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This digest was compiled by Giulia Muir. Many thanks to all those who have shared information for this edition. A special thank you to Tina Etherington who managed and compiled FAO's NWFP Digest over the past twelve years, representing a focal point for knowledge and information-exchange on NWFPs. We wish her luck as she begins a new chapter in her life!

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PRODUCTS

1. **Bushmeat: What's gender got to do with it? Bushmeat consumption in the Congo Basin**
Source: CIFOR Blog, 18 July 2012

While bushmeat consumption as a driver of deforestation has received international attention, understanding the roles played by women and men in the consumption of wild terrestrial or semi-terrestrial animals will be vital if the trade is to continue sustainably, said a CIFOR scientist at a recent conference.

“To develop alternative measures that will bring bushmeat hunting to a sustainable level, it is imperative to understand the complex socio-economic and cultural drivers of the bushmeat hunting, trade, and consumption, particularly the roles of men and women who are involved for different reasons,” said Robert Nasi, CIFOR Scientist and Leader of the CGIAR Research Programme on Forest, Trees, and Agroforestry, at the first Africa Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) and the Forestry Network for sub-Saharan Africa (FORNESSA).

Previous CIFOR research has found that meat from wild terrestrial or semi-terrestrial animals — termed bushmeat — is a significant source of animal protein in the Central African countries, and a crucial component of food security and livelihoods in rural and urban areas. Despite the increasing international attention to bushmeat and available information on its harvest, trade and consumption, there is a limited understanding of the complex socio-economic and cultural situations that drive the phenomenon.

The findings presented at the IUFRO-FORNESSA Africa Congress are part of forthcoming CIFOR research on the roles and contributions of men and women in the hunting, trade, and consumption of bushmeat within the value chain. “Women are increasingly involved in the bushmeat value chain as retailers, wholesalers, restaurant owners, and consumers. In some cases, they are even directly involved in hunting, which is generally considered a man’s activity”

Expounding on the gender dynamics of the bushmeat trade and consumption, Nasi, who is also one of the authors of *The Forest of the Congo Basin: State of the Forest 2010*, said that “While men hunt bushmeat to build financial capital to marry and engage in other social activities such as drinking, women are more likely to use proceeds from bushmeat trade to take care of their families and meet other basic needs”.

Over all, the bushmeat trade chain is gender-balanced with women and men involved for various reasons. For Nasi, an in-depth knowledge of these gender dynamics is key to developing a sustainable solution to bushmeat hunting and its trade in the Congo Basin. For full story, please see:

<http://blog.cifor.org/10247/whats-gender-got-to-do-with-it-bush-meat-consumption-in-the-congo-basin/>

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2. Bushmeat: Poaching in the Serengeti linked to poverty, high legal hunting prices

Source: www.mongabay.com, 9 July 2012

Standing in the way of efforts to protect the Serengeti — arguably Africa's most famous ecosystem — is the bushmeat trade. Population growth, little available protein, poverty, and a long-standing history of hunting have led many communities to poach wildlife within the Serengeti National Park. Interviewing over a thousand community members in the western Serengeti, scientists found that community members are largely aware that wildlife hunting is illegal and that conservation of wild species is important, but hunt animals anyway partly out of necessity.

"Communities in western Serengeti are involved in wildlife hunting not because they lack knowledge about the illegality of wildlife hunting and the importance of conservation of wildlife species, but because they lack alternative sources of meat," the researchers write in the new study in [mongabay.com](http://www.mongabay.com)'s open access journal *Tropical Conservation Science*. They further note that despite promises, local communities find little economic gain from the park.

Hunting by permit is legal in parts of Serengeti National Park, but the researchers write that local communities avoid legal hunting because the price is far too high. Most legal hunters in the region are foreign trophy hunters. "They are neither able to afford licensing fees nor allowed to use traditional weapons under the current legislation," the researchers write. "In reality, legal hunting is not an option for local people in areas like Serengeti, since

no hunting quotas are granted to local people at affordable terms. For local hunters, the economic benefits from sales of illegally acquired bushmeat are far greater than the costs associated with a low probability of arrest and prosecution. The result is a persistent problem for wildlife conservation."

In order to mitigate poaching by local communities, the researchers recommend programs and initiatives to diversify incomes, reduce poverty, increase food security, and provide better wildlife and conservation education in the western Serengeti.

For full story, please see: <http://news.mongabay.com/2012/0709-hance-tcs-serengeti-poaching.html#ixzz21pLu7duQ>

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3. Bushmeat: Endangered fruit bats, and other species, on the menu in the Philippines

Source: www.mongabay.com, 9 July 2012

It is well-known that bushmeat hunting is decimating animal populations in Africa, but the phenomenon has been poorly studied throughout Southeast Asia. However, a new study in [mongabay.com](http://news.mongabay.com)'s open access journal *Tropical Conservation Science* shines light on the size and scale of bushmeat poaching in the Philippines. Studying an anonymous community near a national park on the island of Luzon, researchers found that poachers targeted 22 species, ten of which are considered either threatened or near threatened with extinction by the IUCN Red List. The most heavily hunted animals were fruit bats including the giant flying fox (*Pteropus vampyrus*) and the white-winged flying fox (*Desmalopex leucopterus*).

"According to hunters, bats represent a steady supply of bushmeat, as success in hunting large animals such as wild pig is considered unreliable and sporadic. Several reports suggest that the flying fox populations are rapidly declining throughout Southeast Asia, largely due to overhunting," the scientists write, adding that "flying foxes contribute to forest regeneration by promoting seed dispersal. Reductions in their populations could potentially alter local plant communities and ecosystem functioning. The same holds true for other seed dispersers such as palm civets, macaques, fruit-doves, and hornbills, all of which are also hunted."

By interviewing anonymous poachers over six months, the scientists found that poaching is prevalent in many parts of the park. Lack of enforcement means even local officials admit to hunting bats. But the poachers also told scientists that parts of the park are not hunted due to their remoteness.

"We believe that increased education about threatened species could encourage hunters to focus on less-threatened species. In the end, fines may serve as the best method to limit hunting in the protected area," the scientists say. They add that current poaching is not for subsistence, but largely economic gain. "As in many other developing countries, money is a major driver of the bushmeat trade in our study area. Thus, improvement of local economic conditions would likely substantially decrease hunting frequency, as was observed in nearby Indonesia," the authors write.

For full story, please see: <http://news.mongabay.com/2012/0709-hance-tcs-bushmeat-philippines.html>

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www.fao.org/forestry/wildlife/67288/en/

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4. Cork: Two-year study to test effectiveness of cork and screw cap wine closures
Source: Santa Maria Times (California), 22 July 2012

The University of California (UC) and the PlumpJack Group, which owns two California wineries, are teaming for a two-year study on the effectiveness and quality of screw cap wine closures.

The study, entitled “Bottle Aging — Closure and Variability Study,” will be conducted by the University to shed light on the ongoing debate over whether wine quality and agreeability is compromised by the use of screw cap closures instead of the use of natural or synthetic corks.

The PlumpJack Group wineries, located in Napa Valley, California, use both traditional cork and screw cap closures on its products.

All closure methods on wine bottles are designed to provide an airtight barrier to keep out oxygen, which can negatively affect aging and taste. The study will use scientific methods — including the new CT scanner invented by UC researcher John Boone, Vice Chairman of Research, Radiology. “Oxygen is the biggest culprit for wine — it affects taste, colour and the aging process,” said Andrew Waterhouse, Professor of Viticulture and Enology at UC.

Findings from the study are expected to be published at the end of 2013.

For full story, please see: http://santamariatimes.com/lifestyles/columnist/laurie_jervis/study-cork-vs-screw-cap/article_b1ce6a3c-d2ff-11e1-844e-0019bb2963f4.html

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5. Ecotourism in India: What exactly constitutes ecotourism?
Source: The Hindu (India), 27 July 2012

The Supreme Court’s interim order banning tourism in core tiger areas raises debate whether there are any guidelines for ecotourism and how harmful the practice can be to the wildlife and its habitat in protected areas. Critical to the debate is what exactly is meant by “ecotourism”.

The State Forest Department’s ecotourism initiative in The Nilgiris Biosphere, for example, allows tourists to enter in private Sports Utility Vehicles (SUV), which not only disrupts wildlife but brings few financial benefits to the Department. The logbook at the forest office shows that on an average, 12 SUVs are allowed to ply through the main road of the reserve each day. “On weekends, we allow up to two dozen vehicles,” said one forester posted.

Nevertheless, while 70 percent of the revenue from each trip goes to the tour operators, the rest is spent on the welfare of tribal families in traditional settlements in the area.

“The concept of ecotourism is to rationalize tourist activities in prime wildlife habitats and biodiversity hot spots and is not about throwing open fresh locations for commercial purposes,” says K. Kalidas, founder, OSAI, a Coimbatore-based NGO.

Incidentally, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) draft policy on ecotourism, released in June 2011, has recommended setting up a State-level committee and local advisory committees, as well as granting each protected area permission to develop its own ecotourism plan.

Laying out stipulations for tiger reserves, the policy states that 20 percent could be permitted for ecotourism access for reserves larger than 500 km² but with the condition that 30 percent of the surrounding buffer area should be restored as wildlife habitat in five years.

For reserves smaller than 500 km², ecotourism is permitted in 15 percent of the area with the condition that 20 percent of the buffer should be restored as a wildlife habitat in five years. It also has specified the number of vehicles to be allowed in each protected area.

The MoEF draft guidelines is available at [www.toftigers.org/Documents/DraftEcotourism Guidelines2June.pdf](http://www.toftigers.org/Documents/DraftEcotourism%20Guidelines2June.pdf)

For full story, please see:

www.thehindu.com/news/states/tamil-nadu/article3688085.ece

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6. Edible insects: What will we be eating in 20 years' time?

Source: BBC News Magazine, 29 July 2012

Volatile food prices and a growing population mean we have to rethink what we eat, say food futurologists. So what might we be serving up in 20 years' time?

Rising food prices, the growing population and environmental concerns are just a few issues that have organizations — including the UN and the government — worrying about how we will feed ourselves in the future.

In the UK, meat prices are anticipated to have a huge impact on our diets. Some in the food industry estimate they could double in the next five to seven years, making meat a luxury item. "In the West many of us have grown up with cheap, abundant meat," says food futurologist Morgaine Gaye. "Rising prices mean we are now starting to see the return of meat as a luxury. As a result we are looking for new ways to fill the meat gap."

So what will fill such gaps and our stomachs — and how will we eat it? Insects, or mini-livestock as they could become known, will become a staple of our diet, says Gaye. It is a win-win situation. Insects provide as much nutritional value as ordinary meat and are a great source of protein, according to researchers at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. They also cost less to raise than cattle, consume less water and do not have much of a carbon footprint. Plus, there are an estimated 1 400 species that are edible to man.

"Things like crickets and grasshoppers will be ground down and used as an ingredient in things like burgers," says Gaye.

The Dutch government is putting serious money into getting insects into mainstream diets. It recently invested €1 million into research and to prepare legislation governing insect farms.

A large chunk of the world's population already eat insects as a regular part of their diet. Caterpillars and locusts are popular in Africa, wasps are a delicacy in Japan, and crickets are eaten in Thailand. But insects will need an image overhaul if they are to become more palatable to the squeamish Europeans and North Americans, says Gaye, who is a member of the Experimental Food Society.

For full story, please see: www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-18813075

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7. Edible insects: Insects creep into mainstream market

Source: The Independent Online (South Africa), 12 July 2012

Bugs have been on the menu in Thailand for ages but only recently have they migrated from the forests to commercial farms and factories.

