



Executive Summary

2022



*Celebrating the Year of
the Tiger 2022*

From the Chair

We are extremely proud of the impact we have been able to have on a wide range of endangered species conservation initiatives since the founding of WVI in 2004. By getting world class veterinary expertise to the conservation frontline when and where it's most needed, WVI has made significant contributions to the long term survival of species like the echo parakeet, the Amur leopard and the pine marten.

However, as we approach our **20th anniversary**, we are increasingly aware of how important it is to evaluate the work we do and the projects we support as part of a more holistic approach to biodiversity conservation and the concept of One Health.[1] In doing so, we can demonstrate impact not only for ourselves and our local partners, but also for those who support and fund the work we do.

The 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals provide us with a starting point for a framework for evaluation. Of particular relevance to WVI are; SDG 15, **Life on Land**, which refers to the need to protect, restore and promote biodiversity and terrestrial ecosystems; SDG 14, **Life Below Water**, which addresses the need to conserve our oceans; and SDG 3 **Good Health and Well-Being**, which includes targets concerned with the management of global health risks, communicable disease and vaccine research.

While the SDGs were primarily designed with respect to the health and welfare of the planet's human population, few would now deny the fundamental interconnections between all life on the planet – in particular people, domestic animals and livestock, and wildlife. The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic shone a spotlight on the shrinking interface between humans, other species and the health of the planet, and what can happen when species which would not normally come into contact with each other exist in closer and closer proximity, giving rise to new and greater opportunities for the spillover of pathogens. While emerging infectious disease has become recognised by zoologists and conservationists as a leading cause of species decline over recent decades, the Covid pandemic has resulted in a much wider appreciation of the need for effective disease surveillance and mitigation to protect all life on earth, ourselves included. This is where WVI plays a modest but vital part.



[1] According to the OHHLEP, One Health is 'an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent': <https://www.who.int/news/item/01-12-2021-tripartite-and-unep-support-ohhlep-s-definition-of-one-health>

GOOD HEALTH & WELL-BEING

“All 17 SDGs ultimately depend on healthy ecosystems and biodiversity.”[1]

Despite this assertion by the UN Environment Programme, it is telling that by the organisation’s own admission, “biodiversity is largely neglected in Covid-19 recovery spending”. [1] At WVI we feel this is indicative of a bigger problem in the One Health arena; there needs to be much greater awareness at all levels of society and government of the intrinsic links between species conservation, biodiversity, wildlife health and disease control. Given our small size, WVI’s influence is inevitably restricted to a small pool of projects working with threatened species. However, we are committed to advocating whenever appropriate for a more integrated approach to all policies designed to advance the SDG goals, especially when considering management of global health risks, disease control and associated research. As we move forward, we will strive to make more explicit the role of all our partnerships in promoting and maintaining healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, and ultimately, therefore, to the attainment of all the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

[3] <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal15>

LIFE BELOW WATER

This year, we have not only continued to strengthen the veterinary capacity of the ARCHELON turtle rehab and rehabilitation centre in Greece, but we have also built on our relationship with government vets in Ghana who are responsible for turtle welfare; something which will be taken forward over the coming months by Matthew Rendle. Following a further two clinical-support visits to ARCHELON by Matthew and marine vet Tania Monreal, we are delighted to have helped establish what is now a centre of excellence for Greece, putting them in a position to co-host our first Turtle Health and Welfare Workshop for turtle rehabilitators from around the country in 2023. A special mention must go to Animal Friends Pet Insurance for their kind support for our turtle work.

Plastic pollution now affects all turtles seen in rescue centres around the Mediterranean, from entanglement in discarded plastic fishing nets and line, to the ingestion of miscellaneous plastic waste and the ubiquitous presence of microplastics. While the health implications of the abundance of microplastics are still poorly understood for both humans and wildlife, early indications suggest the effects are unlikely to be benign.



LIFE ON LAND

In 2022, initiatives which have contributed to the protection of Life on Land include the work of Matthew Rendle RVN in Ghana, where he has been helping West African Primate Conservation Action (WAPCA) prepare a group of captive white-naped mangabeys (*Cercocebus lunulatus*) – an Endangered primate – for future release into the wild in community-managed forest. Meanwhile, vet Jessica Bodgener, working with Cornell colleague Dr Martin Gilbert, has significantly advanced understanding of the threat posed by canine distemper virus to leopards in Nepal, and potential links to human-leopard conflict. Jess and Martin were also responsible for a ground-breaking workshop for regional tiger specialists in Indonesia, as the country prepares to be the first to introduce a nationwide network for distemper surveillance – the greatest known disease threat to the world's remaining tigers. The workshop was one of a suite of initiatives to support global tiger conservation - the focus of our Big Give Christmas Challenge campaign, which was our most successful yet, raising over £30,000.

