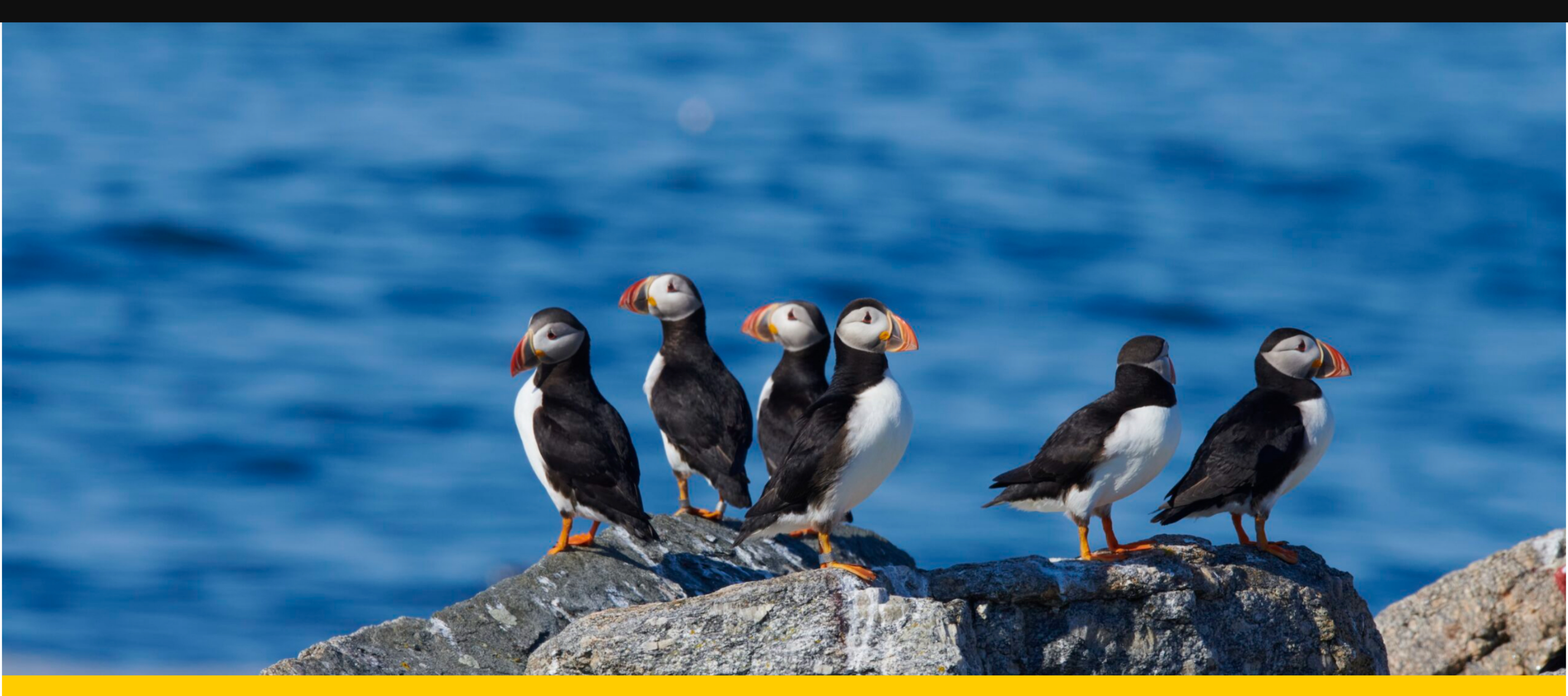


NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

2024 IMPACT SNAPSHOT

The National Geographic Society is a global non-profit organization committed to illuminating and protecting the wonder of our world. In 2024, the Society continued its expansion of its Washington, D.C. headquarters, announced the National Geographic Museum of Exploration and funded Explorers across the globe who pushed the bounds of what is possible. This snapshot illustrates some of the ways that our Explorers have harnessed the powers of science, storytelling, education and exploration to share knowledge and inspire people across the globe to care for our world.

Thank you for supporting the National Geographic Society.

DOWNLOAD FULL REPORT (PDF)

Photo: Atlantic puffins stand on a rock on Eastern Egg Rock, ME, USA.

> *"The National Geographic Society never shies away from daring to do the impossible to change our world for the better. For 137 years, we have championed exploration and innovation — embracing novel ideas, thoughtfully evolving, and expanding our reach to new audiences — to propel our mission, our National Geographic Explorers and organization forward."*

Jill Tiefenthaler
Chief Executive Officer

> *"In 2024, we reached new heights, quite literally, laying the foundation for the next audacious chapter at the National Geographic Society. With each passing day, we moved closer to completing the transformation of our Base Camp headquarters and unveiling the National Geographic Museum of Exploration. The progress we've made is nothing short of extraordinary, and our vision is coming to life in ways that truly inspire."*

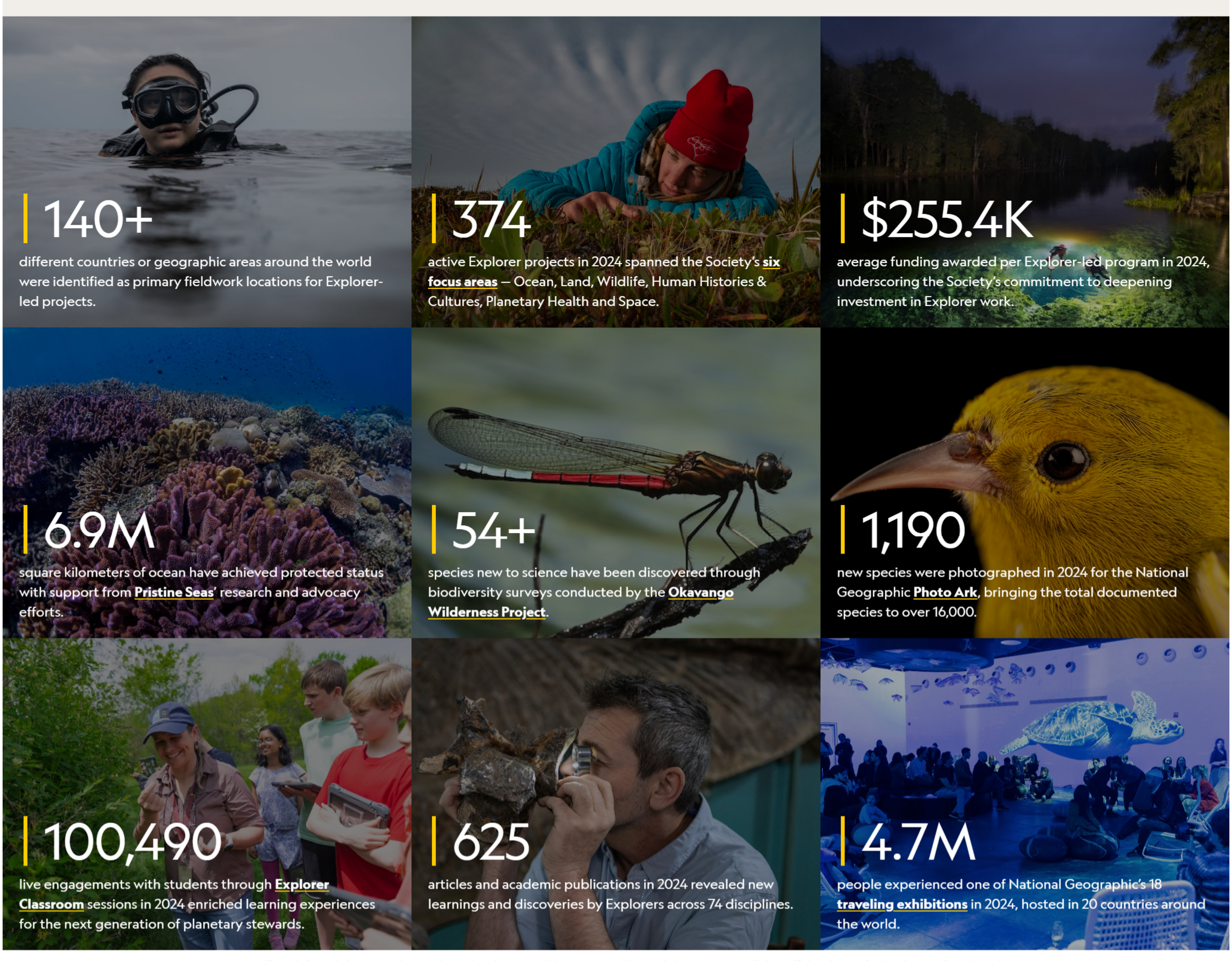
Jean M. Case
Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Photos: Artist's renderings of the interior and exterior of the renovated Society headquarters opening in 2026.