"The crickets you see on sale in Thailand are mostly from farms," said Yupa Hanboonsong, assistant professor in entomology at Khon Kaen University. "We have around 20 000 cricket farmers in the north-east."

Yupa and fellow entomologist Tasanee Jamjanya began introducing cricket-raising techniques as an alternative source of income and protein for farmers in north-eastern Thailand about 15 years ago. For some, the tiny insects have turned into a substantial source of revenue.

“If we are running at full capacity, we can make a profit of 200 000 baht (US\$6 450) in one month,” said Pranee Hackl, a cricket entrepreneur in Khon Kaen province's Nonthon district, 330 km north-east of Bangkok.

Pranee, 47, and her Austrian husband, Oswald, 61, qualify as large-scale farmers in Thailand's cricket industry. Her farm boasts 150 concrete cricket pens, where the insects are hatched, fed and raised for about six weeks until they are big enough to be sold.

The venture has not been without challenges. Like other commercially raised animals, crickets are vulnerable to diseases and weather changes, but unlike chickens and cattle, little is known about crickets.

“There are no real experts on cricket raising,” Pranee said. “This is a new profession, so you have to learn by experimenting.”

The market is also unpredictable. Since she started up seven years ago, the price of crickets has fallen from 180 to 100 baht/kg, evidence of growing competition.

Thailand's bug business is relatively well-established with impressive market logistics in place nationwide. There are three wholesale hubs for insects, including Long Klua in Sa Keow province on the Thai-Cambodian border, Kalasin town in north-east Thailand and Talad Thai in Pathum Thani, just north of Bangkok. Some bugs are now travelling from farms in north-eastern Thailand as far afield as the Middle East. “We have a customer who is sending insects to Israel to sell to Thais working there,” said Keowjai Danook, 36, an insect wholesaler at Talad Thai.

Most of Thailand's overseas labourers hail from the north-eastern region of Isaan, the country's most impoverished, where insects have always been part of the daily diet. Isaan natives living in Bangkok comprise the capital's largest market for insects, but they have also become popular snacks at tourist spots, such as Khao Sarn Road, a backpackers hangout.

Crickets are generally sold on carts on Bangkok' streets along with other delicacies such as water bugs and silk larvae. Upcountry, they are sold in stalls along the highway. The most popular method of preparation is to deep-fry crickets in oil and then sprinkle them with lemongrass slivers and chillies.

While demand for edible insects persists in north-eastern and northern Thailand, the growing market in Bangkok has been driven by middle men and steady supplies now that the bugs are coming from farms rather than forests, vendors said.

“You get a good profit on insects,” said Jarunee Rodpai, 59, owner of the Pha Da insect shop at Talad Thai. “We never have problems with supply, and insects are small and inexpensive to keep in a refrigerator.”

Thailand is not unique in its tradition of entomophagy, but it is a leader in the region in terms of farming insects and processing them, said Yupa, who is helping FAO on a project to introduce insect farming to neighbouring Laos. The UN agency has been promoting insects as an alternative source of food for both people and livestock for the past decade. Experts see their greatest commercial potential in the feed-meal sector.

“The feed sector is the most imminent, particularly for providing protein in fish and chicken rations,” said Paul Vantomme, Senior Forestry Officer for FAO in Rome.

“We raise a huge amount of cattle, chicken, fish, so where are we going to get the protein to feed them?” Vantomme said. “There is not much forest left to deforest, and there is not much fish left in the ocean, so we need to look at all alternatives, including insects.”

For full story, please see: www.iol.co.za/scitech/science/environment/insects-creep-into-mainstream-market-1.1340261

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8. Edible insects: The sushi of the future is insects

Source: www2.macleans.ca, 30 July 2012.

The sushi of the future is insects. By 2050, 9 billion people will inhabit the planet and meat will be like caviar: expensive and hard to get. With a protein gap on the horizon, insects are being touted as a realistic and sustainable food choice. It has been on the menu around the world for centuries but Westerners have never warmed to the thought of an insect on the tongue. So what is the secret to getting Westerners to eat insects? Like sushi, it will be good branding and good design.

Ento (<http://cargocollective.com/ento/>) is a self-described roadmap for introducing edible insects to the western diet. Created by four London-based design students, they plan to move bugs from the fork of the adventurous foodie to the suburban dinner table in less than 10 years, aiming to hit UK grocery stores by 2020. But to get started they tried out a range of recipes on their fellow students and noted that the most popular dishes were those where bugs were least conspicuous. The locust pâté went quickly but there were plenty of leftover whole fried crickets.

"That was an important lesson," says Jacky Chung, one of *Ento's* principals, "We understood that knowing one was eating insects was not a problem. It was the visual."

Pairing with a Cordon Bleu culinary student, *Ento* designers have created a range of prototype recipes, including the *Ento box*, where insects are blended with complimentary flavours and shaped into cubes. The end product, packaged like a Japanese Bento Box (complete with dipping sauce and chopsticks), has a futuristic, clean look: an important aspect in the hard sell of bug-eating.

"A lot of people think insects are unclean," says Chung. "But they are very safe to eat. Their genetic makeup is so different from our own that it is unlikely we could contract any diseases they might have, unlike the way we could with the mammals we eat now: think of swine flu. But consumers need a visual signifier," he says, adding that like ground beef at the grocery store, the cube shape shows that the "meat" has been processed and this human intervention suggests the product is safe to eat.

Ento's slick design and potential positive environmental impact recently won them an award at Amsterdam's Green Design Competition and they plan on plugging the €15 000 prize money into their project to help turn it into a company.

For full story and video, please see: www2.macleans.ca/2012/07/30/think-youll-never-eat-bugs/

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9. Fungi: Caterpillar fungus causing conflict in Indian Himalayas

Source: The Guardian (UK), 30 July 2012

Yeshpal is in his early twenties and lives in the village of Bemni in the Indian Himalayas. He is a self-appointed expert on caterpillar fungus (*Cordyceps sinensis*) collection. Called "kira jari" locally, the fungus enters the larva of the caterpillar moth, mummifies its prey and eventually grows out of the head of the caterpillar, appearing in the high meadows of the Himalayas in May or June.

It has become a prized commodity. In China, it is used as an aphrodisiac and all-round energy booster. In 1993, Chinese athletes broke world records at their national games, which their trainer put down to [eating the caterpillar fungus](http://www.life.illinois.edu/whitfield/pubs/pdfs/Cordyceps.pdf) (www.life.illinois.edu/whitfield/pubs/pdfs/Cordyceps.pdf). "Kira jari" is now going global.

Like other villagers, Yeshpal sells his stash to middlemen who come to the village. A single fungus fetches about £2 (just over US\$3), equivalent to a whole day's manual labour in the village. People have been known to collect 50 specimens in one day, so the search for "kira jari" has come to resemble a Himalayan gold rush. As Yeshpal put it, "We can build new houses with the profits from our 'kira jari' — everyone is having a go."

In Nepal, the collection of the fungus has been happening for some time, but in India it is a new development. So popular has “kira jari” become that the high-altitude meadows of the Tibetan plateau now resemble small towns, improvised black tarpaulin tents fluttering in the breeze, clothes lines strung up between rocks and small cairn temples dotting the landscape.

Fungus collection is a difficult business, though. There is the risk of illness: snow blindness, altitude sickness and sore joints, for example. The winds are freezing at 16 000 ft and snowstorms come on unexpectedly. There is nothing in the way of facilities (such as lavatories or clinics), and people’s diets are often limited to rice, daal and pre-packed noodles. Many people return from the mountainsides with nothing to show for their efforts.

Collectors also risk arrest. It is legal to collect the fungus — you can even get permits from the forest department. But it is illegal to sell “kira jari,” which is part of India’s vast black market. No one has yet gone to jail, but ten men had their entire harvest confiscated by the police last season.

Villagers also fight among themselves. A lockable suitcase has become a must-have for villagers climbing up to search for the fungus. Conflict inevitably occurs when one person collects 50 and another is empty-handed. An open conflict between two villages over access to a particularly good spot for fungus collection has led to villagers employing “bodyguards” (usually dogs) and carrying guns. They have even called in the lawyers.

And there is the problem of sustainability. Bemni villagers only discovered the “kira jari” in 2007. During the first couple of years the supply was abundant. Now prices have skyrocketed, but the supply has gone down. “In five years there will be none left at all,” one villager said. “Our camps are destroying their habitat and we are collecting the fungi before they send out their spores.”

In Nepal, such concerns are rife. But men such as Yeshpal weigh these hardships and risks against the possibility of getting rich. There are other benefits to fungus collection, too: the costs are low and the surroundings stunningly beautiful. And it is not as if there is a lot else to do: there are very few jobs for youth locally, and agriculture is in decline. For the time being, “kira jari” collection is a decent gamble for Himalayan villagers.

For full story, please see:

www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/jul/30/india-aphrodisiac-fungus-supply-droops

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10. Ginseng: Wild about ginseng

Source: Korea Times (Republic of Korea), 26 July 2012

Ginseng is less popular than ginger because it is not for everyday consumption. The price per one root of wild ginseng begins at KRW 50 000 (approximately US\$44) and can double and triple depending on how old they are. The price soars throughout the distribution network.

There are two types of ginseng (*Panax ginseng*) in Korea, wild and cultivated. The price of “sansom” or “Goryeo ginseng” (wild ginseng) is much higher than “insam” (cultivated on farms) mainly because they are hard to get. Wild ginseng grows naturally and is harvested wherever it is found to be growing. It is relatively rare and is out of human reach most of the time which is why people began farming it.

In order to get wild ginseng, it must be picked from the mountains but because it is hard to detect it, people started planting ginseng seeds on farms. Human-cultivated ginseng is called “insam” where “in” in Korean means human. “San” in “sansom,” on the other hand, means mountain.

There is another type of ginseng which falls between the previous two categories. It is “sanyangsansom” which is “sansom” cultivated in the mountains with the help of human hands. Nevertheless, it is also called wild ginseng.

The efficacy of ginseng, whether it be insam or sansam, is more or less the same. Ginseng is known to strengthen the immune system and vitalize cognitive functions.

Wild ginseng is most nutritious when it bears a red fruit. The harvest period begins in May and lasts through October at the latest but the best time to consume it is when the fruit is red.

There are various places across the nation that cultivate wild ginseng and sell it. Among them is Hamyang, which holds a wild ginseng festival every year. Hamyang, located in South Gyeongsang Province, is known for wild ginseng because in the ancient Three Kingdoms period in Korea, Hamyang was the biggest producer of wild ginseng. Until the 1990s, there were ginseng diggers called "simmani" in Hamyang and all over the nation who professionally dug up ginseng for living. Some are still around today, albeit very few. For full story, please see: www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/07/320_116016.html

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11. Honey in the USA: Is honey without pollen really honey? Source: Palm Beach Post (USA), 29 July 2012

The sweet substance produced by bees seems to constantly be the centre of controversy. Now honey is the subject of 14 lawsuits brought on behalf of consumers in Florida and California. At the heart of the lawsuits is the question: Is honey still honey if it contains no pollen?

Four of the lawsuits were filed in Florida state and federal courts in April against four retailers, and the number has grown. They allege the retailers are violating Florida's honey standard of identity because all traces of pollen have been removed from honey products during an ultra-filtering process, thus the products are falsely labelled.

What difference does pollen, which bees collect with nectar, make? Pollen matters for two reasons, said Jason Kellogg, a Miami attorney who filed the lawsuits with Andrew Meyer, a Tampa attorney. First, many people believe pollen provides health benefits, and it is rich in protein, vitamins and minerals. Secondly, the only way to trace where the honey is from geographically or whether it is really from orange blossom or clover nectar, or whatever the label says, is to test the pollen.

