

NATURE ENVIRONMENT

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Guardians of Nature

Humans have made the earth their playground. Unspoiled habitats fall victim to merciless exploitation, cleared or ravaged for things it is believed we cannot live without. But we are all part of nature and cannot survive without it. More and more people are realising that the environment is more than just a supplier of cheap and abundant materials. Many are getting involved in nature conservation projects. Some dedicate their fortune, others their time; some even risk their lives. Their aim is the same: to preserve our planet's biodiversity for the future. These people are **Guardians of Nature**.

01 The American Dream of Saving the World

Growing numbers of people in the United States are rallying to save the world from environmental destruction. From music stars like Willie Nelson to private individuals, people are getting involved in countless nature conservation initiatives.

02 My Own Nature Park

Douglas Tompkins is the founder of fashion giant Esprit and outdoor-gear company The North Face. He's also the owner of the world's largest private nature reserve. Since selling his businesses, he has devoted himself to nature protection, using his wealth to buy up and put under conservation large tracts of unspoiled terrain in South America.

03 The Ape Man of Vietnam

Vietnam is home to many endangered species of ape that are found nowhere else. Tilo Nadler is dedicated to ensuring they don't die out. His job includes training Vietnamese rangers and releasing illegally caught animals back into the wild.

04 Rain Forest Attorney

The largest remaining rain forest in central America is Bosawas in northern Nicaragua. The area has been classified a world natural heritage site, but is nevertheless under threat from illegal settlements and toxic substances used in the extraction of gold. State attorney Indiana Fuentes is heading a campaign to save this unique part of nature.

05 Tracking Climate Change

The global climate is changing as a result of human activity, and although industry in southern Africa is only a minor contributor to such change, this part of the world is particularly badly affected. The region is drying up. Scientist Norbert Jürgens is spokesman for the BIOTA network of research projects that document the consequences of climate change.

06 On the Trail of the Timber Mafia

It's not just the world's rain forests that are threatened by the chainsaw: Some of the last primeval forests in Europe are also falling victim – even where the trees are protected by law. One of the worst offenders is Russia, where timber from the taiga forests is ending up as cheap construction material in western DIY markets. Thomas Henningsen of the Moscow Greenpeace office investigates the trade routes and methods of Europe's illegal timber mafia.

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07 The Rain Forest Ranger

In 2002, the Brazilian government put the Tumucumaque area on the border to Surinam and French Guyana under conservation. It's the largest national park in the world and is still an incomparable, unspoiled area of biodiversity. But growing numbers of human interlopers are moving in to exploit its wealth. Park manager Christoph Jaster is the man in charge of ensuring the protection of this vast territory.

08 Protection for Threatened Mangrove Forests

The mangroves' bizarrely interwoven root structures represent a unique habitat in tropical and sub-tropical coastal regions. Where salty and fresh water mingle, the mangrove forests provide protection for countless creatures. They are essential for the survival of many species of fish, and therefore for the livelihood of the local population. But mangroves are being destroyed all over the world, by tourism, environmental pollution or, for example in Brazil, industrial shrimp cultivation. Ulf Mehlig and Clemente Coelho are committed to maintaining these indispensable habitats.

09 The Battle for Indigenous Species

European settlers in New Zealand introduced carnivores unknown to the country at the time – for example cats, rats and different types of marten. This was a catastrophe for indigenous fauna, most of which were birds. Now the island nation is working to protect its natural heritage. Environment ministry employee Bruce Thomas eradicated all invasive animals from an island off the coast, Breaksea Island. Now indigenous species there have been given a new chance to survive.

10 Solidarity Against Drought

Vast swathes of land are turning to desert in Burkina Faso. Climate change is making rainfall on the edge of the Sahara unpredictable. Conflicts among the population are worsening. Communities are breaking up, and entire villages have been deserted. Madame Fanta works for an aid organization run by Muslims and Christians. She is responsible for the construction of boulis, village water reservoirs with fields nearby for small-scale farmers. Pre-conditions for their use are cooperation and tolerance among village residents. The boulis are making it possible for people to remain in their changing homeland.

11 Taking Care of the Soil

Industrial soil cultivation and livestock farming are endangering biodiversity. For Sepp Braun, an organic farmer in Germany, these modern methods are on the wrong track. He aims to work in harmony with nature, instead of fighting against it. His efforts are paying off, and his fields are more fertile than those of his neighbors who farm in conventional ways. The soil on Sepp Braun's farm is able to absorb vast amounts of greenhouse gases.

12 An Island for Humans and Monkeys

The Indonesian island of Maratua lies off the coast of Borneo. Sea nomads have settled here, built houses and cultivated fields. But their presence has not gone down well with the indigenous residents of the small island – a population of macaques. Biologist Thomas Ziegler is looking for ways to facilitate the coexistence of humans and monkeys.

