

NEWS FROM PROTECTED AREAS IN AFRICA

NAPA 186

Conserving nature in Africa



THIS MONTH IN THE NAPA

**SETTING THE
EXAMPLE!**

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Taking action by doing less and doing it better is disturbing, restrictive... and yet it is essential today. Will we be able to set an example?

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Learn about our online certificate... Sign up for our Tutorial on Environmental Education!

**MOOCS, TOTOS
AND ESSENTIALS**

YOUTH CONSERVATION

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Youth Conservation news and testimonials from the field.

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A report from IUCN on the state of conservation of West African marine protected areas, prepared in 2022.

**FEATURE OF THE
MONTH**



EDITO

SETTING THE EXAMPLE!

By *Geoffroy MAUVAIS*
IUCN-Papaco coordinator

»» Last March, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) published its annual report on climate change indicators and the title says it all: they reached record levels in 2023! Here are some of the findings.

The report confirms that 2023 was, by far, the warmest year on record (*after 174 years of observations*). It is also the warmest decade on record: records broken for ocean heat, sea level rise, loss of Antarctic Sea ice and glacier retreat. Heat waves, floods, droughts, uncontrolled fires, and the rapid intensification of tropical cyclones have caused misery and chaos, disrupting the daily lives of millions of people.

Observed concentrations of the three main greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O)) reached record levels in 2022 and continued to rise in 2023.

“Changes are speeding up. Sirens are blaring across all major indicators — some records aren't just chart-topping, they're chart-busting.”, said UN Secretary-General António Guterres. “The WMO community is sounding the Red Alert to the world,” said Celeste Saulo, Secretary-General of the WMO. “The climate crisis is THE defining challenge that humanity faces and is closely intertwined with the inequality crisis – as witnessed by growing food insecurity and population displacement, and biodiversity loss”, she added.

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North Africa received quite a blow with records broken in Tunisia (49.0°C), Morocco (50.4°C) and Algeria (49.2°C). The Horn of Africa, in the grips of persistent drought, suffered major flooding, causing the displacement of 1.8 million people in Ethiopia, Burundi, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia and Kenya. This is in addition to the 3 million people already displaced within these countries or across their borders by five consecutive drought seasons in Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and Somalia. In southern Africa, cyclone Freddy hit Madagascar, Mozambique, southern Malawi, and Zimbabwe, submerging vast agricultural areas and causing major crop damage.

Hope, of course, comes from renewable energy production, mainly based on solar, wind and the water cycle, which has increased by almost 50% compared to 2022. But progress is still too slow and funding insufficient, despite renewed international commitments.

In this context, it's certainly hard to know what to do. But we already know what we can stop doing! And the first thing is to limit our contribution to the increase in greenhouse gases. As an international organisation committed to environmental conservation, whether individually or collectively, our duty is to set an example...

How many online discussions will we not hold to avoid overloading the Internet? How many overseas missions will we give up because, in the end, they are not so important? How many meetings will we not hold because they are not that necessary? How many conferences will we not organise because we don't want to bring together thousands of participants whose impact will not be that decisive? How many COPs will we not visit because our voice just isn't that essential?

Acting less and acting better is like consuming less and consuming better. It's logical and easy to say! But it's disturbing, it's restrictive... and yet it's essential today.

If we don't do it and don't show the example, who will?

OUR ONLINE COURSES: MOOCS AND ESSENTIALS



MOOC-CONSERVATION.ORG

MOOC Conservation is the platform that hosts IUCN-Papaco's online training courses, developed in partnership with the Senghor University, in Alexandria.

The next session starts in **September.** Stay tuned!



MARK YOUR CALENDARS: COMING ONLINE CERTIFICATE IN PROTECTED AREA CONSERVATION

This university diploma in Protected Area Conservation is awarded by Senghor University. Any learner meeting certain eligibility criteria and technical conditions can sit the supplementary examination and, if successful, obtain this Certificate.

