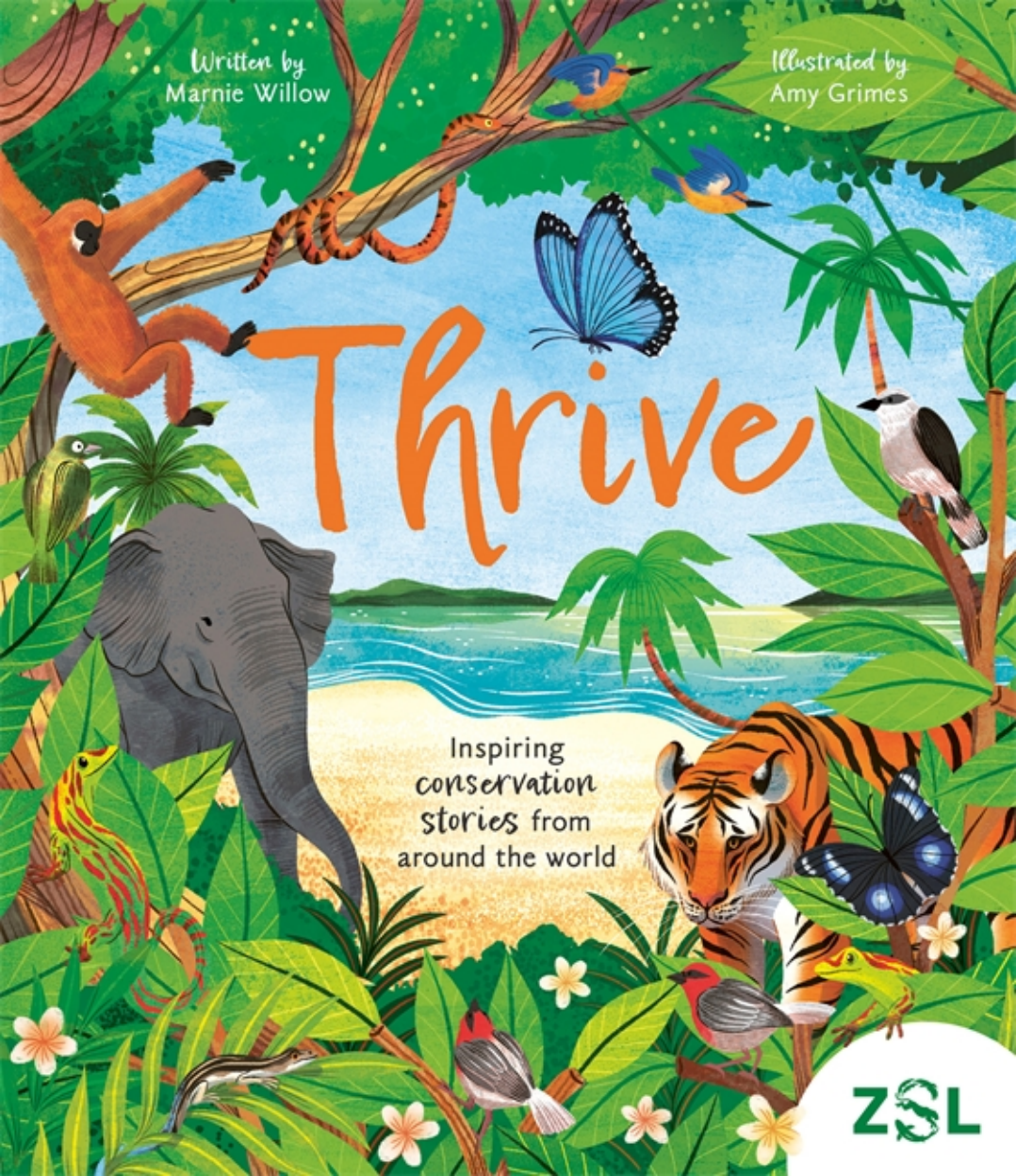

Written by
Marnie Willow
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Thrive
Inspiring conservation stories from around the world
ZSL



A huge thanks to the dedicated teams of scientists, researchers, conservationists, zookeepers and animal experts who contributed their time, energy and experience into creating this celebration of wildlife conservation across the world.

