



# NEWSLETTER **COVID-19 edition #3**

## SOUTH LAKE SIMCOE NATURALISTS

SLSN is an incorporated not-for-profit Member of Ontario Nature.

Telephone 905-722-8021

([www.slsnc.ca](http://www.slsnc.ca))

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Research Partner with The Zephyr Society of Lake Simcoe ([www.zephyrsociety.ca](http://www.zephyrsociety.ca))

Member: Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition

Member: Ontario Greenbelt Alliance

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**Note: Please renew your membership to receive future Newsletters**

2020-06-12

### **SLSN June Newsletter COVID-19 edition #3 – members Update**

As you are aware, we all continue to be in the midst of the global COVID-19 Pandemic, approaching mid-June when much of Ontario, like some other Canadian provinces, begins to enter a version of Phase 2 Re-Opening. Regrettably, our area in York Region continues to be held mostly in Phase 1 with the rest of the G.T.A., Toronto, Hamilton, and Niagara regions. Physical distancing is still the norm though a new “allowing social circles of 10 people” innovation is being announced, with adjacent provincial borders essentially closed to travel, with 14 day self-isolating.

Virtually all wildlife research activities including citizen science programs continue to be suspended and/or canceled in the province, so our regular member outings are not being scheduled at this time for member safety.

**Members are encouraged to safely engage in their own local naturalist activities in local areas**, and later in this newsletter you will see some more member-

submitted observations and avian species lists and photographs, from these kinds of activities in our local area during this difficult time. Also, feature information on COVID-19 zoonotic disease biology, wildlife and animal impact of the virus, and continuing Ontario conservation and environmental news is included in the Newsletter.

I have recently been advised (unsurprisingly) that our meeting venue, the York Region Police Community Room, remains **CLOSED** indefinitely at this point. **Consequently, I am advising that our previously scheduled June 14 meeting has been CANCELED.**

**As you know we do not have summer meetings in July and August. Let us hope that conditions will be much better in September. We will keep you advised later in the summer.**

Stay safe,

Paul Harpley SLSN

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## **Meetings – June Meeting CANCELED – COVID-19**

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### **COVID-19 Emergency Pandemic Birding Documentation**

**SLSN members** have been social distancing and sheltering in place since March, as others in Ontario, Canada and around the world. Being naturalists many of them have been spending their time walking, birding and exploring other aspects of natural history on their property and safe natural areas they have been able to access. Below are naturalist's members observation documentation submitted of three areas in Georgina focusing on birds considered to be breeding (consistently in the area, males on territory, locating of nests etc.) – not all birds listed are fully confirmed breeders as of 2020-06-12.

One area is an open grassland meadow and orchard-like treed site with pine regeneration stands on Prout Rd. Another is a 10-acre site in Central Georgina

on Frog St. that includes an area creek, early successional and mature mixed forest, and open grass savanna. The third location is a house property on Lake Simcoe at the Jackson's Point area, where lake and shoreline birds were casually observed.

**Prout Road location** – rural property, acreage, field, hedgerow, pine plantation



Eastern Phoebe, Jeff Boylin photo

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Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Other Sparrow sp. – (unidentified), White - Crowned Sparrow, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, Rose-Breasted Grosbeak- 3 pairs, White-Breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, European Starling, Tree Swallows, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Bluebird, Black Capped Chickadee, Common Grackle, American Crow, Dark-eyed Junco, Baltimore Oriole, Red-Winged Blackbird, Hairy Woodpecker, Wild Turkey, Red-Tailed Hawk, American Robin, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Mallard Duck, Yellow Warbler, Northern Flicker, Mourning Dove, Brown Thrasher



Eastern Bluebird, Jeff Boylin photo. Blue Birds are here being successful because they are so secretive in hiding their comings and goings.

Jeffrey Boylin

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**Frog St. location** – rural property, 10 acres, forest, stream, grassland meadow



Great Blue heron on creek/stream fishing. Paul Harpley photo.

Canada goose, Wood duck, Mallard, Blue-winged teal, Ruffed grouse, Great Blue heron, Greed heron, Sharp-shinned hawk, Cooper's hawk, Red-tailed hawk, Spotted sandpiper, American woodcock, Belted kingfisher, Ruby-throated hummingbird, Downy woodpecker, Hairy woodpecker, Yellow-bellied sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Alder flycatcher, Red-eyed vireo, Blue jay, American crow, Tree swallow, Barn swallow, Black-capped chickadee, White-breasted nuthatch, House wren, Eastern bluebird, Veery, Wood thrush, American robin, Gray catbird, Brown thrasher, Cedar waxwing, Yellow warbler, Chipping sparrow, Song sparrow, Northern cardinal, Common grackle, Brown-headed cowbird, American goldfinch.

