UNITY IN DIVERSITY: MY ENVIRONMENT AND ME
How does the younger generation see biological and cultural diversity? 50 young adults from four continents, aged between 18 and 33, took their cameras and went in search of evidence in their home regions. Follow their photographic journey through this one world! It begins with zebras in the Namibian steppes, continues through orchard meadows in Germany and ends with a small boy in Venezuela.

Take a look at biodiversity through the eyes of the young people who are personally working towards preserving and protecting it throughout the world. Some of these photographic documents confront us with how humankind has destroyed habitats. At the same time, many of the photographs capture treasures of the world that have been successfully protected; they are a source of encouragement to continue working for the preservation of biological and cultural diversity.

The photo project is part of the International Youth Summit 2008 “Go 4 BioDiv”. It is one of the young people’s contributions to the 9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 9) to be held in Bonn from 19 to 30 May 2008. The Youth Summit provides the younger generation with a political platform, giving them the opportunity to convey their concerns to the conference delegates and an interested public. For further information on the Youth Summit please visit: www.go4biodiv.org
To the participants in the Youth Summit of the 9th Conference of the Parties to the CBD:

The world’s biological and cultural diversity is the basis for the lives and the very survival of us all. Not only does it give us an inconceivable abundance of species of animals and plants. The diversity of foods, building materials, sources of energy and the various habitats of our world are also part of biodiversity. Its decline not only poses a threat to people’s vital economic, social and cultural resources in developing countries – it also jeopardizes the development opportunities of future generations throughout the world.

From 19 to 30 May 2008, Germany will be hosting the 9th Conference of the Parties (COP 9) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Some 5,000 delegates from the 190 countries that are party to the Convention will be discussing activities to protect biodiversity. The results and consequences of the conference will have an impact, in particular, on the lives of young people worldwide and of their children and grandchildren.

The photo exhibition “Unity in Diversity: My Environment and Me” portrays biological and cultural diversity from the perspective of the young generation worldwide. It takes you across four continents and to some very personal worlds. The fascinating motives captured by the outstanding photographs include people along the Amazon River, panda bears, and the Apollo butterfly in the Alps, a critically threatened species.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the 50 committed young people who are sharing with us first-hand impressions of their environment. I would also like to thank the institutions which have organized and supported the exhibition within the framework of the 2008 International Youth Summit, “Go 4 BioDiv” – the Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, the Federal City of Bonn, the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU) and Bavarian Forest National Park.

Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul
Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development
16 NATIONS WITH ONE SHARED HOME

- Germany
- Czech Republic
- Mauritania
- Benin
- Namibia
- Madagascar
- Venezuela
- Brazil
- Bolivia
- Chile
- Mexico
- Uzbekistan
- Mongolia
- Russia
- China
- Vietnam
I live and work as a ranger in the Etosha National Park. Etosha has played a major role in preserving our national and international biodiversity from extinction, including the black rhino and black-faced impala, to mention just two examples. Etosha is also bringing new economic opportunities to many of the local people. My picture shows zebras drinking water at one of the many waterholes in Etosha National Park. The water is getting scarce and the other zebras around seem to be wondering if there will be enough water for them. The black-faced impalas on the other picture are endemic in Namibia.
For me personally, it is important to interpret biodiversity in the context of Namibia, my home country. This is the most arid country south of the Sahara, but it has a remarkable variety of habitats and ecosystems. Biodiversity plays a very important role in poverty reduction for most rural communities in Namibia and Africa at large. People depend on natural resources for their daily livelihoods. I took this photo in the Oshana Region in Namibia. It shows how oxen are used as a form of transportation.

