



## **Journey to Planet Earth**

### **Transcript for Episode 09: The State of the Planet's Wildlife**

**Complete Version**

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**Journey to Planet Earth is produced by**

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**OPENING TEASE**

Next on *Journey to Planet Earth* -- are half of the world's wildlife species on the brink of extinction? Why are tigers and primates disappearing and is global warming a death sentence for Polar Bears? In Montana the grizzly makes its last stand while in the Everglades help is coming from an unlikely source. I'm Matt Damon -- all this and much more as we investigate the *State Of The Planet's Wildlife*.

**SERIES TITLE**

*JOURNEY TO PLANET EARTH*

**UNDERWRITING CREDITS**

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**(Opening Titles)**

(Gorilla Rainforest)

There's a place in the world where a lush rainforest -- with open meadows, bamboo thickets and fresh running streams -- provides a safe haven for a group of endangered lowland gorillas. In this jungle sanctuary highly threatened animals survive without fear of being stalked by local poachers. It's a place where the affects of extreme poverty and civil unrest seem a world away. But what really makes this patch of wilderness so extraordinary is the fact that that it's not located in a remote part of Africa -- but rather here in New York City.

(Zoo)

The Bronx Zoo's gorilla exhibit is one of the city's most popular attractions -- providing visitors with a rare and intimate glimpse of the natural world. However realistic the experience appears -- the jungle sounds are prerecorded -- much of the food the gorillas eat comes from local markets -- many of the trees are made of metal and epoxy -- and the forest that lies behind these thick walls of protective glass is essentially a theatrical illusion.

**Matt Damon (On-Camera)**

*What's not an illusion is the approaching reality that the zoos of the future may be forced to become urban sanctuaries for some of our planet's animals. For years scientists have been telling us that in this century as much as half of the world's wildlife species could become extinct.*

(Wildlife montage)

Once -- not so very long ago -- the Earth was a place of great and unspoiled diversity -- home to the rich tapestry and elegance of the natural world.

Once -- not so very long ago -- ours was a world with vast stretches of uninhabited and protected wilderness areas -- where our polar regions supported an abundance of sea and land mammals -- and the oceans exhibited a healthy biodiversity.

Once, not so very long ago – our tropical rainforests supported an almost infinite variety of species -- and the savannahs and grasslands of the world sustained great herds of wild and migrating animals.

But now scientific research indicates that something is terribly wrong with our environment -- that much of our planet's wildlife is in danger of disappearing.

**Bob Engelman**

**Population Action International**

*Every kind of species, every broad type of species, every broad type of habitat is under threat now in a way that wasn't true in all of past human history.*

**Lester Brown**

**Earth Policy Institute**

*We've kind of taken over the planet and there's just not much room left for many of the other species. So we're seeing these extraordinary drops in populations.*

**Steve Ososky**

**Wildlife Conservation Society**

*Right now we know that at least 25% of the world's 4000 or so mammal species are threatened or endangered. Two out of three bird species are in decline worldwide.*

**[Sub-title: The sixth extinction...]**

(Fire and Asteroid)

Wildlife extinctions are not a new phenomena. During our planet's long geological history – on at least five occasions – catastrophic events wiped out vast numbers of species. The last great extinction happened sixty-five million years ago. That's when a giant asteroid crashed into the Earth -- sending enough ash into the atmosphere to cool the planet and seal the fate of over seventy-five percent of the world's plants and animals. But today, the threat of what scientists call – the sixth extinction – won't come from a volcanic eruption or outer space. The next extinction could be the result of human activities.