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Contents

Precious Yet Precarious.....6
Tigers of the Terai Arc.....8
Angels of the Deep.....10
A Safe Place for Sihek.....12
The Fungus and the Frog...14
Coral Connectivity.....16
Trading Turtles.....18
Back From Extinction?.....20
A Friend of Farmers.....22
A Choir in the Canopy.....24
Elephant Engineers.....26
Project Seahorse.....28
Partula vs Predator.....30
A Lesson From the Dodo..32
Dormouse Daycare.....34
Voles by the River.....36
Wild Camels of the Gobi..38
Call of the Wild Dogs....40
Entwined Lives.....42
Thriving Together....44
Glossary.....46

Welcome to the Wild

Let's explore a forest. Take a deep breath and imagine it now. Can you smell the damp earth? Can you see dappled sunlight streaming through gaps between the leaves? Or hear the song of a nearby river as it tumbles over rounded rocks? Maybe you can hear the birds calling to each other, high in the branches? If you put your ear close to the earth, perhaps you can hear the scuttling of insects under dry leaves..

A forest is a kind of **habitat** – a place where plants and animals have everything they need to thrive. As sunlight streams through the leaves, it feeds the plants and trees, which in turn absorb the water that seeps through the soil. Minibeasts eat plants and break down fallen leaves, enriching the earth. Songbirds **forage** for caterpillars and earthworms. Mammals such as deer, rabbits or foxes graze on plants or hunt smaller animals. Every species is interconnected, forming a living community called an **ecosystem**.

Our magnificent planet is filled with habitats, and no two are the same. Some may be as small as a puddle, teeming with water fleas and fairy shrimp, while others stretch across continents, like the sweeping deserts of Africa or Asia. They might be swampy or humid like a rainforest, bone-dry like a desert or fully underwater. Habitats can be unimaginably hot, like the scalding water around underwater volcanoes, where sea snails have evolved shells made of iron. Or they can drop to temperatures so cold that animals survive by freezing solid, like Antarctic midges. No matter how extreme an environment may seem to us, there are always incredible creatures that have evolved there over many generations to grow, survive and thrive.

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Precious Yet Precarious

We share our planet with countless creatures. But human activity is eroding wild spaces at breakneck pace, and across the world, wildlife is suffering from the effects of pollution and climate change. In just a few decades, humans have cut down enough trees to cover the whole of the USA. As the oceans have grown warmer, half of all coral reefs have disappeared.

But nature can recover.

Scientists, conservationists and zookeepers at ZSL (Zoological Society of London) are working with organisations around the globe to build a world where wildlife thrives. This book is filled with some of those inspiring stories, reminding us that by protecting our planet's diverse habitats, both humans and animals can thrive together.



Ocean

From leafy kelp forests, home to sea otters and spiky urchins, to vibrant reefs where dolphins and turtles glide between ancient coral branches, there are dozens of underwater habitats.

Types of habitats

- Mountains
- Forests
- Wetlands
- Freshwater
- Grassland
- Tundra
- Volcanic
- Ocean
- Deserts

Mountains

Many mountain habitats are icy cold, and the higher you climb, the less oxygen is in the air. Mountain goats have adapted with specially shaped hooves to clamber along cliff sides and large lungs that make the most of the thin mountain air.

Forests

These can be tropical (hot) or temperate (cool). The many plants and trees provide food and shelter, allowing animals to forage, hunt and hide from predators.



Wetlands

Swamps, marshes and bogs are rich habitats where many animals live year-round, while others (like migratory birds) visit to breed or raise their young.

Grassland

Savannahs, prairies and other grasslands are home to herds of large, grazing **herbivores**, as well as the **carnivores** (such as lions or wolves) that hunt them.