Another highlight was the visit of Nepalese wildlife vet, Dr Amir Sadaula, for CPD training in the UK, to enable him to make better use of anaesthetic and X-ray equipment at the country's first and only wildlife hospital in Chitwan National Park, where patients include tigers and leopards. As an umbrella species, conservation of the tiger supports and is intrinsically linked to the protection of its habitat and local biodiversity. We are extremely grateful to Montgomery Veterinary Clinic and our long standing partners at The Big Cat Sanctuary, Colchester Zoo and Chessington World of Adventures for facilitating Amir's training.

A final goodbye.....

Earlier in the year, we were finally able to come together to mark the loss in 2020 of WVI's founder and Veterinary Advisor, Dr John Lewis, at a moving memorial event hosted by The Big Cat Sanctuary. Those present represented just a small proportion of the many people John inspired throughout his life but others were able to contribute remotely: notably Dr Martin Gilbert and Dr John Goodrich, who in turn paid tribute to Dr Mikhail Goncharuk. All three were key to Dr Lewis's pioneering leopard and tiger work in the Russian Far East.

John always said that the Wild Tiger Health Project would be his legacy to tiger conservation, and we are delighted to see its content continue to grow as its network widens, under the leadership of Allie Lewis, Killian Lewis and Dr Jane Hopper.

Dr John Lewis

John and fellow wildlife vet Andrew Greenwood, with Sharon Miller, Tom Ogilvie-Graham and Chris West as Founder Trustees, set up Wildlife Vets International in 2004 when few professional zoo vets and conservation organisations saw the need for wildlife health departments. Both were being asked to provide their expertise to conservation projects where anaesthesia techniques were needed and/or disease was believed to be hindering other conservation activities. Donations raised through WVI enabled these highly valuable species got the specialist care they needed in a timely fashion.

John and Andrew's tireless advocacy through WVI in the past 15-20 years has no doubt contributed to the increased number of wildlife vets and conservation organisations that have their own wildlife health departments that we see today. WVI continues to provide independent specialist veterinary training and advice to those conservation organisations who need it.

It was John's belief that long term support of and the passing on of knowledge to frontline conservation staff was key to sustainable success. WVI remains dedicated to this cause and while we miss his direction and advice, we look forward to continuing John's legacy into the future.



John with a huge, wild, Amur tiger in the Russian Far East.
Credit: John Goodrich

New Year and beyond

As we look forward to 2023, and indeed further ahead to our 20th anniversary, I am delighted to know that our avian first aid team will be back on the ground in India for the first time since the pandemic, we will be actively involved in the delivery of the excellent Interventions in Wild Animal Health course (pioneered by the University of Edinburgh, the Royal Veterinary College, the Wildlife Institute of India, the University of Melbourne and the Zoological Society of London), hopefully mentoring another up and coming wildlife vet from a tiger range state, and holding our first ever Turtle Health and Welfare Workshop.

We are also excited to continue to develop our relationship with VetCT, a veterinary corporate with whom we share core values and vision, and from whom we have received significant support, including through a fundraising initiative by their staff who are in the process for travelling remotely between our projects as they walk, run or cycle their way around the globe for us. VetCT also very kindly welcomed Matthew Rendle on to their stand at the London Vet Show in November, to give a very popular talk on sea turtle medicine. They also made a generous donation to WVI for every visitor to their exhibit, in lieu of so-often-not-very sustainable conference freebies – a brilliant initiative.

Having weathered the global pandemic and gradually been able to get our veterinary professionals back out to support projects, it is heartening to see WVI going from strength to strength and able to embrace new initiatives, with a particular focus on knowledge sharing and transfer. It is important to emphasise that this is not just about our veterinary experts supporting vets and biologists in places where there is yet little in the way of training in wildlife health, but also about facilitating the exchange of information between local professionals, via, for example, the Wild Tiger Health Project website.