Paul and Debra Harpley



Robin trying to hide. Paul Harpley photo

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**Jackson's Point Lake Simcoe location** – lakeside house, urban location

**Feeder**

Red-bellied woodpecker, Black-capped chickadee, Red-breasted nuthatch, Northern cardinal, Mourning dove, Common grackle

## Lake

Common merganser, Mallard, Canada goose, Bufflehead, Great Blue heron, Bonaparte's gull, Common tern

## Flower Garden

Ruby-throated hummingbird

Heather MacKay

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# Ontario Conservation News

## Ford Government increase in the use of Zoning Orders during COVID-19 Pandemic

The Honourable Steve Clark  
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Office of the Minister  
777 Bay Street, 17th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

*Via Email*

Dear Minister Clark,

### **RE: Issuance of Minister's Zoning Orders**

We the undersigned would like to express our concern about the recent increase in the use of zoning orders under section 47 of the *Planning Act*. At least four zoning orders were issued on April 27, 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis.

Our organizations are members of the Nature Network, which is led by Ontario Nature. Ontario Nature is a charitable conservation organization that protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. Established in 1931, it represents over 30,000 members and supporters and more than 150 community organizations across the province.

As we are sure you would agree, Ontarians can and should play an important role in the planning process. A zoning order, however, eliminates the opportunity for them to do so and undermines public participation by circumventing the planning process. A zoning order allows

the Minister to directly zone land. Unlike a zoning by-law, the Minister does not have to give advance notice or consult with the public prior to issuing a zoning order. Furthermore, a zoning order is not subject to appeal to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (“LPAT”). Given the lack of opportunity for public participation, it is not surprising that zoning orders have rarely been used in areas which have zoning by-laws in effect.

We understand that the County of Simcoe has requested a zoning order for a proposed waste facility, which is to be established within the Freele County Forest. This controversial matter was appealed to LPAT and local citizens have expended significant time, resources and money in preparation for the hearing. Under these circumstances it would be highly inappropriate to issue a zoning order. The issuance of a zoning order, when LPAT is seized with a matter, would fundamentally undermine public confidence with Ontario’s land-use planning regime.

We strongly urge you to curtail the use of Minister’s Zoning Orders for land-use planning in Ontario. As Ontario deals with COVID-19 and prepares for the challenging times ahead, the focus should be on enhancing community resilience to climate change and potential future pandemics. Enabling and supporting public participation in the conservation and restoration of our farmlands, forests, wetlands, and other natural areas will be vital to advancing this outcome.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Schultz  
Executive Director



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**Conservation Concerns while Ontario is  
working Flattening the Curve**

# IMPORTANT NOTICE

## Ontario Government Pushes Forward Projects Without Consultation

May 2020

As you may have heard, the Ontario government recently announced it will suspend public oversight and transparency in environmental decision-making during the COVID-19 emergency.

**This change allows the government to push forward projects or laws that could significantly damage the environment without consulting or notifying the public.**

Laura Severinac

Project Coordinator, Ontario Not For Sale

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## Environment News

2020-04-11

National Observer

Emma McIntosh

### Ontario suspends environmental oversight rules, citing COVID-19

The Ontario government has suspended key environmental protection oversight rules, saying they could hinder its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The change allows the Progressive Conservative government to push forward projects or laws that could significantly impact the environment, without consulting or notifying the public. Critics say they fear the relaxed rules could be used to skirt environmental oversight for projects unrelated to COVID-19.

Under the new regulation, government ministries do not have to consult the public or consider environmental values as they make decisions. The regulation doesn't specify that those decisions must be related to COVID-19.

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2020-05-12

**David Suzuki Foundation**

## **The Province of Ontario use of emergency powers eliminates consultation requirements**

The Government of Ontario has suspended core provisions of its Environmental Bill of Rights.

Normally, the provincial government must notify the public and consult on proposed decisions affecting the environment. Decisions must also take into account the responsible ministry's Statement of Environmental Values (policy statements explaining how the ministry will apply environmental rights and environmental protection). But the government has suspended these requirements during the current Declaration of Emergency and for another 30 days after the Declaration of Emergency ends.

**This sweeping exemption is unjustified and dangerous.**

The government says it needs to act quickly during the pandemic, but the exemption is not limited to Ontario's COVID-19 response plan.

Transparency, accountability and public participation in decision-making are key democratic principles that lead to better decisions. In committing to make public COVID-19 incidence and mortality projections, the premier said, "We have to be fully transparent with the people of Ontario, no matter how hard it will be."