Two upcoming dates:

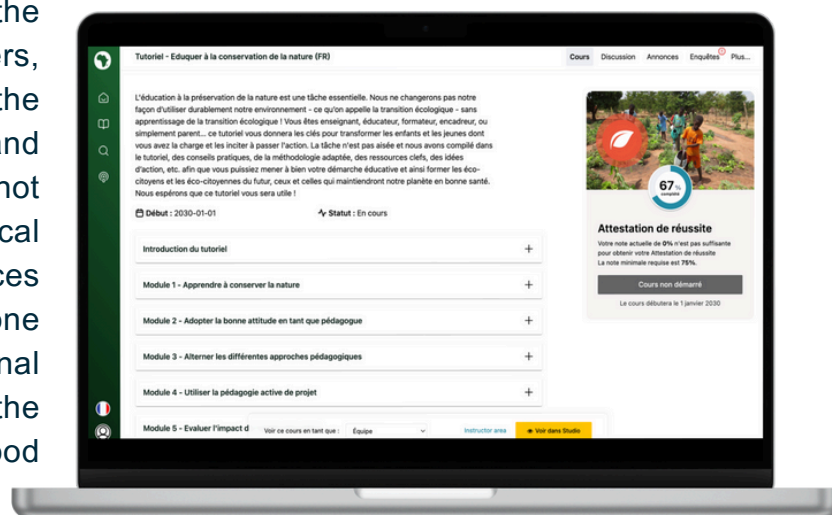
- **French-speakers: 18 June 8h UTC**
- **English-speakers : 19 June 8h UTC**

All the info on [MOOC Conservation](https://MOOC-CONSERVATION.ORG). Good luck!



NEW: TUTORIAL "NATURE CONSERVATION EDUCATION"

The aim of this tutorial is to give educators in the broadest sense (teachers, parents, trainers, supervisors, etc.) the keys to transforming the children and young people in their care and encouraging them to take action. The task is not an easy one, and this tutorial compiles practical advice, appropriate methodology, key resources and tools, ideas for action, etc. so that everyone can successfully carry out their educational approach and thus train the eco-citizens of the future, those who will keep our planet in good health.



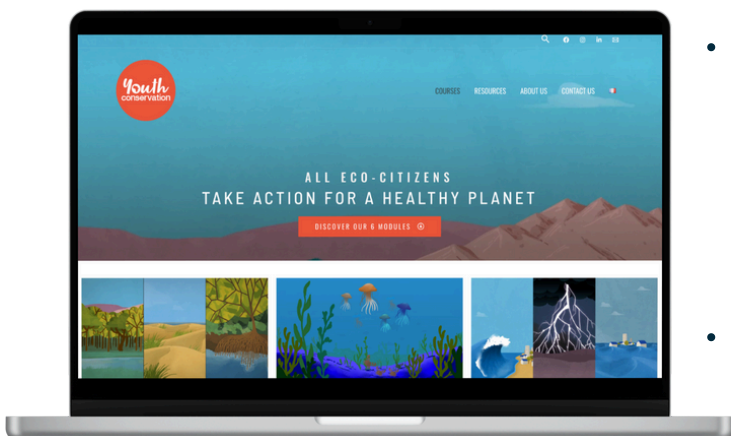
So go to [MOOC Conservation](https://MOOC-CONSERVATION.ORG) to start learning, get your certificate of achievement for this tutorial and make a successful contribution to the green transition!

YOUTH CONSERVATION : **DISCOVER, UNDERSTAND AND ACT FOR THE PLANET**

THE online platform, 100% free of charge, brings together dedicated resources:

- For **children and young people**: 6 didactic and interactive courses on the major themes of nature conservation: terrestrial and marine biodiversity, climate change, nature and health, etc.
- For **educators**: downloadable teaching resources to facilitate learning and the running of educational sessions (posters, guides, etc.).

Visit www.youth-conservation.org!



NEW: PODCAST THE VOICE OF NATURE !

To facilitate dissemination and learning, particularly in less connected rural areas, our 6 modules are now available in MP3 format for free listening on [Spotify](#) and [YouTube](#) (only in French for now).

Over the coming months, we're going to expand our audio offering by translating into English and other major local African languages, by interviewing experts and amateurs working in the field to protect the environment. Our aim? To inspire and help all conservation enthusiasts, whether professionals or amateurs, in their day-to-day work!

So:

- Go to [Spotify](#) or [YouTube](#) and have a good listen!
- We plan to translate these 18 episodes in English; if you want to contribute and read 1 module (3 episodes), please send us a test recording at info@youth-conservation.org! Thanks in advance for your help!
- Would you like to share your experience of environmental education in the field? Contact us at info@youth-conservation.org!