**Liz Bennett**

**Wildlife Conservation Society**

*We're one of perhaps a hundred million species on the planet, but we're the first species ever to have the control of the fates of other species in our hands.*

**Charlie Kennel**

**Scripps Institute of Oceanography**

*There were always side effects from human activities, but they were always small compared to the scale of nature and now we are altering the surface of the Earth.*

**Bob Cook**

**Wildlife Conservation Society**

*And while there have been other extinction crises this will be a dramatic alteration that will fundamentally threaten the future of humanity because we are all linked. We are all part of this web of life.*

**Matt Damon (On-camera)**

*How could we have allowed this to happen? How could many of our planet's animal species be on the brink of extinction? Perhaps it's best to begin with the link between population pressures and the loss of wildlife habitat.*

## (Shanghai)

Shanghai is a mega-city of steel and glass -- the commercial and financial center of China -- fueled by around the clock images -- symbols of consumption -- powered by a global economy. Even when the glow of neon finally gives way to the sobering reality of daylight -- -- nothing slows the city's booming economy.

**Lester Brown**

*We have been saying that the United States, with 5% of the world's people consumes a third to 40% of the world's resources. That was true for a long time. It is no longer true. It is no longer true because China has now overtaken the United States in the consumption of most basic resources. We look at the food economy grain and meat. And of all those commodities now China consumes more than the United States and that could create a serious problem for the world.*

## (Food market)

Shanghai's food markets overflow with fresh produce and once unimaginable luxuries like eggs, poultry, and meat. In fact, China accounts for more than quarter of the world's consumption of meat. Simply put -- 1.3 billion consumers can have a major impact on the world's economy.

## (Cattle Grazing)

The windswept prairies of Northeastern China have sustained herders and nomadic horsemen for thousands of years. Normally they would stay in one location as long as there was enough grass and water for their animals -- then as the grass and ponds became exhausted -- they would move their herds to new pastures.

To exploit China's sudden and growing appetite for meat -- the herders increased their cattle, sheep and goats -- from 100 million head to over 400 million. But, there's not enough pasture to support this increase in livestock. Extreme over grazing has created a crisis -- without the protective cover of grass -- the herders can't keep up with the demand for meat.

## (Duck farm)

This has forced the Chinese to increase their production of pork and poultry requiring massive amounts of feed grain made from soy beans. But farmers can't meet the demand -- and in their search for soy beans -- China is -- in a sense-- burning up the forests of the world -- particularly the rain forests of the Amazon.

**(Sub-title: Turf wars...)**

Each year millions of acres go up in flames. The devastation caused by local farmers is unimaginable. Gone is irreplaceable habitat that helps support the greatest diversity of wildlife in the world. Gone is important genetic information of plants and animals that could lead to the development of new drugs and cures for diseases. And in its place are smoldering pockets of land -- land that gives way to cattle pastures and soy bean farms. But once it's cultivated -- it doesn't take long before the nutrients of the forest floor become exhausted. Soon the land is abandoned -- the ranchers and farmers move on -- and the burning begins again -- only this time -- deeper into the rainforest.

Signs of the devastation can be seen all along the region's major highway -- the Amazon River. Timber -- cut from the heart of the rainforest -- head downstream -- on the way to local sawmills and then onto North America. Cattle raised on exhausted farmland -- are destined for the food markets of Europe. And soy beans -- grown on the charred remains of the forest floor -- are loaded into cargo containers that make

their way to the pig and poultry farms of Asia. As a result Brazil has become the world's largest exporter of soy beans and their biggest customer is China.

In the era of globalization, deforestation is increasingly driven by the dinner tables of the world. And if one point three billion Chinese decide to eat more pork and poultry but lack the land to grow soy beans -- then the Amazon simply becomes their new farmland.

**Tom Lovejoy**  
**The Heinz Center**

*The Amazon year after year is being eaten away by major deforestation. And what we're getting closer and closer to is a tipping point which will affect the whole system. If you do lose the entire Amazon, you are losing probably one fifth of all the wild life species on earth.*

**Matt Damon (On-camera)**

*Though pressures from the world's most populated countries can lead to the loss of huge tracts of wilderness areas -- even the least crowded regions are showing declines in wildlife habitat.*

(South Africa)

South Africa is a country dominated by the timeless rhythms of nature – and the diversity of life found in the rolling hills of endless green. Its central highlands are an environmental treasure. This may be the oldest grassland habitat on the planet – so ancient that it existed before the Earth's original landmass broke off into continents over a hundred million years ago. Here, the word grassland is almost a misnomer – only one in six plants are actually grasses. During the spring and summer months over eight hundred species of wild flowers carpet the landscape – turning it into a delicate mosaic of pastels.