**The same goes for decisions affecting the environment.**

**Join us in calling on the Government of Ontario to reinstate the full requirements of the Environmental Bill of Rights.** At the very least, the exemption should be limited to decisions related to COVID-19 and end on the last day of the Declaration of Emergency.

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## **Save our Water during COVID-19**



During this time of isolation, we are still here to protect water! Physical distancing has meant we've needed to put some of our usual activities on hold, including our in-person efforts at venues such as the Elora Farmers' Market, as well as our sign and ribbon campaigns. To forge on and continue our work to protect our local water, we must remain socially connected!

We are now launching our #StandWithUs campaign and we want you to join in! Tell us what water means to you.



Trevor Wilker.

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## Conservation Authorities Review Letter From Natural Heritage Organizations, Farm Organizations and related/allied Groups

The letter to Premier Ford regarding the value of Conservation Authorities has been sent in. In the end, we received cross-sectoral support from 112 signatories, including from environmental, agricultural and engineering organizations and businesses. **The South Lake Simcoe Naturalists (SLSN) were a signatory to this letter – Paul Harpley, President.** The final letter is attached for anyone who would like to share on your websites or with your networks.

The Honourable Doug Ford,  
Premier Premier's Office Room 281  
Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

April 27, 2020

Dear Premier Ford,

We, the 112 undersigned organizations, call on the Government of Ontario to retain the current mandate of the province's 36 Conservation Authorities in protecting, restoring and managing the watersheds where 95 percent of Ontarians reside. Their functions and responsibilities with respect to land use planning and permitting, monitoring, stewardship and education must be maintained, for the reasons outlined below.

Our Conservation Authorities are a unique and widely respected Ontario innovation. They were established in the 1940s in response to concerns expressed by agricultural, environmental and sports groups about the unhealthy state of the province's lands and waters as a result of poor resource management practices. The combined impacts of drought and deforestation had led to extensive soil loss and flooding, pointing to the need for a regional approach to managing Ontario's watersheds, for the safety and well-being of communities.

Today, Conservation Authorities provide a much-valued bridge across municipal boundaries to understand and address environmental concerns, such as flooding. Because they operate at the watershed level, they are ideally positioned to encourage science-based collaborative strategies and decision-making.

The Flood Advisor's report showed strong support for the Conservation Authority model in protecting Ontario from the impacts of climate change. Their role in flood mapping, hazard assessment and monitoring is critical to protecting life and property. This model only works, however, if Conservation Authorities have the necessary regulatory power, appropriate staffing and adequate funding to intervene in planning decisions and development applications. Their vital role in land use planning and permitting must be retained to ensure that development does not put communities at risk from flooding and other climate change impacts through loss of wetlands, woodlands and farmland. The monitoring initiatives implemented by Conservation Authorities are necessary for delivery of flood mitigation and drinking water protection programs. Additionally, they support broader environmental protections including land conservation (including areas of importance to protecting water resources), biodiversity conservation, water quality protection and ecological restoration. This monitoring role is essential to evidence-based decision-making and should be maintained.

Conservation Authorities are locally based organizations that have a solid track record in responding innovatively and effectively to community needs and priorities. They support multiple municipalities and partner with conservation groups, farmers, other landowners and other community members. They deliver regionally significant projects and provide on-the-ground expertise and funding. Such projects include, for example, implementation of agricultural best practices and wetland restoration or creation.

The province's Conservation Authorities are the second largest landowner in Ontario, protecting significant natural areas and hydrological features in our watersheds. They also own and manage conservation areas that are open to the public and provide highly valued nature-based opportunities for recreation and leisure for millions of Ontarians. Here and across their watersheds Conservation Authorities deliver valuable education and outreach programs, serving youth and enriching communities across Ontario.

Any effort to reduce or constrain the mandate of Conservation Authorities is contradictory to the interests of the people of Ontario who are facing enormous risks and costs as a result of climate change and ongoing biodiversity loss. The roles and responsibilities of Conservation Authorities are critical in protecting the lands, waters and wildlife which benefit businesses and communities across Ontario, and upon which our health and well-being ultimately depend.

None of us can afford to ignore the tragic history of poor watershed management and overexploitation which led to the creation of Conservation Authorities in the last century. Now more than ever we need their expertise to respond effectively to the challenges ahead.

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## Wildlife and Animal Health COVID-19 News

### Live Science

## 6 new coronaviruses discovered in bats

Jeanna Bryner - Live Science Editor-in-Chief



(Image: © Geza Farkas/Shutterstock)

Scientists have discovered six entirely new coronaviruses lurking in bats in Myanmar.

