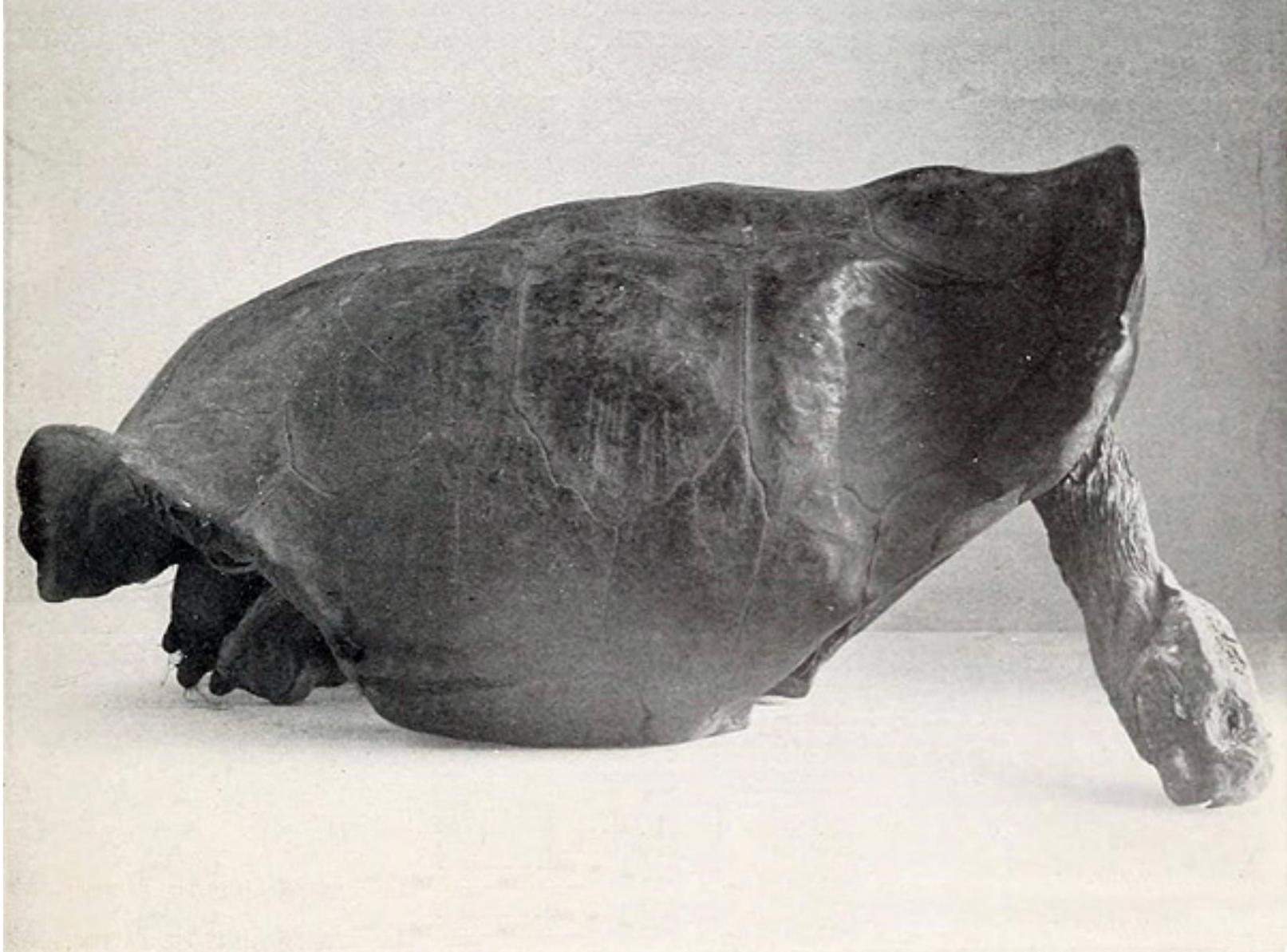


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LOST SPECIES**

[Global Wildlife Conservation](#) today embarks on the first phase of the [Search for Lost Species](#), the largest-ever global quest to find and protect species that have not been seen in the wild in decades. The campaign will work with local partners to send scientific expeditions around the world to some of the most remote and uncharted wild places on Earth in search of 25 “most wanted” species. These species represent flagships for conservation.

The list of top 25 “most wanted” species spans across groups of wildlife and geography and includes the Wondiwoi tree kangaroo, last seen in 1928 in Indonesia and deemed a “zoo-geographical mystery;” the pink-headed duck, with its bright-pink plumage, last seen in 1949 in Myanmar; the Fernandina Galápagos tortoise, last seen in 1906 on the Galápagos’s youngest and least-explored island; the bullneck seahorse from Australia, a tiny seahorse never before seen in the wild; and a colorful tree-climbing freshwater crab from the Upper Guinea forest block last seen in 1955. Collectively the top 25 species have not been seen in more than 1,500 years.