The grasslands act like a giant sponge – a natural reservoir that soaks up water during the rainy season and slowly releases it during South Africa's long dry season. Small pockets of wetlands are home to some 360 species of birds. A sanctuary for migrating flocks from North Africa and Europe. The grasslands also provide fertile and abundant grazing for animals – both wild and domestic. Over-grazing and erosion have never been a problem. Until recently, this was an ecosystem in almost perfect balance. South Africa also represents a microcosm of a global debate – how best to balance badly needed economic development with the preservation of nature.

**John McAllister**  
**Grasslands Ecologist**

*These beautiful grasslands are one of the oldest landscapes in Africa – around about 180 million years. They used to cover as much as 60 percent of Africa and today they're being threatened by all sorts of things. Perhaps the most invasive are alien tree plantations to feed great big paper and pulp mills for Japan and the U.S.*

(Trees)

Along the edge of the grasslands -- hundreds of thousands of acres have been turned into tree plantations. Logging has become a major industry in South Africa. These trees being harvested – mostly pine and eucalyptus – are not native to South Africa – but they are beginning to take over parts of the grasslands. They consume nearly 40% of available rainwater – water that is necessary to maintain the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

Each year less and less run-off finds its way into the wetlands – which has become an important stop-over for hundreds of thousands of migrating birds. Clearly economic development has put the wildlife that live in this ecosystem in jeopardy.

(Lake Baringo)

About two thousand miles to the north, a similar habitat story is playing out. Only this time a local community may have found some answers. Kenya's Lake Baringo is also a refuge for migrating waterfowl. Yet its scenic beauty belies a harsh reality. Lake Baringo is dying -- it's literally drying up.

**Murray Roberts**

*I was born and raised here in Lake Baringo, and the area that we're now standing on used to at one time be lake. In fact, there would have been about seven or eight feet of water here.*

Murray Roberts feels a strong bond to this place and its people. Over the years, he watched with dismay as this jewel of a lake turned brown -- as it slowly lost volume.

**Murray Roberts**

*The lake is receiving about 4 million cubic meters of silt every year. And as the years goes by, the lake goes further and further down, and the bottom of the lake comes further up, and the long-term prediction is that it will eventually become a swamp.*

Murray knows the reasons all too well. Increased agriculture has siphoned river water away from Baringo. Overgrazing has led to massive amounts of soil erosion and silting. Murray also knows that unless something is done very soon -- the lake and the bird sanctuary will simply disappear.

(Tribal Farm)

A few miles from Lake Baringo a local tribesman has found a glimmer of hope. Paul Parsalaach's life revolves around caring for his livestock. For as long as he can remember the family's days have been defined by the herd's search for grass.

(Paul On Motorcycle)

Every time Paul crosses his ancestral territory, he is reminded of the conflicting pressures of the 21st century. As his Njemp tribe became more sedentary -- their livestock stripped away the grass near Lake Baringo. That's when he realized that time was running out -- for his family -- and for the lake.

(Cows grazing)

Paul and Murray Roberts teamed up to find a way to restore about 5,000 acres of denuded land surrounding the lake. The plan was simple. They agreed to plant only indigenous grasses -- hardy species that bind eroded soils together and start the process of grassland regeneration.

(Women In Field)

The community's efforts paid-off. These sheaves of arid grass are being harvested and taken to a local market for sale as thatching and fodder. It's brought hope to a situation which seemed so desperate.