These viruses are in the same family as the SARS-CoV-2 virus that is currently spreading across the globe; but the researchers said the newbies aren't closely related genetically to SARS-CoV-2 or to the two other coronaviruses that cause severe infections in humans — severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which caused the 2002-2003 pandemic, and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

The researchers discovered the viruses while surveying bats in Myanmar as part of a government-funded program called PREDICT to identify infectious diseases that have the potential to hop from animals to humans. And bats are prime suspects, as the mammals are thought to host thousands of yet-to-be-discovered coronaviruses. SARS-CoV-2, which causes the disease COVID-19, is also thought to have originated in bats before taking up residence in humans, possibly taking a detour through some intermediary host first.

Between 2016 and 2018, they collected hundreds of samples of saliva and guano (or bat poop) from 464 bats from at least 11 different species; they sampled at three locations in Myanmar where humans come into close contact with wildlife due to land use changes and recreational and cultural activities — such as guano harvesting for fertilizer.

"Two of these sites also featured popular cave systems where people were routinely exposed to bats through guano harvesting, religious practices and ecotourism," the researchers wrote in their study published online April 9 in the journal PLOS ONE.

The researchers analyzed genetic sequences from these samples and compared them with genomes of known coronaviruses. The new viruses were found in three bat species: the Greater Asiatic yellow house bat (*Scotophilus heathii*), where PREDICT-CoV-90 was found; the wrinkle-lipped free-tailed bat (*Chaerephon plicatus*), which was host to PREDICT-CoV-47 and -82; and Horsfield's leaf-nosed bat (*Hipposideros larvatus*), which carried PREDICT-CoV-92, -93 and -96. Further research is needed to understand the potential for these six newfound viruses to move to other species and how they might impact human health, the researchers said.

"Many coronaviruses may not pose a risk to people, but when we identify these diseases early on in animals, at the source, we have a valuable opportunity to investigate the potential threat," study co-author Suzan Murray, director of the Smithsonian's Global Health Program, said in a statement. "Vigilant surveillance, research and education are the best tools we have to prevent pandemics before they occur."

Contact between humans and wildlife is only becoming more prevalent, they noted, adding that the current devastation caused by COVID-19 is just one reminder of how closely human health is linked to such interactions.

"Worldwide, humans are interacting with wildlife with increasing frequency, so the more we understand about these viruses in animals — what allows them to mutate and how they spread to other species — the better we can reduce their pandemic potential," lead study author Marc Valitutto, former wildlife veterinarian with the Smithsonian's Global Health Program, said in the statement.

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2020-04-03

## Live Science

# The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced us to a new word: Zoonosis (Op-Ed)

Christian Walzer - Executive Director, Health, Wildlife Conservation Society



(Image: © Shutterstock)

The recent eruption of COVID-19 near a "wet market" in Wuhan, China — where vendors brought a variety of live wild animals together for purchase, slaughter and consumption — calls our attention to a phenomenon captured by a word increasingly understood by the general public: zoonosis.

Zoonoses are infectious diseases — caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi or parasites — that spread from animals to humans. They can be transmitted through direct physical contact, via air or water, or through an intermediate host like an insect. Often these zoonotic pathogens do not affect the animals in which they reside, but they can represent an enormous risk to humans who have no natural immunity to them.

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a stark reminder that handling or coming into close contact with wildlife — along with their body parts and/or excretions like blood, spit and urine (the potent mix of which lends wet markets their name) — poses a risk of spillover of the pathogens they host and maintain in nature, and that can lead to zoonotic infections.

Globally, zoonoses are responsible for an estimated 1 billion cases of human illness and millions of human deaths every year. Around 60% of the emerging diseases reported globally are considered to be zoonoses, and 75% of new human pathogens detected in the last 30 years originated in animals.

Zoonotic diseases may be endemic, meaning that they are found in a narrowly defined region or population, or they may be epidemic, when their spread is more far-reaching. A pandemic is a worldwide epidemic. COVID-19 has been designated a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO).

A wide variety of animal species can carry zoonotic agents, from domestic animals to wild ones. Examples of domestic animal zoonoses include the bacterial diseases *E.coli* and toxoplasmosis. Other zoonotic diseases that spill over from wild animal hosts to human populations include West Nile Virus, SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome) and, now, COVID-19.

These "spillover" events are a significant and growing threat to global health, global economies and global security. Analyses of their trends suggest that their frequency and economic impact are on the rise.

