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How wildlife is thriving while we're staying at home

With humans staying at home, wildlife around the world have not only been recovering, but thriving, thanks to the efforts of conservation heroes.

FARHAN SHAH

You've probably heard the stories and seen the pictures – swans and dolphins apparently flourishing in the Venetian canals due to the absence of tourists, and other animals tentatively showing up in urban civilisations. While these stories and pictures have been soundly debunked, nature is still thriving in other parts of the world, probably thanks in part to decreased human activity in the past few months and the tireless efforts of conservationists at the frontline. *The Peak* documents a few of them with help from [A2A Safaris](#).

Super colony of Adélie Penguins discovered in the Antarctic.



An adélie penguin. Photo by A2A Safaris.

Antarctic scientists made an incredible discovery by looking at poop stains in satellite images – 1.5 million Adélie penguins were thriving on a little patch in Antarctica surrounded by treacherous sea ice called the Danger Islands. It turns out these elusive birds had lived on the islands undetected for al-

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White rhino embryos successfully created.

Scientists in Italy announced that they had successfully created three Northern white rhino embryos. With only two surviving females of the subspecies, this development is huge progress. The next step for this process is to successfully transfer the eggs into a surrogate Southern white rhino at a later date, in the hope that a new Northern white calf will eventually be born. This is the first time that scientists have been able to produce embryos for Northern white rhinos using in vitro fertilisation (IVF), which is a significant achievement.

(Related: Luxury safari lodge operator Singita has launched its online store)

Reintroduction of jaguars in Argentina.

In Argentina, two female jaguars, each less than two years old, are being incorporated into the recent Jaguar Reintroduction Project based in the Iberá Wetlands via The Conservation Land Trust (CLT) founded by Tompkins Conservation and the government of Corrientes Province, Argentina. This is a huge step for big cat conservation.

Increased sightings of blue whales in the Antarctic.



Marine scientists have seen a remarkable collection of blue whales in the coastal waters around the sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia, the epicentre for the dark whaling days of the early 20th century when Antarctic blues were reduced from a population of 300,000 to just a few hundred individuals.

A 23-day survey was conducted recently and researchers and scientists counted an astonishing number of blue whales – at least 55 individuals around South Georgia alone, with some experts estimating

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set of blueprints. At least 30 individuals around South Georgia were, with some experts estimating the global blue whale population now approaching 3,000 animals.

(Related: Why Krystal Tan left law to set up boutique travel company Blue Sky Escapes)

Mountain gorilla census reveals increase in numbers.

A census of one of the two populations of mountain gorillas revealed a significant increase, bringing the total count for the subspecies to 1,069 gorillas. This led to a change in the subspecies on the IUCN Red List from Critically Endangered to Endangered.

Mountain gorillas live in three different countries – Uganda, DRC and Rwanda.

The Virunga and Bwindi – Sarambwe populations are not connected to each other. Though just 50 kilometres separates the edges of the two ranges, the landscape between them no longer has a viable forest that can support gorillas.

The numbers of wild tigers have increased globally for the first time.

The number of wild tigers in India have almost doubled in 15 years. Based on the last available data, the WWF and the Global Tiger Forum have announced that their latest count is close to 3,900 tigers in the wild. In 2005, there were just over 2,000 tigers.

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