**ARKive Offers Images of Life on Earth**

One hundred and fifty years have past since the first wildlife photo was taken, and wildlife has been a subject for cinematographers for almost a century. The surviving images, however, are scattered all over the world, in many different collections and locations, often where access is limited, or where their value to science and learning is not yet fully appreciated.

Last month marked the launch of ARKive <http://www.arkive.org>, a new Web site aiming to gather and conserve the most important sounds and images for posterity before they - like the species some depict - are lost forever. It’s already too late to save certain species from extinction. But ARKive will provide future generations with a window onto Earth’s biodiversity, helping to ignite the very first spark of interest in natural history whilst safeguarding a valuable part of our visual and audio heritage, too.

Phase one is the launch of the Web site offering free global access to multi-media portraits of species at risk of extinction. The site is aimed at anyone with an interest in the natural world, from school children to scientists. ARKive aims to become the world’s most comprehensive on-line wildlife reference library, offering:

- **Digital portraits**, to start with, of around 1,000 British and globally endangered species, each accompanied by downloadable fact-files, verified by experts, and links to sources of further information;
- **Planet ARKive** - an e-zone custom-designed for children aged 7 to 11, featuring wildlife facts, games and activities;
- **ARKive Education** - where teachers and others interested in enthusing children about the natural world will find lesson plans, ideas for projects and outings and a range of support materials.

Work began first on the “UK Chapter,” celebrating Britain’s natural heritage. Almost 600 digital portraits now exist on native plants and animals, including the familiar as well as the rare or threatened. Highlights include brown hares boxing; a dormouse giving birth; the only known stills of the Snowdonia hawkweed, recently rediscovered and photographed for the first time since last being seen 50 years ago; and the only known stills of the glutinous snail.

Work is also underway now on the “Globally Endangered Species Chapter.” This is a huge undertaking—at present, some 11,000 species are threatened with extinction according to the IUCN (The World Conservation Union). ARKive is starting by finding and storing visual and audio records of the 500 species which best represent the range of life-forms in danger. Highlights of the global chapter include the only surviving film of the extinct thylacine (Tasmanian tiger), the last known shots of the golden toad (believed extinct), rare images of the coelacanth, and the only known footage of the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey - filmed for the first time only a few years ago after 10 years of trying.

Other images show wildlife at its most weird and wonderful – long-nosed echidnas, mahogany gliders, hairy-nosed wombats, robber frogs, warty pigs, aye-ayes, bald-headed uacaris, giant kangaroo rats, sea dragons, no-eyed big eyed spiders, jellyfish trees, thief palms.

Despite the research team’s best efforts, film, photos and sound recordings have still not been traced for many species. A regularly updated list of what is still sought will
be a feature of the Web site. ARKive maintains a “most wanted” list - are images lying unnoticed in a collection in your area, in a local attic, in the newsroom’s filing cabinet?

ARKive is an initiative of The Wildscreen Trust. It is being funded by Hewlett Packard Laboratories (Europe), the Heritage Lottery Fund and the UK’s New Opportunities Fund. The project is endorsed by UNEP-WCMC (The World Conservation Monitoring Centre), IUCN (World Conservation Union), WWF and many other conservation bodies. Donations of images and sound recordings are arriving from many sources, including the world’s best-known wildlife film and television companies, nature photo libraries, academic institutions as well as individuals, both professional and amateur. One of the latest bequests is the life’s work of Eric Ashby, the naturalist, photographer and film-maker who changed the shape of wildlife television in the 1960s, by showing British wild animals as they really live.

Information Highway Hi-Lites

The free book “Predicting Invasions of Nonindigenous Plants and Plant Pests” is provided by the National Academies Press at <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309082641/html/>. Compiled by the US Board on Life Sciences and the Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources, this 194-page book explores the difficulties in predicting the immigration and impact of exotic species. Researchers active in this field may find this free resource of use.

- from the NSDL Scout Report for the Life Sciences

InfoNatura: Birds and Mammals of Latin America <http://www.natureserve.org/infonatura/> is provided by NatureServe, a non-profit organization dedicated to developing and providing information about the world’s plants, animals, and ecological communities. This Web site is a comprehensive source for conservation, distribution, and taxonomic information on over 5,000 bird and mammal species in 44 Latin American and Caribbean countries. Taxonomic treatment of all species in the database “reflects standard references, and most species have been assigned a global conservation status rank.” InfoNatura is updated three times a year to include “new data from refined geographic surveys, the latest taxonomic treatments, and any new conservation status assessments.” Future versions of the database will include amphibian and reptile data. In addition to searching the database, users can click on Data Sources and Management to learn where InfoNatura data come from.

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Current Literature


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