Tundra

Treeless, freezing tundra spends part of the year covered in ice and snow. Grazing animals rummage under snow to find food. Others change their coats to better camouflage themselves, from white in winter to brown in summer.

Freshwater

Only three per cent of all the water on Earth is **freshwater**, yet fifty per cent of all fish species are freshwater fish.

Volcanic

The areas around active volcanos can be incredibly **inhospitable** for most animals. Lesser flamingos in Tanzania have tough, scaly legs that protect them from the corrosively alkaline waters of volcanic lakes. They can even drink water near boiling point!

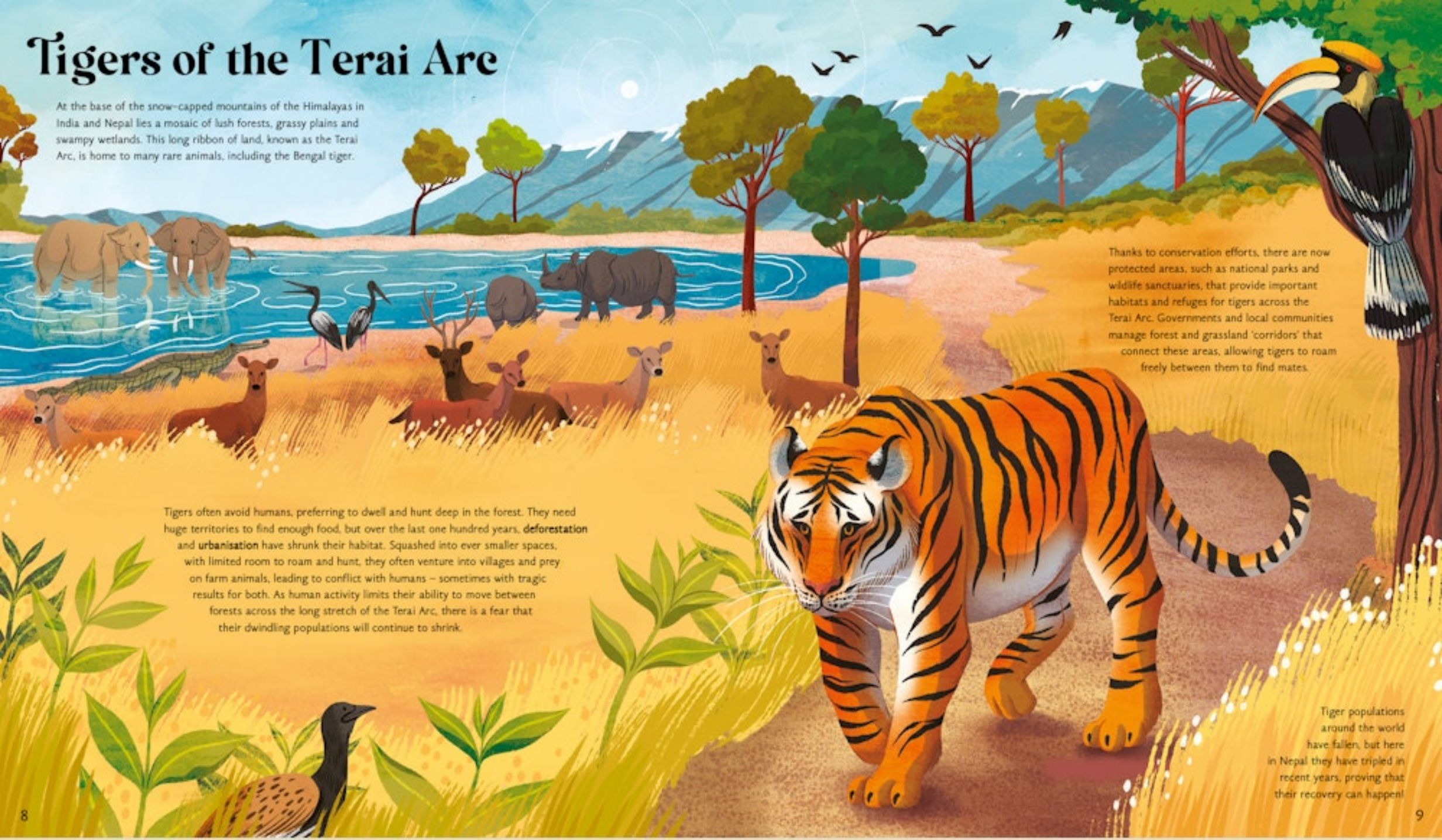
Deserts

With sparse plant life and unpredictable water sources, creatures that dwell here often travel vast distances to find the life-giving resources they need.

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Tigers of the Terai Arc

At the base of the snow-capped mountains of the Himalayas in India and Nepal lies a mosaic of lush forests, grassy plains and swampy wetlands. This long ribbon of land, known as the Terai Arc, is home to many rare animals, including the Bengal tiger.



Tigers often avoid humans, preferring to dwell and hunt deep in the forest. They need huge territories to find enough food, but over the last one hundred years, **deforestation** and **urbanisation** have shrunk their habitat. Squashed into ever smaller spaces, with limited room to roam and hunt, they often venture into villages and prey on farm animals, leading to conflict with humans – sometimes with tragic results for both. As human activity limits their ability to move between forests across the long stretch of the Terai Arc, there is a fear that their dwindling populations will continue to shrink.

Thanks to conservation efforts, there are now protected areas, such as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, that provide important habitats and refuges for tigers across the Terai Arc. Governments and local communities manage forest and grassland 'corridors' that connect these areas, allowing tigers to roam freely between them to find mates.

Tiger populations around the world have fallen, but here in Nepal they have tripled in recent years, proving that their recovery can happen!

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Angels of the Deep

Beneath the crystal waters around the coasts of the Canary Islands, a large, flat-bodied shark camouflages in the sand. This **ambush predator** hides, waits, then uses razor-sharp teeth to snatch small fish. When it swims, its wing-like fins spread, hence the name – angel shark.

