



RSPB Event Series: Nature and Climate – the Science, Policy and Practice

Summary Information

With the two crucial meetings of the international climate and biodiversity conventions close on the horizon, the global community has a critical opportunity to turn rhetoric into reality, with tangible actions to address the multiple crises we face. Over a three-day series of events, the RSPB in close collaboration with its global partners across BirdLife International, hosted a series of panels, workshops and in-depth discussions to explore the science, policy and practice of nature conservation and climate action, and how these can help to deliver ambition and action across both Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP15 and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP26.

Below is a short summary of each of the public sessions, including recordings and key resources. To complement this, we are also sharing a brochure from BirdLife International: *“Nature-based solutions for an equitable, carbon-neutral, nature-positive world: insights into the BirdLife International Partnership’s impact on the ground”*.

High level opening session: Leadership and ambition for nature and climate in 2021 and beyond

Date: July 6th 13.00 – 14.30 BST

Recording: https://youtu.be/5nHFhGsvj_E

Speakers:

- **Elizabeth Maruma Mrema**, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity
- **Ms. Andrea Ledward**, Director, International Biodiversity and Climate, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
- **Patricia Zurita**, CEO, BirdLife International
- **James Miller**, young environmental campaigner
- **Beccy Speight**, CEO, RSPB (Chair)
- **Aneeshwar Kunchala**, our 6-year old environmentalist very special guest!

Summary:

In this high-level opening event, our CEO Beccy Speight met with an esteemed panel of leaders, kicked off by our special guest Aneeshwar, to discuss leadership and ambition for nature conservation and climate action in the context of the upcoming meetings of the CBD and the UNFCCC. The panellists shared their vision for the decade and posed challenges to consider across the week of events, and beyond.

In the panel discussion:

- Aneeshwar inspired us all with his love and awe for nature! He described his favourite birds (the kestrel and hummingbird), and highlighted plastic pollution, animal poaching and habitat loss as some of our biggest problems. His hope for the future is for us **to save the animals and make nature look beautiful!**
- Elizabeth Maruma Mrema explained how deeply the climate and nature emergencies are intertwined and gave a frank assessment of the consequences of not acting in an integrated manner. Her challenge to us all was to **turn words and theory into action on the ground.**
- Andrea Ledward discussed what she saw as the three main opportunities to bring nature to the heart of our climate solutions: 1) shifting the debate (through more clearly integrating the upcoming COPs, through using game-changing science, and through building from partnerships like the Leaders Pledge for Nature); 2) mobilising finance for nature from all sources, and; 3) mainstreaming nature, including through legally binding targets in law. Her challenge to us all was **not to speak in echo chambers**, while ensuring that the **voices of all groups are heard** and showing how **investing in NbS is part of a green growth strategy.**
- Patricia Zurita spoke about how in order to ensure an equitable, carbon neutral and nature positive world, we need to promote biodiversity-inclusive nature-based solutions and support renewable energy solutions that don't harm nature. She stressed the need to unlock the scale of funding required to make this possible and to put nature at the heart of recovery from the pandemic. Her challenges were to **bring the nature and climate discussions closer together**, and to **think about how to make financing for nature more viable.**
- James Miller spoke passionately about his journey into environmental campaigning and shared the incredible work of young environmental activists across the globe. He called for the need for more than just words from our leaders, and for a boldness from NGOs in order to meet the urgency of the situation. His challenge was to **build collaborations to make changes on the scale needed**, and to **keep inspired to keep going!**

In the audience Q&A, we heard about the actions the UK government is taking to address the UK's consumption of agri-commodities, suggestions for how individuals can make a difference (including by thinking about what you consume and where your money is, voicing your message to leaders, and inspiring others), and about how the CBD can learn from the UNFCCC, with the need for clear and measurable targets, and for commitment and engagement from the whole of government.

Greener pastures: aligning action on nature and climate

Date: July 6th 15.00 – 16.30 BST

Speakers:

- **Pete Smith**, Professor of Soils and Global Change, University of Aberdeen
- **Melanie Coath**, Principle Policy Officer, Climate, RSPB
- **Solomon Adefolu**, Lead of Climate Change Programme, Nigerian Conservation Foundation
- **Graeme Buchanan**, Head of International Conservation Science, RSPB
- **Melanie Heath**, Director of Science, Policy and Information, BirdLife International (Chair)

Summary:

In this session (which wasn't recorded to encourage free discussion), we focused on how to deliver ambition across the nature and climate agendas. We discussed how to leverage the role of nature in climate action, shared analysis and evidence in support of joint action on nature and climate, and shared advocacy experiences and lessons learned across different countries.

