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# LIVING PLANET REPORT 2020

BENDING THE CURVE OF BIODIVERSITY LOSS

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WWF is one of the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in more than 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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## Citation

WWF (2020) *Living Planet Report 2020 - Bending the curve of biodiversity loss.*

Almond, R.E.A., Grooten M. and Petersen, T. (Eds).

WWF, Gland, Switzerland.

Design and infographics by: peer&dedigitalesupermarkt

Cover photograph: © Jonathan Caramanus / Green Renaissance / WWF-UK  
*Farmer Nancy Rono with a chameleon on her sleeve, Bomet County, Mara River Upper Catchment, Kenya.*

ISBN 978-2-940529-99-5

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# A PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE WAY WE ASSESS NATURE

People value nature in many different ways, and bringing these together can be used to shape policies that will create a healthy and resilient planet for people and nature.

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Nature's Contributions to People refers to all the contributions, both positive and negative, that nature makes to people's quality of life<sup>1</sup>. Building on the ecosystem service concept popularised by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment<sup>95</sup>, the Nature's Contributions to People concept includes a wide range of descriptions of human dependence on nature, such as ecosystem goods and services and nature's gifts. It recognises the central role that culture plays in defining all links between people and nature. It also elevates, emphasises and operationalises the role of indigenous and local knowledge<sup>1, 100</sup>.

Until recently, the conceptualisation of, and practical work on, ecosystem services have focused on assessing and valuing those service flows with biophysical and economic approaches coming from natural sciences and economics respectively. This approach has largely failed to engage a range of perspectives from social sciences, humanities<sup>96</sup>, or those of local actors including Indigenous peoples and local communities<sup>1</sup>.

The Nature's Contributions to People approach explicitly recognises that a range of views of nature exist. At one extreme, humans and nature are viewed as distinct; at the other, humans and non-human entities are interwoven in deep relationships of kinship and reciprocal obligations<sup>97, 98</sup>. It uses two lenses to assess how people relate to nature: *generalising* and *context-specific* perspectives.

The **generalising perspective** is typical of the natural sciences and economics and is fundamentally analytical in purpose; it seeks a universally applicable set of categories that define flows from nature to people. IPBES identified and assessed 18 of these categories and organised them in three partially overlapping groups: regulating, material and nonmaterial contributions<sup>1, 13</sup>. Trends in these categories and their indicators are explored more earlier in this chapter on pages 78-79. These are defined according to the type of contribution they make to people's quality of life.

- **Material contributions** are substances, objects or other material elements from nature that directly sustain people's physical existence and material assets. For example, this includes when organisms are transformed into food, energy or materials for ornamental purposes.
- **Nonmaterial contributions** are nature's effects on subjective or psychological aspects underpinning people's quality of life, both individually and collectively. Examples include forests and coral reefs providing opportunities for recreation and inspiration, or particular animals and plants being the basis of spiritual or social-cohesion experiences.
- **Regulating contributions** frequently affect quality of life in indirect ways. They are the functional and structural aspects of organisms and ecosystems that modify environmental conditions experienced by people, and/or regulate the generation of material and nonmaterial contributions. For example, people directly enjoy useful or beautiful plants but only indirectly benefit from the soil organisms that are essential for the supply of nutrients to such plants.

Culture permeates through and across all three groups rather than being confined to an isolated category.

The **context-specific perspective** is the perspective typical of, but not exclusive to, local and indigenous knowledge systems. Providing space for context-specific perspectives recognises that there are multiple ways of understanding and categorising relationships between people and nature.

Although presented as extremes, these two perspectives are often blended and interwoven – therefore recognising both these approaches leads to a richer understanding of how biodiversity contributes to people's quality of life and reveals solutions for the sustainable management of nature and the many contributions it makes to our lives<sup>99, 100</sup>.