

1 **Title: A Critical Year for Nature: Now is the time to accelerate action on the Global**
2 **Biodiversity Framework**

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22 **Abstract**

23 In October 2026, Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will convene to
24 review progress against the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) adopted in
25 2022. A global report will provide a summary of collective progress, primarily drawing from government
26 self-reporting at the halfway mark to 2030, the target year for halting and reversing nature loss. Data
27 suggest that action on the KMGBF to date, including through national plans and implementation
28 strategies, remains highly insufficient. At the same time, the decline of biodiversity is continuing, with a
29 real danger of reaching irreversible tipping points. We highlight four key needs to help turn this situation
30 around: (i) an independent mechanism to track actual efforts and outcomes, not just ambition; (ii) an
31 approach for prioritising the most impactful actions that countries could take, incorporating principles of
32 fairness and ability to act; (iii) a broader whole-of-society dialogue on what works and what is needed;
33 and (iv) a mechanism for incorporating context-specific scientific insights to support action. In order to
34 turn these needs into opportunities, we propose specific tools which could reinforce and account for
35 collective action during these critical next few years.

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37 **The biodiversity challenge**

38 The 2026 World Economic Forum's assessment of global risks on a 10-year horizon has once again
39 ranked biodiversity loss second only to extreme climate events (World Economic Forum 2026).
40 Meanwhile, the 2025 Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)
41 *Transformative Change* report explicitly outlined how global systems of production and consumption must
42 be transformed to maintain a sustainable future for humanity (IPBES 2024). In January 2026, the UK's
43 Joint Intelligence Committee recognised the urgent need to take action to limit the risks of ecosystem
44 tipping points, such as the collapse of coral reefs or degradation of the Amazon rainforest, which would
45 create cascading dynamics across the globe, threatening food supplies, water sources, and climate
46 stability with challenges to national security, economies and societies worldwide (DEFRA 2026).

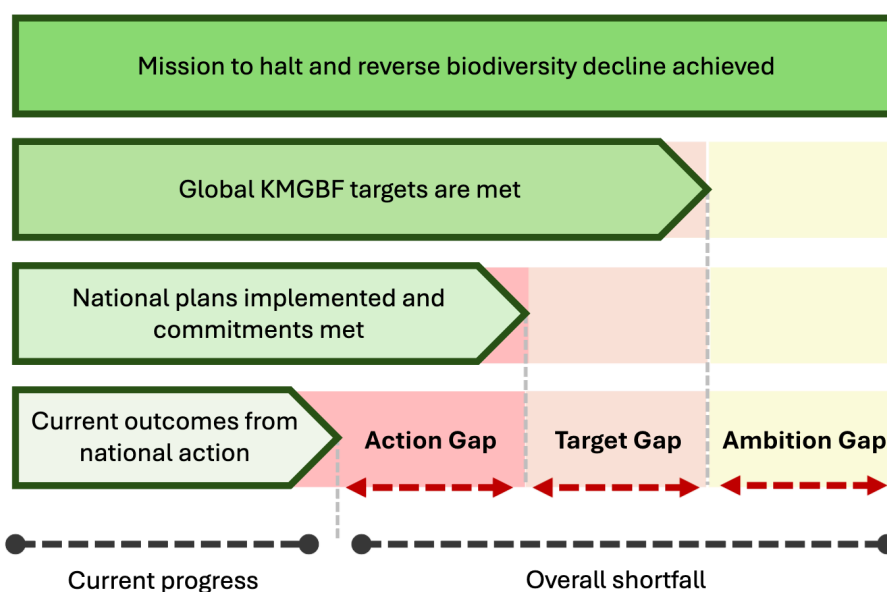
47 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), under which the Kunming-Montreal Global
48 Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) was adopted, have committed to - and hold primary responsibility for -
49 action to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity. This includes putting in place effective policy responses
50 and regulatory frameworks to address the main drivers of destruction, and ensuring the involvement of
51 private sector and other non-state actors under a 'whole of society' approach. However, while the focus
52 on governments as the key drivers of KMGBF implementation is central to the multilateral system, it is
53 insufficient.

