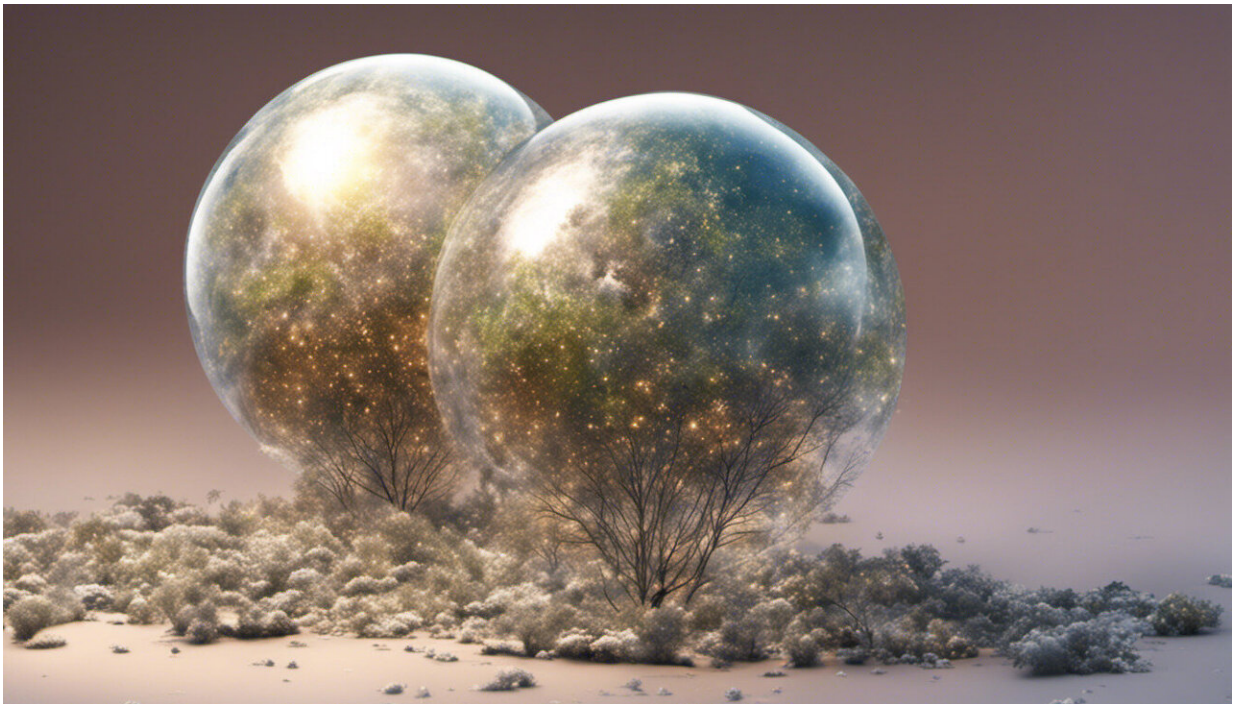


Four steps for Earth: A holistic approach to saving the planet

January 25 2021



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

This decade must be the turning point, where we transform humanity's relationship with nature and put the planet on a path to recovery, argues a global team of researchers in a paper published today [Friday 22 Jan] outlining a new framework for implementing global commitments to restoring nature, The Mitigation and Conservation Hierarchy—or, more

snappily, Four Steps for the Earth.

The United Nations is currently developing a new post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, for the world to 'live in harmony with nature' by 2050. This will be negotiated in Kunming, China, later this year.

The researchers, from 22 institutions, led by the University of Oxford's Interdisciplinary Centre for Conservation Science, argue there has never been a more important time for this bold vision, and everyone has a role to play in its delivery. The paper, published by *One Earth*, shows how to change our overall impact from negative to positive in four distinct steps, the '4Rs':

- The refrain step involves avoiding [negative impacts](#) on nature as far as possible.
- The reduce step involves minimizing damage to nature where it cannot be completely avoided.
- The restore step involves remediating any immediate damage to nature.
- The renew step involves investing in revitalizing nature.

Lead author, Professor E.J. Milner-Gulland, says, "This paper represents a real team effort, with authors from academia, business and government. We're excited to launch this idea and hope that it will be useful to many different groups as they work to realize the vision of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. It's a huge challenge, with many different facets, and we hope that Four Steps for the Earth will provide an intuitive and flexible framework for tying all the threads together."

What makes the Mitigation and Conservation Hierarchy unique is that it enables all types of negative and positive impacts on nature, carried out by different groups at different scales, to be accounted for within the

same framework. It is focused on identifying actions which contribute towards an aspirational goal, such as leaving nature in a better state than we found it in.

However, the paper maintains, ambitious goals are only meaningful if they can be translated into concrete actions across all sectors of society. Most human activity involves [natural](#) resources. As such, conservation actions need to move beyond a niche interest of 'conservationists,' to be incorporated in to the everyday actions and decisions of governments, businesses and individuals.

Last year, the International Union for Conservation of Nature's partner organizations voted to support this framework and to push for it to be widely used. The authors hope it will help countries to plan and monitor the actions that they need to commit to in order to 'bend the curve of biodiversity loss,' as economies recover post-COVID.

Project coordinator at Oxford, Henry Grub, adds, "This [framework](#) will, hopefully, present a turning point in the way institutions such as Oxford think about their biodiversity impact. Our impacts cannot be overlooked because of the positive research we do—rather we hope the '4Rs' will transform efforts to tackle the environmental impacts of the food we eat in canteens, the paper we put in printers, the land we build on, and much more."

More information: E.J. Milner-Gulland et al. Four steps for the Earth: mainstreaming the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, *One Earth* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.oneear.2020.12.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2020.12.011)

Provided by University of Oxford

Citation: Four steps for Earth: A holistic approach to saving the planet (2021, January 25)
retrieved 13 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-01-earth-holistic-approach-planet.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.