

Leaf Litter

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Restore the Earth and Inspire Ecological Stewardship

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Thoughts On The State Of Ecosystems In National Parks

One can't help but think of vacation around this time of year. Many of us are eager to escape the concrete and commotion of our urban and suburban lives, and retreat to the protected, natural settings of national parks.



Banff National Park, Canada



Elephants crossing a road in Amboseli Park, Kenya

But just how protected are the world's national parks when it comes to ecological integrity, and how are they holding up against threats like climate change, invasive species, pollution and habitat fragmentation?

We'll begin examining this question by speaking with three experts.

[Dr. Stephen Woodley](#), Chief Ecosystem Scientist for [Parks Canada](#), tells us how his agency combines science, education, traditional knowledge, and the creation of memorable experiences to improve the ecological integrity of Canada's protected lands. We'll travel to the Eastern Hemisphere for a chat with [Dr. Andrew Burbidge](#), a conservation biologist who has devoted most of his 45-year career to the protection and conservation of biodiversity in Australia. Currently an advisor to the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments on issues related to national park lands, Andrew shares a unique perspective on what it's like to protect ecological integrity on the world's largest island. [Dr. Bert Frost](#), Associate Director of Natural Resource Stewardship and Science for the National Park Service (NPS), shares some encouraging success stories and interesting information about how the NPS is responding to climate change.



Interpreter talking to visitors about wolves, La Mauricie National Park, Canada ©Parks Canada, J. Pleau



Kevin Heatley (L) Biohabitats Applied Ecologist, Invasive Species Specialist, and champion of oppressed species everywhere & Kerry Stafford (R), Bryncon LLC, Amphibious Excavator and Airboat Captain Extraordinaire in Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and

As the reintroduction of wolves in Yellowstone National Park illustrates, trophic cascades resulting from the loss of keystone predators is a hot topic when it comes to national parks. Invasive Species Specialist, Kevin Heatley gives us a closer look at this phenomenon in his review of [Trophic Cascades: Predators, Prey, and the Changing Dynamics of Nature](#), a book edited by John Terborgh and James A. Estes. [Link](#)

You'll definitely want to visit our [National Parks Photo Gallery](#), featuring photographs submitted by Leaf Litter readers and Biohabitats employees.