



WWF

LEAFLET

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WWF-Thailand

**BIODIVERSITY,
ECOSYSTEMS, AND
SUSTAINABILITY**

From beaches of world-renowned beauty to lush forests that support the livelihoods of thousands of local communities, Thailand is home to a wide variety of ecosystems. Situated at a biogeographic crossroads – between the Indochinese region in the north and the Sundiac region in the south – Thailand’s range of climates, varied topography, and long coastlines make it a hotspot for biodiversity. This array of habitats fosters a remarkable variety of species, as well as an abundance of valuable ecosystem services.

Threats to biodiversity in Thailand include poaching, deforestation due to agricultural expansion and illegal timber harvesting, destructive fishing practices, pollution, and disturbances caused by major infrastructure development.

WWF is working to protect Thailand’s incredible ecosystems and the important and iconic species that they harbour, in order to safeguard these wondrous and valuable natural resources for the future benefit of people and nature.

THAILAND HOSTS...



- ▶ PROTECTED AREAS COVERING 20% OF THE TOTAL LAND AREA
- ▶ 26 MARINE NATIONAL PARKS
- ▶ 13 WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE
- ▶ 2 NATURAL WORLD HERITAGE SITES
- ▶ 4 BIOSPHERE RESERVES



Tiger captured by a camera trap in Mae Wong National Park, Thailand



WWF's Illegal Wildlife Trade Campaign

WWF-Thailand's Illegal Wildlife Trade Campaign is working to end the ivory trade in Thailand – currently the world's largest unregulated ivory market. In March, Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra pledged to shut down the country's trade in ivory, seizing a key opportunity to stem global wildlife trafficking. WWF is working closely with partners and government agencies to ensure the necessary legal reforms are now put in place. We also work with leading Buddhist teachers to emphasize the alignment of environmental conservation with the religious values held by many Thais.

A herd of Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus* sp.) is seen in Kuiburi National Park, Thailand. About 2,500 wild elephants are estimated to remain in Thailand.

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CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY AND HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

Saving flagship species and critical landscapes

Under threat from habitat fragmentation, prey depletion, and the illegal wildlife trade, populations of some of Thailand's most iconic and threatened species have plummeted in recent decades. Large connected areas of core forest have also declined significantly across the country. Intact, healthy natural ecosystems provide a range of goods and services that benefit people, including carbon storage, freshwater, fibre and food. Protecting Thailand's rich natural capital is a critical foundation for the country to achieve inclusive, sustainable development.

WWF's approach to saving threatened species and maintaining healthy ecosystems combines scientifically rigorous assessment and monitoring, capacity-building of protected area staff, strengthening law enforcement, community engagement, and innovative methods of collaborative management.

In the Dawna Tenasserim Landscape, covering more than 60,000 km² along the border between Thailand and Myanmar, WWF is working to conserve the area as an intact ecosystem with protected and connected habitats for wildlife, and to safeguard its valuable ecosystem services.

Key activities in this critical landscape include: equipping rangers with innovative tools and training to improve law enforcement patrolling and effectiveness; securing critical habitats through policy work and advocacy; creating partnerships with communities to counter wildlife poaching and protect forests; and linking protected areas by safeguarding and managing corridors that allow for wildlife movement.

THE DAWNA TENASSERIM LANDSCAPE CONTAINS ONE OF THE LARGEST PROTECTED AREA NETWORKS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND HARBOURS A REMARKABLE DIVERSITY OF ANIMALS, INCLUDING ABOUT 200 OF THE ESTIMATED 350 INDOCHINESE TIGERS LEFT IN THE WILD IN ASIA

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WWFThailand

Safeguarding Wetlands



Wetlands harbour migratory birds and act as breeding and spawning areas for hundreds of species of fish, as well as rare marine mammals such as dugongs, manatees and freshwater dolphins

In Thailand, where wetlands occupy approximately 7.5 per cent of the land area, these critical ecosystems directly support a majority of the rural population, with freshwater resources providing income as well as a valuable source of protein for many communities. In addition, they block saltwater intrusion, guard against shoreline degradation, and aid in the prevention of sedimentation and the leaching of minerals and other toxins. Wetlands also support diverse populations of wildlife, both aquatic and terrestrial.

These vital ecosystems are under threat of encroachment by various development projects. WWF is working in partnership with local communities, the private sector, and local government authorities to promote the sustainable use of natural resources and enhance sustainable livelihoods. Our approach combines ‘Thai Baan’ research (a participatory, community-based methodology designed to empower local resource users), watershed management, community education and engagement, developing climate change adaptation scenarios, building social-ecological resilience in target freshwater landscapes, and co-management of natural resources.

