the CBD. Under the programme Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators, six expert groups have been formed to assess key trends related to achieving the 2010 target.

### SAVING ENDANGERED SPECIES

2005 marked the 30th anniversary of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), another of the biodiversity treaties administered under UNEP's aegis. CITES works to balance conservation and sustainable use, and increasingly seeks to make conservation

and poverty reduction mutually supportive. CITES supports conservation and enforcement departments in developing countries to ensure that national and international efforts to control illegal trade in endangered species work in tandem. More recently, CITES' effectiveness in managing 'traditional' wildlife issues, such as elephant ivory, has convinced governments to expand its role in promoting sustainable development. Species from the high-value fisheries and timber industries, which were originally considered off-limits to the Convention, are now featured on CITES appendices.

Among the most endangered and charismatic species on the planet, great apes are the focus of a growing global partnership spearheaded by UNEP and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). In September 2005, with funding from the European Commission, the Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP) held an Intergovernmental Meeting on Great Apes and the first GRASP Council Meeting in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, to raise awareness and strengthen political and donor commitment to conserving great apes. The meeting adopted the Kinshasa Declaration on Great Apes to secure the long-term survival for all great ape species and their habitat.

The meeting also saw the launch of UNEP's *World Atlas of Great Apes and their Conservation*, which provides a comprehensive overview of the six species of great apes other than *Homo sapiens*—chimpanzees, bonobos, Sumatran orangutans, Bornean orangutans, eastern gorillas and western

gorillas. It also gives a thorough background on great ape behaviour and ecology, including detailed habitat requirements, ecological role, and the possible consequences of their decline. The *Atlas* also offers a full description of threats, current conservation efforts, and additional protection needed for each species across its entire range. The European Commission funding of 3 million euros also covers national projects over a four-year-period in Indonesia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire. The projects will support the development of national plans for great ape conservation in range states as well as the implementation of field activities for the survival of threatened great ape populations.

## MARINE DIVERSITY

During 2005, the UNEP Coral Reef Unit intensified UNEP's efforts to support national, regional and global action to reverse the degradation of the world's coral reefs, and widened its scope of work to include the conservation and sustainable management and use of cold-water coral reef ecosystems. At a high level side event at the international meeting to review progress on the 1994 Barbados Plan of Action for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), held in Mauritius in January, speakers, including the UN Secretary-General, raised awareness of the critical role of marine and coastal protected areas, including coral reefs, for human well-being, poverty alleviation and the sustainable development of SIDS. More than \$20 million was pledged by attending governments and non-governmental partners to support networks of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas in SIDS.

Following the Asian tsunami, UNEP's Coral Reef Unit acted as the coral reef focal point between UN agencies, the UNEP tsunami task force and members of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), and facilitated the development and dissemination of the *ICRI/ICRS Guidelines For Rapid Assessment and Monitoring of Tsunami Damage to Coral Reefs*. During the year, UNEP provided strategic guidance and financial support to strengthen ICRI's work, in which more than 30 countries and 20 organizations are now engaged. Also, as a partner in the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN), UNEP has supported projects in 35 countries in seven regions.

UNEP also produced a joint publication with CMS on the status and threats to marine mammals. The *Review of Small Cetaceans: Distribution, Behaviour, Migration and Threats*, was launched at the CMS Conference in Nairobi. No comparable encyclopaedia has been previously published. With the exception of the sperm whale, all species of toothed whales that migrate across the oceans are covered. The findings on distribution, behaviour and migration in the report will facilitate action plans to reduce the threats that so many of these species clearly face. Other important partnership projects with CMS include the development of a regional status report and conservation strategy on the Western African manatee and a *Training Toolkit on Small Cetaceans* in the area covered by the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), with the Black Sea Commission and the Mediterranean Action Plan.

**One of UNEP's most popular publications during the year was the *Review of Small Cetaceans: Distribution, Behaviour, Migration and Threats*, launched during the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species, in November. The publication covers all species of toothed whales that migrate across the oceans. The findings in the report will facilitate action plans to reduce the threats faced by so many of these species.**

