



HEALESVILLE / PHILLIP ISLAND NATURE LINK

Newsletter

Spring 2020



HPNL End of Year Celebration
Harewood House
Saturday, November 28, 12pm
3310 South Gippsland Highway
Koo Wee Rup. RSVP



Healesville to Phillip Island Nature Link President's Report, September 2020

The year started with HPNL being 'Highly Commended' in the City of Casey's Community Group Australia Day Awards and Lindsay Mitchell, Colin Butler and I receiving Australia Day awards from MHR Anthony Byrne. It was great to see our organisation being recognised for the important work we are doing for the environment and biodiversity and attending ceremonies where others were being recognised for work in multiple interesting fields.



We are fortunate to live in a society where people are encouraged to use their unique skills for the benefit of others and to step up when they see a place where they might make a difference.

To create landscape-wide, biolinks that will allow for wildlife connectivity requires strategic planning, negotiation, on ground works and education. Landowners and land managers need to be equipped with effective tools and information to work at a local level as well as connect with neighbours and more distant properties. HPNL activities were organised with these goals in mind.

A **Soil Health and Organic Weed Control seminar** was held at Dr Mary Cole's property in early February where we heard about non-chemical ways of controlling weeds, how to make compost, bush-fire prevention, frogs and work being done along the Yarra River catchment. A big thank you to Mary and all the speakers on that day.

Then, as we all know, Covid 19 hit and life changed... Plans for a **Biodiversity Incentives Workshop** to be held at Andrew Troedel's property, Buneep Park, had to be put on hold and will be rescheduled when such gatherings are again allowed. So too were other workshops we had planned for later in the year.

Albeit slowed by Covid, work on weed control and re-vegetation on **Upper Cardinia Creek sites** continued and HPNL was given further Melbourne Water Grants to continue this work. Glenn Brook-McMillan will report on progress in this area.

Tooradin community/Environment Centre. At our end of year breakup last year Professor Nigel Bertram presented draft concept plans for a community/environmental centre at different possible sites around the foreshore at Tooradin produced by thirteen third-year architect students from Monash University (MADA).

Considerable effort, especially on the part of Marlene Hargreaves, went into advancing this project further and, with the help of MHR Anthony Byrne, HPNL was awarded a Federal \$20,000 Community Environment Programs Grant for a Vegetation Survey and Education

Workshops at Tooradin to assist this. While these funds cannot be used for architectural plans, a further grant has also been forthcoming from Monash University to MADA to cover these and together we have been working on finalising the flora and fauna work, carrying out the workshops and completing the concept drawings. Two surveys were carried out before lockdown and more workshops will follow when it is again safe to do so. Work is progressing on a book on 'The Nature of Tooradin' covering the natural and human history of the district.

The former Holden Proving Ground site at Lang Lang suddenly came up for sale earlier this year and HPNL committee members, especially Mary Cole, have been active with the **Save Holden Bushlands** group trying to preserve the site. The site was sold but the new owner appears to be sympathetic to keeping bushland areas and there is hope that the vision of linking parks and reserves on the eastern side of Western Port can still be achieved.

It has been great to connect with an enthusiastic and informed group who have local knowledge and share HPNL's vision of landscape wide connection of wildlife habitats.

The Save Holden Bushlands Group have managed to forge contacts with the Bunurong Land Council and galvanise unanimous support of the Bass Coast Council and State politicians to protect the bushland areas. What they are doing is an example for others along the whole of the proposed Nature Link of what might be achieved and strategies to do this.

Our Facebook page has been active thanks especially to Ricardo Simao, Marlene Hargreaves and Susan Davies. Brian Hughes has been great at maintaining the HPNL website and Marlene has produced excellent newsletters. Their work is much appreciated.

A sincere thank you to all the committee and those taking part in our activities during the year.

Looking forward to meeting up in person when once again we can.

Pat Macwhirter
President, Healesville to Phillip Island Nature Link



Tooradin Nature Survey 15/11/2020



Ross Wilkie, Secretary, Tooradin Foreshore Committee joined Dr Pat Macwhirter and Marlene Hargreaves for a very informative walk around the peninsula. We learned about various projects and plantings TFC have carried out, and Ross took us to the north side of Sawtell's inlet to the site of an aboriginal midden. The midden site is north of the proposed site for the Tooradin Research and Community/Environment Centre.



Credit: R Workman courtesy Comber Consultants



What are Rights of Nature?