Current investigations of potential zoonotic viruses, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) PREDICT program, suggest that there are over 1.6 million unknown viruses in birds and mammals. Based on decades of expertise, an estimated 700,000 of these agents could pose a zoonotic risk, according to the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Emergence of these as-yet-unidentified threats results from the ever-shrinking separation between humans and wild ecosystems and organisms. Changes in human population size and distribution, land use, infrastructure and consumption all impact the wild world, shake out the pathogens lurking in the dark and increase the potential of zoonotic illnesses to emerge.

Faced with the spectrum of zoonotic agents currently at large in the natural world, limiting the chances of contact between humans and wild animals is the most effective way to reduce the risk of emergence of new zoonotic diseases.

This must include closing live animal markets that sell wildlife, strengthening efforts to combat trafficking of wild animals within countries and across borders, and working to change dangerous wildlife consumption behaviors. Saving wildlife and wild places, while respecting animals and their spaces, can reduce the transmission of zoonoses as the public begins to absorb this new word into their vocabulary.

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2020-05-09

**Earth Sky**

## **What are zoonotic diseases and what can we do about them?**

*Posted by Deanna Conners in HUMAN WORLD | May 7, 2020*

Infectious diseases that leap from animals to humans are called zoonotic diseases. Covid-19 is an example of a zoonotic disease caused by a coronavirus.



Photograph of a Lohmann Brown hen via Konstantin Nikiforov. Backyard chickens have been linked to outbreaks of salmonellosis in people.

As the world grapples with the current coronavirus pandemic driven by a virus named SARS-CoV-2, many scientists and public health experts are emphasizing that more work needs to be done to prevent the emergence of zoonotic diseases. Zoonotic diseases that leap from animals to humans can wreak havoc on society, as the current pandemic amply demonstrates. Please read on for a quick overview of how zoonotic diseases are defined and the strategies being used to combat them.

A zoonotic disease is an infectious disease that is transmissible under normal conditions from animals to humans, according to Harvard Health. The pathogens responsible for causing zoonotic diseases include viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites. Zoonotic diseases are very common throughout the world. The World Health Organization reports that around 75% of new infectious diseases detected in humans over the past few decades originated in animals.

One of the first steps to effectively combat zoonotic diseases involves identifying which ones are the most problematic in certain regions. At a workshop held in Washington, D.C., during December 5-7, 2017, U.S. experts were asked to use a prioritization tool to rank 56 zoonotic diseases according to factors such as their potential to cause epidemics and pandemics, disease severity, and prevalence. The top eight zoonotic diseases of concern in the U.S. were identified as (1) zoonotic influenza viruses, (2) salmonellosis, (3) West Nile virus, (4) plague, (5) emerging coronaviruses, (6) rabies virus, (7) brucellosis, and (8) Lyme disease. Many people are familiar with these diseases because such illnesses are problematic in other countries too. By 2018, over 20 countries had likewise prioritized their top zoonotic diseases of concern by using a similar approach, according to the workshop report.

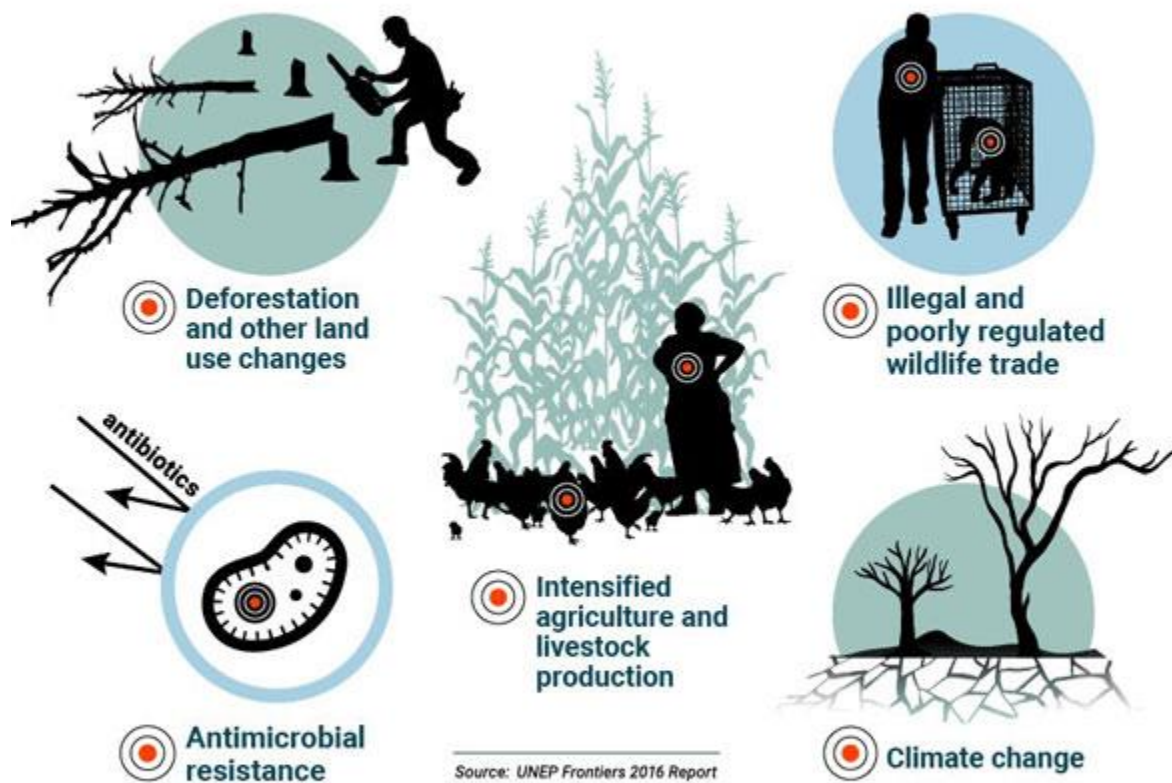
People can be exposed to the pathogens responsible for zoonotic diseases in a variety of settings. For example, exposures can occur through food and water contamination (e.g., the bacteria *Escherichia coli*, better known as just *E. coli*), farming (e.g., bird flu and swine flu viruses), direct contact with wildlife (e.g., rabies virus and coronaviruses), insect vectors (e.g., the bacteria that cause Lyme disease), and pets (e.g., *Salmonella* bacteria). Direct contact with