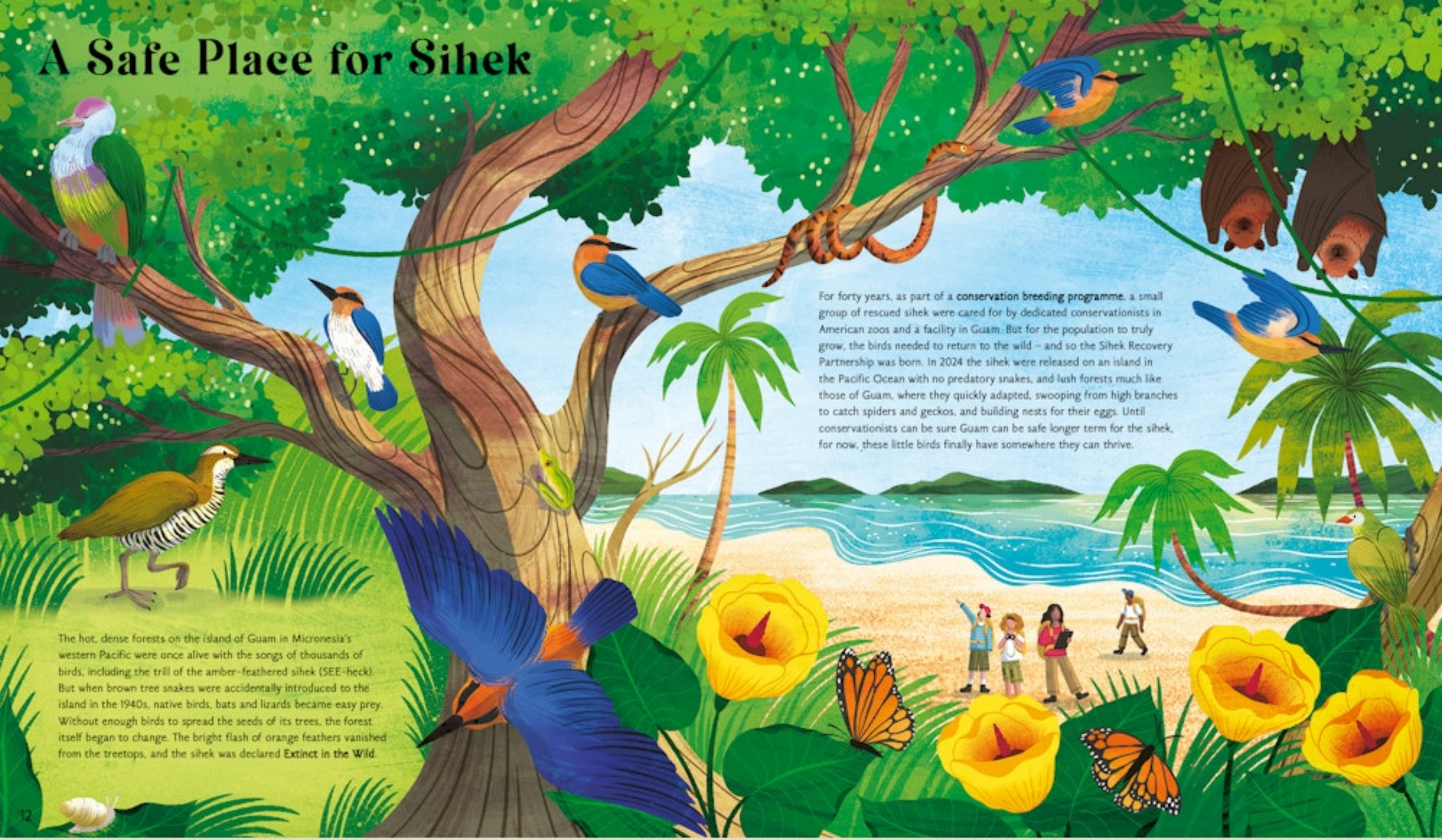
The coastal waters around the Canary Islands are a haven for angel sharks, and one of the few places they can still be regularly spotted by divers – including scientists researching how best to protect them.

Angel sharks grow slowly and only give birth to a few pups every other year. If their numbers drop, it takes a while for them to recover. Sadly, they're under threat due to damaging fishing practices, such as **bottom-trawling**, and all three species in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea are **Critically Endangered**.

Scientists snorkel or dive to observe the sharks up close and collect information. They attach coloured tags to track individual sharks, or tags that give off sound waves so underwater microphones can follow them as they meander around the shores or rest in sandy shallows. This carefully gathered evidence can be used to support changes in laws and policies to protect the sharks and their habitats in the Canary Islands and beyond.

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A Safe Place for Sihek



The hot, dense forests on the island of Guam in Micronesia's western Pacific were once alive with the songs of thousands of birds, including the trill of the amber-feathered sihek (SEE-heck). But when brown tree snakes were accidentally introduced to the island in the 1940s, native birds, bats and lizards became easy prey. Without enough birds to spread the seeds of its trees, the forest itself began to change. The bright flash of orange feathers vanished from the treetops, and the sihek was declared **Extinct in the Wild**.

For forty years, as part of a **conservation breeding programme**, a small group of rescued sihek were cared for by dedicated conservationists in American zoos and a facility in Guam. But for the population to truly grow, the birds needed to return to the wild – and so the Sihek Recovery Partnership was born. In 2024 the sihek were released on an island in the Pacific Ocean with no predatory snakes, and lush forests much like those of Guam, where they quickly adapted, swooping from high branches to catch spiders and geckos, and building nests for their eggs. Until conservationists can be sure Guam can be safe longer term for the sihek, for now, these little birds finally have somewhere they can thrive.

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