TESTIMONIALS FROM THE FIELD (1/2)

»»» NGO YOUNG LEADERS OF BENIN (BENIN) - CREATION OF THE ECOCLUB

A few weeks ago, the NGO Young Leaders of Benin successfully launched its EcoClub programme, aimed at raising awareness among children and young people in Abomey Calavi about environmental protection and plastic pollution. Several meetings have already taken place thanks to the mobilisation of numerous partners (experts, NGO volunteers, media, etc.).



The speakers used Youth Conservation resources such as posters and activity guides to distil lessons and lead discussions. In all, more than 650 pupils, from primary to secondary school, have been educated. Every time, the youngsters are captivated and passionate about what they learn!

These programmes are intended to be extended to other schools.

Together, we have planted the seeds of sustainable ecological change!

Thank you for this testimonial and congratulations to all of you for your commitment!

If you would like to find out more about this project, please contact the NGO directly: ofbeninyoungleaders@gmail.com



TESTIMONIALS FROM THE FIELD (2/2)

»»» NGO FUTURE FOR FUTURE (BENIN) - BY AYENAN SALEM M., PRESIDENT OF THE NGO FUTURE FOR FUTURE

At a time when preserving our planet has become an absolute priority, the NGO Future for Future stands out for its unwavering commitment to education and environmental action. Two of its flagship initiatives, the "**NATURE POSITIVE UNIVERSITIES CLIMATE CLUB BENIN**" and the "**ECOL'ECOLO**" project, embody this commitment by offering quality education to children, teenagers and young people on the crucial issues of climate change and environmental protection.

"Nature Positive Universities Climate Club Benin: A Student Commitment to Biodiversity and Climate.

Launched at COP15 in Canada, the "Nature Positive Universities Alliance" initiative has rapidly established itself as a pillar for the conservation of biodiversity and the fight against climate change. The NGO Future for Future, which pioneered the initiative in Benin, set up the first NPU club at the University of Abomey-Calavi. With over 150 dedicated members, the club has become a driving force for change within the student community. The club's actions are varied and impactful: raising awareness, waste collection, eco-tourism visits and making biodegradable packaging. Every year, on International Zero Waste Day, the club organises awareness-raising activities, webinars and digital campaigns. Recently, its campaign on post-festival waste management reached over 10,388 people on social networks, testifying to its growing influence. On World Wetlands Day, we donated 400 mangrove seedlings to the NGO Pauly Afrique Bio as part of its project to reforest 100,000 mangroves in Benin, and we don't hesitate to support initiatives by young people to help conserve biodiversity.

The "ECOL'ECOLO" project: educate to preserve

Aware of the urgent need to protect the environment, the NGO Future for Future has launched the "ECOL'ECOLO" project, an environmental education initiative. **The project aims to shape responsible and committed citizens by providing high-quality education on the challenges of climate change from a very early age. Through fun, interactive activities such as poetry, singing, storytelling, painting and drawing, the project raises learners' awareness of environmental challenges. Workshops on making biodegradable packaging and tree-planting sessions reinforce this awareness, allowing learners to connect directly with nature.** In 2022, we were privileged to participate in the UNESCO and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change consultations on the Greening Curriculum on Quality Climate Change Education. We not only contributed to the process of developing the proposals, but also presented the results of these consultations at COP27 in Egypt, with the "ECOL'ECOLO" project as our flagship initiative and model.

Towards a sustainable future: our perspectives

For the NGO Future for Future, the road to a sustainable future has only just begun. We aspire to :

- Develop a generation of young environmental leaders who can positively influence their communities.
- Extend our initiatives to more schools and regions by collaborating with other organisations and civil society players.
- Continue to develop our projects with a focus on empowering local communities and promoting sustainable lifestyles.

As stated in our organisation's vision "To create a green and sustainable world for present and future generations", we believe that every small action in favour of the environment is a step towards environmental justice.

Thank you for this testimonial and well done to all the volunteers.

If you would like to find out more about this project, you can contact them directly at future4future.ngo@gmail.com or follow them on their social networks:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/futureforfutureorg/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/futureforfutur/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/futureforfuture/>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/futureforfutur_/

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@futureforfuture/>

Website: <https://futureforfuture.org/>



State of West African marine protected areas

A report by Tanya Merceron & colleagues

FEATURE OF
THE MONTH

»»» The marine protected areas of West Africa are located in an eco-region whose major characteristic is the presence of upwellings. Depending on the more or less strong influence of these upwellings and the terrigenous contributions of fluvial origin, these areas are linked to different coastal ecosystems which form a continuum with regard to their strong interactions.