Credit: Abitaboutforests.weekly.com

There is a growing recognition that we must fundamentally change our relationship with the natural world. Making this shift means recognising our dependence on Nature and respecting our need to live in harmony with the natural world. This necessitates securing the highest legal protection for ecological health.

Acknowledging that all lifeforms on Earth have a right to exist, thrive and evolve

Advocates for the Rights of Nature argue that human beings are just one part of a larger, interconnected web of life. All that is life on earth - and life supporting ecosystems - have evolved together during the long history of our planet and the universe, that the non-human world has just as much right to exist as humans do.

Challenging the idea that Nature is 'property'

Under the current system of law in western and industrialised nations, Nature is legally treated as "property". Something that is considered property confers upon the property owner the default right to do with it as they will, even to damage or destroy it. Those who "own" wetlands, forests, other ecosystems and natural communities, are often permitted to use them however they wish, even if that includes destroying the health and wellbeing of Nature.

When we talk about the Rights of Nature, it means recognising that ecosystems and natural communities are not merely property that can be owned, rather they are 'entities' that have an independent and inalienable right to exist and flourish.

The framework that the Rights of Nature laws offer is to enable the non-human world to be 'seen' in the eyes of the law and to 'have a voice', rather than to be invisible or secondary to human-centred objectives.

These laws transform the status of natural communities and ecosystems from being regarded as 'property' to being recognised as rights-bearing 'entities', with rights that can be enforced by people, governments, and communities on its' behalf.

This has a number of important flow-on effects - it pro-actively changes the way humans interact with and impact upon the non-human world and it changes the way citizens can defend and restore Nature.

Under Rights of Nature laws;

- Nature is empowered to defend and enforce its own rights;
- People are empowered to defend and enforce the Rights of Nature; and
- Governments are required to implement, defend, and enforce the Rights of Nature.

Rights of Nature laws remove the authority of a property owner to interfere with the functioning of ecosystems and natural communities that depend upon that property to exist and flourish.

These laws do not stop the development of the property, they stop the development and use of property that interferes with the existence and vitality of its' ecosystems.

Learning from First Nations People: Earth-centred culture and laws that respect the Rights of Nature.



Credit: Matt Adnate: Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation Co-Operative (Maysar)

Many indigenous cultures see plants and animals as relatives, members of an interconnected community of life that is self-sustaining and deserves respect. They draw from the natural world to live, but do not take more than the natural system can sustainably provide.

The Rights of Nature Movement acknowledges, respects and is inspired by the ancient wisdom of First Nations peoples around the world and refer to Earth-centred cultures for guidance as to how to treat the natural world when we understand that we are part of Nature, not masters of it.

[LINK](#)
Mari Margil, "Building an International Rights of Nature Movement" in M.Maloney and P.Burdon (eds) *Wild Law in Practice* (Routledge, 2014)

[LINK](#)

Global tree massacre

Half the Earth's forests are now gone. Fifteen billion trees are chopped down every year - 476 every second - are being removed from our rainforests, jungles, and woodlands.

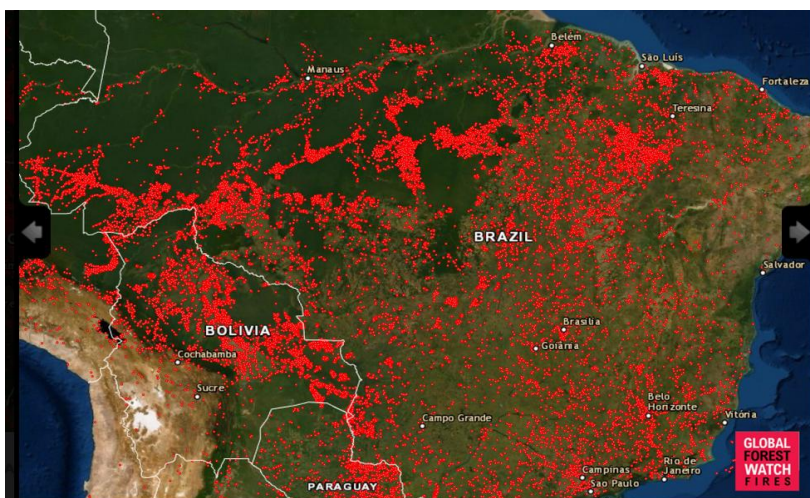
Amazonia



Credit: Survival International

The Amazon region, known as the 'lungs of the world', is home to more than 30 million people who mostly live outside the few large cities. Despite promises to save it, deforestation and wildfires have increased as the agricultural sector pushes into the Amazon basin.