**Paul Parsalaach**

*With the togetherness of the family, with our small amount of reclaimed land, we will make a living. The family is going to have a good future.*

The restoration of the grassland is particularly beneficial to the wildlife that once thrived in this environment -- like the weaver birds -- who now have enough grass to build their nests. And thanks to the efforts of the local community -- for now -- at least -- thousands of migrating birds still flock to Lake Baringo.

**Matt Damon (On-camera)**

*Despite the success at Lake Baringo -- there still remains a fundamental question: how can economic development and the protection of wilderness areas co-exist? It's a question dominating the future of one of the largest wetland ecosystems in North America.*

(Everglades)

At first glance, Florida's Everglades seems like a forbidding primordial wilderness -- an unspoiled breeding ground and nursery for plants and animals -- offering sanctuary to millions of migrating birds.

However abundant the wildlife -- this ecosystem -- which is as large as the state of Connecticut -- is in peril. Close to ninety percent of the bird population is gone. Over a dozen Everglades animals are on the endangered species list.

(Panther and Bobcat)

Once home to over fifteen hundred Florida panthers -- today about eighty remain in the wild. This is also a place where Bobcats sometimes confuse power lines for trees. And like the Bobcat and panther -- the everglades is in trouble.

One hundred years ago things were much different. That's when the seasonal rains were free to flow into the meandering rivers of Central Florida. The water was cleansed by the natural filtering process of the surrounding wetlands. And as the rivers made their way south -- they fed into the second largest freshwater lake within the borders of the United States -- Lake Okeechobee. From there the water slowly flowed across the marshlands -- eventually giving life to the Everglades. But now the lake is surrounded -- not by wetlands -- but rather the urban sprawl of five million people.

(Canal)

To meet the needs of an exploding economy about fifty percent of Florida's original wetlands have been drained -- its water diverted into canals for flood control and to satisfy the thirsty demands of development and agriculture.

(Ranching)

But in return, cattle ranches and farms discharge the watery residue of agricultural chemicals like phosphorous into the major source of water for the Everglades -- Lake Okeechobee.

(Lake Okeechobee)

After decades of abuse, the lake is showing signs of severe damage. And whenever there is competition over water -- wildlife are always the first to suffer.

**Paul Gray**  
**Audubon of Florida**

*When you put a whole lot of phosphorous pollution in Lake Okeechobee and in the everglades the cattails take over everything. Basically the cattails get so thick that no wild life can live in there. There's almost nothing that feeds in cattails, the water underneath the cattails, the water underneath the cat tails is low in oxygen and there are a lot of bugs down there and birds can't wade through there because it's too thick. Ducks can't swim in there because it's too thick and it just becomes kind of a biological desert out there.*

**Matt Damon (On-Camera)**

*Although most biologists concede that the Everglades can never be returned to its original state, experts are developing plans to reverse the environmental damage. And help is coming from an unlikely source.*

(Cattle ranching)

In Florida, cattle ranching is big business. It represents almost a half billion dollars in annual sales. For hundreds of years there was always enough land for both wildlife and cattle -- recently they've been competing for the same land and the same water.

No so on the Williamson ranch. Located less than 15 miles from Lake Okeechobee -- this is one of the most productive pieces of land in south Florida. A hundred years ago much of the ranch's eight thousand acres was wildlife habitat.

Sonny Williamson is a good steward of the land. He knows that something must be done to restore the everglades.

**Sonny Williamson**

*We're trying to find ways to restore wetlands and to do it in a way that will really benefit the water quality when it finally does leave the land and also to store the water there-and not sort of pipeline it straight into Lake Okeechobee and pipeline it into the everglades.*

What Sonny Williamson and some of his neighbors are doing is not channeling their tainted agricultural run-off back into the lake, but rather holding it on the land and turning unused portions of their property into wildlife sanctuaries.

Only after the ecosystem naturally filters out the chemical residue -- is the water allowed to flow into Lake Okeechobee. And in the process new wetlands have been created -- habitats that are essential for the preservation of wildlife . It's a program that's good for the environment and economically sustainable for the ranchers.