The eco-regional dimension of these protected areas is confirmed by the transboundary migrations of pelagic, turtles, marine mammals and waterbirds, not forgetting those of artisanal fishermen.

On an administrative and institutional level, another eco-regional dimension is the colonial heritage, whether French, Portuguese or British, whose imprint on the legal frameworks and administrative practices of the countries concerned is manifest.

A regional challenge is required in terms of coastal zone management, not only with regard to the interactions between the different ecosystems and socio-systems but also the threats to which they are subject. In eco-regional management of the coastal zone, protected marine and coastal areas obviously have a determining role in the protection of species and habitats as well as in the regeneration of biodiversity.

Another issue is regional integration to which the creation of a network of marine and coastal protected areas such as RAMPAAO can contribute by participating in regional institutional strengthening. However, a good perception of environmental awareness must be accompanied by a knowledge base and the production of tools likely to guide decision-making to integrate the environmental dimension into the strategic planning process of sectoral policies. It is in this perspective that the design and drafting of the first report on the State of marine protected areas (EdAMP) in West Africa falls, which includes a set of chapters addressing current and worrying environmental issues, as well as crucial management challenges to be met for sustainable development.

This NAPA presents a few extracts from this report which you can find [here](#).



State of West African marine protected areas 2022

Editors: Tanya Merceron, Thierry Clément, Catherine Gabriel, Francis Staub, Talbou Ba, Marie Suzanne Traoré



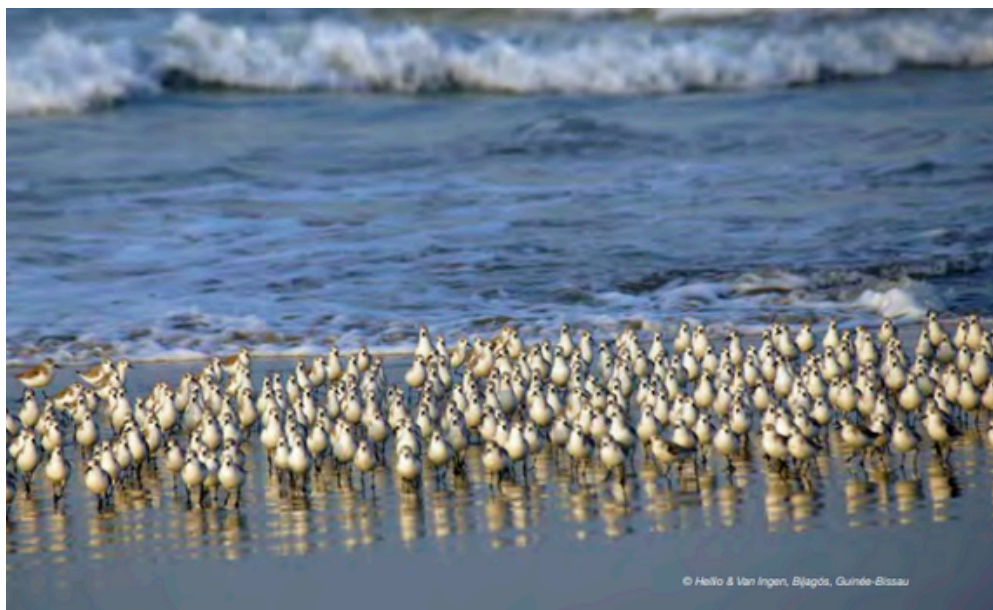
INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE



Executive summary

The coastal zone of West Africa covered by the State of marine protected areas (EdAMP - État des aires marines protégées d'Afrique de l'Ouest) extends approximately 6,000 km, from Mauritania in the north, passing through the deeply indented coasts of the islands and estuaries, then the lagoon coasts and the coastal strips of the Gulf of Guinea, up to Nigeria. The small island state of the Cabo Verde Islands, volcanic and mountainous, completes this geography.

These coastal areas are characterized by globally significant biodiversity: they include some of the most productive and diverse large marine ecosystems in the world, including significant upwelling areas, extensive mangrove forests, salt marshes, immense seagrass beds, seamounts and canyons, cold water coral reefs, and, more rarely (in Cabo Verde for example) areas of warm water (tropical) corals. The region brings together the largest colony of breeding monk seals on earth and an exceptional ornithological community.