wildlife is the presumed transmission pathway for the coronavirus that caused the first cases of COVID-19 in humans, an outbreak which has now progressed to a global pandemic.

Generally speaking, public health officials use prevention, education, surveillance, and outbreak control measures to fight zoonotic diseases. The goal of prevention efforts is to disrupt the transmission pathways to humans. In the case of rabies, that involves widespread vaccination of dogs and cats that can carry the rabies virus and infect humans they come into contact with. With other zoonotic diseases, the most effective strategies will depend on the pathogen, the animals that host the pathogen, and the human behaviors that put them at risk of exposure. Closures of wildlife markets where coronaviruses reside will be important in preventing future coronavirus outbreaks.

## What factors are increasing zoonosis emergence? (Diseases transmitted from animals to humans)



#COVID19

UN  
environment  
programme

Infographic of factors that are increasing the emergence of zoonotic diseases. Image via UNEP.

In an April 5, 2020, essay, Inger Andersen, head of the United Nation's Environment Program (UNEP), reflected on important ways to prevent zoonotic diseases. She wrote:

The 'wild' must be kept 'wild.' It is time to restore our forests, stop deforestation, invest in the management of protected areas, and propel markets for deforestation-free products. Where the legal wildlife trade chain exists, we need to do a far better job of improving hygiene conditions. And of course, there is the urgent need to tackle the illegal wildlife trade, the fourth most common crime committed worldwide.

She and others are also urging countries to green their economies as they take steps to recover from the current pandemic. This could help to mitigate the climate changes that are pushing dangerous mosquito-borne zoonotic diseases like dengue and Zika into new regions around the world.

Bottom line: Zoonotic diseases are infectious diseases that are naturally transmitted between animals and humans. These diseases are very common. General strategies for preventing zoonotic diseases include reducing deforestation, ending the illegal wildlife trade, and improving hygiene in settings where interactions with animals are commonplace.

DEANNA CONNERS

Deanna Connors is an Environmental Scientist who holds a Ph.D. in Toxicology and an M.S. in Environmental Studies. Her interest in toxicology stems from having grown up near the Love Canal Superfund Site in New York. Her current work is to provide high-quality scientific information to the public and decision-makers and to help build cross-disciplinary partnerships that help solve environmental problems. She writes about Earth science and nature conservation for EarthSky.

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2020-03-29

**Live Science**

## **Cat infected with COVID-19 from owner in Belgium**

Jeanna Bryner - Live Science Editor-in-Chief

This is the first case of human-to-cat transmission of the novel coronavirus.



A cat in Belgium (not shown here) has been infected with the novel coronavirus.  
(Image: © Shutterstock)

A domestic cat in Belgium has been infected with COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus that's spreading across the globe, the government's FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment announced March 27, according to news reports.