Reagan Chunga, 21
Junior Consultant
Windhoek, Namibia
I live in the Banc d'Arguin National Park. The National Park is on Mauritania’s Atlantic coast and includes diverse landscape features such as sand dunes, coastal swamps, islands and shallow coastal waters. There we have rich and healthy ecosystems and an abundance of fauna. Some of them are in danger (e.g. turtle, monk seal, shark and ray) because of the offshore oil exploitation that has now begun. Banc d'Arguin National Park has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1989 because it is an important breeding ground for migratory birds. There are many native bird species here such as flamingos, broad-billed sandpipers, pelicans and terns.
I live in Natitingou, about fifty kilometres from the Pendjari National Park. It is the most important town in the area because of its well developed infrastructure compared to the rest of northern Benin. The population is increasing exponentially, which is causing a lot of environmental problems. My photo shows traditional mustard balls with a Maggi stock cube. Extracted from the seeds of *Parkia biglobosa*, this kind of “mustard” with its special taste is used for preparing food typical of northern Benin. When I saw these mustard balls with a tiny glimpse of a Maggi stock cube in their midst, it made me think of cultural diversity and change. The import of Western products means that typical things people here are used to are starting to be mixed with new products. This change is also influencing our cultural heritage and diversity.
My symbol of biodiversity is the Mare Bali in the middle of the Pendjari National Park. I find this pool or watering place very impressive because I’ve seen many different beautiful animals coming to drink there and because there are a lot of old trees and beautiful plants growing around the pool. The Mare Bali is very important for animals – especially in the dry season – because it’s one of the watering places where water is always available even after months of drought. In this way it’s a symbol of life and the diversity of life. In the photo you can see several elephants and antelopes that have come to drink at the Mare Bali.

Antoine Nagassi, 21
Student
Mamoussa/Tanguitéa, Benin
I live in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. Although it is a large city, it has a lovely zoo and botanic park that contain most of Madagascar’s native fauna and flora species. Madagascar is a beautiful country, especially rich in exceptional ecosystems that contain a number of endemic species. This photo shows one of the forests (the Vohibola Forest), where the Nepenthes madagascariensis grows (the plant that you see in the background, on my right). It is an endemic species found only in three littoral forests. Littoral forests are exceptionally rich in biodiversity but they are also subject to continuing deterioration, caused by things such as bush fires and logging.
I live in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. In my immediate environment, green space is being wiped out by urban development. Madagascar is a haven of biodiversity and culture. You can find some species here that you can’t see anywhere else in the world. Biodiversity is very important for our culture. But diversity is not only biological; it is also cultural. Diversity offers us a broad range of products such as food, drugs, and crafts. It also helps us to prevent climate change and reduce pollution. Biodiversity is our future. My photo shows baobabs, also called monkey bread trees. Most people see the Avenue of Baobabs as a tourist attraction, but it is also important as a means of communication and for transporting goods.

Mbolatiana Ranjevasoa, 24
Forestry Engineer
Antananarivo, Madagascar
With this photo I want to draw attention to the re-introduction of Przewalski's Horse (*Takhi*) into Mongolia. I took this picture in the Khustai National Park. The first Takhi horses arrived in Mongolia in 1992. They have adjusted well to our harsh climate and threats from predators. Each year, new foals boost the population, which – as of March 2008 – had reached 186. This was the best example of conservation of the species. Their long-term genetic diversity required the application of two important tenets: a sustainable ecosystem had to be restored and maintained, adhering to modern genetic and geographic principles.

Also nature management had to be integrated into socio-economic processes to allow local people to benefit from wildlife conservation wherever possible.
I live near the Malaya Sos‘va Nature Reserve in Siberia. My native country has beautiful mountains, woods, lakes and rivers – such as the River Naroda shown on this photo. Biodiversity means to me personally: everything that is connected with water and oxygen. Preservation of ecology is the defining factor in preserving cultural diversity. This is very important for me as a representative of the indigenous people because preservation of biodiversity in my country is crucial to the survival of indigenous people.
Thanks to its subtropical monsoon climate and unique geographic characteristics, Sichuan province is abundant in natural resources. I took this photo of the trees called *Quercus aquifolioides* in Yajing county, which is at an altitude of 2,800 metres. The reason for choosing this photo is the lovely cloud in the background. So are the *Quercus aquifolioides* trees. The bushy, broad-leaved thickets seen from a distance are refreshing.

ErShan Chen, 20
Student of Forest Resources Conservation and Recreation Chengdu, China
The giant panda has a long family history and is considered the national treasure of China. I took this picture in the Wolong National Nature Reserve, which is one of the 22 national reserves in Sichuan, the province where I live. Sichuan province has the second greatest biodiversity in China.
Ly Pham, 23
Interpreter and Translator
Tam Dao, Vietnam

I work as an interpreter and translator for the Tam Dao National Park and buffer zone management project supported by GTZ. Therefore I live in a bungalow at the headquarters inside Tam Dao National Park, where I can be close to nature. I like to explore the beauty of nature and want to do anything I can to protect it. Also I have opportunities to see what sustainable values nature can bring back to people if it is well-protected and conserved.