In the past 50 years, roughly 20% of the Amazon - about 300,000 square miles - has been cut down in Brazil. If another 20% of the Amazon were to disappear, it would trigger a 'dieback' phenomenon, causing the rainforest to turn into an African-savannah-type landscape. Once a dieback starts, it would be beyond the reach of any subsequent human remedial measures.



Credit: Global Forest Watch

AVAAZ [LINK](#)

The Intercept [LINK](#)

The global community will pay the price for the destruction of the rainforest - not just in terms of the very real disruptions and economic costs of climate change - but also in loss of potential cures.

In the dreamscape of Amazonia flourishes an astounding range of plants and animals that have provided society with medicines ranging from; contraceptives, treatments for high blood pressure and malaria, surgical muscle relaxants, chemicals that expand the mind and more.

The region is so vast and impenetrable that much within it remains undiscovered and our ignorance about Amazonian flora and fauna is staggering. A recent study suggests there are about 16,000 species of trees in the rainforest of which several thousand have not even been named, much less evaluated for medicinal potential.

From a global perspective, fungi are the least-studied group of organisms with the greatest potential. The fungal kingdom has already provided us with two of the most important classes of drugs ever discovered, antibiotics and statins - cholesterol-lowering drugs that rank among the most important and widely used medicines in the industrialised world today.

Though both of these classes of pharmaceuticals were derived from temperate-zone fungi, tropical regions like Amazonia harbor many more species.



Credit: Wolfgang Kaehler/LightRocket via Getty Images

Valuing and protecting Nature for its inherent worth

The living world is a unique and spectacular marvel that deserves to be valued for its own inherent worth. Legally recognising the Rights of Nature is not about 'conferring rights' on Nature, but giving legal recognition to what is already there. Rights of Nature laws put the health of the natural world at the centre of human decision-making.

[LINK](#)

Science Magazine [LINK](#)

International Rights of Nature Tribunal



GARN
GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR
THE RIGHTS OF NATURE

The International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature was created by the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN) in January 2014.

The Tribunal is a permanent tribunal that hears cases from around the world. The Tribunal was created by leaders of the Rights of Nature movement in response to concerns that current national and international legal systems do not protect the natural world.

The Tribunal aims to create a forum for people to give a voice to protest the destruction of the Earth - destruction that is often sanctioned by Governments and Corporations - and to make recommendations about Earth's protection and restoration.

The Tribunal also has a strong focus on enabling indigenous people to share their unique concerns and solutions about land, water and culture with the global community.

Rights of Nature Law, Policy and Education

Educational activities on the Rights of Nature – sometimes referred to as Earth Jurisprudence - are on the increase in the professional and public spheres.

Worldwide, the law is increasingly recognising the inherent rights of Nature to exist, thrive and evolve.

Australia's participation in the International Rights of Nature Tribunal

In 2016, Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) created the Australian Peoples' Tribunal (APT) for Community and Nature's Rights, a permanent civil society institution for Australia. This Tribunal is a Regional Chapter of the International Rights of Nature Tribunal.

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Federal Act 2017

On 21 September, the Victorian Parliament passed the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017*. The Act became law on 1 December 2017 and legally recognises the Yarra as an indivisible living entity deserving protection.

The Law also recognises the intrinsic connection of the traditional owners to the Yarra River and further recognises them as the custodians of the land and the waterway that they call Birrarung.



Credit: onlymelbourne.com

Local Regulations

On 24 November 2019, Diane Evers, a Member of the Western Australia Parliament, introduced the *Rights of Nature and Future Generations Bill 2019*. This is the first time that legislation aiming to recognise the Rights of Nature has been introduced in an Australian Parliament.

[LINK](#)
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Recognising animals as sentient beings



Credits: Freerockgirl, You are mom, Carl Bovis, whypetfish.com, Lydia Jacobs, Luie's Paws

Scientific research is now clear that most non-human animals are sentient and are able to experience physical and psychological pain in a similar way that we human animals do.

Further, non-human animals have distinct personalities as varied as human personalities.

What is not generally recognised or understood by most people, is that fish and other marine life also have discernible personalities.

Animal rights and the law

Historically, the law has categorised animals as "property". Recognising animal sentience represents a shift away from categorising them as property.



