

Last Chance To See By Douglas Adams

Last Chance to See: Douglas Adams's Journey Through the Natural World Douglas Adams's **Last Chance to See**, far from being just a travelogue, is a captivating exploration of the natural world, interwoven with the author's signature wit and intellectual curiosity. This book, a 1990 collaboration with Mark Carwardine, isn't simply a list of endangered species; it's a poignant meditation on the delicate balance of ecosystems and the urgent need for conservation. *A Journey of Observation and Anecdote* Adams, renowned for his humorous writing style, doesn't shy away from the seriousness of the subject matter. **Last Chance to See** isn't a dry scientific treatise. It's a story, filled with vivid descriptions and insightful anecdotes about the animals and the people Adams encounters. He masterfully balances personal experience with factual information, creating a unique and accessible guide for anyone interested in nature and conservation. The book takes the reader on a guided tour across continents, culminating in a surprisingly intimate understanding of a few endangered species. This isn't just an academic journey; it's a personal one, with Adams frequently reflecting on the human impact on wildlife and the importance of conservation efforts.

Exploring the Enduring Legacy of **Last Chance to See** **Last Chance to See** quickly achieved a status beyond mere travel writing. It became a rallying cry for environmental awareness, influencing a generation to care about the planet's fragile creatures and ecosystems. This enduring impact is largely due to:

- **Accessible Language:** Adams's clear and engaging style makes complex scientific information palatable for a broad audience, crucial for disseminating knowledge about endangered species.
- **Humorous Approach:** His wit and humor never detract from the message; instead, they serve to make the book more memorable and engaging.
- **Personal Connection:** Adams weaves his personal experiences into the narrative, creating a more intimate and resonant connection with the reader.
- **Urgent Message:** The book effectively communicates the threat of extinction and the urgency of conservation efforts, leaving readers with a sense of responsibility.

The Book's A Journey Through Diverse Habitats The book is structured as a series of loosely connected chapters. Each chapter focuses on a specific region or endangered animal species:

- **Southern Africa:** Encounters with African elephants, black rhinoceroses, and the critically endangered white rhinoceros, providing insights into the region's challenges.
- **The Galapagos Islands:** The journey highlights the extraordinary biodiversity of this unique archipelago and the threats posed by human activities.
- **South America:** The expedition focuses on endangered Andean condors and the challenges of protecting them in their native habitat.
- **The Congo Basin:** The chapter vividly paints a picture of the region's biodiversity and the complex threats facing its unique wildlife.

Adams's Personal Reflections: A Blend of Humor and Empathy Adams frequently interweaves his personal reflections and observations with the scientific facts. This unique approach creates a dynamic narrative, drawing the reader into the emotional landscape of the expedition and the plight of endangered creatures. He doesn't simply describe the animals; he analyzes their behaviors and explores the human impact on their ecosystems, prompting deeper reflection on our role in their survival.

A Conservationist's Call to Action While undeniably a humorous work, **Last Chance to See** carries a serious message about the importance of conservation. The book emphasizes the interconnectedness of life and the consequences of unchecked environmental destruction. Adams doesn't offer simplistic solutions, but he underscores the urgency and importance of action to protect biodiversity.

Key Takeaways from **Last Chance to See**

- **Biodiversity is essential:** The book emphasizes the vital importance of diverse ecosystems and the significant role each species plays in maintaining them.
- **Human impact is crucial:** Adams highlights how human activities significantly affect wildlife populations and their habitats.

Conservation is paramount: The book underscores the need for urgent and comprehensive conservation efforts to protect threatened species. • *Education is key:* *Last Chance to See* effectively educates the reader about endangered species and the threats they face. **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):** 1. Why is this book still relevant today? The book's message about the importance of conservation remains just as relevant today as when it was written, given the ongoing and intensifying challenges of habitat loss, climate change, and poaching. 2. What is the book's primary message? The book's primary message is a poignant and humorous call to action for conservation, emphasizing the interconnectedness of life and the urgent need to protect endangered species. 3. How does the book engage with scientific information? The book seamlessly integrates scientific information with Adams's engaging prose and witty commentary, making complex information accessible to a broad audience. 4. What is the role of humor in the book? Humor is a crucial tool in *Last Chance to See* as it makes the serious topic of conservation more approachable, memorable, and accessible to a wider readership. 5. What lasting impact has the book had on conservation efforts? The book has undoubtedly inspired a greater awareness of environmental issues and spurred conservation efforts around the globe. *Last Chance to See* stands as a testament to the power of engaging storytelling to highlight critical environmental issues. By blending humor, scientific accuracy, and personal reflection, Adams created a timeless masterpiece that continues to inspire and motivate readers to act for the preservation of the natural world.