HOME OF THE EXPLORER

The Society's revitalized **Base Camp**, set to open in mid-2026, will be a historic expansion that transforms our campus into a global exploration hub and must-see destination that inspires the Explorer in everyone. With the addition of the National Geographic **Museum of Exploration**, Base Camp will become a convening space for collaboration, bringing together visionaries, learners and changemakers from around the world. We are incredibly grateful for the support of our Base Camp Founding Donors — including Cengage Group, Lyda Hill, Richard Terrance Kennedy and Heidi E. Morgan, Deborah M. Lehr and John F.W. Rogers, and Strive and Tsitsi Masiyiwa, who joined us in 2024 to help make this historic transformation possible.

2024 AT A GLANCE



140+
different countries or geographic areas around the world were identified as primary fieldwork locations for Explorer-led projects.

374
active Explorer projects in 2024 spanned the Society's **six focus areas** — Ocean, Land, Wildlife, Human Histories & Cultures, Planetary Health and Space.

$255.4K
average funding awarded per Explorer-led program in 2024, underscoring the Society's commitment to deepening investment in Explorer work.

6.9M
square kilometers of ocean have achieved protected status with support from **Pristine Seas**' research and advocacy efforts.

54+
species new to science have been discovered through biodiversity surveys conducted by the **Okavango Wilderness Project**.

1,190
new species were photographed in 2024 for the National Geographic **Photo Ark**, bringing the total documented species to over 16,000.

100,490
live engagements with students through **Explorer Classroom** sessions in 2024 enriched learning experiences for the next generation of planetary stewards.

625
articles and academic publications in 2024 revealed new learnings and discoveries by Explorers across 74 disciplines.

4.7M
people experienced one of National Geographic's 18 **traveling exhibitions** in 2024, hosted in 20 countries around the world.

Photos (from left to right, top to bottom): National Geographic Young Explorer Brigitta Gunawan diving off the shore of Tulamben, Bali, Indonesia; Explorer and ecologist Isla Myers-Smith examines tundra plants in Yukon, Canada; a pair of cave divers prepare to enter Devil's Ear, a limestone rift in Florida's Santa Fe River; the vibrant Nautilus Reef in Papua New Guinea; a dragonfly is photographed in Angola; an 'Anianiau at the Maui Bird Conservation Center in Makawao, HI, USA; Grosvenor Teacher Fellow Sandy Reed and students participate in a school district-wide Bioblitz in suburban Ohio; paleontologist and National Geographic Explorer Diego Pol analyzes the vertebrae of Carnotaurus, an abelisaurid theropod dinosaur from Patagonia; visitors enjoy the National Geographic gallery of the Root for Nature immersive exhibition at Palais des congrès in Montreal, Canada.

IMPACT IN THE FIELD

FOCUS AREA

OCEAN

Photos: A school of fish swims in the coral reef at Pulo Anna Island in Palau; the CETI team performs buoyancy measurements on the brand-new SeaExplorer glider at their facilities in Roseau, Dominica; Explorers and Project CETI scientists David Gruber, Shane Gero and Rob Wood with the CETI drone at the CETI lab in Dominica; Explorer Agustina Besada on her sailboat, which she used to cross the Atlantic Ocean twice to study ocean plastic solutions.

Explorer **Laurent Ballesta**'s "Mystery of the Rings" project sheds light on the enigmatic Cape Corsica Rings — 1,417 unique coral formations shaped by 21,000 years of environmental shifts. His work is driving efforts to expand marine protections for this fragile ecosystem, with a stunning documentary set for global release in 2025.

Project CETI, led by Explorers **David Gruber**, **Shane Gero** and **Robert Wood**, made groundbreaking progress to create a "phonetic alphabet" used in sperm whale communication. By analyzing nearly 9,000 click sequences, researchers identified 156 distinct patterns, a crucial step toward deciphering how these intelligent creatures share information. Their work, amplified by cutting-edge AI and deep-sea cameras, was featured in Nature Communications and National Geographic magazine.

Explorer **Agustina "Tati" Besada**'s Unplastify program engaged communities worldwide to reduce single-use plastics. Through hands-on workshops, digital campaigns, and grassroots activism, Unplastify informed and inspired students and policymakers alike, leading to real-world impacts such as the adoption of biodegradable materials at one school in Chile and city-wide plastic reduction initiatives spearheaded by a school group in Ukraine.

These achievements, made possible by the generosity of donors and partners, are shaping a healthier future for our oceans and the life they sustain. **Learn more** about our Ocean programs.

FOCUS AREA

LAND

Photos: The Western Arctic caribou herd gathers in the Alaska North Slope during the summer; the Buna Canals in Bosnia and Herzegovina are an important passageway for migratory fish species; a pair of Grey Crowned Cranes in Rugezi Marsh, Rwanda; Explorers José Luis Carballido and Diego Pol work with dinosaur remains in General Roca, Argentina.

The Explorer-led **World Freshwater Initiative** advanced solutions for water shortages, identifying 21 global hotspots and supporting conservation projects in Chile, Japan, Türkiye, and Indonesia. New enhancements to the Society's **World Water Map** — an innovative geovisualization resource that is central to the Initiative's work — have helped advance global understanding about water scarcity.

Through his work to transform Rwanda's Rugezi Marsh into a conservation area, Explorer **Olivier Nsengimana**'s efforts to protect this important habitat have contributed to a new record-high population of 1,293 endangered grey crowned cranes in 2024. Local stewardship of the program expanded through the training of 75 rangers, while biodiversity surveys cataloged 438 species, reinforcing the marsh's ecological significance.

