Oryx

Latest issue: Bear conservation

By Cecilia Derrick, 24th November 2025

The latest issue of Oryx delves into the complexities of bear conservation across North America and Asia, spotlighting both the difficulties these species face and the efforts underway to protect them. From judicial decisions threatening the fragile population of the Louisiana black bear in the USA, to dwindling populations of Asiatic black bears in Hainan, new insights into the conservation status of black bears and sun bears in Bangladesh, and the rediscovery of brown bears in Nepal, this issue reveals the urgent need for evidence-based policy, habitat protection, community engagement and cross-border collaboration. The theme demonstrates the challenges of conserving wide-ranging carnivores in fragmented landscapes, where human pressures and ecological change intersect.

The lead article by Novak examines in depth the turbulent history of the Louisiana black bear *Ursus americanus luteolus*, featured on the cover, and demonstrates how great an impact government decisions can have on the conservation of vulnerable wildlife populations.

In the editorial, Brian Crudge and Zachary David reflect on the broader implications of bear conservation for biodiversity and ecosystem health.

Explore the full contents and Editor's picks below:

Editor's picks

- Judicial doom of an ursid genome – *Nowak*
- Biodiversity credits: a new currency to support nature conservation? – *Schwerdtner Manez & Clifton*
- Discovering sanctuaries for the Endangered thick-shelled river mussel *Unio crassus* in Kaliningradskaya Oblast, Russia – *Popov, Markovets & Abakumov*
- Wild vertebrate roadkill in northern Central America: a first assessment using citizen science data – *Arévalo-Ayala, Funes, Escobar-Anleu & Funes*

Brown bear. Photo: ambquinn on Pixabay.

Bear conservation

- Judicial doom of an ursid genome – *Nowak*
- Assessing the conservation status of and challenges facing Asiatic black bears and Malayan sun bears in Bangladesh – *Akash et al.*
- New insights into the geographical distribution of brown bears *Ursus arctos* in Nepal – *Kusi et al.*
- Continued survival of the Asiatic black bear *Ursus thibetanus* in Hainan, China – *Li et al.*

Behind the cover

During a hunt in 1902, U.S. President Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt declined to shoot a tethered Louisiana black bear *Ursus americanus luteolus*, an incident that inadvertently gave rise to the manufacturing of Teddy Bear toys for children. This subspecies was protected by the U.S. Endangered Species Act in 1992 but removed from coverage in 2016 based on the alleged presence of two viable native populations that had begun to interbreed. However, historical and genetic data show that one of these populations is descended from bears captured in the U.S. state of Minnesota, far to the north. A recent judicial decision ignored those data, effectively dooming *luteolus* to genomic extinction through hybridization with the introduced population. This issue examines this matter in depth, along with articles on bear conservation in Bangladesh, Hainan and Nepal. The cover shows native Louisiana black bears of the Lower Atchafalaya population, photographed at Avery Island. (Photograph © Pam McIlhenny).

