



The IUCN, for example, has never sought a fluffy image. This is partly because that public appeal was provided by the WWF, which was founded to raise funds for the cash-strapped union. It is also because a hefty chunk of the IUCN's revenue is clinched in diplomatic dealings, which might explain why, after the extinction of the 'flaming artichoke', the union was content to spend several decades tinkering with various permutations of its acronym. Finally, in 2008, the IUCN (with advice this time from New York advertising agency Young and Rubicam) settled for a blue ring encircling the organization's initials. "The blue 'C' of the logo represents the planet and the union," says John Kidd, the IUCN's head of global communications. "The IUCN works on complex issues, often with complex solutions, but the logo is clean, clear, simple and, over time, hopefully memorable."

GLOBAL APPEAL

With the emergence of a truly global culture, and global concerns such as acid rain, nuclear fallout and climate change, it makes sense that this kind of holistic, planetary design has become more common. Most of the Friends of the Earth network swapped the charity's abstract sun and hand for a bright green, marker-pen circle in 2001. "It is a very simple design, and the idea was to represent the Earth, sustainability, cycles and unity," says Ann Doherty, communications coordinator at FOE International.

Similarly, in 2007, the international environmental organization the Nature Conservancy wrapped its trademark oak leaves around a green sphere (Fig. 1j). "As we've expanded outside the United States, now to

more than 30 countries, we've incorporated the round, globe-like symbol to represent our focus on protecting lands and waters around the world," says Valerie Dorian, director of brand marketing and strategic partnerships. Even more nationally focused outfits, such as the United Kingdom's Woodland Trust, have adopted circular or spherical designs that give a nod to the scale of the problem (see Fig. 1f).

Many of these trends — the abstraction, a human presence, the appearance of a global element — have come together in Conservation International's new brand. Part of the reason for axing the long-standing rainforest logo was that it did not reproduce well in miniature, a quality essential in today's relentlessly digital world. It also failed to reflect the breadth of the organization's twenty-first-century mission "to empower societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature for the well-being of humanity"⁶. In other words, Conservation International is about more than just rainforests.

The logo was the result of a consultation with New York design agency Chermayeff & Geysmar. "What Conservation International needed was not a literal picture that illustrates every single area of their activities, but rather a new, suggestive, and potentially expansive mark," says Sagi Haviv, the agency's principal designer. His solution — a blue circle underlined in green — is supposed to represent "our blue planet, emphasized, supported and sustained"; it also evokes an abstract human figure into the bargain.

The WWF's symbol is the most obvious exception that proves this trend towards global imagery. The organization never got type-cast in a species specific role; this is

probably because the Chinese Cultural Revolution prevented the WWF from becoming involved with pandas until 1980. By then its panda had become established as a symbol with a truly global appeal.

So what should we make of a journey that began with literal, fine-art creations and has reached abstract images that make only a passing reference to nature? The answer, like the logos we're left with, is pretty simple. Conservation is no longer just about a single species on the brink of extinction, the habitat it's found in or some wider ecosystem. Now it's about the future of the planet. That, of course, means it's really all about us. ■ [SEE BOOK REVIEW P. 290](#)

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1. Bonner, R. *At the Hand of Man: Peril and Hope for Africa's Wildlife* (Simon & Schuster, 1993).
2. 'This is the symbol of the World Wildlife Fund.' Max Nicholson Archive, Linnean Society of London, EMN 8/7.
3. *Oryx* **24**, 118–119 (1990).
4. Hughes-Evans, D. & Aldrich, J. L. *The Environmentalist* **1**, 91–93 (1981).
5. Schwarzenbach, A. *Saving the World's Wildlife: WWF's First Fifty Years* (Profile Books, 2011).
6. New Logo for a New Mission — Conservation International. (2010); available at <http://go.nature.com/us6yap>

CORRECTION

In the Comment article 'NASA: what now?' (*Nature* **472**, 27–29; 2011), the picture of the space shuttle *Challenger* disaster in 1986 was wrongly identified as that of *Columbia* in 2003.