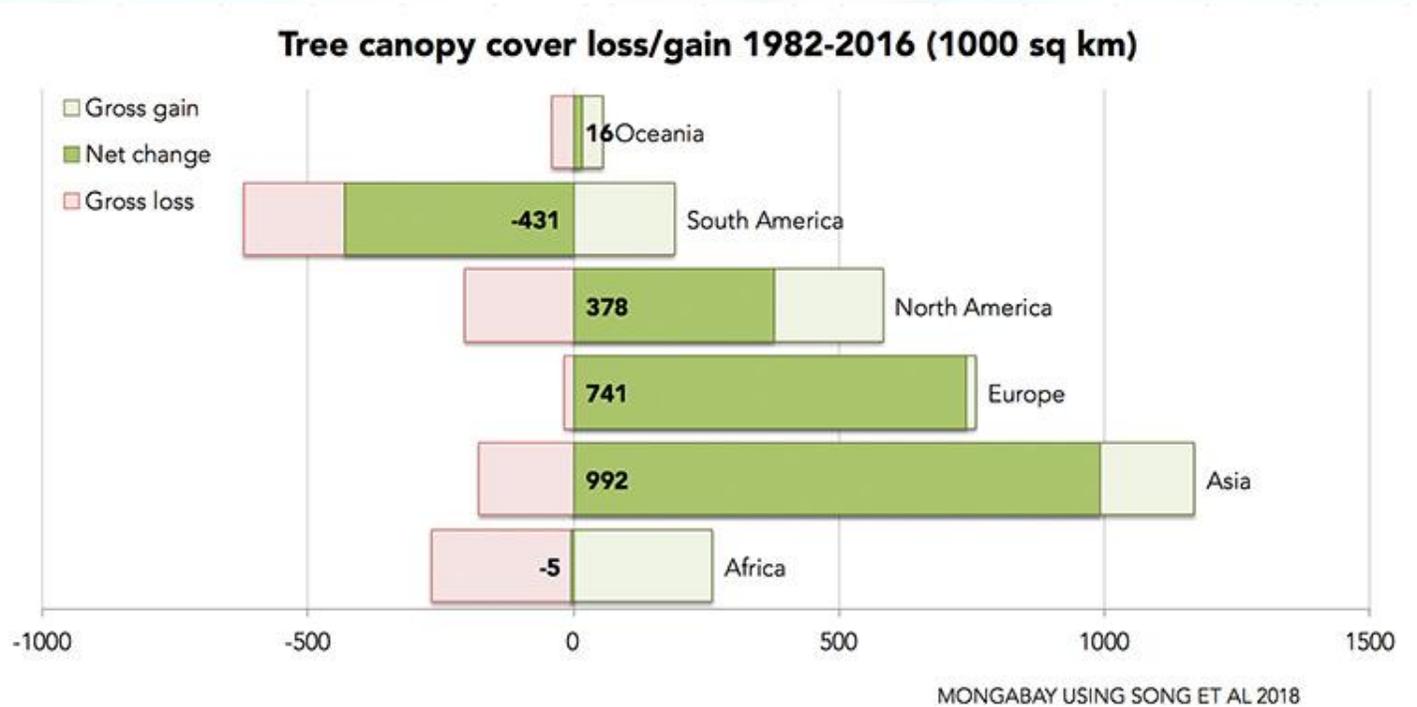




By Sam Matey



**Earth's Forests: World Tree Cover.** A new study published in the prestigious journal *Nature* has found that Earth has more trees now than it did 35 years ago. The research team, led by Doctors Xiao-Peng Song and Matthew Hansen of the University of Maryland, analyzed satellite data from 1982 through 2016 to determine the change in world land cover. They found that during this period, despite intensive logging in many areas of the world, Earth's tree cover increased by 2.24 million square kilometers. That's area the size of Texas and Alaska combined! As is visible in the graph above, most of the tree cover gain stems from North America, Europe, and Asia. Trees are taking over abandoned farmland in the USA, Europe, and Russia, and China's government has invested heavily in tree-planting programs. Climate change is also encouraging trees to move in to other ecosystems, like tundra and mountainous areas. However, not all forests are equal. The study also found that tropical forests, especially Brazil's Amazon, are still losing trees rapidly. These forests are the most important in the world for both biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration, and there's still a lot of work to be done to protect them. Also, the study only looks at overall tree cover: a plantation of pine destined to be logged counts the same as an equivalent area of old-growth forest. Still, the fact that Earth is greener now than it was in the 1980s, even after decades of logging, wildfires, human population growth, and intensive agriculture, is a cause for celebration. It's also more evidence that human development doesn't have to be harmful to other life-forms. For more, check out [goo.gl/Kpjo9U](https://www.google.com/search?q=goo.gl/Kpjo9U).

