



WWF

FACT SHEET

LIVING  
HIMALAYAS

# WWF in the Eastern Himalayas

## Half a century of nature conservation

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In 50 years, WWF has become one of the world's largest and most respected conservation organisations. It has more than 5 million supporters on 5 continents, and thousands of projects and programmes running in more than 100 countries. All these activities play a major part in our effort to stop the accelerating degradation of the Earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

Nowhere is this commitment to the planet more evident than WWF's work in the Eastern Himalayas.

Known for its towering peaks, diverse landscapes and peoples, and home to such iconic species as snow leopards, red pandas, tigers and greater-one horned rhinos, the region is facing many challenges: climate change is melting mountain glaciers and forming glacial lakes; forests are being cut down for timber, fuel wood or for agriculture expansion; and wildlife poaching is rampant.

WWF's mission in the Eastern Himalayan region is to restore and reconnect the region's natural landscapes, while ensuring that plant and animal species are able to thrive and that the needs of local communities are met without adversely affecting the environment.

### WWF IN BHUTAN

For more than 30 years, WWF has worked with the Government of Bhutan to protect

its rich natural heritage. Beginning in the 1970s, WWF helped establish the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN), the country's first local environmental NGO, which led the way in habitat conservation of the rare and endangered black-necked crane and White bellied heron.

In 1992, WWF established an office in Thimpu, the capital – the only international conservation organisation with a permanent presence in the Himalayan mountain kingdom. Since then, WWF continues to support the development of the nation's Protected Area system and establish a network of biological corridors to ensure the survival of the tiger, snow leopard and other endangered species. Most notable is Bhutan's Biological Conservation Complex (B2C2), a large network of five national parks, four wildlife sanctuaries, a strict nature reserve and the biological corridors connecting them, which covers over 50% of the country's territory. In 2008, WWF was instrumental in establishing Bhutan's newest and largest National Park, the Wangchuck Centennial Park, home to tigers, snow leopards, Tibetan wolf, Himalayan black bear and the headwater for four major rivers of Bhutan.

### WWF IN INDIA

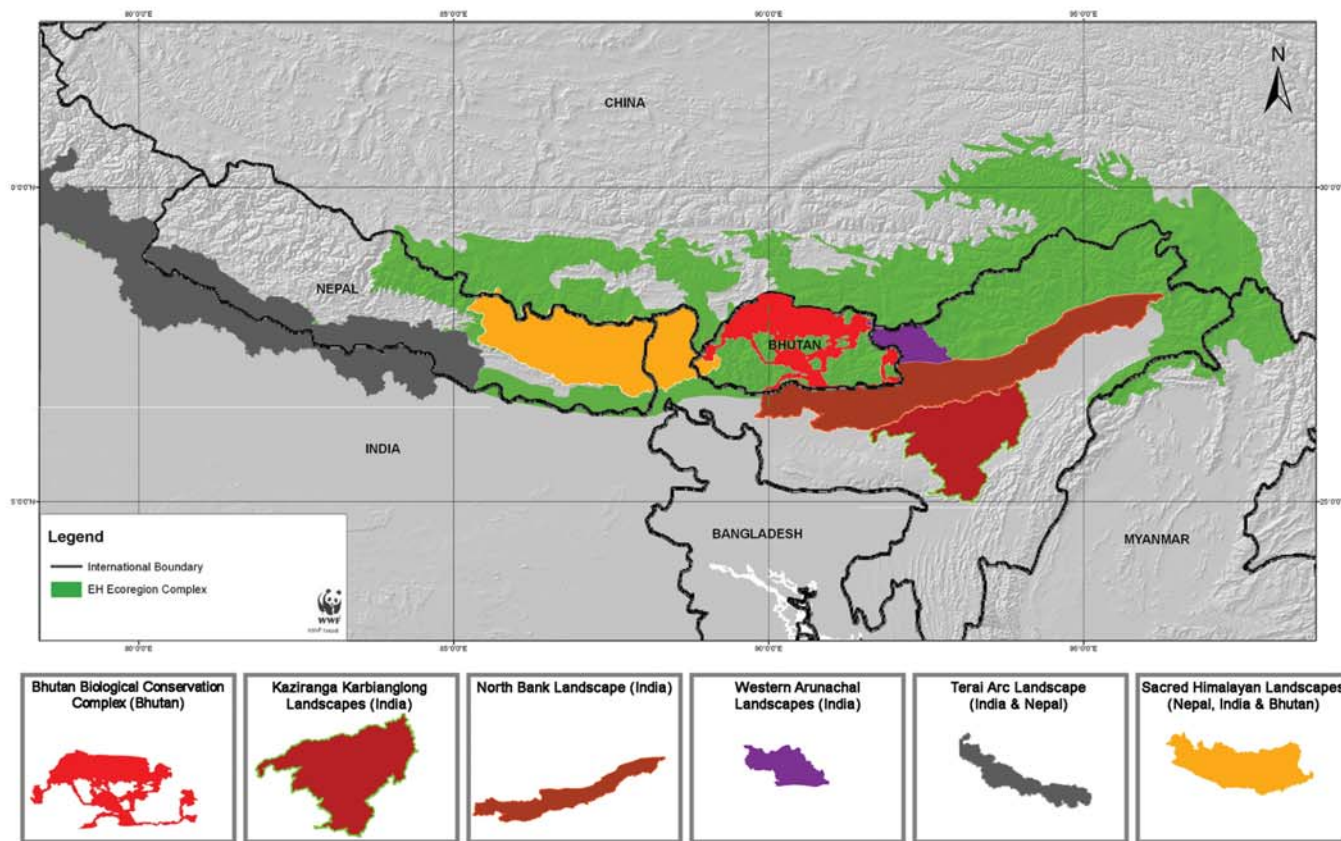
WWF has had an office in New Delhi, India, since 1969. It also has set up regional offices throughout the country, including in the Indian Himalayas. Today, it is one