Explorer **Diego Pol** and his team doubled Patagonia's fossil records in the Paleobiology Database and identified two new dinosaur species — *Koleken inakayali*, a short-armed carnivore, and *Titanomachya gimenezi*, a small titanosaur. Their discoveries are reshaping scientific understanding of Late Cretaceous biodiversity.

Through science, storytelling and education, these programs are shaping a more resilient future for our lands and the life they sustain. The National Geographic Society is grateful for the generous support of donors and partners who make this vital work possible. **Learn more** about our Land programs.

FOCUS AREA

WILDLIFE

Photos: An adult elephant and its calf walk through the Okavango Delta, Botswana; a Santa Cruz long-toed salamander at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in Santa Cruz, CA, USA; a group of penguins gather on the main island of Tierra del Fuego, Chile; Explorer Anand Varma uses a micromotor with diamond tipped cutting wheel to cut a precise window into a chicken egg.

Explorer **Joel Sartore**'s **Photo Ark** expanded its collection to more than 16,000 documented species, adding 1,190 new photographs in 2024, including the critically endangered Santa Cruz long-toed salamander. The impact of the Photo Ark project and Sartore's work was further recognized through the naming of a newly discovered beetle species — *Bothynus sartorei* — in his honor.

In partnership with the Templeton World Charity Foundation, the Society's **Wildlife Intelligence Project** supported three Explorers' research into animal cognition. **Mauricio Cantor** studied cooperative behaviors between humans and dolphins, **Tiago Falótico** examined tool use in capuchin monkeys, and **Felicity Muth** explored bee decision-making, revealing new insights into animal intelligence.

Through his innovative **WonderLab**, **Anand Varma** blended science and photography to illuminate hidden natural phenomena. The project reached global audiences through an episode in the National Geographic Photographer documentary series, and provided mentorship to emerging science storytellers.

Through the support of donors and partners, projects like these are reaching communities and learners, helping shape the future of wildlife conservation worldwide. **Learn more** about our Wildlife programs.

FOCUS AREA

HUMAN HISTORIES & CULTURES

Photos: Samuel Nkwe and Teaghan Stoop emerge from a small passage in Rising Star Cave in the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site near Krugersdorp, South Africa; Explorer Paul Salopek, his walking partner Lee Jun-seok, and guide Kim Gwi-nam at the first gate of Joryeong Path in Mungyeong Saejae Provincial Park, South Korea; Explorer Victoria Herrmann climbs a set of stairs in the rice terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras; students walk across a tree trunk as part of the 2892 Miles to Go project in Sequoia National Park, California.

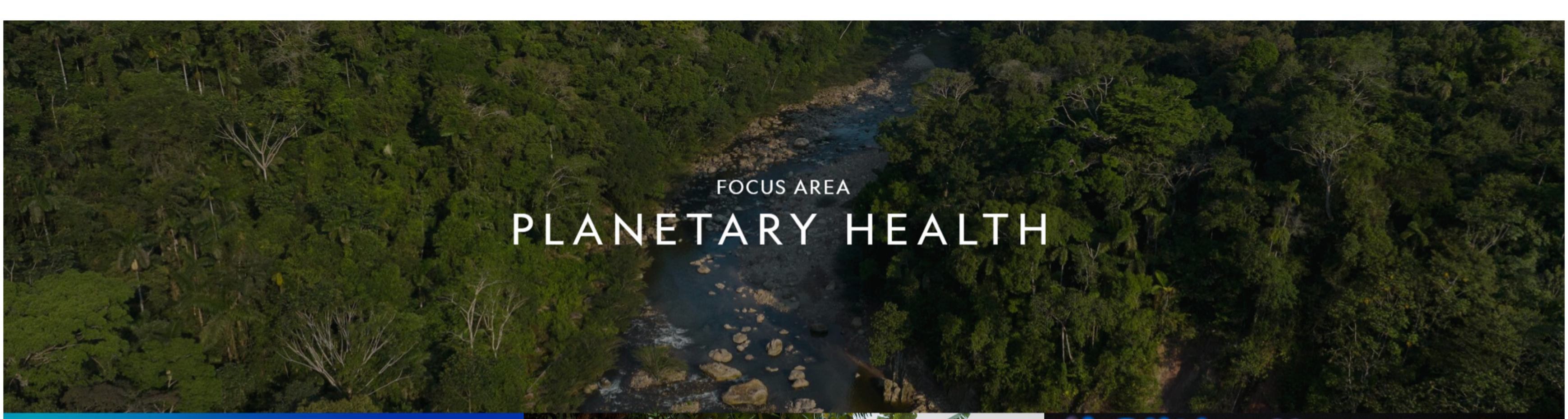
Explorer **Paul Salopek** continued his mission to trace human history by covering 4,020 miles across China and South Korea as part of his **Out of Eden Walk** project. With the help of numerous walking partners, he produced 44 text stories, 13 multimedia dispatches and nearly 19,000 images and videos throughout the year, sharing stories from people and communities that are often overlooked by global media.

Led by Explorer **Victoria Herrmann**, the Preserving Legacies project expanded to 12 new sites spanning 13 countries in 2024, and trained 30 local leaders in climate adaptation planning and strategies. On the ground, the program worked to support restoration efforts for the water management system at Petra in Jordan, and helped local partners at the Ifugao Rice Terraces in the Philippines integrate important traditional knowledge into climate policy.

In South Africa's Cradle of Humankind, Explorer in Residence **Lee Berger** and team continued groundbreaking paleoanthropological work to redefine humanity's origins. Excavations at Malapa and the Rising Star cave system yielded new insights into *Homo naledi*, including potential evidence of the hominid species' use of hearths and tools.

2892 Miles to Go is a place-based education and storytelling program led by Explorer **Ashley Lamb Sinclair**. In 2024, the program engaged more than 600 youth and 130 educators across the United States, fostering a deeper understanding of the past to inspire action for a better future. The program also embraced innovative collaborations with Explorers including Alicia Odewale, Kristi Williams, and Brittney Beck, as well as partnering with the National Geographic Photo Camp program in Colorado.

Thanks to the support of donors and partners, these programs are helping to illuminate and preserve cultural and natural history, while working to shape a more harmonious future for our world. **Learn more** about our Human Histories and Cultures programs.



