



Rewilding and Nature Based Solutions for the Arts: How the Arts and Cultural Sector in Australia can advocate for and fund the protection and restoration of nature and biodiversity

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George Alexander Foundation Fellowship, 2025

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Table of contents

01	Acknowledgements	1
02	Executive summary	3
03	Fellowship background	5
04	Fellowship Learnings	9
05	Personal, professional, and sectoral Impact	26
06	Recommendations and Considerations	29
07	Dissemination and Stakeholder Engagement	33
08	Conclusion	35
09	Appendices	37
10	References	39

01

Acknowledgements

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George Alexander believed in the notion of 'planting seeds and hoping they grow into pretty big trees'. The programs supported by the Foundation endeavour to support this ideal and as GAF Fellowship recipients go on to contribute to the community, George's legacy and spirit lives on through their achievements.

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02

Executive summary

Fellowship Background

We are at a critical juncture where climate change and biodiversity loss must be addressed together, not in isolation. The Earth has already crossed several safe operating boundaries, with global temperatures rising 1.2°C and wildlife populations declining by 68% since 1970 (IPCC, 2021). Australia faces particular challenges, experiencing the world's fastest mammal extinction rate and some of the highest deforestation rates globally, with over 2,000 threatened species—more than half critically endangered.

While carbon reduction remains essential, protecting and restoring nature must proceed hand in hand with decarbonisation efforts. Despite Australia's ecological and economic significance—with roughly half of the nation's GDP dependent on healthy ecosystems—nature remains chronically underfunded, under-protected, and threatened by ongoing land clearing and climate impacts.

This Fellowship explored 'Rewilding and Nature-Based Solutions' and their intersection with the arts and cultural sectors. The research investigated how the live performance industry can advocate for and fund conservation efforts in Australia, focusing on best-practice solutions like rewilding, market-based mechanisms such as biodiversity credits, and the role of storytelling and creative advocacy in driving environmental engagement. The Fellow's goal was to investigate how the live performance industry in Australia can advocate and fund the protection and restoration of nature locally and at scale.

The Fellow conducted her research through interviews and site visits to leading projects, including Knepp (UK) and Oostvaardersplassen (Netherlands). These projects showcase valuable lessons in sustainable conservation funding models, strong community relationships, and long-term ecosystem restoration strategies that could inform Australian efforts. Meetings with experts in London—including Julie's Bicycle, Dr Axel G. Rossberg, and Ben Goldsmith—provided further insight into how the arts can be a vehicle for environmental change.

Key insights from this Fellowship include:

- Funding for conservation in Australia is severely lacking and insufficient to protect nature at the scale we need. Most funding is reliant on philanthropy and government grants.
- Market-based mechanisms, such as biodiversity credits, could play a critical role in conservation finance, provided they are well-regulated, science-backed, and First Nations-led.
- Cultural change is a key missing piece of the puzzle—people need to connect emotionally with nature to be inspired to act. The arts are a powerful medium for fostering this connection.
- Artists and cultural institutions have the potential to drive public engagement on biodiversity issues through storytelling, creative advocacy, and ticket-based funding models.

- Some parts of the industry are already financially strained due to government funding cuts, reduced ticket sales, increased operational costs, and declining attendance. However even if funding is limited, the power of raising awareness through platforms and collective advocacy efforts can't be underestimated.

This Fellowship has deepened the Fellow's expertise in nature-based solutions and strengthened her network of conservationists, scientists, and arts leaders. Professionally, it has directly influenced her work at FEAT, which is now expanding its mission to include financing biodiversity protection alongside clean energy.

For the arts and cultural sector, this research highlights an opportunity to integrate conservation funding into existing sustainability initiatives. Many artists and organisations want to take meaningful action but lack clear pathways to do so. Solutions highlighted in this Fellowship will hopefully provide a tools for engaging the creative sector in environmental advocacy and funding models that drive real impact.

Considerations & Recommendations

The Fellow's research will directly contribute to new initiatives aimed at mobilising the arts sector in conservation efforts. Key initiatives and recommendations include:

- Developing an Arts Biodiversity project with FEAT., similar to its successful [Renewables Investment fund](#) that saw the [construction of a solar farm](#), to direct financial resources and advocacy efforts from the arts and cultural sector toward high-integrity, First Nations led conservation projects. Biodiversity credits could provide the funding mechanisms required to kickstart these projects and/or bridge the funding gap required, as well as provide long-term finance from the corporate sector.
- Further engage the Live Performance sector to apply innovative funding model such as the Solar Slice, Earth Percent to redirect a percentage of touring income and profits towards critical projects that are protecting and restoring nature.

- Creating a consortium of artists and arts organisations to champion nature protection, leveraging their platforms to engage audiences in biodiversity protection advocacy.
- Encouraging policy reforms that integrate biodiversity protection into cultural and sustainability frameworks, aligning with international commitments such as the Paris Agreement and the Montreal Biodiversity Agreement.
- Expanding educational and storytelling initiatives, workshops and partnerships within the arts sector to shift cultural narratives around nature and foster deeper public engagement.

This Fellowship has reinforced the urgency of acting on both climate and biodiversity crises simultaneously. There are no silver bullets and these topics are complex. But by uniting the power of science, creative advocacy, and innovative funding models, the arts sector can play a transformative role in protecting and restoring Australia's natural landscapes and wildlife.

03

Fellowship background

Fellow Biography

The Fellow is an Impact Producer with extensive experience working at the intersection of arts, culture, and environmental action. Her passion for the outdoors and commitment to protecting Australia's wild places are deeply intertwined with her professional work. The Fellow views the arts as a [powerful vehicle for collective action](#), capable of inspiring communities and raising awareness about critical environmental issues. The Fellow's work has consistently focused on environmental regeneration, working on initiatives like [tree planting with Tim Minchin](#) and [biodiversity protection with the Adelaide Festival](#), blending practical restoration with advocacy efforts and strong collaborations with First Nations communities.



As Climate Impact Manager at [FEAT.](#), the Fellow is leading innovative projects like the [Solar Slice](#), a world-first sustainability surcharge on ticketing. This Fellowship is a natural progression of her work, allowing her to explore international rewilding strategies and funding models to adapt these successful approaches back home to address Australia's urgent need for environmental protection and restoration.

Fellowship methodology

The Fellow conducted her research through in-person and online interviews and visited world-leading projects Knepp (UK) and Oostvaardersplassen (the Netherlands), which have thrived for over 40 years and showcase sustainable funding models, educational programs, and long-term relationships with the local community. The Fellow chose these projects because of their successes and failures, with hopes of learning from what worked and what didn't and how these lessons can best inform efforts in Australia. The Fellow also spent time in London meeting with experts in Rewilding and Nature Based Solutions and the Arts, including Julie's Bicycle, Heard, Earth Percent and Ben Goldsmith. These experiences provided a delightful mix of practical, on-the-ground work of wading through creeks, beaver hunting, bird spotting and insightful discussion with passionate scientists, ecologists, conservationists and arts executives.

Fellowship period:

- Visits to the Netherlands and the U.K. - 12th - 25th September 2024
- In-person and online interviews - May 2024 - May 2025

Australia is lagging behind on action to protect and restore nature

Australia has the highest rate of mammal extinctions globally and is considered a global deforestation front alongside regions like Borneo, the Amazon, and the Congo. (Wilderness Society. n.d.). Despite the abundance and global significance of its ecosystems, these diverse landscapes remain undervalued, under-protected, and heavily threatened by deforestation, land clearing, and climate change.

This Fellowship explored rewilding and conservation, analysing successful international projects, their funding models, and the challenges and opportunities they present. Observing these initiatives firsthand provided critical insights into how conservation efforts are financed and sustained. Additionally, the Fellowship aimed to build expertise in advocacy, storytelling, and campaigning, equipping artists with the tools to become stronger voices for nature.

The Fellow undertook this Fellowship to deepen her understanding of rewilding and nature-based solutions and to explore how the arts, cultural, and live performance sectors can advocate for and fund the protection and restoration of nature and biodiversity in Australia. The focus was on market-based mechanisms like biodiversity credits, identifying both barriers and opportunities for artists and organisations, and investigating how the arts can foster deeper environmental engagement. Ultimately, the goal was to explore how science and the arts can collaborate to amplify the voice of our wild places.

During her experience working on decarbonising tours and sustainability within the arts, the Fellow quickly learnt that there is a critical need to address both biodiversity loss and climate change in tandem.

Healthy ecosystems with high biodiversity play a crucial role in carbon sequestration, with 'over 56% of carbon dioxide emissions from human activities being physically and biologically absorbed by land and oceans' (Canadell et al., 2022). Protecting and restoring natural systems is, therefore, one of the most effective climate solutions available.

Nature-based solutions such as rewilding, restoring wetlands, protecting native forests, and regenerative agriculture not only help mitigate climate change but also ensure that species and ecosystems can thrive. This dual approach goes above the status quo of focusing solely on climate, and embraces what the scientific community, the press and the public are waking up to as the two most important existential crises of our time.

Nature provides essential ecosystem services, including clean air, fresh water, food security, and overall human well-being. However, despite their immense environmental and societal benefits, these systems are not adequately valued within the current economic system. There is a pressing need to change that, both through how we communicate and tell stories about our connection to nature, and how we value and finance the critical role nature plays in our lives. There is a need for innovative financial mechanisms that recognise this and enable funding for large-scale restoration and conservation efforts.

