

The background of the top half of the cover is a photograph of a sunset over the ocean. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and a rainbow-like effect in the sky. The water is a deep blue-green. Overlaid on this image are large, semi-transparent, light blue decorative floral and leaf patterns that curve across the right side of the page.

# CONSERVATION OPTIMISM

In the bottom left corner, there are decorative floral and leaf patterns in a light brown or tan color, partially overlapping the sand and the turtle.

ANNUAL REPORT  
2019-2020





# OUR VISION

We believe a planet on which people and nature both flourish is possible.

As we hear of forests burning and species going extinct, it can be hard to remain hopeful. However, amongst the stories of loss, there are also many inspiring stories of hope that are awaiting to be shared, learned from and replicated. Conservation Optimism is built on the belief that empowering everyone to make a difference for nature while also learning from the successes and failures within the conservation sector are key to securing our planet's future.

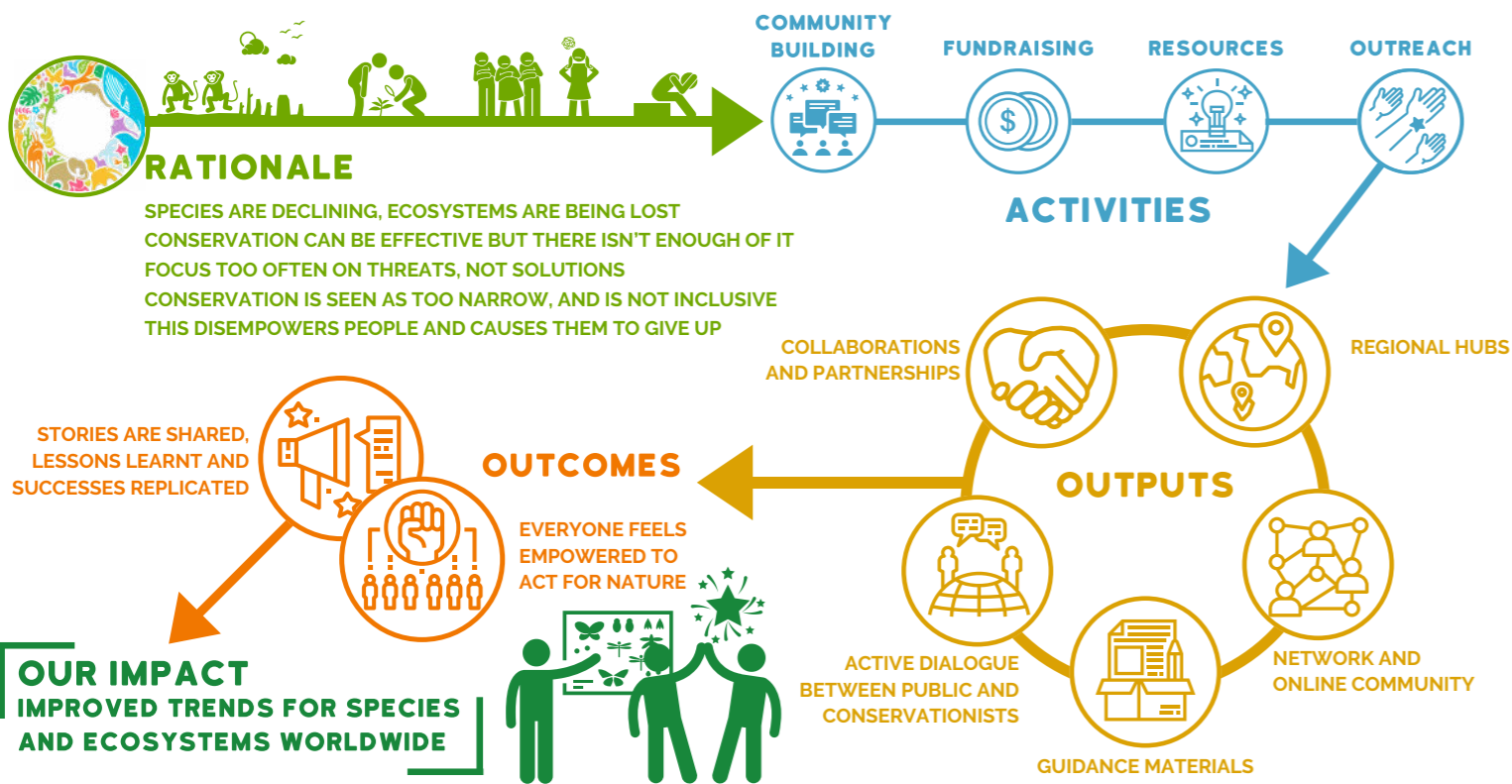
The [Conservation Optimism](#) movement began in 2017 with the first Conservation Optimism Summit. As the community we started online in the lead up to the summit rapidly grew, it quickly became apparent that our work would not be done after the three-day event. Rather, with our help, the conversations and collaborations that started there continued to grow and blossom across continents, disciplines, and sectors.