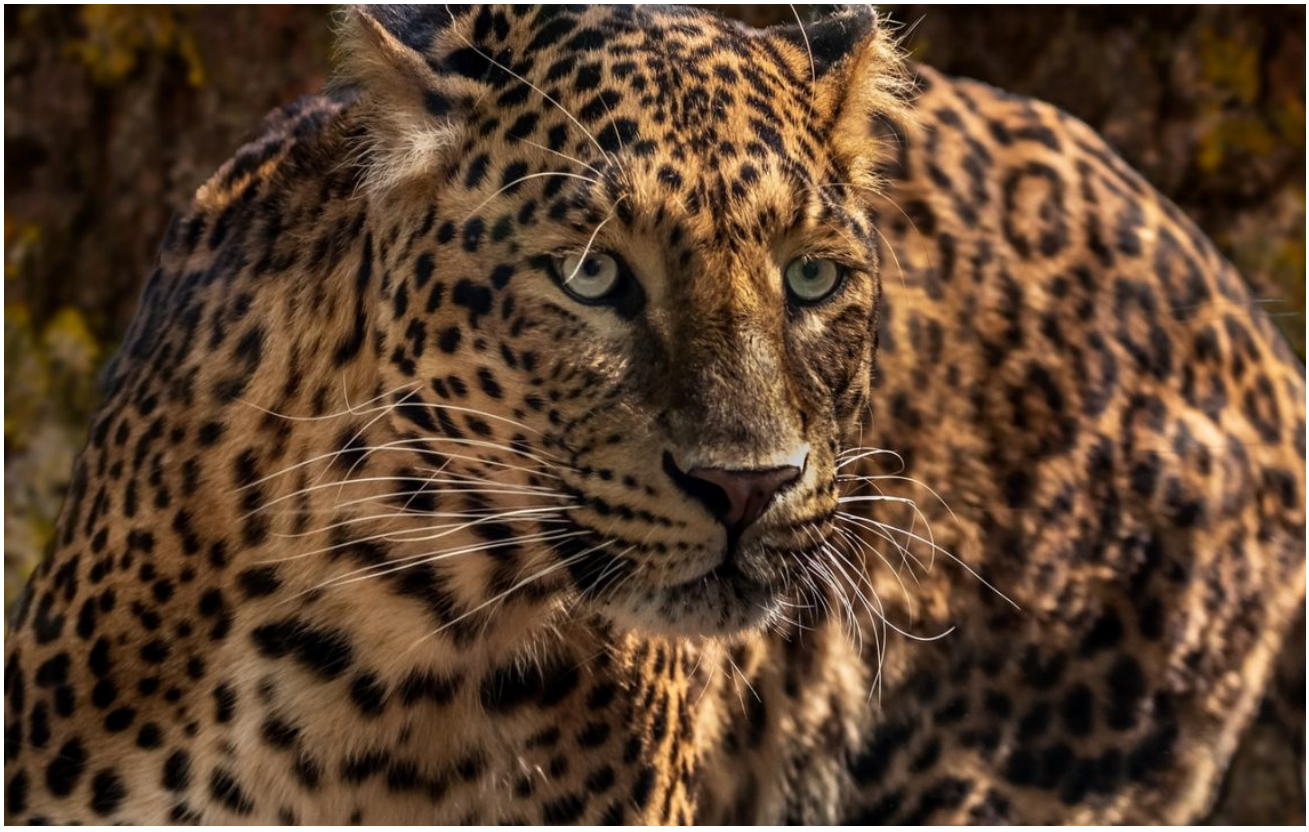
Editorial

Global bear conservation requires local action – *Crudge & David*

Bears are among the most iconic species in the world, yet their survival depends on nuanced, locally driven strategies. Despite their global distribution and cultural significance, many bear species—such as the sun bear—remain poorly understood. While global assessments such as the IUCN Red List offer a broad picture of extinction risk, they often mask the critical vulnerability of local populations and subspecies. This editorial highlights the urgent need for robust, region-specific data and community-based monitoring to inform conservation decisions. From innovative techniques like occupancy modelling to ex situ research in rescue facilities, the authors argue that effective global bear conservation hinges on empowering range-state agencies and local NGOs with predictable resources. Without targeted action, lesser-known species and isolated populations risk slipping through the cracks of global categorizations.

Briefly

Discover selected, bite-sized conservation stories and news from around the world, with a spotlight on bears.



Jaguar. Photo: edmondlafoto on Pixabay.

Other content

- Biodiversity credits: a new currency to support nature conservation? – *Schwerdtner Manez &*

Clifton

- Using local ecological knowledge to identify land-use threats to the last wild population of the Chinese alligator *Alligator sinensis* – *Lau et al.*
- Discovering sanctuaries for the Endangered thick-shelled river mussel *Unio crassus* in Kaliningradskaya Oblast, Russia – *Popov, Markovets & Abakumov*
- A species under siege: modelling habitat suitability for the bear cuscus *Ailurops ursinus* in South Sulawesi – *Nugraha & Marliana*
- Conservation crisis? Status of jaguars *Panthera onca* in Corcovado National Park, Costa Rica – *Olson et al.*
- Wild vertebrate roadkill in northern Central America: a first assessment using citizen science data – *Arévalo-Ayala, Funes, Escobar-Anleu & Funes*
- Using local scientific knowledge for transboundary conservation: distribution modelling for the taruka in South America – *Fuentes-Allende et al.*
- Drivers of medium- and large-bodied terrestrial mammal communities within a savannah–forest mosaic on Makushi and Wapichan customary lands in the Rupununi, Guyana – *Hallett et al.*
- Export volume trends and the conservation status of commonly targeted ornamental fishes from Malawi – *Msukwa & Jere*
- Severe decline of the only remaining population of walia ibex in Ethiopia: proposed actions and recommended recategorization as Critically Endangered – *Scholte et al.*

Walia ibex. Photo: Paul Scholte.

Conservation news

- Conservation Leadership Programme celebrates 40th anniversary — *Kate Tointon*
- The Whitley Awards 2025 — *Kasia Brookes*
- XPRIZE rainforests: providing breakthrough advances for wildlife monitoring — *Hernani F. M. Oliveira et al.*
- Rediscovery of Anthemis stiparum subsp. sabulicola in Algeria after 44 years — *Belkacem Gordo*
- Discovery of a population of the Endangered Dulacia singularis at the mouth of the Rio Doce — *Ana L.L. Batista et al.*
- Creation of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Gekkota Lizard Specialist Group — *Liliana Saboyá-Acosta et al.*
- An IUCN Species Survival Commission Center for Species Survival on Behaviour Change — *João Neves et al.*
- Emerging trafficking of live striped rabbits driven by demand for exotic pets in India and Thailand — *K. Yoganand & Andrew Tilker*
- Mongoose eradication achieved on Japanese World Heritage island: social benefits outweigh costs — *Takahiro Kubo and Kota Mameno*
- First study on the survival and dispersal of captive-reared narrow-headed softshell turtles along the Yamuna River, India — *Arunima Singh et al.*
- First photographic record of musk deer in West Bengal, India — *Meghna Limboo & Govindan Veeraswami Gopi*
- Preserving island living heritage: ancient tree awareness campaign in Hainan — *Chunping Xie*
- International training course on Botanical Garden Development and Management: cultivating seeds of knowledge and strengthening regional capacity — *Shubo Huang et al.*
- 24th Sharjah International Conservation Forum for Arabia’s biodiversity — *Philip Seddon et al.*

Cecilia Derrick

Cecilia joined the Oryx team in 2025, excited to support the dissemination of research that informs conservation action. Since completing a Biological Sciences MSci at University College London, Cecilia has worked in academic science publishing for various journals including the Nature Portfolio and the Natural History Museum’s journals. Alongside her professional work, Cecilia has volunteered with several conservation charities, including the RSPB and the London Natural History Society.