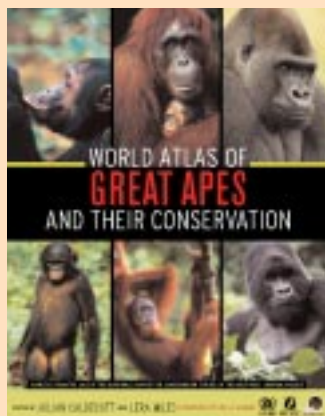


BOOKS & PRODUCTS



Our closest living relatives, as the *World Atlas of Great Apes and their Conservation* shows, are on the very edge of extinction. The Atlas, created in association with UNEP's **Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP)**, provides a comprehensive overview of what is currently known about all six species of them: chimpanzee, bonobo, Sumatran orangutan, Bornean orangutan, eastern gorilla and western lowland gorilla. Edited by **Julian Caldecott** and **Lera Miles**, and published by the **University of California Press**, it gives a thorough background on ape behaviour and ecology for each species, including habitat requirements, the ape's ecological role, and the possible consequences of their decline. It also offers a full description of the threats, of current conservation efforts and of additional protection needed for each species across its entire range.

The **M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation** held a special international conference in Chennai, India in August on the 'human centred sustainable development paradigm' to celebrate the 80th birthday of its founder, after whom it is named. **Prof. M.S. Swaminathan** – often described as the primary architect of the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s – has been described by TIME magazine as one of the 20 most influential Asians of the 20th century, alongside only two others from India: Mahatma Gandhi and the poet Rabindranath Tagore. The recipient of 46 honorary doctorate degrees from universities around the world, he holds the UNESCO Chair in Ecotechnology at the Foundation.

The first **International Media and Environment Summit** will bring together media, government, scientists, campaigners and civil society to debate how the environment is reported, and to find better ways of serving an audience hungry for information and inspiration. Organised by **News World Nature**, and taking place in Kuching, Sarawak from November 30 to December 2 it will also feature a wildlife film festival.

Ecomom is a new Japanese language quarterly magazine aimed at women, mothers and families with an interest in saving the planet. The publication features tips on recycling and energy, next to recipes, children's activities, and information on eco-friendly trips and products. For more information or to subscribe see the *ecomom* website <http://nikkeibp.jp/ecomom>



Infiniti, the first solo album by the Pakistani rock star, **Salman Ahmed**, aims to break new ground both musically and in using music to further peace and sustainable development. Ahmed, the founder and lead guitarist of Asia's leading rock band, **Junoon** – who was featured in Our Planet earlier this year – says that he chose the name because “we are infinite beings who are here on earth for a short journey. Our imagination is unlimited, and our power to change our environment is immense.” It includes a song on AIDS called *Al-vida* (goodbye) which Ahmed, a **UN Goodwill Ambassador for UNAIDS**, is planning to produce as a video for **World AIDS Day**.



NGOs are in the best position to prevent the widespread extinction of species, according to a new book, **Building the Next Ark: How NGOs Work to Protect Biodiversity**. Its author, **Prof. Michael M. Gunter** of Rollins College, Florida, aims to offer a detailed prescription for how they can improve their species protection efforts.

Hedgerows made of **Vetiver grass**, a tropical grass found widely in Thailand, have been found greatly to reduce soil erosion and to mitigate some of the worst effects of hurricanes and extreme storms. The fast-growing grass forms a dense green hedge, and if this is planted along counter lines, it effectively traps eroded silt, forming an earth embankment. It also has a huge, deeply penetrating root mass, which stabilises soil and slopes. The **Vetiver Network**, based in Maryland, USA, says that it has proved highly successful in applications from Madagascar to China.