As ever, none of what we do would be possible without the support of our dedicated individual followers and donors, our generous corporate partners, our indispensable trustees and our small but committed admin team, headed up by Executive Director Olivia Walter. We were delighted to be able to show our gratitude to a good number of this wider team through a Christmas drinks event to mark the launch of our 2022 Big Give Christmas Challenge, with special guest Dr Amir Sadaula. Most of all, of course, recognition must go to our wonderful veterinary partners, who often give up their own time to share their very valuable expertise. WVI simply could not exist without them. My heartfelt thanks goes to everyone who has made, and continues to make, WVI the unique and effective organisation that it is.



Miranda Stevenson PhD OBE

Miranda Stevenson (Chair) and Chris Washington Sare (Trustee) wearing Nepalese hats given to them by Dr Amir Sadaula.

#TrainingVets
#TacklingDisease
#SavingSpecies

Case Study 1

Post Mortem Training for Vets in Ghana

On his recent visit to West African Conservation Action, vet nurse Matthew Rendle was able to provide local vets with a post mortem kit, and training in how to use it.

While not the most romantic aspect of wildlife medicine, knowing how to carry out a post mortem correctly is a vital skill. Effective disease surveillance and risk assessment is crucial to any conservation effort that may involve reintroduction of a species back into the wild, and knowing why an individual animal has died is an important part of that process.

This is part of the preparation for the prospective release of captive white naped mangabeys back into the wild.



Matthew Rendle RVN leading a post mortem workshop in Ghana
Credit: WAPCA

#TrainingVets
#ControllingDisease
#SavingSpecies

Case Study 2

Training for Nepalese Tiger Vet

In November we welcomed Dr Amir Sadaula to the UK for two weeks of training in gas anaesthesia and the use of X-rays. Although the Chitwan wildlife hospital, where Dr Sadaula is based, has anaesthesia and X-ray equipment, these were not being utilised due to a lack of expertise.

During his first week in the UK, Amir was able to gain invaluable practice in a small animal clinic, before moving on to work with more familiar patients like this tiger at The Big Cat Sanctuary. Amir is pictured with WVI Veterinary Advisor, Dr Nic Masters.



Drs Nic Masters (IZVG) and Amir Sadaula (NTNC) at the Big Cat Sanctuary.
Credit: Linda MacLachlan

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#ControllingDisease
#SavingSpecies

Case Study 3

Helping Ghana's Turtles

This year saw the beginning of a new partnership to help government vets in Ghana responsible for dealing with the significant number of sea turtles that are washing up on the country's beaches.

Vet nurse Matthew Rendle has been helping the vets determine whether a turtle is still alive (not always easy) using a doppler machine, and demonstrating post mortem techniques in the worst case scenarios.

Among the beached animals are Endangered leatherback turtles, as well as the world's most threatened turtle, the Kemp's ridley.



Why are turtles ending up dead on Ghana's beaches?

#TrainingVets
#ControllingDisease
#SavingSpecies

Case Study 4

Building capacity at ARCHELON Sea Turtle Rescue Centre

Our Turtle Team of marine vet Tania Monreal and vet nurse Matthew Rendle made two short trips to ARCHELON this year, to provide hands-on clinical support and advise on some of the most challenging cases.

This built on the work they have done, both in situ and remotely, over several years to transfer knowledge to the local team, with regard to pain management, wound treatment, surgery, nutrition and other aspects of turtle husbandry.



Dr Tania Monreal and Matthew Rendle RVN investigating a hook in the throat of a loggerhead turtle at ARCHELON Sea Turtle Rescue Centre

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#ControllingDisease
#SavingSpecies

Case Study 5

The Wild Tiger Health Project Gathers Support in Indonesia

The Wild Tiger Health Project is an online living textbook, which is free to access for anyone working with wild tigers. It is an invaluable source on everything tiger, from drug dosages and disease testing, to tiger anatomy and how to handle a conflict animal. It is regularly updated and includes a forum that allows anybody working with wild tigers in the field to get advice from the world's leading tiger experts. Allie Lewis was able to introduce the WTHP to Indonesian tiger conservationists during last year's canine distemper workshop on Java, and we're delighted that a good number of local vets and tiger biologists have since signed up.