FOCUS AREA

PLANETARY HEALTH

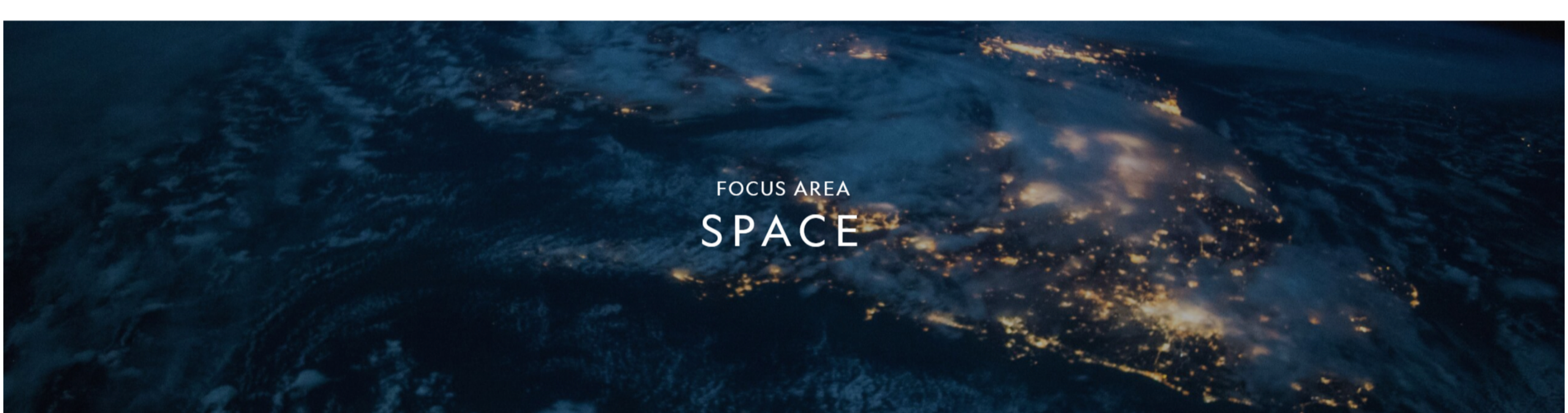
Photos: Aerial view of the Isiboro Securé National Park and Indigenous Territory highlands in Bolivia; made using sunlight, water and carbon dioxide, this solar synthetic fluid has the potential to replace fossil fuels; Explorer and conservationist Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka interacts with pupils at the Buhoma Community Primary School in Kanungu District, Uganda; Explorer Sonika Manandhar.

Explorer **Davide Monteleone**'s Critical Minerals photojournalism project examines the environmental and geopolitical complexities of resource extraction for renewable technologies. Published in 2024, his interactive StoryMap traced the journey of minerals like cobalt and lithium from extraction to global markets, sparking critical discussions about sustainability in the pursuit of renewable energy.

Explorer **Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka** expanded her ingenious Model Households program, reaching thousands of families near Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in 2024. By improving hygiene, sanitation and agricultural practices, the initiative aims to reduce disease transmission between humans, livestock and endangered mountain gorillas, leading to a healthier coexistence and supporting the program's goal to achieve a 30% total reduction in infectious diseases over the next few years.

Explorer **Sonika Manandhar** has worked to revolutionize Nepal's public transit sector by providing financing for electric vehicle (EV) upgrades, particularly for women entrepreneurs operating Kathmandu's Safa tempos. By ensuring long-term viability for these battery-powered three-wheelers, her efforts promote sustainable urban mobility while reducing emissions.

From deep forests to urban streets, these Explorer-led projects demonstrate how environmental solutions can improve both human and planetary health. The National Geographic Society is grateful for our generous community of supporters, who are helping advance this vital work. **Learn more** about our Planetary Health programs.



FOCUS AREA

SPACE

Photos: International Space Station view of Western Europe at night; moonrise view taken from the Khumbu Icefall during the National Geographic and Rolex Perpetual Planet Everest Expedition; Explorer Cynthia Chiang examines an ALBATROS (Array of Long Baseline Antennas for Taking Radio Observations from the Sub-antarctic / Seventy-ninth parallel) antenna in Quebec, Canada; the Sun rising over Earth from the International Space Station.

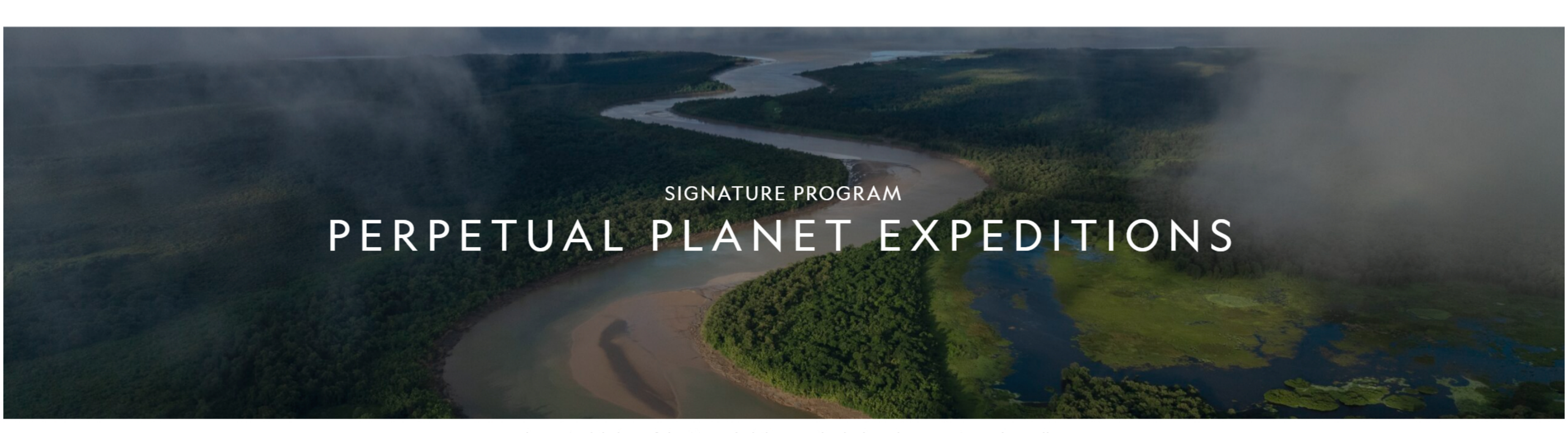
Explorer **Cody Paige** led high-resolution 3D mapping of the Moon's surface, testing scanning technologies in Spain's volcanic landscapes and Antarctica's polar conditions to simulate lunar exploration. These innovations will help scientists and astronauts navigate the Moon's terrain more effectively.

Explorer **Cynthia Chiang** deployed the PRIZM instrument to remote locations like Marion Island to detect 21-centimeter hydrogen signals from the universe's first billion years. Her work is shedding new light on the cosmic "dark ages," a period before the first stars formed.

Explorer **Moriba Jah** launched the Glint Evader app, a tool designed to mitigate satellite light pollution for astronomers. His research, incorporating Indigenous knowledge, emphasizes sustainable space exploration and responsible stewardship of Earth's orbital environment.

Explorer **Martin Wikelski** secured funding for the ICARUS satellite tracking system, which will launch in 2025 to monitor global animal migration. Data collected from six small satellites will enhance biodiversity protection, pandemic prediction and food security research.