**Earth's Forests: Child Nutrition.** A new study from UVM has found that children across 27 different developing nations have better nutrition when they live near forests, likely due to extra micronutrients obtained from forest-collected foods. "Our study shows that conservation and health can go hand in hand," said coauthor Dr. Brendan Fisher. For more, see [goo.gl/5BFMHe](https://www.google.com/search?q=goo.gl/5BFMHe).



# the weekly anthropocene



dispatches from the wild, weird world of humanity and its biosphere

By Sam Matey

**Sri Lanka.** All over the world, animals are moving into cities. This is one of the most encouraging trends of the Anthropocene, offering hope that humans and wildlife may be able to peacefully coexist, and examples of it are multiplying. Peregrine falcons swoop around New York City's skyscrapers, pumas prowl through Los Angeles parks, wild boars wander around Berlin, and leopards lurk in Mumbai's back alleys. Now, a fascinating new instance of large-animal urbanization has been discovered. In Colombo, Sri Lanka, a population of fishing cats (*Prionailurus viverrinus*, pictured) is learning to



adapt to city life. Their existence was discovered by chance in 2015, when a fishing cat was caught on camera stealing goldfish from a pond outside an environmental nonprofit's office. (Fishing cats love water, regularly hunting fish and swimming. They even have partially webbed feet!). Anya Ratnayaka, a young conservationist working at the nonprofit, was studying fishing cats in nearby wetlands at the time, and was fascinated by the new urban population. Ms. Ratnayaka's Urban Fishing Cat Conservation Project has been collecting data on and advocating for Colombo's fishing cats ever since. This is another fascinating example of human/wildlife coexistence! For more, check out [goo.gl/zLa7Mk](https://goo.gl/zLa7Mk). For Ms. Ratnayaka's own amazing project, see [fishingcats.lk](http://fishingcats.lk) and [fishingcats.blog](http://fishingcats.blog).

**New Caledonia.** On August 14th, the government of New Caledonia (a French overseas territory near Australia) voted to protect over 28,000 square kilometers of ocean, an area larger than Massachusetts. The new marine protected areas safeguard five previously unprotected coral reefs (Chesterfield, Bellona, Entrecasteaux, Pétrie and Astrolabe) from fishing and other harmful activities. This is excellent news, and will help protect coral reefs from the perils of the Anthropocene. For more, see [goo.gl/oDQc3i](https://goo.gl/oDQc3i).

**Madagascar.** A new report from the IUCN's Primate Specialist Group has found that lemurs are now the most threatened mammal group on Earth. There are 111 known lemur species and subspecies (all of which live only on Madagascar) and at least 105 are now considered to be at risk of going extinct. (Pictured is the critically endangered indri (*Indri indri*), the largest living lemur). Due to political turmoil in Madagascar, little or no official action has been taken to aid lemurs for years, and habitat destruction is rampant. Private groups such as the Lemur Conservation Network may now be the best hope for the survival of these enchanting primates. For more, see [goo.gl/37cSZX](https://goo.gl/37cSZX).



**USA: Wyoming.** The Path of the Pronghorn is an initiative that uses highway crossing structures to help a Wyoming population of pronghorns (*Antilocapra americana*) survive their annual 170-mile migration. A new study has found that it is working, with pronghorns growing used to using the new structures over time. Great news! For more, see [goo.gl/aosYDx](https://goo.gl/aosYDx)