"We allege that by removing pollen from the honey without labelling the product "filtered" or "pollenless," the retailers are violating the Florida honey regulation and misleading consumers," Kellogg said. "Consumers deserve some assurances that the type and source of their honey can be verified," Kellogg said. "Honey without pollen just is not honey."

Beekeepers who want to make sure pollen stays in the honey simply strain it to filter out such larger impurities as bee legs, said Gary Ranker, a Palmetto beekeeper who is president of the Florida State Beekeepers Association. Some people have found that consuming local honey every day can help build immunity to pollens that trigger allergies. But most honey sold in retail stores is ultra-filtered because that gives it a longer shelf life and keeps it from crystallizing.

The lawsuits have put the effort to create a national honey standard on hold, Ranker said. Three years ago Florida became the first state to institute a honey regulation that prohibits additives, chemicals or adulterants in honey produced, processed or sold in the state.

The rule was an effort to stop the flow of "laundered honey" from countries that was watered down with high-fructose corn syrup, sugar and water or contaminated with insecticides or antibiotics. Its goal was to protect consumers and Florida's beekeeping industry, which ranks fifth in the nation in honey production, from adulterated honey.

Honey containing anything other than the "natural food product resulting from the harvest of nectar from honey bees" will be considered adulterated and mislabelled, the rule states.

Charles Bronson, who was the state's agriculture commissioner at the time said, "In the future when you are paying for honey in this state, pure honey is what you will get." For full story, please see: www.palmbeachpost.com/news/business/is-honey-without-pollen-really-honey/nP3N3/

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12. Honey in the USA: It is a sweet season for honey Source: Los Angeles Times, 4 August 2012

There are honey bees who reside on an east Silver Lake hill in the backyard of beekeepers Amy Seidenwurm and Russell Bates, drinking the nectar of the flowers of lavender, California buckwheat, sage, jasmine and eucalyptus, fig and citrus trees.

This season the couple's bees — about 120 000 of them in three hives — have produced more than 60 pounds of honey, twice as much honey as in past years. "We have never had this much of it," says Seidenwurm, whose honey and honeycomb go to local bars and bakeries, where it garnishes fruit crostatas and is sold in jars.

Other urban beekeepers have been flush with honey too. Kirk Anderson, who along with Seidenwurm and Bates founded the progressive apiculture group [Backwards Beekeepers](http://www.backwardsbeekeepers.com) (www.backwardsbeekeepers.com) recently dropped off nearly 100 jars of his honey at a local organic butcher shop. Anderson tends bees all over Los Angeles.

Overall, it has been a bumper season for urban honey in L.A., and summer is when worker bees are at their busiest. Corey Brill has three hives on a rooftop downtown and sells his honey to local stores. He says he harvested at least 50 percent more honey this year than last year.

"We would like to take the credit" for the bonanza of honey, says Seidenwurm, standing in a three-layer protective suit and pulling a frame bulging with honeycomb from one of the quintuple-level hives as hundreds of bees buzz around her. "But they do all the work. We just steal from them."

"Silver Lake treats bees really well," says Bates. "There is a huge variety [of plants] that blooms everywhere," and bees travel as far as five miles to collect nectar that they convert into honey.

The key to all that nectar was spring rain, says Anderson, considered a guru who promotes organic, treatment-free beekeeping. "Just the right amount of rain and the right amount of sun," he says. "It has been a good year, maybe one in every eight or nine years there is a bumper crop."

The growing amount of neighbourhood honey is also helped by an increasing interest in beekeeping. The Backwards Beekeepers started with a handful of members three years ago; now each of its monthly meetings draws more than 100 people.

"We started [beekeeping] because we wanted to do something that allowed us to create our own food, to be closer to the process," says Seidenwurm.

Though the city of Los Angeles does not allow hives in residential zones, many keep bees under the radar, and a grassroots movement to change the law has drawn the support of nearly a dozen neighbourhood councils. That is at least partly because of the growing concern about colony collapse disorder. Cities such as New York, Seattle, San Francisco and Santa Monica allow residential beekeeping.

Meanwhile, the demand for neighbourhood honey is high.

For full story, please see: www.latimes.com/features/food/la-fo-urban-honey-20120804,0,958918.story

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13. Maple syrup: Canada government grant CAD\$1.7 million to maple syrup research

Source: www.cbc.ca, 1 August 2012

Canada's federal government is hoping to improve the quality of maple syrup by funding a CAD\$1.7 million initiative to develop a special tool to test the quality of maple syrup.

For five years, Quebec's Maple Research Centre has been developing a machine that could taste test the product. Human taste testers try sampling an average of 250 barrels of syrup/day. These machines would do the work for them by calculating how certain compounds in the syrup react to light.

Depending on results, the new technology will determine if sugar has been added to the syrup or if there are taste defects in the batch.

Luc Lagacé, a researcher who has been developing the tool, said it will improve Canada's reputation in the maple industry. "We have a guarantee of quality for this product," he said.

Most of the federal grant will be used for research to help determine the exact compounds of maple syrup.

Geneviève Béland, member of the Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers [FQMSP], said research shows that maple products have antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. But researchers believe the golden treat may have other health advantages. If these benefits are discovered, the FQMSP said it would recommend using maple sugar in special diets, such as those of athletes and some diabetics.

For full story, please see: www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2012/08/01/maple-syrup-federal-grant.html

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14. Medicinal plants: Grassroots project brings endangered plants back from the brink

Source: Reuters, 30 July 2012

A UN-sponsored project in the harsh deserts of Egypt is helping save ancient medicinal herbs endangered by ongoing drought and unsustainable grazing practices. Bedouin tribes of the Sinai have relied on the plants for hundreds of years, but it may take the award-winning project to conserve them for future generations. At the UN funded Medicinal Plants Association (MPA), 14 of the 19 endemic plant species in the St Katherine's Protectorate have been successfully propagated and more than half a million seedlings transferred to the wild.

Back in Cairo, Project Manager Dr Adel Soliman is celebrating winning a US\$15 000 prize at the UN's Rio Earth Summit.

UNDP Project Manager, Dr. Adel Soliman, says, "The project's biggest achievements are first and foremost the active participation of the local community in efficiently managing and protecting their natural resources. Another success was the propagation of the medicinal plants which took a lot of effort and years of trial and error because of the lack of research materials available."

At the MPA shop a small number of products are available to buy, but the sales potential of herbal tea and honey is barely tapped. In a deprived area like this, reliable income, like the endangered plants on the nearby mountains, is a rare asset and one worth nurturing.

To view video, please see: www.reuters.com/video/2012/07/30/grass-roots-project-brings-endangered-pl?videoId=236731557&videoChannel=6

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15. Medicinal plants: Indian and Australian plant extracts may help treat diabetes
Source: Times of India, 13 July 2012

Scientists have isolated some Indian and Australian medicinal plant extracts that could potentially help manage diabetes. Researchers from Australia's Swinburne University of Technology have investigated 12 medicinal plant extracts to determine their potential in slowing down two key enzymes in carbohydrate metabolism which affect blood sugar and diabetes. The extracts comprise seven Australian aboriginal medicinal plants and five Indian ayurvedic plants.

Of the plant extracts, Australian sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*) and the Indian kino tree (*Pterocarpus marsupium*) had the greatest effect in slowing down both enzymes, the journal *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine* reports.

"Diabetes represents a global public health burden, with the World Health Organization estimating that more than 180 million people worldwide currently suffer from the disease," said Enzo Palombo, associate professor and study co-author at Swinburne.

"More than 800 plants are used as traditional remedies in one or other form for the treatment of diabetes, but the management of the disease without any side effects is still a challenge," said Palombo, according to a Swinburne statement.

"The results obtained in this study showed that most of the traditional plant extracts have good potential for the prevention and management of diabetes," added Palombo.

For full story, please see: http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-07-13/health/32536022_1_diabetes-plant-extracts-traditional-remedies

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16. Wildlife: Interpol wildlife operation results mark Global Tiger Day
Source: AFP in France24, 30 July 2012

Interpol marked Global Tiger Day Sunday by announcing the results of an operation to help save the endangered species that saw 40 arrests and the seizure of big cat skins and other body parts.

"Operation Prey," conducted across Bhutan, China, India and Nepal, has also so far led to the seizure of other wildlife goods such as rhino horns and ivory as well as protected flora, the global policing body said.

"The range of goods recovered during an operation primarily aimed at tiger protection again shows that criminals will target any animal and any plant to make a profit," Interpol's David Higgins said in a statement.

Interpol's Environmental Crime Programme coordinated "Operation Prey," which involved police, customs, environmental agencies, narcotics bureaux, forest protection authorities, and prosecutors. The operation was conducted under the umbrella of "Project Predator," an initiative created by France-based Interpol that covers the 13 countries in Asia where wild tigers can still be found.

For full story, please see: www.france24.com/en/20120730-interpol-wildlife-operation-results-mark-global-tiger-day

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17. Wildlife: Statisticians help fight against increasing illegal ivory trade
Source: www.traffic.org, 16 July 2012

Statisticians from the University of Reading in partnership with TRAFFIC are helping in the global fight against the trade of illegal ivory, with a major revision of the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS), a global monitoring system for tracking illegal ivory trade.

With elephant poaching levels the worst they have been in a decade, and recorded ivory seizures at their highest levels since 1989, the revised system will give accurate and up-to-date information on the illegal trade of ivory. This will be of huge benefit for international and national policy makers on elephant conservation and on illicit trade who have previously struggled to get reliable and timely data.

At the heart of the upgrade is an innovative new database that allows countries to report seizures of illegal ivory online, making data entry easier and more accurate than ever before. It will also encourage more countries to report illegal ivory trade as they will be able to access statistical summaries of their data and review other seizures where their country is implicated.

TRAFFIC manages ETIS on behalf of Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The revised online ETIS will be showcased today at the CITES Standing Committee currently taking place in Geneva. In attendance will be representatives from many of the CITES Parties who will use the revised system. They will witness the functionality and the effectiveness of the database by way of a demonstration, ahead of its launch in September 2012.

Recording illegal ivory seizures is just one aspect of the revised monitoring system, which now has enhanced capability to provide indicators of hidden illegal activity.

Applied Statistics Research Fellow Bob Burn, who conceived the current project and has been involved with ETIS since its inception in 1997, said, "Not all illegal ivory transactions are discovered or officially reported. The challenge in analysing seizures data is to adjust for this gap by accounting for factors such as law enforcement effort and corruption. Using cutting edge statistical methods the monitoring system can now begin to combat this problem."

The statistical analyses will provide information on how patterns of illegal trade are changing over time and will identify problem countries so that attention can be focused upon those countries most heavily implicated in illicit trade. This provides crucial evidence for CITES and individual governments in their decision making when it comes to elephant conservation.

For full story, please see: www.traffic.org/home/2012/7/26/statisticians-help-fight-against-increasing-illegal-ivory-tr.htm

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COUNTRY INFORMATION

18. Bangladesh: "Social afforestation" can alleviate poverty Source: The Financial Express (Bangladesh), 27 July 2012

"Social afforestation" involves the management and protection of forests and afforestation on barren lands with the purpose of improving environmental, social and rural development. It is a participatory approach for the conservation of forests. The purposes of "social afforestation" are to protect forests by establishing the rights and access of people to forest resources, sharing the income generated from projects and improving rural ecology and economy.

The concept was launched in the late 90s with the support of some development partners. Many small and marginal farmers and rural poor people of Bangladesh have attained financial benefits from social afforestation programmes. The Department of Social Forestry (DSF)'s programme includes planting trees on government forests, homesteads, fallow and marginal lands, roadsides and railway tracks, riverbanks, and on the premises of educational institutions.