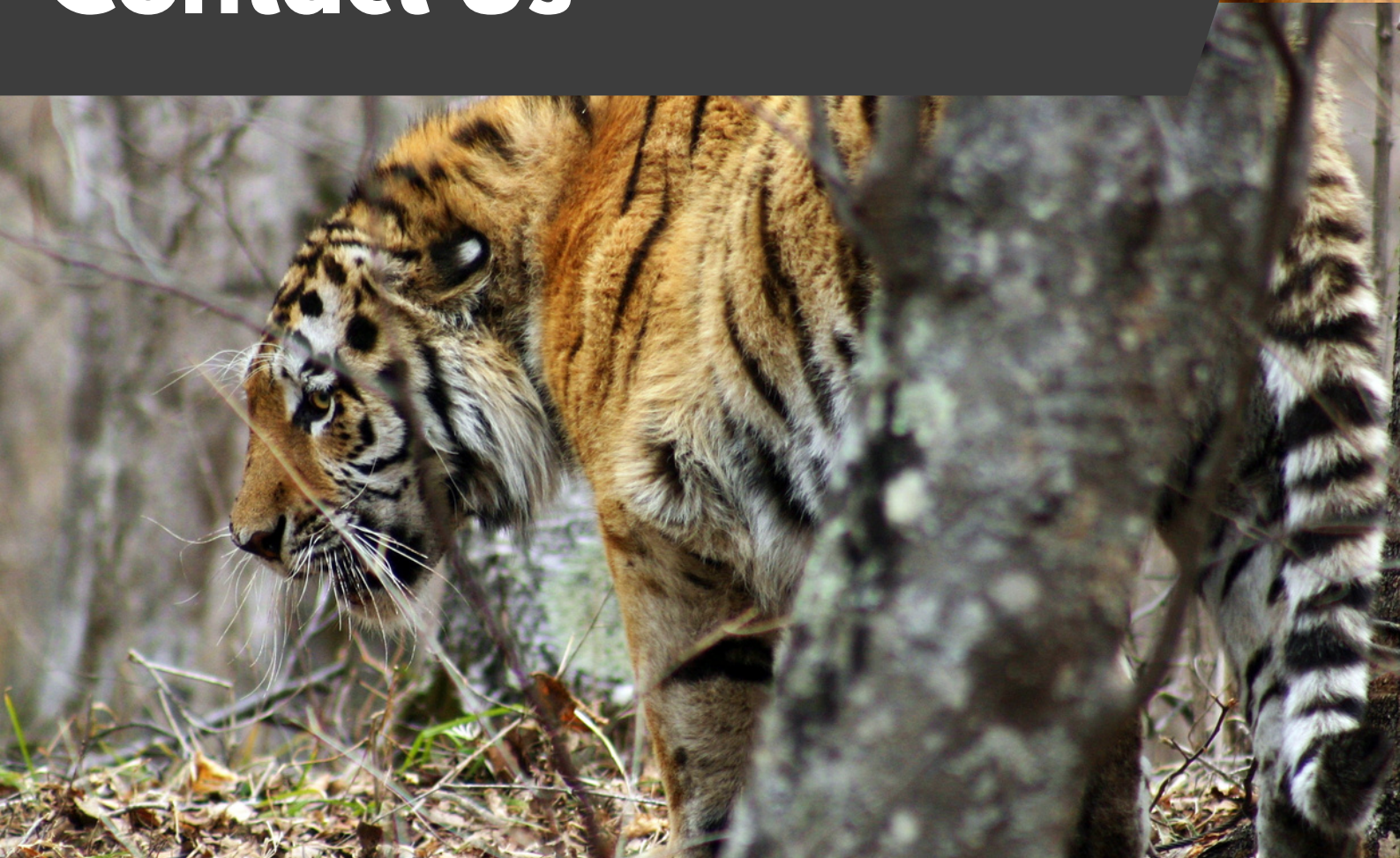
Allie's late husband and WVI founder, Dr John Lewis, created the WTHP as his legacy to tiger to tiger conservation, and it has quickly become a hub for sharing not just John's vast knowledge of tiger medicine but for the exchange of invaluable information between those working across all tiger range states, often in remote areas.



Allie Lewis tells delegates in Malaysia and Indonesia what is in the Wild Tiger Health Project. Credit: Jess Bodgener

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Contact Us



If you can help us train more vets to control disease and save species for future generations, please contact us:



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Find out more about what we do:



www.wildlifestvetsinternational.org
and follow us on social media @WildlifeVets