The Fellow undertook this Fellowship to explore alternative funding models for ecological regeneration that prioritise sustainable finance and long-term impact. Her research focused on rewilding and nature-based solutions as key strategies for restoring ecosystems while simultaneously addressing climate change.

Importance to the Arts and Cultural Sector

The Fellow was also interested in the importance of the cultural narrative around nature and wild places and how the arts can be a powerful vessel for change. The Australian arts and cultural sector play a critical role in shaping public discourse and inspiring societal change, as musician and environmentalist Brian Eno says, 'Arts tells us what's cool and what

isn't". But so far, art has not sufficiently redirected resources or funding toward environmental sustainability. This Fellowship highlights the need to use creative advocacy, storytelling, and ticket-based funding initiatives to support conservation projects.

What are the gaps in Australia?

National nature laws are outdated and insufficient and often go unenforced, leaving community groups responsible for holding corporations accountable. Funding for conservation is woeful, over-reliant on philanthropic funding or government grants, both of which are nowhere near enough to meet the demand we need.

There is a continued cultural apathy towards the living world and humans' role in healthy ecosystems. Nature is in trouble, and we need all hands on deck. This doesn't only affect our beautiful iconic animals and landscape; it impacts our economy. 'Roughly half of Australia's GDP, [49% or \\$896 billion](#), has a moderate to very high direct dependence on healthy nature. (Australian Conservation Foundation 2022).

Along with finance, a big part of the project will be inspiring others to act by harnessing the power of artists and creative storytelling to engage the hearts and minds of the public. Cultural change is a critical piece of the puzzle. We need to engage people's hearts and minds in more regenerative ways of being.

This Fellowship sought to address these gaps by investigating successful rewilding and conservation models abroad, where projects have demonstrated innovative funding strategies, long-term community partnerships, and sustainable frameworks that could inspire similar initiatives in Australia. The research also explored ways to embed nature-based solutions into arts and cultural programming, policymaking, and advocacy to drive public engagement and policy reform.

Before setting off, the Fellow met with Arts representatives to better understand the current barriers to action as well as opportunities they see within policy, good governance, advocacy and funding. The Fellow also met with Environmental

and Conservation representatives to understand current challenges within the sector and how and what advocacy and funding support could look like. The goal here was to identify the barriers and potential opportunities to support collective efforts.

Australia's current environmental focus compared to the U.K. and Europe.

More and more arts organisations and artists are looking to reduce their impact on the environment and make meaningful changes to help protect nature. Most creatives who engage in this work want to have some skin in the game and be involved in the process, not a tick box, to send money to far-away offsets and continue business as usual. Whilst there is some action being taken, and a lot of appetite from the sector, there is still some confusion around where to start, where to get funding from and how to successfully bring along audiences, stakeholders and the general public. The majority of the action currently being taken is focused on measurement and data, carbon reductions and action plan development.

While several promising initiatives exist in Australia—including projects the Fellow has been directly involved in, such as [Adelaide Festival's partnership with Wilderlands to protect biodiversity in the Coorong](#)—the arts and cultural sector has yet to commit sufficient resources toward environmental sustainability. In contrast, the U.K. has seen significant progress, with organisations like Julie's Bicycle leading climate action in collaboration with Arts Council England for nearly two decades. European discussions now focus on how to act, recognising the climate and ecological crisis as an urgent priority, whereas in Australia, the conversation often seems to remain centred on whether to act at all.

One major similarity between Australia, the U.K., and the Netherlands is the recognised need for strong community engagement in rewilding and conservation efforts. However, a notable contrast lies in government support. In the Netherlands, conservation projects benefit from European Union subsidies under the Natura 2000 framework, while

in Australia, nature remains woefully underfunded, with only a fraction of the federal budget allocated to environmental protection.

The findings from this Fellowship hopefully address these challenges and offer valuable insights into best-practice nature-based solutions and how the

can be adopted within the live performance sector. By incorporating these solutions will help to strengthen partnerships between impact-driven organisations and the arts, ensuring that sustainability initiatives deliver strong conservation outcomes, uphold scientific integrity, are guided by First Nations leadership, and create lasting impact.



04

Fellowship Learnings

Major Findings and Opportunities

The major findings of this Fellowship were that the need to protect and restore nature in Australia (and globally) is as critical as ever. While there is an ongoing debate around the best approach and/or terminology—whether it be rewilding, restoration, nature reserves, or conservation—each with its own practices and methodologies, the common thread uniting them all is the goal of protecting and restoring nature and fostering healthy, ecosystems where all species, including humans, can thrive.

When done right, nature-based solutions help to restore habitat and biodiversity and regenerate degraded land, breathing life back into the landscape. In the U.K. and Europe, where much of the land has been developed and degraded, these solutions can act as a way to restore and rehabilitate ecosystems. Rewilding is one of the most commonly used terms for this kind of land restoration. But in countries, including Australia, where there is still vast areas of intact biodiversity, the most important thing we can do is stop the degradation and destruction in the first place. Biodiversity underpins planetary health. It's the role of governments to enforce robust policies and effective environmental laws that halt such destruction. For this to happen, we need elected leaders who prioritise nature. So, we need voters to care about climate and nature so they vote for the right people. And this is where cultural change comes in.

Research findings underscored the huge potential for creative industries to shift cultural attitudes and drive ambitious action to protect and restore nature. Successful overseas rewilding projects have shown that with adequate funding, community engagement, and stronger policy frameworks, rewilding can restore ecosystems, inspire cultural change and build resilience against climate risks. And, in some cases, save money. By adapting these models, there is a huge opportunity to develop programs tailored to the Australian context. Another key learning is that all fauna and flora restoration projects need to come hand in hand with social and community benefits and be Indigenous-led. Another key element is having access to long-term funding streams such as Nature-based markets like Biodiversity Credits, Government subsidies, Philanthropy, and Tourism. Below are some key findings related to these various solutions and priority areas.

REWILDING

'Rewilding is a tangible, practical way to reweave ourselves back into the miracle of nature and remember that we are a part of a living system, and we can also be a part of the repair of that system.' - Berry Liberman

A large part of this Fellowship focused on Rewilding, a concept that takes a big-picture, holistic approach to helping nature recover and flourish. Rewilding Britain defines rewilding as 'large-scale restoration

of ecosystems to the point where nature is allowed to take care of itself. Rewilding involves reinstating natural processes and, where appropriate, reintroducing missing species to restore biodiversity and ecosystem health'(Rewilding Britain, n.d.). The goal is to create self-sustaining environments where wildlife can thrive, and natural processes function with minimal human intervention. The two projects the Fellow visited emphasised the reintroduction of large roaming herbivores that play a crucial role in habitat creation and ecosystem health, ultimately supporting a diverse range of other species.

While climate action and carbon reduction have rightfully been at the forefront of environmental efforts, it is essential not to overlook nature and biodiversity. Protecting forests, wetlands, and other critical ecosystems must go hand in hand with decarbonisation efforts and phasing out fossil fuels. These efforts are also deeply interconnected—thriving biodiversity enhances carbon sequestration, helping to mitigate global warming.

As a new report published in Nature Climate Change suggests, 'Reducing carbon emissions is an indisputable solution to addressing the global climate crisis, but even if we stopped burning fossil fuels immediately, the climate would continue to warm due to the excess carbon already trapped in the atmosphere. "Fortunately, we have the technology to scrub CO2 from the atmosphere," Schmitz said. "It's called nature." Many nature-based climate solutions rightly emphasise the role of plants and soil as carbon sinks, but animals have a profound effect on how effective these sinks can be. (Oliver). When it comes to climate solutions, your first thought may not be a wild beaver, but in the boggy soils of Sussex, these furry pup-looking dammers are key to carbon capture and thriving biodiversity (more on that below).

During her Fellowship the Fellow visited two world famous and iconic projects Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve in the Netherlands and Knepp Rewilding project in Sussex in the U.K. Below are the successes, challenges and solutions the Fellow learnt about whilst visiting these two projects.

Oostvaardersplassen - Nature Restoration in the Netherlands



Oostvaardersplassen (OVP) in the Netherlands is one of the world's most ambitious ecological restoration initiatives, transforming a once-industrial site into a thriving wetland ecosystem. Originally set aside for development in the 1960s, the area was instead left to nature, allowing bird populations to flourish. Over time, the project evolved into a large-scale nature restoration site, with the introduction of free-roaming herbivores such as Konik horses, Heck cattle, and red deer to mimic the natural grazing patterns of extinct megafauna. This approach has successfully maintained open landscapes, prevented overgrowth, and supported diverse bird and insect populations. Despite some controversy over management strategies, particularly during harsh winters, the project has demonstrated the power of nature-led restoration, minimal human intervention, and adaptive management to achieve significant biodiversity gains.

A key lesson from Oostvaardersplassen is the importance of long-term vision and adaptive strategies in ecological restoration. Rather than imposing rigid conservation models, Oostvaardersplassen allows natural processes to shape the landscape, fostering resilience and adaptability. This contrasts with traditional conservation approaches that often prioritise intensive human intervention and rigid metrics of success. Another crucial takeaway is the role of community engagement and public perception in the success of large-scale restoration projects. Communicating the complexity of ecological processes remains a challenge, particularly when controversial decisions—such as controlled



population reductions—are necessary at times. Transparent storytelling, education, and ongoing dialogue with the public, along with adapting their techniques to respond to the changing environment, have been critical in maintaining support for OVP.