The Last Chance to See the Universe: A Deep Dive into Douglas Adams' Unforgettable Journey

Douglas Adams. The very name conjures images of galactic hitchhikers, bewildered protagonists, and a universe so absurdly, wonderfully logical that it feels more real than our own. While "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" series is his undisputed magnum opus, Adams also penned a non-fiction gem that offers a unique glimpse into his mind and his passions: "Last Chance to See." This isn't a tale of intergalactic bureaucracy or sentient robots, but rather a deeply personal and profoundly moving exploration of the planet Earth and its dwindling biodiversity.

If you're a fan of Adams' wit, his singular perspective, and his ability to find humor in the darkest of situations, then "Last Chance to See" is an absolute must-read. It's a book that will make you laugh, make you think, and quite possibly, make you shed a tear for the magnificent creatures teetering on the brink of oblivion. Let's embark on a journey through this extraordinary book and discover why it's so much more than just a travelogue or a conservation plea.

More Than Just a Guide: Adams' Foray into Non-Fiction

When Douglas Adams released "Last Chance to See" in 1990, it was a bit of a departure from his established comedic sci-fi persona. Co-authored with zoologist Mark Carwardine, the book chronicles their globe-trotting adventures in search of endangered species. But fear not, dear reader, for this is no dry scientific treatise. Adams' signature voice is all over these pages, infusing even the most dire statistics with a characteristic blend of sharp observation, dry wit, and existential musings. He approaches the subject of extinction not with preachy pronouncements, but with a curious, often bewildered, fascination that mirrors the reader's own potential apprehension.

The premise is simple: Adams and Carwardine set out to find and document species that were critically endangered, effectively their "last chance to see." This quest takes them to some of the most remote and fascinating corners of the planet, encountering creatures that most of us have only ever seen in nature documentaries, if at all. Think of it as an earthly, slightly more perilous, version of Arthur Dent's accidental voyages – only instead of Vogon poetry, they're facing habitat destruction and the stark reality of species loss.

A Galactic Hitchhiker's Guide to Earth's Dying Wonders

What makes "Last Chance to See" so compelling is the inherent Adams-ness of it all. He doesn't shy away from the grim realities, but he also doesn't wallow in despair. Instead, he uses his inimitable style to highlight the absurdity of it all. The sheer scale of the planet's problems, coupled with the often-quirky nature of the animals themselves, provides ample fodder for his comedic genius. He marvels at the evolutionary quirks of each creature, dissects the often-bungled human efforts to save them, and reminds us of our own rather insignificant place in the grand scheme of things – a recurring theme in his work.

The book is structured around the various expeditions, each dedicated to a specific endangered animal. We travel with Adams and Carwardine to Indonesia to witness the orangutan, to Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) to encounter the mountain gorilla, and to Australia in pursuit of the kakapo. Each encounter is a miniature narrative, filled with the unexpected, the humorous, and the poignant. You'll find yourself chuckling at Adams' descriptions of awkward encounters with local officials, his philosophical ponderings on the nature of existence, and his general bewilderment at the complexities of the natural world, a world that, in his own words, is "improbable."

The Kakapo Caper: A Flightless Parrot's Plight

One of the most memorable and endearing chapters focuses on the kakapo, a critically endangered, flightless parrot from New Zealand. Adams' fascination with this peculiar bird is palpable. He describes its unique mating rituals, its distinctive scent, and its almost comical inability to fly. The efforts to save the kakapo, often fraught with challenges and setbacks, are chronicled with both humor and a deep sense of empathy. It's a testament to Adams' skill that he can make a flightless parrot's struggle for survival so utterly captivating.

