

WHAT HAS WWF EVER DONE FOR US?

ONE OF THE WORLD'S TOP CONSERVATION GROUPS HAS A CONFESSION TO MAKE – IT'S FAILED TO STOP GLOBAL WILDLIFE DECLINES. BUT THE NEW HEAD OF CAMPAIGNS FOR ITS UK OPERATION, VETERAN ENVIRONMENTALIST TONY JUNIPER, BELIEVES HE HAS THE SOLUTION. JAMES FAIR REPORTS

Working for WWF must sometimes feel like acting as the world's environmental peace-keeping force – you're trying to do the right thing, but you're still hated on all sides.

The criticism comes from the likes of BBC presenter Chris Packham, who has penned articles on why it's a waste of time and effort trying to save pandas and tigers, two of WWF's flagship species. Or Survival International, which has alleged anti-poaching patrols funded by WWF and others have committed atrocities against tribal people in Central Africa.

Elsewhere, in 2012, German journalist Wilfried Huismann, in a book eventually published in the UK as *PandaLeaks*,

accused the NGO of cosying up to companies accused of being environmental polluters such as BP, Shell and Monsanto. Some right-wing commentators have claimed its focus on climate change is leading WWF to ignore its primary role of protecting wildlife populations.

NATURE'S SPOKESPERSON

Whatever you feel about the organisation that started life as the World Wildlife Fund, became the Worldwide Fund for Nature and is now simply WWF, it would be hard to argue with the new director of campaigns for its UK operation, Tony Juniper, when he argues that something needs to change.

"Never mind WWF, the whole conservation movement is at a critical moment, because we've spent a century focused on species, key sites and ecosystems, and the evidence is that what we've been doing is not sufficient, and we need to change gear," he says. Along with David

Bellamy and Jonathan Porritt, Juniper was one of the first environmental campaigners to achieve a level of national recognition when he led Friends of the Earth's anti-road protests in the 1990s. After leaving FoE in 2007, he wrote the highly influential *What Has Nature Ever Done for Us?*, which popularised the idea that nature wasn't just pretty, it was fundamental to the future of the human species.

Now back at a mainstream conservation group, Juniper wants to see this message spread further and wider. "We must change the perception of what nature is," he says. "Progress has been made, the narrative is beginning to change, but it's got to be a whole lot further and a whole lot quicker. WWF is planning to put its weight behind that shift in perspective."

From songbirds in a Dutch orchard to vultures in India and pollinators in the USA, over the past two decades or so, nature's balance sheet has been rigorously audited – and it's

come out firmly in the black. Not only that, but policy-makers are starting to take note. As Juniper points out, environment secretary Michael Gove has been talking up the idea that, instead of giving farmers subsidies on the basis of how much land they own – which is how the Common Agricultural Policy operates – once we leave the EU we could decide to dole out the £3bn on the basis of the environmental functions they perform.

"There will still be vested interests owning land, but can they be given a business case for doing things differently?" Juniper says. "Instead of being paid for shooting services, can they be paid for catching carbon and cleaning up the water supply?"

BOG BENEFITS

Companies are already jumping on board this bandwagon. South West Water has been putting money into blanket bog restoration on Exmoor, not necessarily because it's right for wildlife, but because it reduces water bills for consumers. "We're not only getting clean water coming off the hill, but cleaner rivers for trout and salmon and the restoration of habitat for declining birds such as dunlin and golden plovers. We're also holding large quantities of carbon and getting flood-risk reduction," Juniper says. Win, win, win, win.

Juniper believes that environmental issues are now back on the political agenda in a way that they haven't been since the financial crash of 2008, and that those working within the conservation sector must make the most of this window of opportunity. "The moment may



Left: environmentalist Tony Juniper has joined WWF to work on the charity's new strategic direction. Above: Exmoor Mires Partnership volunteers are shown how to monitor the distribution of plants and mosses. The project is restoring peat bogs to provide

cleaner water. As a consequence, habitat for declining species such as the golden plover (top) has been reinstated. Right: Juniper led Friends of the Earth's anti-road protests in the 1990s. Here, locals rally against the Newbury bypass.



Golden plover: Andrew Parkinson/2020VISION/NPL; volunteers: Exmoor Mires Partnership; Protest: Nick Cobbing/Friends of the Earth

Tom Gillis

last a short time or it may last a long time – politics is volatile, and in a democracy it's always unpredictable, so we have to use the opportunities we have."