From a financial perspective, Oostvaardersplassen operates through a mix of government subsidies, Natura 2000 funding, visitor fees, and private donations. This diversified funding model ensures both stability and scalability, allowing for ongoing monitoring, research, and adaptive management.

The European Union's Natura 2000 network funding ranged from '€400 million in 2007 to €2 billion in 2013' European Commission. (n.d.). Whilst this has reduced significantly over the years, it still hugely overtakes Australia's funding for nature restoration. By contrast, in Australia, work to protect and restore nature is most often done with little, if any, government support. One of the findings from the Biodiversity Council is the extent to which Australians overestimate the federal government's commitment to biodiversity. 'Most guess that about 1% of the budget is dedicated to nature programs, which would translate to about \$7.8bn a year, but





the reality is that in last month's budget in April 2025, on-ground biodiversity programs received just 0.06% of spending – or just six cents for every \$100 committed' Readfearn, G. (2025).

The financial mechanisms in place in the Netherlands and Europe more broadly provide valuable insights

into the slowed progress in Australia and highlight the need for integrated funding strategies that combine government spending, public investment, private sector contributions, and community-driven financial support. Applying these lessons in Australia could enhance the sustainability of conservation initiatives, ensuring that rewilding efforts receive the long-term funding necessary to restore ecosystems at scale.

Knepp Rewilding project - degraded farmland to bustling biodiverse haven

Knepp Estate is a pioneering rewilding project in the UK that has transformed a degraded industrial farm into a thriving biodiversity hotspot. Once an intensively managed agricultural site with poor soil health and low biodiversity, Knepp has, over the past two decades, become a thriving ecosystem teeming with life. By removing traditional farming constraints and allowing natural processes to take over, the estate has seen the return of rare and endangered species, including turtle doves, nightingales, and purple emperor butterflies. The estate employs free-roaming herds of English longhorn cattle, Tamworth pigs, Exmoor ponies, and deer to naturally manage vegetation, creating diverse habitats and enhancing soil health through their grazing and trampling behaviours. The recent reintroduction of beavers has further contributed to ecosystem restoration by improving water management and biodiversity. The successful reintroduction of white storks, which had not been bred in Britain for over 600 years, is a testament to the effectiveness of Rewilding. Beyond wildlife recovery, Knepp's rewilding model has improved soil health, increased carbon sequestration, and restored vital wetlands, demonstrating how nature-led restoration can enhance biodiversity while also building climate resilience. The project also highlights how rewilding can create economic opportunities in tandem with environmental benefits, with the estate going from being 1 million pounds in debt, to now generating income to employ 80 full-time staff, through a thriving ecotourism offering of wildlife safaris, workshops, cafe and restaurant as well as regenerative land management.



Knepp's success underscores the potential for similar large-scale rewilding efforts in Australia, reinforcing the need for long-term vision, adaptive management, and financial support to scale these initiatives effectively.

Effective storytelling and creative engagement are also pivotal themes identified in the success of rewilding projects, as exemplified by the Knepp Estate. Through Isabella Tree's wildly popular book *Wilding*, a recent documentary, and various public events, Knepp has actively involved the community in its restoration journey from the very beginning. It wasn't all rosy. There were plenty of mistakes, which they were honest about, as well as resistance in the early days. But most of that has turned around now - many locals who initially threw up their hands in protest are now regular walkers along Knepp's wild paths. Nothing about what Charlie and Isabella, the founder of Knepp, are doing is preachy. 'You want to tempt people by showing them how good things can be, not tell them how bad they are doing things currently' Noted Isabella in *Wilding Tree*, I. (2018).



The estate offers 16 miles of public footpaths, attracting visitors who contribute to both the project's sustainability and its educational outreach. By transparently and creatively sharing their story and experiences, including challenges faced, Knepp has done a wonderful job at fostering public support and demonstrates the transformative potential of rewilding, and connecting locals and travellers to nature and being an active part of restoring the local ecosystem. This approach underscores the arts' capacity to inspire cultural change and mobilise communities toward environmental stewardship.

The term Rewilding in Australia and what is 'wild' anyway

A key contrast identified was the framing of Rewilding within an Australian context. Internationally, especially in the U.K. and Europe, where this research was conducted, the term Rewilding is widely recognised and associated with thriving, biodiverse landscapes. However, very early on in this Fellowship, various conversations and research revealed that in Australia, the term can sometimes



be problematic, as it can imply that the land was once “wild” prior to colonisation—overlooking the long-standing stewardship of First Nations peoples. Alternative terms, such as Healing Country, Cultural Land Restoration and Ecological Regeneration, may be more appropriate while still aligning with the core principles of rewilding. However, this is perhaps more to do with what we consider to be wild in the first place. If the term ‘wild’ is one that describes healthy, thriving and biodiverse ecosystems that humans are a part of and play a role in protecting and restoring (as First Nations peoples did for thousands of years), then perhaps the term Rewilding is the fact, useful terminology.

This question of language and framing ties into a deeper philosophical discussion about how we perceive nature and our place within it. As Dr Tristan Derham, an environmental philosopher, ethicist, and ecologist, notes, the core issue behind environmental destruction is a worldview

that separates humans from the rest of the natural world, reducing ecosystems to mere resources. This idea is central to environmental philosophy, and the point has been made many times over, e.g. (Crist, 2019; Mathews, 2006; Plumwood, 1993). There is a famous debate between Pinchot and Muir on whether nature is a resource or has value that transcends to utilitarian. ‘If wildness is understood not as the absence of humans but as the presence of thriving, interconnected life—where humans, like all other species, have a role in maintaining balance—then rewilding offers something unique. As Tristan suggests (e.g. Derham et al 2025), ‘true rewilding is not about stepping back from nature but actively collaborating with it, recognising the agency of ecosystems and supporting them in their restoration’.

Tristan also highlights the need for a more ethical and inclusive approach to conservation, particularly in colonised countries like Australia, Canada, and



the U.S. He cautions against framing conservation in ways that exploit Indigenous communities.

Tristan stresses that the root of environmental destruction lies in a narcissistic worldview—one that reduces the world to “human beings and natural resources.” Instead, he argues for a perspective that acknowledges the agency of non-human life, emphasising that “the world is not just here for us... there are others out there that matter too.” He describes rewilding at its best as a form of collaboration with nature, recognising that ecosystems have their own needs and that conservation efforts must actively support them rather than simply “locking up” land. There needs to be so much more than locked up or fenced spaces for all the other beautiful little critters that call this place home. Urban greening, regenerative farming, keeping domestic cats inside, pollination corridors. These are all ‘Rewilding’ in a way. Embedding nature and the health of our ecosystems into the fabric of everyday life.



When the Fellow interviewed Tristan they also spoke about ways to fund this collaboration with nature and potential avenues in Australia to finance First Nations-led land restoration at scale. On biodiversity credits and corporate involvement, Derham expresses both hope and scepticism. While he acknowledges the accountability and funding benefits of market-based ecological restoration, he warns against governments abdicating their responsibility to corporations, stating, “They should be representing the interests of ecosystems... It’s their job, and they are handballing that job right now.” He critiques the trend toward small government and unchecked corporate control, arguing that public interest must remain central. However, he also sees value in bringing diverse sectors together, noting that such mechanisms can foster cross-sector collaboration between the corporate world, environmentalists, and the arts. Ultimately, he underscores the importance of conversation, local context, and relationships, reminding us that “the cornerstone of democracy is

conversations over your neighbour's fence." (1939 John Dewey).

Market-based approach - a way to incentivise funding or a get-out-of-jail-free card?

Throughout her research, various interviews such as the conversation with Tristan, the Fellow quickly discovered that there is quite a hot debate about whether a Market-based approach is the best path to address biodiversity loss in a meaningful way.

So what's a market-based approach anyway?

A **market** is a system or place where buyers and sellers come together to exchange goods, services, or resources. This exchange can happen physically, like in a marketplace or store, or virtually, like online platforms. Markets operate based on supply and demand, with prices typically determined by the interaction of these forces. They can range in scale from local (a farmers' market) to global (the international fish market). Right now, most 'markets' aren't accounting for their impact on the natural resources that many of them extract from. They

aren't 'valuing' the very thing that enables them to sell their products and services in the first place. The hope with market-based approach to financing nature is that by incorporating these costs, the true impact on nature is accounted and paid for.

By using this **market-based approach** and leveraging tools such as taxes, subsidies, tradable permits, units or credits, the hope is that we can significantly increase funding directed towards properly paying for the 'services' nature provides, and going a step further to protect and restore ecosystems that provide life-supporting essentials, e.g. clean air, food, water etc. It sounds like a no-brainer, but as with most 'hot topics', there are many layers of complexity. Layers that we will unpack more below.

The Potential Role of Biodiversity Credits in Conservation

One key financing mechanism that the Fellow explored during her research was the emerging Biodiversity Credit market. Biodiversity credits are very different from biodiversity offsets. They act as a



measurable and science-backed mechanism to show a measurable uplift in biodiversity and an avenue to funding the work required to do so. The Biodiversity credit market could present an emerging opportunity for funding nature restoration at scale in Australia.

Whilst some scepticism remains, Dr. Sophus zu Ermgassen cautions, “At best, they provide money back to First Nations communities... but my best guess is very few people will actually buy them, and evaluations will show in a few years that many achieved no real conservation outcomes.” This highlights concerns about additionality and market viability. However, the overall feedback is that whilst there is a need for regulations on the emerging market, many agree that they could serve as a critical tool, amongst others, to redirect a significant amount of funding towards indigenous-led conservation.