**Sonny Williamson**

*Our connection with nature is extremely important I believe and I don't know what happens to the human being when he is completely urbanized, but I don't really want to be around when that happens.*

Clearly the greatest challenge for the future of South Florida is finding a balance between rapid urbanization and the need to save the Everglades.

**[Sub-title: The price of poverty...]**

But elsewhere in world -- poverty and hunger play an equally dramatic role in the loss of wildlife. A South African lumber mill hasn't had a job opening for nearly a year. The hours are long and the pay is marginal. Yet each morning the plant manager must turn away dozens of applicants.

**Allen Robertson**

*Some of the men came to me from homes that literally had no food at all, and they said, "We're quite happy to work just for food alone, if you'll just give us food, and we will show you that we can work, and after the second or third month if you feel we're worth our wage, please pay us." But I had to very sadly turn people away, and it's a heart rendering exercise to go through and ask these folk to leave because you just haven't got work for them. And some of the men actually said, "You don't know how hungry we are -- we desperately need food."*

Many move to urban centers in search of work. But the big cities of Africa have little to offer the rural poor. Nairobi is ringed with impoverished shantytowns like Kibera. Over seven hundred thousand migrants live in squalor -- there are very few job opportunities -- unemployment is over 80%. Here in Kibera, hunger is a stark reality.

**(Wildlife preserve)**

Yet just a few miles away animals are free to roam on a protected game preserve. But when people are hungry -- wildlife become targets of opportunity. It's happening all over the world.

**(Poaching and wildlife trade)**

Each year millions of animals are killed so the poor can earn enough for the bare necessities of life -- while the world's tigers are going extinct.

Each year millions of animals are killed to feed the hungry -- while the world's primates are going extinct.

Each year millions of animals become trophies for the wealthy -- while their body parts are turned into remedies and tonics.

Each year hundreds of millions of animals are caged and sold as exotic pets.

**(Singapore bird trade)**

And the loss of bird species is astonishing. The epicenter of the world's wild bird trade is here -- in the back alleys and markets of Singapore. Located in the heart of Southeast Asia, this is where hundreds of thousands of rare and exotic birds are bought and sold.

Singapore's active harbor reflects the enormous profits that come from liberal trading policies. But it's from its international airport that the rarest of animals are shipped to the wealthy markets of Europe and North America. In an age of globalization -- wildlife trade has turned into a six billion dollar a year industry.

**Liz Bennett****Wildlife Conservation Society**

*What we're essentially doing is creating what's known as the empty forest syndrome. And this means that we're getting forests which look fantastic. They're full of wonderful trees but they're losing their wildlife from inside them because it's being hunted out. And that means that we're losing pollinators, dispersers, browsers and that's likely to have a domino effect within the forest and will cause other species to go too, including species which are very important for medicines, for timber. So if we lose those animals the wider repercussions for the whole ecosystem could be very significant indeed and we don't know the full ramifications of it.*

**Bob Engelman****Population Action International**

*Wild species are facing the prospect of a kind of demographic winter, a period of time in which there are so many human beings on the planet and their economic needs are so great they have so dominated the planet-that it's very difficult for wild life to survive.*

Fortunately there are many places in the world where community initiatives can lead to global solutions. In the African nation of Zambia there is such a program.

(Zambia)

Thirty-five years ago the Luangwa Valley was a 3,000 square mile protected sanctuary for about 90,000 elephants. But when drought and famine overwhelmed the local farmers, the valley became less like a wildlife preserve and more like a war zone.

The elephant population was hunted for food and tusks. Despite a ban on the sale of ivory -- their numbers dropped to fewer than 15,000. And as poverty deepened, elephants continued to be slaughtered - - at the rate of over a thousand a year.

**Steve Osofsky****Wildlife Conservation Society**

*In the face of poverty people will tend to utilize whatever they can to survive and that makes perfect sense. Our job as conservationists is to try and create environment where sustainable management is possible where people can see things from a larger scale and learn how to manage things not just at the household level but work collaboratively to manage things at a landscape level.*

Organizers realized that the villagers needed economic incentives before they would agree to stop poaching. And there was one condition. They had to turn in their snares and guns.