54 Key areas of concern include that decisions on priority actions are generally made at national level,
55 without fully considering the impact of these actions on other countries' biodiversity. Domestically, policy
56 incoherence can mean that policies meant to protect and restore biodiversity are undermined and
57 overwhelmed by other policies which continue to exacerbate biodiversity loss. Additionally, despite the
58 many contributions to fulfilling the KMGBF made by non-state actors, the CBD's platform for recording
59 these contributions is under-used. Therefore, the world is missing out on opportunities to appreciate,
60 account for, and catalyse meaningful actions undertaken by sub-national, supra-national, and non-state
61 actors, including local communities and Indigenous Peoples, civil society, and the private sector.

62 Many Parties continue to face challenges in effectively implementing policies on the ground. Depending
63 on national circumstances, these challenges may stem from limited institutional capacity, financing gaps,
64 or insufficient enabling mechanisms. Meaningful action materializes only when policy commitments
65 outlined in strategic frameworks are operationalized through concrete measures and implementation
66 processes. Even then, questions remain as to whether these measures achieve their intended outcomes
67 and impacts. The Parties to the CBD therefore risk falling short of their stated mission to halt and reverse
68 biodiversity loss (Figure 1).

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70 **Figure 1. The potential gaps between current outcomes, commitments, targets and goals.**



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73 The world's governments will meet in Yerevan, Armenia, for the CBD's COP17 in October 2026, under
74 the theme of 'Taking action for nature'. This meeting will include the first Global Review of collective
75 progress, which is expected to guide accelerated implementation of the KMGBF. For humanity
76 collectively to 'bend the curve' of biodiversity loss and secure a nature-positive future, all stakeholders
77 committed to the KMGBF must contribute (Leclère et al. 2020). This requires agreement on what more is
78 needed to support bold and effective action.

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80 **Key needs for nature action**

81 The adoption of the KMGBF in December 2022 was a landmark achievement. Since then, many countries
82 have formulated new or enhanced national biodiversity strategies and action plans, or adopted new
83 targets (WWF 2026). While this represents important progress, the past three years have also revealed

84 several structural shortcomings. Here, we identify four key needs that must urgently be addressed, and
85 the opportunities they present.

86 **1. The need for independent tracking of CBD Parties' actions and outcomes:**

87 The Global Review of progress will draw mostly from governments' self-reported information, contained
88 within their 7th National Reports (CBD 2026a), as well as additional information uploaded to the CBD's
89 non-state actor portal (CBD 2026b). The resulting report will be an important milestone and an opportunity
90 for dialogue and renewed attention to areas of weakness, while recognizing countries' efforts to date.

91 More can and must be done, however. Government declarations of commitment and ambition alone are
92 insufficient if they are not backed by policies and dedicated resources to implement them. Therefore, in
93 addition to cataloguing government declarations and documentation, systematic analysis is required to
94 track follow-up; what policies are adopted, how these policies are operationalised, what financial and
95 human resources are allocated to implementation, and how progress is monitored and evaluated. The
96 7th National reports are meant to cover many of these issues, but many are incomplete (CBD 2025).

97 A mechanism for independent assessments of progress would therefore be a useful complement to the
98 formal Global Review of progress by Parties. This should be accessible to all, draw on a broad spectrum
99 of in-country expertise, and cover actions and needs for all sectors of the economy.

100 **2. The need for prioritisation of the most impactful actions beyond national borders:**

101 National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) are intended to drive comprehensive
102 implementation of practical measures to address all KMGBF targets, including those targeting the primary
103 drivers of biodiversity loss. However, they rarely account for the cross-border impacts of national
104 economies, particularly via consumption and trade (for example, of agricultural commodities). The
105 danger, therefore, is that such national plans may fail to reflect what is needed for transformative change
106 at the global scale.

107 Further, countries have different capacities to act and different impacts on global biodiversity. It is
108 unrealistic to assume that all countries can and should fulfil all the KMGBF's targets to the same level.
109 Consequently, prioritisation of efforts and resources will be required, focussed on different KMGBF target
110 areas, depending on the country's social, economic and ecological context. This needs to be guided by
111 independent, context-specific assessments of where efforts should best be targeted (Box 1).