While biodiversity credits could provide financial incentives for conservation, the concern is whether they might also serve as a distraction from necessary systemic policy changes. Rules and regulations that actually stop the damage to nature and biodiversity must be the key priority and remain front and centre in any discussion around emerging markets. As stated by the Conversation, ‘Sudden popularity can be the reason for caution. After all, we’ve seen well-intended ideas become cover for greenwashing before. Without strong guardrails, we risk nature positively being used as a distraction from continued failures. ([September 22](#)).

But, that being said, this work is slow, so why shouldn’t well-intentioned organisations from the arts, cultural and private sectors jump in to help raise the funds needed for conservative projects? Can we do both at the same time? Create a highly regulated market to fund and advocate for regeneration projects, with rigorous methodologies to show an increase in biodiversity and strong ethical frameworks to ensure credits aren’t used as offsets and push for better policy. Don’t know yet. Lots to chew on.

Lessons from the carbon market

To start with, the Fellow would like to fully acknowledge that the scepticism on a market-based approach is fairly received, especially in light of the recent scrutiny and many failings of the carbon market. There is a need for higher regulation and trust building within any emerging mechanism, including the Biodiversity credit market. The concern of some academics interviewed throughout this fellowship was that creating another ‘sexy’ market could be a distraction from the real policy change that needs to happen. Or, worse, another way to let large corporates off the hook.

On the other hand, a market-based approach offers a tangible and effective way for well-intentioned private sector organisations to contribute to conservation efforts, particularly at scale. Which was the opinion of many Ecologists, Arts Directors and Restoration project leaders interviewed throughout this research. When projects are First Nations-led, highly regulated, and grounded in rigorous, science-backed methodologies and strong ethical frameworks, they have the potential to redirect significant financial resources toward the active protection and restoration of degraded landscapes. In this scenario, biodiversity credits could represent a true win-win, aligning economic investment with meaningful environmental and cultural outcomes.

One common thread within this research is that biodiversity credits are just one solution among many and must be coupled with direct government regulations and mandates to ensure economic activities align with global policy commitments, which at best can enforce guardrails against the destruction of nature, and at worst are watered down public pledges that amount to little to no action. For example, Australia’s commitment to the Montreal Biodiversity and Paris Agreement underscores the need for strong regulatory frameworks that drive meaningful action. But has there been any tangible results since making these commitments? Not really. So far, there isn’t a lot of evidence to suggest meaningful action towards these targets at the rate we need. So, while market-based solutions like biodiversity credits can incentivise conservation,

they must work in tandem with enforceable policies to ensure lasting ecological and economic benefits. In short, we still need to push for stronger environmental laws and penalties for breaking those laws.

The ethics related to market-based finance

One of the most clarifying conversations while grappling with whether market-based mechanisms are an effective and ethical way to finance conservation came from Bjorn Everts, Head of Nature at Green Collar. Bjorn has over 18 years of experience in conservation, nature-based solutions, and renewable energy and is passionate about biodiversity, science-based conservation, and securing long-term private sector finance for nature.

“My perspective on environmental markets is deeply shaped by the decade I spent supporting Indigenous-led conservation in Australia. From the viewpoint of the people I worked with, Australia

is a land that colonisers have exploited for generations. When land is returned to Indigenous people, it is not for others to dictate that they cannot generate an income from it—especially through the preservation and restoration of nature via market-based mechanisms or wildfire management that produce carbon and biodiversity credits. This represents one of the few truly non-exploitative hybrid economies available to them—one that enables participation in the capitalist model imposed by colonisation without compromising their value systems. While some macro-level criticisms of carbon markets are valid, which is why I have always advocated for careful screening of buyers, I firmly believe Indigenous people have the right to derive income from their land. If that income supports the preservation and regeneration of ecosystems, it’s a win for everyone. Nature-based solutions to climate and biodiversity loss have the potential to create opportunities to achieve both environmental and economic justice in this way.’



This conversation reaffirmed the importance of prioritising First Nations leadership in projects, ensuring profit-sharing mechanisms directly benefit the community and empowering Indigenous rangers to lead the work.

Biodiversity credit for the resilience of ecosystems and endangered species

To further unpack some of the reservation about the impact of Biodiversity Credit on conservation outcomes, the Fellow met with Dr. Axel G. Rossberg who is a theoretical ecologist at Queen Mary University of London and is leading the Centre for Biodiversity and Sustainability. The focus of the interview was how critical Biodiversity is for human health, economic stability, and the resilience of our ecosystems.

Dr. Axel emphasised that conserving non-human species is critical and for it to be done well, requires long-term investment and measurable outcomes. He pointed out that Australia in particular is facing a high risk of species extinction and urgent, targeted efforts are necessary to safeguard our precious and rare wildlife.

Dr. Rossberg pointed out that Biodiversity is complex and varied. This makes it hard to track and monitor its value with one standardised tool across a huge variety of ecosystems. But for endangered and at risks species, Biodiversity credits could present a promising solution by providing a quantifiable way to track and incentivise species protection and recovery. While ecosystem services have historically been difficult to monetise through credits, species-based credits offer a more direct mechanism to ensure tangible conservation outcomes. By establishing a clear baseline of species abundance and measuring uplift over time, these credits can demonstrate real improvements in biodiversity, making conservation efforts more transparent and accountable.

Dr. Rosenberg also pointed out that Biodiversity Impact Credits are the only biodiversity credit endorsed by [TNFD](#) (Task for on nature-related financial disclosure) and have been recommended



as a [metric for impact on species extinction risk by the Nature Positive Initiative](#).

Despite challenges such as market demand and standardising measurement methodologies, biodiversity credits can play a crucial role in financing conservation projects. They incentivise investment in ecosystem restoration, especially in regions with high endemic biodiversity as common in Australia—creating a win-win scenario for conservation and economic sustainability. Dr. Rossberg highlighted the importance of clear communication around the value of biodiversity credits and the role of policy frameworks in supporting their implementation. As governments explore legislative backing for biodiversity credits, these tools could become a key driver of large-scale restoration and species protection initiatives.

Example of Current Projects in Australia working to restore Biodiversity through Credits

Terrain, the Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisation for the Wet Tropics, plays a key role in working with private landholders and communities to improve water quality and drive environmental



and conservation outcomes. The Fellow met with Bronwyn Robertson from Terrain to discuss the development of Cassowary Credits, a market-based mechanism for investment in rainforest restoration. Developed in partnership with the Queensland Government and WWF-Australia, Cassowary Credits is a credible, science-backed approach to rainforest restoration, ensuring that investment leads to tangible biodiversity and carbon sequestration benefits ([WWF-Australia, 2024](#)).

Terrain has drawn insights from their work on Reef Credits, an earlier environmental market developed to improve water quality flowing to the Great Barrier Reef. Cassowary Credits underwent a feasibility study five years ago and has seen a significant increase in interest over the past three years. While it remains too early to provide a credible forecast for Cassowary Credits, Bronwyn highlighted that there is growing interest from both the supply side (landholders) and the demand side (potential investors). Initial pilot projects are being established and look promising, but as WWF-Australia highlights, scaling up the initiative requires greater investment to restore ecosystems at the pace and scale needed (WWF-Australia, 2024).

A key challenge Terrain has faced is scaling restoration initiatives effectively, and Bronwyn emphasised the urgent need for finance mechanisms to enable increased investment and sustained funding to drive impact at scale. Without adequate financial support, Terrain and similar organisations cannot support landholders and critical restoration efforts to the extent required. Mechanisms like Cassowary Credits, with the backing of WWF-Australia, have the potential to bridge this funding gap, unlocking large-scale investment in environmental restoration and ensuring long-term sustainability for both ecosystems and communities.

How to value nature in our current economic system

One of the key questions the Fellow explored during the fellowship was how to properly value nature within our current economic systems. How can we put a price on nature? It's like trying to put a price on the love we feel for a child or the way music and art move us. It's a complex and important question—one the Fellow discussed in depth with Ben Goldsmith, a leading British environmentalist, financier, and advocate for rewilding. Ben brings both practical experience—having rewilded his own Somerset property—and expertise in financial mechanism that support large-scale ecological restoration. He co-founded Nattegral, an investment and advisory firm dedicated to rewilding, and chairs the Conservation Collective, which funds grassroots environmental efforts globally. His book *God is an Octopus* movingly captures how nature and rewilding brought him solace and meaning following the loss of his teenage daughter.

In conversation, Ben noted that he really empathises with the philosophical argument that nature is priceless. 'It's somehow crude and almost heretical to try and put a financial value on something that is beyond price'. We clearly depend on nature for everything we have, everything we love, and everything we do; it is the be-all and end-all. Trying to put a price on it is a bit like trying to put a price on the love we feel for our kids or our parents.' Ben pointed out.

‘That being said, we already put a price on nature in every economic and industrial decision we take, and that price is 0. We have been valuing nature, and it’s just at zero. So unless we start to rationalise what nature is really worth and the things nature does for us are really worth, then it won’t be taken into account in decision-making around what we build and what we do.’

Unless we begin to account for the true worth of ecosystems and the services they provide, nature will continue to be excluded from decision-making and exploited as pure ‘resource’. The Fellow shared reflections on the impact of involving artists in environmental projects—how spending time outdoors and actively engaging in restoration helps reconnect people to the wild places, and fires them up to be a part of their protection. Ben agreed that a cultural and spiritual reconnection with nature is essential, but so too is an economic shift. He cited practical examples, like rewilding catchments in Dartmoor with beavers, wetlands, and restored peatlands, to create natural flood mitigation and drought resilience—solutions that are not only good for nature but have huge economic benefits as well.