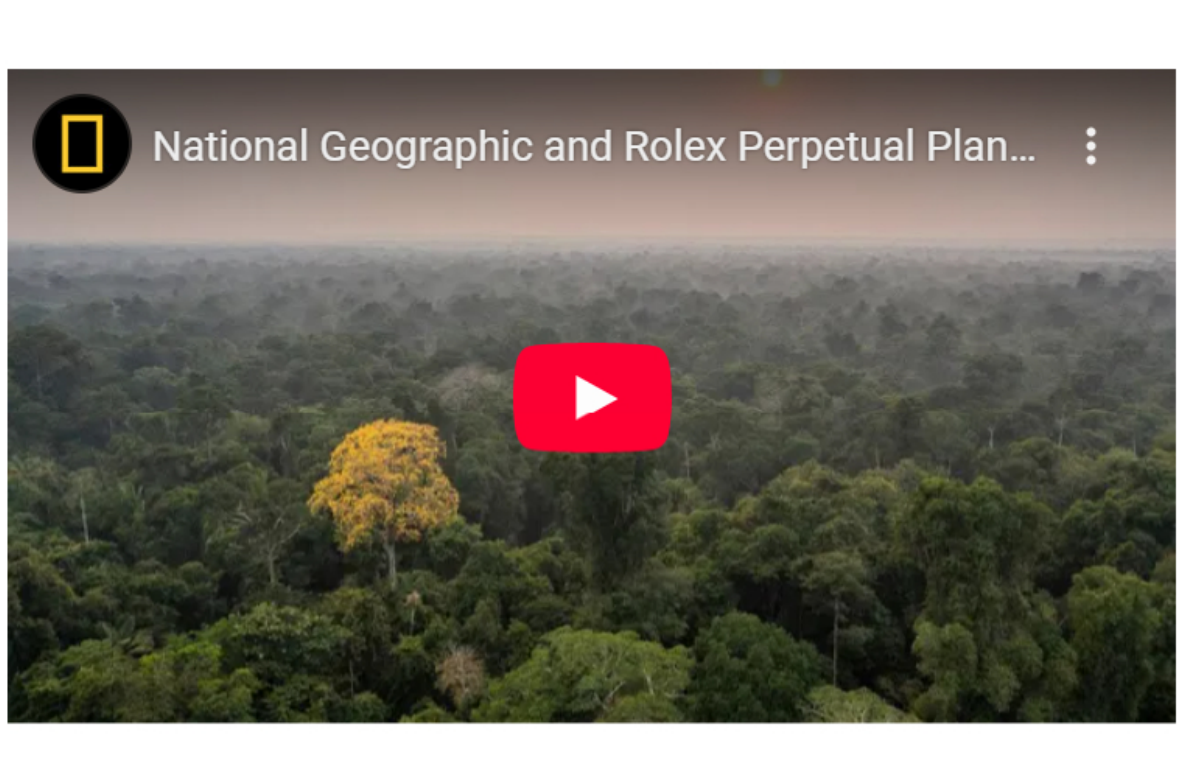
With critical investment from our philanthropic supporters, the Society is advancing projects like these to broadening humanity's understanding of the cosmos while working to ensure that the future of space exploration is responsible and sustainable. **Learn more** about our Space programs.



SIGNATURE PROGRAM

PERPETUAL PLANET EXPEDITIONS

Photo: Aerial view of the Maracá-Jipioca Ecological Station near Amapá, Brazil.



In 2024, **National Geographic and Rolex Perpetual Planet Expeditions** completed its landmark Amazon Expedition, chronicling the basin's biodiversity through cutting-edge science, community engagement and storytelling work, and culminating with a single-topic National Geographic magazine issue and a documentary film on Hulu/Disney+. In a breakthrough study, Explorers used GPS-enabled collar cameras to track Andean bears, revealing never-before documented animal behaviors and transforming wildlife research. Looking ahead, Perpetual Planet Expeditions will shift focus to the ocean, beginning with a pioneering expedition in the Weddell Sea that launched in December 2024.

SIGNATURE PROGRAM

PRISTINE SEAS

Photo: A massive school of jackfish in Palau.

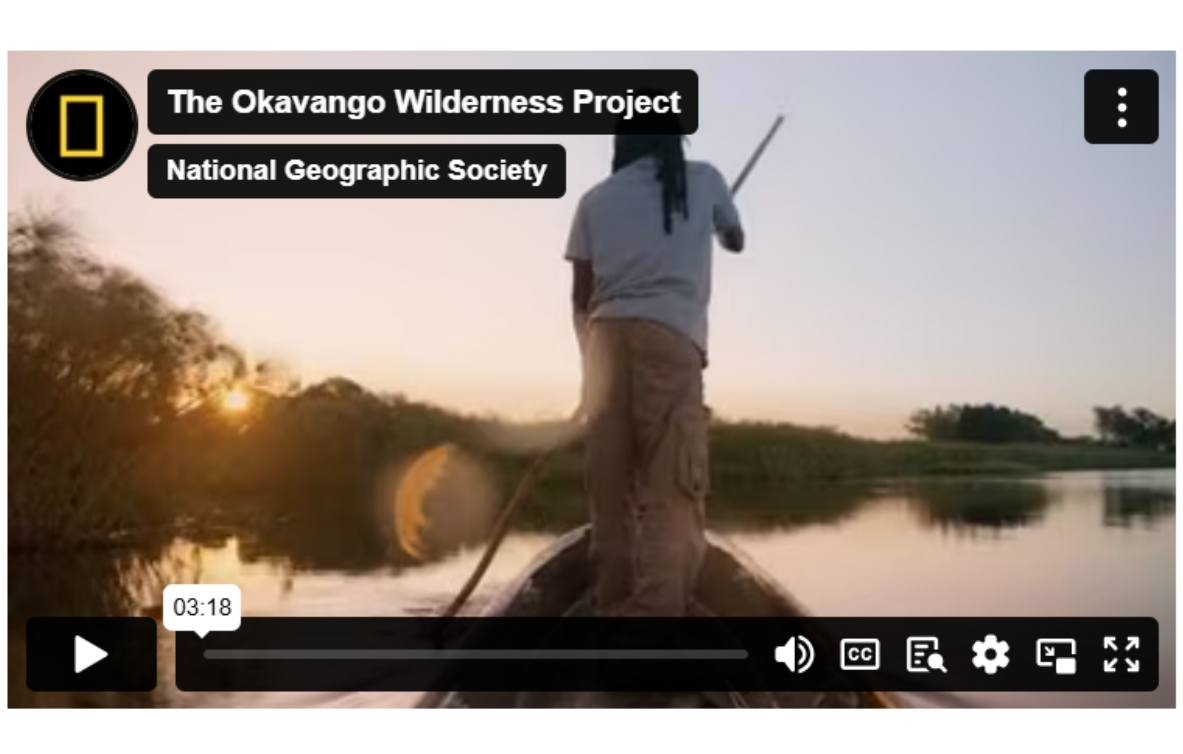
Protecting The Last Wild Places In the Ocean - Oct 2024
National Geographic Society
03:30

Pristine Seas, led by Explorer in Residence Enric Sala, continues to spearhead marine protection efforts worldwide. In 2024, the program played a pivotal role in the creation of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) around Isla de Lobos in Uruguay, ensuring the preservation of one of South America's largest sea lion colonies. Additionally, the Azores established the largest MPA network in the North Atlantic —spanning 287,000 square kilometers—further advancing global ocean conservation goals.

SIGNATURE PROGRAM

OKAVANGO WILDERNESS PROJECT

Photo: People traveling in mokoros, a type of dugout canoe, as part of the The National Geographic Okavango Wilderness Project's annual Delta Crossing in Botswana.