Experts think successful implementation of the social forestry programme will contribute to the government's poverty reduction effort along with initiatives to reduce the adverse impacts of climate change in drought-prone areas.

Profitable afforestation activities have encouraged many people to plant saplings of wood, medicinal and fruit-bearing trees on homesteads, roadsides, office premises, forest areas, embankments, the premises of religious institutions and other places.

Over 7 391 beneficiaries have, so far, received more than Tk 153.70 million as their shares from the forests developed.

Additionally, the department has distributed around 140 000 saplings of wood, fruit-bearing and medicinal trees among various government institutions, private organizations and individuals during the last fiscal year.

The afforestation programme has become world-renowned. Specifically, the community-based adaptation to climate change programme on afforestation in Bangladesh project has received a UNDP prize, while the co-management committee of Chunti Sanctuary of Chittagong has received the UN Equator award.

For full story, please see:

www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=138073&date=2012-07-27

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19. Brazil: Low extinction rate disguises pending Amazon catastrophe **Source: Imperial College London, 16 July 2012**

No animal species have been confirmed extinct in the Brazilian Amazon during the last 40 years, despite high rates of deforestation in the region, but the authors of a new study say this masks the critical condition of many species, many of whom do not have enough remaining habitat to survive long term.

The scientists from Imperial College London say the difference between the number of species that models predict should be extinct and the number in reality, a figure termed "extinction debt," is set to increase in line with global extinctions to the year 2050 and beyond if deforestation continues at present levels.

They developed a new model that assessed the link between historical patterns of deforestation to extinction rates in the future, and compared their model outputs to data on global populations of endangered animals and with data collected at a local level in the rainforest. The results showed that while many species were not considered to be extinct at a global level, they had completely disappeared from many individual regions, creating gaps in local biodiversity.

Previous predictions suggest that between four and ten animal species should have gone extinct from the whole Brazilian Amazon, but none have yet been confirmed. In this study, the scientists examined data from the region and found that if deforestation continues as per the current situation over the next 40 years, it would cause around 10 extinctions/2 500 km² area, with an additional extinction debt of nearly 27 species.

The scientists further predicted that if the Brazilian government introduces severe measures to manage deforestation now, some of these species can recover from near-extinction and drastically reduce extinction debt in many areas. They say that by 2050 this could be reduced by between one and two-thirds, to around six extinctions/2500 km², with an extinction debt of only 10 species.

Dr Rob Ewers, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Life Sciences, and lead author of the research, said: "Tropical deforestation condemns huge numbers of species to extinction, but that extinction can take decades to materialize as the last individuals of doomed populations slowly die off. This time lag means extinctions over the last 40 years pale into insignificance compared to those expected to occur in the coming 40 years.

"The Brazilian Amazon could make it to 2050 having lost just five percent of its native large animal species if current levels of conservation action are maintained. However,

present-day changes to the national Forest Code will ease requirements for landowners to protect forests on private land and new legislation currently being debated threatens to cause an increase in the rate of deforestation. The impacts of this on biodiversity will be felt decades into the future."

For full story, please see:

www3.imperial.ac.uk/newsandeventspggrp/imperialcollege/newssummary/news_16-7-2012-14-23-52

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20. Brazil fines 35 firms US\$44 million for biopiracy

Source: Scidev.net, 20 July 2012

A Brazilian government agency responsible for natural resources has fined 35 companies for not sharing benefits from exploitation of the country's biodiversity. The decision follows official complaints filed by the Genetic Heritage Department of the Brazilian Ministry of Environment to the agency in charge, the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (Ibama).

Ibama announced earlier this month (6 July) that 35 different companies were responsible of 220 violations of the national law on biodiversity, totalling BRL 88 million (around US\$44 million) in fines. Most of the fined companies are Brazil-based cosmetic and pharmaceutical multinationals. Some of the companies were fined for not sharing financial benefits from the exploitation of Brazil's biodiversity, and others for falsely claiming that they did share the benefits, according to Ibama.

Brazil's national law on biodiversity stipulates that benefit-sharing resulting from the exploitation of biodiversity can include: the sharing of profits or payment of royalties; technology transfer; and the training of people in the region from which a resource has been taken.

Natália Milanezi, from Ibama's Board of Environmental Protection and the person in charge of the operation, said that companies that do not comply with the law are causing huge injuries to the Brazil's economy and are practicing biopiracy.

"Unfortunately, biopiracy is still not a crime, despite several bills in the congress trying to make it [such]," she told SciDev.Net. Although the operation to control institutions that are evading benefit-sharing started in 2010 and several researchers and universities have been warned or fined since, this is the first time Ibama has fined companies on such a large scale, Milanezi said. Milanezi added that Ibama does not want to prevent companies from working in Brazil, so there is an option of writing off up to 90 percent of the fine if the companies agree to better regulate their benefit-sharing policies. She said that the Ibama is looking into a method to ensure the money from fines reaches local people.

Vanderlan Bolzani, vice president of innovation agency at the State University of Sao Paulo Júlio de Mesquita Filho, Brazil, said that the large number of companies fined indicate that the government agencies and ministries responsible for regulating biodiversity need to communicate more effectively to speed up processing the requests from companies.

Vanderlan also highlighted that the biopiracy law should be educational, not only punitive.

The companies now have the right to appeal to Ibama's decision.

<http://www.scidev.net/en/agriculture-and-environment/bioprospecting/news/brazil-fines-35-firms-us-44-million-for-biopiracy.html>

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21. Canada: Beekeeping at its best in Newfoundland

Source: CBC News, 19 July 2012

A veteran beekeeper in Newfoundland is feeling good vibes from the buzz of bees. Aubrey Goulding is the principal beekeeper at a local farm that produces honey, beeswax and pollen products. He said if the summer continues to be warm and dry on the northeast Avalon, he is expecting a record-breaking honey harvest.

“This year has been tremendous,” said Goulding. “This is the first time in 20 years that I have been able to extract honey from the hives this early.” Goulding said before this year the earliest he had extracted honey was in mid-August, which means honey production is weeks ahead of usual.

He said the most honey he has ever produced was 1 000 kg. Last year, he produced less than 200 kg because of the terrible weather.

Goulding said the future is bright for beekeeping in Newfoundland. He described the island as a “beekeepers’ paradise”, because local bees do not have the diseases or pests that are common on the mainland.

“We are the only place in the world, pretty well, that does not have the mite that is causing havoc with beekeepers across North America, Europe and Asia,” he said. “We feed them absolutely no drugs, no medication and that is almost unheard of in other parts of North America, so our bees are clean.” The mite-free status, he said, means Newfoundland can sell hives to other parts of the world.

But Goulding also warned that the future of beekeeping depends on protecting the hives.

For full story, please see: www.cbc.ca/news/technology/story/2012/07/19/nl-beekeeping-newfoundland-harvest-719.html

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22. Chad: Dozens of elephants massacred **Source: Environmental News Network, 27 July 2012**

Poachers killed at least 30 elephants in southwestern Chad during the early hours of Tuesday, 24 July. During the night, Stephanie Vergniault, President of the organization SOS Elephants, described on her Facebook page how a group of armed horsemen chased a herd of elephants with war weapons near the SOS Elephants camp in the Chari Baguirmi area. After daybreak, the SOS Elephants team counted 28 carcasses, most with missing tusks. The exact number of carcasses with missing tusks is unclear because the team was afraid to stay and investigate further due to the presence of the poachers hiding on the other side of the Chari River.

The elephant massacre occurred as 350 participants from all over the world attend the 62nd meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Standing Committee in Geneva, Switzerland, where the illegal killing of elephants and ivory smuggling are at the top of the agenda. On Tuesday, the Standing Committee discussed the close correspondence between rising trends in elephant poaching and large-scale ivory seizures and recommendations to improve the situation. It also considered a new report, titled *Decision-Making Mechanisms and Necessary Conditions for a Future Trade in African Elephant Ivory*, that explores the future legalization of international ivory trade and the potential establishment of a Central Ivory Selling Organization (similar to the DeBeers diamond cartel).

Local communities and the SOS Elephants team living permanently at the camp, including SOS Elephants' Secretary General Raphael Djimadibaye, who heard the attack informed the Paramount Chief. The Chief contacted Vergniault, who spoke with local authorities, and in turn immediately sent soldiers to track the poachers.

For full story, please see: www.enn.com/top_stories/article/44721

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23. China: Foraging for wild edibles in Kunming's hills
Source: www.gokunming.com, 31 July 2012

The rainy season is finally here, and with it comes more than just drought relief. At this time every year wild mushrooms are spreading their spores in pine forests, wild edible ferns are sprouting up through the soil and all sorts of other wild edibles are popping up in the hills around Kunming. For culinary connoisseurs and adventurous eaters, this is one of the best times of year to take advantage of Kunming's diverse local fauna when planning a meal.

Few people in the world take as much pleasure and pride in the collection and preparation of wild vegetables, "yecai," and wild mushrooms, "yesheng mogu," as Kunmingers. Over the next few months culinary enthusiasts from all over the city will climb the nearby hills foraging for free delicacies. Vendors of wild edibles will be found stationed outside almost every vegetable market and restaurants will take the opportunity to add seasonal items to their menus.

For the uninitiated, wild vegetables and mushrooms can be intimidating. It takes special training to be able to identify what is edible and what is poisonous. Two years ago it was discovered that a certain kind of mushroom may have been responsible for the deaths of hundreds in nearby Dali over the past 30 years.

Selecting the right mushroom does not necessarily make it safe to eat. The improper preparation of "niuganjun" (*Suillus grevillei*) one of Yunnan's most coveted mushrooms, has been blamed for sending many to emergency rooms each year with hallucinations that can last up to three days.

Here are some other wild edibles worth foraging for in Kunming:

Called "juecai" in Chinese, fiddlehead ferns (e.g. *Osmunda japonica*, *Athyrium esculentum* or *Matteuccia struthiopteris*) are some of the most ancient edibles on the planet. They can be found in almost every country in the northern hemisphere and come in many different shapes and colours. Fiddleheads get their name from the curled tips of their fronds displayed while still young. Only when they are young and the tip has yet to unwind are they actually edible. The ferns must be soaked in water for two days before cooking to leach out potentially carcinogenic toxins. Yunnan has two main varieties. The more sought after variety grows in small patches high on the hills around Kunming and only appears during the rainy season. A more common variety of fiddlehead, located near lakes and streams, is called water fiddlehead or "shui juecai." These can be cooked immediately after harvesting and minority restaurants throughout Kunming serve them up in a variety of different ways.

"Matai" is another favourite wild vegetable of Dai cuisine. The leafy green is often found near fiddlehead patches and can be distinguished by its thin, twisting stalks and broad, fan-shaped leaves. Boiled or fried, matai gives any dish a hearty texture and a fragrance similar to anise or liquorice. The vegetable is also highly regarded for its medicinal value and is said to improve digestion and circulation.

"Niuganjun" (*Suillus grevillei*) is a Yunnan species of porcino and one of Yunnan's most treasured wild edibles. There are two main varieties to be found around local markets — one yellow and one red. Both have a uniquely meaty texture and a full buttery flavour. When preparing this mushroom, it is always best to do so under the supervision of an experienced local as improper preparation can lead to intense stomach aches and lengthy hallucinations.