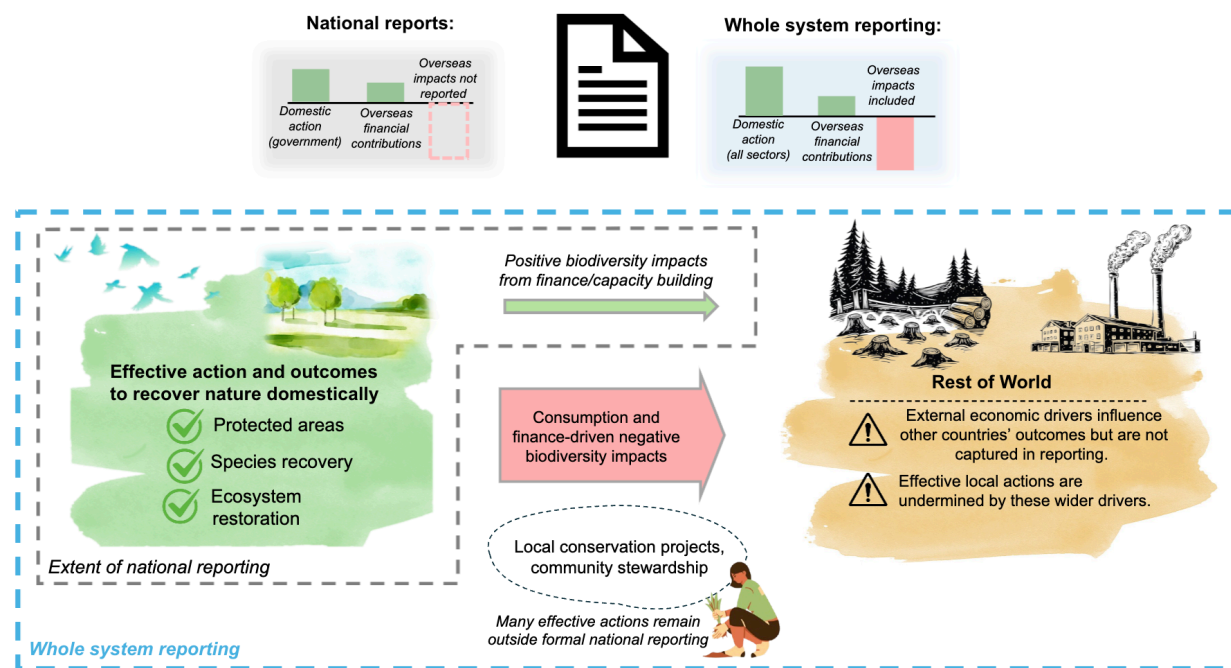
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113 **Box 1: An example of the need to address cross-border impacts**

114 *Country A is a high-income country which achieves domestic conservation successes but fails to*
115 *address its external impacts embedded in its trade practices, imports or financial flows to high*
116 *biodiversity Country B. Because the KMGBF currently sets no explicit, measurable expectation for*
117 *reducing international footprints and spillovers, Country A can report progress based on action within*
118 *its borders while continuing to drive deforestation, pollution, or unsustainable extraction elsewhere.*
119 *Meanwhile, Country B struggles to deliver conservation gains at national scale due to powerful*
120 *external economic incentives that overshadow local efforts. The result is a net loss of global*
121 *biodiversity – even when individual countries appear to be performing well against their own indicators*
122 *(Figure 2). These structural asymmetries highlight a deeper issue: in the absence of greater clarity,*
123 *critical dialogue and public accountability, countries prioritise actions that are politically or*
124 *economically feasible at home rather than those most urgently needed to reduce global drivers of*
125 *loss. In addition to action to conserve and restore biodiversity domestically, Country A should*
126 *therefore focus more of its resources and efforts towards reducing its footprint, and supporting fair*
127 *and equitable transitions away from biodiversity-damaging activities, in Country B.*