The **Okavango Wilderness Project**, led by Explorer Steve Boyes, strengthened its impact in 2024 with the launch of Fundação Lisima in Angola — part of the Wild Bird Trust family of organizations — reinforcing collaborative conservation efforts in the region. Furthermore, the groundbreaking 2024 Lisima Biodiversity Survey revealed over 1,000 species of moths and 120 species of spiders — many new to science. The Project also made strides in research advocacy, presenting critical findings on the Angolan Highlands Water Tower to delegates at the Southern African Development Community Summit in August.

BEHIND THE YELLOW BORDER

INSPIRING THE CHANGEMAKERS OF TOMORROW

For nearly 40 years, the National Geographic Society's education programs have connected students and educators with Explorers, igniting curiosity and inspiring action to protect the planet. In 2024, these initiatives engaged millions of learners worldwide through dynamic storytelling, hands-on experiences and innovative digital resources.

Photos: Students and educators participate in a school-district-wide Bioblitz for 5th graders; Photo Camp students capture photos on a game drive in a safari in Kissama National Park, Angola; Slingshot Challenge Youth Workshop during Earthshot Week in Cape Town, South Africa.

EduHub, the Society's free online education platform, expanded its collection with 20 new Explorer-centered resources, covering topics such as environmental conservation and cultural heritage. The platform also integrated a globally inclusive learning design approach to ensure accessibility and cultural relevance for different learning communities.

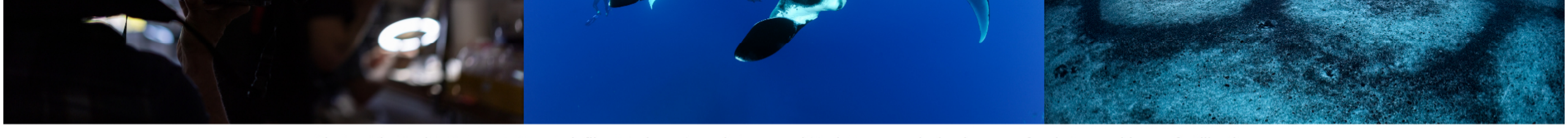
Explorer Classroom brought the spirit of exploration into classrooms, engaging more than 100,000 students in live virtual events with 35 Explorers. Special series like the Ocean Expedition, co-developed with Pristine Seas and the Palau Ministry of Education, reached 40% of Palau's student population, immersing learners in marine conservation efforts.

The **Slingshot Challenge** inspired young changemakers, receiving more than 2,100 submissions from 87 countries. Participants proposed bold solutions, from tree-planting robots to food waste reduction apps, demonstrating the next generation's commitment to tackling environmental challenges.

These programs, made possible through the generous support of donors and partners, continue to foster an Explorer Mindset in learners of all ages — equipping them with the knowledge, skills and determination to shape a better future for our planet.

EQUIPPING EXPLORERS TO GO FURTHER

The National Geographic Society empowers its Explorers with cutting-edge tools, mentorship and training to amplify their impact. In 2024, Society-led programs expanded access to education, technology and storytelling resources, ensuring that Explorers can tackle global challenges with innovative solutions.



Photos: The Society's Impact Story Lab films Explorer Anand Varma and Mark Unger analyzing images of a photographic egg fertilization experiment; an oceanic manta ray outfitted with the Exploration Technology Lab's animal-born camera system, a Crittercam, is seen off the coast of Mexico's San Benedicto Island; Explorer and biologist Laurent Ballesta and a team of divers investigate unexplained seabed formations off the coast of Cap Corse, Corsica: 1,417 perfectly circular rings, 20 meters in diameter.

The **Exploration Technology Lab** provided more than 600 Explorers with advanced tools, including a new marine Crittercam that provided new insights into the behavior of humpback whales and custom-built deep-sea cameras deployed to depths of 3,500 meters. The lab also supported key research, including Project CETI's sperm whale studies in Dominica and Pristine Seas expeditions in Palau, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Impact Story Lab helps National Geographic Explorers harness the power of strategic storytelling to supercharge the impact of their work. The award-winning creative unit collaborates with our community of global changemakers to produce film, video, audio, photography, VR/AR experiences and other media to further the goals of Explorer-led programs.

The **EduLab** served as an incubator for innovative educational solutions, supporting learning initiatives across the Society's programs. In 2024, it helped launch SOLAx, an online academy developed with Explorer Shabana Basij-Rasikh to provide Afghan girls and young women with microlearning opportunities via WhatsApp. Within six months, SOLAx reached 14,000 learners worldwide. EduLab also collaborated with MIT Media Lab and Esri to create new mapping tools, including updates to the World Water Map.

Through initiatives like these, the Society is strengthening a global community of Explorers with the knowledge, technology and storytelling expertise needed to drive real-world impact. This work is made possible by generous supporters who believe in the power of exploration to change the world.

ENGAGING GLOBAL AUDIENCES

Through signature events, immersive exhibitions and live storytelling, the National Geographic Society brings people together to celebrate exploration and inspire action for the planet. In 2024, these programs reached millions worldwide, connecting audiences with the work of National Geographic Explorers.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
EXPLORERS
FESTIVAL 2024
NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY

Photos: Explorers and Society leadership are pictured with the Society's flag during Explorers Festival 2024 in Washington, D.C., USA; Explorer and photographer Jamie Rojo presents at the 2024 Storytellers Summit in Los Angeles, CA, USA; a National Geographic Live show at the Red Rocks Amphitheatre near Denver, CO, USA.

The Society's **Storytellers Summit** event convened journalists, photographers and changemakers to share and celebrate the impact of new perspectives and insights. Our annual **Explorers Festival** gathered more than 1,700 attendees to share groundbreaking discoveries and forward-thinking solutions. The event featured Explorers such as Laurent Ballesta, who discussed his deep-sea research, and Richard Turere, who shared the evolution of his Lion Lights innovation for mitigating human-wildlife conflict. The **International Explorers Festival**, held for the first time in South America, highlighted Amazonian conservation and featured Explorers working in the region. We are grateful to Rolex for their continued partnership in presenting the National Geographic Society's signature events Explorers Festival, Storytellers Summit, and International Explorers Festival.

National Geographic's **traveling exhibitions** reached 4.7 million people across 20 countries. "Root for Nature" in Montreal and "One World, One Chance" in Mexico City immersed audiences in the beauty and urgency of conservation. "Photo Ark" featuring the work of Explorer Joel Sartore, continued to showcase the world's biodiversity, while "Wolves" focused on Explorer Ronan Donovan's efforts to provide a compelling look at the complex relationship between wolves and humans.

The iconic **National Geographic Live** program significantly expanded its offerings, hosting 89 public performances and 31 student matinees across 30 cities, a 275% increase from the previous year. The series premiered seven new shows, including "From Roots to Canopy" featuring Nalini Nadkarni, which explores the hidden world of forest canopies.