Credit: Animal Rights Coalition

New Zealand, May 2015

The New Zealand Government formally recognised animals as 'sentient' beings with the passing of the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill. Its purposes include recognising that animals are sentient beings that are able to subjectively feel and perceive the world around them.

The Act also recognises the "intrinsic value" of animals and imposes a "duty of care" on people to ensure good animal welfare.

According to Dr Virginia Williams, Chair of the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee (NZ) "To say that animals are sentient is to state explicitly that they can experience both positive and negative emotions, including pain and distress". She goes on to add, "The *explicitness* is what is new and marks another step along the animal welfare journey".

Australian Capital Territory, October 3, 2019

The ACT is the first jurisdiction in Australia to recognise animals as sentient beings and not just property. Animal Welfare legislation not only protects cats, dogs, and other pets, but also farmyard animals – cows, pigs, chickens, goats etc.

City Services Minister Chris Steel said, "what we've done ... in recognising sentience is simply recognising what we already know about animals. The science tells us that animals feel and perceive things, and we're simply seeking to recognise that under law."

Urban Growth

Today, 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas and with the gradual shift in residence of the human population from rural to urban areas, that proportion is expected to increase to 68% by 2050.

1.5 million people are added to the
global urban population **every week**



Credit: PWC analyses (United Nations Population Division 2014)

[LINK](#)
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As the world continues to urbanise, changing patterns of land use and development create both threats to, and opportunities for, the protection of biodiversity and native vegetation.

The strategic planning process is the most effective planning mechanism to protect and conserve biodiversity - though it is important to note that planning has limitations in addressing the impacts of historical depletion of biodiversity, or the impacts of existing uses.

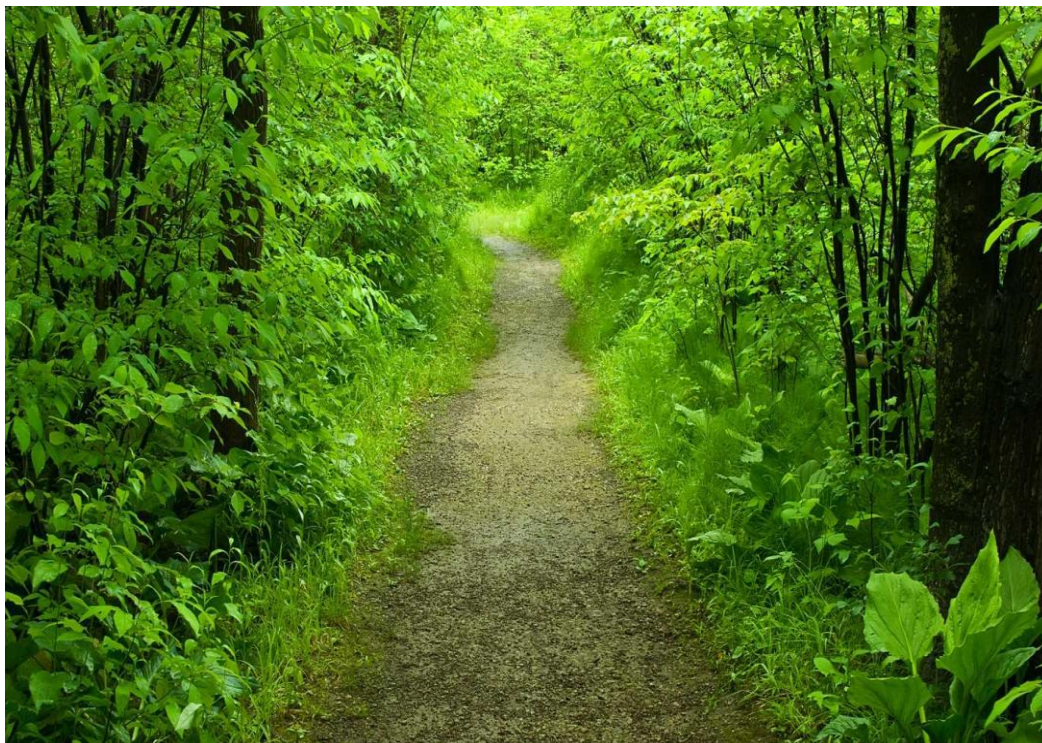
Government organisations, community groups, research organisations, public land managers and landholders must all undertake a range of complementary programs and actions to ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

The Human-Nature Experience – Nature As Medicine

As we become increasingly engaged with the digital world, our connection with the physicality and enrichment of the natural world has deteriorated.

