



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

### Environmental Trends that Provided Hope in 2020

It was a challenging year on many fronts, but there are some environmental trends to celebrate that provide hope for our planet. Here are some.

#### 1. The great outdoors scored a major win.

In 2020, “while we spent much of our time isolated inside, nature took on new significance as a place of refuge and entertainment. The passage of the Great American Outdoors Act in July was a reminder that protecting America’s national parks is something we can all agree on.”

#### 2. Electric vehicles are surging.

“In the past decade, cars that run on electricity instead of gas have become more popular.... In 2010, there were just 17,000 electric cars on the world’s roads. In 2019, there were an estimated 7.2 million, half of them in China.... The United Kingdom announced it would ban the sale of new gasoline or diesel cars by 2030, and California said it would do so by 2035.... General Motors will spend billions on making electric vehicles. Amazon committed to rolling out 100,000 electric delivery vehicles by 2030....”

#### 3. There’s sunlight at the end of the fossil fuel tunnel.

“Globally, renewables are growing fast. In the first half of 2020, electricity generation by wind and solar rose by 14 percent and, for the first time, accounted for nearly 10 percent of all electricity. In the U.S. too, renewable energy output grew in 2020, increasing by about 5 percent from 2019. The U.S. installed a record number of wind and solar projects, thanks in part to an expiring tax credit.”

#### 4. Wall Street is feeling the heat.

“A report published in February showed that most of the more than 400 investors interviewed were weighing climate risks in their decision making.... In recent months, all six of the largest banks in the U.S.—think JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, and Wells Fargo, among others—said they wouldn’t fund drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.... The president elect has said he’ll issue an executive order requiring publicly traded companies to disclose their emissions and how they may influence climate change.”

#### 5. The ocean is getting attention.

Recently, “14 nations announced that they would sustainably manage 100 percent of their coastal waters by 2025, protecting an area of the ocean totaling roughly the size of Africa.... and comprising 40 percent of the world’s coastlines.”

#### 6. The world catches a glimpse of a cleaner world.

Largely due to COVID-19, “in March, air travel dropped to 50 percent of what it had been in March 2019, the largest decline in recent history, according to the International Air Transport Association. Vehicular traffic in the U.S. and many other countries fell sharply. Parts of India normally blanketed by air pollution reported being able to see the Himalayas for the first time.... Even oceans went quiet, giving marine life a reprieve from human-generated noise.”

Excerpted from *National Geographic*, December 7, 2020 by Sarah Gibbens (contributions by Craig Welch)

**The road to protect our planet and the creatures that inhabit it is never-ending and often a challenge to navigate, but it is good to celebrate the victories, large and small, along the way to keep us going.**