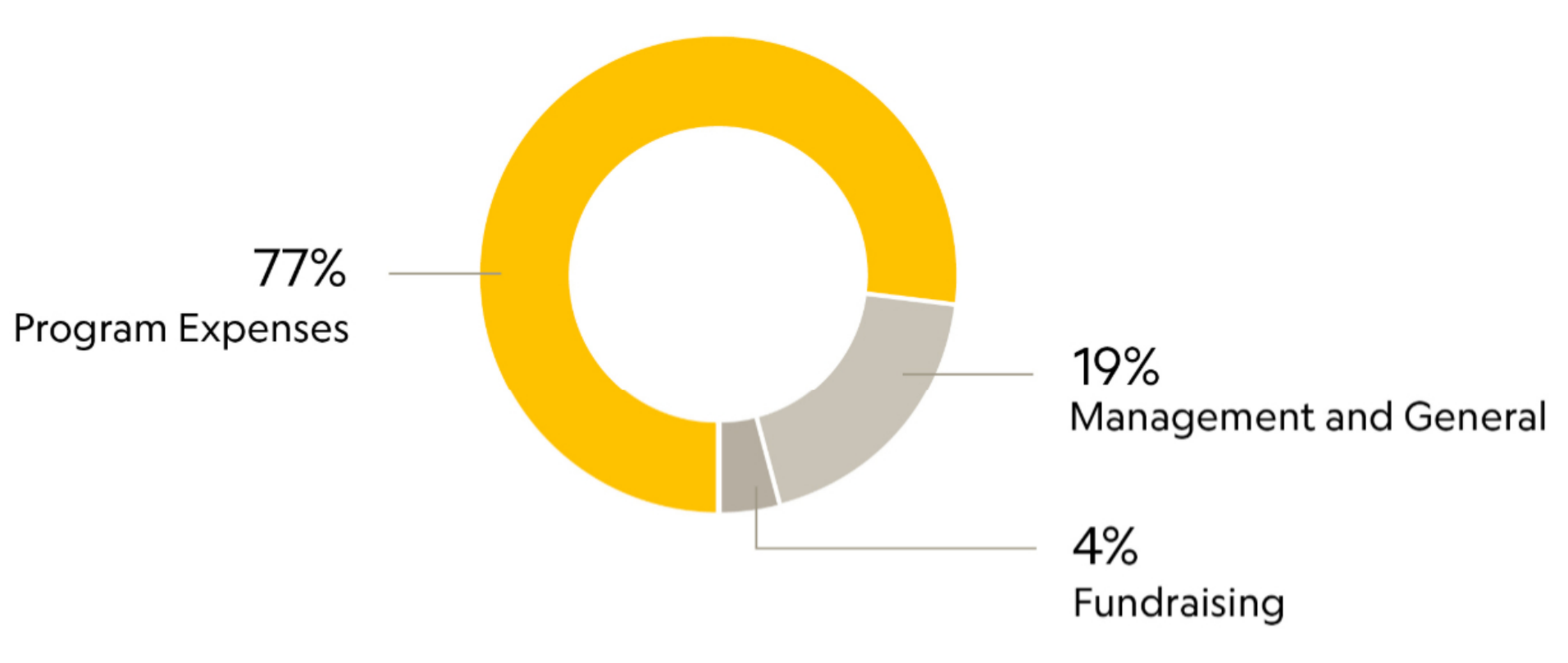
Engaging events and compelling experiences like these ensure that the spirit of exploration reaches and inspires audiences across the globe, fostering a deeper connection to our world and sparking a desire to protect it.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

100 percent of donor contributions go to support Explorers and our mission work.

> *"2024 marked another record-breaking year in fundraising, coupled with an 11% annualized return on our investment portfolio, and a 23% year-over-year increase in operating margin. As we prepare for the transformative 2026 opening of the Museum of Exploration, a key chapter in amplifying our mission and further diversifying our revenue streams, we express deep appreciation to our donors and partners."*

Darien Wright
Chief Financial and Operating Officer



THE POWER OF PHILANTHROPY

2024 BY THE NUMBERS

$112.4M
Raised through donor contributions

$100K+
105 donors of $100K+ helped advance our important work

108K+
Donors and partners supported the Society's Explorers and mission work

$438
The average gift amount donated to the Society

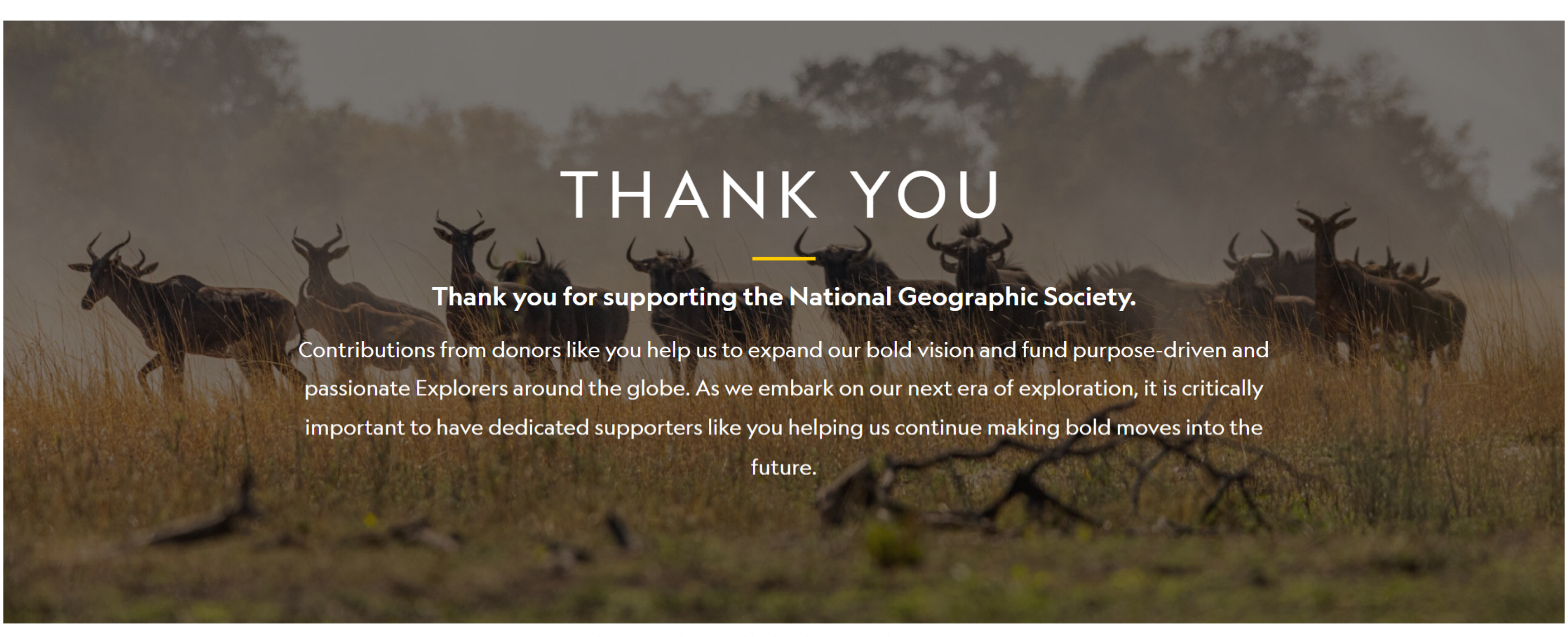
100%
Philanthropic participation by the Society's Board of Trustees and senior leadership team

24
Gifts of $1M+ provided vital resources to support Explorers

Photo: Explorer and photographer Babak Tafreshi photographs the night sky in northern Quebec, Canada.