Several species are classified on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List as threatened with extinction (Vulnerable or Endangered). Thanks to the presence of seasonal upwellings, the region's marine waters are among the richest in fisheries resources on the planet, resources on which a significant part of the population depends.

But the marine ecosystem and coastal communities face many challenges, namely illegal, unreported and/or unregulated fishing, pollution, uncontrolled coastal development, etc., which harm habitats and species.

The prospective reflections carried out on the region show the growing strategic importance of the West African coastal area, where most of the economic activity is concentrated, bringing together more than 40% of the total population and around 60% of the urban population of coastal states, dependent to varying degrees on these coastal and marine resources, often pillars of their economies.

Climate change, with an already visible impact on the coastline, is exacerbating these many challenges.

The inventory work carried out within the framework of the EdAMP therefore identifies 141 marine and coastal protected areas, of which 84 are marine areas (with at least a small marine part), 55 are coastal only without marine part but with intrusions of salt water allowing the establishment of mangroves); 124 sites have been officially designated (by decree or order) and therefore have a national status while 15 do not have such national status, but have been designated of international interest (Ramsar sites), to which are added 7 biosphere reserves. These MPAs have very variable status, with managed natural resource protected areas (IUCN category VI) being the most numerous. But 50% of the MPAs identified have not been classified according to the IUCN categories by the authorities.

It is now established that MPAs, provided they are well managed, are effective tools for the conservation of biodiversity, the protection of marine and coastal environments and their resources, making it possible to strengthen the resilience of ecosystems.



Extract from chapter 2: Geographic context

Three main ecosystem types were identified:

- Senegalo-Mauritanian system characterised by upwellings;
- Cabo Verdian system, which is mainly rocky islands;
- Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, mostly estuarine mangrove.

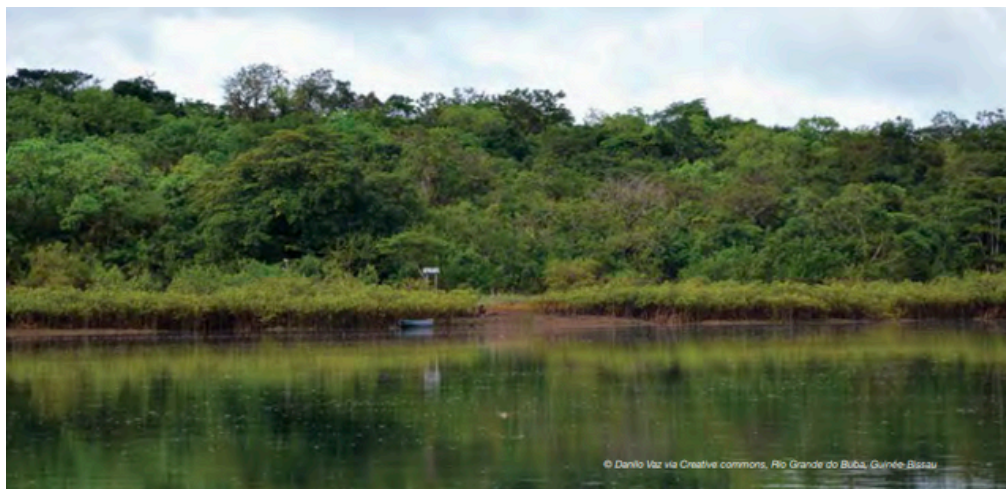
The coastal areas of West Africa are home to a great diversity of ecosystems: sandy coasts, dune complexes, rocky coasts, vast deltaic and estuarine areas with mangroves, coastal wetlands (mudflats, sebkhas, lagoons), vast sea grass beds, as well as the coral areas of Cabo Verde with a high rate of endemism. Further, notable habitats in Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) include cold-water coral reefs (e.g. off Nouakchott in the Mauritanian EEZ - ZEEM), upwelling areas, canyons (“Canyons of Timiris” of the same ZEEM).

One of the main characteristics of this region is the presence of seasonal upwellings. Enriched by the primary production of Saharan upwellings and coastal ecosystems, West African coastal areas are home to extraordinary biodiversity: molluscs, fish, sea turtles (five of the world’s seven species), marine mammals, including the largest colony of breeding monk seals on land, manatees, whales, dolphins.

Several species are listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List as threatened with Extinction, Vulnerable or Endangered. There is an exceptional ornithological community here, with Afrotropical species breeding and residing in the area, alongside Palearctic species migrating to spend the winter (up to 10 million individuals) in the region. It is also a vital wintering and/or breeding area for many migratory species.