Orangutans and Gorillas: Our Primate Cousins in Peril

The encounters with orangutans and mountain gorillas are equally profound. Adams doesn't just present facts; he imbues these magnificent primates with personality. He observes their intelligence, their social structures, and their undeniable connection to us. The threats they face – deforestation, poaching, human encroachment – are presented not as abstract concepts, but as direct assaults on individuals with lives and families. His descriptions of the lush, yet vanishing, rainforests are both beautiful and melancholic, a poignant reminder of what we stand to lose.

The Adamsian Lens: Humor, Humanity, and the Big Questions

"Last Chance to See" is more than just a conservationist's diary; it's a philosophical exploration disguised as an adventure. Adams uses the plight of endangered species as a springboard to contemplate larger issues: the nature of evolution, the responsibility of humanity, and the inherent absurdity of existence.

He's not afraid to admit his own ignorance or to poke fun at human pretensions. His observations about our attempts to "manage" the natural world are often hilariously, and sadly, accurate.

He also showcases his deep affection for the planet. While his fictional universe is a glorious playground of the imagination, "Last Chance to See" reveals a genuine love for the tangible, breathing world around us. He approaches each animal with a childlike wonder, a stark contrast to the often-cynical tone that can permeate discussions about environmental issues. This genuine curiosity is infectious, drawing the reader into his experience and fostering a sense of shared concern.

The Philosophy of Extinction: Adams' Unique Take

Adams' philosophical musings are woven seamlessly into the narrative. He contemplates the vastness of time and the fleeting nature of individual existence. The extinction of a species, in his view, is not just a biological event but a cosmic tragedy, a silencing of a unique voice in the grand chorus of life. He grapples with the idea that perhaps, in the grand, indifferent universe, the loss of these species is ultimately insignificant. Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely this cosmic indifference that makes our efforts to preserve them all the more noble and, in his eyes, profoundly meaningful.

Why "Last Chance to See" Still Resonates Today

Sadly, the title "Last Chance to See" has, for some species, proven tragically accurate. The threats that endangered animals faced in 1990 have, in many cases, only intensified. Deforestation, climate change, and habitat destruction continue to push countless species towards the precipice. This makes "Last Chance to See" not just a historical document but a prescient warning. Adams and Carwardine's journey serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing biodiversity crisis and the urgent need for action.

However, the book is not solely about doom and gloom. It also offers glimmers of hope. The dedication and passion of the conservationists they meet, the resilience of nature, and the growing global awareness of these issues provide a sense of optimism. Adams, ever the pragmatist with a dash of idealism, reminds us that even in the face of overwhelming odds, individual action and collective effort can make a difference. His work encourages us to look at our planet with fresh eyes, to appreciate its intricate beauty, and to recognize our role as stewards of this precious, improbable world.

Echoes of the Guide: Familiar Themes in a New Context

While the setting is Earth and the subject is zoology, the echoes of "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" are unmistakable. The sense of bewildered exploration, the observation of peculiar customs (both animal and human), and the underlying current of existential questioning are all present. Adams' ability to translate complex issues into accessible and engaging prose is a hallmark of his writing, and "Last Chance to See" is no exception. He makes you care about the fate of these animals, not just as scientific specimens, but as fellow inhabitants of a fragile planet.

If you're looking for a book that is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally resonant, "Last Chance to See" is an excellent choice. It's a testament to Douglas Adams' extraordinary mind, his profound empathy, and his enduring legacy as a writer who could find both humor and meaning in the most unexpected places. It's a reminder that sometimes, the greatest adventures aren't in the furthest reaches of space, but in the very places we call home, and that the future of these wonders is a responsibility we all share.

The Enduring Legacy of “Last Chance to See” by Douglas Adams

Douglas Adams’ *Last Chance to See* is far more than a whimsical travelogue—it stands as a poignant and profound meditation on mortality, curiosity, and the fleeting nature of life. Published in 1990, this collection of essays captures Adams’ signature blend of dark humor and intellectual depth, offering readers a unique journey through zoos, wildlife sanctuaries, and eccentric personalities across continents. What sets this work apart is its ability to transform what could have been a mere travel narrative into a reflective exploration of human wonder and the inevitability of time slipping away.