Over the recent generations childhood has moved indoors, leaving children disconnected from the natural world. This worldwide trend can negatively impact a child's psychological and physical wellbeing - with effects that can reach in to their adult life.

Some researchers have linked increased recreational sitting to raised mortality and cardiovascular disease risk.



Nature as a healer: Suicide Call Back Service

There is growing concern about the impact of biodiversity loss and change on human health. Specific linkages between biodiversity and health include impact in nutrition, health research, traditional medicine, and new infectious diseases.

The destruction of our environment is impacting us psychologically and some researchers speak of a “Nature Deficit Disorder” in children. As we are spending less time outdoors, this can result in a wide range of behavioral problems.

Philosophers and writers have long been fascinated by our response to the sublime and over the past 50 years there has been a marked increase in research on the effects on human health of contact with and feelings of connection to Nature.

Stress is implicated in 60% of modern diseases. Some researchers have found that psychological and physical illnesses such as depression, cardiovascular disease, and symptoms of stress including high blood pressure are treatable, in part, by contact with Nature.

Nature gives us awe and wonder and research shows the feeling of awe creates a neurological cascade that boosts our compassion and builds trust. It reduces harmful chemicals in our body – like cortisol and cytokines - that get in the way of healing.

Experiences that facilitate immersion in Nature can profoundly impact one's sense of psychological wellbeing, including mood state, and community cohesion.



Credit: Meissl

[LINK](#)

[LINK](#)

[LINK](#)

[Bratman et al., 2012; Shanahan et al., 2016\)](#)

[Maas et al., 2009; Kardan et al., 2015\)](#)

[Brown et al., 2013](#)

UC San Francisco [Memory and Aging Center \(MAC\)](#) & [Global Brain Health Institute \(GBHI\)](#)

Dr Wallace J Nichols

[LINK](#)

[Maas et al., 2009; Shanahan et al., 2016](#)

Climate change



Credit: kwest/Shutterstock.com

Humans are increasingly influencing the climate and the earth's temperature. Three of the biggest contributors to this crisis are; burning fossil fuels, cutting down rainforests, and the mass industrialisation of the breeding, raising, and slaughter of animals for human consumption – encompassing mammals, birds, reptiles, fish and arthropods.

These activities add enormous amounts of greenhouse gases to those naturally occurring in the atmosphere, increasing the greenhouse effect and global warming. By continuing on this suicidal path, we are using up finite resources and the rightful legacy of our children and grandchildren.

Just as communicating via jungle drums and cave paintings have been replaced with satellite communications and online streaming, so too these activities and industries are undergoing transformation.

Fossil fuels are being relegated to the past in favour of wind, wave, tidal, solar, magnetic and geothermal energy.

Livestock farming is transitioning to growing plant-based protein and crops such as industrial hemp.

In February 2019, Tyson, America's biggest meat producer unveiled its first alternative protein products to meet the demand for plant-based protein. In just the first quarter 2020, investment in U.S. plant-based meat, egg, and dairy companies was \$741 million and investment in to cultivated meat and alternative protein rose to \$930 million.

[LINK](#)

Market Watch [LINK](#)

The Good Food Institute [LINK](#)

Australian Industrial Hemp Alliance [LINK](#)

More than 25,000 food, fibre, hurd and medicinal products can be made from industrial hemp and growing requires far less work and is more profitable and sustainable than animal agriculture and most broad acre crops.



Food



Fibre



Hurd



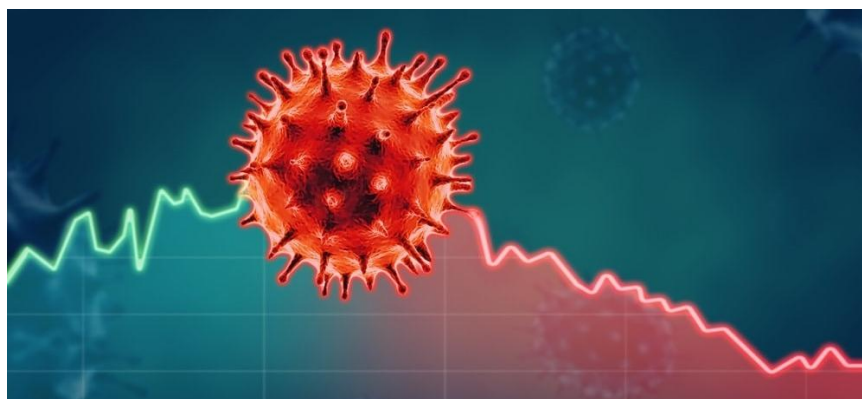
Medicine

Pandemic and potential systems collapse

Covid-19 is the first time in our existence we are experiencing the potential systems collapse of our global civilisation. While ongoing ramifications of the pandemic is uncertain, what is certain is that if we maintain our status quo operations, there will be many more future threats - likely of greater intensity - that can ultimately bring down our systems. Our current choices about how we inhabit the planet make it inevitable.