**Steve Osofsky**

*And since we've done this we've had over 30,000 snares turned over. Hundreds of guns have been turned in because farmers have seen that by new ways of managing their agricultural output and new marketing strategies they don't need to poach. Poaching is a food security issue. And even the term poaching is a loaded one. It's something people need to do when they're' starving. When they need to feed their families.*

The results are impressive – in three years 16,000 farmers have achieved food security -- wildlife is coming back -- the elephant population is increasing – and the economic benefits of eco-tourism are on the rise.

**(Matt Damon On-camera)**

*The challenge for the nations of the world is to somehow duplicate Zambia's success. But it won't be easy, especially when an even greater threat to the state of the planet's wildlife is looming on the horizon.*

**[Sub-title: A global melt down...]**

(Glaciers)

From the air the world's glaciers are an extraordinary sight -- a treasure of natural beauty -- with endless formations of ice and snow -- seemingly frozen in time.

But now take a closer look -- something seems to be going wrong -- the world's glacial regions are melting -- and it's because of human changes to our environment.

We now live in a world where ice and snow are melting at unprecedented rates -- and where temperatures are rising faster than at any time in recorded history.

In Montana's Glacier National Park, about one hundred and fifty years ago there were over 150 active glaciers. Today there are 27 -- in a few decades scientists tell us they'll be gone.

In South America, the glaciers of the tropical Andes are also melting. The alarming fact is that they are melting three times faster than they were fifty years ago.

Parts of Africa are also showing the affects of climate change. Mount Kilimanjaro dominates Tanzania's landscape. Its peak has been covered with ice and snow for nearly 11,000 years. But recent satellite images show a dramatic melting of its glaciers. Scientists now expect that they will be completely gone by the year 2020.

**Matt (On-Camera)**

*The melting of the world's glaciers is also an early warning signal -- a vivid reminder that the sixth extinction could be only decades away. Yet there is a place where it may have already begun -- and it's happening in one of the world's coldest regions -- the arctic.*

(The Arctic)

**Sheila Watt-Cloutier****Inuit Circumpolar Conference**

*Climate change is not a theory. It's a reality here in the Arctic. We are getting, ice forming much later in the year and breaking up much earlier in the year. We are getting insects that have never been up here in the Arctic before. We're getting birds, species of birds and fish that have not been up here before. Our whole world is being altered up here in the Arctic and I think the world has to pay heed to that.*

(Polar bears)

For polar bears -- climate change may be a death sentence. To hunt for seals -- which is their primary source of food -- the bears must first swim long distances until they find stable sea ice.

Without the ice -- the bears cannot survive. Their hunting technique is simple. The bears stake out breathing holes carved out by seals -- they wait until the seals must come up for air -- and when they do -- the bears pounce. Polar bears spend months gorging themselves. They hunt with a sense of urgency. The bears know that when the sea ice melts -- they must go months without food -- until the ice returns.

But now scientists say their frozen habitat is rapidly warming and the Arctic Ocean could be ice-free within decades. Without ice floes to hunt seals from -- the polar bear will surely become extinct. Though the bears can swim non-stop for as long as a hundred miles -- already many are drowning from sheer exhaustion -- in their desperate search for sea ice.

**Bob Cook**  
**Wildlife Conservation Society**

*We have some significant challenges ahead of us. I think global climate change is going to turn everybody on their heads. What areas will become richer in wildlife? What areas will become more barren?*

**Matt Damon (On-Camera)**

*In a world already experiencing the warmest years on record -- the threat of climate change leading to a sixth extinction is getting stronger. Here's a snapshot of the future -- a look at how global warming could affect wildlife in a place already on the edge -- Africa.*

(African montage)

As temperatures rise -- pastures for livestock dry up -- rural villages begin to suffer -- human migration into cities intensifies -- unemployment and poverty deepens -- elephants invade farms in search of food -- and if the heat and drought doesn't wipe out half of Africa's wildlife -- surely the poachers will -- even those who voluntarily turned in their guns in the Luangwa Valley of Zambia.