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Figure 2. A hypothetical example of the need for whole-system reporting to capture a country's overseas impacts



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As a concrete example, the UK government has made a bold commitment to halt and reverse the loss of its own domestic biodiversity. It has included metrics of overseas deforestation and footprint in its National Report (JNCC 2025). This recognition of the need to report on its overseas footprint is not, however, matched by legislation that aims to reduce the footprint of its consumption, external trade, production, supply chains and investments. The UK is a major global financial centre with a consumption footprint that puts it in the top 10% of countries worldwide (TheCityUK 2026; SEI & JNCC 2026). It would therefore seem clear that this should be a priority area of action for the UK, in terms of its contribution to global biodiversity recovery.

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At the same time, Brazil published a new National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) at the end of 2025 (MMA 2025). There is no doubting the ambition, arguably going further than required by the KMGBF, and contributing therefore to closing the gap between the KMGBF targets and mission. Brazil's pledges bridge between the climate and nature agendas, including the elimination of deforestation from Brazilian biomes by 2030 and promoting sustainable agricultural production. The question is whether this is feasible for Brazil to deliver without corresponding action from other countries, including the UK and European States, to address consumption footprints and reduce market demand for, and investment in, unsustainable and deforesting commodities from Brazil.

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History tells us that perverse subsidies, damaging investments, and unsustainable production and consumption undermine all other conservation action. Global financial flows to nature-damaging activities are 30x the flows to nature-sustaining activities (UNEP 2026). So, we risk a cumulative failure to halt nature loss, even if countries driving or facilitating that net-loss are still evidencing a positive score card.

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3. The need for broader, whole-of-society dialogue:

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While national governments are the only formal Parties to the CBD and its negotiated agreements, they are not the only actors who need to be engaged in delivering its goals and targets. In many countries, there are remarkable efforts, innovations, and actions that contribute to the KMGBF but are not systematically accounted for in current national reporting. For example, Indigenous Peoples are establishing protected and conserved areas based on their own laws and practices, which balance protection with traditional livelihoods (UNEP & IUCN 2026). Furthermore, local communities and sub-national governments are contributing through expansion of green spaces, urban and regional planning, and localized conservation policy initiatives. Some forward-thinking companies are implementing plans to understand and disclose their impacts and dependencies on nature, while reducing their material risk,

163 with the aim of contributing towards KMGBF Target 15 and the global nature positive goal (Hawkins et
164 al. 2026).

165 Several Parties include non-state actors' actions in their 7th National Reports. The CBD's online reporting
166 tool allows non-state and sub-national actors to voluntarily submit information on their biodiversity actions
167 to capture 'whole-of-society' efforts (CBD 2026b). Many actors are beginning to do so but there remain
168 significant gaps in reporting, verification, and long-term accountability.

169 Ultimately, it is important to account for, track and learn from all efforts - both positive and negative, public
170 and private - so their cumulative effects are reflected in official data and inform planning and
171 implementation of national and international action for biodiversity.

172 **4. The need for context-specific scientific analysis to support prioritisation:**

173 To create the momentum required to achieve the KMGBF goals and targets, it is critical to identify and
174 prioritise policies with the greatest potential impact, and to consider the benefits of domestic action
175 alongside action to reduce national footprints abroad.

176 One of the most impactful modelling exercises ahead of the adoption of the KMGBF was Leclère et al.'s
177 analysis of the need not only for traditional conservation, but also for sustainable production and
178 consumption, in order to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity (Leclère et al. 2020). However, this
179 model is global rather than national, is not spatially explicit, and does not include climate change.
180 Therefore, there is an urgent challenge for scientists to produce context-specific analyses that can provide
181 policy-relevant guidance on the most efficient and cost-effective measures that can be taken at a national
182 level to contribute to global biodiversity goals. This should include not only positive conservation actions
183 domestically, but also measures to mitigate negative impacts and drive positive change both at home
184 and overseas, particularly with respect to consumption and supply chains. It should also include principles
185 for fair allocation of efforts and resources between countries (Booth et al. 2024).