Defending Forests



The loss of forests is doubly counterproductive to combating climate change – formerly stored carbon is released while the forests’s potential to continue storing carbon in the future is eliminated

Thailand has lost about half its natural forests since 1990. Deforestation and forest degradation due mainly to agricultural expansion, illegal logging, and land-tenure issues continue to threaten the country’s remaining forests.

Millions of people in Thailand depend on forests for their livelihoods and the vital ecosystem services they provide, such as clean water, and erosion and flood prevention. Deforestation threatens these livelihood-boosting and service-providing abilities of forest ecosystems, as well as the continued existence of many endangered species, including tigers, elephants, tapirs, clouded leopards and hornbills.

WWF is measuring and monitoring forest carbon stocks in order to maintain forests and the many benefits they provide. Through the TREEMAPS (Tracking Reductions in Carbon Emissions through Enhanced Monitoring & Project Support) project, WWF is working with government, community, and academic partners to develop a national carbon “basemap” against which future rates of deforestation can be measured. The project is also helping to set up a sub-national REDD+¹ pilot project, as well as building capacity and facilitating knowledge sharing to allow people in Thailand to benefit from REDD+ and associated opportunities.

Protecting marine resources

With a length of just under 3,000km, Thailand’s coastline comprises a variety of remarkable ecosystems. From beaches and coral reefs that fuel Thailand’s burgeoning tourism industry, to highly productive mangrove forests and seagrasses that serve as protective barriers and exceptional carbon sinks, these marine ecosystems are home to an abundance of natural resources and have played a major role in Thailand’s economic growth.

Unfortunately, sustainable natural resource management is lacking, even as the demand for these resources and their vulnerability to climate change are on the rise – a combination of factors that can only lead to rapid environmental degradation.

WWF is working with marine area stakeholders to bolster conservation management for Thailand’s marine ecosystems. WWF-Thailand’s SAMPAN (Strengthening Andaman Marine Protected Area Network) project aims to improve management and tourism by strengthening national park administration and protection, reducing the impacts of tourism, and developing replicable best environmental standards with private tourism operators.

¹ Global Forest Resources Assessments 2012. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

² REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, Plus) goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks



Fishermen pulling nets in Phang Nga Bay Thailand.

WORKING TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Making the shift to sustainable seafood

As one of the world's largest producers and exporters of fish, seafood, and fishery products, Thailand draws heavily from marine resources to sustain a lucrative, export-driven, food-processing sector. With imports increasing to feed this enormous industry as well as the huge local demand for seafood, Thailand's role in these sectors will likely continue to increase.

WWF is engaging corporations in the seafood commodities supply chain and coordinating with other key stakeholders to promote sustainable seafood production, particularly for tuna and shrimp, as Thailand is a major player in the global market for these commodities. We are also raising consumer awareness about the environmental impacts that their product choices can have.

Greening cities

WWF IS WORKING TO RECRUIT AND ENGAGE THAI CITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY TO PARTICIPATE IN EARTH HOUR CITY CHALLENGE

Although cities are drivers of much of the environmental degradation being seen around the world, they are also home to concentrated and more easily reachable masses of potential actors who could support more environmentally friendly practices. Harnessing the opportunity presented by these paradoxical circumstances, WWF is working to engage cities in conservation activities – which may seem distant to many urbanites but are highly relevant to even the most mundane aspects of city life.

The Earth Hour City Challenge initiative was created by WWF in 2011 to celebrate cities that are taking innovative actions towards creating greener, cleaner and more sustainable cities. The challenge invites cities to submit inspiring and credible urban development plans that dramatically increase renewable energy usage.

WWF is engaging Thai cities around the country to join this global challenge. Part of the initiative will involve educational and awareness-raising campaigns to inspire and provide individuals with knowledge of how to live more sustainably. The final result will be announced at an annual Earth Hour event at the end of March each year.

WWF-Thailand in numbers

2,500

Thailand is home to an estimated 2,500 wild elephants

1980s

WWF has been involved in developing conservation programmes in Thailand since the early 1980s and formally established a national office in 1995



20%

Approximately 20% of Thailand's total area is under protected area status; this includes over 200 national parks and wildlife sanctuaries

3

Thailand is the world's 3rd largest exporter of fish and fishery products



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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