

Eastern Himalayas Region

CEPF INVESTMENT PLANNED IN REGION
\$5 million

QUICK FACTS

The youngest and highest mountain chain on Earth, the Himalayas continue to develop and become more biologically unique, making the region ripe for the emergence of new species.

The Eastern Himalayas Region is home to 175 known terrestrial mammal species and more than 500 bird species.

The region includes critical areas offering the greatest chance for long-term tiger survival.

The rugged and largely inaccessible landscapes make biological surveys extremely difficult, with vast areas of intact forest still unexplored. The region's natural wealth is undoubtedly underestimated.

Plant species are not included in CEPF priorities for this region because information is lacking about their needs, but reassessing the conservation status of the region's plants is a priority.

The Eastern Himalayas Region encompasses Bhutan, northeastern India, and southern, central, and eastern Nepal. Sitting at the juncture between Asia and the Indian subcontinent, the region is geologically young and characterized by extreme altitudinal variations, which contribute to its rich biological diversity.

The region is home to 163 globally threatened species including Asia's three largest herbivores—the Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*), the greater one-horned rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), and the wild water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*)—and its largest carnivore, the tiger (*Panthera tigris*), as well as several large birds such as vultures, adjutant storks, and hornbills.

Previously classified as a region within the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot, the Eastern Himalayas Region now stretches across the Indo-Burma Hotspot and Himalaya Hotspot, with the latter being classified as a new hotspot in 2005.

Hotspots are Earth's biologically richest places. They hold especially high numbers of species found nowhere else and face extreme threats. Each hotspot has already lost at least 70 percent of its original natural vegetation.

THREATS

Chronic collection of nontimber forest products; harvest of trees for fuel, fodder, and lumber; and conversion of forests for agriculture contribute to ecosystem degradation and habitat loss throughout the Himalayas. The consequences are especially severe where human population density is high.

Unsustainable and illegal wildlife trade fueled by consistent demand for wildlife products, especially parts of large species such as tigers, rhinoceros, snow leopards (*Uncia uncia*), and elephants, has driven these populations to the brink of extinction.



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CEPF INVESTMENT STRATEGY

WWF, the global conservation organization, developed the CEPF ecosystem profile and 5-year investment strategy for the Eastern Himalayas Region based on extensive research and stakeholder consultations organized by BirdLife International in collaboration with WWF, the Centre for Environmental Education, and the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment.

Government institutions and civil society are active in conservation in the Eastern Himalayas, but often lack coordination in their efforts and capacity to effectively preserve biodiversity. Given this context, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) aims to strengthen the role of nongovernmental groups and local communities in biodiversity conservation and landscape restoration in this region by using traditional and contemporary land management to link existing protected areas and create reserve networks.

A key approach is to build alliances and coalitions among civil society groups to scale up their clout in addressing landscape conservation issues and influencing national policies in favor of biodiversity conservation.

The strategy is underpinned by conservation outcomes—targets against which the success of investments can be measured. These targets are defined at three levels: species (extinctions avoided), sites (areas protected), and landscapes (biodiversity conservation corridors created). As a result, CEPF investments in the Eastern Himalayas Region focus on 76 globally threatened species mostly found in 60 sites within five conservation landscapes.

STRATEGIC FUNDING DIRECTIONS

CEPF investments in this region are guided by four strategic directions and related investment priorities, a full description of which can be found in the ecosystem profile. Each project must be linked to one of the strategic directions to be approved for funding.

1. Build on existing landscape conservation initiatives to maintain and restore connectivity and to protect wide-ranging threatened species in priority corridors with a particular emphasis on the Bhutan Biological Conservation Complex, Kangchenjunga-Singalila Complex, and North Bank Landscape.
2. Secure the conservation of priority site outcomes (key biodiversity areas) in the eastern Himalayas with a particular emphasis on the Bhutan Biological Conservation Complex, Kangchenjunga-Singalila Complex, and North Bank Landscape.
3. Leverage partnerships among donor agencies, civil society, and government institutions to achieve priority biodiversity conservation outcomes over the long term.
4. Develop a small grants program to safeguard globally threatened species in the eastern Himalayas.

ABOUT US

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a global program that provides grants to nongovernmental organizations and other private sector partners to protect critical ecosystems.

CEPF is a joint program of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank.

In the Eastern Himalayas region, WWF leads a special regional implementation team for CEPF investments. The team is responsible for the strategic implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile and for building a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and geographic boundaries toward achieving shared conservation goals.

HOW TO LEARN MORE

For more information about CEPF, the strategy for this region, and how to apply for grants, visit www.cepf.net or contact the regional coordinator:

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