With over 13,700 members across Instagram, Twitter and Facebook and thousands more actively engaging with our #ConservationOptimism hashtag, our channels are a way for people to easily find stories of conservation optimism. Every single day people are using our hashtag to share successes from the conservation sector or to reach out for support when facing challenges. We also amplify under-represented voices by allowing people to write blogs on our website and then sharing it with our wider community on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Supported by the University of Oxford and Synchronicity Earth, our movement aims to achieve improved trends for species and ecosystems worldwide. One aspect of achieving this mission involves ensuring that the stories that generate optimism get amplified and heard, and that even when headlines are unavoidably grim they are not told without an action step. This way, people from every walk of life are empowered to act for nature instead of being left feeling depressed and powerless.

However, Conservation Optimism is more than our online hub. It's a spirit and an ethos that many organisations are embracing as we all move forward to build a more effective, more inclusive, and more active future for conservation. To this end, we are working to build robust reciprocal relationships with those institutions, collectively called the Conservation Network of Optimists Worldwide or ConservationNOW, that uphold our vision. Our theory of change highlights the different activities and outputs that are essential to achieving our vision.

To achieve our vision, we are fostering an online community of conservation optimists from around the globe.



## THEORY OF CHANGE

# 2019 SUMMIT

# OUTREACH EVENTS

**Our second Conservation Optimism Summit took place in Oxford this past September. We brought together delegates from the worlds of conservation, journalism, NGOs, academia, and the creative arts to explore ways in which we can cross-pollinate new ideas and share our strength and resources.**

Conservation Optimism began as what was originally intended to be a one-off summit, and while we have grown to be so much more, the summits still provide a key opportunity for our community. The 2019 summit had a truly international focus, with attendees and speakers from every continent, including plenary speakers from Ghana, India, Malaysia, Namibia, UK, USA and Uzbekistan. We focused on four new themes: Conservation Works: Lessons Learned & Models for Success, Optimism and Wellbeing: Living & Working in Conservation, Creative Conservation: Engaging Through Storytelling & The Arts, and 2020 & Beyond: A Tipping Point for Nature and People.

In addition to plenaries, workshops, panels, speed talks and creative sessions, we added a brand new and exciting feature to the Conservation Optimism Summit this year: a film festival. 327 professional and amateur filmmakers submitted their short films fitting into categories such as People and Nature, Learning from Failure, and Conservation Champions. Both delegates and members of the public had the opportunity to watch the shortlisted films at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, through a Facebook livestream and on our website.

Thanks to £18,880 in generous donations, we were able to grant 13 bursaries for speakers from the Global South and offered free registration and accommodation to 13 UK-based students from the Global South.



The feedback we received following the summit was extremely positive, with delegates rating both the Summit and the film festival 9 stars out of 10. Enthusiasm for continuing the movement ran high, with 98% of respondents expressing the desire to attend another Conservation Optimism Summit in the future and 97% indicating that they were keen to stay in regular contact.

Delegates particularly enjoyed the interactivity of the workshops, the inclusive atmosphere and the quality of the vegetarian food served throughout the three days. The live streaming of all the plenaries was also highly appreciated with thousands of people tuning in on social media from all over the world to watch.

As a special public-facing component, we selected four of our speakers to take part in a series of TED-style talks on the afternoon following the end of the summit. The University of Oxford filmed the talks, which are now available for streaming on the university's website for people to enjoy globally.



**Conservation Optimism is working hard in the UK and beyond to reach our vision of a planet on which people and nature both flourish. In 2019, our team has been busy running outreach events and giving talks both locally and internationally.**

In 2019 we seized the opportunity to take part in the International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB) which took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Running a Conservation Optimism Booth opened doors for future collaboration and allowed us to reach out to potential new ConservationNOW members. Alongside the booth, we were able to share the Conservation Optimism ethos through a symposium, a discussion group and a photo exhibit.

Conservation Optimism recently partnered with the museum again, creating a Conservation Optimism trail for a sell-out Late Night event for the general public. The trail took the visitors on a guided tour around the museum, highlighting the conservation success stories behind six species. The response to the trail was very positive with people asking questions throughout the night. The script developed by our team will be used by the museum for future events and will help develop new biodiversity-related signage.



We have also been busy sharing Conservation Optimism's mission with conservationists at various conferences such as Now For Nature and the BIAZA Annual Conference. The team is currently preparing a set of activities for the Festival of the Future, a large Oxford community event organised by a local school.

These opportunities serve not only to allow Conservation Optimism to build and strengthen our community close to home, but also to develop tools, templates, and best practices to share with our community to help them incorporate effective messages of hope and empowerment into their public-facing events.

