

This Day in History... April 29, 1961

The World Wildlife Fund

On April 29, 1961, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) was founded.

Prior to the WWF, the Conservation Foundation was founded in 1948 as an affiliate of the New York Zoological Society. Their goal was to protect the world's natural resources.

The WWF's creation is credited to Victor Stolan, who suggested to Sir Julian Huxley that they establish a fund to help protect endangered animals. Huxley introduced Stolan to Max Nicholson, who had 30 years of experience helping people like him get their ideas off the ground through the Political and Economic Planning think tank.

Together, Huxley, Nicholson, Peter Scott, Guy Mountfort and a few other scientists, naturalists, and business and political leaders joined together to form the World Wildlife Fund on April 29, 1961. On that date, they issued their Morges Manifesto, a declaration of their concern for the "thoughtless and needless destruction" of nature and the animals that inhabited them. They opened their first office later that year on September 11, in Morges, Switzerland.

At a time, there were few wildlife organizations around the world, and even fewer with sufficient funding. The goal of the WWF was to serve as a funding institution for other conservation groups such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and The Conservation Foundation.

As stated in the Morges Manifesto, "They need above all money, to carry out mercy missions and to meet conservation emergencies by buying land where wildlife treasures are threatened, and in many other ways. Money, for example, to pay guardians of wildlife refuges... Money for education and propaganda among those who would care and help if only they understood. Money to send out experts to danger spots and to train more local wardens and helpers in Africa and elsewhere. Money to maintain a sort of 'war room' at the international headquarters of conservation, showing where the danger spots are and making it possible to ensure that their needs are met before it is too late."

The WWF's first president was His Royal Highness Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, who had also helped found the organization. Their original stated mission was for the "conservation of world fauna, flora, forests, landscape, water, soils and other natural resources by the management of land, research and investigation, and publicity coordination of efforts, cooperation with other interested parties and all other appropriate means."

Chi Chi, a panda that had been transferred from Beijing Zoo to London Zoo in 1958, inspired the WWF's famed giant panda logo. They chose Chi Chi as their symbol because she was the only panda in the Western world at the time and was an endangered species, which represented an important part of their work.

In 1986, the WWF changed its name to the World Wide Fund for Nature to more accurately represent their activities. Despite the name change, the organization has kept the same WWF initials. Currently, the WWF has more than five million supporters around the world in more than 100 countries, working on 3,000 conservation and environmental projects. Co-founder Sir Peter Scott once said of the WWF: "We shan't save all we should like to, but we shall save a great deal more than if we had never tried."



This semipostal has raised over \$7.5 million for wildlife conservation.

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