A Journey Rooted in Wonder and Impermanence

At its core, *Last Chance to See* chronicles Adams’ final major travels, visiting places like the Rotterdam Zoo, the Taronga Zoo in Sydney, and remote wildlife reserves near the equator. Each entry is infused with Adams’ characteristic wit, yet beneath the laughter lies a deeper awareness of life’s transience. The title itself conveys urgency—a final chance to witness beings, cultures, and landscapes before they fade or disappear. This theme resonates powerfully in an era where biodiversity loss and climate change accelerate, reminding readers that every encounter is, in essence, a moment suspended in time. Adams writes not just as an observer but as a thoughtful chronicler of the delicate balance between awe and impermanence. His reflections on captive animals, endangered species, and the eccentric caretakers who dedicate their lives to preservation reveal a profound respect for life in all its forms. This balance between levity and gravity transforms the book into more than entertainment; it becomes a philosophical inquiry into how we engage with the world before it changes beyond recognition.

Key Insights: Curiosity, Connection, and Conscious Existence

One of the most compelling insights of *Last Chance to See* is the idea that true understanding comes not from detached observation but from active, empathetic engagement. Adams urges readers to look beyond surface-level fascination and recognize the interconnectedness of all living things. His vivid storytelling turns scientific facts into emotional experiences, making the abstract concept of mortality tangible through encounters with a lemur’s curious gaze or a rhino’s quiet dignity. Equally significant is Adams’ emphasis on curiosity as a vital force in human life. He portrays exploration not as a race to collect facts but as a journey that enriches the soul. This perspective aligns with modern psychological insights linking curiosity to personal growth and resilience. By framing wildlife encounters as opportunities for connection—rather than mere spectacle—Adams challenges readers to approach the world with humility and presence.

Applications: Inspiration for Travel, Education, and Environmental Advocacy

The lessons embedded in *Last Chance to See* extend far beyond the pages of the book. For travelers, it serves as a guide to meaningful exploration—one that prioritizes depth over checklists and meaningful interaction over superficial sightseeing. Educators can draw on Adams’ work to inspire students to appreciate biodiversity, fostering early awareness of conservation issues through storytelling that captivates hearts as well as minds. Moreover, the book’s emotional resonance makes it a powerful tool in

environmental advocacy. While not overtly preachy, its underlying message—that every creature and habitat matters—aligns with urgent calls for preservation. By humanizing the “last chance” narrative, Adams compels readers to see conservation not as a distant ideal but as a personal responsibility.

Benefits: A Timeless Reminder to Live Fully

Reading *Last Chance to See* offers a rare gift: the invitation to slow down and truly see. In a world saturated with distractions, Adams’ work encourages mindfulness and gratitude for the living world around us. His blend of humor and wisdom makes the experience both uplifting and grounding, helping readers process the weight of impermanence without succumbing to despair. The book’s enduring appeal lies in its ability to inspire action rooted in love, not fear. By confronting the reality of loss, Adams empowers readers to cherish what remains, fostering a deeper commitment to protecting the world’s wonders.

Future Outlook: A Blueprint for Ethical Engagement with the World

Looking ahead, *Last Chance to See* remains profoundly relevant as humanity grapples with ecological crises and existential uncertainty. Its message of presence and connection offers a blueprint for ethical engagement—one that values empathy, sustainability, and wonder. As new generations discover Adams’ work, his vision encourages a shift from consumption to stewardship, from detachment to responsibility. In an age where technology often distances us from nature, the book rekindles a primal urge to connect, to witness, and to care. Douglas Adams’ final testament is not just about seeing last chances—it’s about living fully, loving deeply, and ensuring that future generations inherit a world worth seeing.

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As technology continues to shape education, digital books will remain an integral part of modern learning environments. The ability to download *Last Chance To See By Douglas Adams* reflects an adaptive approach to education that prioritizes accessibility, efficiency, and learner empowerment. Digital literacy is now a critical skill.

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Questions & Answers About last chance to see by douglas adams

No	Question	Answer
1	What's the core premise of Douglas Adams' 'Last Chance to See'?	'Last Chance to See' is a non-fiction travelogue where Douglas Adams, accompanied by zoologist Mark Carwardine, journeys to remote corners of the globe to document and highlight endangered species on the brink of extinction, exploring the reasons behind their decline and the efforts to save them.
2	Why is 'Last Chance to See' considered a 'last chance'?	The title reflects the urgency of the situations the authors encounter. They are visiting these animals with the genuine fear that they might be the last people to see them in their natural habitats before they disappear forever due to human impact and environmental threats.