Mangroves play a key role in maintaining coastal dynamics all along the southern rivers region and in estuaries, and contribute to the existence of remarkable marine and terrestrial fauna.

They are essential habitat and a breeding ground for a large number of birds and fish, including some of the most important commercial species in the region. Beyond that, they play a major role in mitigating and regulating the impacts of climate change, contributing in particular to the sequestration and storage of carbon but also to the vertical erection of the ground, thus reducing the risks of submersion and salinization linked to sea level rise. The distribution of mangroves plays a major role in wave energy attenuation (up to 90% attenuation). They are very dynamic, and while they were losing surface area in West Africa in the period from the 1950s-1995, with a decrease of nearly 40% in surface area (from 14,757 km² to 9,799 km²), others on the contrary have gained ground; this increase is either natural or due to protective actions and major restoration programmes undertaken several years ago.



Seagrasses also play a very important ecological, economic and social role. They are feeding grounds, breeding grounds and nurseries for many species such as fish, turtles, molluscs and crustaceans. They contribute to maintaining clear and quality water, store carbon, produce a large quantity of oxygen used by all the organisms that live there. They thus play a preponderant role in the climatic cycle and, by retaining sediments and protecting the coast. Knowledge of West African seagrasses is still sketchy, especially their spatial distribution and state of health (see resiliencesea.org). Also poorly known are the habitats of cold-water reefs and the warm-water coral communities found, for example, in Cabo Verde.

The prospective demo-economic reflections carried out in 2011 as part of the development of the West African Coastline Master Plan (SDLAO), the main trends of which were verified in 2016, show the growing strategic importance of the West African coastal area, where most of the “modern” economic activity is concentrated and which brings together more than 40% of the total population and around 60% of the urban population of the coastal States, depending to varying degrees on these coastal and marine resources, often pillars of their economies.

Download the full report [here](#).

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Land is not a gift from our parents, it is our children who lend it to us".

Indian proverb

Event to diarise

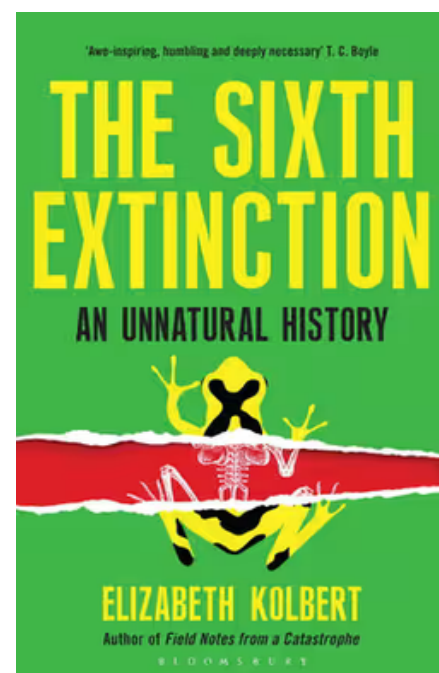
Wednesday 5 June is **World Environment Day**, which brings together millions of people around the world and encourages everyone to take part in efforts to protect and restore the Earth. This year marks the **fiftieth anniversary of the event**. Saudi Arabia will host **World Environment Day 2024**, which will focus on **land restoration, desertification and drought resilience**. #GenerationRestoration

Some reading

»»» THE SIXTH EXTINCTION - BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

For anyone paying attention to the biodiversity crisis it will come as no surprise that some scientists are calling it the sixth extinction. That is the title Elizabeth Kolbert, a seasoned journalist with a gift for writing, adopted for her 2015 Pulitzer Prize-winning book, which lays out in stark terms exactly what we are facing. But this is not some dry account of how humans are destroying the natural world, though it certainly makes for sober reading. It is a gripping story of the fate of species we have lost, and those we stand to lose if we sit idly by and do nothing. From the demise of the American mastodon and great auk to the threats that loom over the planet today, from the Amazon to the Great Barrier Reef, Kolbert asks the question: "In an extinction event of our own making, what happens to us?"

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Hélène Magdelain - Youth Conservation coordinator

Consider publishing in the NAPA (article, stories, pictures on protected areas in Africa, job offers, etc.), contact us at mooocs@papaco.org.

THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF IUCN