of the country's largest conservation organisations engaged in wildlife and nature conservation. Since its very beginning, WWF has been instrumental in protecting the tiger, helping the Indian government launch Project Tiger, which set up tiger habitats and other wilderness areas in the Eastern Himalayan region, including the world-renowned Corbett National Park and Tiger Reserve.

Expanding its conservation efforts to save this endangered species and others – Asian elephants, greater one-horned rhinos, red pandas and snow leopards – WWF shifted from just supporting individual Protected Areas to larger landscapes in order to restore and manage critical conservation regions for the benefit of wildlife and local communities. This includes the Terai Arc Landscape, which covers an 810 km stretch of India's Himalayan foothills; the North Bank, Kaziranga-Karbianglong Landscapes and the Western Arunachal Landscapes in the northeastern states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh; and the Khangchendzonga Landscape in the state of Sikkim and parts of northern West Bengal.

### WWF IN NEPAL

WWF has been in Nepal for almost 40 years, starting in late 1960s when it provided conservation support for species conservation, such as the greater one-horned rhino. At the time, there were only 60 of these rhinos left in Nepal. Today there are more than 400 – the majority in



Chitwan National Park – thanks to concerted conservation efforts by WWF and conservation partners. Although the recovery of Nepal’s rhinos is a success story, there is still more work to be done to save this endangered species in the long run.

In its early years, WWF in Nepal focused on species conservation and research with strict law enforcement practices. While this continues today, efforts are also centered on integrating conservation and community development. This approach led the Government of Nepal to promote community based-conservation model of Annapurna Conservation Area, ultimately leading to hand over the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area in 2006 to local communities. The area, which includes Mt Kanchenjunga – the world’s third highest mountain – is known for its rich biodiversity, spectacular scenery and vibrant cultural heritage. WWF has been involved from designing and handing over of the area with desired impacts-increased forest cover and wildlife, improved livelihoods and decreased killing of snow leopards and other species.

Both of these areas are integral elements of the larger Terai Arc and the Sacred Himalayan Landscapes where WWF Nepal now focuses the vast majority of its efforts.

### GOING BEYOND BOUNDARIES

The Eastern Himalayas never cease to amaze. A decade of research from 1998-2008 revealed the discovery of over 350

new species in the region, including a small deer, flying frog and 100 million-year-old gecko fossil. While the discoveries celebrate the Eastern Himalayas as one of the world’s most biologically rich regions, it also highlights the fragile nature of the species and their ecosystems as a consequence of unsustainable development and a host of many other threats. Today, only a quarter of the region’s original habitats remain intact.

While Bhutan, India, and Nepal have each seen significant conservation successes in their own right over the past 50 years, the future to safeguarding the Eastern Himalayas will only be possible through a regional approach that views the ecoregion as a single unit, not as a series of fragmented landscapes in separate countries.

WWF, through its Living Himalayas Initiative, is working closely with the governments and people of Bhutan, India and Nepal to restore and protect ecological processes, reduce the human footprint and support local economies. Building on past successes, WWF’s goal for the future is to achieve a shared regional vision for conservation and sustainable development of the Eastern Himalayas.

### NOTABLE WWF MILESTONES IN THE EASTERN HIMALAYAS

**1970s**  
 • Catalysed the initiation of Project Tiger which led to the creation of a network of

Tiger Reserves in India and halting the decline in tiger numbers

**1980s**  
 • Translocation of rhinos from Chitwan to Bardia National Park in Nepal to help re-establish their population  
 • Annapurna Conservation Area created in Nepal, a model of community collaboration in conservation, which funds conservation with revenues from tourism

**1990s**  
 • WWF offices set up in Bhutan (1992) and Nepal (1993)  
 • Government of Bhutan expands environmental protection in the country to 51% of its territory  
 • Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation established– one of the first trust funds of its kind – generating over US\$30 million for its endowment

**2000s**  
 • Development of Government Strategic plans for the management of the Terai Arc and Sacred Himalayan Landscapes in Nepal  
 • Management handover by the Nepalese government to local communities of the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area  
 • Endorsed Bhutan Biological Conservation Complex (B2C2)  
 • WWF-India partnered with Assam Forest Department and other NGOs for Indian Rhino Vision 2020, to ensure long term survival of this species

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