**Matt (On-camera)**

*Though the full impact of climate change may be decades away -- wildlife habitats continue to deteriorate at alarming rates. This leaves animals with few options -- either face extinction -- or migrate to safer wilderness areas. But too often these wildlife corridors are blocked by human development.*

**Bob Engelman**

*These wild life corridors would have to displace farms, interstate highways, in some cases entire metropolitan areas. That's not going to happen so we have a real dilemma of how we can actually make the world a more compatible place for threatened plants and animals to ideally survive and if not survive to find some nearby place where they can survive.*

**Tom Lovejoy**

*We have to move past the old model of having isolated national parks and wild life preserves here and there, not connected with the rest of nature. And so basically it's really important to stitch these all together into a sort of a matrix with corridors running between the protected areas.*

(Rocky Mountain Front)

**(Sub-title: Escaping extinction...)**

They call this the Rocky Mountain Front. It's where the grasslands of the Great Plains meet the towering peaks of the Rocky Mountains. Located in northwestern Montana, this is a gateway to one of the largest wilderness areas in the United States.

This is also where grizzly bears still roam free. Two hundred years ago the west was home to over 100,000 bears. Today, there are about a thousand. Human development has turned their feeding grounds into suburban backyards -- and public sentiment threatens to exile the grizzly bear to isolated wildlife preserves. Yet it is here, in these remaining patches of wilderness, that these endangered grizzly bears must make their last stand. In a world where game preserves offer little protection -- there is a place where much is being done to keep wildlife corridors open.

(Blackfoot River Valley)

Montana's Blackfoot River valley is a community of about twenty-five hundred families. Most are ranchers -- and they treasure a rural lifestyle that hasn't changed very much for generations. Through the center of their valley runs the crystal clear waters of the Blackfoot River -- celebrated in the book and movie called "A River Runs Through It."

**Hank Goetz**

**Lands Director, Blackfoot Challenge**

*I think Norman Maclean's phrase the River runs through it is so, is so true because it binds the people in the community together. Some people use it for agricultural purposes, others use it for recreational purposes. It's a thing that brings us together.*

What also brought the community together was the fact that their beloved river was surrounded by one of the most robust grizzly bear habitats in the country.

**Greg Neudecker**

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

*The Blackfoot valley lies at the southern edge of what we call the Crown of the Continent ecosystem which includes glacier national park and the Bob Marshall wilderness. Unfortunately that high area is at such a high elevation that it doesn't have the most productive land and so critters like grizzly bears while they winter up there they hibernate up in that high country they need to come down on the valley floors in the spring time and particularly the fall time for foraging reasons.*

Several decades ago the community decided they'd rather live with grizzly bears than cut off their wildlife corridors and isolate them into to extinction. To help save the bears -- they formed a grass roots alliance called "The Blackfoot Challenge."

**Dave Mannix**

**Rancher, Blackfoot Challenge**

*Where grizzly bears and cattle you know both share habitat. There is conflict. Our ancestors got rid of that by getting rid of the grizzly bears. What we're trying to figure out now is how that we can have both cattle and grizzly bears.*

**Greg Neudecker**

*This Jack link fence that we constructed in 1990 allows for wild life migration such as grizzly bears to pass through this area while preventing domestic livestock from access this riparian area. This is the only Bull trout spawning site we have in the whole Blackfoot valley that's located on private property. And thanks to the rancher here who's allowed this management change we have a healthier habitat to a whole host of critters from grizzly bears to migratory song birds to bull trout that spawn in the stream system.*

The community also turned their attention to the grizzly bear's most important habitat -- the vast tracts of forests that surrounded the valley.