> *"Each year, I am amazed and deeply grateful to see how our global community of supporters has grown, and to reflect on all we have accomplished together over the past year. For the third year in a row, your passion and generosity have resulted in more than $100 million in new commitments. This sustained support from our dedicated community strengthens the Society, enabling us to make bold investments in solutions that will lead to a healthier planet and a brighter future."*

Kara Ramirez Mullins
Chief Advancement Officer



THANK YOU

Thank you for supporting the National Geographic Society.

Contributions from donors like you help us to expand our bold vision and fund purpose-driven and passionate Explorers around the globe. As we embark on our next era of exploration, it is critically important to have dedicated supporters like you helping us continue making bold moves into the future.

Photo: Tsessebes stand in the Okavango Delta, Botswana.

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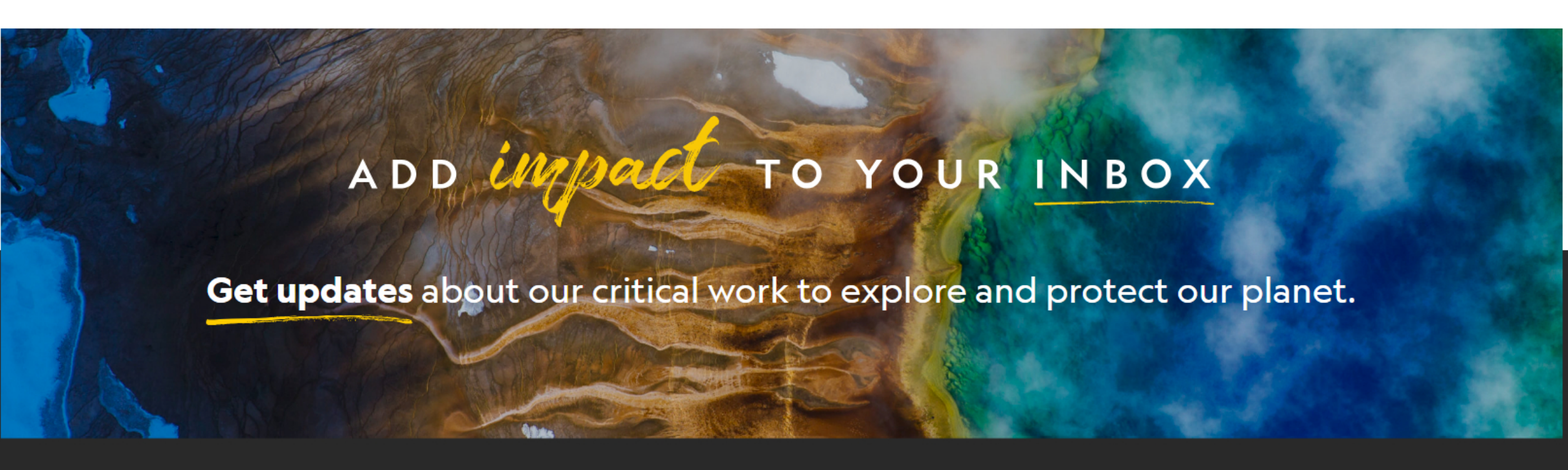

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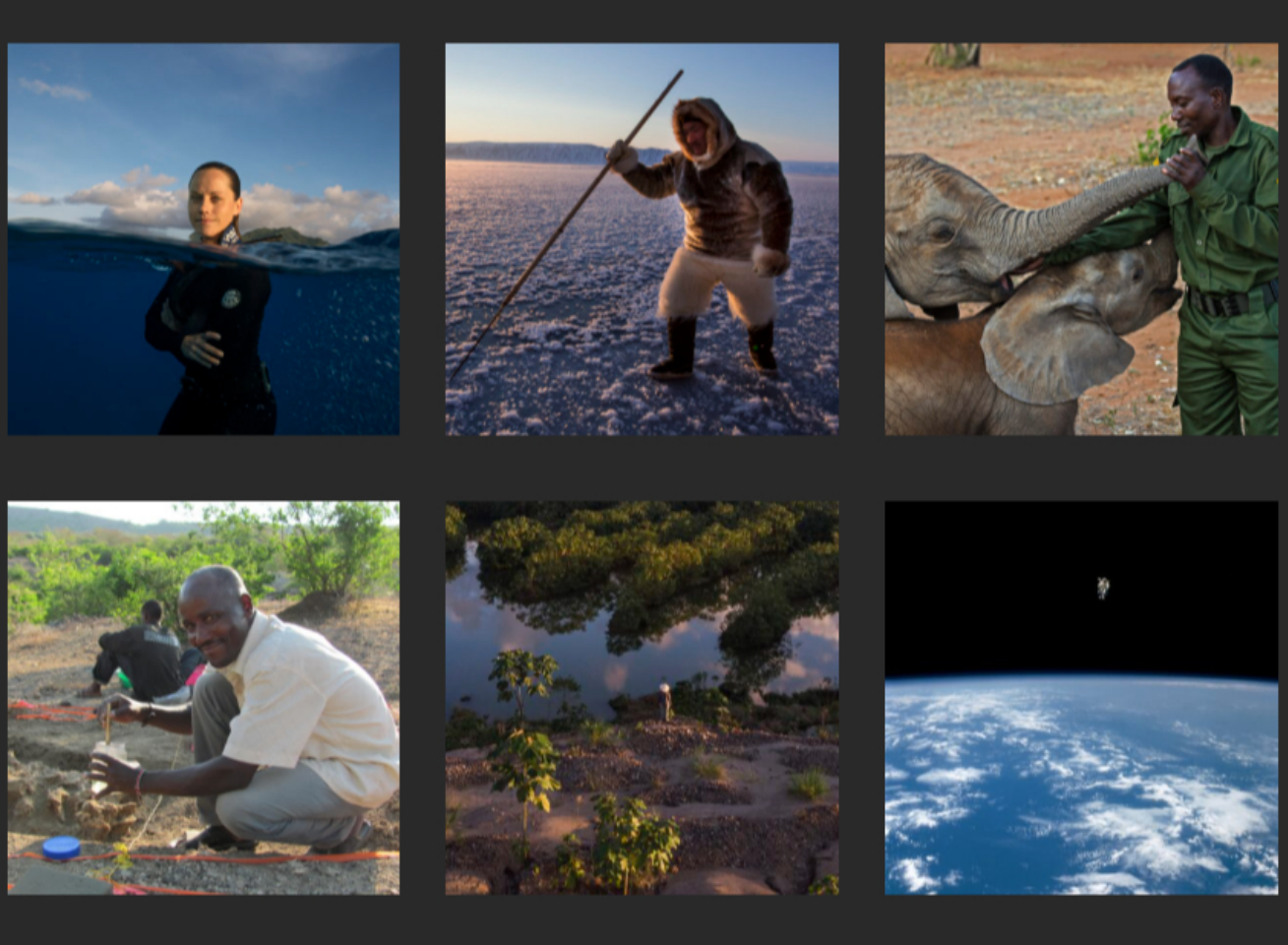
Get updates about our critical work to explore and protect our planet.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

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