Ben provided the example of communities that flood every year in the U.K. that can protect themselves most efficiently by rewilding landscapes further up the catchment. ‘If you rewild parts of western Dartmoor and turn those landscapes back into the sponges that they once were with beavers, wetlands, restored peatlands, wildflower meadows and so on, those landscapes act like a sponge and release water slowly throughout the year. So you are creating a natural solution to flooding and a natural solution to drought in the summer as the water continues to run through the dry season, and it’s the cheapest way of cleaning that water’.

There are now 12 nutrient neutrality markets; in those areas, landowners are paid to restore and filter water by absorbing water and restoring wetlands. These are very logical solutions. There are real markets that are directing huge amounts of capital towards rewilding projects.

Ben went on, ‘If nature does that for us, we can then, like for like, work out exactly what that’s worth. So water is often the starting point with water nutrient neutrality markets in the U.K., where landowners can be paid to purify water by restoring their land, restoring their soil and restoring nature. That is just one really good example of where we have put a rational, well-thought-through price on something that nature does for us. And that then changes the incentive because if you take that for granted and put no price on the value of those water services, then the landowners in those sensitive catchment areas have no incentive to protect the water storage capabilities of their land.’

However, such work requires funding; it cannot rely solely on goodwill. ‘The reality is we can’t just expect landowner to turn over their farmland to marshland and rewild habitat for free’ Ben pointed out ‘It would be nice if they wanted to, but even if they all wanted to, this stuff costs money. Lots of it. A ton in fact.’ Ben said.

Different numbers get thrown around, but according to peer-reviewed research by Brendan Wintle from the University of Melbourne and his colleagues, in order to halt the extinction crisis in Australia, we would need about [\\$1.7 billion per year](#). (Slezak, M. 2023)

However, the reality is that the work to protect and restore nature in Australia is most often done with little, if any, government support. In last month’s budget, March 2025, on-ground biodiversity programs received just 0.06% of spending – or just six cents for every \$100 committed. (Morton, A. 2025). We’ve clearly got a lot of work to do, and whilst there is also a real opportunity these solutions need to be funded and built into policy.

Ben highlighted three clear priorities that are required to scale up funding for rewilding efforts globally. The Fellow has summarised these priorities here for clarity.

1. **Put the ‘bad guys’ out of business** - The most important thing we can do is remove government incentives to do the wrong thing, e.g. stop



subsidies to destructive industries (fossil fuels companies, global fisheries, deforestation and land clearing for development).

2. **Campaign for finance reform** - Why do these subsidies exist? Because the bad guys pour money into political campaigns and politicians make poor decisions because they are being fed millions under the table from large corporations to get them elected - see more at Big Deal for the Australian context). We need to find a way to fund political campaigns without destructive industries.
3. **Public and private funding for the protection and restoration of nature.** Pour money into the 'good guys'. We need to recognise the services ecosystems provide. Through various mechanisms, such as Nature-based finance and biodiversity credits, on top of philanthropy, government spending and private investment. We need private and public incentives to value the services that the environment provides. Environmental markets are really important, but they come third. Build the market by doing and just get on with it.

No small task, but Ben made it clear that all of this is entirely possible, and things are already shifting in the right direction. He also made it clear that he thinks it needs to go in that order.

'We can't pour money into the good guys if the bad guys are still ripping up rainforests somewhere else'. He pointed out. 'And we definitely can't let pouring money into the good guys be a get-out-of-jail-free card to let big oil off the hook for tearing up rainforests somewhere else as is sometimes the case with offsets.' he added.

When asked about the role of the arts sector, Ben emphasised that while not all artists can contribute financially, they hold tremendous power through storytelling, humour, and influence. Using platforms to challenge destructive industries and celebrate nature can drive cultural change. He was enthusiastic about initiatives like the Solar Slice, which redirect a small percentage of ticket sales toward conservation, enabling the arts sector to contribute collectively without overburdening individuals. As Ben noted, 'even modest investments in rewilding can yield profound environmental and social returns—cleaner water, healthier soils, carbon sequestration, and vibrant biodiversity. More than that, they spark community engagement and inspire others. This is where artists are essential: their ability to tell stories, galvanise audiences, and offer a shared vision of hope and action is a crucial ingredient in the movement to restore and protect nature.

A mixed approach to financing nature, not a silver bullet

Market-based solutions like biodiversity credits may be one tool among many, but they must be rigorously tested, ethically structured, and First Nations-led. The live performance sector has a unique capacity to inspire action and redirect funding towards conservation, but sustained collaboration, regulation, and investment in community-driven approaches are essential. As the debate around biodiversity credits continues, it is clear that “no single approach will be the silver bullet.” as Natasha Davis, CEO of Trees for Life, highlighted in an interview with the Fellow. Instead, a combination of policy advocacy, financial mechanisms, and artistic engagement will be key in shaping a future where the arts and environmental restoration go hand in hand.

Artists as Active Participants in Conservation

Another key learning during this fellowship was just how important Arts and cultural change is in all of this. In tandem with adequate funding, restoration and rewilding projects need to get their story out there. Inspiring hearts and minds of the public and private sector to increase community engagement, further sustained finances and cultural change. Artists have a unique opportunity to not only spread awareness about nature restoration but also actively fund and contribute to conservation efforts. The Fellow met with Ash Knob, Co-Founder of Wilderlands, to discuss how artists and the cultural sector, more broadly, can both fund conservation and engage their audiences to follow suit. The Wilderlands model, funding a square metre of biodiversity to be permanently protected, presents a compelling pathway for artists to integrate environmental stewardship into their practice.

For example, if an artist owns or identifies land with high biodiversity value, they can protect and restore a portion of it under a permanent conservation covenant. By meeting Wilderlands’ assessment criteria, they can receive annual funding for up to 20 years while ensuring their land is restored and monitored through third-party audits.

Additionally, artists can engage their audiences directly by offering biodiversity credits linked to ticket sales, allowing concertgoers to purchase units that contribute to ongoing land restoration. This mechanism to actively protect and restore nature alongside the live performance sector could work together with other solutions, such as the Solar Slice, boosting both funding and advocacy efforts towards nature restoration. This model not only secures long-term funding but also fosters deeper audience engagement by making conservation a tangible and participatory experience.

Wilderlands provides the methodology, auditing, and sales platforms to streamline this process, expanding the reach of these projects beyond the artist’s immediate network. By embracing this model, artists can amplify conservation efforts, educate audiences, and drive cultural change, ensuring that environmental action is woven into the fabric of artistic expression and financial sustainability.

Industry Perspectives and Constraints to Environmental Action

The Australian music and arts industry, whilst acknowledging the urgency of conservation around climate and environment, still faces significant barriers to action. In a conversation with Arts Executive Elaine Chia notes, “Time and money” are critical constraints. Despite this, there is growing interest to ensure that sustainability becomes more of a priority.

Support for biodiversity restoration within the industry depends on clear, practical mechanisms that can fund and advocate for the protection of nature without significantly affecting artists’ bottom line. Solutions like the Solar Slice, where a dollar amount or percentage of ticket sales can be redirected towards conservation. Funding models like this help overcome barriers by allocating a small percentage of revenue and creating a dedicated pool of funds for environmental solutions. Additionally, they facilitate partnerships with impact organisations that bring essential expertise to the table. Overcoming another barrier towards environmental action which is not knowing where to start or what solutions will ensure the best outcomes for nature and the environment’.

The Fellow spoke to Ruth Langsford, Yorta Yorta woman and facilitator in environmental/ social justice in the arts, about effectively incorporating environmental stewardship into the live entertainment sector. Ruth has been working hard to advocate for the protection of the Takayna rainforest in Lutruwita / Tasmania and for the return of a Sacred relationship to Water. Ruth emphasises the need to integrate First Nations voices into conservation planning and reinforces that it's such a critical time to fund this work however we can, in close collaboration with First Nations peoples. "We need to remember that the primary stakeholder must be land justice, ensuring First Nations communities are always included in the conversation. You need to engage directly with local custodians to understand their needs—visit the community, ask about their priorities, and learn what's already in progress. What do you need?" This reinforces both the critical need for holistic community engagement alongside Bjorn Everts' argument that all conservation efforts must be First Nations-led.

The role of the Arts in advocating for and funding the protection and restoration of nature in Australia.

The Australian Arts and Cultural sector has a unique and powerful role to play in driving environmental action. While much of the industry's focus has been on reducing carbon emissions, a key research finding is the need to expand the conversation to include protecting and restoring nature and biodiversity. One of the key insights being reinforced in many interviews and site visits is the need to address the dual threat of climate change and biodiversity loss. By integrating rewilding, ecological restoration, and conservation into industry practices, the arts and cultural sector can have a far-reaching impact—not only by directing funding toward these solutions, however small, but also through storytelling, advocacy, and community engagement.

Artists, festivals, and cultural institutions have the ability to shape public narratives, spark curiosity, and inspire change. The sector can serve as a bridge between science, conservation, and the broader

public, making complex environmental challenges more tangible and urgent. We cannot protect what we do not love, and we cannot love what we do not see. The arts have the power to make us see. By shifting the focus beyond carbon to include biodiversity and land restoration, the live entertainment industry can help normalise ecological thinking, engage audiences in meaningful action, and influence policy change.