In the panel presentations:

- Pete Smith gave an overview of the findings of the IPCC-IPBES Joint Workshop Report, which stresses that Earth's climate and biodiversity are inextricably linked and are connected to our human futures. He explained that success depends on rapid action, in terms of ambitious emissions reductions from fossil fuels, restoring a resilient biosphere and biodiversity, and addressing justice and equality. He stressed **that we're**

now “off the edge of the map” and need to take new pathways of transformative change which require new kinds of politics and policy that we’ve never had before.

- Melanie Coath presented various pieces of work that the RSPB is doing to bring evidence to the table in terms of the role of nature in addressing climate change (see links in resources section). She called for the need to urgently protect nature-rich carbon-rich habitats and stop them degrading, invest in restoring and re-creating habitats going beyond BAU, ensuring climate change adaptation urgently integrates NbS, and ensuring mitigation takes an NbS-led not a carbon-led approach that delivers multiple benefits, including significant economic benefits.
- Solomon Adefolu presented on the work being delivered in Nigeria, in the context of increasing hazards from climate change. This included working to manage nature reserves, using NbS to reduce coastal erosion, reducing flood risk through wetlands and floodplain preservation and restoration, running ecotourism activities, working on youth engagement, working with businesses, and carrying out direct advocacy on NDC revisions.
- Graeme Buchanan discussed a piece of ongoing research quantifying global-level synergies and trade-offs between biodiversity conservation and NBS. He revealed that the research highlights the importance of carrying out the right action in the right place, and that NbS actions alone are insufficient to mitigate climate change, so they must be part of a wider package of action.

Interventions from the floor included: a sharing of experiences of climate impacts in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories, and a call for the UK to support governments to include climate adaptation measures within their planning measures; a discussion of a new WWF report on Nature in NDCs; a discussion of the findings of a recent Climate and Biodiversity Negotiator and Expert Dialogue; a presentation of the work being carried out to mobilise young people at the intersection of the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis; and a call to ensure that any NbS action recognises different knowledge systems through a genuine participatory approach. Please see the references section for links to the information shared.

Lessons from the frontline: Nature-based solutions in practice across the globe

Date: July 7th, 10.00 – 11.00 BST

Recording: <https://youtu.be/Jx61dNqPa1M>

Speakers:

- **Xiaoting Hou-Jones**, IIED
- **Yiching Song and Yufen Chuang**, Farmer Seed Network, China
- **Patrick Dauda**, Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL)
- **Pietro Carpena**, TreeAid
- **Melanie Coath**, RSPB (Chair)

Summary:

This session was a collaboration between the RSPB, IIED and the CAN-UK International Nature-based Solutions Working Group. It brought together NGO practitioners to discuss the key success factors of high-quality nature-based solutions (NbS) projects – involving actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore ecosystems which deliver beneficial outcomes for nature, people and the climate. The session drew on learnings from a soon-to-be-released report: ‘Nature-based Solutions in Action: Lessons from the Frontline’. The report, a partnership project between a large group of environment and development organisations, grounds NbS theory with tangible examples of NbS projects from across the globe, with evidence of how they are delivering multiple benefits. It identifies a series of success factors and makes key policy recommendations for how to make sure NbS delivers for all.

In the session, we were joined from practitioners representing three of the case studies: Yiching Song and Yufen Chang discussing their community-based seed banks and agroecology projects in China; Patrick Dauda sharing about forest conservation and forest-friendly livelihood work in the Greater Gola Landscape of Sierra Leone and Liberia; and Pietro Carpena speaking about community-based dryland restoration in Mali.

Each speaker first gave a short overview of their NbS project, and then in the moderated discussion, we discussed some of the key success factors. We heard about the importance of incorporating the knowledge of IPLCs, building mutual trust with communities and using a truly participator approach – for example in the example from China, they found that the rich knowledge of the farmers was an essential foundation to the project and by combining this knowledge with other research, they could improve resilience of the crops, and improve water management in the area. We also heard about the multiple benefits of using a long-term, landscape scale partnership approach, especially in the example from Gola, where the project is transboundary, and depends on close collaboration between the governments of both Sierra Leone and Liberia, local and international civil society organisations, and local communities, such as the Paramount Chiefs.

When asked about what key decisions leaders should make this year to support NbS in action, our speakers spoke about the need for further investment in NbS (especially in key regions such as in Africa’s drylands and the Upper Guinean Forest), for a prioritisation of protection and restoration of nature in both the CBD and the UNFCCC, and for ambitious targets for nature’s recovery showing strong international collaboration. They also voiced the need to listen more to voices from local communities and those on the front lines – in this rapidly changing world, these local peoples are the ones who have to adapt and respond to the crises every day.