I took this photo in Mr. Cuong’s Nursery, which is supported by GTZ and the Botanic Garden of Tam Dao National Park to supply seedlings for the forest restoration.
I work in the Tam Dao National Park for the Tourism and Environmental Education Board and as a forest ranger. This park has great biodiversity, with more than 1,400 plants and over 1,000 animals. It is now well protected. I took this picture in Tam Dao National Park’s buffer zone. For a long time, Vietnamese people have lived on rice. In spring, the field is covered with a verdant carpet of rice and, in the distance, some people can be seen fertilizing their fields. They have happy smiles on their faces; they have high expectations of an abundant crop.

Chi Tran, 26
Forest Ranger
Vinh Phuc, Vietnam
Otabek Akramov, 20
Student of Economics
Bukhara, Uzbekistan
Almost 80 percent of the surface of Uzbekistan is desert, dominated by the Qizilqum (Kyzyl Kum), the largest desert in Central Asia. The desert ecosystems of the lowlands or plains harbour a rich variety of flora and fauna and provide basic habitats for many rare and disappearing animal species. More than 27,000 species can be found in Uzbekistan, of which 30 reptiles, 8 birds and 15 mammals are endemic. 80 percent of the people here are Uzbek; other ethnic groups include Russians, Tajiks, Kazakhs and Karakalpaks. The vast majority of the inhabitants are Muslim (88 percent), most of them Sunnis.

Nargiza Rakhmatova, 19
Student
Bukhara, Uzbekistan
A typical winter in Germany includes snow and sledding – for example on the Grosser Feldberg in the Hochtaunus Nature Park. The Großer Feldberg is the highest point of the Taunus and, at 878.5 metres above sea level, it is also the highest mountain in the Rheinische Schiefergebirge range. It is one of the most striking peaks in Germany’s low mountain ranges.

Annegret Lutz, 23
Student of Geoecology
Braunschweig, Germany
I took this picture of the Apollo butterfly (*Parnassius apollo*) in the Ötztaler Alps, near Obergurgl in Austria. This is an endangered, but very beautiful alpine butterfly. If we can learn about how species live and diversify, how they spread and why they become extinct, it will be the first step to understanding what biodiversity means.

Natascha Wagner, 25
PhD Student and Scientific Assistant
Kassel, Germany
I enjoyed growing up just outside Frankfurt and my mother introduced me to nature early on. She not only inspired me to actually see its beauty and diversity, but also encouraged me to understand and respect it. I took this photo of mating dragonflies in the Main Valley, Hesse. The oldest finding of species similar to the dragonfly dates back 320 million years. Today, 42 out of 70 dragonfly species in Germany are endangered, as their larvae rely on clean and natural waters.

Birgit Heraeus, 21
Student of International Business
Frankfurt, Germany
I have lived in a small village near Darmstadt called Niedernhausen-Fischbachtal for almost 20 years. And I like it, especially because I am surrounded by nature: I only have to walk five minutes and I’m in the Forest of Odenwald. There are fields and a pretty castle with fortifications on top of a hill near my village. I took this picture in a forest of beech trees and pines. For me it represents another ecosystem with great diversity. I’m fascinated by the fact that we know only a very small part of the world’s bio-diversity and I always wonder how many different plant and animal species are still to be discovered.
Kathrin Fröhlich, 18, and Aline Nowak, 18
Highschool Students
Stadt Bad Vilbel, Germany

We live in the Rhine-Main area – a region participating in a biodiversity campaign – in a small town near Frankfurt called Bad Vilbel. The area around our home town displays a great variety of nature: mountains (the Taunus), forests, lakes and fields and – especially around Bad Vilbel – a lot of agriculture. If we were to choose a symbol of biodiversity for our area, we would select the apple tree. Firstly, Apfelwein, the “national drink” of Frankfurt or at any rate of Hesse, is made of apples. Secondly, more than one hundred different kinds of apple grow in the Rhine-Main area. One of our pictures shows apple trees in front of the skyline of Frankfurt. For us, the blossoms on the other photo illustrate the beautiful environment.
Rathlin Island off the North Coast of Northern Ireland is a site of outstanding natural beauty, a special area of conservation and an exceptional area for birds that contains hundreds of rare endemic species. The Harbour Seal that you see in the picture is under threat in the whole of Ireland, but you can find colonies of the seals on Rathlin. Over the last couple of years I have lived in Germany, Northern Ireland and Peru, and travelled to various other countries. The outstanding beauty of nature and the cultural diversity I encountered in all these places call for preservation of nature’s riches. I would like to help in conserving our unique world together with friends from all over the globe. It is a significant and wonderful task to pursue.