Furthermore, the innovative, collaborative and creative nature of the sector makes it well-suited to building cross-sector partnerships with conservation groups, Indigenous land stewards, and policymakers. This research has reinforced the idea that the arts are not just a vehicle for funding solutions but a catalyst for cultural and behavioral shifts—bringing people together, sparking conversations, and inspiring a deeper connection to the natural world.

'Restoring Minds' The importance of Environmental and Social benefits from Rewilding and Nature-based solutions.

Another key insight that was reinforced during this Fellowship is to advocate for the use of accessible and inclusive terminology such as "Regeneration" or "Restoration" with an emphasis on restoring both communities and nature. A key concept explored in the Fellow's discussion with Farah Ahmed (Climate Justice Lead) and Thiago Jesus (CCL Program Manager) from Julie's Bicycle is "Reforestation of minds," which calls for a cultural shift in how society values and interacts with natural systems. Financial resources should be directed towards activities that prioritise social benefits alongside environmental ones and returned to Traditional Owners and First Nations-led and grassroots approaches whenever possible. It is crucial to avoid allowing corporations to evade accountability by merely providing superficial funding for solutions without addressing their broader systemic impacts. This priority is particularly important in Australia where First Nations communities must be a leading partner in any environmental project development, especially when there are nature-based markets involved.

The research highlights the need to simultaneously reduce the environmental footprint of cultural organisations (the priority to reduce emissions in the time scale we need) and invest in genuine, First Nations-led environmental projects that support nature repair and recovery. For example, the [Ashes-to-Ashes project](#) that Thiago worked on, where ashes from the burnt Amazon forest were turned into art to support Indigenous people from the Xingu territory fighting the fires, addressing both sustainable finance and advocacy efforts.

Rather than focusing narrowly on specific species metrics (a key theme emerging from this research, as highlighted at OVP), the emphasis is on regenerating communities and ecosystems. The recommendations encourage a critical evaluation of value and response—identifying who benefits and ensuring that biodiversity efforts do not inadvertently create climate justice challenges. For those living on the land, the perspective extends beyond individual species to encompass cultural diversity and the interconnectedness of biodiversity within human communities. As Eco Artists Ian Solomon Kwall underscores, ‘true regeneration requires integrating cultural and ecological diversity to create meaningful and sustainable impact’.

05

Personal, professional, and sectoral Impact

Personal

This Fellowship has profoundly affected the Fellow's own personal growth by expanding her knowledge and experience with nature-based solutions and highlighting how incredible some of these holistic approaches can be, especially when combined with social and community benefits. The opportunity to visit projects on the ground, see what success looks like, and learn from their challenges has provided a wealth of knowledge and excitement about the future's potential of protecting and restoring nature in Australia. The most significant impact was witnessing how quickly nature can regenerate and restore when given a helping hand and the space to thrive. In tumultuous times, this hope and inspiration from the resilience these projects bring to communities is truly inspiring.

Professional

This research has been instrumental in shaping new campaign ideas within the Fellow's work, drawing inspiration from international examples of what is possible. It has expanded her ability to design initiatives that actively engage artists in conservation efforts across Australia—both through direct funding and advocacy. One current example is FEAT's collaboration with the Australian Conservation Foundation on the Vote for Nature campaign, which aims to mobilise artists in the lead-up to the federal election (see more below). By leveraging their

platforms, artists can help bring more people into the conversation, shift cultural attitudes, and push for more ambitious and urgent climate action. Exploring rewilding in depth has further reinforced the essential role of nature-based solutions in addressing climate risk. This Fellowship has broadened the Fellow's understanding of the significance of nature-based solutions, the importance of the arts and cultural sector role within environmental regeneration and strengthened her capacity to integrate these solutions into arts-led environmental initiatives.

Sectoral impact: Broader Sector: Impact implementation as a result of Fellowship findings

Lungtalanana - Cultural Landscape Restoration Project in Tasmania

FEAT has partnered with Australia's largest environmental market organisation, Green Collar, to fund a world first cultural landscape restoration project called Lungtalanana. Lungtalanana / Clarke Island is an 8,200-hectare island north of Tasmania, which has been decimated by overgrazing, wildfire, and feral cats. The project needs critical funding to continue the restoration work, with the goal of reintroducing the Bass Strait Wombats (a native species of Wombat that used to live on the island) and the Indigenous ranger team leading the work on the ground.

This is a multi-stakeholder conservation partnership between the indigenous owners, the [Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre](#) (TAC), [GreenCollar](#), the [World Wildlife Fund](#) and the [University of TAS](#). The biodiversity rehabilitation work will be led by the TAC, with funding support from WWF; the University of Tasmania will lead the native animal reintroduction, and GreenCollar will apply their innovative conservation financing methods to enable the project to generate biodiversity credits based on the demonstrated uplift in biodiversity markers. FEAT are partnering on this project to enable cultural organisations and touring artists to fund the project via a \$1 sustainability ticketing surcharge ('Solar Slice') along with advocacy efforts to help breathe life back into the island.

Not only will this project implement best-practice conservation methods, but it will importantly provide a profit-share mechanism and long-term funding stream for the Indigenous team leading the work. This project will also hopefully mark the launch of an artist-driven conservation movements, with additional Australian projects set to roll out between 2025 and 2027.

Election Campaign Partnership

In the lead-up to the Federal election, FEAT partnered with Green Music Australia and the Australian Conservation Foundation to encourage voters to support candidates committed to protecting nature and advocating for stronger environmental policies. Artists participated in a campaign video—similar to [Party with the Planet](#)—where they delivered a short script emphasising the importance of voting for climate and nature. The campaign directed fans to sign a pledge [to vote for climate and nature](#), and through their social platforms, artists amplified key messages, mobilising their audiences to advocate for stronger environmental protections during this crucial election cycle.

See the:

- [Final collective artists video here.](#)
- [Final Lime Cordiale video here.](#)
- [Angie McMahon video here.](#)

Artists Leadership Retreats: Connecting with Nature and Conservation

FEAT is currently developing an engaging program to host Arts and Cultural representatives in nature and leadership retreats. In collaboration with festival and arts organisation partners, this initiative will immerse musicians and arts professionals in hands-on conservation experiences. These single or multi-day workshops with artists are designed to build industry-specific skill sets to create a positive environmental legacy with their music careers. Artists will participate in an engaging programme of information sessions, personal reflection activities, and inspiring speakers and artist case studies, covering topics from rewilding, nature finance, green riders and planetary boundaries. Participants will also experience conservation work firsthand, engaging in activities such as tree planting and bush regeneration, while exploring systemic approaches to sustainability within the arts and culture sector. By directly engaging with environmental projects, participants will develop a deeper connection to nature, fostering meaningful advocacy and integration of regenerative practices into their work.

These retreats will provide artists, producers, directors, programmers, and cultural leaders with the knowledge, inspiration, and practical tools to support climate solutions and environmental stewardship. Held in Australia at an idyllic site, the program will offer a setting for reflection, learning, and action.

Regeneration project visits

FEAT has hosted artists visit to regeneration sites in the past, but now, as a result of this Fellowship, the Fellow is working to create a more bespoke offering of nature and impact visitation opportunities for artists to experience conservation projects in person, including cultural welcoming, tree planting and bush regeneration activities. Hosted within a wilderness setting, these experiences will offer a truly unique experience for education alongside connection with wild places and involve practical workshops on rewilding and conservation principles to inspire artists to transform their experience into action.

Climate and Nature Communication Online Workshops

Online climate and nature communications workshops in partnership with UK communications specialists, [Heard](#), to equip artists with the confidence and clarity to tell their own personal stories with a focus on communicating environmental and climate challenges.

Pilot Program - Artists Leadership workshop (still in development)

FEAT is partnering with [Engaged Change](#) to host a workshop and event for South Australian artists, focusing on building skills and confidence in applying funding mechanisms like the Solar Slice to protect and restore local ecosystems. The event will explore how artists can engage with biodiversity protection through both advocacy and financial models, emphasising collective funding approaches within the arts and cultural sector. It will also highlight the critical role of storytelling in shifting narratives around nature protection in Australia, bringing artists together to reimagine how their work can contribute to environmental regeneration.

Flow Festival - A Regenerative Music event with Nature Festival (event set for October 2025)

The Fellow collaborated with Nature Festival to program and produce a regional music event that integrated live performance with environmental action, highlighting the importance of protecting and restoring nature. This event will combine music with bush care activities, plantings, and engaging educational experiences to inspire participants in conservation efforts before the performances. Additionally, the Fellow worked with Nature Festival to implement the Solar Slice initiative across the festival, ensuring a portion of ticket revenue was directed toward local conservation and environmental protection projects.

Doughnut Economics for the Arts (still in development)

This initiative is still very much in its infancy and contingent on securing seed funding for a pilot phase. This project aims to provide a free, adaptable circular model for the live entertainment industry, with tools, resources and templates to apply to their practice. Working with One Stone and DEAL to develop a Doughnut Economics framework tailored for the touring and cultural sectors.

Nature Sound Fund – A First-of-Its-Kind Arts and Cultural Nature & Climate Fund (Still in development / long-term Project)

In support of the UN's biodiversity goal to protect 30% of the planet's land and seas by 2030, FEAT is developing the concept of a 'Nature Sound Fund'—an innovative Arts x Conservation fund that will bring together high-profile artists and cultural institutions to finance large-scale biodiversity conservation projects, emissions reductions, and decarbonisation strategies. Funding mechanisms will include contributions from the Solar Slice model alongside internal sustainability commitments and advocacy campaigns.