Through questions raised in the audience Q&A, we heard about how in order to deliver multiple benefits from tree planting, the right tree must be planted in the right place, and that the focus should be on conservation and restoration, prioritising soil health and other key issues as well as community needs. We also heard about techniques used to monitor and measure benefits, including baseline surveys, household survey tools, participatory monitoring and the use of key indicators. In terms of key barriers to delivery, our speakers discussed frustrations with leaders making commitments that are not backed by enough action or funding, and the challenge of building up the recognition of the vital importance of indigenous knowledge. A key message reiterated by many of our speakers was of the importance of meaningful community participation in NbS projects, and ensuring that people are given the tools, opportunities and the capacity to work together towards holistic solutions.

Nature Partnerships: Opportunities and Challenges

Date: July 8th 13.00 – 14.00 BST

Recording: https://youtu.be/J_aq7-RYx6A

Speakers:

- **Francesca Osowska**, Chief Executive Officer, Nature Scot
- **Ian Sargent**, Cairngorms Connect Board and Nature Scot
- **Joe Perry**, Flows to the Future and Highland Council
- **Julie Stoneman**, Alliance for Scotland’s Rainforest and Plantlife Scotland
- **Gemma Campbell**, Scottish Land Commission
- **Deborah Long**, Scottish Environment Link (Chair)

Summary:

This session focused on the importance of a landscape approach to nature conservation and restoration, through exploring examples from Scotland. We had experts and practitioners from successful large-scale conservation partnership projects to discussing what it takes to carry out functional and effective landscape scale action that provides benefits for nature, climate and people. Our chair led a moderated discussion, taking questions from the audience and using guiding questions to tease out key opportunities and challenges.

To open, our speakers discussed the panel’s one wish to change the world, responses to which included: for the curve of biodiversity loss to be bent by increasing conservation efforts, for both local and global decision-making and practice to use more of a community wealth-building approach, for landscape scale partnerships to have a real part to play in nature restoration, and for the power of peatlands to be understood in the public in the same way that people recognise the power of woodlands and tree planting.

When discussing the most important actions to deliver real progress to limiting global warming and halting biodiversity loss, our speakers discussed the need to look at landscapes as a whole on a broader scale, create resilience within habitats to allow them to adapt to future changes, and the need to think on not just a geographical scale, but also a temporal one – with long term, holistic planning. They also raised the need to learn from experiences across different countries.

The key challenges discussed in terms of implementing landscape scale projects included the struggle to access adequate funding to support complex projects over long periods of time; the lack of key skilled workers, such as for peatland restoration (the lack of which restricts the types of action that can be taken); and the challenge of convincing landowners that conservation and restoration of their land is beneficial and important to halting biodiversity loss.

Importantly, the panel also discussed options for solutions, including working in a collaborative way with external organisations or even local authorities working with smaller landowners to run sessions to better explain how to claim money; and offering training sessions. The panel emphasised the importance of building right from the start a common goal to direct and galvanise action (with MOUs helping to formalise that approach) and expressed how benefits can be realised and retained locally through early and meaningful involvement of communities.

References:

On integrating nature and climate:

- [IPBES-IPCC Co-Sponsored Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Climate Change](#)
- RSPB & WWF Report: [The role of nature in a UK NDC](#)
- RSPB, WWF & NBSI report: [The role of NbS for climate change adaptation in UK policy](#)
- WWF Report: [NDCs: A Force for Nature?](#)
- IDDRI Study: [Aligning high climate and biodiversity ambitions and action in 2021 and beyond: what, why and how?](#)

On nature-based solutions:

- [The NbS Guidelines](#)
- RSPB Report: [Economics costs and benefits of NbS to mitigate climate change](#)
- RSPB Report: [Harnessing the power of nature to tackle climate change: 5 lessons based on what works](#)
- [NbS Youth Position](#)

On nature & carbon mapping:

- RSPB Nature & Carbon maps: [UK](#) & [West Africa](#)
- RSPB Opportunity maps: [Peatland restoration](#) & [Woodland creation](#)

On landscape scale partnerships: Cairngorms Connect

- <http://cairngormsconnect.org.uk/>
- <https://vimeo.com/285111177>
- <https://youtu.be/1M3Xpta8hLA>

On nature networks:

- Scottish Environment Link [Discussion Paper](#)
- Why [Nature Networks Matter](#)

Other information shared by attendees during the sessions:

- [Youth 4 Nature storytelling work](#)