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13 The Arctic Circle's Primeval Forest

The Muddus National Park is situated in the far north of Sweden. At its heart is one of the last primeval forests in Europe. Jan Stuge is a Muddus park ranger. It's his job to make sure people can continue to visit the forest without damaging its sensitive eco-system. After all, the more people experience such pristine natural surroundings, the greater the awareness of the need to protect them.

14 Safe Passage for Elephants

Botswana is home to about 130,000 elephants – and that's putting an environmental and economic strain on the human population. Many of the animals originate from regions in Namibia and Angola affected by civil war. Now they are retracing their steps through densely populated areas. Ecologist Mike Chase is trying to establish conservation enclaves that link Botswana with other elephant habitats.

15 Saving the Elbe Floodplain

The floodplain of the River Elbe was once an open expanse of meadowland rich in flora and fauna. It was sustained by the grazing habits of large herbivores such as wild horses, wisent and aurochs. Today these areas are monocultures, or have been lost to forest encroachment. Andreas Wenk has now introduced a descendant of the extinct aurochs to the Elbe Valley floodplain.

16 Frog Sanctuary

The Panamanian rainforests are home to many species of frog. But the amphibians are threatened by a deadly skin infection. The chytrid fungus has already wiped out frog populations worldwide. In a bid to protect Panama's frogs from the fungus, Panamanian biologist Edgardo Griffith captures healthy animals for breeding at a quarantine facility.

17 Battling an Invasive Species

Nile Monitor lizards, up to two meters in length, are cropping up more and more often in the canals and swimming pools of Cape Coral in Florida. They or their ancestors were once exotic house pets dumped by their owners. They are posing a further threat to indigenous species, many of which are already in danger of dying out. Biologist Conny Spurfeld is looking for solutions to the problem.

18 The Rain Forest Academy

Man's voracious appetite for natural resources is threatening the lands and the way of life of the indigenous tribes of the Amazon Basin. In Ecuador, the Amazonica Academy, founded by publisher Mascha Kauka, aims to help the Indio peoples live with modern technology and in harmony with nature. Education and exchange programs should help the inhabitants of the region secure long-term sources of income.

19 Campaigning for Iceland's Landscapes

Iceland has an abundance of energy sources thanks to its unique geology. Electricity, for example, can be generated almost everywhere with geothermal energy and hydropower. This attracts energy-intensive industries such as aluminium-smelting. Omar Ragnarsson is a journalist and environmentalist who campaigns for the protection of Iceland's unspoiled territories, which he views as the nation's greatest asset.

20 Rehabilitating Baboons

Baboons often raid houses and gardens in South Africa, and that makes them unpopular there. Rita Miljo looks after baboons whose parents have been killed. At her center on the edge of the Kruger National Park, the animals live in groups and are prepared for their reintroduction to the wild – far from houses, roads and people.

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21 Bats to the Rescue

The government of Costa Rica wants to restore areas of rainforest cut down to make way for agriculture. They will be supported in their reforestation efforts, at no cost, by bats, who will be used to spread seeds. Bat colonies are being established by biologist Detlev Kelm with the help of local farmers.

22 Saving the Snow Leopard **HD**

Snow leopards live in mountainous regions of Central Asia. They are hunted by poachers for their fur and killed by shepherds who drive their flocks to higher altitudes and encroach upon the leopards' habitat. In Kyrgyzstan, biologist Thorsten Harder is leading a project to protect snow leopards – in cooperation with an anti-poaching squad who are risking their lives on behalf of the endangered animals.

23 The Environment as Public Asset

Chinese environmentalists Liu Jianqiang and Wu Lihong are employing a new and increasingly effective method in their campaign: publicity. They courageously challenge shocking violations of environmental-protection law passed by the Chinese central government. Their opponents are powerful functionaries and local businesspeople.

24 Beautiful, Rare – Soon to be Extinct?

The Banggai cardinalfish lives in a very small area off the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. It is a popular ornamental fish, and up to a third of the wild population is captured every year. Conservationist Yani Mile wants to stop the Banggai cardinalfish from becoming the first species to die out because of its popularity in the aquarium trade.

25 The Schaalsee Negotiator

The Schaalsee in northern Germany is a UNESCO biosphere reserve. Although it is a nature-conservation area, farming and forestry use continue in the area. In a bid to ensure all interests are represented, Thomas Neumann mediates among environmentalists, farmers and hunters.

26 Battling the Illegal Bird Hunt

Most types of songbird and birds of prey are protected in many European countries. But on their annual migration between Europe and warmer climes in Africa, many birds are being illegally shot on the Mediterranean island of Malta. Bird protection groups from all over Europe are trying to put a stop to the practice.

27 Keeping the Balance

The Etosha National Park in Namibia is one of the oldest in the world. It's the workplace of veterinarian Mark Jago and rangers Johnson Veyorerako and Ole Friede. Together, they are responsible for trying to maintain the delicate balance of flora and fauna within this environment. They also seek to harmonise the interests of nature conservation with those of the people living in the area.