

What nature conservationists said

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Nature is part of who we are. Nature shapes and informs our identity in consort with other experiences. Our wonder and appreciation of the natural world inspires our drive for knowledge and nurtures us in many ways. Conserving nature is like a calling, something we were drawn to. We believe we have a morally worthwhile role, defending nature from all the other pressures that human culture and policies throw at it. And ultimately it is a means of self preservation. Can we be who we are without nature?

Although we feel this personal drive towards conservation, many factors influence how much impact we feel we can have. We enjoy our jobs and feel privileged to be working in the field. We love being outdoors, involved in hands on recording and scientific analysis, and in sharing our passion for nature with others. In many cases we have chosen quality of life over pay, and autonomy to control how we operate is important to us. With good management and the resources to achieve goals we get good satisfaction from our work. Sometimes though, we feel isolated and do not feel our work is appreciated. While we think that some people feel strongly about nature we also feel that it is often seen as irrelevant, or a nice add on, in political and media circles.

Our organisations have good missions, and try very hard to live up to their aspirations, sometimes we think they surpass them. But organisations are bound by funding constraints, political will and the need to be non controversial to get the message across. To engage as many people as possible they have become very people focussed, rather than nature focused. Nature conservation is also not immune from the target culture of squeezing 'outcomes' into boxes and ticking them off once achieved. Perhaps we have also hidden too much behind scientific justifications, when personal connections are actually what matters to people.

We did not generally become involved in conservation out of love of numbers or scientific reports, but because we loved to be immersed in nature and felt the need to act. Our enthusiasm encourages others and we should be able to talk openly about how we feel, sharing experiences and re thinking our connections.