"Ganbajun" (*Thelephora ganbajun*) is arguably one of the world's most flavourful mushrooms. "Ganbajun" look nothing like typical edible mushrooms and more resemble fossilized black coral blossoming from the base of pine trees. They have a flavour similar to truffles but with a heartier texture. They can be found in the forests just south of Kunming. For full story, please see:

http://gokunming.com/en/blog/item/2752/foraging_for_wild_edibles_in_kunmings_hills

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24. Kenya: Bamboo takes pressures off forests
Source: Alertnet, 30 July 2012

It is a chilly morning in Olenguruone village on the southern flank of the Rift Valley, but Gloria Chepng'etich is warming up to the task at hand. Spread neatly on her workbench are bamboo splices that the 21-year-old will weave into floor mats over the next hour or so. She will then pass the handicraft to her colleague, Zipporah Sirui, who will finish it with touches of dye, blending it into a colourful mix of orange, red and gray. A single mat fetches around US\$50, enough for each of them to buy cooking flour and save some money for a rainy day.

Beyond their work, Chepng'etich and Sirui have something else in common — both are internally displaced persons (IDPs). They were among the thousands of families evicted by the Kenyan government from the Mau forest complex in 2009, following pressure by environmentalists to rehabilitate the area. The complex, which comprises 16 blocks of forest on the western side of the Rift Valley, is the largest indigenous forest in East Africa, generating and capturing rainfall that is a crucial resource for Kenya and beyond and a significant factor in mitigating the regional effects of climate change.

The eviction of forest residents won the government national and international praise, with officials arguing that it would reduce illegal harvesting of forest resources and create space for reforestation in the complex. But the social and economic costs were high.

Destitute and desperate is how officials with the BamCraft Project found the two, and hundreds of other IDPs. The project is a partnership of Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), the UN Industrial Development Organization and the Government of Japan. Now the IDPs are finding a new way to make a living — without cutting trees — by turning to bamboo farming.

At the nearby Kapkempu IDP camp, Hudson Sang' has been piecing together refined bamboo planks, which he will craft into furniture, selling a set for about US\$100. "We have about one acre of land (0.4 h) under bamboo," says Sang'. "After harvesting (the bamboo) we make tables, chairs, floor mats, baskets, brooms, necklaces, sugar dishes, smoking pipes and even wine cups."

The land has been loaned to Sang' and other IDPs by well-wishers while they await permanent resettlement by the government. As a result of the bamboo project, he no longer has to worry about the forest guards who enforce a ban that since 2000 has restricted the harvesting of forest resources from all government forests. The legislation requires Kenyans to seek permission from local authorities before cutting down any tree from their farms, but it does not apply to bamboo since the plant is classified as a giant grass, officials say.

The legislation prompted the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI) to investigate opportunities offered by NTFPs and their potential to reduce pressure on forests, says Gordon Sigu, a research scientist working with the institution. "Our research has shown that the grass can supplement the rising demand for timber both at home and abroad," Sigu said.

The institute estimates that Kenya is home to 14 species of bamboo growing on some 150 000 ha of land — more than one-fifth of which lies within the Mau complex — but it says that a lot goes to waste because few people understand its commercial value. According to KEFRI's Rift Valley regional director, Joshua Cheboiywo, the country has the capacity to generate almost 25 million stems of bamboo/year without taking too much of the country's water supply.

A 2010 government survey indicates that Kenya has a forest cover of 5.9 percent. The government hopes that the use of bamboo as an alternative timber resource, together with enforcement of the ban on logging in the Mau complex, will help the country make headway towards the target envisioned in the country's constitution of 10 percent forest cover within the next 30 years.

For full story, please see: www.trust.org/alertnet/news/bamboo-farming-takes-pressures-off-kenyas-forests

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25. Madagascar: Lemurs disappearing in the wild

Source: Dr. Russell Mittermeier, President of Conservation International in The Huffington Post, 17 July 2012

The island of Madagascar is located nearly 400 km off the east coast of Africa and is in many ways the highest priority biodiversity hotspot on Earth. Covering some 600 000 km², it is the fourth-largest island in the world. Because of its geographic location in the tropics and subtropics and its unusual geological history and topography, it has very high levels of species diversity and extremely high endemism (species found nowhere else on the planet).

Sadly, Madagascar is also one of the world's most heavily impacted countries in terms of recent habitat destruction, and its globally unique species are sending us an urgent warning. Nearly 90 percent of its natural vegetation has already been lost, and erosion on the island is severe. In addition, a recent upsurge in bushmeat hunting has impacted lemurs, tortoises and other species.

Among the lemurs being indiscriminately killed is the indri (*Indri indri*), the largest of the living lemurs. This spectacular species leaps from tree to tree like an arboreal kangaroo and looks like a cross between a teddy bear and a giant panda. Indeed, like the giant panda, it is a flagship species of incalculable value for Madagascar and must be fully protected. Given this, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission decided to carry out a reassessment of Madagascar's lemur fauna.

Every species of lemur was reviewed. Among the most spectacular species recognized as Critically Endangered is the indri; the greater bamboo lemur, a bamboo specialist that is the world's most endangered primate genus; Madame Berthe's mouse lemur, at 30 g the world's smallest primate; and the blue-eyed black lemur, one of only two primates other than humans that has blue eyes. The most endangered of all is the northern sportive lemur from extreme northern Madagascar, which is down to only 18 individuals left in the wild (with none in captivity), in the whole world.

This new assessment highlights the very high extinction risk faced by Madagascar's unique lemur fauna, and it is indicative of the grave threats to Madagascar's biodiversity as a whole. Madagascar's unique and wonderful species are its greatest asset, its most distinctive brand, and the basis for a major tourism industry that continues to grow despite current political problems. Science and experience both suggest that in order to maintain Madagascar's lemur fauna and its biodiversity in general, it is essential to have a well-managed, representative network of parks and reserves. These reserves are important not just for Madagascar's biodiversity; they are essential for the long-term well-being of its people. The vast majority of the ecosystem services benefiting Madagascar's human population derive from these protected areas. These services include water from forested watersheds, pollination, maintenance of productive soils, fibres, building materials, plant foods from the forest and carbon sequestration.

Of particular note, these ecosystems and the biodiversity within them provide many sources of jobs and livelihoods, especially in terms of ecotourism and associated activities. Madagascar has only begun to scratch the surface of its enormous tourist potential, counting only about 250 000/year, compared to tiny nearby Mauritius which attracts more than one million international visitors a year.

On the heels of Rio+20, it is essential to look at lemurs not just as cute, wonderfully appealing creatures worthy of preservation in their own right or unique objects of scientific investigation, but as engines of economic development, as a global brand and a true competitive advantage for Madagascar in the global arena. They should be seen as a powerful engine for job creation and poverty alleviation in one of the poorest countries in the world.

Fortunately, the models for this are already in place. Madagascar has some of the best village-based guide associations in the world. Many of these local communities have

taken on the task of creating community reserves of their own to complement those run by the government.

The lemurs offer an important warning about the vital natural wealth mankind is squandering to the detriment of present and future generations.

For full story, please see: www.huffingtonpost.com/russell-mittermeier/lemurs-madagascar-conservation_b_1677758.html

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26. Madagascar: New study shows pre-human effect on biodiversity
Source: www.phys.org, 23 July 2012

Madagascar, a biodiversity hotspot for its richness of endemic species, has been especially hard hit by deforestation and subsequent destruction of natural habitats, caused mainly — it is thought — by human pauperization, economic activities and population growth.

A recent study by an international research group led by Lounès Chikhi group leader at the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência (Portugal) and CNRS researcher (in Toulouse, France), questions the prevailing account that degradation of tropical ecosystems is essentially a product of human activity. Their findings call for reassessment of the impact of local communities on their environment.

Published in the journal *Proceedings of the Natural Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*, the research shows that the population of golden-crowned sifaka (*Propithecus tattersalli*), inhabitants of the Daraina region in the north of Madagascar, indeed contracted dramatically, but at a time that precedes human arrival on the island. Furthermore, by examining aerial and satellite photographs of the Daraina region, the researchers concluded that forest cover in this region has remained remarkably stable over the last 60 years, thus excluding any strong effect of humans on the environment. Taken together, and combined with historical and paleontological records, the findings strongly suggest that the present-day open habitats of Daraina are a result of pre-human climatic changes (such as the Holocene droughts, which happened between 10 000 and 4 000 years before the present time). These may have been the cause of the increase in open landscapes in northern Madagascar, and subsequent reduction in the number of the tree-dwelling Golden crown sifakas.

Their findings are highly relevant for the communities of climatologists, ecologists, evolutionary biologists and conservationists, as Lounès Chikhi describes, "There is no doubt that humans have played a major role in driving several Malagasy species to extinction, since their arrival on the island. Although our findings relate to a specific region in Madagascar, they shine the spotlight on how important it is that conservation projects account for regional differences. The presence of humans, we have demonstrated, may not be the only cause for loss of biodiversity. It is risky to alienate local communities by excluding them from their territories, rather than bringing them on as precious allies to help conservationists find local answers for sustainable resource management".

For full story, please see: <http://phys.org/news/2012-07-pre-human-effect-biodiversity-northern-madagascar.html>

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27. Malaysia: Earning a living from nipah palm
Source: [The Star \(Malaysia\)](#), 31 July 2012

For more than 30 years, Mek Jah Yaakub has been depending on the nipah palm (*Nypa fruticans*) to make a living and support her 15 children. Mek Jah, 53, sits on the cement floor of her house at Pantai Pulau Kundur and diligently sifts the young nipah palm shoots and

cuts them up into small pieces as a condiment for nasi kerabu, a popular dish. The young nipah palm shoots are an important ingredient in the local “kenduri” celebration.

Mek Jah starts the day by going to mangrove swamps close to her home to harvest the young shoots. “I make an average of MYR10/day by producing 4 kg of palm shoots and during Ramadan, orders increase to 6 kg/day. But I make the most by producing 30 kg of palm shoots for those who intend to have kenduri at their homes,” said Mek Jah.

She said that all these years she had depended on the young nipah shoots to feed her family and admits that it is just enough to make ends meet. Mek Jah said she cuts up the flowers and mixes it with the young shoots because it would enhance the taste of nasi kerabu.

Mek Jah added that the palms could also be woven into mats, baskets and other household items while young leaves are used to roll cigarettes.

For full story, please see:

<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/7/31/nation/11755347&sec=nation>

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28. South Africa: Bioprospecting permits issued

Source: www.news24.com, 28 July 2012

South Africa has issued seven bioprospecting permits which will also benefit regional owners of traditional knowledge. A permit for the extraction of chemical compounds from the shrub Kraalbos (*Galenia africana*) was handed to Rapitrade 670 by Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa at Komaggas in the Northern Cape.

"The community of Komaggas...would receive both monetary and non-monetary benefits," said Molewa. Kraalbos is predominantly found in the Northern Cape and would be used for the production of products such as soaps and herbicides.

A company has been established for the Komaggas community to receive 5 percent of all distributable cash reserves, after costs, at the end of each financial year.

The Khoi Heritage Foundation, which represents the holders of traditional knowledge about the Kraalbos, would also receive 1 percent of all distributable cash reserves after costs at the end of each financial year.

Molewa introduced a guideline document for providers, users and regulators in the sector, entitled "South Africa's Bioprospecting, Access and Benefit Sharing Regulatory Framework (BABS)".

The country's regulations for bioprospecting, access and benefit sharing came into effect in April 2008. Eight permits had been issued thus far. The first was awarded in 2010 to HGH Pharmaceuticals for international research on *Sceletium tortosium*, a succulent herb commonly referred to as “Kanna”. HGH Pharmaceuticals was working with Gehrlicker GmbH, a German-based company, to commercialize the product as a stress reducing, concentration enhancing, and mood elevating substance.