## (Archival Footage)

In the past clear-cutting wiped out huge sections of woodlands. For decades old growth trees were torn from the valley's slopes. But in the process -- tens of thousands of acres of wildlife habitat were sacrificed to meet the nation's growing demand for wood.

The sounds of logging still echo throughout the Blackfoot River Valley. But today trees are harvested using newer techniques. Rather than indiscriminate clear cutting the forest is thinned out. Left behind is a healthier and larger habitat for birds and other animals -- especially for grizzly bears.

## (Logging)

The sounds of logging still echo throughout the Blackfoot River Valley. But today trees are harvested using newer techniques. Rather than indiscriminate clear cutting -- the forest is thinned out. Left behind is a healthier and larger habitat for birds and other animals -- especially for grizzly bears. To help avoid serious confrontations between humans and bears -- a local biologist keeps track of their migration patterns.

**James Jonkel****Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks**

*Grizzlies have always been back in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. In the last ten years or so they're starting to come out here on the south end and a lot of this is private land and a lot of it is land that hasn't had grizzly bear activity in the last 20, 30 years but they're starting to move back in.*

At times Jamie Jonkel uses radio collars and tracking devices to monitor the more active bears.

**James Jonkel**

*We have a large male grizzly, male 107 that's on the ranch right now. He came down here about a month ago just because it was a good place to come if you're a bear and he's very close and his signal is just booming in. Sounds like he's about a quarter mile away. And they kind of come off the mountain face here and they come down into the flats. But he's definitely down here on the ranch.*

For the people living in the Blackfoot River Valley -- the decision to keep their land open to wildlife corridors seemed like the most logical choice.

**Greg Neudecker**

*I think the greatness about being here in the Blackfoot and being part of this system that we still have all these critters together, really means that we've got an intact landscape. It means something bigger than just those critters.*

## (Grizzly bears in zoo)

Thanks to a community's deeply held respect for the natural world -- the grizzly bears of the Blackfoot valley are doing well. But there still remains a larger and more serious question -- on a planet teetering on the brink of the sixth extinction -- are the grizzly bears and all the other animals living in the natural world ultimately doomed to survive only as popular attractions in our zoos.

**Bob Cook**

The large cats, the tigers, are a terrible risk and zoos may be the last place where there are genetically pure representatives of these species. But will they be wild animals? For me they won't be. They'll be an aberration. They'll be the remnants of human thoughtlessness and inability to heal the planet.

**Matt Damon (On-camera)**

*However difficult it is to protect wildlife, it's a testament to the power of human ingenuity that we are finding ways to co-exist with the animals of the natural world. But in the end -- perhaps the biggest challenge to the state of the planet's wildlife is recognizing the seriousness of the problems that lie ahead.*

**[Sub-Title: The state of the planet's wildlife...]****Liz Bennett**

*The state of the planet's wildlife, at the moment, is very alarming. Some species are going so fast and we either need to do something about it very quickly or we're going to start seeing some pretty massive extinctions of species that we really care about.*

**Bob Cook**

*But it's going to be a horse race between those changes that will be irreparable and our ability to do good and alter the way that we use the resources on our planet.*

**Steve Osofsky**

*I would say that the state of the planet's wild life is precarious and I think the decisions we make in the next few years will be very important in terms of determining which way things go.*

The urgency to avoid a sixth extinction presents us with enormous challenges. What we need now are the efforts of people everywhere -- all those who are willing to find ways to strike the right balance -- between what we want -- and what our planet's wildlife can endure.

**Matt Damon (On-Camera)**

*Though separated by distance and culture -- for the six and a half billion people who draw sustenance from the rich diversity of the natural world -- there are common bonds. Bonds that are renewed by each generation -- bringing new ideas -- new attitudes -- new hope for the state of the planet's wildlife. Planet Earth. This is our home -- this is where our journey of discovery must begin.*

**Web Site Announcement**

To discover more about today's featured stories, educational resources, or download teacher's guides and other information about the environment please join me on the Journey to Planet Earth web site at pbs.org.

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**PBS Cue**

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