We are experiencing a turning point in our civilisation. We now have the opportunity to create a new civilisation that can better handle exponential growth and human advancement. Short term, siloed thinking about our systems is negligent.

We are deeply imbedded in the natural world and utterly dependent on it. We need to re-imagine and promote a better future, planned in accordance with Nature.



Credit: Corporate Compliance Insights

Using technology to achieve social betterment for all living systems.

What the human species faces at this point is primarily a crisis of perception. The way we 'see' Nature is the way we treat Nature - it shapes our behaviour.

Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technology can bridge the digital and physical worlds. AR and VR are tools to educate future generations to help prepare them intellectually and emotionally for the changes and challenges that lie ahead. They allow us to take in information and content visually, in the same way we take in our world.

These tools can help us to feel part of Nature, not just observers of it or visitors to it. Subtle differences and how everything is kept in balance can be revealed in detail. The feeling of joy that comes from connectedness and understanding the symbiotic relationship of life can help to inspire us to co-create new systems for civilisation.



Credit: Magic Leap

AR overlays visual, immersive, digital content on top of our physical world. It lets us search things visually, simply by pointing the camera at them and can deliver answers right where our questions are.



Credit: Audio Trails

VR places the viewer in a fully immersive, computer generated world that can transport us anywhere, helping us to learn about different places and ideas by experiencing them as if we were actually there. It can show us the detail, intricacies and wonders of Nature – help us to fall in love with wildness and take our understanding of animals to a completely different level.



Credit: HP Store

VR makes it possible to see in to the very life of things and enable us to enter in to a reverie by;

- Look directly in to the eyes of an animal in the wild and feeling its' energy connect with our own
- Walk under a waterfall or near a river or lake, or deep in a forest
- Look at the sky through leaves and listening to the sound of the wind and birds
- Look at the ocean while walking along a coastal cliff
- Be on the bow of boat with dolphins
- Be completely immersed on the bottom of the sea with marine animals all around

Or conversely;

- See up-close the vast floating trash heaps in the oceans
- Gain an understanding of how toxic chemicals and plastic are dissolved in to marine-life bodies and through the food chain, in to our bodies.

Legacy for future generations

This new paradigm essentially involves taking a holistic worldview and accepting the interconnectedness of the world as an integrated whole as opposed to a dissociated collection of parts. Our living planet, Mother Earth, is a delicate system of complex relationships, of ecosystems, animals, plants, fungi, insects and other life forms that have evolved in unison and interact in myriad ways.

The loss of biodiversity is a benchmark of humanity's current failure to understand that we are an inextricable part of Nature. This decline will continue or worsen under current economic, social and environmental models. It cannot be emphasised enough the urgent need for transformative change to prevent collapse - we have to change our way of thinking or perish.

We find ourselves on the verge of a new beginning, an opportunity for a great transition in life. The change must be the evolution of consciousness within each of us.

Sir David Attenborough counsels that "People must feel that the natural world is important and valuable and beautiful and wonderful and an amazement and a pleasure".

Ilya Prigogine, the Romanian chemist and physicist, remarked, "The world we see outside and the world we see within are converging. This convergence of two worlds is perhaps the most important cultural event of our age."

Critical thinking is required about outdated social structures, old norms and patterns, and the redesign of our culture and values related to the carrying capacity of the Earth and intelligent management of Earth's resources.

It is our duty of care to respect, care for and nurture all our fellow sentient beings and wildlife around us. We advocate new ways of thinking and living to enable human beings, technology, and Nature to progress sustainably.

"Let us dream of what is possible and put our efforts in to working towards that dream - let us show what we are truly capable of as a species".



Credit: Ezra Tanner

[LINK](#)

David Attenborough

David Suzuki: An Elders Vision For Our Sustainable Future [LINK](#)

Credit: Visit Victoria

Next meeting:

Date: Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Time: 7pm

Venue: Zoom

Purpose: New year strategy

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