Molewa reiterated that the export of any indigenous biological resource for bioprospecting or any other kind of research first had to be permitted. Other bioprospecting permits were officially awarded to different organizations to start prospecting activities. They provide for, amongst others, the trade in *Aloe ferox* sap. A permit was also awarded for the cultivation, processing and marketing of herbal products containing active ingredients from 40 indigenous biological resources. Another permit was awarded for the development of the *Sclerchilton illicifolius* plant as a natural sweetener.

Molewa said South Africa's natural and cultural resources underpinned a large part of the economy. Many people were dependent on them for employment, food, shelter, medicine and spiritual wellbeing. The use of indigenous plants and animals furthermore contributed to the creation of jobs and skills development.

For full story, please see: www.news24.com/SciTech/News/Bio-prospecting-permits-issued-20120727

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29. USA: Senators urge Environmental Protection Agency to help protect honeybees

Source: Auburnpub.com (NY, USA), 26 July 2012

The decline of the honey bee population in New York and across the country is a problem for the agricultural industry. It is a problem U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., hopes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can do something about. Gillibrand, along with fellow U.S. Senators Patrick Leahy and Sheldon Whitehouse, asked EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson to speed up the agency's review of pesticides that could be harmful to bees.

"Our agriculture industry is vital to the upstate New York economy," Gillibrand said in a news release. "Our farmers need honey bees to pollinate our crops and produce. However, certain pesticides may be unintentionally killing off the honey bee population. By expediting this review, we can help save our honey bee population and grow our agricultural economies."

Colony Collapse Disorder has decreased the country's bee population by 30 percent, according to Gillibrand's news release. But the EPA's review of certain pesticides (neonicotinoids) — that could be harmful to bees — will not be completed until 2018.

Gillibrand hopes the EPA wraps up its review by the end of 2013.

For full story, please see: http://auburnpub.com/news/local/gillibrand-to-epa-help-protect-honey-bees/article_1213309e-e1f2-5a8a-a304-84062cb28bd4.html

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30. USA: Professor to restore American chestnut trees

Source: Rome News Tribune (Alabama, USA), 24 July 2012

A professor of biology at Berry College (Georgia, USA), Martin Cipollini, has been working in partnership with the Georgia Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation throughout the years to restore the American chestnut tree, which was nearly wiped out in the 1950s by blight in southeastern forests.

By cross-pollinating some remaining American Chestnuts with Chinese Chestnut trees — which are immune to the blight that was caused by an infectious fungus — hybrid trees were created and are currently growing in an orchard on Berry College's Mountain Campus.

But next year, he plans to kill them. "Next year we are going to try to kill them," Cipollini said as he stood between rows of chestnut trees in the orchard. "We are going to put that fungus in each of these trees."

The fungal disease was introduced by frogs in New York during the early 1900s, Cipollini said, and the disease then spread from tree to tree, infecting both Asian and American chestnuts. Only, the Asian trees — particularly the Chinese chestnut — were able to resist the blight brought on by the fungus. The American chestnut was susceptible to the disease and by the 1950s, nearly all the trees were wiped out.

"The only saving grace is that the chestnut can resprout from the roots," Cipollini said. "As a result of that, the tree was not killed entirely, instead of having large forests of trees producing nuts."

In the Berry orchard, there are not only the hybrid trees but also pure American chestnuts and pure Chinese chestnut trees. Cipollini said they are also going to infect the American chestnuts and Chinese chestnuts with the fungus.

The Chinese should be resistant and develop a canker that will heal over. The other trees, he said, will form cankers and that canker will expand. The point is to see if the hybrid trees will form cankers that heal like the Chinese chestnuts will.

Hopefully some hybrid trees will resist the disease. For the ones that do, they will in turn be bred with more American trees. This process, which could take 30 years or longer, will be continued until the trees have more than 90 percent of American in their genetic backgrounds, but are still able to resist the blight.

Berry's orchard is "the headquarters, so to speak, for the breeding program for the state of Georgia," said Cipollini. "We have helped to establish about 100 orchard sites in the state."

For full story, please see:

http://romenews-tribune.com/view/full_story/19529300/article-Professor-to-restore-American-chestnut-trees?instance=home_news

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31. Vietnam: Fungicide residues bankrupt beekeepers
Source: Nguyen Quand Tan, University of Agriculture and Forestry (Vietnam),
***Bees for Development Journal*, June 2012**

One of the risks of beekeeping is the many and unforeseen changes in the international honey market regarding policy and quality. In Vietnam, thousands of beekeepers are now facing bankruptcy because of the presence in their honey of residues of the fungicide carbendazim.

Carbendazim is a cheap fungicide which is applied to fruits and crops. It is commonly and legally used around the world in countries including Canada and many European countries.

As for any agricultural chemical, there is a maximum residue limit (MRL) for carbendazim in foods and beverages. In Europe, the MRL is set at 200 ppb (parts per billion) for most agricultural products. The USA does not allow the use of carbendazim in agriculture but will allow the use of thiophanate methyl, a fungicide which naturally degrades to carbendazim in plants and the environment. US bee scientists have found residues of 27 and 149 ppb respectively in honey and pollen. A survey by the Food and Drug Administration found that nine out of 14 samples of domestically manufactured orange juice contained levels of carbendazim of 13-36 ppb. The orange juice is not recalled because the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that residues lower than 80 ppb do not pose a health risk.

Recently, 24 shipments from Brazil and Canada of orange juice testing positive (10 ppb or more) for carbendazim have been detained or refused entry to the USA, despite this being in violation of international trade agreements.

In late 2011 some shipments of honey from Vietnam to the USA were returned. This was the first time that Vietnamese beekeepers and honey exporters were informed of a new criterion for honey quality with carbendazim levels less than 10 ppb. The change to the quality requirement is too sudden for beekeepers to adapt. This season in Vietnam thousands of tonnes of honey were harvested from cashew, coffee, and rubber — carbendazim is used to control fungi on some of these plants, thus the honey is unintentionally contaminated with the fungicide at levels of 10-100 ppb. Beekeepers cannot sell their honey and cannot repay loans.

The health of consumers must always take priority. However, according to the EPA, the residue level of 80 ppb in orange juice is not a risk, while the residue level of honey imported to the USA has been "capped" at 10 ppb. This may be too strict and should be set at 80 ppb or above, so that it can save the livelihoods of beekeepers in developing countries as well as meet the demand for honey by consumers in the USA.

For full story, please see: www.beesfordevelopment.org/portal/article.php?id=2907

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NEWS

32. Bill Clinton at Oxford forum: How to manage scarcity of resources **Source: Oxford University, 16 July 2012**

The most important decision of the 21st century is whether the human race can learn to share its scarce natural resources for the common good, President Bill Clinton told delegates at Re|Source 2012 during a two-day forum at the University of Oxford.

The 42nd President of the United States said: "The only strategy that makes sense is the one that says we are going to share the world with other human beings and we will share its natural resources." This, he said, "is the fundamental decision of the 21st century."

Clinton's address reflected a key theme from the conference about the need for greater cooperation between governments, businesses and other organizations to successfully meet the resource challenges the world. In particular, he noted, the private sector has the commercial leverage and influence to drive significant changes — and can create new models in finance to support these changes.

Mr Clinton was the keynote speaker at Re|Source, a gathering of 250 leaders from business, finance, policy and government, dedicated to the issue of how the world can manage resource scarcity with economic growth.

Re|Source 2012 is a joint initiative hosted by Oxford University and its Smith School of Enterprise and Environment in cooperation with The Rothschild Foundation. Its objective is to reframe the debate about sustainability and growth away from the polarized view that economic growth and commercial success are incompatible.

Re|Source 2012 hopes to spark change by presenting a compelling financial case for solving these issues, exploring viable, commercial and proven solutions towards a sustainable future.

For full story, please see: www.ox.ac.uk/media/news_stories/2012/120716.html

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33. Central African countries to monitor Congo forests **Source: Agence France Presse (AFP), 26 July 2012**

Ten Central African countries have agreed to take part in a regional initiative to monitor the Congo Basin, one of the world's largest primary rainforests, FAO said Thursday.

"A new regional initiative will help 10 Central African countries to set up advanced national forest monitoring systems," FAO announced. The 10 countries are Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe, it said. The 200 million ha or so of forests are second only to the Amazon rainforest in size, supporting the livelihoods of some 60 million people.

"The main threats to these forests include land-use change, unsustainable logging and mining," FAO said. The monitoring project would be managed in conjunction with the Central Africa Forests Commission (COMIFAC).

"The rates of forest cover change and the subsequent emissions from deforestation ... remain poorly understood partly due to the lack of up-to-date, accurate information on the current state of forests in the region," said FAO.

The gross deforestation annual rate in the Congo Basin was 0.13 percent between 1990 and 2000, but it doubled in the period of 2000-2005, COMIFAC data showed.

The monitoring system was crucial to improving the protection of forests and sustainable management, said FAO's Assistant Director General for Forestry Eduardo Rojas-Briales.

The Organization said it would provide remote sensing technologies so the countries can estimate forest cover and track changes, as well as estimate the amount of carbon stocks their forests contain.

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www.fao.org/climatechange/unredd/en/

For full story, please see:

www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gmse7NBTSpFDzFo5M0W2DiDyXfyg?docId=CNG.f99cb874bf7e1621463c1928b5661c30.6e1 or

www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/153735/icode/

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34. CITES bares teeth, but can it bite?

Source: www.traffic.org, 27 July 2012

A week's long meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Standing Committee ended today. The decisions taken are ratcheting up pressure on a number of countries to be held accountable over their failure to deal with rampant poaching and illegal trade, but no sanctions or punitive measures were agreed.

African countries identified as the main sources of illegal ivory in trade, plus Asian and East African transit countries and the two countries with the largest illegal ivory consumer markets — China and Thailand — were given until the end of the year by the Standing Committee to provide written reports of what progress they have made in tackling the illicit trade. Failure to do so could ultimately result in a suspension of all trade in CITES-listed species with the country concerned, but the CITES Parties have so far avoided taking such action.

Thailand, for example, had already been called upon to submit such a report, and did so at this meeting. WWF and TRAFFIC considered their report vague and non-committal, and joined others in calling for a timetable for the legislative changes needed to close a gaping loophole that allows ivory from illegal sources to be laundered into the Thai marketplace.

"With elephant poaching and illegal trade in ivory reaching new heights, we should not be shy about using CITES trade suspensions as an international tool to prevent a full-blown elephant crisis," said Tom Milliken, who co-authored the report on the status of elephants to the meeting.

The report highlighted that up to 23 percent of Central Africa's elephant populations are being killed each year. This was further evidenced by the massacre of more than

30 elephants in Chad whilst the CITES meeting was taking place. Meanwhile, Central African governments revealed a new plan at the meeting to combat poaching and illegal trade in the region.

“The new Central African plan is warmly welcomed, but it is critical that the plan is rapidly implemented because time is running out for the elephants of this region,” said Colman O Criodain, WWF’s wildlife trade specialist.

The country at the centre of the rising demand for illegal rhino horn — Vietnam — was similarly instructed to report on what progress it had made in curbing rhino horn demand, and has until 3 September to report. In particular, Vietnam will need to explain what measures have been implemented to prevent illegal import and trade in rhino horn, how the black market in rhino horn is being targeted in the country, and what is being done to discourage rhino horn use.

The Standing Committee also instructed CITES’ Rhino Working Group to focus on actions needed to reduce demand for rhino horn and was tasked with developing a demand reduction strategy, taking into account the outputs of the experts’ meeting convened by TRAFFIC and WWF in November last year on messaging to reduce consumer demand for tigers and other endangered wildlife species.

The illegal trade in tiger parts was also on the agenda, with TRAFFIC highlighting its work on reducing demand for tiger products, while China reaffirmed its commitment to the ban on trade in tiger parts, but made no firm statements about phasing out existing tiger farms.