3	What kind of tone can I expect from 'Last Chance to See'?	While dealing with a serious subject, the book retains Douglas Adams' signature blend of sharp wit, dry humor, and insightful observations. It's a unique combination of ecological concern and Adams' characteristic eccentric charm.
4	Which endangered animals does Douglas Adams feature in the book?	The book covers a diverse range of creatures, including the kakapo parrot in New Zealand, the northern white rhinoceros in Zaire, the aye-aye lemur in Madagascar, and the vaquita porpoise in Mexico, among others.
5	Is 'Last Chance to See' a sad book, given the subject matter?	While the underlying theme is undeniably somber, Adams injects enough humor and humanity to prevent it from being purely depressing. It's more of an urgent call to awareness, delivered with his trademark light touch, making the plight of these animals all the more poignant.
6	Who would enjoy reading 'Last Chance to See'?	Fans of Douglas Adams' comedic writing will find much to love, as will anyone interested in wildlife, conservation, and travel narratives that offer a different perspective on the natural world. It appeals to both humor enthusiasts and those concerned about environmental issues.
7	What's the difference between 'Last Chance to See' and Adams' fiction works?	'Last Chance to See' is a non-fiction exploration of real-world conservation efforts and endangered species, whereas his most famous works like 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy' are science fiction comedies. However, both share his distinctive narrative voice and intelligent wit.
8	Does 'Last Chance to See' offer solutions or just highlight problems?	The book not only highlights the dire situations of various species but also explores the challenges and successes of conservation efforts. It features interviews with scientists and conservationists, offering glimpses into what's being done, though the overall tone emphasizes the precariousness of the situation.

Last Chance To See By Douglas Adams

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Douglas Adams' "Last Chance to See": A Humorous and Heartbreaking Look at Extinction

Douglas Adams, the celebrated author behind the iconic *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, was not just a master of comedic science fiction. He was also a passionate advocate for wildlife conservation, a cause that profoundly shaped his later literary endeavors. His non-fiction work, *Last Chance to See*, co-authored with zoologist Mark Carwardine, stands as a testament to this commitment. More than just a travelogue or

a list of endangered species, this book is a deeply personal and often hilarious, yet ultimately tragic, exploration of what we stand to lose as species disappear from our planet at an alarming rate.

The Genesis of a Conservation Chronicle

The genesis of *Last Chance to See* lies in a BBC radio documentary series of the same name, which aired in 1988. Adams, known for his quirky humor and unique perspective on the universe, was approached to present the series. He brought his signature wit and insightful observations to the often somber subject of extinction. The subsequent book, published in 1990, expanded upon these themes, allowing Adams and Carwardine to delve deeper into the stories behind the creatures teetering on the brink.

Adams' fascination with the bizarre and the improbable, so evident in his fictional works, found a new and poignant outlet here. He wasn't interested in simply presenting dry facts about biology or conservation statistics. Instead, he sought to understand the personalities of the animals, the peculiarities of their habitats, and the often absurd human interventions that had led them to their precarious situations. This approach makes *Last Chance to See* remarkably engaging, even for readers who might not consider themselves naturalists. It's a book about empathy, about recognizing the inherent value of every living thing, no matter how strange or insignificant it might seem.

A Journey into the Vanishing Wild

The core of *Last Chance to See* is a series of journeys undertaken by Adams and Carwardine to observe various endangered species in their natural (or what remains of their natural) habitats. These encounters are painted with Adams' characteristic blend of observational humor and profound sadness. From the elusive kakapo of New Zealand to the Northern White Rhino of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), the reader is taken on a whirlwind tour of the planet's most threatened creatures.