186 Developing decision-relevant national-scale assessments that address all these issues remains a key
187 challenge. In the climate space, science-driven, locally grounded methods to model, compare and
188 prioritise specific national policy pathways have transformed the discourse on policy-driven change
189 (Schipper et al. 2022). By both broadening and sharpening our existing instruments in the biodiversity
190 space, and supporting countries to develop science-based policy pathways that align with both their
191 biodiversity impacts and their capacity to act, we can better ensure national action for biodiversity
192 catalyses global-level transformative change.

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194 **Our opportunity to reinforce the KMGBF**

195 CBD COP17 provides a critical and timely platform to openly debate the Global Review of progress
196 towards the KMGBF and what it will take to deepen and accelerate action on nature. This dialogue must
197 consider what is already in place, but also what is missing. In our view this must include a consideration
198 of the needs and opportunities we detail above. This will reinforce the existing multilateral biodiversity
199 regime in three important ways:

200 Already, the KMGBF targets provide a solid basis and plan for action towards its 2050 goals. However,
201 aside from its formal monitoring and reporting framework, a mechanism is needed for independent
202 tracking of government-led action and follow-through on existing policies and commitments.
203 Transparency on government policies, action, and outcomes, across sectors and drivers is essential to
204 enhance public accountability. This would also support cross-sectoral and international learning on what
205 works, how, and at what cost; and, importantly, who should bear those costs.

206 Second, while the UN provides platforms for dialogue and inter-country collaboration, the KMGBF
207 reporting mechanism's focus on national-level commitments and implementation means that neither
208 cross-border impacts nor sub-national actions (whether by government or non-state actors) are easily
209 captured. Given the need for action beyond borders, and for whole-of-society engagement, for tackling
210 the systemic drivers of biodiversity loss, it is essential that positive and negative actions and outcomes
211 are captured and learnt from, so their biodiversity impacts can be mitigated.

212 Third, the achievement of KMGBF targets depends on systematic efforts to develop, model and review
213 alternative policy choices at national and sub-national levels. While IPBES is a major, and hugely
214 influential, platform producing vital analyses of what is needed for transformative change, it is not tasked
215 with producing concrete, country-level scenario modelling and assessments of the real-world feasibility

216 of national-level priorities. Prospective policy analyses and science-based scenario modelling have
217 become standard contributions to climate policies, but similar work is still lacking on nature and
218 biodiversity – especially at the level of country-based pathways and scenarios, testing alternative policy
219 choices for relative costs and impact. To support consistency, improve efficiency and build capacity, this
220 should be based on international collaborations founded on in-country scientific expertise and involving
221 civil society actors that draw on a range of perspectives and experience (including traditional and local
222 knowledge).

223 **A way forward**

224 To move beyond discussion towards a concrete path forward, we here introduce two synergistic initiatives
225 currently under development. Together, these aim to address the existing gaps identified above, and offer
226 opportunities to strengthen the KMGBF through greater accountability:

227 **The Nature Action Tracker (NAT)** is an independent mechanism aiming to systematically track and
228 assess national-level efforts to adopt, implement and enforce existing public policies and regulations and
229 actions by others as they are directly relevant for the KMGBF. Equivalent to the Climate Action Tracker
230 in the global climate space (Climate Action Tracker 2026), the NAT complements formal monitoring
231 frameworks by maintaining up-to-date inventories and mappings of existing policies, by sector and
232 geography; and by conducting analyses of commitments, targets, actions and regular updates on
233 implementation progress and problems.

234 The NAT's databases and periodic assessments of country action will improve transparency on existing
235 action, enhance public accountability, and contribute to public dialogue and accelerated policy learning
236 on what works and what is needed. Importantly, the NAT will tap into the vast expertise and practical
237 experience of in-country experts and networks, with the potential to capture insights into all ongoing
238 action, including efforts and innovations by communities, companies and civil society currently
239 insufficiently captured in national or international reporting.