CORPORATE POWER

There are, however, people working within the broader conservation movement who will have misgivings about Juniper's plan to put the idea of natural capital at the heart of WWF's agenda.

At the New Networks for Nature conference in 2015, Juniper debated natural capital with the rewilding proponent, George Monbiot, who argued that by putting a value on nature, conservationists would yield precious territory to those who run the world's multinationals.

The reason why conservationists have failed to reverse wildlife declines, he suggested, was not because their arguments were wrong, but because they had less power than corporations and governments.

Monbiot used the example of mangroves to make his point. As 'natural capital', they are worth \$12,000 a year to local people as flood defences and nurseries for young fish, but only \$1,200 a year if they are cut down and replaced with prawn farms. It's no contest then – mangroves should win every time.

But they don't, and here's why. "The issue here isn't one of money but of power," Monbiot said. "Those people coming in and cutting down the mangroves don't give two hoots if it's worth

\$12,000 a year to local people – they're not local people, and it's worth \$1,200 a hectare to them, and they're happy with that."

But Juniper is not saying ecosystem services is the only game in town. There are other major issues to be overcome, and perhaps the most important is to get across at a public level the threat posed by the loss of biodiversity, which is as great a threat to food and water supplies and therefore human security as that posed by climate change.

"One of the things at the back of my mind," says Juniper, "is a BBC survey from a few years ago [2010] which found that the single biggest perception as to what biodiversity meant to the British public was a brand of washing powder."



“THE SINGLE BIGGEST PERCEPTION AS TO WHAT BIODIVERSITY MEANT TO THE BRITISH PUBLIC WAS A BRAND OF WASHING POWDER, WOULD YOU BELIEVE?”

COALITION CONSTRUCTION

So, environmentalists need to stop using the word 'biodiversity' and replace it with something else? Nature? Wildlife? Well, yes – but there's more. Towards the end of his time at Friends of the Earth, Juniper helped build a multi-NGO campaign that included development and church groups, as well as the environmental sector, to highlight the need for action on climate change. This resulted in, first, the UK's Climate Change Act, which was passed in 2008, and eventually to the Paris climate accord of 2015, which was ratified by most of the world's major powers, including China, India, the USA and the EU.

"In Paris, there was an incredible alliance of pension funds, insurance companies, banks, manufacturers, and consumer goods companies alongside WWF, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth and the people protesting on the streets," Juniper recalls. "With biodiversity we do not have that yet, but one of the things we will do is to encourage that coming together to build a movement to create demand and get the political shift we need."

Juniper is unapologetic about WWF's policy of working with businesses, even those whose actions lead to the biodiversity

declines that it is fighting to reverse. There is, and should be, a spectrum of environmental groups, ranging from the direct-action tactics of Earth First! and Greenpeace, through to the more collaborative approach of WWF and others. "It is quite a tricky place to work," he admits. He also adopts an unashamedly positive approach that takes account of what people are like, not how we'd like them to be – he wants to get results, not preach ideals. "If you tell people they're wrong and it's all their fault, they're not going to respond very well," Juniper points out. "If you tell them the positive solutions are good for them as well as the planet, then they're more likely to listen."

FIND OUT MORE

Tony Juniper is speaking at the Hay Festival on 3 June www.hayfestival.com **What Has Nature Ever Done for Us?** (2013) is published by Profile Books (£9.99).

TONY JUNIPER

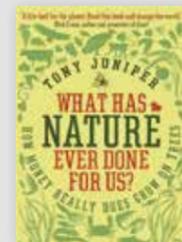
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A LEADING ENVIRONMENTALIST



● Tony's first act of environmental protest – aged 12 – was putting gravel into the fuel tanks of bulldozers involved in the construction of the Farnoor Reservoir near Oxford. "At the time it was a lovely wetland that had breeding reed warblers and grass snakes," Tony says.

● In 1989, he started working for what is now BirdLife International on a parrot conservation project. "We had 100 parrots in danger of going extinct and none of them have, so it shows that targeted conservation does work."

● Tony joined Friends of the Earth (FoE) in 1990 to work on its rainforest campaign, and in the mid-1990s became prominent in FoE's road protests movement. "We used it to show the road-building



programme was unsustainable and needed to change and that the law governing Sites of Special Scientific Interest had to be improved." It was.