For full story, please see: www.traffic.org/home/2012/7/27/cites-bares-teeth-but-can-it-bite.html

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35. CITES/UNEP-WCMC study highlights trends in trade of species

Source: IISD Reporting Services, 23 July 2012

A new report finds that international trade in wildlife contributes substantially to the livelihoods of the rural poor, and indigenous and local communities (ILCs). The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) commissioned the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) to analyze trade trends in protected species and prepare the report, which covers species listed in CITES Appendix II from 1996-2010.

The findings include: an increase in mammal skins in trade, particularly in the years 2006-2008; a decrease in trade in caviar in the years 2005-2010; an increase in trade in timber species since 2003, in part accounted for by new listings of timber species in Appendix II; and for many species, an increase in the number of captive-produced or ranched specimens in trade, with a decrease in the number of wild specimens.

The report was distributed as an information document for the sixty-second meeting of the Standing Committee, which is meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, from 23-27 July 2012, and was funded by the European Commission.

For more information, please see: www.cites.org/common/docs/CITES-trade-snapshot-eng.pdf or www.cites.org/common/docs/Recent-trends-in-international-trade-in-Appendix-II-listed-species.pdf

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36. ICCWC launches toolkit on wildlife and forest crime

Source: IISD Reporting Services, 25 July 2012

The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) has launched the Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit, which will allow countries to collect and analyze available data, gather evidence, prepare and preserve the wildlife and forest crime scene, and identify suspects.

In collaboration with its ICWC partners, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) commissioned the development of the toolkit, which will be tested in partnership with selected national governments. The toolkit was launched during the 62nd meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Standing Committee (SC 62). The kit includes resources on: wildlife and forest legislation, law enforcement measures, prosecutorial and judicial capacities, drivers of wildlife and forest offenses, and the effectiveness of preventive interventions at the national level.

CITES Secretary-General John Scanlon highlighted the scaling up of collective enforcement efforts in recognition of the serious risks that wildlife crime poses to people and nature. UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov said the toolkit will be invaluable to boost law enforcement training, strengthen the judiciary and prosecution, and promote international cooperation. World Bank's Vice President for Sustainable Development Rachel Kyte also welcomed the toolkit, noting that its new and innovative ideas will enable countries to better combat environmental crime.

For full story, please see: <http://biodiversity-l.iisd.org/news/icwc-launches-toolkit-on-wildlife-and-forest-crime/>

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37. Protected tropical forests' biodiversity “declining” **Source: BBC, 26 July 2012**

Despite having protected status, the biodiversity in a large number of tropical forests is still continuing to decline, a study has suggested. The authors said the findings should cause concern because the areas have been seen as a final refuge for a number of threatened species. Habitat disruption, hunting and timber exploitation have been seen as signs of future decline, they added. The findings have been published online by the science journal *Nature*.

"The rapid disruption of tropical forests probably imperils global biodiversity more than any other contemporary phenomenon," the international team of researchers wrote. "Many protected areas in the tropics are themselves vulnerable to human encroachment and other environmental stresses."

Tropical forests are considered to be the biologically richest areas on the planet. In order to assess the state of the world's protected areas, the team considered data from 60 areas, based on "262 detailed interviews, focusing on veteran field biologists and environmental scientists, who averaged more than two decades of experience".

"Our study was motivated by three broad issues: whether tropical reserves will function as 'arks' for biodiversity and natural ecosystem processes," the team wrote. They added: "Whether observed changes are mainly concordant or idiosyncratic among different protect areas; and what are the principal predictors of reserve success or failure."

The study covered 36 nations across the tropics in Africa, Asia and South America. The findings suggested that "protecting biodiversity involved more than just safeguarding the reserves themselves". "In many cases, the landscapes and habitats surrounding the reserves are under imminent threat," they observed.

"For example, 85 percent of [the observed] reserves suffered declines in surrounding forest cover in the [past] 20 to 30 years, whereas only 2 percent gained surrounding forest."

The team reported that the data showed that forest disruption, over-exploitation of wildlife and forest resources had the greatest "direct negative impact". They also observed that "air and water pollution, increase in human population densities and climatic change" had a weaker or more indirect impact.

The team — headed by Professor William Laurance from James Cook University, Australia — concluded that the activities outside the protected areas had an impact on the resilience of the biodiversity within the protected areas.

"It is not enough to [protect] interiors while ignoring surrounding landscapes, which are being rapidly deforested, degraded and over-hunted," they observed.

"A failure to limit inter-related internal and external threats could predispose reserves to ecological decay, including taxonomically and functionally array in species communities and an erosion of fundamental ecosystem processes."

For full story, please see: www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-18970076

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38. The Rights and Resources Initiative calls for incorporating women's rights in forest management

Source: IISD Reporting News, July 2012:

The Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) has released a new analysis of women's land rights, titled "Securing Women's Tenure and Leadership for Forest Management: A Summary of the Asian Experience," which highlights the need to recognize women's rights to forest and land resources in order to achieve climate and poverty goals in Asia.

The analysis concludes that women continue to be discriminated against and exploited in resource management processes throughout Asia because of unclear, unsecured and unequal tenure rights. It underlines that, to be effective, programmes and policies to address climate change and promote sustainable development must incorporate gender issues.

The research contains case studies from Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, and the region of South and Southeast Asia, which show that many poor Asian women face challenges related to: generic gender issues; the interrelations between poverty and tenure issues; and gender-blind and gender-biased development interventions. As a result, it concludes, they are locked in a cycle of poverty and disenfranchisement.

RRI recommends the development of a framework to improve gender justice and secure tenure rights in Asia, which should be based on four interconnected areas of action as follows: increasing women's visibility through mobilization and networking; building capacity within projects and organizations; reinforcing participatory ethos; and increasing the link with policy.

For full story, please see: <http://uncsd.iisd.org/news/rri-calls-for-incorporating-womens-rights-in-forest-management/>

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39. Struggling to conserve seed biodiversity: the gaps and wisdom in current research

Source: Emily Eggleston in mongabay.com, 18 July 2012

Biodiversity conservation is huge field, but at its heart we find something very small: the seed. From seeds come the plants we need and food for the animals we hope to conserve as well. Knowledge of seed dispersal, or how seeds are generated and move through the landscape, is essential if we are to understand the influence of human activity on biodiversity.

What do we know and what do we not know? To answer these questions, Kim McConkey and colleagues, including researchers from India, Singapore, Malaysia, and Spain, reviewed research published since 2000. They sought to determine what advice should be given to conservationists.

Their review looked at the four causes of changing biodiversity and what is known about how seeds interact with each of them. They are (a) fragmenting plant and animal habitat, (b) overharvesting of plants and animals, (c) invasive species crowding out native plants and animals, and (d) changing climate. Their review concluded that seed dispersal research needs to be done at larger scales and in more varied landscapes that reflect real terrain, since research often encompasses only a small, homogenous space. Research should also account for all four key drivers of biodiversity change. It is important, the review stated, for scientists to know how those drivers affect seed dispersal and what happens when more than one is present. As scientists develop more comprehensive methods, current research offers insight for both future research questions and conservation decisions.

In an attempt to isolate variables, research often fails to offer conclusions that apply to real-world scenarios. For future research on seed dispersal as it relates to biodiversity conservation, the review's primary advice is: "Seed dispersal ecologists need to expand their field of view in order to study how seeds move — or fail to move — across real (fragmented, heterogeneous) landscapes on scales (km) that matter for the long-term survival of plant and animal diversity in a changing world."

For full story, please see: <http://news.mongabay.com/2012/0718-eggleston-seed-dispersal.html>

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EVENTS

4th World Ecotourism Conference

Gyeonggi Province, Republic of Korea

2-5 September 2012

Gyeonggi Province Governor Kim Moon-soo and Goyang Mayor Choi Seong will be marking the 20th anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit and the 10th anniversary of UN Year of Ecotourism at the 4th World Ecotourism Conference in the Republic of Korea.

The World Ecotourism Conference backed by UNWTO (UN World Tourism Organization) first convened in Vientiane, Laos in 2009 and since it has been successfully convened in different countries in the region.

The Conference, under the theme "Ecotourism for Global Peace," will focus on related topics which include: transformational initiatives and success stories, ecotourism trends and innovation, as well as ecotourism best practices and recommendations.

For more information, please contact:

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www.WEC2012Korea.com

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REMINDER: COFO 21 Committee on Forestry: 21st Session/3rd World Forest Week

Rome, Italy

24-28 September 2012

World leaders at Rio+20 agreed that forests have a significant role to play in addressing many sustainable development challenges. To help fulfil this role, COFO 2012 will focus on translating the results of Rio+20 into action and strengthening forestry's many cross-sectoral linkages under the following key topics:

- Integrating forests with environmental and land use policies at all levels
- Forests, trees and people together in a living landscape: A key to rural development
- Broadening the financial basis for sustainable forest management: wood and NWFPs, services, innovations, markets, investments and international instruments
- Sound information and knowledge base for better policies and good governance

The *2012 State of the World's Forests* report will also be released at COFO. It will make the case that better and more sustainable use of forestry resources can make a significant contribution to meeting many of the core global challenges including poverty and hunger, climate change, and more sustainable sources of bio-products and bio-energy for human use.

For the third time, COFO will be held in conjunction with World Forest Week — a series of meetings and events sponsored by FAO and its partner organizations and institutions. The events of the Week are organized around the key topics of COFO shedding more light on key issues and allowing for a more detailed discussions. The World Forest Week is an opportunity for sharing state-of-the-art knowledge and major accomplishments and achievements.

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www.fao.org/forestry/cofo/en/

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11th Asian Apicultural Association Conference

Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia

28 September-2 October 2012

The Asian Apicultural Association (AAA) was established in 1992 to encourage scientific exchange of information between bee scientists, beekeepers, bee enthusiasts and the bee business community in Asia. A Conference is held every two years.

In September, a wide community of people with wide-ranging interests will convene and collaborate for a three-day conference and exhibition on the many aspects of bee research and business networks.

Papers are invited in the following categories: bee biology, pests and diseases; pollination and bee plants; sustainable beekeeping and honey hunting; technology and equipment; bee by-products (honey, propolis, pollen, bee bread, royal jelly, bee venom, etc.); apitherapy; and economics, extension and environment.

For more information, please contact:

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www.asianbeeconference.org/11thaaconference

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Scientific Seminar: Social Dimensions of Forests at the EFI Annual Conference

Istanbul, Turkey
4-5 October 2012

This year the scientific seminar — held in occasion of the European Forest Institute Annual Conference — will concentrate on social dimensions of forests in order to strengthen this area of research. The social dimension of forests involves a wide array of aspects, from involvement of local community, and conflicts over use, to global forest governance challenges. Three main fields will be discussed: environmental and ecological economics, rural and regional economics and society, and institutions and governance.

For more information, please contact:

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www.efi.int/portal/members/annual_conferences/2012/scientific_seminar/

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Apimondia Symposium — ApiEcoFlora 2012

San Marino
4-6 October 2012

Apimondia and the San Marino Beekeepers' Cooperative will host ApiEcoFlora 2012 in San Marino this October. ApiEcoFlora 2012 is an international symposium intended to address issues specifically related to the complex relationship between bees, environment and bee flora.

ApiEcoFlora 2012, together with other symposia organized under the aegis of Apimondia, is part of a consistent and articulated number of thematic events to be held in successive editions in order to offer the international beekeeping community reliable and authoritative points of reference on the most current topics in the beekeeping sector and at the same time attempt to provide adequate answers.