We are also actively involved with organising a variety of outreach events at a local level in Oxford. Following our film festival in September, the Oxford University Museum of Natural History invited us to co-host an event with Extinction Rebellion. In addition to re-screening our shortlisted films we ran a stop motion animation workshop allowing children to create their own short movies. The event attracted thousands of visitors with various activities and talks happening throughout the day.



-  **3 DAYS OF SUMMIT**
-  **2 FREE EVENTS**
-  **4 TED-STYLE TALKS**
-  **> 230 DELEGATES FROM OVER 30 COUNTRIES**

# FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In 2020, we are focussing on ensuring that the movement grows to be as inclusive and widespread as possible. We started in Oxford, but our vision is to support conservationists from around the world to take up the Conservation Optimism ethos, and evolve it to suit their own contexts and priorities. We're doing this in two main ways: providing people with the resources that they need and supporting them to take action in their own countries and regions.

## RESOURCES

One of the primary ways that Conservation Optimism is helping to catalyse change is by influencing the influencers. We are currently developing a range of projects to support conservationists (and others who are passionate about reframing conservation messages) towards more solutions-based narratives. We recently conducted a survey of our ConservationNOW members asking them what support they would like to get from us and here are two ways we'll be supporting them in 2020:



## ONLINE COURSE

Our members also expressed a strong interest in an online Conservation Optimism course. It would give them an opportunity to take a deep dive into how to reframe conservation stories and will highlight how storytelling can be a powerful tool to reinforce the connection between people and the natural world.

The course will be delivered by world experts from the conservation and communications sectors and will provide an important free resource for conservation practitioners.

## REGIONAL HUBS

In order to empower people to take action in their own areas, in 2020 we are supporting colleagues to start their own regional Conservation Optimism hubs.

Conservation Optimism's first Regional Hub will launch in Bangalore, India, and we are currently building capacity with conservationists there to start the process. This will include a strategic planning workshop in spring 2020, and providing know-how and resources for them to hold a 2020 event. Over the next few years, we hope to start two or three more hubs, and we're already getting input from our conservationNOW partners about where these might be. We are actively pursuing partnerships in Oceania, Asia, Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe.

## HOW-TO GUIDES

Over 70% of organisations that we asked said they needed support with framing their communications, and over 80% said that having a how-to guide to help them to communicate their messages in an optimistic and empowering way would be very beneficial for them. We are currently working with a consultant specialising in narrative-framing to develop a guide tailored to our members. This guide, to be published later this Spring, will provide in-depth tools on how to frame conservation stories in an optimistic way and how to build solutions-focused narratives around the challenges we face in the conservation sector.

## EMPOWERING CONSERVATION

Our goal is to make the maximum impact by empowering individuals to act for nature by connecting them with the inspiration, resources, and tools needed to do so. We began this process via our summits and by building our online community, with over 12,800 members across Instagram, Twitter and Facebook and thousands more actively engaging with our #ConservationOptimism hashtag since 2017. Now we're adding two exciting new initiatives:

## PODCAST SERIES

We are thrilled to announce the upcoming launching a podcast, "Good Natured," where we will invite our listeners to join us for uplifting chats that shine a light on conservation challenges but focus on those who are actively striving to make a positive impact. Each episode will feature an interview an inspiring individual who is making important strides for conservation, from scientists, to artists, to activists, and beyond. Each conservationist will speak about their struggles, their successes and their hopes for the future of nature.

We already have some fascinating guests booked and cannot wait to reveal our first episode later this Spring. The podcast will be hosted by the University of Oxford, and we will be releasing new episodes monthly. The first season will consist of six episodes.

## KEY CONSERVATION

Conservation Optimism has also partnered with the Key Conservation mobile app to help further our aims of empowering our community for positive conservation impact — both by supporting grassroots conservation projects financially, and by helping to connect individuals from around the world with meaningful ways to contribute to conservation efforts in the field and remotely.

With the launch of the Key Conservation app in 2020, our ConservationNOW partners will gain an easy way to connect directly with members of the public from around the world to help support them through direct actions such as sharing, funding and mentorship, while the public becomes empowered to directly aid conservation efforts more easily than ever before.

## WHO'S BEHIND CONSERVATION OPTIMISM?

Conservation Optimism started as a one-off summit in 2017, which was co-organized by the University of Oxford, with partners Zoological Society of London and Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust. What began as a one-time event has become a cultural movement, and we draw a lot of strength from neither sitting exclusively in the academic sector nor in the charity sector. Our community is made of individuals and organizations from a wide variety of sectors and backgrounds, and our vision is to empower people from every walk of life to feel that they are part of a larger whole, working together towards a vision of a better world.

Conservation Optimism is soon to become a registered charity, but we are still very much in touch with our roots as a movement. It is currently a partnership between The University of Oxford and Synchronicity Earth and we are actively recruiting additional partners. Our flexible and unique structure ensures that we are able to be highly dynamic and responsive to the needs of our community, while also remaining deeply tied to both the current trends in academic conservation thought, the conservation practitioner community, and the wider world.



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