A 1964 expedition to the least-explored Galápagos Island, Fernandina Island, found possible evidence of the Fernandina Galapagos Tortoise, including a giant bite out of a cactus. The tortoise was last seen in 1906. (Photo by John Van Denburgh)

“These species include quirky, charismatic animals and plants that also represent tremendous opportunities for conservation,” said Robin Moore, GWC communications director and conservation biologist. “The rediscovery of any of these elusive species will help unlock its mysteries, providing us with the valuable information we need to understand and best conserve the species, its habitat and the wildlife that share its habitat. While we’re not sure how many of our target species we’ll be able to find, for many of these forgotten species this is likely their last chance to be saved from extinction.”

While there is no standard definition of what constitutes a “lost” species, the top 25 flagship species have not been seen since before 2007 and are listed in descending order of threat as critically endangered (possibly extinct), critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable or data deficient by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. With the help of more than 100 of the IUCN Species Survival Commission’s Specialist Groups, Austin-based GWC compiled a total list of more than 1,200 species considered lost across more than 160 countries. The definition of “lost” varied by taxa. The [list of all 1,200 lost species](#) is also available to the public to submit additional nominations and to launch searches for species on this broader list, or to report an observation on [iNaturalist](#).



The Pink-headed Duck was always considered rare, but it has not been conclusively seen in the wild since 1949 and is known from Myanmar from only two specimens. Male pink-headed ducks have deep pink plumage on their heads and necks. (Photo by Philip Nelson)

“Expeditions for lost species are going to take scientists across the planet from the dark depths of the ocean to the bottom of rushing freshwater rivers, from the lush jungles of the tropics, to the seemingly barren wastelands of the desert,” said Don Church, GWC president and director of conservation. “The hope that we can preserve as much of Earth’s beauty and wonder as possible will drive the adventurers to overcome the elements, logistical mishaps and the race against time.”

The first phase of the Search for Lost Species will include raising funds for expeditions to launch this fall, with a fundraising goal of \$500,000. GWC will be seeking corporate sponsorships, individual donations and partners to support the expeditions. These efforts include fundraising at events in Austin and New York City this month and an auction of Lost Species artwork, including a painting of the pink-headed duck created by artist James Prosek specifically in support of the initiative. The Search for Lost Species has already received support from close GWC partner [Turtle Conservancy](#) and artist Alexis Rockman, who has captured the beauty of each of the 25 top species—even those where no photos or sketches exist—for the campaign.



Eli Wyman holds one of the only known Wallace's Giant Bee samples. Wallace's Giant Bee was believed to be extinct until it was rediscovered in 1981 in Indonesia. It hasn't been seen since. (Photo by Clay Bolt)

“We have been amazed by the overwhelmingly enthusiastic response to the concept of the Search for Lost Species initiative,” said Lindsay Renick Mayer, GWC’s associate director of communications. “We’re clearly in need of some good news for wildlife and are certain that the stories of adventure and hope that emerge from this campaign will provide a powerful antidote to the despair that today dominates headlines about the future of our world’s wildlife and wildlands.”

The global search begins at <http://lostspecies.org/>.

(Artwork by Alexis Rockman)

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National Geographic Voices

Researchers, conservationists, and others share stories, insights and ideas about Our Changing Planet, Wildlife & Wild Spaces, and The Human Journey. More than 50,000 comments have been added to 10,000 posts. Explore the list alongside to dive deeper into some of the most popular categories of the National Geographic Society's conversation platform Voices.

Opinions are those of the blogger and/or the blogger's organization, and not necessarily those of the National Geographic Society. Posters of blogs and comments are required to observe National Geographic's [community rules](#) and other [terms of service](#).

Voices director: David Braun (dbraun@ngs.org)

Fighting Wildlife Crime: The Unsung Heroes



Journalist and National Geographic Fellow Bryan Christy uses investigative journalism to expose illegal wildlife trafficking around the globe. In this video he introduces a series of interviews with the people fighting wildlife crime on the front lines.

[Watch all the videos in the series>>](#)

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Photo of the 2016/2017 class of Fellows by Randall Scott.

Featured Research: Mushara Elephant Project



Caitlin O'Connell and her husband, Tim Rodwell, started the [Mushara Elephant Project](#) in Namibia 24 years ago to better understand elephant social structure, communication and health in order to apply this knowledge to improved care in captivity and ultimately to elephant conservation in the wild. O'Connell is on the [faculty at Stanford University School of Medicine](#) and CEO of the elephant-focused nonprofit, [Utopia Scientific](#). A grantee of the National Geographic Society, she is also an award-winning author of six books about elephants. [Read Caitlin's dispatches](#) from Mushara.

Nat Geo Expedition: Rising Star



Two years after being discovered deep in a South African cave, the 1,500 fossils excavated during the Rising Star Expedition have been identified as belonging to a previously unknown early human relative that National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Lee Berger and team have named *Homo naledi*.

With at least 15 individuals of all ages and both sexes represented, the find adds an unprecedented amount of information to our understanding of early human evolution in Africa.

In addition, the absence of any other animal remains or large debris in the fossil chamber strongly suggests that these non-human beings intentionally deposited their dead within this cave.

Join the discussion surrounding this remarkable discovery here and on Twitter:

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