For the symposium's plenary sessions, taking place on 4 and 5 October, part of the scientific programme will be coordinated and conducted directly by FAO and focus on topics such as pollination and conservation of nectar-bearing species and how to fill possible deficits, with specific emphasis on developing countries as well as measures adopted at farm and environment level to increase pollination services.

For more information on the scientific topics being discussed and on the symposium, please contact:

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REQUESTS

45. **Request for papers on forests and sustainability** **Source: IISD Reporting Services, July 2012**

The *Natural Resources Forum* (NRF), a quarterly journal issued by the UN Division for Sustainable Development (DSD), has called for papers for a special issue on forests, to be published in 2013. NRF notes that articles submitted should address forests from a sustainable development perspective, and be relevant to policymaking.

Articles of interest include those that discuss: the forestry sector's structure and implications for the sharing of benefits from forests across developed and developing countries; links between forests and other economic sectors at the national or sub-national level; case studies on forest management at the local or national level; implications of global or regional trends in demand for forest products for sustainable development and poverty eradication in developing countries; assessment of international and national market instruments linked with forest management; and trends in international forest governance, and their implications for sustainable development.

For more information, please see:

<http://biodiversity-l.iisd.org/news/nrf-calls-for-papers-on-forests-and-sustainability/>

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LITERATURE REVIEW & WEB SITES

46. ***Investing in locally controlled forestry: natural protection for people and planet*** **From: Growing Forest Partnerships Newsletter, 1 August 2012**

As a policy research organization, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) has evolved key concepts, theories and ways of working in sustainable development since 1973. The big idea explored in this publication is investing in locally controlled forestry. This approach rests on the fact that people living in or near forests — families, communities and indigenous peoples — have significant interest in ensuring the sustainability of the forest resources on which they depend. By supporting these communities' long-term stewardship of forested land, two urgent global issues — forest loss and insecure livelihoods — can be tackled.

To view publication, please see: <http://pubs.iied.org/17130IIED.html>

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47. ***Living with the Trees of Life: Towards the Transformation of Tropical Agriculture*** **From: Prof. Roger Leakey, Vice-Chairman, International Tree Foundation, 19 July 2012**

Poverty leads to land degradation and degradation leads to poverty in an inexorable downward spiral — and farming is one of the culprits. Numerous international reports on the future of agriculture have emphasised that “business as usual” is not an option. In this book,

Robert Leakey insists that a solution has to involve both land rehabilitation and income generation and illustrates practical ways of achieving this that intensify production and improve the yields that farmers obtain from modern crop varieties.

Remarkably he shows how trees in farm land can improve soil fertility and restore the failing ecological processes that lie behind land degradation and poor crop yields. By creating new crops from the *Trees of Life*, those little known species that used to provide the food, medicines and other everyday products of local people, he goes on to provide convincing evidence of how they can transform the lives of people living on the edge of the cash economy. These trees also diversify the local economy. This critical step enhances the livelihoods of local people by meeting their needs for crucial life support systems lost by deforestation, generating income and creating new business and employment opportunities.

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**48. Forest Peoples: Numbers across the world now available several languages
From: Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), July 2012**

By providing estimated figures for indigenous and forest peoples' populations in countries and regions across the globe, this FPP report, released in May 2012, seeks to raise awareness of the existence of peoples who primarily depend on forests for their livelihoods, and to enhance their visibility as key actors and rights-holders in the management and use of forests and forest resources. These figures may serve as a useful reference in advocacy for the recognition of forest peoples' legal and human rights.

This report is now available in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Bahasa Indonesia.

For more information, please see:

www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2012/07/e-news-july-2012-colour-english.pdf

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**49. Publications of interest
From: FAO's NWFP Programme**

Asaah, E.K., Tchoundjeu, Z., Leakey, R.R.B., Takouing, B., Njong, J. and Edang, I. 2011. Trees, agroforestry and multifunctional agriculture in Cameroon. *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability* 9: 110-119.

Bitanyi, S., Nesje, M., Kusiluka, L. J. M., Chenyambuga, S. W. and Kaltenborn, B. P. 2012. Awareness and perceptions of local people about wildlife hunting in western Serengeti communities. *Tropical Conservation Science Vol. 5(2):208-224.*

Buchy, Marlene. 2012. *Securing Women's Tenure and Leadership for Forest Management: A Summary of the Asian Experience*. USA: Rights and Resources initiative.
Available at: www.rightsandresources.org/documents/files/doc_5211.pdf

Jamnadass, R.H, Dawson, I.K., Franzel, S., Leakey, R.R.B., Mithöfer, D., Akinnifesi, F.K., and Tchoundjeu, Z. 2011. Improving livelihoods and nutrition in sub-Saharan Africa through the promotion of indigenous and exotic fruit production in smallholders' agroforestry systems: a review. *International Forestry Review* 13: 338-354.

Haissan, T. 2012. *NWFPs and Poverty Alleviation in Semi Arid Region*. USA: Lambert Academic Publishing.

Abstract: The aim of this study is to determine the contribution of NWFPs to rural livelihoods in Nuba Mountains of Sudan. The deterioration of socio-economic and environmental issues have underscored the urgency of understanding their interactions to prepare successful land management and help implement a development paradigm that can lead to environmental sustainability and poverty alleviation. Generally, there is scarcity of studies on socio-economic factors affecting NWFPs as a renewable resource in semi-arid areas and their values from the local to national level. Besides their importance for food and medicinal uses, promoting NWFPs will have an enormous effect on income generation, in addition to enhancing the general environment through encouraging conservation of tree cover.
Available at: www.morebooks.de/store/gb/book/non-wood-forest-products-and-poverty-alleviation-in-semi-arid-region/isbn/978-3-659-16411-8

Leakey, R.R. B. 2012. NTFPs — a misnomer? Guest Editorial. *Journal of Tropical Forest Science* 24: 145-146.

Leakey, R.R.B. 2012. Participatory domestication of indigenous fruit and nut trees: New crops for sustainable agriculture in developing countries. In: *Biodiversity in Agriculture: Domestication, Evolution, and Sustainability*. 479-501, P Gepts, TR Famula, RL Bettinger, SB Brush, AB Damania, PE McGuire, and CO Qualset (eds.) Cambridge University Press, New York, USA.

Leakey, R.R.B. 2012. The intensification of agroforestry by tree domestication for enhanced social and economic impact. *CAB Reviews: Perspectives in Agriculture, Veterinary Science, Nutrition and Natural Resources*, 7: No: 035, 1-3.

Leakey, R.R.B. 2012. Addressing the causes of land degradation, food/nutritional insecurity and poverty: a new approach to agricultural intensification in the tropics and sub-tropics. In: *UNCTAD Trade and Environment Review 2012*, U. Hoffman (ed.), UNCTAD, Geneva, Switzerland.
Available at: www.unctad.org/Templates/Page.asp?intItemID=3723&lang=1

McConkey, Kim R., Soumya Prasad, Richard T. Corlett, Ahimsa Campos-Arceiz, Jedediah F. Brodie, Haldre Rogers, Luis Santamaria. 2012. Seed dispersal in changing landscapes. *Biological Conservation*. 146:1-13.

Scheffers, B. R., Corlett, R. T., Diesmos, A. and Laurance, W. F. 2012. Local demand drives a bushmeat industry in a Philippine forest preserve. *Tropical Conservation Science* Vol. 5(2):133-141.

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50. WEB SITES and E-ZINES

From: FAO's NWFP Programme

Backwards Beekeepers

Backwards Beekeepers is a group of organic, treatment-free beekeepers in Los Angeles, USA with branches now forming in other cities. They are "Backwards" because they rely on observation and natural practices to keep their bees thriving rather than pesticides, chemicals, or treatments of any kind.

www.backwardsbeekeepers.com

Xate and Ramón nuts: Rainforest Alliance's work with women in Guatemala

Throughout Guatemala, Rainforest Alliance is helping local women to earn additional income through the sustainable harvest and manufacture of xate (the leaves produced from 3 of the eleven different palms within the *Chamaedorea* species) and ramón nuts (harvested from the ramon tree, *Brosimum alicastrum*, indigenous to the Americas, which can grow 120 ft high and produce over 150 lbs of nuts/year).

To view video, please see: www.rainforest-alliance.org/multimedia/women-guatemala-xate

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MISCELLANEOUS

51. Neanderthals self-medicated?

Source: National Geographic, 20 July 2012

A cave in northern Spain now suggests the prehistoric humans ate their greens and used herbal remedies. A new study of skeletal remains from El Sidrón cave site in Asturias detected chemical and food traces on the teeth of five Neanderthals. Tartar samples from the 50 000-year-old teeth revealed microscopic plant starch granules, which had cracks indicating the plants had been roasted first. Further chemical analysis revealed compounds associated with wood smoke.

Starch and carbohydrates in the tartar show the Neanderthals ate a variety of plants, but there were surprisingly few traces of meat-associated proteins or lipids.

Not only did our extinct cousins prefer grilling vegetables to steaks, they were also dosing themselves with medicinal plants, according to a team led by Karen Hardy, an archaeologist at the Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies in Barcelona.

The cave dwellers' diet was found to include yarrow and chamomile, both bitter-tasting plants with little nutritional value. Earlier research by the same team had shown that the Neanderthals in El Sidrón had a gene for tasting bitter substances.

"We know that Neanderthals would find these plants bitter, so it is likely these plants must have been selected for reasons other than taste" — probably medication, Hardy said in a statement. "It fits in well with the behavioural pattern of self-medication by today's higher primates, and indeed many other animals."

It is impossible to know what cures Neanderthals sought from the plants, but people use them today to treat a variety of ailments, she noted. "Chamomile is very well known as a herbal treatment for nerves and stress, and for digestive disorders," while yarrow is used to treat colds and fevers and works as an antiseptic, she said.

The Neanderthal study was published on 18 July in the journal *Naturwissenschaften*. For full story, please see: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2012/07/120720-neanderthals-herbs-humans-medicine-science/>

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52. Which species must die?

Source: Discovery News, 18 July 2012

Looks like you are on your own, rockhopper penguins. The costly, long-shot measures needed to protect the penguins are more than most cash-strapped conservation organizations can justify. The same applies to Chinese water dolphins. They are cute but arguably serve no meaningful role in our ecosystem. Not compared to, say, gray wolves — top predators that control animal populations — or whitebark pines, critical food for grizzly bears.

And so long, mangrove forests. You might provide a critical role in protecting coastlines, by trapping sediment and slowing the flow of water, but they do not have much going on otherwise. Sequoia forests, on the other hand, those are rich biodiversity hotspots. They house all manner of unique plants and animals — definitely worth the investment...

Believe it or not, there is method to this madness. In the August 2012 issue of *Scientific American*, Colorado-based journalist Michelle Nijhuis investigates some of the new systems of triage that scientists are using determine which species to save and which to leave to die.

This reality is a stomach turner, but conservation groups can no longer afford to try to protect as many plants and animals as they did in the past. As budgets shrink and environmental stresses grow, politicians continue to prioritize the economy over the environment.

Conservation triage is not entirely new:

"Conservationists who are pushing for explicit triage say they are bringing more systematic thinking and transparency to practices that have been carried out implicitly for a long time. 'The way we are doing it right now in the United States is the worst of all possible choices,' says Tim Male, a vice president at Defenders of Wildlife. 'It essentially reflects completely ad hoc prioritization.' Politically controversial species attract more funding, he says, as do species in heavily studied places: 'We live in a world of unconscious triage.'"

For full story, please see:

<http://news.discovery.com/earth/which-species-must-die-120718.html#mkcpgn=rssnws1>

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QUICK TIPS AND INFORMATION FOR NWFP-DIGEST-L

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