This concept is still in its early stages and will require additional financing and development support to become fully operational. Still, it has been informed by key insights and findings from the Fellow's research, playing a critical role in shaping the approach, identifying best practices, and building key industry partnerships to ensure its success.

06

Recommendations and Considerations

Through site visits, hands-on learning, interviews, and in-depth research, the Fellow has gained clearer insight into the priorities for effective environmental action in Australia—particularly when it comes to funding and advocacy efforts to protect and restore nature. Below are several potential solutions identified in response to key gaps and challenges.

1. Advocacy & Policy Engagement -

- **GOAL: Put the ‘bad guys’ out of business** (Reduce harm and redirect harmful subsidies (e.g. fossil fuels and fisheries). Vote in leaders who put nature and climate action first.
- **Policy Reform:** Outdated environmental policies must be overhauled and strengthened to protect and restore nature and stop native bushland and critical habitats from being bulldozed. This is important so degradation and destruction are reduced or prevented from happening in the first place.
- Global policies will start to trickle down to the Australian arts and Cultural sector, especially when it comes to international touring, as highlighted in the [Ultimate Cookbook for Cultural Managers](#):. **Organisations must be thinking proactively to address these changes.** Policy shifts in the UK and Europe, such as [Gov funding for net Zero targets in Germany](#) and the [Natura 2000](#) biodiversity protection initiative, provide models for action. More locally, in South

Australia, state Gov policies such as the [‘Climate Ready initiative’ or PC 007](#) and Festival City Adelaide’s [‘Leading Environmental Sustainability and Responsible Practice’](#) is already affecting arts and cultural organisations. Arts and cultural organisations would be wise to be proactive instead of reactive by developing environmental action plans, funding sustainability roles, building pathways and applying funding mechanisms, such as the Solar Slice, to adequately finance environmental action.

- **Reducing Consumption:** A fundamental shift in consumption patterns—both individual and industrial—is needed to reduce demand for harmful activities.

2. Financial Contributions & Impact Investment

- **GOAL: Pour money into the ‘good guys’** (Generate new revenue for nature):
- There is a vast funding gap between Australia’s commitment to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030) and actual investment in conservation. Mechanisms such as biodiversity credits, philanthropic funding, and nature-based solutions can help bridge this gap.

3. Cultural Change & Audience Engagement

- **GOAL: Shift and shape culture to protect and restore nature.** (Tell better stories)
- Beyond policy and finance, **cultural change, storytelling,** and advocacy are crucial. Rewilding Europe highlights the importance of “providing hope and purpose”—a sentiment that is vital in today’s climate crisis. Restoring ecosystems is not just about plants and animals; it is about restoring human relationships with nature. The arts have a powerful role to play in this by shifting cultural narratives, fostering a connection to nature, and inspiring action.

How the Arts and Cultural Sector in Australia Can Support These Priorities

1. Advocacy & Policy Engagement

- **Advocate for stronger environmental protections,** e.g. reforms to the outdated Australian Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. Elect leaders who prioritise nature and engage and encourage audiences to consider the same. Support leaders who are pushing for “No new fossil fuel projects”—ensuring that nature-positive initiatives do not mask ongoing environmental destruction. We need to stop the harm and destruction in the first place, not announce [‘Nature Positive’ plans](#) whilst opening [three new coal mines](#). Any focus on nature mustn’t distract from the need to fully address ongoing negative impacts and enforce stronger policies.
- **Support campaigns:** look for campaigns that support actively protecting and restoring nature and use creative platforms to raise up these campaigns and support and spread the broader messages.
- **Partner with environmental organisations** (e.g., Australian Conservation Foundation, Greenpeace, Bob Brown Foundation) to amplify their campaigns and engage wider audiences.

See the example of [Triple J and ACF, teaming up across the Hottest 100](#), to help find solutions to the climate crisis and raise funds for environmental campaigns.

- **Advocate for environmental action plans and funding.** Integrating environmental action plans and dedicated funding into grant requirements for arts organisations, as exemplified by the partnership between Julie’s Bicycle and Arts Council England, has significantly advanced environmental responsibility within the UK’s cultural sector. Since 2012, Arts Council England has mandated that National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) develop environmental policies and action plans, leading to widespread adoption across the sector. This initiative has resulted in a 35% reduction in carbon emissions since its inception. Implementing similar policies through bodies like Creative Australia could foster comparable environmental progress within Australia’s arts and cultural organisations

2. Financial Contributions & Impact Investment

- **Direct a portion of ticket sales** or event and touring profits towards conservation initiatives using models like the [Solar Slice](#) (e.g. allocating a % or \$1 per ticket for environmental impact).
- **Support programs like [Sounds Right](#),** a global music initiative recognising the value of nature and allowing NATURE to generate royalties from her music. Streaming one of the Feat. NATURE tracks is a simple iconic action everybody can take to generate royalties for high-impact conservation projects while incurring no additional cost to themselves.
- **Explore impact investment opportunities,** such as biodiversity credits, which directly fund measurable improvements in ecosystem health. These models not only support the teams leading conservation efforts on the ground but also create a profit-sharing mechanism for arts organisations and artists who choose to invest their hard-earned touring income in nature restoration.

- **Engage Audiences to match funding efforts.**

Arts organisations can unlock new funding streams for conservation by giving audiences the opportunity to also contribute. Simple mechanisms—such as optional donations at checkout, rounding up ticket purchases, or adding a small environmental levy—can collectively generate significant support for nature restoration. Complementing internal contributions from artists and organisations and doubling the impact. By embedding these options seamlessly into the ticketing process, merchandise sales, or membership programs, organisations empower audiences to be part of the solution. Beyond the financial impact, this also deepens audience engagement, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and connection to environmental initiatives. Transparent communication about where these funds go—whether supporting reforestation, habitat restoration, or Indigenous-led conservation projects—helps build trust and reinforces the role of the arts in driving real-world change.

Important note: While many arts organisations are eager to engage in environmental action, financial and capacity constraints can be significant. Funding is often limited, and the sector itself is already under financial strain. It's important to acknowledge these constraints while also recognising that even small contributions—when pooled across the industry—can create meaningful impact. Innovative mechanisms like the Solar Slice help unlock critical funding for sustainability initiatives, including decarbonisation, nature protection and restoration, artist advocacy, and climate justice. By embedding these funding models into existing structures, the sector can play a vital role in driving environmental change without placing undue financial burden on individual organisations. Yet, monetary contributions are only one part of the equation. Right now, advocacy and cultural change are just as crucial yet often overlooked. If funding support isn't available to artists or organisations they still have a huge superpower to mobilise collective action, which is their platform, storytelling ability, creativity and engaged audiences and fans base.

3. Cultural Change & Audience Engagement

- Shift narratives around nature, helping audiences understand that humans are part of the ecosystem, not separate from it. By lending their platform to these organisations, arts companies and artists can help bring critical environmental issues into mainstream conversations—especially among audiences who may be 'on the fence' about climate and conservation challenges. This is an affordable (or even free) yet high-impact way to support conservation efforts, ensuring that awareness translates into action. Partnering with experts in the field provides credibility, strengthens advocacy efforts, and engages audiences in meaningful ways, fostering a deeper connection to the natural world.
- **Inspire audiences** by incorporating environmental themes into performances, exhibitions, and storytelling. Art brings us together, and by coming together we can connect, feel a part of something bigger and remind us we are all part of a complex system.
- **Engage audiences in direct action**, such as partnering with NGOs to host "Action Villages" at events where people can sign petitions, donate, or learn more about conservation efforts.

Additional recommendations for the Arts and Cultural Sector to reduce their environmental impact.

- **Apply holistic frameworks when measuring the environmental and social impact of a tour / event** such as Donut Economics models, with specific model for the Arts such as this [microsite of the workshop](#) and [the DEAL tools and resources](#).
- **Sound Country** - A green Artist guide full of tools and extra resources for artists putting the planet centre stage.
- **Align Banks & Super funds with a safe climate future:** Through [Market Forces](#) and [Responsible Returns](#)

- **End Fossil Fuel partnerships:** Climate Council [Fossil Fuel Free Sponsorship code](#) and [Sign the pledge](#) to End Fossil Fuel Partnerships
- **Develop a code of ethics like the:** PVI [code of ethics template](#)
- **Complete [Creative Climate Action](#):** an environmental action course: build frameworks and set goals for sustainability in the arts.

Note: Given the complexity of the live performance sector, tracking environmental impacts can be challenging. For arts organisations with limited budgets, prioritising direct decarbonisation efforts or supporting grassroots environmental and climate justice initiatives is often a more effective use of resources than investing in extensive tracking systems. Focusing on high-impact areas, such as energy consumption and transport emissions, allows organisations to drive meaningful change without becoming overwhelmed by administrative burdens.

Vision for the Future: The Role of Arts Organisations and Artists in Environmental Action

In an ideal scenario following this Fellowship, arts organisations and artists in Australia would:

- Commit to applying the Solar Slice model, directing a percentage of ticket sales towards protecting and restoring nature with a focus on Indigenous-led conservation and cultural land restoration efforts.
- Advocate collectively for policy change and stronger federal environmental laws.
- Produce and program work that explores environmental themes while collaborating with grassroots environmental organisations to support and amplify their campaigns.
- Actively collaborate with industry peers and arts organisations to find solutions to shared environmental challenges.