● In 2005, Tony ran a campaign called The Big Ask that led to the Climate Change Act 2008, which commits the UK Government to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by 80 per cent by 2050.

● In 2010, he stood as the Green Party candidate in Cambridge – he came fourth with 8 per cent of the vote.

● Tony has written a number of books including *Spix's Macaw: The Race to Save the World's Rarest Bird*. His latest is *Rainforest: Dispatches from Earth's Most Vital Frontlines* (see review on p88). He was appointed a CBE in 2017.

WHAT HAS NATURE EVER DONE FOR US?

From vultures to coral reefs, the value of nature is being increasingly audited.



VALUE

\$2.2bn

MANGROVES

Mangroves are salt-tolerant bushes that form coastal forests in tropical and subtropical regions. They provide a defence against tsunamis and storms, nurseries for fish, and wood. WWF cites a report that estimates the value of these services at \$186m a year, while a paper published in 2012 calculated that the predicted loss of mangroves in South-east Asia would cost \$2.2bn a year by 2050.

VALUE

£960 GREAT TITS

A study published in 2007 found great tits in Dutch orchards reduced caterpillar damage to the apple crop. Putting up nestboxes encouraged great tits to occupy the orchards and eat the caterpillars, increasing the apple yield by 1,200kg/ha. The authors did not put a value on this, but assuming a wholesale price of 80p/kg (Source: Defra), great tits provide ecosystem services worth £960 per ha – minus the cost of the nestboxes, less than £20/ha.

VALUE

\$361bn POLLINATORS

One of the most important service provided by wildlife is pollination – roughly two-thirds of all the plant species we eat are reliant on pollinators. A study in 2005 found their global economic value was €153bn, while in 2012 it was put at \$361bn. In the UK, it's estimated pollination is responsible for £430m of crop production, and in the US, it's said to contribute \$29bn to farm incomes.



VALUE

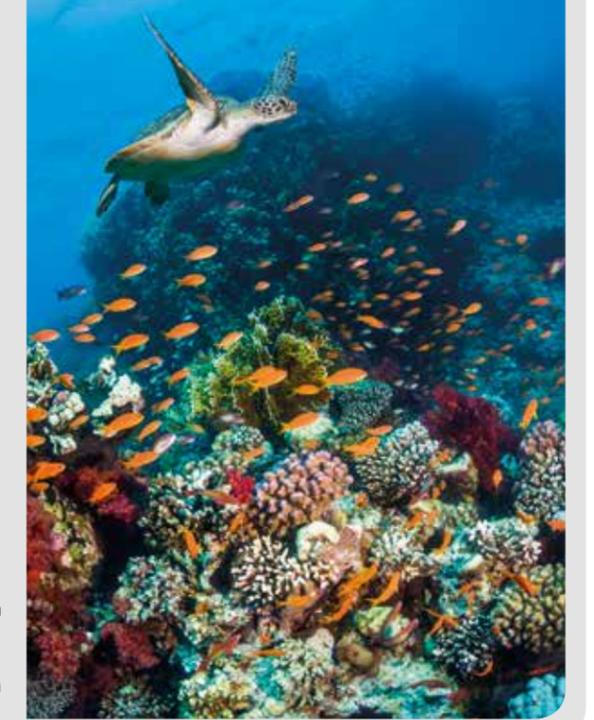
VULTURES \$34bn

The decline and near extinction of Asian vultures as a result of giving an anti-inflammatory drug called diclofenac to cattle has been calculated to have cost the Indian economy alone \$34bn over 14 years. The reason – the loss of some 40m vultures (that were poisoned by diclofenac after feeding on cattle carcasses) allowed the feral dog population to surge by 7m, leading to the deaths of an additional 48,000 people from rabies.

VALUE

\$30bn CORAL REEFS

Coral reefs, like mangroves, are valuable in a number of ways – as coastal protection from storm surges, as critical habitat for fish, as places for recreation and as refuges of biodiversity. According to the Reef Resilience Network, globally they provide \$30bn worth of services every year, while the potential costs of bleaching are said to range from \$20–84bn. In Australia alone, 54,000 full-time jobs are dependent on the Great Barrier Reef.



Washing powder: Getty; Tony Juniper: Tom Gills

Vulture: Tony Head/NPL; reef: Georgette Douma/Getty; Honeybee: Solwin Zank/NPL; great tit: Sven Zosch/NPL; mangrove: Jürgen Freund/NPL