Tatjana Puschkarsky, 24
Student of Political Science and English
Heidelberg, Germany
I took this photo of a Roman snail crawling over moss near my hometown of Schleiz, which is in the eastern part of the Schiefergebirge mountains in Thuringia. For me, this species symbolises biodiversity in my environment because it is found exclusively here in Europe. It is also protected by law. I now live in the small village of Fürstenhagen near Heilbad Heiligenstadt in the middle of Germany. I work in the Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal Nature Park with its beautiful scenery and nature that remind me of home. The nature park protects a part of the area where the border between western and eastern Germany used to be. Many endangered species live here.
I come from Zwiesel, a town close to the Bavarian Forest National Park. I am now studying in Berlin, where I took this picture in Treptower Park. It shows a ladybird with more than six spots. Ladybirds are very beneficial for gardens and crops because they eat aphids and spider mites. They are also a symbol of good luck.

Christina Frank, 26
Student of Portuguese and Ethnology
Zwiesel, Germany
I live in the Black Forest near Freiburg and I work in the city of Freiburg. I enjoy the scenery and the tranquillity of the forest in contrast to city life very much. I took this photo on the Feldberg, which is the highest mountain in the middle of the Southern Black Forest Nature Park. The Southern Black Forest Nature Park covers 3,330 square kilometres, making it the second largest nature park in Germany, after the Central/Northern Black Forest.

Johanna Thaetner, 24
Forest Ranger
Freiburg, Germany
I live in Mannheim, a city between the Odenwald and Pfälzer Wald, two very beautiful regions that are known for their wine production. Near my home is a large area of protected water-meadows where I especially enjoy going for long walks with my dogs. I’m always surprised to meet deer or wild boars there, since it is really not far from industrial and residential areas. This shows me that living side-by-side with wildlife is possible, if some simple rules of protection are obeyed.

My photo demonstrates that diversity adds colour to life! Not only animals and plants can be found in diverse variations; we are also diverse. I took a picture of my friends gazing at a valley in Palatinate (an area in the south-west of Germany).

Verena Treber, 22
Student and Trainee
Mannheim, Germany
I am from the Philippines and now studying in Freiburg in Southwest Germany, near the Black Forest. When I arrived there, I admired the ability of the citizens and authorities to maintain the viable condition of the forest. I learned that some exotic species have already been introduced into the Black Forest and that this has posed some biodiversity issues. I took this picture in Freiburg. Freiburg and its surrounding towns are also known for their wine production.
I was born in Moers, a small city located in the Ruhr valley. This region is the economic centre of Germany and is characterized by high population density, traffic, and noise. In the past the environment suffered because of these industrial activities and many species disappeared. This picture depicts a tick, which I removed from a hedgehog’s body. I chose this picture because it shows the beauty of this species, which – being a vector of disease – normally tends to evoke disgust and fear.
I live in Cesky Krumlov, which is near the Sumava (Bohemian Forest) National Park and the Trebonsko protected area. The Sumava National Park contains many kinds of protected areas: from valuable peat bogs, mixed forests to montane spruce forests. The Protected Area of Trebonsko is home to unique aquatic communities. From the nature conservation point of view, natural protected areas in South Bohemia, where both are situated, are among the most valuable in the Czech Republic. My photo shows a sporocarp as an example of species that are dependent on dead wood.
I live in Manaus, northern Brazil, in the heart of the Amazonian Forest. Manaus is a large city, surrounded by protected areas, such as the Anavilhanas Ecological Station and Rio Negro State Park, the area where I work. The Amazon is magnificent and beautiful with a mix of peoples, cultures, languages, animals and plants, which interact and maintain the life of the forest. This is a photo of students from São Sebastião Community close to the Cuieiras River.
Nailza Sousa, 24
Tourism Manager
Manaus, Brazil

I work in protected areas of the Amazon forest bordering the Rio Negro. This region contains 150 riverine communities in an area totalling seven million hectares, known as the Lower Rio Negro. My photo shows children on wooden boats. This kind of wooden boat is one of the principal means of transport for communities of ribeirinhos – people who live on the riverbank – and even children are able to use them. Sailing on Amazon rivers means seeing different scenery at every moment of the voyage.
I live in a small town called Novo Airão in the State of Amazonas, Brazil. I have the privilege of living in one of the largest freshwater archipelagos in the world – the Anavilhanas Archipelago. This is not only a beautiful ecological area, but also a very important region as it preserves a great number of animal and plant species. I took this photo at Novo Airão’s Harbour. It reveals the harmonious relationship between man and nature.