240 **The National Assessment Tool for Understanding Relative Environmental Impacts - NATURE**
241 **Impacts (LCNR 2026):** This initiative builds off the information collected by the Nature Action Tracker,
242 aiming to support countries in prioritising future actions for biodiversity by: (1) Providing a transparent,
243 independent platform to enable non-state and sub-national actors to monitor their government's progress
244 and contribute their expertise and knowledge; (2) Hosting scientific assessments of actual and potential
245 policy choice outcomes, based on context-specific, spatially disaggregated modelling and expert
246 knowledge, importantly including both domestic and overseas footprints; (3) Enabling analysis of priority
247 actions and the identification of fair and proportionate national and sectoral contributions to biodiversity
248 recovery, across all activities that impact biodiversity.

249 Together, these initiatives address the need for credible and locally grounded methods to prioritise future
250 outcomes and actions that maximise positive biodiversity impacts, in the context of limited time and
251 resources. In this way, they will help to address the gap between the KMGBF's mission to halt and reverse
252 biodiversity loss, and current outcomes from national action (Figure 1).

253 In combination, NAT and NATURE Impacts aim to catalyse the development of an open platform
254 dedicated to policy learning and innovation. Based on existing KMGBF elements, this platform could be
255 used during and between Global Reviews to accelerate and deepen our shared understanding of gaps,
256 opportunities for innovation, and the scaling of effective measures to address the primary drivers of
257 biodiversity loss and destruction of nature. The platform could be co-created with input from the UN,
258 Parties, civil society and private sector companies, and used to catalyse joint action across sectors and
259 countries.
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261 **Outlook**

262 Humanity, in aggregate, has never been wealthier, more technologically capable, or better informed - yet
263 the vital natural systems that underpin our prosperity are unravelling at unprecedented speed. Global
264 biodiversity loss poses an existential threat to economic stability, geopolitical security, and human
265 wellbeing in general (DEFRA 2026).

266 Humanity already possesses sufficient scientific understanding to identify the drivers of nature loss and
267 the actions required to halt and reverse it. We have an internationally-agreed framework for action, in the
268 KMGBF. However, although political ambition and commitments are necessary, they are not enough.
269 What remains insufficient is effective and dedicated action to implement what has been agreed, using

270 approaches which are predominately already on the policy shelf. In order to strengthen and mobilise
271 rapid, sustained and well-coordinated action, as well as political capital and financing across the whole
272 of society, we need to establish and invest in public accountability using mechanisms that have science
273 and inclusion at their heart.

274 2026 is a critical year, in which financing and mechanisms need to be put in place to reinforce synergistic
275 implementation of global goals on nature, climate and sustainable development. Addressing the needs
276 and opportunities which we have highlighted here will support the broadening of efforts from business-
277 as-usual towards a global, whole-of-society effort to turn the tide for nature and humanity.

278 **Acknowledgements:**

279 This work was supported by the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, University of Oxford, WWF-
280 UK, WWF-International and WWF-Colombia. We are particularly grateful to Neil D. Burgess, Carlos M.
281 Herrera, Yadvinder Malhi, Mark Wright and Lucy Young for their guidance and support. We also thank all
282 those who attended the NATURE Impacts workshop in December 2025, providing valuable feedback and
283 insights which informed the manuscript: Xilonem Clarke, Robin Freeman, Jonathan Green, Liam
284 O'Connor, Willow Outhwaite, Harveet Singh Purewal, Cesar Suarez and Joe Trigg.

285 The work also benefitted from input from colleagues including Juan Camilo Cardenas Campo, David
286 Obura, Thomas Brooks, Joseph Bull, Javier Castiblanco, Elsie McDowell and Camila Yepes. Finally, we
287 express our appreciation for those who attended the original workshop co-organised by WWF with
288 members of Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, Interdisciplinary Centre for Conservation Science,
289 and Environmental Change Institute at the Oxford Martin School, University of Oxford, UK, in July 2024:
290 Ashley Bang, Samira Barzin, Michael Clark, Katie Gough, Leah Han, Thomas Harwood, Katia Sanchez
291 Ortiz and Sophus OSE zu Ermgassen.

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