This is the first human-to-cat transmission of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). About a week after its owner got sick with COVID-19, after returning from a trip to Northern Italy, the cat developed coronavirus symptoms: diarrhea, vomiting and respiratory issues, Steven Van Gucht, virologist and federal spokesperson for the coronavirus epidemic in Belgium, told Live Science. The owner sent samples of vomit and feces to Dr. Daniel Desmecht's lab at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of Liège. Genetic tests showed high levels of SARS-CoV-2 in those samples, he said. "The cat recovered after 9 days," Van Gucht said.

Cats and humans appear to have a similar "doorknob" on the surfaces of respiratory cells that lets the SARS-CoV-2 virus get inside, according to Van Gucht.

In humans, scientists have figured out that the SARS-CoV-2 virus attaches to a receptor protein called ACE2 that's on the outside of respiratory cells. Once inside of these cells, the virus hijacks certain machinery so it can replicate.

"The feline ACE2 protein resembles the human ACE2 homologue, which is most likely the cellular receptor which is being used by Sars-CoV-2 for cell entry," Van Gucht said.

During the 2003 SARS outbreak, cats were infected with a coronavirus as well, Van Gucht said.

The only other pets thought to have "caught" the novel coronavirus from owners were two dogs in Hong Kong. The first dog, a 17-year-old Pomeranian, tested a weak positive for the virus at the end of February, Live Science reported. The dog died in mid-March, though the exact cause of death is not known, as the owner didn't allow an autopsy. A second dog, a German shepherd, tested positive but showed no symptoms of the disease, Bloomberg reported. During the outbreak of another coronavirus, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), dogs and cats contracted low levels of that virus, animal health expert Vanessa Barrs from City University told the South China Morning Post.

There have been no reports of pets passing the virus to their human owners, and Van Gucht stressed that even human-to-pet transmission is not a significant path of viral spread.

"We think the cat is a side victim of the ongoing epidemic in humans and does not play a significant role in the propagation of the virus," he said.

To prove definitively that the cat was infected with SARS-CoV-2, scientists will need a blood test to look for antibodies specific to this virus, Van Gucht said. Those tests will happen once the cat is no longer under quarantine.

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2020-04-02

**Change.ca**

PETITION UPDATE

## Elephants and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Ivory-Free Canada Coalition

The infographic is titled "WHERE DID THE COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS COME FROM?" with a subtitle "HOW WILDLIFE MARKETS SPREAD DISEASE". It is divided into two main sections. The left section contains text explaining that zoonotic diseases spread from species to new hosts, exacerbated by wildlife trafficking, habitat destruction, and climate change. The right section is titled "1. WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING & POACHING" and features a diagram of a rhinoceros with arrows pointing to three icons: a medicine bottle, a fork and knife, and a cage. Below the diagram, it states that animals are hunted, trapped, and taken to markets for traditional medicine, food, and the pet trade. A second section titled "2. PATHOGEN EXCHANGE" is partially visible at the bottom.

APR 2, 2020

We are urging people to consider helping their favorite elephant organization during this time of crisis. The economic fallout from this crisis is affecting everyone and everything. African and Asian sanctuaries and rescue organizations are not immune. It is a hard time for all, but animals tend to suffer the greatest consequences when times are tough.

Realizing even a LITTLE can help a LOT, and the psychological effect of feeling better by giving back, has huge positive implications for all concerned.

## Pandemic 2020 - Even more reason to close the trade in wildlife

Please sign and share [this important petition](https://www.change.org/p/world-health-organisation-who-is-responsible-for-the-covid-19-global-pandemic) demanding the World Health Organisation permanently closes wildlife (wet) markets around the world, or cut and paste: <https://www.change.org/p/world-health-organisation-who-is-responsible-for-the-covid-19-global-pandemic>

As the news continues to update us on the ongoing crisis facing us all, it is time to focus on the positive steps taken to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. We need to honour the health care professionals and front-line workers subjecting themselves daily to a war that is invisible and deadly. It is with prudence and subjugation that we will win this battle. Listening to the experts and staying vigilant to the rules of social distancing and washing hands is mandatory. It is through difficult times a light we had been searching for, can suddenly appear. Positive outcomes and new opportunities arise to change the fabric of our society and cultural beliefs for the better. Change is necessary and immediate.

Countries such as China have taken action and shut down their wildlife trade. This is good news, for the most part. We can only hope this ban will stay in effect for the long term and that other countries will close their wildlife markets for the benefit of both humans and animals. The link between wet markets and illegal wildlife trade is synonymous with the trade in elephant ivory and is cohesive in effect.

The Coronavirus or COVID-19 epidemic has prompted China to permanently ban the trade of wild animals as food, but, unfortunately, not for medicinal use. Pangolins are suspected as a potential Coronavirus host but it has not yet been determined exactly what has caused COVID-19. The decision to ban the trade in wildlife, however, does not ban trade for fur, medicine or research.