07

Dissemination and Stakeholder Engagement

Articles and Blog pieces:

Throughout this Fellowship the Fellow published two blog pieces on the FEAT website which were supported by shorts reels capturing each project. The Fellow also wrote an article in Rewilding Magazine summarising her interview with Ben Goldsmith from Rewilding the World.

- [Rewilding Safari Part #1 Knepp Estate: Transforming a flogged-out industrial farm into a thriving biodiversity haven](#) and [supporting Instagram reel on FEAT socials](#).
- [Re-wilding Safari Part #2 Oostvaardersplassen: From abandoned industrial swamp-land to White-tailed Eagle territory](#) and [supporting Instagram reel on FEAT socials](#).
- [Lungtalanana support from Laneway Festival's Solar Slice wrap video](#).
- Interview with Ben Goldsmith with Rewilding Magazine.

Online Webinars with Creative Climate Leadership international network -

*(Still in development - due to roll out in late 2025)

Julie's Bicycle's Creative Climate Leadership (CCL) is an international program designed to empower artists and cultural professionals to take impactful

action on the climate and ecological crisis with creativity and resilience. Through training, mentoring, events, policy labs, and networking, CCL enables participants to explore the cultural dimensions of climate change and develop leadership in climate action and justice. Since its inception, CCL has engaged over 250 individuals across more than 30 countries, fostering a global network of creatives leading and mobilising others through various initiatives, including events, workshops, artistic works, and projects.

The Fellow will host a webinar with industry collectives and bodies (e.g., the Creative Climate Leadership cohort—an international network of arts and climate professionals led by Julie's Bicycle) to share key research findings and practical strategies for embedding nature-based solutions and environmental action within the creative industries.

These workshops will be a series of open conversations exploring how the arts, music, and live performance sectors can increase their positive impact through regeneration, rewilding, and advocating for environmental protection and restoration. The session will focus on advocacy and finance and explore practical tools, funding mechanisms (including the emerging biodiversity credit market), and creative strategies for integrating nature protection into cultural work.

08

Conclusion

The research undertaken through this Fellowship aimed to identify the most effective strategies to protect and restore nature and biodiversity in Australia. The findings highlight that best-practice solutions—such as rewilding—must be implemented in ways that are Indigenous-led, rigorously monitored, science backed, community minded and sustainably financed.

Protecting and restoring nature requires both a shift in how we communicate its value and a commitment to mobilising financial resources for conservation efforts. The arts play a pivotal role in this endeavour by reshaping narratives and fostering a deeper appreciation for the intrinsic value of ecosystem services. Clean air, food, pollination, fresh water, carbon storage, and human well-being—are not just invaluable but also economically significant. Through compelling storytelling and creative expression, artists can illuminate the importance of valuing nature, thereby encouraging society to invest in healthy thriving ecosystems. This greater literacy around the true worth of these services can hopefully help drive policies and funding mechanisms that ensure they are protected and restored.

A key outcome must be a communication mandate: using storytelling and creative engagement to reshape public understanding and inspire action. In tandem with shifting perceptions, financial investment in nature-based solutions must be significantly scaled up. The arts can play a crucial role in both educating audiences and unlocking funding by fostering a deeper emotional and intellectual connection to nature. Through storytelling, performance, and

visual art, artists can connect those with capital—whether governments, philanthropists, or corporate investors—to a new way of seeing their role in environmental restoration.

This connection not only raises awareness but also fosters a tangible commitment to funding initiatives that safeguard our natural world. By creating playful yet practical avenues for involvement, we can cultivate a broader connection to nature and inspire meaningful contributions toward conservation. As noted by the World Wildlife Foundation ‘combining art and the environment has helped as a driving force empowering political and environmental developments (Kashif, M. (n.d.)

There is no single solution to the ecological crisis, but every industry must play a role in evolving and coming together to collaborate and support solutions—and the arts and cultural sector holds a particularly powerful position. Beyond financing conservation efforts, this sector has the unique ability to shape narratives, influence cultural attitudes, and inspire action. More than ever, advocacy and storytelling are needed to shift perspectives and drive systemic change. Simple initiatives—such as replacing backstage flowers with donations to bush regeneration or allocating a percentage of event budgets toward conservation—are meaningful steps. However, this is not just about sustainability; it is about reimagining our relationship with the natural world and using the power of culture to inspire a regenerative future.

The Arts and creativity have long been at the forefront of social change. Communities rallying together have driven successful environmental campaigns, such as the Fight for the Bight and the Franklin Blockade. Artists and cultural institutions not only have an opportunity but a responsibility to engage audiences and communicate solutions for a better future. This extends beyond creative content to include industry-wide collaboration and collective action. By leveraging their influence, cultural organisations can drive meaningful social and behavioural shifts, fostering a more informed and engaged public while actively contributing to environmental restoration.

Every industry has unique roles, capabilities, and limitations, but the arts have a secret superpower that should not be forgotten - the power of storytelling. Addressing the ecological crisis requires collective effort, creative collaboration, and a shared commitment to solutions that build resilience, foster connection, and restore the landscapes that sustain us all. We need our artists, filmmakers, songwriters, theatre makers, authors ,and playwrights to be shouting from the rooftops.

09

Appendices

Abbreviations / Acronyms / Definitions

Biodiversity credits: provide a standardised measurement for assessing biodiversity value. Biodiversity Units finance action that has positive biodiversity outcomes through location-specific conservation and restoration. Offering a measurable and traceable way to invest in biodiversity protection and restoration. Biodiversity Credits have the potential to address biodiversity loss in Australia by investing in the protection and restoration of Australia's wild landscapes through, and measuring the success through science-backed methodologies. Once an increase in biodiversity is achieved, called an 'uplift' (e.g. a flogged-out weed paddock becomes a thriving paradise bursting with native flora and fauna), these credits are sold on a voluntary market, providing a financial return on investment.

How they work: The voluntary biodiversity credit market has existed for a few years, but in the wake of the [global biodiversity framework established in 2022](#) and the growing recognition of the urgency to protect and restore nature, there is increasing momentum in both the public and private sectors to tap into this rapidly evolving market. The pricing mechanism hasn't properly been figured out yet. Still, there are many indications that this form of nature finance could be a key mechanism, especially once governments legislate reporting requirements for impact on nature.

NaturePlus™ Credits (Green Collar) - Abiodiversity credit developed by Green Collar each of which represents one hectare of biodiversity improvement delivered through projects that aim to enhance the condition of ecosystems, habitats, and threatened species, like koalas. These credits will be verified by environmental accountants [Accounting for Nature](#) and the first issuance. This is large scale, land and ecosystem restoration.

Biodiversity offsets: focus on compensating for biodiversity loss through financing 'positive' impacts elsewhere. According to Trust for Nature ([Trust for Nature 2024](#)) 'Under state and federal legislation, the removal of native vegetation on one site due to a government-approved development may be offset by the protection and enhancement of native vegetation at another site.' Biodiversity offsets are quantifiable biodiversity outcomes designed to compensate for negative and unavoidable impacts of developments, usually with the goal of achieving a standard such as 'no net loss' or 'net gain'. They are considered a measure of last resort. In some cases, offsets are simply not appropriate. For example, [critical habitat](#) for threatened species should be fully protected and never offset. In an ideal world, biodiversity offsets are not used at all, and there are rules and regulations that stop developers and mining companies from bulldozing previous bushland and wildlife habitats.

Nature-Based Solutions: Nature-based solutions leverage nature and the power of healthy ecosystems to protect people and safeguard a stable and biodiverse future. It's a fancy term for supporting natural systems to do what they are designed to do (through policy, financing and hands-on work). Restoring wetlands and mangroves, reforestation, greening Urban Infrastructure, Peatland Conservation and Establishing marine protected areas are all forms of Nature- Based Solutions.

Rewilding: Rewilding restores healthy ecosystems, allowing natural processes to take over and form stable habitats. Rewilding draws down huge amounts of carbon, restores soil health, and increases biodiversity and resilience. Rewilding costs little, as nature does the heavy lifting. Humans can kick-start the process by planting native plants, reintroducing wild roaming herbivores and re-wiggling rivers. After that, there's minimal human intervention, and nature takes the lead.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF): adopted during the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) following a four year consultation and negotiation process. The primary goal of countries committed to this framework is the "30 by 30" target to protect and restore 30% of land and sea by 2030.

Human Induced Regeneration (HIR): is a land management approach that promotes the natural regeneration of native vegetation through human intervention. It involves practices like reducing grazing pressure, controlling invasive species, managing fire regimes, and protecting soil and water resources to create conditions that allow native plants to recover and thrive. HIR is often used as part of carbon farming initiatives, where the restored vegetation helps sequester carbon, contributing to climate mitigation while supporting biodiversity and ecosystem health.

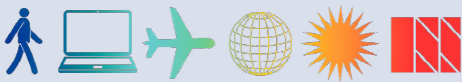
Nature-Positive Economies: An economy that recognises and values nature and helps conserve and restore the many benefits that ecosystems provide, while enabling sustainable development for local communities. Efforts to support nature-positive economies can range from helping communities maintain their traditional livelihoods by promoting sustainable agriculture practices to investing in the development of local, nature-based enterprises and improving market access for their products. Nature-positive economies also require ambitious sustainability commitments from companies that source raw materials from these landscapes. ([Conservation International](#))

10

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