Simeão Anhape Bezerra, 27
Craftsman
Novo Airão, Brazil
La Paz is a city of contrasts, where people interact every day with pre-Hispanic, colonial and contemporary traditions. Personally, as a biologist from such a rich country as Bolivia that has more than 30 ethnical groups, over 20 local indigenous languages, huge pristine and ancient ecosystems, and is the last remaining home for hundreds of endangered species, biodiversity is a way of understanding and living life itself. My symbol of biodiversity are the mountains – not only because they are where basins begin, and because they harbour thousands of species, but also because in my culture they represent the ancient ancestors of my people.

Gabriel Zeballos Castellon, 26
Biologist, Scientific Researcher
La Paz, Bolivia
Bolivia is rich in biological and cultural diversity, because it has many eco-regions. This photo shows “The Island of the Sun” (Isla del Sol) at the Titicaca Lake. It was previously inhabited by pre-Inca and Inca communities. This island has been identified as a source of magnetic energy and the cradle of the Inca Empire. The Inca Terraces were used for agricultural practices and the Inca Stairs were built to reach the water spring in the island. Nowadays the communities living on the island continue using the terraces for agriculture. I think the complexity of ecosystems is of high value for the planet’s dynamic system stability and the survival of the life in it. We still have lots to learn about valuing the ecosystem services provided to us. The other picture shows the Oruro Carnival in south-western Bolivia, a festivity that has its origin in Andean customs. The groups perform various folkloric dances and are accompanied by different bands.

Tahia Devisscher, 26
Environment and Development Consultant
La Paz, Bolivia
Biodiversity means to me “a variety of different life forms”. These life forms protect our soil and water, provide all of our food and medicines, provide services upon which our lives depend. I live in a country with 199 different ecosystems; fortunately I have had the opportunity to travel extensively around Bolivia to see the amazing array of cultures and different forms of life in my own country. Climate change is having a huge impact on indigenous communities. Indigenous people are known for their ability to “read nature” through natural indicators in order to predict situations. Now they feel “confused” because it doesn’t rain when it should and rains when it shouldn’t, which changes the crop cycle times.
I live in a city called Temuco in the south of Chile. It is surrounded by green areas, hills, forests and a river, but it is not a protected area. I took this photo in the Nueva Imperial community. It shows a spiritual ceremony of which the native canelo tree is an indispensable part.
As a technical guide for adventure tourism, I work directly with nature and all its biodiversity. I saw these male carpenter birds in the Villarrica National Park. This bird is distinguished by its head colouring, the rest of the body resembling the female plumage.
A child enjoys the temperate climate in central Mexico, while his mother sells “Flores de Calabaza” (pumpkin flowers) at the Sunday market in Celaya, Guanajuato. These flowers are delicious cooked with cheese in a tortilla to make a snack we call quesadilla. Working in my country with my people has given me a different view of what is really happening in rural areas, how natural resources are being used and some ideas about how things should actually be done.

Elsa Leticia Esquer Ovalle, 21
Student of Natural Resources Management
Linares, Mexico
Chiapas is one of the biologically richest states of Mexico. It is known throughout the world for its beautiful landscapes, like this waterfall called Agua Azul, and because of the EZLN, an indigenous group that fights for the recognition of their human rights.

Alan Monroy Ojeda, 21
Student of Natural Resources Management
Linares, Mexico
I live in Carúpano, in the State of Sucre. Near the city is the Turupancho National Park in the Península de Paria region. I took this picture in the village of Ajíes. It contrasts the innocence of childhood with a small contaminated river. What is important is to develop a conscience towards future generations.

Maitté Flores, 25
Journalist
Carúpano, Venezuela
Alfredo Jose Rodriguez Rojas, 18
Highschool Student
Carúpano, Venezuela

I live in the city of Carúpano in Venezuela. Carúpano is in the state of Sucre and has about 150,000 inhabitants. I work in El Pilar nursery, where we grow different plants and offer educational courses for students and children. Biodiversity means to me personally the process of protecting and maintaining the variety of flora and fauna. My photo of a forest fire demonstrates an environmental problem caused by agricultural production methods.
This picture shows pelicans on a traditional fishing boat, called a peñero, at the Paria Peninsula.