“This creates potential loopholes for traffickers who may exploit the non-food exemptions to sell or trade live wildlife,” stated Wildlife Conservation Society. There is a large trade in wildlife that is not related to consumption. Traditional Chinese Medicine is controlled by the government and pangolin scales are used widely in this medicine, which leaves room for illegal activity to take place due to the loophole in the ban.

Daniel Challender, a researcher at the University of Oxford said: “The new decision made clear that there was going to be a clampdown on pangolin meat, but attempts to breed pangolins for medicinal purposes appear to be exempt.”

Professor Andrew Cunningham, Deputy Director of Science at the Zoological Society of London, states, “Live wild animal markets are ideal places for zoonotic virus emergence to occur. The highest priority for the protection of human health is, therefore, to ban markets and regulate any future wildlife trade.”

We are thankful to China for banning the trade of wild animals as food, but further restrictions are necessary to prevent illegal trade. Viruses will continue to emerge and devastate animal populations and humans if we don't act quickly to eliminate further loopholes that continually perpetuate the problem.

The Ivory-Free Canada Coalition

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2020-04-03

**New Scientist**

## **Virus threatens apes**

Endangered great apes may be at risk from the new coronavirus, according to researchers who say there is a “difficult battle” ahead to protect the animals from possible infection. Gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees and bonobos are known to be susceptible to human respiratory illnesses, sometimes getting much sicker than we do.

Although there haven't yet been any confirmed cases of the covid-19 virus in any other great apes, chimpanzees have similar cell biology to humans, which might make them susceptible to the virus. In the Ivory Coast in 2016, a human coronavirus called OC43 was transmitted from humans to wild chimpanzees. Researchers are calling for governments to take precautionary measures to protect great apes, especially populations that come into regular contact with people.

**Wildlife trade:** China's ban on trading and eating wildlife due to the coronavirus crisis could become law within the next three months, according to conservationists.

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## **Canadian vets say stay away from pets if you're sick after tiger diagnosed with COVID-19**

April, 2020

Though scientists are already aware that COVID-19 is a zoonotic — an infectious disease which originated in non-human animal species — people are becoming more aware of their potential to transit it back to animals now that at least one tiger at the Bronx Zoo in New York City has tested positive with the virus.

The four-year-old Malayan tiger is among seven big cats that have fallen ill, whom experts believe contracted the communicable disease from a zoo employee.

This comes after several household pets around the world, both cats and dogs, have also tested positive for COVID-19, though it is the first instance of its kind in the U.S.

### **Hind Elhinnawy**

The infection of 'Nadia' now raises new questions about human-to-animal transmission. Are our pets safe? [#Coronavirus](#) [#humananimaltransmission](#) News - Coronavirus: Tiger at Bronx Zoo tests positive for Covid-19 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-52177586> ...



#### **Tiger at US zoo tests positive for coronavirus**

Four tigers and three lions at the Bronx Zoo developed a dry cough - they are expected to recover.

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association has officially advised anyone north of the border who has the virus, or thinks that they might, to stay away from their household pets and other animals.

The professional group is asking those with symptoms and/or who are self-isolating to "follow similar recommendations around animals as they would around other people in these circumstances."

It also says that Canadians should limit their pet's exposure to other people if and when they themselves are sick, and if possible, to have someone else care for the animal(s) while they're in isolation.

The Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency have likewise asked potentially infected Canadians to avoid any and all close contact with animals — which means no kissing or snuggling with, and definitely no sneezing on, your fluffy friends.

Bodies like the World Health Organization and the U.S.'s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have also made similar suggestions recently

### **Kathleen Kenney**

Looks like animals can get infected too: Tiger at the Bronx Zoo. Curious how many pet owners



are going to make masks for their pets

[#tigerkingmemes](#) [#BronxZoo](#) [#coronavirus](#)

[#TigerKingNetflix](#)

Though it appears that animals may be able to potentially contract the disease from us, there is currently no evidence that the public should be worried about them being a risk to humans, or about their role in the global outbreak (aside from their fur serving as a potential surface to carry the virus).

As any pet owner knows, animal companions can boost your mood and mental health, making them a lifesaver during this time of social distancing, especially for those of us who live alone.

As the CMVA notes, "pets contribute to our overall happiness and well-being, especially in times of stress" — and seeing as trying to do our respective parts to help in a global pandemic may be the most stressful time any of us have ever had, keeping our pets close by seems wise right now (as long as, of course, we're still feeling healthy).

Lead photo by  
[Paul Hanaoka/Unsplash](#)

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