The Kakapo: A Flightless Parrot's Predicament

One of the most memorable subjects is the kakapo, a large, flightless, nocturnal parrot endemic to New Zealand. Adams' description of the kakapo's mating ritual, which involves the males emitting a deep booming sound, is a classic example of his ability to find humor in the most unexpected places. Yet, beneath the humor lies the stark reality of the kakapo's vulnerability. Introduced predators, particularly stoats and cats, have decimated their populations, leaving only a handful of individuals. The efforts to save the kakapo, involving intensive breeding programs and the creation of predator-free sanctuaries, highlight the dedication and ingenuity required in conservation, but also the immense challenges faced.

The Northern White Rhino: A Solemn Farewell

The encounter with the Northern White Rhino in Zaire is perhaps the most poignant and sobering chapter. Adams and Carwardine find themselves in a landscape ravaged by conflict and poverty, where the majestic rhinos are hunted for their horns. The sheer scarcity of these animals, and the palpable sense of their impending extinction, creates a profound sense of loss. Adams' description of the rhinos, their immense size and ancient lineage, underscores the tragedy of their disappearance. The encounter serves as a stark reminder of humanity's destructive potential and the irreversible consequences of our actions.

Other Endangered Wonders

The book also features other captivating creatures, each with its own unique story of endangerment. The Blue Whale, the largest animal to have ever lived, faces threats from pollution and historical whaling. The Aye-aye, a peculiar lemur from Madagascar, with its elongated middle finger used for foraging, faces habitat destruction and local superstitions. Adams' interactions with these animals and the people trying to protect them offer a multifaceted view of the conservation crisis. He doesn't shy away from the grim realities, but he also finds glimmers of hope in the dedication of conservationists and the resilience of nature.

Adams' Distinctive Voice: Humor as a Tool for Empathy

What sets *Last Chance to See* apart is Adams' inimitable narrative voice. He possesses a rare ability to balance profound sadness with infectious humor. This isn't a case of making light of tragedy; rather, it's about using wit to illuminate the absurdity of the human actions that lead to extinction and to make the reader more receptive to the underlying message. His observations about the illogicalities of human behavior, the bureaucratic hurdles faced by conservationists, and the sheer strangeness of the natural world are both hilarious and thought-provoking.

Adams' trademark tangential anecdotes and philosophical musings are present throughout the book, adding layers of depth and context. He might, for instance, digress into the evolutionary implications of a particular animal's adaptation or ponder the cosmic insignificance of humanity in the face of vast natural cycles. These digressions, far from being distractions, serve to amplify the central theme: that each species is a unique and valuable thread in the intricate tapestry of life, and its loss is a diminishment for all of us.

The Underlying Message: A Plea for Stewardship

Beyond the humor and the captivating anecdotes, *Last Chance to See* is a powerful and urgent plea for conservation. Adams doesn't preach; instead, he invites the reader to share in his wonder and his despair. By presenting these endangered animals not as abstract statistics but as living, breathing creatures with their own peculiar charms and vulnerabilities, he fosters a sense of connection and responsibility. The book implicitly argues that extinction is not just a biological event; it is a moral failing, a sign of our inability to act as responsible stewards of the planet.

The title itself, *Last Chance to See*, is a stark and evocative phrase. It implies a race against time, a final opportunity to witness these magnificent beings before they vanish forever. Adams and Carwardine, through their adventurous and often perilous journeys, bring this urgency to life. They reveal the fragility of ecosystems, the impact of climate change, and the relentless pressure of human development. The book serves as a potent reminder that the natural world is not an inexhaustible resource, but a precious inheritance that we are in danger of squandering.

Legacy and Relevance in the Modern Era

Published decades ago, the themes explored in *Last Chance to See* remain acutely relevant today. The rate of species extinction continues to accelerate, with new reports of dwindling populations and ecological collapse emerging with alarming regularity. Douglas Adams' work serves as a prescient warning, a

timeless call to action. His ability to blend profound concern with effortless wit ensures that his message continues to resonate with new generations of readers.

The book's enduring popularity speaks to its power. It's a book that makes you laugh, makes you cry, and ultimately, makes you think. It encourages us to look beyond our immediate concerns and to consider our place within the larger web of life. For anyone interested in wildlife conservation, the natural world, or simply a brilliant piece of writing, *Last Chance to See* is an essential read. It's a testament to the extraordinary diversity of life on Earth and a somber, yet hopeful, reminder of our responsibility to protect it before it's too late – before it's truly our last chance to see.